

## **Revitalizing Alia Madrasah Education Through the Integration of Pedagogy and Spirituality**

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### **ARTICLE INFORMATION**

*The Faculty Journal of Arts*  
Rajshahi University  
Special Volume-7  
ISSN: 1813-0402 (Print)

Received : 30 January 2025  
Received in revised: 08 April 2025  
Accepted: 16 March 2025  
Published: 25 October 2025

Keywords:  
Alia Madrasah Education,  
Higher Education, Integration,  
Pedagogy, Spirituality, Possibility.

### **ABSTRACT**

The integration of pedagogy and spirituality is essential for revitalizing Alia Madrasah education, which plays a crucial role in cultivating holistic and meaningful learning experiences for students. This conference seeks to explore innovative strategies that merge educational methodologies with spiritual development, ensuring that students not only acquire academic knowledge but also nurture their moral and ethical values. In contemporary educational landscapes, there is a pressing need to adapt traditional teaching practices to meet the challenges of today's world. By incorporating spiritual elements into the pedagogical framework, educators can create a more engaging and inclusive environment that promotes critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility among students. This approach not only enhances academic performance but also fosters well-rounded individuals who are equipped to contribute positively to society. Key themes of the conference will include the implementation of best practices that blend curriculum content with spiritual teachings, the role of educators as facilitators of both knowledge and character formation, and the influence of community engagement in reinforcing these ideals. Through collaborative workshops, presentations, and discussions, participants will share insights and experiences, aiming to develop practical guidelines for integrating these two vital dimensions of education. Join us in this exploration of how revitalizing Alia Madrasah education can inspire a new generation of learners who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually enriched and socially conscious. Together, we can pave the way for a transformative educational experience that honors both academic excellence and spiritual growth.

### **Introduction**

Alia Madrasah education in Bangladesh is a unique educational approach that combines Islamic tradition with a commitment to providing a comprehensive education encompassing both religious and worldly knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Historically, Madrasahs have been instrumental in disseminating religious teachings, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to the intellectual growth of Muslim communities in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>2</sup> Addressing pedagogical gaps within the Madrasah education system is a critical challenge for the advancement of Alia Madrasah education. Pedagogy plays a vital role in spiritual education by shaping the transmission of knowledge, cultivating a deeper understanding of faith, promoting ethical and moral development, and preparing students for improved education.<sup>3</sup>

### **Historical Context and Evolution of Alia Madrasah Education**

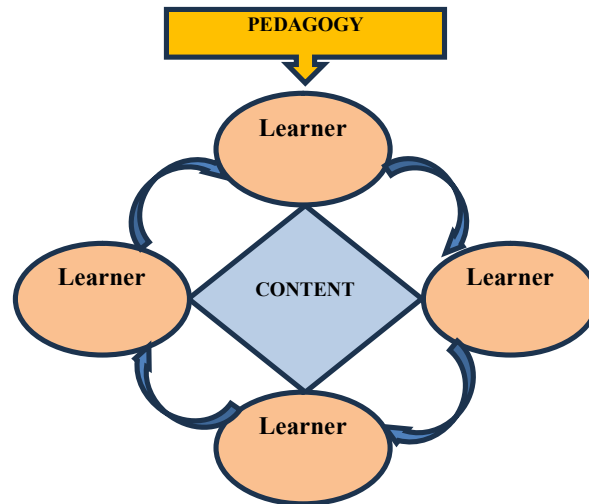
The history of Madrasah education in Indian sub-continent can be traced back to 711, following Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh. While the origins of Madrasah education, in India coincide with this conquest, the establishment of the first institutional Madrasah occurred at a later date.<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Ghori's establishment of the Turkish Empire in India in the late 1200s was followed by the founding of a Madrasah in Ajmer.<sup>5</sup> Muslim rule was first established in Bengal in 1205 AD with Bakhtiyar Khilji. In 1253 AD, Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah unified the entirety of Bengal, forming the independent Muslim state of Bengal. This state persisted for approximately 320 to 326 years under the Delhi Sultanate.<sup>6</sup>

