COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND BEST PRACTICES IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MODERN ISLAMIC WORLD

(Lessons and Insights for Reforms in Pakistani Madrasah System)

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It is important to know that how the whole system of Madrasah education was evolved and what were various trends which contributed in shaping the whole system of religious Education in the Muslim world, particularly. I this article I will be presenting a comparative analysis of some important Religious Education systems prevalent in prominent Muslim Countries to demonstrate that how same institutions can develop on different lines due to application of certain approaches by state. Here I will be making a comparison of five Muslim countries namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Under this comparison I would try to illustrate briefly that how different contexts actually shape and direct the overall approach, methodology and pedagogical methods of these institutions. And I will try Here I will make comparison of four major religious education institutions working in four different Muslim countries namely

Turkey: The Imam-Hatip Model

History and Overview

Religious education in Turkey applies a model curriculum and structure especially in terms of instilling skills such as critical thinking and diversity, with many useful lessons for Pakistan's Madrasahs to consider. The current Imam-Hatip Madrasah curriculum includes informative lessons on world religions and emphasis on critical thinking, communication, and problem solving. Adoption

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of certain aspects of the Turkish model could strongly help to enhance religious education in Pakistan, but caution and sensitivity would need to be taken in adapting elements of the Turkish model to Pakistan's unique context.

Imam-Hatip education system was created in the backdrop of sweeping secularism and Westernization that characterized the new Turkish Republic beginning in the early 1920s, which was a direct result of the conflict between Islam and secularism that has been a dominant part of Turkish history over the last half century. In 1923, the new Turkish Republic was established as a modern secular state after the war of liberation from Western occupation.[3] Over the course of the next year, Madrasahs throughout Turkey began to follow the system of the Ministry of Education (T-MOE), while a small number of vocational schools, known as Imam-Hatip (Imams and Preachers) schools, would remain to train religious clergy. The Caliphate was abolished in the same year, and in 1928, the language establishing Islam as the national religion of Turkey was removed from the constitution and the Turkish language script was romanized from the original Arabic-Persian.[4] In 1937 secularism was formally codified in the constitution.[5] Religious courses in mainstream public education were banned in 1940, then reintroduced in 1949 (with a parental consent requirement),[6] and were made compulsory by the 1982 constitution.[7] Religious

[3] Talip Kucukcan. "Secularization of the State and Secular Nationalism: Foundations of Civil Religion in Turkey," (GW International Law Review, Vol. 41, 2010) <http://docs.law.gwu.edu/stdg/gwilr/PDFs/41-4/JLE413.pdf>

[4] Gardom, Judith. "Religion in Contemporary Society: Turkey," (Farmington Trust: Jun 2010)

[5] Ozsunay, Ergun. "The Permissible Scope of Legal Limitations on the Freedom of Religion or Belief in Turkey," Emory International Law Review, Vol. 19. 2005 p. 1089. <http://www.law.emory.edu/ fileadmin/journals/eilr/19/19.2/Ozsunay.pdf>

[6] "Sanctifying the State," p. 8

[7] Kucukcan, Talip. "Sacralization of the State and Secular Nationalism: Foundations of Civil Religion in Turkey," *GW International Law* Review, Vol 41, 2010 p. 978

lessons are now taught for two hours a week from grade four to eight, and for one hour a week, they are taught in all public high schools.[8]

The Turkish Imam-Hatip model is based on strong government oversight with the inclusion of secular content in the academic curriculum. The Imam-Hatip schools have been under secular government control since 1924, and religious education currently comprises only 40% of the curriculum. In contrast, the Government has very little influence over what is taught in registered Madrasahs and absolutely none in those that do not register. There are other issues as well. For example while in Turkey the Imam-Hatip system matured gradually under the influence of a secular government, in Pakistan there was an exponential growth of Madrasahs during last 50 years. In 1957 there were only 244 Madrasahs in the country, while now in 2017 there are around 25,000 Madrasahs in Pakistan,

The Turkish Ministry of Education has offered the Imam-Hatip School as an educational model for Madrasahs in South Asia and throughout the world. While both Pakistan[9] and Afghanistan[10] have expressed interests in adopting the Turkish model, it is important to note that presently the capacity of Madrasahs in Pakistan is limited to implement or adopt Imam Hatip school model. In addition, any shift in the Pakistani Madrasah curriculum towards the inclusion of secular education would thus require significant outside assistance to implement a massive teacher training program.

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[8] UNESCO, "World Data on Education 2010/11." (VII Ed., Apr 2012) <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Turkey.pdf>

[9] Writer, Staff. "Ankara to open religious school in Pakistani City," Hurriyet Daily News (Apr 4, 2012) <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/ankara-to-open-religious-school-in--pakistani-city.aspx>

[10] Sobecki,Nicole."Muslim world turns to Turkish model of education," Global Post (Aug 12, 2010) <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/education/100809/turkey-islamic-schools-education>

The educational strategy and curriculum of Turkish Ministry of Education for the Imam-Hatip model differs dramatically from that of most Pakistani Madrasahs today. The core religious curriculum of Imam-Hatip appears to be intact, with additional concepts such as critical thinking and communication given equal weight. Modern and "secular" subjects such as Math, Physical Sciences, and literature have also been well represented in the curriculum. According to the official religious curriculum, the students are given a well-structured and intensive Islamic education in the Imam-Hatip high schools. The study of the Quran is at the core of all four years, and focuses extensively on recitation, memorization, and interpretation. Moreover, Islam and its ideologies are explored in its historical, cultural, and sociological context.

The disciplines that the Turkish students learn can have a particular application in the Pakistani environment, such as the perception of change and continuity, empathy, social participation, research, and information technology skills.

The tables below provide an overview of the religious education component of the Imam-Hatip education system.

Key Religious Courses of the Imam-Hatip Curriculum (Grades 9 – 11)		
9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade
Quran Study		
Intro. to Reading the Quran	Quran Study (Tejvid)	Quran Study
Introduction to Tejvid (Unification of God)	Memorization and Meaning	Memorization and Meaning
Prayers and their Meanings	……...	……...
Memorization and Meaning	……...	……...

