

Issues in Curriculum and Pedagogical Practices in *Madarsa* under Modernisation Programme

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Abstract

Before the arrival of colonial education, madarsa system of education along with the indigenous system of education flourished well in India. However, the repercussion of the revolt of 1857 gave a serious setback to madarsa education. After India gained independence the secular nature of the state led to the establishment of secular system of education in India. Though Muslims can access the secular schools as well, sometimes madarsas can be the only educational option available to muslim children especially those belonging to the marginalised community. Many of the previous researchers pertaining to the review of muslim education in India have highlighted the fact that the children of the educationally backward muslim community attend maktabas, madarsas and darul-ulooms with very little participation in the national mainstream education system. These religious institutions to a larger extent provide religious teaching. In order to provide them access to education in modern subjects, the Union Government has been implementing the scheme of even Madarsa Modernisation Programme (MMP) since the 1990s. Unfortunately, even after such a long time, madarsa graduates cannot compete with the students of mainstream education (with a few exceptions). This investigative paper tends to explore those curricular issues and pedagogical practices, which are prevalent in madarsa education that create hurdle in the educational development of the students studying in these madarsas. For the study of the pedagogical practices inside madrasa, the researcher conducted classroom observations in one of the Government-aided madarsa in Varanasi city registered under Madarsa Modernisation Programme and to study the issues in curriculum of madarsas, content analysis of the curriculum framework of Uttar Pradesh Madarsa Board of Education in the light of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has been done.

Keywords: Madarsa Education, Modernisation Programme, Classroom Observation, Curriculum, Pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

India always had the tradition of amalgamating and assimilating with 'other' civilisation to such an extent that it becomes the reason of its wide and varied culture and society. Though Islam was foreign, many Indians accepted Islam and today "Indian Muslims are the largest religious minority in Indian sub-continent" (Kayoom, 2016, p. 39). Education had always held a high place in Islamic history and therefore, the place of learning in *madarsas* came in to existence. Before the advent of colonial education, *madarsas* system of education along with the indigenous system of education flourished well in India. However, the repercussion of the revolt of 1857 gave a serious setback to *madarsa* education. Many equations worked simultaneously and at present they are among "the most marginalised sections of Indian society, educationally and economically" (Sacchar Report, 2006; Kayoom, 2019, p. 9). The percentage of Muslim literacy is 68.5 per cent compared to the national level, which is 74.04 per cent. Also, Muslims have the highest number of non-illiterates aged above seven at 42.72 per cent in their population (Census, 2011). It has also been noted by Kayoom (2019) that "Any discourse on subject of Muslim education had always rose indignation in community members followed by concern and controversy. Many visionaries and educationists

roar upon *madarsa* education as outmoded, archaic, religious centric education offering little scope of employment in contemporary India. All these debates and discourses called for the Government to intervene".

The Area Intensive and *Madarsa* Modernisation Programme (AIMMP) were started under the 10th Plan by the Central Government between the years 2002–2007. The programme as implemented included two elements—infrastructure support for educational institutions serving populations with low levels of education and the introduction of modern subjects into the traditional *madarsas*. The Muslim scholars and *madarsa* Personnel registered their objection on both the component of the AIMMP that eventually led to the recasting of the programme as Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM). This scheme is aimed to provide mainstream education to children studying in *madrasa*. The very first objective of the scheme states "To encourage traditional institutes like *madarsas* and *maktabs* by giving financial assistance to introduce Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English in their curriculum so that academic proficiency for Classes I–XII is attainable for children studying in these institutions" (clarification on SPQEM, 2009, p. 2).

Further in the scheme, there are provisions and guidelines related to the

development of infrastructure inside *madarsas*, making them conducive to teaching and learning. On the other hand, it remained silent on the syllabi, curriculum and pedagogical practices inside *madarsas* due to the previous indignation and resentment from the Islamic scholars.

