COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL POLICY ON MADRASAH EDUCATION IN BENGAL (1914-1964): A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ON “REFORMED MADRASAH SCHEME”

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Abstract

This paper looks into the colonial and post-colonial policy of madrasah education reform, and its impact on Muslim society in Bengal. It reviews how the British Government took various plans on Madrasah education from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century to adapt with the modern education system. Notable among the plans included the establishment of Calcutta Madrasah (1782) and the Mohsinia Madrasahs (donated by ‘mohsin fund’ in 1873-74), and initiating the Middle Madrasah Scheme (1905), and the Reformed Madrasah Scheme (1914). I argue that despite various measures taken by the British colonial administration, the initiatives for modernizing the madrasahs achieved limited success. The only exception was the Reformed Madrasah Scheme, which was an innovation for enhancing the education of the Muslims of Bengal and India. The paper then addresses the concerns over the linkages between madrasah education and violent extremism in Bangladesh. The paper takes a historical approach and relies on archival materials, including educational commission reports, official records, and secondary analyses.

Introduction

Reform of ‘Madrasah’ education is one of the most focused issues regarding recent education reorganization movement in Bangladesh. In this context, the present Western World together with a section of intellectuals in Bangladesh thinks that the students educated in madrasah are responsible for terrorism. For this reason, madrasah education needs reforms for national and international security. However, it is observed that personalities who were educated under ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’, introduced by the Colonial government in Bengal in 1914, played a peaceful role and leadership in worldly life in Bengal and India. The ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’ made English language compulsory and excluded Persian language with the aim of elevating the maktab and madrasah to the standard of modern institutions. As a result, the popularity of modern English

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education system gradually increased among the Muslims in Bengal. But this reformed system of madrasah education was changed after the British colonial period (post-1947). Under this circumstance in 1964, the East Pakistan government abolished the reformed scheme for different reasons. In this paper, a comprehensive review of the colonial and post-Colonial policy of madrasah education reform in Bengal has been presented. It has also focused on the success of Reformed Scheme achieved in the field of development and modernization of madrasah education in Bengal with the help of public-private efforts. Finally, whether madrasah education is an impediment to the worldly life or a threat to the social security in the context of Bangladesh has been evaluated.

**Madrasah Education in the Middle Ages**

The word madrasah is extracted from the Arabic language which refers to a place or centre for Islamic teaching and research. In essence, madrasah is a seat of learning which plays a role in the dissemination of knowledge. During the Muslim age (1204-1757), the madrasahs of Bengal, generally were institutes for traditional Islamic higher education. Madrasahs providing lower education were known as maktabs, where primary level of education was given on religious basis. At that period maktabs and madrasahs of Bengal were run privately and to achieve knowledge was considered by each and every Muslim man and woman to be their religious obligation or the means to satisfy the Creator. The Muslim rulers, amirs and courtiers, sufis, ulema, zamindars or wealthy men of Bengal were devoted to education and they involved themselves in the activities of developments and spread of education, in many ways. As a result, a huge number of maktab-madrasah centres of education were instituted in different parts of the country. All these maktabs and madrasahs used to grow mainly keeping the mosques, places of worship, as their nuclei. According to the Provincial Committee of Bengal of the Indian Education Commission (1882), in the whole country there was no such

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1 In Islam, education is compulsory for all. It is also mentionable that the first direction from God is to read in the names of the Creator who created the human beings and whole universe. *Al Quran*, *sura* no 96, sentences 1-5, *sura* no. 39, sentence 9. In this context, William Adam (1796-1881), a famous Scottish missionary said in his reports (1835-1838), “… many private Mahomedan schools begun and conducted by individuals of studious habits who have made the cultivation of letters the chief occupation of their lives, and by whom the profession of learning is followed, not merely as means of livelihood. But as a meritorious work productive of moral and religious benefit to themselves and their fellow creatures.” James Long (ed.), *Adam’s Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar, Submitted to Government in 1835 1836 and 1838: With a brief view of its present condition*, Calcutta: Home Secretariat Press, 1868, p. 215.
mosque where education centre had not been established.\textsuperscript{2} When the country went under British rule, in the eighteenth century, there were 80,000 \textit{madrasahs} in Bengal, on an average one \textit{madrasah} for every four hundred persons, functioning efficiently, maintaining high standard of teaching and offering a high degree of intellectual training with large funds for their maintenance and smooth functioning.\textsuperscript{3}

To keep these educational institutions i.e. \textit{maktabs-madrasah} operational Muslim rulers, \textit{zamindars} or noblemen used to donate land free of tax. Since no fee was imposed on the students, all section of people, wealthy or poor, got a chance to educate their offsprings.\textsuperscript{4}

Persian was the state language, and the medium of instruction in Bengal. Arabic was also taught in higher education and teaching of Urdu was included in the education system of the Muslims since the 17th Century.\textsuperscript{5} Moreover, Bengali (language of Bengal) used to be taught at the primary stage. According to one Chinese diplomat, Ma Huan, who was visiting Bengal during the 15th century, Bengali was the language of general masses, Persian was the court language, and Arabic was the language for religious pursuits.\textsuperscript{6}

The Muslims of Bengal as well as Indian subcontinent introduced the \textit{Darse Nizamiya} (syllabuses of Nizamiya University at Baghdad) following the pattern of education of their predecessor, the education system in vogue during the period (750-1258) of Caliphs of Baghdad.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{2} Education Commission: Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee with Evidence taken before the Committee and Memorials Addressed to the Education Commission Calcutta: The Superintendent of Government Printing, 1884, p. 51.


\textsuperscript{7} Azizul Huque, \textit{History and Problems of Moslem Education in Bengal}, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1917, p.2. During the late Abbasid period(750-1258), the Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk created the first major official academic institution known in history as the Madrasah Nizamiyyah, based on the informal \textit{majalis} (sessions of the shaykhs). However, the first universities in the modern sense, namely institution of higher education and research which issued academic degrees at all levels(bachelor, master, and doctorate), were medieval \textit{madrasahs} known as \textit{Jami’ah} founded in the 9th century. The University of Al Karauaine in Fez, Morocco is thus recognized by the
But in the eighteenth century, the *Darse Nizamiya*, introduced by Mollah Nijamuddin (1677-1749) of Lucknow, started to replace the former *Darse Nijamiya* of Baghdad, in the subcontinent.\(^8\) This system of education became popular from Bengal to Peshawar (presently in Pakistan) and its standard was well recognized.\(^9\) The Scottish Missionary William Adam (1796-1881) highly appreciated the standard of Arabic higher education introduced during the Muslim period in his report (1835-1838) and said that the whole of the curriculum of Arabic *madrasah* was incorporated, very precisely, with the research based materials of metaphysic to achieve high quality of knowledge for the students.\(^10\) General Sleeman, a renowned contemporary English scholar, also praised higher education of the Muslims in India and observed that the way the Muslims progressed in terms of higher education was rarely found in the case of any other communities of the world.\(^11\)

### The State of Madrasah Education during the Early Colonial Period

In 1757, the traditional education system started to change in Bengal after the loss of the Muslim’s political power to the English East India Company in the Battle of Palassey. Since then, Arabic and Persian were replaced with English and other indigenous languages. Due to loss of political power, the Muslim rulers, *amirs*, courtiers and nobles lost the administrative and economic support and as a result the sources of income for the *maktabs* and *madrasahs* narrowed and that education system faced so challenges that it was eventually ruined. The fall of Muslim *zamindars* and barons was caused due to introduction of various policies of the Company such as the Permanent Settlement and declaration of forfeiture of tax free properties (*lakheraj*) by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. Innumerable *maktabs* and *madrasahs*, consequently were closed forever. Due to change of Lakheraj property (donated land free of revenue for religious and educational purposes) into government property in 1793, about 1,00,000 primary *madrasahs* were forced to

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\(^8\) Report of the Moslem Education 1934, p. 72.


close down. This is because the wealthy Muslims managed those madrasahs mainly depending on the income fetched out of those tax-free lands. In this context, William Hunter (1840-1900), a British civilian, said "Hundreds of ancient families were ruined, and the education system of the Musalmans, which was almost entirely maintained by rent-free grants, received its death-blow." To continue the higher education institutions i.e. madrasahs under the circumstances was difficult for them, though the Muslims tried and succeeded in keeping alive the primary education of maktabs for some time.

