

## Epistemological Shift of Madrasa Students in Bangladesh: A Multi-Level Analysis

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**Abstract:** This study explores the epistemological shift (ESHIFT) of madrasa students at secondary, higher secondary and tertiary level of education in Bangladesh. Using snowball sampling technique, madrasa students shifted to general education- universities (120), colleges (50) and high schools (30)- were interviewed based on 7 point-Likert scale. In addition, 384 madrasa students at Alim level (equivalent to HSC) were also interviewed to know the plan of their ESHIFT at Tertiary Level. After collecting data, SPSS software (Windows Version-20) was used to analyse descriptive statistics. The study results reveal that most of the madrasa students in Bangladesh are interested to study general subjects for job purposes. Considering general education as to be market oriented, they are being shifted from their traditional education systems to general education. Thus, madrasa students are being shifted from theological/metaphysical to positive stage as theorized by Auguste Comte, the founding father of Sociology.

**Keywords:** Epistemological shift. Madrasa students at different levels of education in Bangladesh. Multi-Level Analysis

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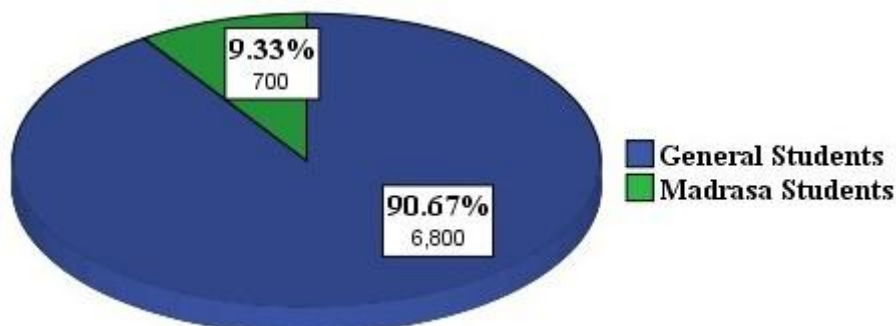
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### I. INTRODUCTION

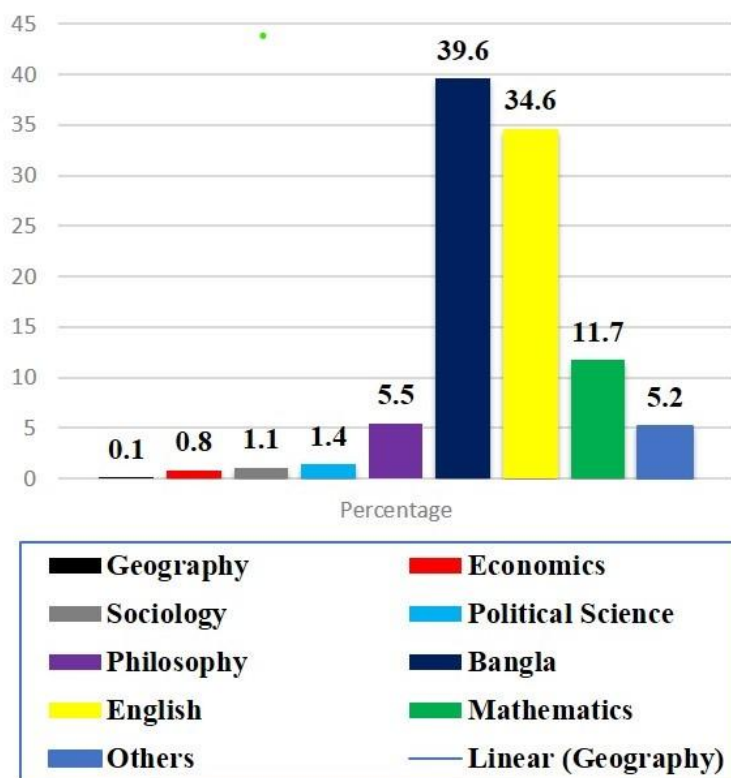
In Bangladesh, there are three conventional education systems: general, English medium and madrasa. The general and English medium curricula are established on scientific notion what is considered as the final stage of progress in *Comte's* philosophy (positive stage). On the contrary, madrasa education in Bangladesh rooted in the principles of the prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) is found to be shifting from the traditional curriculum. Traditionally, madrasa education was based on the dictates of the Quran and the hadith as well as the duties and responsibilities of a true Muslim. Azad (2017) called this traditional phase of madrasa education the *Comtean 'theological stage'* (Morning Tea, December 1). The next phase of madrasa education started from the British raj with the establishment of Calcutta alia madrasa. During that period, two types of madrasa education (*alia* and *qoumi* systems) were basically available in the Indian sub-continent. The *alia* system was *metaphysical* in *Comtean* terminology (i.e., a bridge between *theological* and *positive stage*) for the inclusion of both general subjects and religious subjects in the curriculum. On the other hand, the *qoumi* system was and is *theological*. Remarkably, despite the modification of *alia* system, the students of *alia* madrasa in Bangladesh are facing several problems. These problems can be analyzed from two perspectives: internal and external. The internal perspective identifies the problem of language and curriculum while the external one addresses the lack of government grants focusing infrastructural, staffing pattern, salary scale, management and absence of proper environment as well as academic and administrative shortcomings such as, shortage of expert teacher, technical education and training institution, problem of recognition and restricted job opportunity. It is notable that a significant portion of *alia* madrasa students are found to be shifted from their *metaphysical stage* to *positive stage* though the *alia* madrasa education systems in Bangladesh are yet to be shifted to *Comte's positive stage*. Epistemological shift (ESHIFT), here, does not indicate the term of philosophy but to the evolution of madrasa students from traditional and religious based madrasa education to the empirically need based scientific or general education. Azad (2017) linked this ESHIFT of madrasa students with Auguste Comte's '*Laws of Three Stages*' and defined as their evolution from *theological* to *positive stage* followed by *metaphysical* (mixture of religious and general education) *stage* (Morning Tea, December 1, 2017). The study views their evolution both physically and or mentally since some of them absorbed into general education for job purposes while others shifted from their heart. The significance of this ESHIFT will be evident from Dhaka University Admission Record, 2016. According to the Admission Record of the University of Dhaka (Session-2015), out of 7500 students getting admitted into different departments, 700 were madrasa-background students where 40 percent were enrolled in the department of Law (Graph-1). According to the statistics of the last admission test (held in