Basic Religion	Life of the Prophet	Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)
Concept of Islam and Religion	Context of the Prophet	Concept of Fiqh
Basis of Faith in Islam	Life Prior to Prophethood	Birth and Growth
Islamic Worship	The Mecca Period	Resources and Regulations
Revelation and Quran	The Medina Period	Ijtihad
Prophethood and the Final Prophet	The Prophet as a Model	Cleaning and Prayer
Islam and Ethics	……...	Fasting and Zakat
Islam Life and Science	……...	……...
……...	……...	Hadith
……...	……...	Concept of Hadith
……...	……...	Hadith History
……...	……...	Types of Hadith
……...	……...	Analysis and Criticism
……...	……...	The Hadith and Sunnah

The Imam-Hatip model also incorporates study of other religions in its curriculum. The “Revealed Religions” (meaning the Jewish and Christian faiths) are distinguished from East Asian, Tribal, and Indian religions in the Imam-Hatip curriculum, but comparative religious education appears to be

extensive and comprehensive as it covers the foundation, history, and beliefs of the world's major religions. The curriculum introduces students to other religions in the ninth grade and expands in the senior year to broader concepts such as teaching pluralism, secularism, religious freedom, and interreligious dialogue.

Key Religious Courses of the Imam-Hatip Curriculum (Grade 12)	
Quran Study	History of Islam
Quran Study	Introduction
Memorization and Meaning	Emergence of Islam
……...	Four Caliphs Era
Tafsir (Interpretation of the Quran)	The Dynasties
History of the Quran	Abbasids
Concept of Tafsir	Islam and the Turks
History of Tafsir	Islamic Civilization
Quranic Traditions	Modern Islamic World
Tafsir in Practice	……...
……...	Speech and Vocational Religious Practice
Kalam (Dialectics)	Religious Services and Communications
Kalam Concept and Problems	The Sermon
Islamic Thought	Preaching
Faith, Knowledge and Performance	Funerals
Existence of Tavhid	Ceremonial Prayers
Angels	Religious Nasheed
Prophethood and Holy Books	……...

Maad (Afterlife)	Comparative Religious History
Human and Qadar	Introduction
Kalam Today	Essence of Religions
Religion and Conscience Freedom	Revelation-Based Religions
……...	Indian and East Asian Religions
……...	Religious Beliefs
……...	Religious Worship and Places
……...	Religious Ethics
……...	Religious Pluralism, Dialogue and Missionary

The Imam-Hatip curriculum features a comprehensive and dynamic course structure that is designed to transmit a complete Islamic education despite of a reduced overall focus. The focus of the Turkish curriculum is to build the student's foundation in Islam for a lifelong spiritual journey. Concern about pulling focus away from the core religious curriculum is a major obstacle to the deeper integration of "secular" and modern subjects in the Pakistani Madrasahs. If the efficiency and the structure of the Imam-Hatip curriculum could be replicated in Pakistan, even with the necessary variations in the subject matter, it could relieve concerns that more science would mean less Islam.

Challenges of the Curriculum for Application in Pakistan

There are other challenges as well for adoption of Imam-Hatip model for Pakistan it Madrasah. Pakistan. For example, the concept of secularism, which is taught in Turkey as a philosophy compatible with Islam, is rejected by many religious conservatives in Pakistan. Advocates may be forced to grapple with the stigma of Westernization associated with Turkey, which despite its overwhelming Muslim population, is considered by some to be well-removed from the traditional Islamic society.

As Imtiaz Gul, the Executive Director of the Centre for Research and Security Studies in Pakistan, opined in an April 2012 editorial, the pursuit of

reforms along the lines of the Turkish model would be difficult due to this extreme difference in religio-political climate:

> "It is, of course, debatable as to whether Pakistan can follow what Ataturk did over 90 years ago with brute power. The extent to which Ataturk went to remove references of religion from every segment of the society was breathtaking and is probably not possible today in an era of fast-moving transnational's Islamist ideologies…."[11]

Additionally, the 60% focus on "secular" courses in the Imam-Hatip curriculum as compared with only 40% religious courses is likely to provoke backlash in Pakistan by those who see the Madrasahs as the protectors of Islamic identity and the critical purveyors of Islamic education to the next generation of religious leaders. The perception of secularization must be thus managed for the Pakistani Madrasah community to be comfortable with the idea of drawing lessons from the Turkish model for inclusion of non-religious courses into the curriculum and of possible assistance from the Turkish government in matters of education reform.

In addition, the strong focus on religious tolerance in the Turkish model, if incorporated in a manner sensitive to the Pakistani context, could make a valuable contribution to enhancing both a) the knowledge of Madrasah students and their ability to succeed in a diverse society and b) the ability of these students to contribute to inter-sectarian and inter-religious co-existence in Pakistan. Even if incorporated on a scaled-back level, the inclusion of comparative religious education could strongly enrich the Pakistani Madrasah curriculum.

The Turkish model also seems to place great emphasis on critical thinking and research; a characteristic adopted by a religious community that is

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[11] Gul, Imtiaz. "Can we emulate Turkey?" The Express Tribune (Apr 9, 2012) <http://tribune.com.pk/story/362051/can-we-emulate-turkey/>

comfortable with the security of its role in the society. Islam in Turkey has been threatened to some extent by secularism, but almost a century after sweeping secular reforms, it is still found to be a deeply Islamic country. As Gul writes:

> "…outside modern Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul, Turkey, like Pakistan, is a religious country which is strictly orthodox Hanafi Sunni. Not every Turk drinks but most people pray and fast. They are, at the same time, very comfortable with the secular model of governance."[12]

The Turkish government places considerable emphasis on the rearing of constructive, creative, and productive individuals with physical, mental, moral, spiritual and emotional balance. Turkish education in general thus focuses on developing sound personalities of students with the ability to think freely and scientifically, hence they develop an awareness of human rights, civic duties, and responsibilities to one's society. Pakistani Madrasah students could also benefit greatly from incorporating such themes into their own curriculum, a greater emphasis on the development of such qualities, in such a way that enhances rather than decreases their Islamic learning.

It is also mandatory for Imam Hatip teachers to have a degree in Islamic Education in addition to the specialized content training in their specific subject areas, and are required to undergo continuous education training courses in order to maintain their teaching certification. Divinity Schools train teachers to teach in the Imam Hatip schools and every trainee ought to study 4-5 years in order to qualify as a teacher. The Pakistani delegates have highlighted the need for a formal teacher-training system for their own teachers.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of the Turkish model that would add value to religious education in Pakistan, but the implementation of insights gained from the

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[12]Ibid.,

Turkish model would have to be done with great sensitivity in the context of Pakistan's unique religious and social environment. In particular, careful outreach to other stakeholders within the Madrasah community or related to the Madrasah education system would need to be done to create buy-in for such enhancements.

