

Strategies for harmonizing the University and Madrassah Curriculum at Graduate Level

Dr. Syed Abdul Ghaffar Bukhari¹

Dr. Qibla Ayaaz²

Abstract:

Religious education is being provided in Pakistan either in Universities or in Madrassah. There lies a huge difference in curriculum of the two education systems. The study analyzes the difference in curriculum of the two educational systems and provides strategies in harmonizing the two curriculums for better Islamic education. The methodology of the study is quantitative in which panel discussions were conducted in seven cities of Pakistan. From each city scholars were invited from one University and one Madrassah. Scholars were asked open-ended questions. It was concluded that to harmonize two education systems, single/shared curriculum must be devised in which best essays/subjects from each curriculum must be extracted. As a result, the students from both the institutes will have same status after graduation.

Keywords: *Universities in Pakistan, Madaris, Curriculum, Teaching Methodology, Research Approach, BS Level*

¹ Associate Professor, Islamic Thought and Culture, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad

² Chairman Islamic Ideology Council

1. Introduction to the topic:

In Pakistan, two forms of education systems are providing religious education, one is graduate level of Universities and other is Madrassah institute. University and Madrassah are providing Islamic education but the two forms of education are different from each other. Both are liable of providing Islamic education but the difference lies in their curriculum. University education system is a part of formal education system in Pakistan. Bachelor program is of 2 to 4 years³. Education at university level is considered higher education in which students study core courses as well as specialized courses including Computer, Pakistan studies, English language and Research⁴. University curriculum is devised at government level where a government representative leads the University as Vice Chancellor for providing quality education⁵. In comparison, Madrassah institute is providing religious education to the children in Pakistan. For some students, the only form of formal education is Madrassah⁶. In Pakistan, Madaris are independent institutions. They are Islamic seminaries typically called “Madaris-e-Deeniya”. The government of Pakistan avoids interference in their internal affairs. They have their own curriculum taught by their particular scholars and Ulama but most of them teach Islamic subjects⁷. Madrassah system of education is using traditional form of education⁸.

1.1 Difference in Curriculum of University and Madrassah:

Curriculum is basically the syllabus planned and focused by institutes in order to attain educational goals⁹. University is a part of formal education system in Pakistan. It is led by official educational establishments of the society. Bachelor program is of 2 to 4 years. In Pakistan, a bachelor's degree is an undergraduate degree obtained after completing intermediate. The curriculum of University is designed by the Federal Board or University boards that are meant to prepare them for examinations. In comparison, Madrassah curriculum includes Quran, Hadith, Seerah, Fiqh, Logic and Syntax etc. They are operating under variant federations i.e. Wafaq. The syllabus/curriculum taught in Madrassah of Pakistan is called “Dars e Nizami”.

³ Saeed, Muhammad. “Education system of Pakistan ad UK: Comparison in context to inter-provincial and inter Countries Reflection.” *Bulliten of Education & Research* (2011): 43-57.

⁴ Ahmad, Sirajuddin, *Universal quality education: A challenge to the whole world* (National Book Foundation, 2012)

⁵ Rehman, Tariq. 2004. “Denizen of Alien worlds: A study of Education, Inequality, and polarization in Pakistan” *Oxford University Press*.

⁶ Laghari Ghulam Farooque, Abro Allahdino and Jafri Syed Iftikhar Hussain. “Perceptions of Students Towards Madrassa System of Education in Pakistan”, *The S.U. Jour. of Ed* 41 (2011-2012): 60-75.

⁷ Ghani Fauzia and Ghani Bushra. “Madrassa Education System and Political Socialization in Pakistan.” *Madrassa Education System and Political Socialization in Pakistan* (2012). <https://doi.org/10.46568/ihya.v21i1.85>

⁸ Anjum, Ubair. “Assessing the Need of Modern Education in Madrassah System: A Case Study of Madaris in Lahore.” *Arts and social sciences journal* 8 (2017): 1-8.