2017), 200 students got chance to get themselves admitted into the same university from merely one madrasa where most of them wanted to enroll in general subjects (Morning Tea, December 1, 2017). Barakat et al, (2011) and Barakat (2016) found that madrasa students were interested to study general subjects (Graph-2).



**Graph-1:** Distribution of Dhaka University Students Enrolled in General Subjects by Educational Background (Session-2015)

[Source: Adopted from (Azad, 2017)]



**Graph-2:** Distribution of Madrasa Students up to *Alim* by their Study Interests  
[Source: Adopted from (Azad, 2017)]

Under this circumstance, social researchers should know the magnitude of the epistemological shift of madrasa students in Bangladesh. Barakat et al, (2011) and Barakat (2016) was the pioneer to understand madrasa education from political economic perspective focusing genesis, growth and impact. In addition, he explored the study interest of madrasa students in Bangladesh. However, he did neither explore the trend of the ESHIFT of madrasa students in Bangladesh nor explain the root causes of their ESHIFT. On the other hand, Azad (2017) raised the issue of ESHIFT in his ‘Shifting Epistemology of Madrasa Students in Bangladesh: On the Way of Positive Stage’ (Morning Tea, December 01, 2017). Though Azad’s (2017) work was directly related to the present study, he did not rigorously explore the phenomenon at different levels of education.

### Research Objectives

The main objective of the research is to explore the magnitude of the epistemological shift of madrasa students at different levels of education. In this regard, the study explores the nature and magnitude of the ESHIFT of madrasa students at secondary, higher secondary and tertiary levels of education in Bangladesh.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Questionnaire Design

For collecting data, the study conducted a survey consisting of 5 sections. The first section covered the basic information of the study participants such as gender, age, family size, religion, and ethnicity. The other sections of the questionnaire were: (1) ESHIFT of madrasa students at Secondary Level; (2) ESHIFT of madrasa students at Higher Secondary Level; (3) Plan of ESHIFT of madrasa students at *Alim* Level of Education; and (4) ESHIFT of madrasa students at Tertiary Level of Education in Dhaka City. To explore the ESHIFT of madrasa students, the study used a 7 point-Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Somewhat Disagree=3, Neither Agree nor Disagree=4, Somewhat Agree=5, Agree=6 & Strongly Agree=7).