In the Mughal empire madrasah educated people appointed as Kázis, held positions in both Civil and Domestic Courts. Even within legal proceedings administered by trained English officers, these Muhammadan Law experts served as authoritative advisors on legal matters.<sup>7</sup> In 1765, Bengal had 80,000 Maktabas and Madrasahs, supported by lakhraj land grants, which constituted one-fourth of Bengal's total land.<sup>8</sup> Over the subsequent 200 years, the East India Company progressively enacted legislation and pressured Hindu landlords and subjects to divest these institutions of their lakhraj holdings. Consequently, by 1965, the number of Maktabas and Madrasahs in Bengal had declined to fewer than two thousand. Concurrently, the British administration dismantled the existing Madrasah education system and established the Calcutta Alia Madrasah in 1780, with the stated purpose of providing religious instruction to Muslims. Following the partition of the country in 1947, the Alia Madrasah was relocated from Calcutta to Dhaka.<sup>9</sup>

### Pedagogy

The term 'pedagogy' derives from the Ancient Greek word παιδαγωγία (paidagōgia), which translates to 'the art of leading a child.' This term is a composite of παις (pais), meaning 'child,' and ἄγω (ágō), meaning 'to lead.'<sup>10</sup> In ancient Greece, the term 'paidagōgos' (the root of pedagogy) referred to a male slave who accompanied young boys to and from school, often acting as a tutor or guide.<sup>11</sup>

Pedagogy is a field of study concerned with the methods and practices of teaching, aiming to facilitate effective and engaging learning experiences. It is a term that refers to the method of how teachers teach, in theory and in practice. The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept. Educators employ pedagogical principles to structure and present educational content in a manner that enhances student interest and comprehension.



There are 5 different Pedagogical Approaches:

1. The constructivist approach,
2. The collaborative approach,
3. The reflective approach,
4. The integrative approach, and, finally,
5. The inquiry-based approach.

### Spirituality

The abstract nature of spirituality makes it difficult to define precisely.<sup>12</sup> Spirituality entails the understanding that our lives possess significance within a framework that transcends a commonplace, daily existence focused solely on biological needs that foster self-interest and aggression. It signifies the recognition that we constitute a meaningful component of a purposeful unfolding of life within the cosmos.<sup>13</sup> In essence, spirituality involves acknowledging a feeling, sense, or belief in a reality greater than oneself, something inherent to the human experience that goes beyond sensory perception, and that the greater entity of which we are a part is cosmic or divine in nature.

Spirituality can provide guidance during difficult periods, offering stability and a sense of grounding. It may facilitate the discovery of personal fulfillment, foster optimism for the future, and promote feelings of empowerment. Furthermore, spirituality is frequently associated with the cultivation of gratitude.<sup>14</sup> Research indicates a significant positive correlation between academic achievement (as measured by both GPA and course grades) and spirituality, as reported through frequency of prayer.<sup>15</sup> Students who reported more frequent prayer and followed the rituals of his own religion throughout the week demonstrated higher levels of academic performance.<sup>16</sup>

### **Challenges Currently Affecting Alia Madrasah Education**

Alia Madrasah education in Bangladesh faces a set of challenges they are categorized as follows:

**Curriculum Challenges:** The curriculum and teaching-learning procedures within Alia Madrasah education necessitate comprehensive reform. To ensure the continued viability of this education system, a thorough revision of its curriculum and the teaching-learning process is essential.<sup>17</sup> Madrasah graduates face limited employment prospects. This constrained employability is largely attributable to inconsistencies within the education system and its less relevant curriculum.<sup>18</sup> Another impediment to successful reform in Alia Madrasah education stems from the divergent perspectives of reformists, who aim to adapt the system to Western secular models, and traditionalists, who advocate for the incorporation of modern education within an Islamic framework..<sup>19</sup>

**Pedagogical Challenges:** Teaching practices within the Alia Madrasah education system are characterized by a lack of contemporary or effective instructional methods. Madrasahs predominantly employ rote learning, memorization, and lecture-based instruction. The application of modern pedagogical techniques is limited, and the restricted access to teaching aids, technology, and interactive materials impedes pedagogical development.

**Resource Challenges:** Many Madrasahs suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure,<sup>20</sup> such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities.<sup>21</sup> Many Madrasahs operate with limited financial resources, making it difficult to invest in infrastructure, technology, and teacher training. Access to computers, internet connectivity, and other technological resources are often limited, particularly in rural areas. Attracting and retaining qualified teachers is a challenge,<sup>22</sup> particularly in subjects like science, mathematics, and English.