The Union Government specifies another goal as “the scheme will also empower State *Madarsa* Board, by enabling them to monitor *madarsa* Modernisation Initiative” in the proposed guidelines for the SPQEM scheme. Clarifying further on the question of implementation, it quotes “the scheme will be implemented by the State Governments” (SPQEM, 2009, p. 2).

These two extremely essential guideline furnish the underlying meaning that the Central Government will not intercede in the curricular issue and only the ‘concerned’ state will be responsible for the implementation of modernisation programme inside *madarsa* and therefore, the prospective question of curriculum for the state of Uttar Pradesh’s *Madarsas* slips to the hand of Uttar Pradesh Board of *Madarsa* Education (UPBME).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Role of *madarsas* in imparting education had been studied comprehensively which had reported incongruity and absurdity inside various *madarsas* along with absence of definite aims and objectives

regarding education. It has also been reported that the teachers in these *madarsas* are still involve with sterile pedagogy and obsolete monitorial system of teaching (Davidson, 2008; Fahimuddin, 2004; Fandy, 2007; Halstead, 2011; Haque, 2013; Sikand, 2005). The stance of the teachers shape up the choices, worldview, self-concept and educational aspiration of the students; therefore, without focusing on the pedagogical practices of teachers, any claim for modernising *madarsas* would rather be an illusion than actuality. Thus, the very idea that simply implying modern subjects will modernise *madarsas* is deceptive, as it presents spasmodic rather than a holistic understanding. Without a change in the curricula and pedagogical methods used inside *madarsas*, the aim to modernise the same would not be realised. In order to investigate the educational methods and curriculum reform in *madarsas* registered under the Modernisation Programme, the current study was conducted.

Research Question

1. How much curriculum and pedagogical reform took place in *madarsas* once the Modernisation Programme was implemented?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the changes in *madarsa* curriculum that followed the modernisation programme.

2. To study the instructional methods used in *madarsas* following the implementation of modernisation programme.

METHODOLOGY

Thematic analysis in the light of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was used for analysing the document for curriculum framework of UPBME.

Classroom observation schedule was used to assess the pedagogical practices inside classrooms. Beside these, semi-structured interview schedules were used to study both the teacher's and student's perception dealing with pedagogical practices.

Research Validity

Qualitative or mixed method researches are largely criticised for researcher bias offering potential threat to validity or trustworthiness of research, therefore, triangulation as a strategy for testing the consistency and cross-checking information through multiple methods or data source contributes in more credible and defensible results (Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Patton, 2001). In this study, interview and observation had been used along with the classroom observation schedule to triangulate and substantiate the findings.

UNIT OF THE STUDY

This research work is on the implementation of MMP in Varanasi

Division of Uttar Pradesh. The researcher conducted the study in two phase— the quantitative and the qualitative. In the quantitative phase, a self-reporting questionnaire based on the guidelines of the SPQEM was implemented on all *madarsas*. For the purpose of this study, only one *madarsas* was selected for field work to have an in-depth understanding of the reforms. The selected *madarsa* was among the good performing *madarsas* (outliers case) as per the stated objectives of the Modernisation Programme. This selected *madarsa* was also one of the prominent, government-aided *madarsas*, registered under the MMP as early as in the year 1996 located in a Muslim ghetto in Varanasi city. This study was conducted during the academic session 2016–17 from February to March.

Research Procedure

During the field work good rapport was established by the researcher with all the teachers and students, permission for interview and classroom observations were sought from the Principal of the *madarsa*. The researcher also took a few classes in case of absentism by a few teachers in order to establish familiarity among students and teachers. The observation lasted for two months. The classroom observation schedule was employed by the researcher to study the pedagogical practices inside the *madarsa*. The schedule

contains various dimensions related to pedagogical strategies for holistic learning. A total of 36 classes of 12 teachers (8 Male and 4 Female) were observed by the researcher, the observed classes ranged from 5–8 and subjects included were Maths, Language (English, Hindi and Urdu), Science and Social Studies.