After taking over the rule of Bengal by the East India Company, the English did not pay attention to education of people in Bengal for half a century. Moreover, it was considered to be damaging for the empire and against the interest of the company to give any kind of education to the people of this country. As a commercial organization, the primary goal of the East India Company was generating more revenue and caring less about social welfare. As the Persian language was in use in the Law Court till 7th March 1835, the Company Government felt it mandatory to produce intellectuals skilled in Persian language. Consequently, some of the administrators of the Company patronized Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit learning personally. Under this circumstance, in 1780, the Governor General Warren Hastings established the “Calcutta Madrasah” for the first time on his own expenditure based on appeal raised by a group of distinguished Muslims. In 1781 the Company Government took over the administrative responsibility of this institution on its own. From this time the reform of madrasah education started under the management of the Government.

In accordance with the new rules for madrasah education the first public

12 Abul Barkat et. al., op. cit., p. 63.
14 W.W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 139.
examination was held on 15th August 1821. At that time few other madrasahs took part in that examination system with a hope to get Government aid and employment. Thus, from this point of time madrasah education continued to develop in two ways—public and private. Besides, a medical class, headed by Dr Breton, Professor of Medicine, was started at this Madrasah in 1826 for the first time in British India. Breton was authorized to purchase a skeleton and collect medical books. An anatomical work published by John Taylor was arranged to be translated into Arabic. The medical class continued here till the establishment of Calcutta Medical College in 1836. However, the students of the Madrasah were allowed to study medicine at Calcutta Medical College. This speaks for the high standard of education at the Madrasah in those days.

On the other hand, right from the last half of eighteenth century, the establishment of private English medium education institutions started in different places of Bengal by the Christian missionaries, Company and indigenous Hindu merchants. In 1817 it was inevitable to establish Hindu College especially because of the increase of interest for learning English among Bengali Hindus. At that time though there was an attempt to introduce English in madrasah education in Calcutta Madrasah, it failed because of the apathy of Muslim aristocrats and lack of proper guardianship on the part of the Government. But at that time the demand for madrasah diminished as the use and demand of English were increasing in various fields of the country and society. The necessity of madrasah education for government officials ceased when English was declared as the language of law courts in 1835 and the medium of instruction in place of Persian in 1837. The


21 Abul Barkat et. al., op. cit., p. 64. Also see, Calcutta University Commission 1917-19, Vol. II, p. 110.

22 Jogesh Chunder Banerjee, Lord Macaulay and Higher Education in India: Address delivered at the Thirty -Fifth Anniversary of the Death of David Hare, Calcutta: Stanhope Press, 1878, pp.7-9.


East India Company wanted to form a servile and docile class amongst its people, who would only look to their vested interests.\textsuperscript{25} During this time tremendous debate and discussions were initiated in respect of the future of such education. The Government stopped financial help for madrasah education at all levels after it declared English as the medium of instruction and recommendations from different quarters were raised to stop Persian education. Besides, thousands of Muslims youths, having had madrasah education, became unemployed after English had become the state language and a psychology of non-cooperation with the Government developed in the mind of those youths.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Wood Despatch and the situation of Madrasah Education}

In 1854, in the Wood’s Despatch there was a recommendation about affiliation of the eminent madrasahs of the country with the universities, but Calcutta University did not include Calcutta Madrasah or other madrasahs in its arena.\textsuperscript{27} As a result, madrasah education was cornered again and the Muslims were deprived of modern higher education for a long time. During this period no donation from the British colonial administration was sanctioned for the modernization of maktabs and no effort was made to reform those, though pathsalas of Hindus were reformed. Above all, after the Sepoy Mutiny (1857-58) the Calcutta Madrasah was designated by Lieutenant Governor of Bengal as the breeding ground of mutiny and advocated for its closure. But during the most crisis period of the Muslim education in Bengal, Nawab Abdul Luteef (1828-1893) and W.N. Lees, Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah raised their voice for the necessity of madrasah education. As a result, the Government of India rejected the view of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.\textsuperscript{28} Abdul Luteef placed the demand before the British Government for reformation of Muslim education through the rational discussions held at various seminars and symposiums in 1867.\textsuperscript{29} In this perspective in 1871 Lord Mayo took a resolution for the uplift of Muslim education in India as a

\textsuperscript{25} T.B. Macaulay, \textit{Minutes on Indian Education, dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} February}, 1835, Calcutta: Central Printing Office, 1835, p.7.


\textsuperscript{27} Despatch from the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to the Governor General of India in Council on the subject of the Education of the people of India, (No.49, dated 19\textsuperscript{th} July, 1854), Reprint, Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat Printing Office,1907, pp. 2, 6.

\textsuperscript{28} Government of Bengal: General Department, Education Proceedings, Progs. No. 11, 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 1860.

The special feature of the resolution in respect of education, declared by the Bengal Government, in 1872-73, was the reform of Muslim education and a decision was taken to reform the *maktabs* and to upgrade the level of government primary schools. But even after that the lower standard of *madrasah* education continued to draw widespread attention. In the Report of the Director of Public Instruction (1884-85) it was stated that the students of *madrasah* hardly got a chance in Government services because of their poor proficiency in English and Mathematics. Loyalty to religion, fondness for Urdu and Persian and apathy to secular education of the Muslims were identified as the major problems.

The Government continued its support for *madrasah* education on the plea from Abdul Latif in spite of recommendation made by a section of Muslim leaders including Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) and Syed Ameer Hossein (1843-1914?) for its discontinuance. Ameer Ali and Ameer Hossein opined that the necessity of *madrasah* education for government officials ceased when English was declared as the language of law courts in 1837 and as the medium of instruction in place of Persian in 1835. In consequences Ameer Ali argued in his evidence of the *Indian Education Commission* (1882), memorandum (before the British Government), statement and comments in different articles (such as ‘A Cry from the Indian Mahommedans’ in *The Nineteenth Century*, August 1882)’ that there is no need of separate institution in mass level for Bengal Muslims such as *madrasah* education. Ameer Hossein also gave his comments and evidence before the Education Commission (1882) and wrote in his book *A Pamphlet on Mahomedan Education in Bengal* that there is not necessity for the instruction of religious education in any academic institute. However, the Colonial government continued the *madrasah* education system and in this context in 1873-74, it established a few Madrasahs in different cities such as Dhaka, Rajshahi and

34 Education Commission: Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, 1884, pp. 218-220.
Chittagong with the contribution of the ‘Mohsin Fund.’ The new Madrasahs followed the curriculum of Calcutta Madrasah. Therefore, although madrasah education was a main subject of discussion of the society in Bengal during the whole of the nineteenth century, no progress of its reform was achieved.

Middle Madrasah Scheme

In the beginning of the 20th century, especially after partition of Bengal in 1905, the case of reform of madrasah education came forward with an increase of interest among the Muslims to co-operate with the Colonial Government in the field of education. After the establishment of the new province “Eastern Bengal and Assam,” the introduction of Middle Madrasah Scheme was an important step by the local Government. Because of the demand from Muslim leaders, this Middle Madrasah Scheme was approved in the education conference held in Barisal. The aim of this scheme was to render modern secondary education along with Islamic education in Muslim populated areas. Though Middle Madrasah was not similar to Middle English school, it was also not similar to conventional junior madrasah which was popular for Arabic-Persian and Urdu. Basically it was a modern higher standard Middle Madrasah the main aim of which was to reach the standard of secondary schools. In Middle Madrasahs, there was a facility to study Arabic, Persian or Urdu along with English and other modern subjects of secondary schools. But separate Arabic Department was also opened in many Middle Madrasahs.