⁹ Tyler Ralph. “Basic principles of curriculum and instruction.” *Chicago: University of Chicago Press* (1949).

1.2 Literature Review:

When Pakistan came into being, the education system was weak. It was required not only to expand this education system but also to redesign education system according to social, cultural as well as economic needs of the country¹⁰. In Pakistan, there are two education systems running. These systems are formal education institutes like Universities and the religious institutes called Madrassah. They are running simultaneously and different curriculum are being taught in them. Reviewing the curriculum, there is a huge difference between University and Madrassah.

Various studies are conducted on reviewing curriculum of Madrasah. As far as Madrassahs are concerned, they have their own historical background. These are providing good virtuous people that the society requires. Compared to others, free education is provided only in Madrassah. They teach Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and Seerah etc. They are running under different federations. The students graduating from Madrassah are inheritors of Companions and Sciences of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) who graduated from first Madrassah named “*Suffa*” established by the Holy Prophet (SAWW) in Madina. The syllabus taught in religious schools is called Dars e Nizami, credited to Mulana Nizam ud Din Suharvi¹¹. The curriculum included books on arts and sciences. With time changes were made in syllabus as per the needs of the era¹². Madaris are distributed into five categories based on the sects. Each category has its own educational system and policies. Five main categories are: Tanzeem ul Madaris, Wafaq ul Madaris al Arabia, Wafaq ul Madaris al Alafia, Wafaq ul Madaris al-Shia and Rabita ul Madaris al Islamia. A study explained various aims, objectives and methods of Madrassah education. One researcher emphasized that modern education should be combined with Islamic education, arguing that one type of education is complementary to the other.¹³ A scholar provides an overview of the historical background of Madrassahs with special reference to the development of Madrassahs. Another author gave description of Dars-e-Nizami as well as the modern system along with inclusion of science in the curriculum.¹⁴ In his book, one researcher, described Madrassahs and highlighted major elements like syllabus, management and importance of integration with modern education¹⁵. One relevant book gives a detailed description of various issues faced by Madrassahs, their history, their present status, contribution to the society, need for revised curriculum

¹⁰ Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior (Education Division). “Proceedings of the Pakistan Educational Conference” 12 & 41.

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¹² Islam Muhammad. “A Research Review of Present Curriculum of Pakistan’s Religious Madrassas and some Possible Aspects of its Improvement.” *Bannu University Research Journal in Islamic Studies* 9, No. 1 (2022).

¹³ Anjum, Ubair. “Assessing the Need of Modern Education in Madrassah System: A Case Study of Madaris in Lahore.” *Arts and social sciences journal* 8 (2017): 1-8.

¹⁴ Qasmi Muhammad Sajid. “Madrassah Education Framework.” *Manak Publication* (2005).

¹⁵ Qamruddin. “Modernising Madrasahs.” *The Times of India, Bangalore* (1996).

and reforms to improve Madrassah¹⁶. One researcher explained aspects of Madrassah Education including 'Ilm and Islam'¹⁷. A researcher conducted a study on Madrassah education and emphasized the need of modern education. She spoke about supporting education for women and their freedom¹⁸. A study was conducted to understand the safety of Madrassah teachers in Belgaum district in the current situation. An exploratory method was used to collect data. Research showed that Madrassah teachers were self-sufficient and able to support themselves¹⁹. A study has been conducted on Madrassah Daawah Al- Islamiyyat, Nigeria with the focus on its establishment, history, management system-organizational structure, finance and physical facilities and the problems confronting the Madrassah²⁰. One researcher described the various roles played by Madrassah in the education and empowerment of Muslims. The author sheds light on the various challenges faced by them in today's world. It has been suggested that the educational role of madrassas and universities in Pakistan needs to be reorganized. To solve this problem, the government changed the law to improve education in madrassas. The Pakistani government has taken steps to reform to support Madrassah education²¹.