FINDINGS RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

ONE: CURRICULAR REFORMS

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 was used as a guide while analysing the curriculum framework suggested by the UPBME. The guidelines for the content analysis of the curriculum on the basis of NCF 2005 was developed using which the curriculum for UPBME was studied and it generated following themes:

1. Too Many Subjects

The issue of curriculum load on children was examined by a committee appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) in the early 1990s. The committee noted that learning at school cannot become a joyful experience if the teachers perceive the students as only receivers of knowledge and textbooks as the basis of examinations. As a result, it was recommended that curriculum should be seen not in terms of syllabi but rather as a learning experience. However, the UPBME burden children with extensive curricula and a large variety of supplementary topics. Arabic,

Persian, Urdu, Hindi and English are the five languages that make up the majority of the curriculum from Classes I to XII. Science, Math and Social Studies (History, Geography, Civics, Economics), are also included along with the topics related to general knowledge and religious subjects. This dual style of curriculum places a heavy burden on the pupils, using up more of their time without making learning enjoyable. The defenders of religious education loudly declare that modern courses may be added to strike a balance between them in order to address modern requirements, but any modification to the religious curriculum of a *madarsa* is unthinkable, in this context Maulana Ansarul Haq Qasmi said, “Last but not the least, the changes in *madarsas* are brought about not to link them up to modern system of education or to bring their graduates closer to government job opportunities, these changes are aimed at ensuring the very existence of *madarsas* in India” (Qasmi 2000).

2. Monotony in Curriculum

Despite the fact that the curriculum framework of the UPBME does not discuss the kinds of educational activities to be conducted or the manner in which teachers and students should interact, the NCF 2005 explicitly outlines the wide variety of learning experiences in schools that are evidently based on activities rather than cramming

books and notes. As a result, the curriculum by UPBME encourages outdated teaching strategies like the lecture and the monitoring system.

3. No Flexibility in Examination Pattern

The NCF proposed a flexible examination system that ensures continuous and thorough evaluation throughout the year in order to relieve students of their exam anxiety and to assist them in overcoming the burden of the examination system. In contrast, the *madarsa* board unmistakably emphasises the paper-and-pencil test. It would be preferable if the examination process examined every facet of the child's development while they were attending *madarsas*.

4. Gender Discrimination in Choice of Subject

In 1961–1962, the Hansa Mehta committee advocated creating a common curriculum for boys and girls in the elementary and intermediate grade and encouraging girls to pursue Math and Science in the upper secondary grades. The Kothari Commission (1966), the National Policy on Education (1968) and the Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (1990), all supported the recommendations of the Hansa Mehta Committee, eliminating the differentiation of curriculum for boys and girls on the choice of subjects. However, the UPBME continued to support this discriminatory

practise. Beginning in first grade, the curriculum explicitly recommends Home Science for female students and Physical Education for male pupils (Nisab-e-Talim, 1998, p. 28).

5. Conflicts Between the Objective of SPQEM and UMBME Curriculum (Nisab-e-talim, 2010)

The *Madarsa* Board has not changed its curriculum in accordance with the SPQEM's purpose, which clearly states that the academic proficiency in mainstream education from Classes I to XII must be attained by children studying in these institutions. During the field work, it was found that the curriculum for Classes I to VIII offers the same core subjects as those suggested by the Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad; however, there is a gradual change in the curriculum as pupils advance to Class IX. The students in Class IX must take a total of six subjects where five are compulsory and one is elective. At this point, the following disciplines are required— Diniyat, Arabic or Persian literature, Urdu literature, general English and general Hindi. Optional subjects include Math, Home Science (only for girls), Science, Social Studies, *Tib* (Unani Medicine), and *Makula'at* (logic).

