Development of Bangladesh Aliyah Madrasah Education and Curriculum

Syed Mahbubul Alam Al-Hasani
University Putra, Malaysia

Abstract

Two education systems namely Islamic and secular are in operation in the modern world while Islamic education system is more or less available exclusively in the Muslim countries. Islamic education is also known as Madrasah education system, which holds a big number of students in Bangladesh. Madrasah is playing a significant role to preserve the legacy and identity of Islam and Muslims. This is the main focus of Madrasah education from the beginning of its establishment in the early period of Islam. Currently, this Madrasah is moving towards teaching of modern knowledge parallel with religious education. Government of Bangladesh recognized these Madrasahs and working to modernize its curriculum like formal education systems, with special focus on Islamic religious subjects. This article, therefore, will investigate the development of the Aliyah Madrasah education and curriculum in the present milieu through Various Commissions, Recommendations and Reports in the long history of National Education Policies from the British colonial period to the present Bangladesh. Finally, this paper will show the development of Madrasah education through the new Education Policy of 2010 in Bangladesh.


1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, Madrasah education is one of the running education systems, which is operating all over the country, recognized by the government and accepted by the public. Madrasah education is a recognized education system of the Structured Education of Bangladesh (Mehdy, 2003). In all places from rural to urban, a big number of the Muslim students are getting their formal education from Madrasah with Qur’anic values. Madrasah is providing modern education parallel with religious education (Bano, 2011). Aliyah Madrasah Education is a public accepted government recognized education system, which is providing good education from the rural to urban area of Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2010).

1.1 Bangladesh Education Systems

Three education systems are in operation in Bangladesh; Formal education, Technical- Vocational education and Madrasah education. Madrasah education has been operating since British colonization in Indian sub-continent (Ellis, 2007).

1.2 Madrasah Education Systems

Two systems of Madrasah education are running currently in Bangladesh. One is government control Aliyah Madrasah and another one is Qawmi (private body control) Madrasah. This Aliyah Madrasah has five levels: Ibtidae (Primary), Dhakhil (Secondary), which include four groups; Arts, Muzabbid, Science and Business Studies, Alim (Higher Secondary) also included four groups; Arts, Muzabbid, Science and Business Studies, Fazil (B.A Degree / Honours) and Kamil (Masters) level also consists four groups; Tafasir, Hadith, Arabic and Fiqh group (BANBEIS, 2011). Recently, the present Government of Bangladesh has introduce another new stage called Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) Examination in Bangladesh, which held before Dhakhil (Secondary) Examination (Hossain, 2016).
1.3 Establishment of Aliyah Madrasah

Aliyah Madrasah of Bangladesh is connected with the beauty and glory of the long history. This Aliyah Madrasah is the product of Calcutta Aliyah Madrasah, founded by the Bengal governor Warren Hasting of British East India Company in 1780. It was the first Muslim education institution in Bengal under the British rule which was known as ‘Muhammadan College’ of Calcutta (Ayub, 1983). This Madrasah was founded to prepare the young Muslim for the government services of British East India Company in Bengal.

2.0 VARIOUS COMMISSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FOR MADRASAH EDUCATION

To reform the national education including Madrasah education of Indian sub-continent various committees and commissions have been formed by the various ruling governments, Muslim leaders and educationists of the Bengal.

From British colonization to the present Bangladesh, education system of Madrasah has been experienced with various education policies of the different government, recommendations of reforms committee and curriculum policy makers which have left an notable remark on Bangladesh Madrasah education. However, here, this paper will explore and describe the development of Aliyah Madrasah education and curriculum through Various Commissions, Recommendation and Reports in the long history of National Education Policy of three governments; British, Pakistan and finally government of independent Bangladesh.