Middle Madrasah was first established in Dhaka division and later it spread to different places. There was 32 Middle Madrasahs in Dhaka division in the year 1907-08 and the number of the students was 1885. In this division, Middle

Madrasahs were the most popular and due to this, in 1911 the number of students rose up to 4607. In Rajshahi division Middle Madrasah started in 1908-09 with huge interest. Within two years, the number of students in 9 Middle Madrasahs rose up to 1395. They followed the syllabus of Middle Madrasah Scheme. The Middle Madrasahs in Chittagong came out less successful in comparison with those of other regions in the province. The Madrasahs in Chittagong were divided into two types, religious and modern. For this reason, no syllabus of Middle Madrasah could gain popularity and ultimately these died down. In spite of everything, Middle Madrasahs could draw the attention of Muslims along with other types of institutions. It can be taken to be true by the amount spent after these. In 1911, the expense of Middle Madrasahs of East Bengal was Taka 45,078, out of which only Taka 9121 was available from the government fund. The rest of the amount was completely available from the private source. In a government report regarding the contribution of Middle Madrasah it was mentioned:

There can, however, be no doubt that these institutions, whether they do or do not conform to the original scheme, have done more than any class of schools to help forward the cause of Muhammadan education…. in Faridpur, is reported to have brought education to the stronghold of the Ferazis, a sect of Muhammadans who, until five years ago, were certainly more backward than any other section of the Muhammadan community.

Contribution of Muslim leaders for reforming Madrasah education

On the other hand, it was in the beginning of the partition days that the attention of the leaders of the Muslim community, like Nawab Sir Salimullah (1871-1915), Nawab Sir Syed Shamsul Huda (1863-1922), Nawab Ali Chowdhury (1863-1929) and Shams-ul-Ualma Abu Nasar Muhammad Waheed and also the Eastern Bengal and Assam Provincial Muslim Education Association was drawn to the importance of the Madrasah system. When the New Provincial Muslim Educational Conference met at Dhaka in 1906 a resolution on the general reform of Madrasahs was moved by Nawab Sir Syed Shamsul Huda and it was unanimously adopted. As a result, a ‘Madrasah Reform Committee’ was constituted with Abu Nasar Waheed (1872-1953), the then principal of Dacca Madrasah, as its secretary.

42 Ibid., p. 115.
43 Ibid.
44 Proceedings of the First Provincial Mahomedan Educational Conference of Eastern
The All India Muhammadan Educational Conference (founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan 1817-1898) which met at Dacca soon afterwards unanimously reiterated the resolution. Sir Bamfylde Fuller, Lieutenant Governor of the new province, encouraged the idea. Consequently the centres of Islamic learning in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Turkey, as well as the Oriental Institutes in Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and Paris were visited by Abu Nasar Waheed. And a scheme was drawn up as a basis of discussion. The scheme was a comprehensive one leading to a very high standard in Islamic learning and culture modernized, as far as practicable even on its Arabic and Islamic side, and English and other secular subjects were included as far as possible. To effect these improvements the whole course from maktab (primary section in Madrasah) upwards was proposed to extend over 18 years and Persian was altogether omitted. The maktab course was proposed to be extended for 4 years and it was also suggested to make equivalent to the lower primary course. The junior madrasah course extended over 7 years and was sufficiently secularized to allow a boy to pass on to Class VII of a modern high school if he so chose. The senior madrasah course extended over 5 years and was also adequately secularized to approach the high school standard. The advance course in Islamic Studies was so framed as to reach a high standard. The scheme was considered by some to be a most ambitious one, as if aiming at a Muslim University. In fact, the scheme placed a strong demand to upgrade through introduction of modern knowledge and science and other subjects together with English in maktab-madrasah education, and Abu Nasar Waheed submitted his proposal in the second Provincial Muslim Education Conference which met in Mymensingh in 1908.

After long discussion on this scheme in the second provincial conference, the delegates recommended the constitution of another Madrasah education committee with the Government representative which might be convened for the purpose. By this time, in 1907, the Government of West Bengal appointed a committee under

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47 Report of the Second Session of the Provincial Muhammadan Educational Conference, held in Mymensingh on the 18th & 19th April, 1908, Calcutta, 1908, pp.52-54.
Mr. (later Sir) Archdale Earl, Director of Public Instruction, to consider the whole problem of Muslim education in Bengal including Calcutta Madrasah. He held a series of conferences of Muslim leaders of West Bengal and East Bengal in 1907-08. The Title (Masters) degree was conferred only in the Calcutta Madrasah on Hadiths and tafsir in the year 1909, although the recommendation was also to have courses in Literature, Law, Logic and Philosophy. The leading members of East Bengal advocated with much vigor for modernization of the whole madrasah course and introduction of English as an integral part of the madrasah course, but their proposal was opposed by narrow majority.48

Reformed Madrasah Scheme

In 1909, the Bengal Government approved the appointment of a education committee led by Sir Henry Sharp, Director of the Public Instruction (DPI) in the new province, to consider the proposal for the reform of madrasah education submitted by Abu Nasar Waheed and recommended by the second Provincial Muslim Education Conference. Sir H. Sharp was unwilling to make any recommendation to Government unless reputed ulema of Upper India, as well as the leading Anjumans (Islamic Association) of the province, were consulted and their opinion obtained in writing.49 Abu Nasar Waheed, member of the Sharp Committee, after consulting a number of ulema in various parts of India, prepared and submitted a revised syllabus for the consideration of the committee. After that, in March 1910, a conference of the Sharp Committee along with representatives of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal and Assam (particularly with those involved with Madrasah Reform Committee of 1906) was held at Dhaka. This conference drew up a revised syllabus on the basis of previous proposal as per:

1. The courses comprise instruction in the junior classes: Secular teaching and considerable amount of Bengali, omission of Persian, inclusion of compulsory English, Quran and Arabic literature, Urdu, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Drawing, and Handwork and Drill.
2. In the senior classes attention was concentrated on Arabic, English and mathematics with other subjects presumably approximate in standard to those of the Calcutta Matriculation. The Muslim Law and Rhetoric, Logic in Arabic and a vernacular up to matriculation standard were also taught. The history of

48 Ibid., pp. 57-58. Progress of Education in Bengal 1907-08 to 1911-12, Fourth Quinquennial Review, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913, p.148; ‘A. Earle, Director of Public Instruction of Bengal, to Government of Bengal, 10 June, 1908’, General Department: Education Proceedings, para 27, August 1908.
India was taught in English and the subject covers the Hindu, Muslim and British periods. (It was expressly stated that the passing of the senior course examination would in no sense be an entitlement to entrance into any standard of the University course).

3. The Title Course: Of three years’ duration. The first year would be one of common ground work. In the second and third year alternative courses were suggested in Theology, Jurisprudence, Literature and Philosophy.

4. Special English Course: Of two years’ duration. The course was intended to be arranged for those who had passed the senior or Title course.50

But Sharp, pointed out, in submitting the revised curriculum to Government that it attempted too much and comprised a heterogeneous mixture of subjects. He was unable to recommend its general adoption. He submitted it to the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in August 1910 and recommended its introduction as a tentative measure. As a result the reformed scheme was first introduced with Dhaka, Chittagong and Hooghly Madrasah experimentally in August 1910.51

At this point, Sir Robert Nathan, a new DPI, was placed on special duty to thrash out the whole question. “The position which he assumed was that revised curriculum should be as simple as possible and should be introduced into as many madrasahs as financial considerations would permit. With this object in view Conference was held in Dhaka in March 1912, when the proposals of the 1910 conference were taken as a basis of discussion, and such modification in them were suggested as appeared likely to make the course simpler and more practicable”.52

In May 1912, the Government of Bengal published a resolution in regard to the proposed Dhaka University appointed a committee with Sir Robert Nathan as president to frame a scheme.53 This committee which had four highly placed Muslim gentlemen of Bengal on it, recommended that a Department of Islamic Studies should form an integral part of Dhaka University, the subjects being Arabic language and literature, the various branches of Islamic learning and English. The University course must necessarily be an extension of the studies of the Madrasah. The Sub-committee formed to draw up the scheme had, therefore, took into consideration the proposed Madrasah curriculum. The committee endorsed the

50 Report of the Third Session of the Provincial Muhammadan Educational Conference 1910, pp. 34-35; Also see please, Eastern Bengal and Assam Education Proceedings, August, 1910.
opinion that “...a student thus trained will become a man of culture, who should make a good Government officer or a suitable recruit for the learned professions.”