Table 1
Showing the percentage of the teachers using different pedagogical strategies

S. No.	Pedagogical Strategies	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
1.	Review previous day's course	30%	43%
2.	Overview present day's course	25%	33%
3.	Use good examples	40%	57%
4.	Non-lecture activities	0%	14%
5.	Write keywords	55%	76%
6.	Use teaching aids	0%	19%
7.	Deliver lectures	100%	80%
8.	Encourage student's questioning	35%	24%
9.	Wait for students to respond	40%	33%
10.	Listen carefully to students	35%	48%
11.	Explain concept clearly	30%	57%
12.	Relate concept with student's experience	35%	33%

**Figures in percentage are rounded off to two digits.*

Table 2
Showing the percentage of the teachers using strategies for Science/Maths, Language and Social Studies

Subject	Pedagogical Strategies	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
Science/Math	Make a Table/graph	33%	50%
	Demonstrate experiment	-	-
	Use models/videos/pictures	-	25%
Languages	Telling something (story)	-	50%
	Model reading	30%	75%
	Introducing vocabulary	40%	75%
Social Studies	Initiate discussion	-	40%
	Use role play/drama	-	-
	Ask open-ended questions	-	-

**Figures in percentage are rounded off to two digits.*

FINDINGS RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

TWO: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

I The following findings are based on the analysis of classroom observation checklist.

With reference to table 1 the analysed data reveals that:

1. Only 30 per cent male and 43 per cent female teachers commenced their classes with proper introduction and review of previous day's course content, and only 58 per cent teachers overviewed day's course content.
2. None of the male teacher used any teaching aids in any class or used any innovative interaction technique like small group talk, class discussion or project, or activity with students.
3. All male teachers used lecture for explaining the concepts and only 40 per cent of them used examples other than those given in the books to explain the text or content.
4. As high as 55 per cent male teachers and 76 per cent female teachers used blackboard to write keywords while explaining.
5. Two-way discussions between teacher and students was lacking because just 59 per cent of the teachers encouraged students to ask questions, and only 40 per cent of male teachers waited for students to answer, as most of the time the teachers answered their own question which they put in

front of the class and therefore, the discussion never took place.

With reference to Table 2, the analysed data reveals that:

1. Only 33 per cent of the male teachers and 50 per cent of female teachers drew any table or graph during their explanation whereas none of the teachers ever demonstrated any experiment.
2. Just 50 per cent female teachers used other supplementary stories and an incident along with the content to explain the text. One male teacher teaching English used model reading and allowed students to read the chapter, other teachers read the chapter themselves.
3. None of the teacher, either male or female tried to stimulate students' belief related to any social issue or historical event by presenting any critical or open-ended questions and neither do they used any non-lecture activity too for the same. However only 40 per cent of female teachers did initiated discussion which did not lasted long because of the non-comprehending and non-communicating abilities of the students.

II The following findings are based on the analysis of classroom observation notes and interview.

1. Lack of preparedness among teachers: Most of the time the teachers came unprepared for the class without formulating any approach or *modus operandi* to

begin the class. Teachers dwelled on spinning altogether different concepts unrelated to the context. As for instance, one science teacher was teaching change in seasons but instead on focusing on the revolution of earth, was delivering lecture about number of seasons and their characteristics.

2. Lack of teaching aids and experiment demonstration: None of the teacher ever demonstrated any experiments charts models, any other teaching aids in any class or subject concerned; albeit some models and charts had been provided to *madarsas* as part of the Science Kit and Maths Kit under the SPQEM scheme. The *madarsa* lack in providing basic facilities to the students, and the teachers are not diligent enough to use the resources they are provided with. female teacher No. 1 said, "The *madarsa* lacks a lot of amenities; if we had access to them, we could have shown them off and explained things more clearly than we did".

When the researcher questioned her about which chapter she was currently teaching and by what method, she responded, "I am teaching them about stars right now, and whatever is written in books I explain that only; if the *madarsa* had those binoculars, I could have shown it to the pupils."

3. Extensive use of lecture methods in language learning: Language is an important aspect in school

learning because it enables the learner to comprehend and communicate. Therefore, language teaching indispensably require special tactics in order to get the students involved. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) and components of a particular language that incorporates skills and therefore, the students must learn correct pronunciation too which they learn from their teachers. On the contrary, the agony is that none of the teacher ever bothered to let the students read the chapter. Instead, teachers themselves read the text and elaborated the content, forming the only transactional strategy for language teaching. A male teacher No. 1 on the question of transactional strategy answered, "...I change the teaching pattern according to the standard of the class, for Classes VI, VII and VIII, I explain the whole gist or summary to the students, and do the book exercises on blackboard and asked them to write it".