2.1 British Colonization (1757-1947)

From 1757 to 1947 around 200 years of British domination, many Commissions, Recommendations, Reports and education policies were formed by the various state governments, Muslim leaders and educationists for changing the educational condition of Bengal Muslim. It was firstly formed in 1826 to introduce the English language in Aliyah Madrasah curriculum by British East India government, long after the establishment of Calcutta Aliyah Madrasah (Shafiq, 2010). After a long break, a series of conferences were organized by Western and Eastern Bengal government from 1906 to 1913 under the observation of Mr. Earle to find out the issues of Muslim education in Bengal. Earle Committee of 1907organized two conferences namely; ‘Provincial Muhammadan Educational Conference’ and ‘All-India Muslim Muhammadan Educational Conference’ of Eastern Bengal and Assam at Dhaka for Madrasah education. Two things were focused by the committee to prepare students for government services, course specialization for Madrasah subjects and teaching of English in Madrasah

In 1910 a prepared scheme of those conferences was sent to the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam with a proposal of introducing balance education between Madrasah and Secular education system through the reform Madrasah education. The Government modified the scheme by adding some other subjects related with modern India of that time. After modification, the scheme was known as ‘the Reform Madrasah’(Ayub, 1983).In 1914, resolution of ‘Muhammadan Educational Conference’ was revised and justified again by a Committee named Muhammadan Education Advisory (Hornel) Committee, appointed by government of Bengal. More than 197 recommendations were made by this (Hornel) committee which focused on Muslim general education policy with some extra recommendations on technical education, moral and religious institution and Muslim girls’ education.

From 1906 to 1913, throughout these periods the Government introduced a lot of reports, recommendation and commission to improve the Muslim education of Bengal including modernization
of Madrasah education and in 1914 the government recognized the committee proposal but it was not put into practice. However, Shafiq (2010) argued that, three things were successfully done between 1906-13; one was English language development in 1907, division of Madrasah education according to old schemes and the new schemes in 1910 where English language was made compulsory instead of Arabic and Farsi.

Another committee named ‘Harley committee’ in 1915 was formed to modify the curriculum of Calcutta Madrasah. The committee was asked to revise the courses of studies in Calcutta Madrasah. So, in 1917 a Commission was formed to survey not only Calcutta Madrasah education systems alone but also the whole education system of Muslim in Bengal and to make a recommendation on it by the name of Calcutta University Commission but unfortunately they failed to propose any recommendation. Then, in 1921, another Committee named Shamsul Huda Committee was formed by the government of Bengal to find out the overall condition of Madrasah in Bengal. But could not carry out any objective of these recommendations due to conflict and ideas of the ideals and political issues as a result of Muslim education remaining as before.

After a long break, in 1931, a Committee namely the ‘Muslim Education Advisory Committee (Momin Committee)’, was formed by the Bengal government to design Muslim education according to the demand (Mehdy, 2003). In 1934 Committee reviewed the whole Muslim education system and find out some problems related to the Muslim education. Committee recommended some suggestions and adjustment to overcome for the curriculum of Reformed Madrasah System.

To identify and to solve the problems related to Madrasah education, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq Minister of Bengal formed The Madrasah Education Committee by Moula Baksh in 1938. The committee submitted Reports in 1941 with 68 recommendations for the success of old scheme and new scheme Madrasah of Bengal. Some of the remarkable suggestions were founding the Madrasah Teachers Training Institution, Islamic Learning University, giving status for Maktab and Ibtidae Madrasah and parallel moving of Madrasah education and secular education side by side. However, no action was taken by the government due to the Great War at that time.

For the revision of old and reformed scheme Madrasah syllabus a Committee was formed in 1946 by Muazzem Hossain under the chairmanship of education minister of Bengal. Committee of 1946 framed two new syllabuses for new scheme and reformed Madrasah. A Muslim University, Central Madrasah Education Board and Teachers Training Collage were also recommended by that committee (Ayub, 1983). Furthermore, according to the report of Shafiq (2010), the most important tasks of Aliyah Madrasah’s recognition is on its and education structures of 16 academic years were broken down into 5 levels; Ibtidae (Primary) level four years, Dakhil (Secondary) level four years, Alim (Higher Secondary) level two years, Fazil (Degree) level two years, and two years for Kamil (Masters / Post graduate). This was done by the committee in 1946.