Egypt: Al-Azhar Institutes

History and Overview

Private Islamic education in Egypt is dominated by a network of primary and secondary schools (called Institutes) affiliated with the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. First established in 972 AD by the Fatimid Dynasty, Al-Azhar University is among the oldest and most respected institutes of higher learning in the world. The university was entirely devoted to religious education until 1961,[13] when Gamal Abdel Nasser implemented new policies that forced Al-Azhar to expand from the original three departments (Arabic, Theology, and Shariah) to include secular disciplines such as engineering and medicine.[14] Under the new 1961 laws, the following steps were taken:[15]

1. Al-Azhar was divided into largely autonomous departments including: the Supreme Council, the Research Academy, the Muslim Culture and Missions Department, and Al-Azhar University.
2. The Supreme Council became the chief administrative body, with council members appointed by the government.[16]

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[13] Brown, Nathan J. "Post-Revolutionary Al-Azhar," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Sep. 2011 <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/al_azhar.pdf>

[14] Moustafa, Tamir, "The State and Religious Institutions in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (Vol. 32: 2000) p. 3-22

[15] Crecelius, Daniel. "Al-Azhar in the Revolution," *Middle East Journal* (1966: 31-49), p. 38-40.

[16] Ibid., p. 45

3. New departments were added including: Business Administration, Engineering and Crafts, and Agriculture and Medicine.[17]

4. Students in the primary and secondary schools were trained in industry, commercial, and agricultural studies to equalize their education with the secular government system.[18]

Over the subsequent decades, Al-Azhar institute evolved to become a modern university and remains as one of Egypt's most notable institutions. The curriculum and educational policy of the 8,000 Al-Azhar Institutes operating in Egypt is developed and overseen by the Supreme Council of Al-Azhar, with limited government input. In a June 2003 publication from USAID on education in the Muslim world, the Al-Azhar education system was found to be equivalent in every way to the Egyptian public school system:

> Egypt's Al-Azhar education system provides students with a secular education that is comparable to the education provided in public schools, and their preparation for employment is similar to that of students who go through the public school system.[19]

Al-Azhar University's role in assessing, monitoring, and regulating the performance and teachings of the religious Institutes, combined with its close cooperative relationship with the government and the legitimacy of its religious leadership is what gives such value to religious education and its practices in Egypt.

Academics and Curriculum

Al-Azhar education is defined, according to Dr. Ustad Munib Talib, an Al-Azhar instructor and member of the syllabus committee, by its moderate ideology. The goal of Islamic education at Al-Azhar, as he explained in, is not only to produce Imams, but also to produce engineers and doctors—Muslim

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[17] Ibid., p. 48

[18] Ibid., p. 47

[19] United States Agency for International Development-USAID, "Strengthening Education in the Muslim World," June 2003, p.11.

engineers and Muslim doctors.

The curriculum comprises 40% "secular" subjects and 60% religious subjects. The course of study at the Al-Azhar Institutes is divided into four years of elementary study and a subsequent five years of secondary study, from which students are then qualified to move on and join one of the three colleges of Al-Azhar University: the College of Arabic Language (liberal arts), the College of Islamic Law (training in Muslim law), and the College of the Fundamentals of Religion (theology). The religious Institutes themselves fall under two categories:

- Al Maahid al Nizamiyyah, which are an integral part of the Al-Azhar system, and
- Al Maahid al Hurra, which are affiliated with Al-Azhar.

The religious instruction is intended to complement the secular education system set by the Ministry of Education. At the primary and secondary level, Dr. Talib describes a system of education where the students learn the Holy Quran by heart and are engaged in modern sciences as well. Religious courses become more comprehensive and focused in higher grades, with courses like Jurisprudence, Commentary, and Tradition and Theology taught to secondary students in addition to secular subjects.

The Three Streams of Al-Azhar Education in Higher Grades:[20]		
Arabic Language	Islamic Law	Religious Fundamentals (Emphasis on Polemics and Debating)
Grammar	Quran Commentary	Theology

[20] Arnon, Groiss, "Jews, Christians, War And Peace In Egyptian School Textbooks," Rep. Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, New York: AJC, 2004.

Web. < http://www.impact-se.org/research/egypt/index.html>, p. 18-9.

Rhetoric	Prophetic Sayings	Logic
Literature	Islamic Jurisprudence (various branches)	Philosophy
History	Arabic Literature	Morals
Quran Commentary	Logic	Quran Commentary
Prophetic Sayings	Rhetoric	Prophetic Sayings
Composition	……...	Arabic Literature
……...	……...	Islamic History
……...	……...	Psychology
……...	……...	Rhetoric

Challenges of the Curriculum for Application in Pakistan

At present Pakistan does not have any institutional equivalence of Al-Azhar University to serve as a trusted, credible, and legitimate overarching regulatory body administering religious instruction in the country. So in this context it would be a challenge to implement a system of educational standards in Pakistan's Madrasahs along the lines of the Al-Azhar model.

In addition, while the Al-Azhar model teaches students to understand and accept various different Islamic schools of thought with regard to subjects such as Jurisprudence has likely contributed positively to religious tolerance and inter-sectarian coexistence in Egypt. However, to convince current Madrasah system to allow interpretations of other sects in the syllabus would be a

challenge in Pakistan because Madrasahs system in Pakistan is based on strict seatrains lines.

Learning Points for Pakistan

The Al-Azhar curriculum's 60% emphasis is on religious courses, while still integrating high standards of 'secular' education in the other 40%, could be made acceptable to the Pakistani Madrasah community than the Imam-Hatip's majority emphasis on secular courses. Over the past few decades, Al-Azhar has been skillfully walking the fine line between maintaining its position of authority as guardian of authority on traditional religious education in Egypt while simultaneously embracing and incorporating elements of modernity in its course structures. The integration of rigorous training in Islamic studies with training students in technology, modern information, and other areas designed to equip them to face the challenges of contemporary society could be a useful model for Pakistani Madrasah system.

