

**Community
Association of
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**A study on
CONTEMPORARY
MADRASAH EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN SRI LANKA**

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CONTEMPORARY MADRASAH EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN SRI LANKA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACJU	– All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama
CAP	– Community Association of Professionals
ICT	– Information Communication Technology
MAB	– Madrasah Accreditation Board
MES	– Madrasah Education System
DMRCA	– Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs

DEFINITIONS OF ARABIC TERMS

Ahadiyya: This word refers to the Islamic religious institutions or system, where children taught basic tenets of Islam on weekends. This is a similar setup like *Daham Pasal* of our country and these are held in schools or Masjids or other places. These are registered with Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs, which is under the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and follow the syllabus framework prepared by Department.

Ashāb al-Suffah: The companions of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and dedicated learners, who were in Masjid Al-Munawwarah in Medina.

Fiqh: Fiqh is Islamic jurisprudence. Fiqh is often described as the human understanding of the Sharia, that is human understanding of the divine Islamic law as revealed in the Quran and the Sunnah.

Hadith / Hadees: This consists of, firstly all the words, counsels and oral teachings of the Prophet (PBUH), and secondly his actions, his works and daily practices, and thirdly his silence on particular matters, which could imply a tacit approval on his part of any individual act committed by his disciples¹. This is the second source for religious law and moral guidance after the Quran.

Hajj: The greater Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, which takes place in the last month of the Lunar Calendar and which all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lifetime if they can afford to do so. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Hifl Madrasah: This word refers to the Islamic religious institutions, where students are taught to memorize Quran. These institutions are also registered with Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs, which is under the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs.

Imam: The person or religious scholar, who leads prayers in a mosque². In this context, Imams may lead Islamic worship services, serve as community leaders, and provide religious guidance.

Ittihadul Madaris: Federation of Sri Lanka Arabic Colleges.

¹ Cooray, L.J.M. (2003). An Introduction to the Legal System of Sri Lanka. P 131.

²<https://www.definitions.net/definition/imam> (Accessed date: 10.02.2020)

Katheeb: Katheeb is a person (Islamic Religious Scholar), who delivers the sermon (khutbah) (literally "narration"), during the Friday Jumu'ah prayer and Eid prayers³.

Kitab Madrasah: This word refers to the Arabic colleges as mentioned above, where students are taught the sciences of Quran and Hadith in detail for 5 to 7 years in producing Islamic religious scholars. These institutions are registered with the Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs, which is under the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and follow the syllabus frame work prepared by the Department of Examinations for Al-Alim Examinations, Parts-1 and 2.

Madrasah: Madrasah is an educational institution, particularly for Islamic religious instruction⁴. The word is variously transliterated Madrasah, Medresa, Madrassa, Madraza, Medrese, etc. In the West, the word usually refers to a specific type of religious school or college for the study of the Islamic religion, though this may not be the only subject studied. In Sri Lanka, the word usually refers to Arabic Colleges, which teach sciences of Islam in detail and produce Islamic religious scholars.

Masjid: This is a place of worship for Muslims⁵. Mosques commonly serve as locations for prayer, Ramadan vigils, funeral services, religious ceremonies and marriage.

Quran Madrasah (known as Maktab or Pallikoodam): This word refers to the Primary Islamic religious institutions, where children are taught basic tenets of Islam on weekdays. Mostly, these are held in Masjids and few in other places, if there is no sufficient space in Masjids. Many Madrasahs have been registered with the Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs (DMRCA); which functions under the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and follow the syllabus frame work, prepared by the Department.

Quran: The Prophet (PBUH) dictated to his amanuenses the word of God as revealed to him by the Angel Gabriel. The collection of these recitations is the Quran or Koran (meaning the recitation), the bedrock of Islamic law, and a 'book of exalted power': 'And indeed it is a book of exalted power. It is sent down by one

³<https://translation.babylon-software.com/english/Khateeb/> (Accessed date: 10.02.2020)

⁴<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/madrasah> (Accessed date: 10.02.2020)

⁵<https://www.lexico.com/definition/masjid>(Accessed date: 10.02.2020)

full of wisdom, worthy of all praise.’ Its chapters are of unequal length and its contents range over not only the ordinance of religion such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage, but also civil and criminal laws, personal laws, and the laws of succession and inheritance.⁶

Shari’ah: Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna), prescribing both religious and secular duties.

Thafseer/Tafsir: Tafsir (Tafsīr, lit. 'Interpretation') is the Arabic word for exegesis, usually of the Quran. An author of a Tafsir is a Mufassir. A Quranic Tafsir attempts to provide elucidation, explanation, interpretation, context or commentary for clear understanding and conviction of God's will.

Ulama: In Islam, the Ulama, (singular: ‘Ālim, "scholar", literally "the learned ones") are the guardians, transmitters, and interpreters of religious knowledge in Islam⁷. They are known as Islamic Religious Scholars and educated in Arabic Colleges (Madrasahs).

Umrah: The non-mandatory lesser pilgrimage made by Muslims to Mecca, which may be performed at any time of the year.

Ustha: This name was historically usually used for well-regarded teachers. It could also be translated into meaning ‘master’.

Waqf: an endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational, or charitable cause.

⁶ Weeramantry, C.J. (1998). Islamic Jurisprudence: An International Perspective. P 5.

⁷<https://www.definitions.net/definition/ulama>(Accessed date: 10.02.2020)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Madrasah Education has a long history in Sri Lanka. It had been in the country traditionally for several centuries in some form or the other. The Madrasah system, for the first time, had been established in an organized manner in 1870s. By the time Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, there were approximately 10 to 15 Madrasahs.

At present, there are 317 Madrasahs registered with the Department of Muslim Cultural Affairs. Madrasahs are started and managed by individuals and groups of people in different localities in Sri Lanka. Most of them are very small units with average of 50 students in numbers. The learning period of these Madrasahs are seven years, spent on learning Quran, Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence and related sciences.

The individuals and groups people, who started these Madrasahs, consider that they are performing a meritorious service to the betterment and enhancement of ethical, moral, religious understanding of the people and betterment of the nation as whole, which is greatly appreciable. The intention and perception of the founders are laudable. It transpired that a very few of them are managed reasonably well. In order to achieve the objective of producing high caliber *Ulama*, it is vital to make overall improvements.

The present study revealed that the current MES has several concerns such as formation/establishment, administration/management, curriculum and duration, effective teaching-learning and adequate facilities, student admission criteria and selection processes, infrastructure, recruitment of academic and other staff, retention and retirement entitlements of the staff, and lack of career prospects. Due to the above prevailing concerns as mentioned above, effective teaching and learning activities of MES is affected.

In order to advance effective teaching and learning activities of MES, and its future development, it is recommended to bring a central regulatory system to supervise and regularize MES by a statutory arrangement. Moreover, all MES should be brought under a Madrasah Accreditation Board (MAB), consisting of eminent scholars and reputed professionals. It is further recommended to introduce an operationalization plan to rearrange the categorization in terms of admission criteria, number, specialization of studies, and other relevant factors of Madrasahs and managed by a formally constituted Board of Management, under the purview of the MAB.