The whole question was further examined in March 1913 at a conference over which Sir Robert Nathan presided and the previous proposals of the Madrasah Reform Committee were adopted with slight modification. The courses of study was finally recommended for the junior classes comprised instruction in the Quran, Urdu, Bengali, Arithmetic, Geography, History, English, Arabic Drawing and Handwork and Drill. In the senior classes attention was concentrated on Arabic, English and Mathematics. The Muslim Law and Rhetoric, logic in Arabic and a vernacular up to matriculation standard were to be also taught. The history of India was to be taught in English and the subject covered the Hindu, Muslim and British periods. It was thought that the course of study thus designed though not exclusively secular as was the case in High School would serve to produce cultured Muslims fit to enter one or other of the careers open to all Indian students. As a result, 31 July 1914, the British Government approved this revised course namely “Reformed Madrasah Scheme” and described it as follows:

The leading Moslems of Bengal are fully alive to this evil and repeatedly expressed their desire for a general reform of madrasahs. They hold that the course of study pursued therein, whilst not being exclusively secular, should be such as is likely to produce cultured Muhammadans fit to enter one other careers open to educated men, and to play their part in the various activities which go to make up the public life of modern India...The Governor in Council is satisfied that the syllabus of studies drawn up by experts in consolation with the leaders of the Muhammadan community is well calculated to serve the highest interests of that community. His Excellency in council has accordingly decided to adopt this syllabus for all government madrasah except the Calcutta Madrasah... while not absolutely debarring from Government aid such institution as adhere to the Orthodox course, the Government in Council will in future give preference to those that adopt the new course and entertain a staff on the scale prescribed.

Therefore, it can be said, mainly because of the demand and proposal of the Madrasah Reform Committee (1906), in 1914, the British Government introduced the ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’ making English compulsory and excluding Persian language with the aim of elevating the maktabs and madrasah to the standard of modern institutions.

54 Ibid., p.100.
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The reformed scheme came into operation with effect from April 1915. It was to be introduced gradually and by the year 1919, the course would have been introduced throughout all the classes of the junior department of madrasahs adopting them. The revised scheme was introduced in the three government senior madrasahs at Hooghly, Dhaka, and Chittagong and in the Government junior madrasah at Rajshahi and in all the aided senior and junior madrasahs. Many Middle Madrasahs and aided madrasahs also adopted the course. It is notable that Calcutta Madrasah was left outside the scheme in order to teach the orthodox course with English or without. The rationale behind this was that Madrasah would be shut out from worldly prospects by Muslims who would betake themselves to the English system of secular education. At that time, madrasah education was divided into two systems—“Reformed Scheme” and “Old Scheme”.

The two outstanding features of the Reformed Madrasah Scheme are the omission of Persian, and the introduction of English as a compulsory subject for study. It is historically true that the Persian language was the most favourite study of the Muslims not only as a medium of instruction but also as an official language of the Mughal Empire in Bengal and Indian sub-continent. But by the course of time Muslims were forced to abandon this influential language. In this regard, Sir Azizul Haque (1892-1947) said:

> It obviously necessitated much boldness to pass beyond the orbit of influence of Persian which found a most congenial home in this country for several centuries. But the stern needs of the hour have forced the Government to take decisive action

57 Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17, Fifth Quinquennial Review, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918, p. 137.

58 However, a new committee was appointed under A.H. Harley, Principal Calcutta Madrasah, in February 1915, which made certain observations as to the revision necessary in the course of studies of the Madrasah. The Committee made recommendations with regard to the course of studies, the medium of instruction, the introduction of Bengali as an optional subject in junior classes and the study of unani system of medicine. It is also recommended the introduction of logic in the Title (Kamil) classes. As regards to the learning of languages, it was recommended that (a) Urdu should be compulsory optional in the senior classes, and that (b) English and Persian should be optional both in the junior and senior classes and that (c) Bengali should be optional in the junior classes. But at that time, the Government did not accept the recommendation, and they approved the proposed courses with some revised from the session 1928-29. Report on the Calcutta Madrasah for the Quinquennium Ending the 31st March 1917, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918, p. 1; Report of the Moslem Education 1934, pp. 75-76, 95; Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1927-28, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1929, pp. 31-32; Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1927-28 to 1931-32, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1933, pp. 81-82.
and the Mahomedan to shake off the influence of a subject which has for centuries
been regarded as culture and an accomplishment to a Mahomedan gentleman.  

The Government prioritized Madrasahs under the reformed scheme providing
sufficient fund. During the of 1912-1917 under a review a sum of Tk. 84,000 a year
was earmarked in 1914-15 from one of the recurring imperial grants for the
improvement of Muslim education with special reference to the Reformed
Madrasah Scheme. This allotment has enabled the Department to increase the
grants of all the six aided senior madrasahs and seven aided junior madrasahs and
also to aid 55 junior madrasahs which had previously not been aided.  

Moreover, an additional sum of Tk 25,000 was provided in the budget for increasing grants-in-
aid to new scheme madrasahs. About one half of the amount was spent on giving
new grants to 18 junior madrasahs and enhancing grants of seven other junior
madrasahs adopted to reformed scheme. In addition, revised rules for the award of
free-studentship and Mohsin Scholarships were introduced in 1917. In terms of
these rules Government aided school for the Muslims and reformed madrasahs
were entitled to free-studentships up to the limit of 15%. Formerly, there were
Mohsin scholarships of different values tenable at Government madrasahs. With
effect from 1917-18 they were converted into a number of stipends of a uniform
rate of Tk. 5 a month and 66 stipends were offered for the students of reform
scheme.  

In 1918, the Government sanctioned the opening of Islamic studies in intermediate
classes for the higher studies of ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme.’ These classes were
opened in 1919, in Dacca Madrasah, which was subsequently developed into an
intermediate college consisting of the four senior classes of the madrasah and the
two Islamic intermediate classes.  

At the same time, a special board styled the
Advisory Board for Islamic studies, with the Director of Public Instruction and the
Assistant Director of Public Instruction for Muslim Education, Bengal, as President
and Secretary, respectively, was constituted to conduct the special Matriculation
and Islamic Intermediate Examinations and to grant certificates and award
scholarships and stipends. This Board exercised its function till the formation of the

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59 Muhammad Azizul Huque, *Moslem Education in Bengal*, pp. 87.
60 Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1914-15, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book
61 Progress of Education in Bengal, 1917-18 to 1921-22, Sixth Quinquennial Review,
Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1923, p. 81; Report on Public Instruction
62 Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1918-19, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book
Depot, 1920, pp.18; *Progress of Education in Bengal, 1912-13 to 1916-17*, p.138.
Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education at Dhaka in 1921 to which was given control of the reformed Madrasahs and Islamic Intermediate Colleges in the presidency (Government resolution No.1011 Edn. Dated the 7 May 1921), in order to enable the board to make the High Madrasah (Under the Reformed scheme) and Islamic Intermediate education a part of the intermediate and secondary education.63

A public examination at the Senior Class VI of Reformed Madrasahs was instituted in 1916. The first Junior Madrasah Examination was held in 1917. Moreover, the Islamic Intermediate Examination was held for the first time in 1921. These two examinations were conducted first by the Department with the assistance of an Advisory Board and certificates were granted by the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal. In 1921, the control of these examinations was transferred to the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka. The Islamic matriculation Examination was called “High Madrasah Examination” and the Islamic Intermediate Examination was called “Intermediate Examination in Group-C”.64

With the above mentioned steps of the Government, reformed scheme madrasahs spread throughout the country. On the other hand government recognition was withdrawn from the madrasahs unwilling to follow the reformed scheme. The reformed system of Madrasah education supplied the long felt need of the Muslim community. A large number of students were attached to this system who would otherwise had gone to the old type Madrasahs or would not had gone to any school at all. Far from weakening the general line by keeping Muslim boys out of secondary schools, the reformed system was becoming a source of strength to it. The progress of Reformed Madrasah Scheme was a matter to be mentioned. In the Sixth Quinquennium Review (1917-1922), the British Government observed that when as a result of political unrest, “the total secondary school-going population decreased by nearly a quarter, there was a steady increase in the number [of students] attending Madrasahs, viz., from 21222 to 25,036.”65

Madrasah Studies under the control of University

Meanwhile, the ‘Reformed Madrasah Education’ was brought under the control of the university by opening of the ‘Islamic Studies Department’ in Dhaka University,