Al-Azhar also provides a model of operational independence from government control and interference while at the same time serving as a trusted and legitimate regulatory body for religious academic institutions. Al-Azhar is striving to solidify its status as the reference in Egypt on all matters relating to Islam, its sciences, heritages, and ijtihad (modern reinterpretation) in the fields of jurisprudence and modern knowledge.[21] Al-Azhar system also provides a model for teacher training. Al-Azhar teachers are required to have college degrees in their specialized fields, and are also instructed in areas such as the basic principles of psychology and the psychological makeup of children and adolescents, cultural training, and the use of modern technology.

Finally, a remarkable characteristic of the Al-Azhar curriculum is the institution's dedication to keeping up with the rapid evolutionary pace of international standards of education. Al-Azhar takes special care in considering the purpose, process, and practical efficacy of change that seems inevitable. For this reason, religious studies in the Al-Azhar curriculum in particular are

[21] Islamopedia Online, "Islam and the Education System,"

constantly being revised and updated. Pakistan's Madrasahs could also benefit from a formal process for continuous evaluation and enhancement of their curriculums and educational system.

Conclusion

Al-Azhar Institutes adapt to continuous changing circumstances and provide a modern education which prepares their students to succeed in the modern world, while simultaneously strengthening and honoring their Muslim identity. It was observed that the ability of the Al-Azhar schools to provide both quality religious and secular education seems to be producing a well-rounded next generation of students who are better equipped to deal with modern-day challenges while at the same time remaining pious Muslims. There are many potential lessons from the Al-Azhar model which could benefit the Pakistani system if addressed with sensitivity to the unique Pakistani context, including development of a stronger and more centralized governing body with the meaningful consultation and cooperation from Pakistani Madrasah system.

Observations on State-School Relationships in the Turkish and Egyptian Models

The relationship of the religious schools to the state in Turkey and Egypt is another important aspect since both systems differ markedly from the current relationship in of Madrasah and government in Pakistan. While Pakistani Madrasahs have long been private institutions, in Egypt and Turkey, the government plays a central role in developing the model for the religious schools, while the religious leaders and their communities provide the vision for the religious education and its continued enhancement. In both countries, private citizens raise the funds and build the religious schools and then hand them over to the state to administer and maintain, ensuring uniform standards of quality, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

The ability of the Turkish and Egyptian governments to effectively administer religious schools (through the Imam Hatip system and university divinity school affiliations in Turkey and the Al-Azhar system in Egypt) is a result of genuine partnerships of trust that have been developed with the

religious leadership and communities, and of these states' ability to deliver educational reforms consistently and effectively. Both the Turkish and the Egyptian systems thus provide remarkable examples of vibrant, effective public-private partnerships for the rest of the Muslim world. The relationships of trust and confidence between the religious leadership and the governments are what have enabled this significant level of cooperation. Because these relationships of trust and cooperation exist, the governments' involvement in religious education is contributing toward improving the educational quality on one hand and on the other in providing effective Islamic education system.

Indonesia: Pesantren

History and Overview

The Madrasahs (day schools) and Pesantren (boarding schools more akin to many Pakistani Madrasahs) of Indonesia exhibit a number of curricular trends that could potentially serve Pakistani Madrasah system. The Pesantren originally appeared in Indonesia in the aftermath of colonialism and the Suharto dictatorship, as the Javanese population sought to develop an indigenous network of Islamic scholars to "advance and support democratic processes, civil society, pluralism, gender justice, and human rights within the framework of traditional Islamic scholarship and teaching."[22]

Initially, the Islamic schools found their purpose in filling the gap left by the government, which was simply unable, both fiscally and logistically, to cater all the children's educational needs, particularly in the light of what were deemed more pressing concerns. The Pesantren were also an ideal option for parents seeking to provide their children with a sound knowledge of secular subjects while simultaneously catering to their religious and spiritual growth at a relatively low cost. The pesantren's popularity would continue even after the Indonesian government improved the quality and accessibility of secular, state-

[22] Pohl, Florian, "Islamic Education and the Public Sphere: Today's Pesantren in Indonesia," New York, N.Y.: Waxmann Verlag, 2009, p. 83.

sponsored education, with their numbers reaching over 17,000 schools today.[23] Indonesia has been remarkable for the lack of opposition in most Islamic schools to the integration of secular education in their curriculum.[24] Over the course of the 20th century, Pesantren expanded their curriculum in part based on the needs of their students and in part based on government regulations. For example, curricular includes Mathematics, History, and English which can be seen in some Pesantren as early as the 1920s[25] as well as Dutch (the colonial language) and Geography in the 1930s.[26]

In 1975, the government issued a memorandum whereby Islamic schools that implemented a curriculum devoting at least 70% of the school week to secular education would receive a modest stipend from the government, and graduates would be eligible for college admission.[27] While the shift towards a more secular education was not universal, the new access to higher education for graduates was a sufficient incentive for the majority and ultimately led to a sharp increase in Islamic education in the decades to follow.[28] By the 1990s, the focus of Pesantren education shifted away from a pure Islamic education towards a focus on the understanding of Islam within the context of a democratic civil society. Pesantren began to use Islamic texts to advocate nonviolence, civility, justice, and pluralism.[29]

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[23] Hashim, Rosnani; Rufai, Saheed Ahmad; and Mohd Nor, Mohd Roslan, "Traditional Islamic Education in Asia and Africa: A Comparative Studiy of Malaysia's Pondok, Indonesia's Pesantren and Nigeria's Traditional Madrasah," *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization.* Vol. 1, No. 2. (2001), p.96.

[24] Robert W. Hefner, "Schools, Social Movements & Democracy in Indonesia," in Making Modern Muslims, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), p. 57.

[25] Jaddon, Park, and Niyozov, Sarfaroz, "Madrasah Education in South Asia and Southeast Asia: Current Issues and Debates," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 28 (4) 2008, p. 340-346

[26] Azra (2006) p. 185.

[27] Hefner (2009) p. 65.

[28] Ibid., p. 69.

[29] Pohl (2006) p. 402.