In conclusion, from 1757 to 1947 many tasks were taken over by the various governments, Muslim leaders and educationists to change the educational condition of Bengal Muslim but it was almost unsuccessful due to the hostile attitudes towards the Muslim by the British government.

2.2 Pakistan Period (1947-1971)

In 1947 British left Indian sub-continent and divided it into two independent nations namely India and Pakistan. Bengal (currently Bangladesh) became the part of Pakistan with a new name; East Pakistan. After separation from India, Pakistan started to reform the national education system according to its nation demands with Islamic values and culture.
Almost immediately after the separation, the government of Islamic republic of Pakistan formed ‘East Bengal Educational System Reconstruction Committee’ under the chairmanship of Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan. This Committee submitted their reports in 1951 with a recommendation to upgrade the whole national education system and a suggestion to Integrate Madrasah system with the General Education. The establishment of the Madrasah Education Board of the East Pakistan is one of the successes of this Committee (Ayub, 1983). To Mehdy (2003), Akram Khan Committee recognized Bengali as Hindu language and decided to change it into Muslim language.

Without this, Ashraf-uddin Choudhury Committee of 1956 under the East Pakistan Government to rebuild the whole education system of East Pakistan including madrasah education was also important (Habibur, 2001). To modify the High Madrasah and the old scheme Madrasah, the Educational Reforms Commission of East Pakistan of 1957, under the chairmanship of chief Minister Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan were notable, even though no recommendations of this commission were implemented resulting in the closing down of the reform Madrasah system.

Islamic Arabic University Commission of 1963 was formed by Dr. S.M. Hossain to prepare Madrasah students through introducing science and technology education in their curriculum and reports submitted in 1964 stated that the focus was only on designing of the curriculum and syllabus for Primary and Secondary Education (Ayub, 1983). However, the S.M. Sharif Commission was abolished due to students’ objections while political revolution of the country was a barrier for Nur Khan Commission of 1969 to put into practice (Mehdy, 2003). Apart from these, Justice Hamidur Rahman Commission of 1966 to update and modernize the Madrasah (Habibur, 2001), Nur Khan Commission by M. Nur Khan in 1969 to identify the blockades of national integration in education (Ayub, 1983) and Shamsul Haque Education Commission of 1970 (Habibur, 2001) were the remarkable Commissions represented by the government.

However, during the last 24 years many Recommendations and Committees had been formed from time to time, but no intellectual officials were there to implement the activities because the so called modernist authorities controlled the administrative body. Material achievements were the main goal of that modernist people through the development of education.

According to Habibur (2001) recommendations were made and submitted to the government to resettle and modify the whole education systems including Madrasah education. But no considerable adjustment and modification were taken place without few small changes in the systems. To Azharul (2001) these recommendations, reports and policies of the various Commissions did not represent the Islamic values properly and even then, those recommendations were not put into practice properly.

2.3 From Independence 1971 to the Present (Bangladesh) Time

After liberation war of 1971, East Pakistan became an independent country named Bangladesh. After independent, the government of Bangladesh focused on reformation of education for the citizens according to the new demands of liberation (Azharul, 2001). Consequently, the first Education Commission namely Kudrat-e-Khuda Commission was formed in 1972 under Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda to bring back the national legacy and educational values of the state. The Commission demanded the change of established structure of religious education. A report of the commission was submitted on 1974 and published in 1975 (Islam and Rahman, 2008).

Regarding the Madrasah education, Kudrat-e-Khuda Commission of 1972 noticed that, the curriculum of Madrasah education is Islamic tradition approach based and no instruction was given according to economic, social, political and modern zeal. Then, the commission made Bangladesh
Islamic Education Reform Society to develop Madrasah education to align the students with the current order.