63 Progress of Education in Bengal, 1917-18 to 1921-22, p. 80; Report of the Moslem Education 1934, pp. 78-79.
65 Progress of Education in Bengal, 1917-18 to 1921-22, p. 80.
established in 1921. As the University course must necessarily be an extension of the studies of the Madrasah, the Dhaka University Committee (1912) recommended a modification of the Madrasah curriculum by adopting as far as possible the course laid down by the Madrasah Reform Committee, but reduced the length of the school course in Arabic and Islamic studies by about two years, in view of the longer period of subsequent study which it proposed to introduce. The Committee endorsed the opinion that a student thus trained would have the opportunity of becoming a good scholar and a man of culture who would be eligible to be Government officer or a social reformer. The Dacca University Committee also recommended that the degrees in Islamic studies should be styled Bachelor of Islamic studies (B.I.) and Master of Islamic studies (M.I.) and should be regarded as equivalent to the degrees of B.A. and M.A. for Government employment and admission to the B.L. course. As a result madrasah education was placed under control of modern university education for the first time in Bengal as well as in India. A regular student beginning from Class III of a madrasah would take 10 years to reach the University stage. The remarkable growth of the reformed system within short period, in spite of difficulties, proved beyond doubt that it was popular with a large section of the Muslim society. After establishment of the Dacca University, 82 students of the Islamic studies department graduated from this University till 1932, of whom 25 obtained first class honours, and 39 second class. Of these, again 46 obtained the M.A. degree, 21 securing first class and 17 second class, 3 the B.T. and 2 the B.L. degrees. Out of total of 82 Muslim students who graduated from Dacca University with honours, during 1927-32 the number of students of the Islamic Studies department were 29 or more than one third. The number of students migrated, to the Universities of Calcutta and Aligarh is unknown.

Thus, statistics shows that the students of the reformed madrasahs, after completing their studies in Dhaka University, were able to extend intellectual, social and cultural contribution to the development of the country. Again, the record of reformed madrasah students shows that they were identifying themselves closely with this aspect of the University life. As Vice-Presidents of the Muslim Hall Union and members of its cabinet, as debaters and prize-winners in extempore speech competitions in English and Bengali, in University sports, as representatives

68 Report of the Moslem Education 1934, pp. 80-84.
of the Hall to the University Students’ Union, and to the University Athletic Club, as Secretaries to the University Journal Committee, and to the Social Service League, and to the Library Section of the Hall, and as members of the University Training Corps, they did not in any way lag behind the other students of the University. From the following statement of the Government Education Report (1934), it is understandable about the progress of social and organizing activities of the Islamic Studies Department of the University of Dacca:

1. The present Vice-President of the Moslem Hall Union, its chief elected executive and two out of five members of the Cabinet are student of Islamic Studies.

2. Student of Islamic Studies secured its prize for extempore speech for 3 years in English and for 2 years in Bengali in open competition in the Moslem hall.

3. In the last Annual Sports of the Dacca University an student of Islamic Studies secured the champion prize. He created a record by securing as many as 3 out of 8 first prizes for the whole University. It is noteworthy that Nasim (Nassim) and Al-Haji Ramizuddin (Romiz) two prominent figures in the sporting circle, are old boys of the Dacca Islamic Intermediate College. Their names are mentioned in the sporting columns of the “Statesmen”, and other papers, sometimes with photos.

4. The present representative to the University Students’ Union is an student of Islamic Studies.

5. The present representative to the University Athletic Club is also an student of Islamic Studies.

6. The present Secretary to the Social service League is also an student of Islamic Studies.

7. About half of regular members of the University Training Corps from the Moslem Hall are students of Islamic Studies. Two are lance corporals and one a corporal, the first in the history of the Moslem Hall.

It is evident that reformed scheme created unprecedented educational awakening among a large section the Muslims in Bengal. It stimulated private enterprise, opened up backward localities and drawn students from sources hitherto untapped - a fact which was admitted even by the adverse critics of the new system. In 1931-32, the number of students in 686 reformed Madrasahs was about 60,000. Similarly, the three Islamic intermediate colleges which had been brought under the Board as part of its general scheme made regular contribution to the number of Muslim pupils in the Universities.

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
In 1927, on recognition of ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’ by the Calcutta University, these students got a chance for admission not only in the Islamic Studies Department of Dacca University but also in other general departments of Calcutta University. As a result the popularity of English education among the Muslims grew in a big way.71 “An Islamic under-graduate can now take up Honours not only in Islamic Studies, but also in any of the general Subjects, such as English, History, Economics, Mathematics, Philosophy etc.”72 Even most parts of the modern Middle Madrasahs were converted with Reformed Madrasah course although Middle Madrasah was most similar to Middle English school.73 But in the Reformed Scheme, many subjects on science and knowledge as well as English were incorporated along with religious education. Consequently, the method got popularity among the Muslims within a very short period of time. The *Seventh Quinquennial Review* (1922-1927) of Government says: “That the community desires these separate institutions and that their popularity cannot be denied.”74 The Bengal Government resolution (No. 1918 Edn., dated the 3rd July 1928) on the progress of reformed madrasah education during 1922-27, has the following: The numbers in the High Madrasahs rose from 1,196 to 4,204 and the Junior Madrashas from 23,840 to 46,795, showing that the Muslims were still anxious to retain connection between religion and learning.75

**Orthodox Madrasahs and the Reformed Scheme**

The Government did not affiliate the Calcutta Madrasah in ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’ to teach the orthodox course without English or with English as an optional subject. Hence the followers (lesser madrasahs) of Calcutta Madrasah course were identified as the ‘Old Scheme Madrasah.’ Under this circumstance, there were some important proposals about the Calcutta Madrasah by the different Committees and conferences before the government. The recommendations were, however, so general that no definite action could be taken on them.76 Besides, the Calcutta University Commission, constituted in 1917 by the British Government,

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74 *Ibid.* p.73
Colonial and Post-Colonial Policy on Madrasah Education

also reviewed the problems of Calcutta Madrasah and problems of higher education of the Muslim society. Calcutta University Commission prepared a huge report based on the above and evidences, suggestions and memoranda of the Muslim leadership, on also various appeals and prayers and a deep search on higher education of the country.77

Besides the Calcutta Madrasah and its followers, there were madrasahs that continued to follow the old Darse Nizamiya completely financed by private source and they did not follow either the Old or the Reformed Scheme Madrasah. All these madrasahs were designated as ‘Qawmi (community) Madrasah’. In modern India a large influential madrasah of this kind was first established in Deobondh in 1866.78 That is why all the ‘Qawmi Madrasahs’ of Bengal used to follow the syllabus of Deobondh Madrasah. By the end of the British era mainly three types of aforesaid madrasah education was in vogue.79 As a result various problems were created in the way of true reform of madrasah education. In spite of getting momentum of popularity for the ‘Reformed Madrasah Scheme’, a controversy surfaced against the pressure of multilanguage study on the students. Not only the followers of ‘Old Scheme’ and Qawmi Madrasah criticized the modernity of the reformed madrasahs but also a part of modern educated Muslims opposed to the new scheme. Patronization of Colonial Government to a separate education was also under scrutiny and many believed that these activities of the Government were taken from political motive.