Over time, the relationship between the Pesantren and the government developed into one of cooperation, with the state trying to reconcile the two educational systems by:

- Accepting the standards of the Madrasahs and equating them with the level of the public schools,
- Entitling Madrasah students to admission into secular public schools at a level equivalent to the one attained, and
- Officially recognizing the private Madrasah certificate and equating it to the state school certificate.[30]

Academics and Curriculum

In its efforts to modernize, Islamic education in Indonesia over the past few decades has undergone many reforms which have been characterized by "the adoption of a more western education system, the increasing concern on natural as well as human sciences, a greater penetration of Western culture, and an attempt toward eliminating the dualism between modern education and religious education."[31] In 2003, a law was passed for officially recognizing pesantren as part of the national education system. Today, it is even common for pesantren to open up government-curricula schools alongside their Islamic facilities or re-structure their schedules such that students can attend general schools during normal hours and pesantren before or after that time.[32] The purpose of this is to better equip Pesantren students to pursue higher education within the secular educational institutions of the Islamic academic world upon graduation.[33]

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[30] Hashim, Noraini and Langgulung, Hasan. "Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia," Bulletin of Education and Research. Vol. 30, No. 1 (June 2008). Malaysia: INSTED International Islamic University, p. 1-19

[31] Ibid.

[32] Pohl (2006) p. 400.

[33] Lukens-Bull (2001) p. 354.

The Pesantren curriculum is comprised of four components, which are namely as following:

- Traditional religious education
- Government-recognized secular curricula;
- Vocational skills training; and
- Character development.[34]

While different Pesantren place more focus on certain aspects of this education over others, almost all Pesantren agree on the instrumentality of character development as a unique and crucial component to a well-rounded education. Furthermore, while the initial outcome of Pesantren education was to form future Kyai (religious teachers), in embracing modernization many of the Pesantren now merely seek to inculcate into the individuals the solid religious values and principles that they may practice in secular careers and in society.

Challenges of the Curriculum for Application in Pakistan

Though in general there is a potential for replicating the Pesantren model in Pakistani Madrasah system, however the highly individual nature of this system presents some difficulties. For instance, allegations of radicalization and intolerance in certain pesantren[35] are difficult to confirm or reject, specifically because of the individuality of each Pesantren and the variations in teachings depending on the personality and beliefs of each Kyai. Similarly, the lack of uniform educational standards and regulation also makes the evaluation and educational assessment difficult.

Another challenge is related to the equation of Pesantren education certificates to the official government educational level. Despite government decisions to reconcile and accommodate the two educational systems, given the

[34] Lukens-Bull, Ronald, "A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java," New York: Palgrave McMillian, 2005, p. 47-70.

[35] There have been claims that the suspects apprehended for the 2002 Bali bombing had received a Pesantren education.

individuality and variety among the Pesantren, the ease of incorporation of Pesantren students into government-run higher education institutions may vary from case to case. The lack of uniform educational standards for Madrasahs has created similar difficulties for Pakistani Madrasah students who wish to enter institutions of higher education.

Learning Points for Pakistan

The Pesantren model has been heralded for incorporating "the teaching of democratic values and practices, endorsing civil society and community development, and inculcating cultural and religious diversity and tolerance in students" by means of its classroom and out-of-classroom practices.[36] Florian Pohl conducted a specific study of a selection of Pesantren and published a number of observations regarding the specific practices and anecdotal experiences that promote a multi-cultural education. He concluded that the model's success in doing so lay, among a number of factors, in: (1) the incorporation of parts of the government's secular curriculum into its own without undermining the religious component of its education, and (2) the boarding school component of the institutions which allows for a communal experience and the development of sounder friendships and a better understanding of the other, particularly students of different faiths and traditions.[37]

While students of a Pakistani Madrasah typically belong to the same faith and sect, successful cultivation of the principles of coexistence, cooperation, and communal participation fundamental to successful boarding school life could be applied to relations with those of other faiths and sects, both through incorporation into classroom instruction and in students' extra-curricular activities. The strong emphasis on character development typical of many

[36] Raihani. "Report on Multicultural Education in Pesantren," *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. Vol. 42, No. 4. (July 2012), p. 585-605.

[37] Pohl, 2009, p. xx.

Pesantren could also benefit Pakistani Madrasah students if incorporated in a culturally-appropriate manner.

The Pesantren's collaboration with the Indonesian government while simultaneously maintaining academic and financial independence from its control also provides a model of a delicate balance between accommodation to modernization efforts and preservation and incorporation of religious education into the public and political sphere, which may inspire greater openness in Madrasah stakeholders in light of the historical independence of Pakistani Madrasahs from the Government control.

Conclusion

In developing a model for best practices in Pakistani religious education, the balance struck between modernity and tradition in Indonesian Pesantren, as well as the incorporation of both secular and religious subjects and mechanisms for addressing issues of cultural diversity, religious pluralism, and democracy in their curriculums, is worth considering, as is the case in evolving collaboration between the government and the Pesantren in Indonesia.

Saudi Arabia: Tatweer Reform and Science Education

History and Overview

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has played a profound role in the development of the Pakistani Madrasah system in terms of both funding and ideology (though some scholars see it with suspicion due to its focus on spreading a particular religious ideology) However, the reputation of the Kingdom could work as a leverage to foster a greater integration of modern sciences in the Pakistani curriculum. In Saudi Arabia, all but a few international academies should be considered 'Madrasahs' as the curriculum is dominated by four core religious subjects and several others, such as literature and history, which are presented exclusively through the prism of Islam. The overwhelming focus on religious subjects and outdated curriculum have been criticized as a driving factor for the country's current youth unemployment crisis.

The Kingdom is undergoing a $2.4 billion education restructure, called the Tatweer Reform, designed to increase the focus on modern pedagogy, critical thinking and physical science which will address many of the same problematic areas currently found in the Pakistani Madrasah curriculum. As Saudi Arabia moves away from rote memorization and a curriculum dominated in every respect by Salafist Islam, lessons drawn from its own reform efforts could be potentially applied to Pakistani Madrasahs, especially to those Madrasahs which are directly under Saudi influence.

Academics and Curriculum

Islam is at the heart of the Saudi education system. As religion plays so prominent a role in Saudi Arabian society, students are educated on the various aspects of the Islamic faith in depth. Islamic studies are taught through all levels of education, including the university level. Approximately 30% of each week is dedicated to religious subjects in elementary school, 24% percent in intermediate school, and in secondary school 14% for those in the technical and natural science branch and 35% for those in the Shari'a and Arabic branch.[38] This statistic is perhaps misleading as the social sciences are extremely religio-centric.

