

# Political Economy of Madrassa Education in Bangladesh

*Genesis, Growth, and Impact*

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An in-depth politico-economic research into the madrassa education in Bangladesh has never been tried. What we have is a few and scanty studies that are inadequate to ensure informed policy guidelines for the madrassas; yet this are crucial for human capital formation.

This book provides a politico-economic sketch of the madrassa education system within the broader canvas of education system. An attempt has been made to uncover the essence of the core components of madrassa system in Bangladesh. These include critical issues like: growth of madrassas including students and teachers by type, and over time; curriculum; political affiliation of madrassa Management Committee members; financing; and status and constraint of female education. Furthermore, a rigorous analysis on demand and supply of madrassa education in terms of reasons for sending children to madrassa, employment opportunities, madrassa education in the modern world and current concerns about fundamentalism, and so forth, are part of this endeavor. In addition, a substantial portion of this book provides an analysis into the rise of Muslim scholarships and genesis of madrassa system, which sets the stage for understanding the madrassa education system in a historical continuum.

This book, based primarily on empirical analysis, reveals many thought provoking outcomes. Notable ones are: Every third student in Bangladesh is a madrassa student and so is the case with teachers implying a major imbalance in education system; students from economically insolvent and poor families are disproportionately highly concentrated in madrassas implying failure of State in ensuring poor people's access to mainstream public education; growth in madrassas (both number and students) is positively correlated with the presence of military-autocratic regimes (from 1947 to 2008) implying that lack of democracy distorts education system; unemployment rate of madrassa graduates is high, at 75 percent indicating wastage of national resources as well as creation of fertile ground for religion-based politics and associated extremism; estimated annual (2008) expenditures to run madrassas in Bangladesh is about US\$ 775 million. Finally, it is argued that State, in congruence with the Constitution, shall ensure poor people's unhindered access to mainstream education system; Government should think seriously about Madrassa reform with much emphasis on the Quomi system to expedite the process of human development and human capital formation necessary for establishing a secular, progressive and liberal democratic welfare state.