Different opinion and controversy about the Colonial policy on madrasah education

Abul Hossain (1896-1938), lecturer of the University of Dhaka, opined that the pressure of multilanguage study in Reformed Scheme would be harmful for the Muslim students. To him, because of the multi-lingual stress, about 60% Junior

78 As an aftermath of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, the British demolished many madrasahs and madrasah education had a severe setback. After the failure of the mutiny in 1857, a part of the Muslims in the sub-continent realized that they could not depend on the government for their religious education; so, they decided to have their own schools so their youth would know their knowledge. The traditional ulamas led by Maulama Qasim Nanatabi (1833-1880) rejected everything western, and established a madrasah in 1863 known as “Darul Ulum Deoband” in Deoband, a small town in Uttar Pradesh in India. Based on the Deoband model of madrasah, many madrasahs sprang up all over India including Bengal. Abul Barkat et. al., op. cit., p. 65.
Madrasah students used to drop out of their student life before completing studies. He suggested English and Vernacular language as the medium of modern and religious instruction accordingly.\textsuperscript{80} Wazed Ali (1896-1954), a prominent writer and litterateur, said that following reformed scheme system Muslim students cannot be skilled neither in religious field nor in modern subject. He opposed any separate education scheme for the Muslims and he also believed that patronization of \textit{madrasah} education by the British Government was a political motive.\textsuperscript{81} Mozaffar Ahmed (1881-1973) also criticized the prevailing Madrasah education system. But he did not oppose the religious education. He suggested religious teaching through Vernacular.\textsuperscript{82} Nasiruddin Ahmed (1888-1994), the editor of the famous journal \textit{Saugat}, suggested for converting the reformed \textit{madrasahs} into modern school and college.\textsuperscript{83} Maniruzzaman Islamabadi (1875-1950), a renowned nationalist leader in contemporary India, widely criticized the reformed scheme. Because, to him, Muslim students could not learn religious education properly in new scheme \textit{madrasahs} where they were only taught clerical knowledge of modern life. He also said that this sort of education system could only produce a servant class for the Colonial government.\textsuperscript{84}

Therefore, there occurred a mixed reaction regarding Reformed Madrasah Scheme. It is notable that from late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, a section of educated Muslims demanded to abolish separate education i.e. Madrasah system totally. On the other hand, another part of the Muslims advocated continuing Madrasah education. However, no parts of the Muslims denied the necessity of religious education. Majority of the Muslims proposed to modify the reformed \textit{madrasah} course. Even in 1928-29, all School Inspectors of the country recommended to relieve the students from the over burden of language in junior \textit{madrasahs}.\textsuperscript{85} At that time, Hartog Committee of Simon Commission (1929) recommended for converting \textit{madrasahs} education into general one.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{80} Abul Hossen, Bangali Mussalmaner Siksha Samassay (New Scheme Madrashar Sangskar Prosthab), Dhaka: Modern Library, 1928, pp. 22, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{82} Muzaffar Ahamad, ‘Banghodeshey Madrasaher Siksha’, \textit{Banghio-Mussalman Sabhithay Patrika}, Vol. 3, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Year,1326 (Bengali year), p. 233.
\textsuperscript{83} ‘Mussalmaner Skhsah Samassay:Editorial’, \textit{Saugat}, Vol. 8, 6\textsuperscript{th} Year,1335 (Bengali Year).
Observation of different committees on Reformed Madrasah Scheme

In this context, in 1931, the Government of Bengal took an important step for the further development of Madrasah education in general and Calcutta Madrasah in particular. Muslim Education Advisory Committee headed by Khan Bahadur Abdul Momen (1876-1946) or “Momen Committee” was formed which submitted its report in 1934.87 The report of the Committee that deals with all aspects of Muslim education embodies a separate chapter (Chapter VI) on Madrasah education. The Committee thoroughly examined the Reformed Madrasah system in actual operation. They expressed the merits of the Reformed Madrasah Scheme from various points of view and came to the conclusion that for educational advancement of the Muslim community its retention as an integral part of the educational system of the country was of considerable importance. The Momen Committee held the opinion that if the Reformed Madrasah were abolished there would be a setback to the progress of Muslim education in Bengal. The Committee examined the phenomenal growth of the system within a short span of a little more than a decade and a half and showed that Reformed system created unprecedented educational awakening among a large section of the Muslims in Bengal. But the Committee put emphasis on the necessity of modifying and improving the curricula of the reformed madrasahs and the Department of Islamic Studies.88

According to the Ninth Quinquennial Review (1932-1937) on education by the Bengal Government, the report of the Momen Committee is an exhaustive discussion of the various aspects of Muslim education and it gives a valuable account of the history of the education of the community under the British Raj, written from the Muslim viewpoint.89 A Special Government Officer was appointed to deal with its recommendations and to examine their implications.

Consequently, the Bengal Government further revised the syllabus of reformed Madrasahs. After the consideration by the government, the High Madrasah under the reformed scheme would run like the High English Schools but in an Islamic environment. In junior forms of the reformed scheme madrasahs, the Middle English curriculum was followed except in drawing and science which had been

87 Report of the Moslem Education 1934.
88 Ibid., pp. 93-95.
replaced by Arabic and Rituals of Islam as compulsory subjects. The curriculum and examinations of high madrasahs were regulated by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka, and those of junior madrasahs by the department of public instruction.\(^9\)

In February 1937, the general election of Bengal was held and A. K. Fazlul Haq (1873-1962), the leader of Krisak Proja Party became the Chief Minister of Bengal. The tenure of the Fazlul Haq Ministry (1937-41 and 1941-43) may be described as a period of consolidation of Muslim League’s power and influence in Bengal. In his League-Proja coalition ministry Fazlul Haq kept for him the portfolio of education with the object of extending educational facilities to the common people. He wanted to recognize the madrasah education in general and Calcutta Madrasah in particular. Presiding over the prize distribution function of Calcutta Madrasah, he openly criticized the policy of discrimination in the matter of grant-in-aid to Reformed Scheme and Old Scheme Madrasah in Bengal. He assured the people that no further discrimination would be made. He also wanted to raise Calcutta Madrasah to the level of Islamic Arabic University in Bengal.\(^9\)

With this view he appointed an Inquiry Committee (on 27\(^{th}\) July 1938) headed by Khan Bahadur Maula Bakhsh as a special officer for Muslim education.\(^9\) On the basis of the report of Maula Bakhsh Committee, he assured the people that madrasah education would be reoriented to suit the needs of the Muslim society.

The Maula Bakhsh Committee submitted its passed report to the Government of Bengal on 10\(^{th}\) October in 1940. The committee proposed certain reforms in the course of studies for the Old Scheme Madrasahs. Its most important recommendation was with regard to the controlling authority for the Madrasahs. The Committee recommended the establishment of a University of Islamic Learning at Calcutta, having its jurisdiction and control over all Madrasahs both old and new type including Islamic intermediate college. The Maula Bakhsh Committee observed that Reformed Madrasah course was too heavy for the average pupil as it introduce as many as three foreign languages, namely, Urdu, English and Arabic in the elementary stage. It is educationally unsound to burden the young


\(^9\) Report of the Madrasah Education 1941.
mind with so heavy a course which would tend to blunt his intellect instead of
developing it.\(^93\)

**Development of Madrasah education both in Reformed and Old Scheme**

Although, the recommendations of the Committee were considered by the
Government carefully, no action, however, appeared had been taken on the
recommendations of the Committee before partition (1947). The main reason of
was the declaration of Second World War in 1939 and economic depression
including political unrest of the country. A.K. Fazlul Haq himself accepted his
failure for the implementation of this report. In the annual functions of Calcutta
Madrasah, held in 1941, he declared that “the Maula Bakhsh Committee, had
submitted some very useful suggestions, no doubt, but the war efforts have come in
our way to spare any fund for new educational project.”\(^94\) But Bengal Government
took an important step for developing the reformed *madrasah* scheme in particular
to *maktabs* or primary education. With the introduction of a uniform curriculum for
all types of primary schools the difference in nomenclature between primary
schools and *maktabs* ceased to exist by the Government in 1941.\(^95\) In addition,
government established some Islamic Intermediate Colleges in Hooghly, Serajganj
and Magura and made permanent the intermediate classes attached to the
Chittagong Madrasah for the progress of modern higher education of the reformed
*madrasah* scheme.\(^96\) Thus, with contribution of government, students in reformed
*madrasah* scheme advanced rapidly, which is reflected in the following table-1.

As the data show the increase in the number of Muslim students is very remarkable
in reformed *madrasah* education of Bengal. But simultaneously, it is interesting
that the prosperity of old scheme of *madrasah* education survived in a competitive
way with the new or reformed scheme. The popularity of old scheme was in the rise
though the government did not extend any financial assistance to *madrasahs* of the
‘old scheme’ except Calcutta Madrasah for a long time after introduction of
reformed *madrasah* scheme. From the following table, a clear idea can be
generated about the number of students of the old scheme *madrasahs*.