In comparison, various studies are conducted on curriculum of Universities in Pakistan. Curriculum at Universities constructs students' national identities in Pakistan. A study took a holistic view of curriculum and estimates how the written curriculum is operationalized in Universities and how students use curricular content and experiences in making sense of themselves as Pakistani²². A researcher studied curriculum of Islamic studies in Universities and Board of Wifaq ul Madaris al Arabia Pakistan. The selected institutions were University of Karachi, Punjab University, IIUI, AIOU at national level and at international level the Universities were Al-Azhar University Egypt and Islamic University of Madinah. This study analyzed the Universities and their curriculum at higher levels and found drawbacks and comparisons²³. Curriculum is an important input of education for learning to

¹⁶ Wasey Akhtarul. *Madrassahs in India: Trying to be relevant* (Global Media, 2005), chap. 2, <https://indioclub.com/products/17751-madrassas-in-india-trying-to-be-relevant>

¹⁷ Sikand Yoginder. *Bastions of the Believers: Madrassahs and Islamic Education in India* (Penguin Global, 2006), 1-400.

¹⁸ Jhingram Saral, First Edition., *Madrassah Education in Modern India* (Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2010), 1-424.

¹⁹ Pathan Ziya and Mujawar. "Sustainability of Madarasa Teachers: A Case Study of Belgaum District." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4 (2012): 26-31.

²⁰ Ibrahim SB. "Knowledge and Utilization of Information Technology among Health Care Professionals and Students in Ile-Ife, Nigeria: A Case Study of a University Teaching Hospital." *Journal Medical Internet Research* 6, No. 45 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.6.4.e45>

²¹ Bukhari Syed Rashad and Rahman Khalid. "Pakistan: Religious education and institutions." *The Muslim World* 96, No. 1(2006): 323-339.

²² Naureen Durrani. "Schooling the 'other': the representation of gender and national identities in Pakistani curriculum texts, Compare." *A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 38, No. 5 (2008): 595-610, DOI: 10.1080/03057920802351374

²³ Shafiq Muhammad. "Madrassas Reforms in Pakistan: A Critical Appraisal of Present Strategies and Future Prospect." *Journal of Educational Research* 22, No. 2(2019): 152-168.

happen in any University. It covers arrangements for the development as well as the learning needs of students²⁴.

Reviewing the literature, the studies on curriculum have been conducted and they have agreed to review curriculum. This research is aimed at finding the difference between Islamic curriculum taught at Madrassah and University in Pakistan.

1.3 Statement of the Problem:

The study aims to find the difference between the curriculums of both education systems i.e. University and Madrassah. Looking at these two, it is observed that University curriculum is systematic and encourages students to study maintaining international standards whereas curriculum of Madrassah is providing free Islamic education taught by their Ulamas which is not systematic. There is a dire need to analyze both curriculums as to extract the best from them to fill the gap between University and Madrassah. Due to such difference, conflicts arise in the society at intellectual, social, economic, political and even personal level, hence destroying the unity of nation.

1.4 Research Questions:

The study has following research questions:

1. Which type of curriculum is taught at BS level in Universities and Madrassahs in Pakistan?
2. What strategies are to be taken to harmonize curriculums of both education systems?

1.5 Research Objectives:

The study has following objectives:

1. To analyze the curriculum taught at graduate level of University and Madrassah in Pakistan.
2. To suggest strategies in harmonizing the curriculums of both education systems.

2. Methodology:

This research is descriptive in nature. This research aims to describe phenomenon of the difference between two education systems in Pakistan. Qualitative data collection approach is applied through panel discussion. This study is conducted in three phases: conceptual framework, data collection through focused group panel discussions and data presentation and analysis. In *first phase*, concept of research was defined and variable of study was identified i.e. curriculum. In *second phase*, data was collected through panel discussion. For the purpose, seven Universities and Seven

²⁴ Majeed Azeem. "Key Reforms for Quality Improvement in Education: [New Interventions in Curricula and Textbooks]." *Joint Education Adviser Ministry of Education* (2008):1-11.