To Azharul (2001) Kudrat-e-Khuda education Commission was formed by the Indian education specialist and submitted to the Bangladesh government. The Bangladesh government was concern with secularism and socialism in the framing of the new constitutions. Consequently, Kudrat-e-Khuda education Commission gave less emphasize on Madrasah education. In addition, religious teaching has been made non-compulsory in the secondary level and focus given was on the establishment of a socialist society.

According to the report of the National Education Policy [NEP] 2010, the Commission of Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda could not put it into practice at that time because of the protection by the majority Muslim educationists, scholars and finally, the death of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

The ‘National Committee for Curriculum and Course of Study’ 1975 was formed by Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed under the chairmanship of Prof. Muhammad Shams-ul-Haq to prepare a comprehensive curriculum and syllabus for the national education in the light of Kudrat-e-Khuda education Commission, but no emphasize was put on Madrasah education.

After the death of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1977 Ziaur Rahman became the President of Bangladesh and focused on Islamic research development and Madrasah education of the country. In these regards, he formed a Committee in 1977 under the Prof. M. Abdul Bari namely Islamic University Scheme Committee to plan a scheme for the Islamic University (Ayoub, 1983). As for the Madrasah education, he employed another Education Advisory Council to reform an education policy, which recommended integrating Ibtidae Madrasah with Primary, recognize Madrasah degree with general degree, equal salary for both general and Madrasah teachers and to establish Madrasah teachers training institutions (Ahmad, 2006). His work was not limited to that, but on the 27th February 1978, the president formed Madrasah Education Ordinance to modernize the Madrasah Education through the founding of Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board.

In 1982 new president Hossain Mohammad Ershad came in power in Bangladesh and formed Education Policy and Management Commission in 1983 under Dr. Majid Khan to make Madrasah education acceptable and useful through the introduction of Arabic and English into Madrasah primary education. The Education commission of ‘Ahmed Commission of Bangladesh National Education’ of 1986 under Professor Mafiz-u-ud din Ahmed was not implemented because of fundamental issues and it was just a school turning into a Madrasah (Mhedy, 2003). The Bangladesh National Education Commission of 1987 was formed with three hundred members with 30 chapters to recommend a proper education system for all levels. The report of this commission was published in 1988. The Committee recommended to nationalize Ibtidae Madrasah, free books for Ibtidae students, focus on sciences subjects for Dakhil and Alim levels and science laboratory for practical training, library, teachers training and training institutes, vocational, agriculture and commerce education for Dakhil and Alim levels. For Fazil and Kamil level, to be put under Islamic university and must add social science subjects including political science, general studies, economics, history and culture and general science subjects (Bangladesh National Education Commission [BNEC], 1987).

According to Rahman et al (2010) during the ruling time of Ziaur Rahman and Ershad, development of Madrasah education was on the rise.

In 1991 Khaleda Zia took power from the autocrat leader Hossain Muhammad Ershad by a movement of autocrat abolition of 1990 and run the country for 5 years from 1991 to 1996. During these times no Education Commission was formed without Education Investigation Committee of 1995 by Barrister Jamir uddin Sarker but no instruction was made for Madrasah (Mhedy, 2003).
‘Composing Committee of National Education Policy’ of 1997 made some recommendations for Madrasah education beside the other formal education. They recommended Madrasah for females, Madrasah teachers training collages and institutes in the various places of the country to prepare Madrasah graduates for higher education, research, training and working inside and outside of the country through providing vocation and stipend education (Composing Committee of National Education Policy [CCNEP], 1997). On the other hand, ‘National Education Policy Development Committee’ (also called Shamsul Huqe Education Commission) of 1997 could not do anything for Madrasah education (Mehdy, 2003).

Three years later, a new ‘Education Policy’ was made for upgrading the whole education system and encouraging the people in the light of 1971 war of Bangladesh independence. According to the report of NEP 2000, recommendations of National Education Policy 2000 were made to evaluate the general subjects by Secondary Education and Vocational Education Board, religious subjects will be evaluated by Madrasah Education Board and Fazil and Kamil Level will be controlled by Islamic University and other recommendations were quite similar to the Report of National Education Policy 1997. But this Education Policy of 2000 could not be put into practice because of the changing government after 2001 National Election, as reported by NEP of 2010.