### Participants

The study was conducted in different levels of education. 120 madrasa background students ( $n_1$ ) got admitted into general subjects were drawn from Tertiary Level (3 Public & 2 Private Universities in Dhaka City). Other sample groups i.e.,  $n_2=384$ ,  $n_3=50$ ,  $n_4=30$  were respectively drawn from 4 *Alim* level madrasa, 5 colleges and 3 high schools (Table-1).

**Table-1: Sample Size Distribution**

Level of Sample	Name	n	Total
Tertiary Level Students Shifted from Madrasa to General Education	University of Dhaka	24	N <sub>1</sub> = 120
	Jahangirnagar University	24	
	Jagannath University	24	
	BRAC University	24	
	North South University	24	
Alim Level Madrasa Students	Tamirul Millat Kamil Madrasa	96	N <sub>2</sub> = 384
	Government Madrasa-e-Alia, Dhaka	96	
	Kazipara Siddiquia Fazil Madrasah	96	
	Tanjimul Ummah Alim Madrasah	96	
Higher Secondary Level Students Having Madrasa Background	Dhaka College	10	N <sub>3</sub> = 50
	Titumir College	10	
	Mirpur Bangla College	10	
	Residential Model College	10	
	Dhaka Ideal College	10	
Secondary Level Students Having Madrasa Background	Mirpur Bangla School	10	N <sub>4</sub> = 30
	Mohammadpur Government High School	10	
	Monipur High School	10	

### Data Analysis

After collecting data, SPSS Software (Windows Version-20) has been used to analyze data. In this regard, descriptive statistics with tabulation and graphical presentation have been done.

### Ethical Consideration

Voluntary sharing of the respondents as well as *confidentiality* of their information have been strictly maintained. While interviewing the respondents, force and coercion has also been avoided and their *privacy* has been safeguarded.

### III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### ESHIFT of Madrasa Students at Tertiary Level of Education

While measuring the magnitude of the ESHIFT of madrasa background students who got admitted into general subjects of both public and private universities of Bangladesh, the study conducted a pilot survey on 120 participants based on 7 point-Likert scale (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, somewhat disagree=3, neither agree nor disagree=4, somewhat agree=5, agree=6, strongly agree=7). When they were asked to tell if their epistemology had been shifted for job purposes, out of 120 students, 52.5 % students agreed with the idea; 25.8% were somewhat agree and 15% of strongly agree (Table-2). To know if their epistemology had been shifted from their heart or rational points of view, the responses were found to be somewhat different (Table-3).

**Table-2:** Magnitude of ESHIFT of Madrasa Students for Job Purposes

Magnitude of ESHIFT	n (%)
Strongly disagree=1	0 (0%)
Disagree=2	0 (0%)
Somewhat disagree=3	0 (0%)
Neither agree nor disagree=4	8 (6.7%)
Somewhat agree=5	31 (25.8%)
Agree=6	63 (52.5 %)
Strongly agree=7	18 (15%)

**Table-3:** Magnitude of ESHIFT of Madrasa Students from Rational View

Magnitude of ESHIFT	n (%)
Strongly disagree=1	0 (0%)
Disagree=2	3 (2.5%)
Somewhat disagree=3	25 (20.8%)
Neither agree nor disagree=4	10 (8.3%)
Somewhat agree=5	25 (20.8%)
Agree=6	43 (35.8 %)
Strongly agree=7	14 (11.7%)