The religious subjects that are studied in all schools under the Saudi Ministry of Education are: hadith (sayings and traditions of the prophet Muhammad), fiqh (Islamic law and jurisprudence), tawhid (the unification of God), and tafsir (interpretation and exegesis of select surahs or verses of the Quran).

In the Saudi education system, there are also special religious subjects that students learn about in schools for the memorization of the Quran. These schools use special religious textbooks that are only used at Quran memorization schools. Such schools focus on tajvid (rules for recitation of the Quran), which is a key focus in elementary school and middle school. In addition, the tafsir

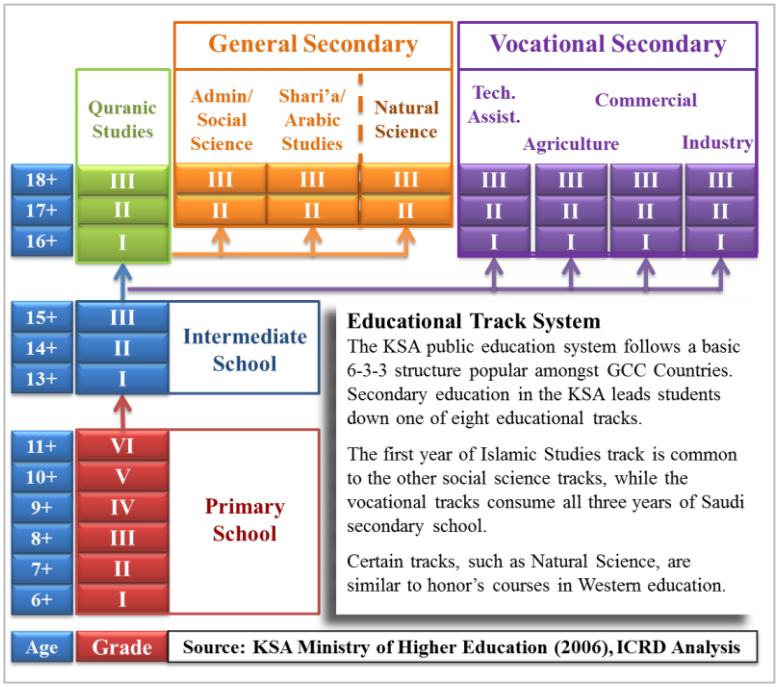
[38] Prokop, Michaela. Saudi Arabia: "The Politics of Education," Royal institute of International Affairs. January 2003, Vol. 79, p. 77-89.

curriculum in Quran memorization schools is different from that of “regular” Saudi schools. Once students from Quran memorization schools reach high school, they begin taking new subjects which include: Fundamentals of Fiqh (Usool Fiqh), Science of the Quran (Uloom Quran), Methods of Recitation (Qira’at), and Inheritance Studies (Fara’id).

The Saudi education system follows a 6-3-3 (six levels of primary education, three levels of intermediate education, and three levels of high school) education system. Upon graduating ninth grade, Saudi students, depending on aptitude, can select one of eight majors as the chart below demonstrates.

Conclusion

As host to the holiest sites of Islam, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys a privileged status in the Muslim world. As a conservative Islamic Kingdom governed by strict adherence to Shari’a law, Saudi Arabia wields considerable influence in Pakistan. The basic concept of the Tatweer program in Saudi Arabia would likely be rejected as an attempt to ‘Westernize’ the Pakistani Madrasah system if promoted by the American or European governments, but as a Saudi initiative there is cause to believe it could be embraced. The ongoing research and development under the Tatweer program is designed to grapple with the same issues of ineffective pedagogy and poor integration of secular education that burden the Madrasah system today.



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long been considered an inattentive actor in education; the shortcomings of its own curriculum have been well-documented along with its impact on the Pakistani Madrasah system. As Saudi Arabia applies much-needed, next-generation solutions to its own education system, Madrasah leaders should be engaged to observe the process to adapt curricular reforms from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan.

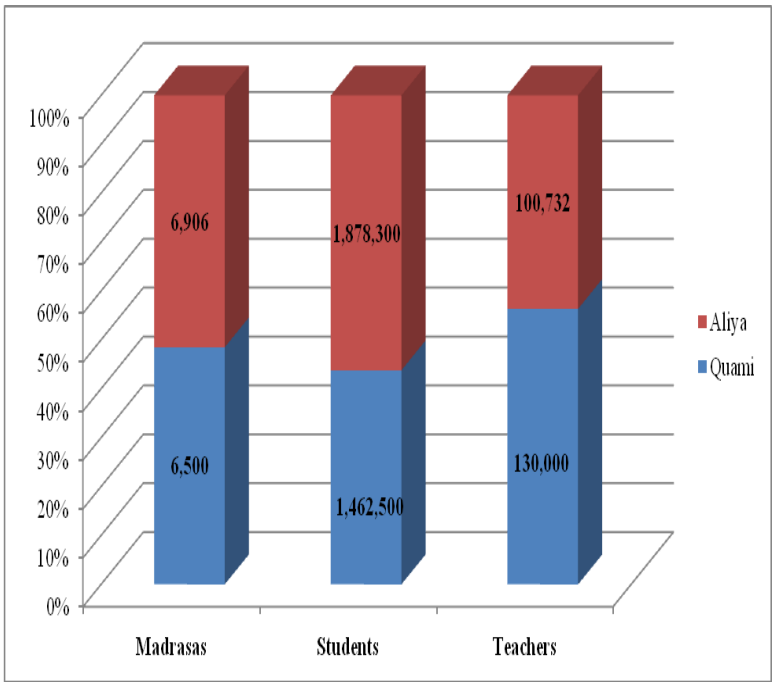
Bangladesh: Competing Streams

History and Overview

The religious education model in Bangladesh is unique among its counterparts in South Asia, despite having started off from the same ideological foundation as the Pakistani and Indian models with the establishment of the Darul Ulum Deoband (Deoband Madrasah) in India in 1867.

Unlike Pakistan, where religious education is relegated to the private sector, Madrasahs in Bangladesh are divided into two types: the private Qaumi Madrasahs and the government-controlled Aliya Madrasahs. From these two streams of Islamic education, predictable distinctions emerge. The Aliya

Madrasahs offer a more balanced education with religious studies accounting for less than half of the curricular focus, while Qaumi Madrasahs began some integration of general education in 1978, but still maintain an overwhelming focus on religious studies. According to a 2005 estimate there are slightly more Aliya Madrasahs than Qaumi Madrasahs in Bangladesh.