The New government of 2001 formed ‘Madrasah Education Amendment Committee 2002’ under Prof. Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, and the Committee recommended Fazil and Kamil level to be equivalent to general B.A and Masters and for establishing an affiliating university, reports from (NEP, 2003), while ‘Education Reformation Specialists Committee’ of 2001 under the chairmanship of Muhammad Abdul Bari did nothing for Madrasah education (Monzoor and Kabir, 2008 and Ahmed et al., 2005).

According to Habibur (2001) from Kudrat-e-Khuda Commission of 1972 to National Education Policy 2000, most of these commissions were against Madrasah education. Some of the recommendations of these policies and commissions were to abolish the Ibtiidae and Dakhil level of Madrasah system.

In January 2003, a National Education Commission was formed under the chairmanship of Professor Muhammad Monir-uz-Zaman Mia, to develop the whole education system of the country and Reports of the Commission were submitted in 2004 with three parts of around 880 recommendations of suggestion (NER, 2003).

Ahmad (2006) stated that, the report of NEC 2003 focused on general and Islamic education systems, Ibtiidae Madrasah nationalization and A Training Institution for Madrasah teachers. This commission also considered Madrasah Education Reform Committee of 2002 which was formed by Bangladesh National Party (BNP) government, elected in National Election of 2001.

The National Education Policy 2009 was formed under the chairmanship of Professor Kabir Chowdhury with Co-chairman Dr. Qazi Kholiq-uz-zaman Ahmad by Sheikh Hasina, leader of Awami League democratic government through reviewing the report of 1974, Education Commission of 1997 and 2000 education policy. The main focus of the 2009 Education Policy was to emphasized on teachers selection of Ibtiidae Madrasah, syllabus, course outline and textbook rearrange, teachers’ salary structure, Training Institute for different levels of Madrasah teachers, some modern subjects related with general education stream, modify the duration of every level of Madrasah education and some others important steps were proposed too (NEP, 2009).

And the last Education Policy 2010, Bangladeshi government has decided to modernize the Madrasah education to match the students with the standard of general school students. So, 2010 policy recommended to double the number from 100 to 200 for each subject in Dakhil from level 6 to
level 10 similar to the standard of formal schooling system, while previously, Madrasah students studied 100 marks in Benguli (100 marks for one paper, combined grammar and literature together) and 100 marks in English (100 marks for one paper, combined grammar and literature together) (Chowdhury, 2012).

According to Rahman (2011), Madrasah education development, founding Arabic university with affiliating power to modernize Madrasah education, establish Madrasah headquarters to strengthen Madrasah administration, Madrasah monitoring cell, payment of Ibtidae Madrasah regular salary, establishing a model Madrasah in every District level were recommended in the 2010 education report.

3.0 CONCLUSION:

Currently, Madrasah in Bangladesh is offering a good quality of education from primary to post-graduate level. Based on the report of BANBEIS (2011) currently there are 9361 Madrasah with 2200927 students in Bangladesh. It has been given a contentious effort to reform and modernize the Madrasah education of Bangladesh to meet the challenges of the contemporary world. Comparing to that effort, formal schooling education has attained a lot of constructive improvement while Madrasah education received only a few. Formal education gets big percentage from the government annual budget for education while Madrasah gets a smaller portion only. Therefore, Madrasah is looking forward to modernizing its education system and curriculum in Bangladesh.

REFERENCES:

• Ahmad, M. (2006). ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: Tradition, Trends, and Trajectories, Hampton University, Hampton, VA 23668
• Paper presented in 8th International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance 19-21, Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha Qatar.
• Ellis, T. (2007). MADRASAS IN BANGLADESH, IPCS SPECIAL REPORT No 47, August, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, B 7/3 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi110029, INDIA.