#### ESHIFT of Madrasa Students at Alim Level Madrasa

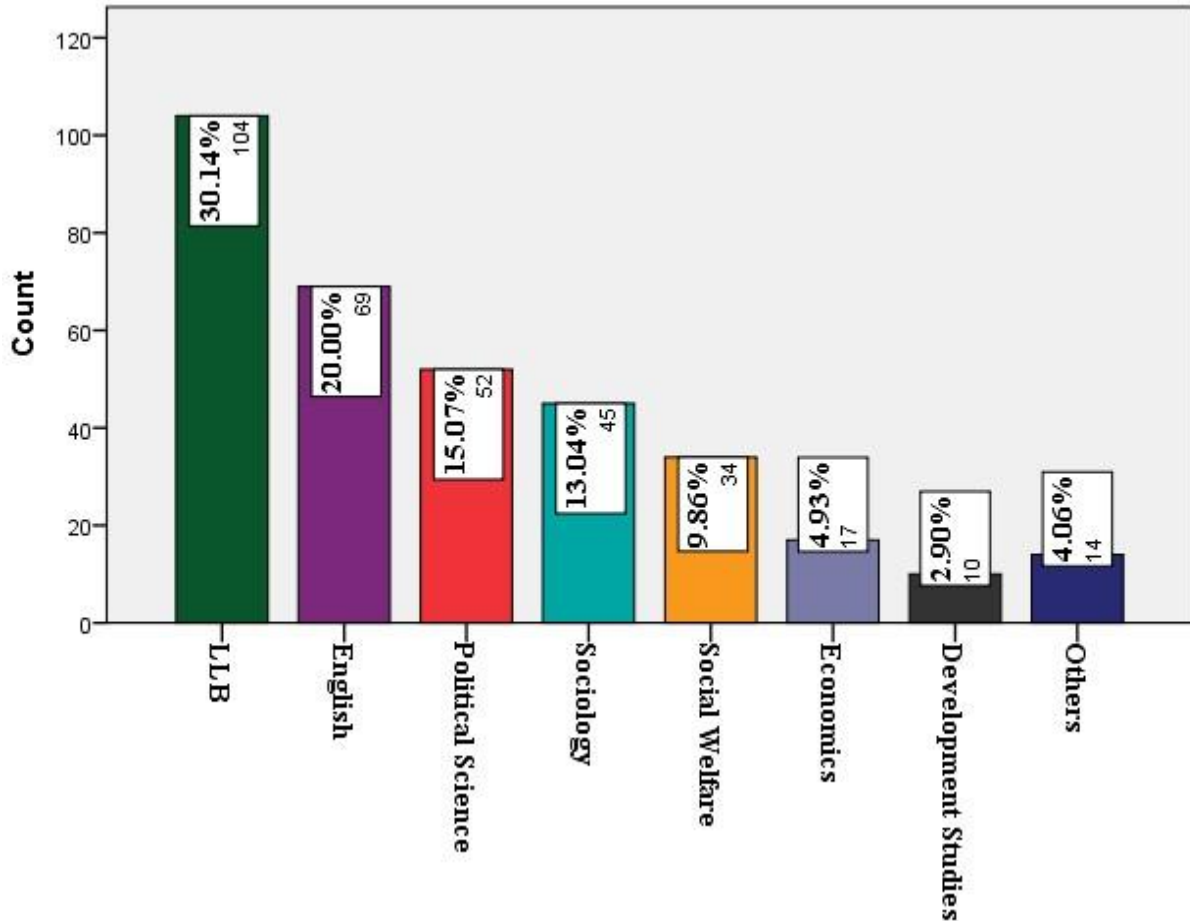
While understanding if the madrasa students who studied at Alim level, equivalent to HSC, wanted to be enrolled in general subjects (based on scientific principles) at university level after passing Alim examination, the study conducted a survey on 384 students in Dhaka city where they were asked to fill up the structured questionnaire. Out of 384 students, 345 of them (nearly 90 %) wanted to be enrolled in the general subjects (Graph-3). When the students who wanted to be enrolled in general subjects (90%) were asked to know of the reasons of their aims to be shifted to general education, the most of them (65.51%) reported that general education was market oriented (Graph-4).

#### ESHIFT of Madrasa Students at Higher Secondary Level of Education

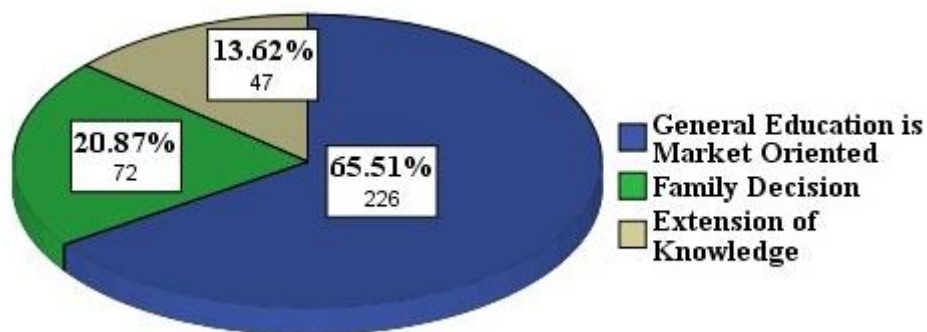
Another study was conducted on 50 madrasa students who got themselves admitted into intermediate level of education after passing Dakhil examination. When they were asked to tell the reasons for their epistemological shift, out of 50 students, nearly 65 % students thought that general education was market oriented (Graph-5).