4. Authoritative and teacher centered class ethos: Except the teachers of Maths and English subject (both male), every teacher tried to maintain authority in class and hard discipline was followed. Male teacher No. 2 was exceptionally dominant, as he most of the time snubbed the students right in front of the researcher. Even the researcher, herself, felt threatened when the

same teacher came close to the researcher and tried to read the observation schedule.

5. Blaming students for low achievement: Almost every teacher hold the view that students' low and poor academic performance was due to their parents' lack of willingness to get their child educated. The same authoritative male teacher no. 2 said to the researcher, "...I am trying so hard to make all these students learn so much, but they cannot learn... you see...the children's first school is their mother, these children do not get proper ethos at home, they do not study at home... here in *madarsa*, in a period of forty minutes, what amount of teaching are we suppose to do?".

6. Reluctancy on the part of *madarsas* management: Managing an educational institute, and providing basic infrastructure and facilities for conducive learning atmosphere require a lot of personal efforts on the part of *Madarsa* Management but most of the time the researcher found indifferent attitude of the Principal and Manager in doing so. Almost all teachers acknowledged *madarsas* reluctancy towards educational activities like excursion or educational tours, science lab or teaching aid, son the pretext of lack of funds and resources. Male teacher no. 3 recruited under Modernisation Programme for teaching Science revealed, "...

there is no such arrangements (for educational tours) as such, neither do the managing committee organised it".

Researcher: "Have you ever demanded for" it?

Science Teacher: "...(hesitantly) regarding this, we never got any help from them, and whatever material we have in the science kit that's also not sufficient, neither there is any lab nor there is any such arrangement to demonstrate any experiment". The teacher actually skipped the original question of the researcher.

7. Students's perception of the *madarsa* as an educational institute: The modernisation programme in this *madarsa* runs for Classes I–VIII. The strength of the students in every Class is quite good but not in Class VIII as most of the male students only come to the *madarsa* at the time of half yearly and annual exam. For the sake of interview the researcher had to put a lot of effort to make them visit *madarsa*. When this problem was questioned to the teacher Male teacher, no. 4. said, "...these students belong to economically deprived class... they do not have proper business at home and so they work outside as powerloom weaver, and so do not come".

On the contrary, when the students were asked about their regular absentism from the *madarsa* they altogether said a different story.

Male student no. 1 was especially vocal and said, "...rather than instructing us, the teachers in this place are busy chatting with one another. They sent us along to bring refreshments (tea or snacks) from the stores next to the *madarsa*".

Researcher: "You, students, should complain to the Principal".

Male Student no. 1: "...for what? They (teachers) will scold us and beat us".

Researcher: Ask your parents to get involved, let them complain.

Male Student no. 1: "...there is no unity among us at all (students), if they all complain together then only something can be done".

Clearly the students lack the sense of attachment with their alma mater which they must feel in order to learn, the connectivity, the sense of belongingness is not visible in the students.

CONCLUSIONS

This exploratory study indicates that the arguments proposed for

modernising *madarsas* are detached from reality. The very idea that simply implying modern subjects will modernise *madarsas* is very deceptive as it presents spasmodic rather than holistic understanding. The vision to modernise the same will not be accomplished unless there is change in the curriculum and pedagogical practices inside *madarsa*. Reviving and modernising these small, inadequately resourced *madarsas*, which are frequently found in rural and interior regions of the nation and occasionally serve as the only educational institutions in Muslim ghettos, is urgently necessary. However, there is reluctance both on the side of government and *madarsa* management. Without developing adequate infrastructure, these charity-run *madarsas* cannot function well, and without assimilating new curricula and pedagogical practices, the students will not be able to join mainstream education or participate in organised workforce of the country.

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