Madrassahs were selected from seven cities i.e. Peshawar, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Muzaffarabad, Malakand, Sargodha and Faisalabad. From each city, one University and one Madrassah was selected. The selected institutes were: Sheikh Zahid Islamic Center University Peshawar and Jamia Junadia Peshawar, Punjab University Lahore and Jamia Lahore Al Islamia Markaz al Bait al Ateeq Lahore, Islamia University Bahawalpur and Dar-ul-Uloom Bahawalpur, University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Jamia Muhammadia Muzaffarabad, University of Malakand and Jamia Muhamadi Qadari Gul Abad Chakra (male) Malakand, University of Sargodha, Jamia Sargodha (Male) & Jamia Ilmia Madrassah Al Banaat Sargodha (Female) & The University of Faisalabad and Jamia Taleem ul Quran o Hadith Albanat (Female) Faisalabad. Panel discussions were conducted city-wise. The number of scholars were invited from selected University and Madrassah. All the invited scholars were males. The invited scholars were the participants of panel discussion. Scholars were asked open-ended questions to discuss the difference of curriculum. In the *third phase*, data was analyzed out of the panel discussions.

3. Results Findings and Conclusion:

The study aimed to find the difference in curriculums taught at BS level of Universities and Madrassah. The results of the question are discussed here after panel discussions in seven cities.

3.1 Curriculum taught at University and Madrassah:

After conducting survey, the scholars agreed that students of University are learning curriculum which contains Islamic and Science subjects, both. They study more subjects of Islam as compared to Science subjects as core courses. In comparison, the students of Madrassah study curriculum containing only Islamic subjects. They do not learn English language other than Arabic language along with Computer subject. The Panel discussion found that Universities are essential part of the education system in Pakistan with proper learning and training. It is governed by the government. Undergraduate programs are either of 2 or 4 years. In Pakistan, a bachelor's degree is essential for higher education. The curriculum of University is designed by the Federal Board or University boards that are meant to prepare them for examinations. In comparison, Madrassah curriculum includes Quran, Hadith, Seerah, Fiqh, Logic and Syntax etc. They are operating under variant federations i.e. Wafaq. The syllabus/curriculum taught in Madrassah of Pakistan is called "Dars e Nizami". This curriculum is attributed to Mulana Nizam ud Din Suharvi. The discussion added that the educational stream provided by Madrassah is the source of Islamic education. They are independent and funded by charities, foundations or NGOs. The syllabus includes teaching Quran, Hadith, Fiqh and Tajweed. Additional courses are taught in the first five years, and the Quran and Hadith are taught in the last two years. In

addition, training is provided in horse riding, writing, martial arts, writing, athletics, drama and other subjects. Madrassah cannot prepare students for modern job market. But in Pakistan, there is no other institute that is providing Islamic education other than Madrassah. The education system of Madaris is basically the system of Deeniyat. Shariyat is being taught. It includes prayer/worship, dealings, social studies, politics, economics, issue related to Nikkah and Talaq, roles and responsibilities of government and public, trade, heritage, testament as well as all aspects of life. This system was established to enforce Islamic law and order. Therefore, the Quran, Hadith and Sharia are the main sources of this system.

The similarity among them is the study of Islam, Quran, Hadith and Fiqh. Both institutes are devoted to teach Islam and enabling students to learn as much as they can help. It includes Quran, Hadith and Sharia. The course of BS in Islamic Studies and Madrassah Islamic course has been established to educate a generation of Islamic scholars and leaders. The differences lie among the two curriculums. Madrassah provides more adequate knowledge of Islam as compared to University because University teaches science subjects along with the Islamic subjects. The learning environment at University is more effective. The University provides students with quality classrooms, computer labs, offices, study and study centers, and doctoral professors. The environment of learning is more effective in University s compared to Madrassah.