\(^94\) Quoted in A. K. M. Ayub Ali, *History of Traditional Islamic Education in Bangladesh*,
\(^95\) *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1940-41*, Calcutta: Bengal Government Press,
1943, p. 9.
Government Press, 1939, p. 29; *Tenth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of
78.
Table 1

The progress of Reformed Madrasah Scheme in Bengal, 1934-1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nature of Madrasah</th>
<th>Number of Madrasah</th>
<th>Total student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme High</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme Junior</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>50,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme High</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme Junior</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>70,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme High</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Reformed Scheme Junior</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>90,444</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 shows that the number of madrasah students for old scheme in the affiliated of Calcutta Madrasah had considerably increased in spite of the unsuitability of the course followed therein, the poor quality of teaching in them and the meager financial support from Government. Even the continued political unrest during the last decade of the British colonial period in India or so and the economic depression through which the country had to pass could not check their growth. In fact, before 1938 no Government grant was given to Old Scheme Madrasahs except one Madrasah at Furfurah. So it is understood that these institutions are based on the unalterable religious faith of the Muslims which is the outcome of their loyalty to their traditional learning based on religion.97 Alongside, though the detailed statistics of Qawmi Madrasah could not be traced, we may note the establishment,--completely private and unhindered--of Hathazari Madrasah (1901), Patia Madrasah (1910) of Chittagong Kanaighat Madrasah (1904) of Sylhet, Lalbagh and Chawkbazar Madrasah (1931) of Dhaka, Unisia Madrasah (1907) of Brahmanbaria and Gazalia Madrasah (1935) of Bagerhat during the first half of the 20th century. In this context, the comment of Tenth Quinquennial Review on the Education in Bengal (1937-1942) is very significant:

But a great number of Muslims prefer to attend their own special institutions, in which the language, theology, and ritual of Islam form an important compulsory subject. They are happier in that orthodox atmosphere and feel that religion must play a great part in forming the mind and character of the young. The appeal of these schools is also due, in part, to the cheapness of their education. At any rate, there has been an extraordinary revival of their popularity in certain parts of the province. In one Division, the number of madrasahs rose from 78 to 126, in another from 167 to 233; during the period...that madrasah education is still in strong demand.98

Table 2
The state of students of the Old Scheme Madrasahs in Bengal, 1934-1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nature of Madrasah</th>
<th>Number of Madrasah</th>
<th>Total student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>Old Scheme Senior</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same Old Scheme Junior</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>Old Scheme Senior</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>16060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same Old Scheme Junior</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Old Scheme Senior</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>27,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same Old Scheme Junior</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>12,678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In this connection, the Government of Bengal after the end of the Second World War, and on the eve of partition, appointed the Madrasah Syllabus Committee in term of their resolution, dated the 4th July, 1946, with Khan Bahadur Syed Muazzamuddin Hossain(1882-1972), the then Minister of Education as Chairman, to draw up revised syllabus of Madrasahs, both Old and Reformed.99 In consultation with various interests and incorporating various reforms demanded from time to time, the Committee framed a new syllabus for both the Old and

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98 Tenth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1937-38 to 1941-42, p. 77.
Reformed Scheme Madrasahs and its final report and recommendation submitted to Government on 30th April 1947. According to recommendations of the Madrasah Syllabus Committee the new curriculums thus framed were referred to the Dhaka University and the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka, which were directly concerned with the Reformed Madrasah Education.

The Muazzamuddin Committee was the best one appointed by the Government for the improvement of the traditional Islamic education in Bengal during the British period. The British Government, having been in a critical situation at that time, readily accepted the recommendations of the Madrasah Syllabus Committee. But before any practical action could be taken on the proposal of the Syllabus Committee, great political and constitutional changes occurred in the sub-continent resulting in the establishment of two separate independent sovereign states of Pakistan and India on the 14th August, 1947.

**Post Colonial policy on madrasah education**

With the establishment of Pakistan, the opinion leaders felt the necessity of reorganizing the educational structure including Reformed Madrasah Scheme of the country. From time to time attempts were made to rationalize and reorganize the system of reformed scheme so as to make it more useful and fitted for modern requirements. Although in the Reformed Madrasah course, a happy combination was effected between secular subjects and basic Islamic subjects, there was a question to retain the two systems of Madrasah education undisturbed or one of them or to combine them or to liquidate them both with a view to unifying the Muslim educational system.

Though for a time the Reformed Madrasahs were sought to be encouraged at the cost of the old system, the Government policy was to draw a ground to make the two systems run smoothly. This being the position, the question of the total abolition of one or other of the systems did not arise at all. The only alternative, according to directives of Pakistan Educational Conference, 1947, and the Advisory Board of Education for Pakistan, was to make an attempt to bring Madrasah education into line with the general system without, at the same time, sacrificing the essential elements of the former.

In this regard, Post-colonial government in East Pakistan took initiative to further reform new scheme madrasah course by excluding Islamic studies and including

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general subjects. As a result there was no deference between English High School and High Madrasah of reformed scheme except name and environment. In 1957, an education committee headed by Ataur Rahman Khan (1907-1991), the then Education Minister, recommended to integrate rapidly the High Madrasah and Islamic Intermediate College of reformed scheme with the general education system. Then the Government started to implement the recommendations properly. As mentioned above, Government initiated a uniform curriculum in general primary school and maktabs of reformed course in 1941. As a result maktabs of reformed scheme turned into general primary school and students became fond of English High School instead of High Madrasah. In 1959, another National Education Commission Reported that finally East Pakistan Government had decided to unify Reformed Madrasah Scheme and general education system. In consequence, all reformed madrasahs were adapted to the general education within 1965.

Therefore, it is evident that during the Colonial and Post-colonial era the madrasah education in Bengal of three forms sustained in spite of different hindrances. Introduction of reformed or new scheme madrasah was an epoch-making due to modernization of the Government in the field of madrasah education. In this reformed scheme both types of education, religious and modern, were synthesized and because of this a part of madrasah education achieved substantial modernization. But this reformed madrasah education system was changed and adapted to general education policy after the British colonial period. In Post-colonial period although the Reformed Madrasah system, in fact a modified form of general High School education, the name “Madrasah” acted as a charm for a great majority of the Muslims in Bengal. It is proved that the number of High Madrasah in 1955-56 was 84 and the number of the students was 21,567 which broke all previous records. Despite this kind of popularity, why did Reformed Madrasah Scheme abolish? East Bengal Educational Reconstruction Committee indentified four grand causes behind the conversion of reformed madrasahs and colleges into general high school and colleges. Those were: (i) Inadequate financial

aid; (ii) Untrained teachers; (iii) Unsuitability and inadequacy of the inspecting staff for Muslim education; (iv) Abolition of Reformed Maktabs. Many others accused the illusion of the Muslims for the old Madrasah education system and hostile attitude of some conservative ulemas.¹⁰⁷

Recent aspects of Madrasah education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has two types of Madrasahs—Aliah and Qwami—attended by about 10 million students.¹⁰⁸ Majority students from these religious institutions do not get enough employment opportunity, largely due to a mismatch between the job markets’ demand and the skill sets of the Madrasah graduates. In this context, the common criticisms against madrasah education have been that it is obsolete, backward and unfit to keep pace with modernity; that it is unproductive in the sense that madrasah graduates are ill-equipped to run public offices and, thus, to contribute to the country’s development; and that it produces only religious functionaries like mosque imams and kazis (or qadi, Islamic judge). Madrasah education in Bangladesh came under intense scrutiny and received renewed critical attention in the wake of the 9/11 attacks against the United States and then, more so, after the 2005 bombings in different parts of Bangladesh. In this context, many in civil society in the country as well as the wider world feel that madrasah students are responsible for generating both backwardness and terror. Consequently, a section of the intellectuals demand complete eradication of madrasah education in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand majority of the Islamic scholars think that madrasah educated students are contributing a lot in the development of the country far from being threat to the security.¹¹⁰ They also think


¹⁰⁸ It is known from a very reliable research work that there are about 10 million students enrolled in the madrasah education (both in Aliya and Qawmi) during 2008. Abul Barkat et. al., op. cit., p. 129; Also see, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics(BANBEIS) 2000-2015, http://banbeis.gov.bd/data/images/chap06.pdf. Retrieve online :05-08-2016.