**Societal Challenges:** Negative connotations contribute to a perception of Madrasahs as inferior educational institutions, inadequate facilities, low-performing teachers, and weak administrative oversight. Parents express concern that Madrasah graduates may have limited access to opportunities available to students from other educational backgrounds, such as employment and higher education at universities or colleges.<sup>23</sup> Across all socioeconomic and cultural levels, families tend to prioritize investment in the education of sons over daughters, as education is widely viewed as a primary means of socioeconomic advancement for their children.<sup>24</sup>

### **A Framework for Revitalization: Integrating Pedagogy and Spirituality**

To revitalize Alia Madrasah education, this paper proposes a framework based on the integration of contemporary pedagogy and spirituality and they are:

**Curriculum Reform:** Curricula should be regularly revised to integrate the latest advancements in diverse fields, including the sciences and technology, development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and problem-solving abilities. Interdisciplinary learning should be promoted to enable students to connect with various subjects. Emphasis should be placed on cultivating strong language skills in Arabic, Bengali, and English to enhance students' communication proficiencies.

**Pedagogical Innovation:** **a.** Teachers should employ active learning strategies, such as group discussions, project-based learning, and inquiry-based learning, to engage students and promote deeper understanding. **b.** Instruction should be student-centered, focusing on the

individual needs and learning styles of each student. **c.** Technology should be effectively integrated into the classroom to enhance teaching and learning. This includes the use of computers, multimedia resources, and online learning platforms. **d.** Teachers should focus on developing students' higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and creation, rather than simply memorization. **e.** Students should be encouraged to be creative and innovative in their thinking and problem-solving. **f.** Ongoing professional development programs should be provided for teachers to equip them with the latest pedagogical skills and knowledge.

**Cultivation of Spiritual Values:** **a.** The curriculum should place a strong emphasis on ethical and moral development, fostering in students a sense of responsibility, compassion, and integrity. **b.** Islamic teachings should be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum, not just religious studies, to provide a holistic and values-based education. **c.** Students should be encouraged to engage in spiritual reflection and self-examination, to deepen their connection with their faith and develop a strong sense of purpose. **d.** The educational process should aim to develop students' character and leadership skills, preparing them to be responsible and ethical leaders in their communities. **e.** Creating a positive and supportive learning environment is essential for students' spiritual and intellectual growth. This includes fostering a sense of community, respect, and mutual understanding.

**Strengthening Institutional Capacity:** Initiatives should focus on enhancing the physical infrastructure of Madrasahs, encompassing classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities. Adequate resources, including textbooks, teaching materials, and technology should be provided to Madrasahs. To attract and retain qualified teachers, attractive incentives and professional training should be offered. The administrative efficiency should be improved to facilitate the effective and seamless delivery of education.

**Expected Outcomes and Benefits:** The integration of pedagogy and spirituality in Alia Madrasah education is expected to yield a wide range of positive outcomes and benefits, including: **a.** By adopting modern pedagogical techniques and developing a relevant curriculum, Madrasahs can provide a higher quality of education. **b.** A revitalized Madrasah education can empower students by fostering their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, and by instilling in them a sense of confidence. **c.** By aligning the curriculum with job market and providing relevant skills, Madrasahs can enhance the employability for their graduates. **d.** By producing well-rounded individuals who are both knowledgeable and ethical, Madrasah education can contribute to the development of Bangladesh. **e.** The integration of spirituality into the curriculum will ensure that students develop a strong connection to their cultural and spiritual heritage. **f.** By demonstrating their commitment to quality education and producing successful graduates, Madrasahs can improve their image and gain greater recognition and acceptance from society.

## Conclusion

Alia Madrasah education stands at a critical juncture. By embracing a framework that integrates contemporary pedagogy with a strong foundation in Islamic spirituality, these institutions can overcome the challenges they face and emerge as vibrant centers of learning that empower students, strengthen communities, and contribute to the progress of Bangladesh. The revitalization of Alia Madrasah education is not merely an educational imperative; it is an investment in the future of Bangladesh, ensuring that its citizens are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world, while remaining true to their rich cultural and spiritual heritage. It is a call for a holistic approach to education, one that nourishes both the mind and the soul, and prepares students to be not only successful in their chosen fields but also responsible, ethical, and engaged members of society.

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