3.2 Steps/Strategies to create Harmony:

The scholars agreed that improvements are needed to fill the gap between the two streams of education as both are inclined to teach Islam. Harmonizing curriculums of both education system is necessary by devising a single/shared curriculum by extracting the best from each institute in order to fill the gap. According to scholars, curriculum of BS Islamic Studies at University level must be improved with reference to Islamic subjects. They thought certain essays from curriculum of Madrassah must be added in their curriculum of BS Islamic Studies. In comparison, curriculum of Madrassah must also be improved with reference to science subjects. They thought Science subjects from curriculum of Universities must be added in their curriculum. They agreed to merge various good aspects of both the curriculums to improve the standard of curriculum for Islamic Studies. As a result, shared/single curriculum can be devised to harmonize both education systems.

According to the scholars of panel, the current syllabus is not enough for combating or answering doubts and rebellious activities. There are gaps in both the curriculum. The curriculum of University includes subjects related to Islam as well as science subjects. But to some extent, this curriculum is not providing adequate knowledge of Islam as it is practiced in Madrassah. It is noted

that Madrassah is more effective in learning Islam. But Madrassah is lacking behind in technology and updated curriculum. Graduates of Madrassah do not know using computer science, internet, social media, software and applications that are needed to compete with the international world. In comparison, University students are skilled in such technologies. So, it is concluded that good aspects of the curriculum must be compiled and shared to form new curriculum. For harmonizing curriculums, scholars suggested to add certain essays from curriculum of Shadat al Alia and Shadat al Almiya in the curriculum of BS in Universities to create harmony. And in the curriculum of Madrassah, science subjects must be added so that students of Madrassah should know how to use computer, internet and social media to research and to update themselves about the contemporary world. They should make assignments, learn various software and must do potential jobs to earn their bread.

Harmonizing the curriculum, few suggestions were given by scholars of University and Madrassah:

1. Dialogue: Promoting open dialogue between University and Madrassah representatives. This makes it easier to create understanding with common goals.
2. Determination of Learning Outcomes: It refers a joint determination of learning outcomes associated with University and Madrassah education.
3. Planning of Curriculum: Conducting a qualitative analysis of existing curriculum taught at University and Madrassah to identify areas of convergence and divergence. This will help identify opportunities for collaboration.
4. Bridging Programs: Bridging programs or transfer programs must be designed to provide Madrassah graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to transition to University education.
5. Interdisciplinary Approach: Encouraging collaboration in University and Madrassah curricula.
6. Feedback: Establishing a process for ensuring ongoing evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.
7. Promoting exchange: Organizing exchanges to enable students and teachers in University and Madrassah to interact and learn from each other. This helps improve understanding and build relationships based on mutual respect.

4. Conclusion:

The study concluded that to create harmony of curriculum of University and Madrassah, single/shared curriculum must be designed by extracting the best from each institute in order to fill the gap. Universities in Pakistan are equipped with computers/latest technology and they teach computer applications at BS level i.e. Word, Excel and PowerPoint but Madrassahs do not teach such subjects.

Computer must be taught as a subject at Madrassah as to help them to equip with digital media, social media, internet and mobile applications. It is concluded that at BS level in Universities, certain essays from curriculum of Shadat al Alia and Shadat al Almiya must be added in the curriculum of BS in Universities to create harmony. As a result, the students from both the institutes will have same status after graduation.

5. Recommendations:

The recommendations of the research work are as follows:

1. It is necessary to involve the specialists in the educational curricula when devising the curriculum in order to improve educational process in Pakistan.
2. This study will help other Universities, besides seven selected cities for the study, in Pakistan to compare the curriculums.
3. Based on the findings of this study, comparative studies can also be conducted on private Universities in Pakistan.
4. For implementation and further research on curriculum comparison, take exhibited suggestions by the results into account.
5. Comparative research on other disciplines may also be conducted in the future.