The Qaumi Madrasahs adhere predominantly to the Deobandi tradition and receive no financial support from the government. They are supported by zakat (religious endowments) and sadaqah (charitable donations). The degrees issued by these schools are not recognized by the government, and students therefore tend to pursue careers in religious establishments and private businesses rather than the government or public sector. The Qaumi Madrasahs are characterized by their operational autonomy in matters of finances and content. Maintaining this (particularly financial) autonomy has allowed them to wield independent religio-political power and resist efforts by government authorities to introduce reforms and gear the traditional Islamic educational system toward a more modern, secular alternative. In fact, the Qaumi Madrasahs have adhered nearly entirely to the curriculum, teaching method, and examination of the Darul Ulum Deoband, as it was developed in 1867.

However, on the other hand the Aliya system is very distinct—the curriculum and syllabi of these schools is prescribed and controlled by the government-appointed Bangladesh Madrasahs Education Board, which also conducts standardized examinations.[39] The government pays 80% of teacher and administration salaries. Graduates of Aliya Madrasahs tend to further their education and integrate into secular higher education colleges and universities.[40]

A third sub-set of Madrasahs in Bangladesh are the maktabs, or elementary-level Madrasahs, often perceived as precursor institutions from which many students then join the Qaumi or Aliya Madrasahs. The maktabs are of significant use in areas where government primary schools are unavailable.

Academics and Curriculum

The Aliya system in and of itself is an excellent example of traditional-modern educational combination. The curriculum, which goes all the way to the equivalent of a graduate degree, combines all the required modern subjects (including English, Bangla, sciences, social studies, maths, geography, and history) with a revised version of the Dars-e-Nizami, the traditional religious curriculum prevalent in most South Asian Madrasahs. While the curriculum of the Aliya system appears to be a sound integration of Islamic studies with modern science, it should be noted that the actual educational experience differs in each school. Few Aliya Madrasahs offer the entire breadth of the prescribed curriculum.

Qaumi education is predictably much more religiously focused. The Qaumi curriculum differs in its literal adoption of the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, but it has independently undertaken a series of steps towards modernization over the past thirty years. Among the most notable internal changes to the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum:

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[39] However, only the higher and secondary school certificates may be equated with the secular government certificates.

[40] Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. "Modernization of Madrasah Education in Bangladesh: A Strategy Paper," Dhaka. 2011, p. XX.

- The language of instruction was changed from Urdu to Bangla in an effort to indigenize Islam and Islamic worship.
- Bangla and English were also made compulsory subjects—Bangla up to the secondary level, and English at the primary level.
- New subjects were added, such as politics, economics, comparative religions, and the history of Islam in the Indian subcontinent up until the creation of Bangladesh.
- Elementary education was incorporated into the system.[41]

The Qaumi Madrasahs went through a number of structural changes as well, such as:

- The bureaucratization and professionalism of admission, administrative procedures, and management practices.
- The creation of a centralized system of curriculum syllabi and exams to standardize academic performance, under the auspices of the Wafaqul Madaris and the Anjumun Itehadul Madaris.[42]

Challenges of the Curriculum for Application in Pakistan

The value placed on autonomy by the Qaumi Madrasahs in Bangladesh is a double-edged sword. While on one hand it allows for complete control over the procedures and curriculum, on the other it renders obtaining degree equivalences to the national educational curriculum problematic, and therefore poses a hindrance for students seeking government employment or higher education upon graduation.

Learning Points for Pakistan

A Pakistani model drawing on the Bangladeshi experience would thus be better served by establishing some sort of link with the national curriculum, such as

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[41] Ahmad, Mumtaz, "Madrasah Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh," in Satu P. Limaye, Mohan Malik and Robert G. Wirsing, eds., Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia (Honolulu, Hawai: Asia Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2004), p. xx.

[42] Ibid.

the one between the Aliya system and the Bangladeshi national curriculum. At the same time, Bangladesh provides model of Madrasah-led reform. The environmental and societal awareness of the Madrasahs in Bangladesh allowed these institutions to anticipate and accommodate to modernization trends, thus preserving their legitimacy and relevance as credible educational institutions across the decades. Even the Qaumi Madrasahs realized the value of this and began introducing incremental changes over the past decades.

A proposed Model curriculum for Pakistani Madrasahs

Key Principles and Rationale of Proposed Curriculum Model

In light of the above analysis of both the current Pakistani Madrasah system and various other Islamic educational models around the world, the following key principles have informed the suggested curricular enhancements in the new Madrasah curriculum model:

1. The Dars-e-Nizami and its variations currently used in most Pakistani Madrasahs have not been adapted to modern times. Most of the books taught within this curriculum are six and seven hundred years old. As a result, much of the educational material they contain has become obsolete and irrelevant in the present-day Islamic world.
2. A true Islamic education system revolves around the idea of unity, i.e. the balance between religious and worldly knowledge.[43] The psychological basis of the Islamic curriculum and its entire philosophy is founded on this all-inclusive principle that "the subject matter of religion is the entire world" and religion is "man's primary nature." Islam thus endorses a curriculum which is of both religious and secular nature. This "balanced" curriculum guarantees that learners understand and interpret their religion in light of the latest knowledge and simultaneously keep their perceptions flexible

[43] Shahid, S.M. (2002) "Islamic System of Education," Lahore: Majeed Book Depot.

enough to make room for newer possibilities to be explored. Free discussion of contemporary intellectual and scientific issues in this environment will empower students to understand and address them within the framework of Islamic educational principles. In order to make the Madrasah system meet the contemporary needs and keep pace with the modernizing trends in Pakistan,

3. The curriculum used in most Pakistani Madrasahs is not only several centuries old, but is teacher-centered rather than student-centered. Consequently, Madrasah students tend to be only passive recipients of knowledge and are discouraged from interpreting or innovating the information they receive. The primary purpose of contemporary education is to bring about behavioral change in students and equip them with the skills needed to succeed in modern society, such as critical thinking and analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. One of its major functions is to ensure the comprehensive intellectual development of students, encouraging them to adopt an active role in the learning process and to learn to practice tolerance and egalitarian values of dialogue, diversity, and democratic acceptance. Only a student-centered approach can achieve that purpose.