**ESHIFT of Madrasa Students at Secondary Level of Education**

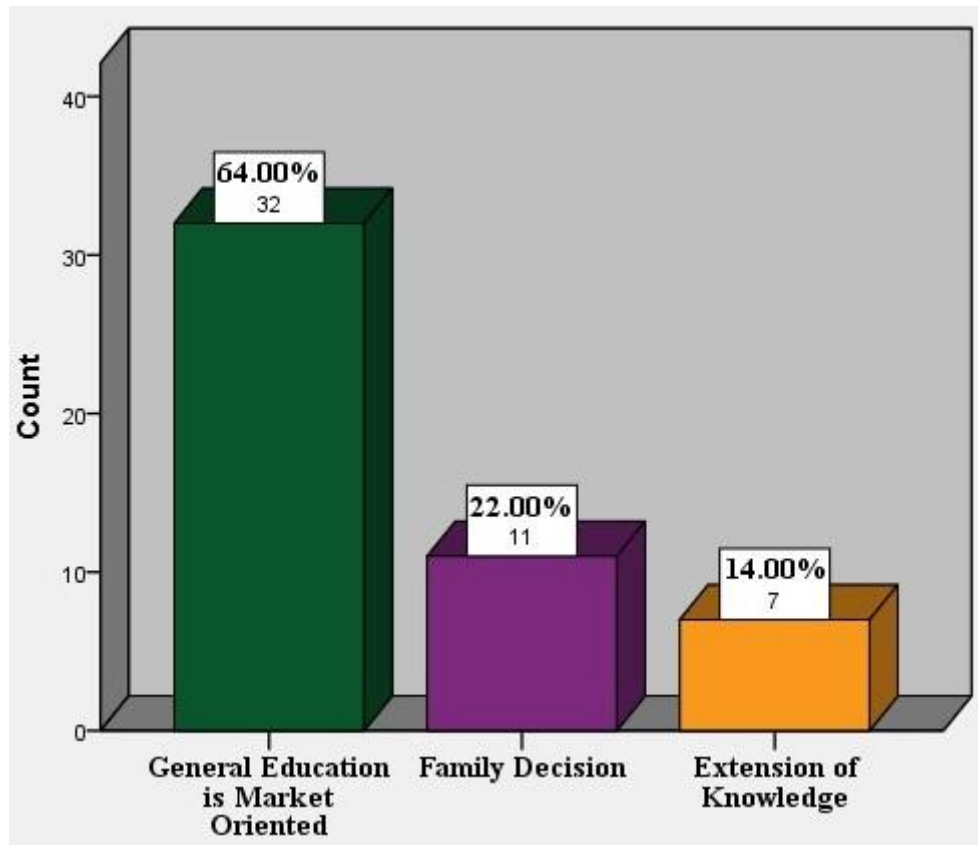
The study also conducted a survey on those madrasa students who had been shifted early from traditional madrasa education to general education. A total 30 students were interviewed to understand their ESHIFT. Being asked to give their opinions on their ESHIFT, most of the respondents 60 (%) reported that their ESHIFT was influenced by their family decision (Graph-6).