¹⁰⁹ Danik Samakal, Dhaka, 7 April, 10 June, 2006.

¹¹⁰ According to Ahmed Safi of the president of the Befaqul Madarisil Arabia Bangladesh, a largest Qawmi madrasah education board in Bangladesh, madrasah educated students are contributing a lot to the development of the country far from being involved in current radicalism. The president also said that the Qawmi madrasah students are not related with any extremist. Abdul Jabbar, Secretary of the Befaqul Madarisil Arabia Bangladesh, also supported this view. He opined these are mere isolated incidents, having no connection with Islamic educational institutes in the country. Mumtaz Ahmad; ‘Views from the Madrasa: Islamic Education in Bangladesh’
that besides providing the religious leaderships, madrasah education is also providing morality based professional in the worldly sectors. This kind of polarization creates the demands for madrasah education reform in Bangladesh.

Actually, it can be said, Madrasah education in Bangladesh has been reared up as a tradition for almost one thousand years and its role to preserve the tradition of the Muslim is remarkable. It is necessary to rethink the concept of Madrasah education to make it more suited to the present modern requirements. It cannot be said that Madrasah education is totally unnecessary. There should be no confusion regarding Madrasah education and religious learning. Every Muslim student should know the moral and spiritual values of religion and their fundamental duties to God and men.111 To the Muslims, religious education is more important than that of Sanskrit studies of the neighbouring Hindus.112 Noticing this fact, British government also did not close the Madrasah education completely. We have already mentioned that a large number of committed scholars and leaders educated in Reformed Madrasahs appeared in the Muslim community under the Colonial rule. Moreover, in spite of persistent attempts of Government to discourage the old type Madrasahs in various ways, these institutions have not only survived but also increased in number. Even now the process of expansion continues. Although entrenched in the country’s educational landscape, madrasah education has always had its critics—especially following Bangladesh’s independence in 1971—among secular intellectuals who are opposed to this very system of education and have repeatedly urged successive governments to abolish madrasah education and introduce a unified education system. However, such demands never gained either public support or approval from successive Bangladeshi governments. It is noted that a mentionable part of Aliah madrasahs teach all the required modern subjects such as English, Bengali, Science, social studies, Mathematics, Geography, History, etc., along with a revised version of Dars-i-Nizami. Unlike the graduates of Qawmi madrasahs, whose degrees are not recognized by the government and who pursue their careers in religious establishments and private businesses, the majority of the graduates of

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112 According to Mr. Chapman, a British scholar and contemporary principal of the Calcutta Madrasah, “…the Muslims religious education is more important than that of the neighboring Hindu Sanskrit.” Quoted in Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-08 to 1911-12, Vol. 1, pp. 159-60.
Aliah madrasahs merge into the main stream of education by continuing their education in colleges and universities.

In spite of different kinds of obstacle, a part of madrasah students are contributing to modern professions. It is a wonder that a recent survey found that 32% of Bangladesh university teachers in the humanities and social sciences were graduates of Aliah madrasahs.\textsuperscript{113} It is also a wonder that while a group of general educated students in some public universities and colleges are engaging in bloody clash equipped with fire arms due to the different causes, there are no such mentionable records of clash created by Madrasah students in their institutions in Bangladesh. So, whatever the condition of the rest of the Muslim World is, it is true to some extent, a part of Madrasahs, is making moderate people with humanistic spirit in country. Meanwhile, recently Bangladesh Government also has taken initiatives for reforming madrasah education, Qawmi madrasah in particular and has formed a Committee led by the prominent ulemas. The Committee has published by this time a proposed report on education policy of Qawmi madrasah.\textsuperscript{114} In this context, the Government of Bangladesh can take lessons from the Reformed Madrasah Scheme under the Colonial and Post-colonial rule.

**Conclusion**

During the British Colonial and Post-colonial period madrasah education was the most discussed and controversial subject in both government and non-government sectors in Bengal. The British colonial policy governing madrasah education had undergone three important changes since the introduction of the English system of secular education. At the outset the policy was to side-track the Madrasah system to a water-tight compartment, outside the pale of the University, in spite of the suggestion for its inclusion therein in the Despatch of 1854. After a cycle of sad experience, this policy of passive discouragement was changed into one of active encouragement which further complicated the situation. As a result of the latter British policy which was evolved during 1871-73, government madrasahs of the old type were multiplied in number and Calcutta Madrasah was invested with all the outward paraphernalia of an affiliating University, instead of being included in the University itself. After another cycle of failure, a fresh policy was inaugurated

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Colonial and Post-Colonial Policy on Madrasah Education

about the year 1909-1914 by which the reformed course of the Madrasah system of education was incorporated with the University according to which, at the suggestion of the Government of British India, the Islamic Studies were included in the Dhaka University Act of 1920.

The *madrasah* education became ineffective in the first half of the 19th century when English was established in place of Persian as a medium of instruction and as a royal language. That’s why a section of Muslim leaders wanted the abolishment of *madrasah* education. On the other hand a large part of Muslim community kept demanding the reformation of *madrasah* education although they had known well that this education system had been useless. They also demanded the inclusion of religious study in the curriculum of general education.\textsuperscript{115} Though there was difference of opinion in British governmental sector, the government finally started patronizing *madrasah* studies for the progress of Muslim education in Bengal. It is also mentionable that in 1782 the British government emphasized Islamic education by nationalizing the Calcutta Madrasah. In line with that thought the Government has taken various initiatives to reform and modernize *madrasah* in the form of arranging different meetings and constituting committees after 1891. In fact, it was not possible for the British Government to exclude religion from the system of education. The Muslims believed that education would remain incomplete without religion. Besides these, it was also true that there was the existence of religion in British owned education system and the minority Jews used to study their religion.\textsuperscript{116} So, as a British colony, in Bengal and India the government wanted to keep religious education and introduced a comprehensive course with Islamic learning and culture, modernized as far practicable even on its Arabic and Islamic side, and English and other secular subjects were included as far as possible. Consequently, Madrasah education became a part of modern higher education with the inclusion of reformed or new scheme course in the curriculum of Dhaka University. Moreover, the *madrasah* education played vital role in the advancement of the Muslims higher education. A huge number of befitting scholars and leaders of reformed *madrasahs* appeared in the Muslim society who offered


their leadership in social and political movement of Bengal and the subcontinent as well.\textsuperscript{117}

But it is observed that the British colonial policy and modernization of madrasah education created pressure of multi-languages on Muslim students in Bengal. Though Persian was excluded from reformed scheme, in some madrasahs Persian was continuing.\textsuperscript{118} Consequently, the learning of languages such as Bengali, English, Arabic, and Urdu emerged as a challenge for the students. This led to the evolution of the reformed system of Madrasah education in Bengal, while Calcutta Madrasah was left outside “to teach the orthodox course without English.” The rationale behind this was that, shut out from worldly prospects, the Madrasah would be deserted by Muslims who would take themselves to the English system of secular education. Unfortunately, for the Muslims’ secular interest, this dual policy of Colonial Government caused a great deal of harms to the success of the reformed scheme. On the other hand, the progressive Muslim intellectuals and leaders criticized both Reformed and Old Scheme. According to the critics, the students of reformed madrasah gained real expertise neither in religious study nor in modern education and the British government tried to keep Muslims in ignorance by continuing such unscientific and ancient education. On the other side, the number of students began to rise in the Old Scheme system surrounding Calcutta Madrasah by competing with the Reformed Scheme. Beside these, a third stream madrasah education called ‘Qawmi Madrasah’ existed in Bengal in the form of the oldest Deoband Madrasah. Thus the real progress of Muslim education was hindered by


\textsuperscript{118} Tenth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal, 1937-38 to 1941-42, p. 78.
the internal conflict and by the clash between old and reformed scheme education. In this respect, the progressive Muslim leaders also failed to come into a consensus about the development of modern education for their own society. As a result, the reform of madrasah education proceeded in the midst of different complexities.

On the whole, the new education system was effective in spreading modern education among the Muslim community in Bengal. But after the British period, the reformed system ceased, this education method chose complete modernism and all institutions had been converted to general high school and college. However, on the other hand, British government had not taken any step to reform or to modernize the private Qawmi madrasahs and the Calcutta-centered Old scheme.