4. Religious education has a powerful role to play in equipping students to put into practice Islamic values of tolerance and to be both knowledgeable about and able to coexistence with people of other religions and other Muslim sects. The increasing levels of sectarian and interfaith violence in Pakistan today suggest that this role is not being fulfilled by the current Madrasah education system and curriculum.

5. The purpose of a balanced Islamic curriculum is to nurture an evenhanded and healthy generation of students who act as morally upright Muslims and citizens and guide others to do the same. A viable curriculum must thus endeavor to produce students who can maintain a healthy balance between changing realities, evolving

knowledge, and constant principles. The constantly evolving and progressing nature of our times demands that curriculum-making itself no longer be a static but a dynamic process as well. In order to remain relevant, the curriculum must constantly be altered, amended, and contemporized.

Overall Objectives of Curriculum Model

The mission of the proposed Pakistani curriculum model is to:

1. Reduce the gap between Madrasah and public school education;
2. Produce graduates with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of both Islam and the modern world;
3. Develop higher moral character and a sound capacity for critical thinking among the students; and
4. Inspire religious scholarship and leadership which reduces sectarian prejudice and promotes tolerance and coexistence both within Pakistan and globally.

Structure of Curriculum Model

Course Levels:

The table below outlines the basic grade structure of education in Pakistan:

Level	Years	Grades
Primary Level:	5 Years	1st-5th Grades
Middle Level:	3 Years	6th-8th Grades
Secondary Level:	2 Years	9th-10th Grades
Higher Secondary Level:	2 Years	11th-12th Grades
Graduation (BS):	2 Years	13th-14th Years
Masters:	2 Years	15th-16th Years

Most students enter a Madrasah the age of 12-15 years, at the first middle level

(equivalent to Grade 6) after completing their elementary education. The main levels of Madrasah education, which are included in this curriculum, are as follows:

Level	Madrasah Level	Government School Equivalent
Middle	Mutawasita Saal-e-Awal	Grade 6
	Mutawasita Saal-e-Dowm	Grade 7
	Mutawasita Saal-e-Som	Grade 8
Secondary	Sanwiyya Amma Saal-e-Awal	Grade 9
	Sanwiyya Amma Saal-e-Dowm	Grade 10
Higher Secondary	Sanwiyya Khassa Saal-e-Awal	Grade 11
	Sanwiyya Khassa Saal-e-Dowm	Grade 12

Credit Hour Breakdown:

The current length of a teaching day in a typical Pakistani Madrasah is five hours (300 minutes), not allowing for break/meal periods. Hence, in a six-day school week (where classes are not held on Fridays), 30 hours (1800 minutes) are devoted to teaching.

The new curriculum model proposed that the teaching day be amended as follows:

1. Each teaching hour/credit hour (CH) will be of 45 minutes.
2. There will be seven such credit hours per day (315 minutes) for each of the six teaching days, for a total of 1890 minutes of teaching per week.
3. Two short breaks and one long break will be given for refreshment each day.

Proposed Daily Schedule	
Class No./ Period No.	Time Allocated (Minutes)
1	45
2	45
Short Break	10
3	45
4	45
Long Break	30
5	45
6	45
Short Break	5
7	45

Courses

The following proposed curriculum model is divided into two primary components—Contemporary Subjects and Religious Subjects. The breakdown between the two components at each grade level is as follows:

Level	Component "A" Contemporary Subjects	Component "B" Religious Subjects
Middle	50%	50%
Secondary	40%	60%
Higher Secondary	40%	60%

Proposed Curriculum Model					
Years	Teaching Level	Component A (Contemporary Subjects)		Component B (Religious Subjects)	
3 Years (Equivalent to Gr. 6-8)	Middle (Mutawasita)	English	5 CH	Quran	5 CH
		Mathematics	4 CH	Seerat (Biography of Prophet) /Hadith (Sayings of Prophet)	5 CH
		General Science	4 CH	Religious Beliefs	5 CH
		Social Studies	4 CH	Linguistics	6 CH
		Urdu	4 CH		
Total CH			21 CH		21 CH
2 Years (Equivalent to Gr. 9-10)	Secondary Level	English	5 CH	Quran	4 CH
		Mathematics	4 CH	Seerat	4 CH
		Pakistan Studies	4 CH	Hadith	3 CH
				Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	3CH
		Urdu	4 CH	Religious Ethics & Coexistence	3 CH
				Islamic Civilization	3 CH

	(Sanwiyya Amma)			Linguistics	5 CH
Total CH			17 CH		25 CH
2 Years (Equivalent to Gr. 11-12)	Higher Secondary (Sanwiyya Khassa)	English	5 CH	Quran	4 CH
		Civics	3 CH	Seerat	3 CH
		Computer Science	3 CH	Hadith	3 CH
				Fiqh	3CH
		Pakistan Studies	3 CH	Linguistics	6 CH
		Urdu	3 CH	Comparative History of Abrahamic Religions/ Indian & East Asian Religions	3 CH
				Belief in Religions/ Logic	3 CH
Total CH			17 CH		25 CH

Course Objectives and Content

Contemporary Subjects-Overview:

The contemporary subjects included in the proposed curriculum model include English, Mathematics, General Science, Social Sciences, Urdu, Pakistan Studies, Civics, and Computer Science. Under this curriculum model, objectives, content, and textbooks (prescribed by the provincial textbook boards) of the curriculum developed by the Pakistani government's Ministry of Education at each level for these courses will be used for these contemporary subjects. The government curriculum for these courses is in the process of being updated by the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Wing; when it is completed,

the most updated objectives, content, and textbooks would be used by the Madrasahs under this curriculum model.

The overall objectives of including these courses in this curriculum model are to:

1. Equip Madrasah students with knowledge of contemporary subjects and the contemporary world;
2. Equip Madrasah students to more fully contribute to and succeed in modern Pakistani society, including through increasing their prospects for acceptance into institutes of higher education and their job prospects; and
3. Better integrate the Madrasah education system into the national educational system.

Conclusion

The Bangladeshi religious education system has proven itself remarkable in maintaining autonomy and relevance by adapting to the environmental shifts and progression of the society. The ability of the religious leadership to anticipate the changing needs of Bangladeshi society and incorporate modernizing elements into their curriculums and operational procedures has thus far allowed them to present a valid and quasi-equivalent alternative to secular government education, while at the same time preserving their popularity with the devout Muslim community.