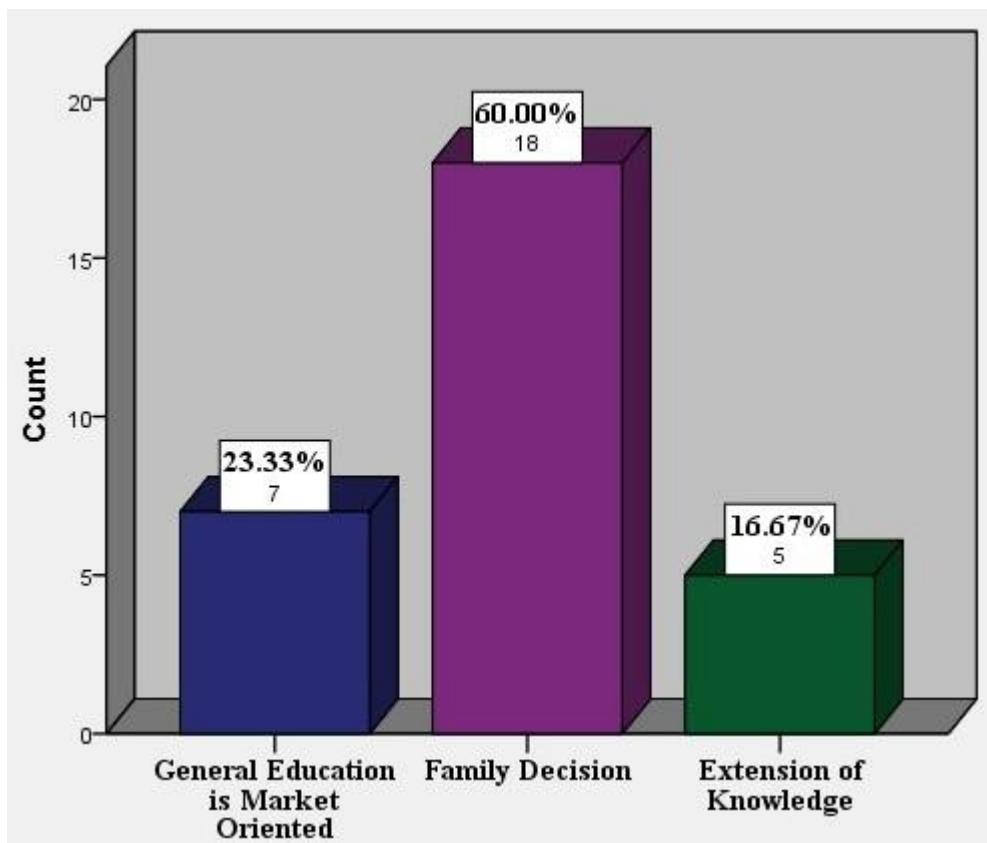
**Graph-3:** Distribution of Alim students by their study interests in general subjects



**Graph-4:** Reasons of aims to be shifted to general education at university level



**Graph-5:** Reasons for ESHIFT of madrasa students at intermediate level



**Graph-6:** Reasons for ESHIFT of madrasa students at secondary level

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

##### Discussion

This is the first study to explore the ESHIFT of madrasa students in Bangladesh at secondary, higher secondary and tertiary levels of education. In addition, the madrasa students at Alim level (equivalent to HSC) were also interviewed to know the plan of their ESHIFT at Tertiary Level. Most of the university students (52.5 %) absorbed into general education told that their epistemology had been shifted for job purposes. Furthermore, 35.8 percent of them reported that their epistemology had been shifted from rational points of view. The madrasa students who absorbed into general education at higher secondary level gave almost similar opinions. According to nearly 66 percent of them, the idea of general education as market oriented influenced most. On the other hand, the madrasa students who were early shifted to general education (i.e., at secondary level) reported that their decision was mostly influenced by their family guardians which accounts for 60 percent of the respondents. In addition, the madrasa students who studied at Alim level were also interviewed to know their future aim at absorbing into general education, where 90 percent were found to tell that they will be shifted to general education. As reported by them, 30.14 percent wanted to be enrolled in LLB followed by 20 percent in English, 15.07 percent in Political Science, 13.04 percent in Sociology, 9.86 percent in Social Welfare, 4.93 percent in Economics, 2.90 in Development Studies and 4.06 percent in other subjects.

##### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explores the nature and magnitude of the 'ESHIFT' of madrasa students at different levels of education in Bangladesh. According to the empirical data collected in the study, most of the madrasa students in Bangladesh are interested to study general subjects for job purposes. Considering general education as to be market oriented, they are being shifted from their traditional education systems to general education. Thus, madrasa students are being shifted from theological/metaphysical to positive stage as theorized by Auguste Comte, the founding father of Sociology. However, the study as an underexplained phenomenon has some recommendations for future researchers. First, the future researchers should conduct explanatory research works in this field. Secondly, researchers should make database by studying on this phenomenon. Finally, sociologists of Bangladesh should contribute to the pitch of Sociology of Education by creating a mega research project of the ESHIFT of madrasa students in Bangladesh.

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