The Traditional Islamic Curriculum of *Pallidars* in Malabar: A Content Analysis of *'Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar'*

Hassan Shareef K.P[1*], Shebeeb Khan P[2]
[1,2] SAFI Institute of Advanced Study (Autonomous), Kerala, India
[1]drhassan@siasindia.org, [2]drshabeebkhan@siasindia.org
*Correspondence

Abstract

The Muslim community of Malabar, South India has placed significant emphasis on Islamic education since the advent of Islam into the land. In order to impart Islamic education, Muslims of Kerala instituted different systems such as *Ottupalli* (*kuttab*, for basic learning of Islamic teachings), *Pallidars* (Mosque Centered Higher Learning System) in medieval periods. The article is a detailed academic study on the traditional Islamic curriculum of *Pallidars* in Malabar, focusing on the content analysis of the book *'Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar'* by Sayyid Abdu-Rahman Al Azhari. It explores the historical evolution of Islamic education in Malabar, the significance of *Pallidars* as mosque-based educational institutions, and the curricula that shaped traditional religious education in the region. Key findings include the identification of three distinct curricula—*Ma'bari, Fakhriyya, and Nizamiya*—and their historical relevance. The study also highlights the flexibility and accessibility of the curriculum of *Pallidars* education, its connection to global Islamic learning centers and its impact in shaping the curriculum. It emphasizes the need for further research into the medieval curriculum and its impact on contemporary Islamic education in Malabar.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Malabar, Pallidars, Curriculum, Content Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Studies in the areas of transformation of curriculum of traditional Islamic education systems, while rooted in specific regions and practices, are showing some emerging paradigms in the field of educational research.[1] Islamic education is a holistic approach that combines spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical growth. It has historically influenced knowledge, academic endeavors, and cultural progress in various fields, including science, mathematics, literature, and philosophy.[2] It aims to cultivate a

---

[1] Subhan Subhan et al., "Towards a Tawhidic Framework in Islamic Higher Education Curriculum: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Malaysia," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 12, no. 2 (2024): 333–70, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v12i2.28676.

[2] Samsul Ma'arif et al., "Pesantren Entrepreneurship: Harmonization of the Theories of Kasb Asy'ariyah and Locus of Control on Strengthening Santripreneur," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 31–64, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.17404.

well-rounded character based on values of fairness, empathy, and moral behavior. In the current globalized era, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive curriculum that combines enduring principles with contemporary educational approaches and societal demands.[3] A holistic curriculum combines traditional Islamic studies with modern approaches, fostering a comprehensive understanding of both religious and moral principles.[4] This approach promotes active involvement with local and global society, enabling students to contribute to the world while upholding their Islamic identity[5].

The role of mosques is very crucial in extending academic and educational dimensions of the Muslim communities of medieval world.[6] The evolution of the curriculum of mosque-centric education is revealing valuable insights into contemporary educational theory and practice of traditional Muslim communities.[7] Significant changes took place over time in the pattern of curriculum of Islamic education due to various factors, including historical events, societal shifts, and development of educational thought of religious scholars.[8] It is a common characteristic of all systems of traditional Islamic education, both historical and contemporary, that their content and curriculum are designed in accordance with a traditional and ideological perspective intended to instill specific values within the Muslim community.[9] Through traditional education, mosques have closely contributed in enriching and shaping Muslim societies.[10]

The curriculum design of an educational system is crucial in shaping and enhancing the desirable qualities and attitudes within societies that are characterized by diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.[11] Different nations around the globe hold varying perspectives on the optimal design of their educational systems. Similarly in the traditional Islamic learning, the educational framework significantly impacts the

---

[3] Nurul Salis Alamin et al., "Hidden Curriculum In Students' Activities At Modern Islamic Boarding School: Phenomenology Study at Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School, Ponorogo, East Java," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 48, no. 1 (2024): 57–72, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v48i1.1134.

[4] Nur Agus Salim et al., "Fostering Moderate Character of Santri: Effective Hidden Curriculum Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 357–72, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4676.

[5] Raqib Moslimany et al., "Designing a Holistic Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities in Islamic Education," *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 53, https://doi.org/10.35335/beztg009.

[6] Suud Sarim Karimullah, "The Role of Mosques as Centers For Education and Social Engagement in Islamic Communities," *Jurnal Bina Ummat: Membina Dan Membentengi Ummat* 6, no. 2 (2023): 151–66, https://doi.org/10.38214/jurnalbinaummatstidnatsir.v6i2.184.

[7] Junaidi et al., "Islamic Moderatism in Curriculum Development Of Islamic Educational Institutions in Aceh," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (2025): 43–56, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i1.8313.

[8] Zainal Arifin et al., "Organization of Islamic Education Curriculum to Prevent Radicalism Among Students in Indonesian Universities," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (2025): 81–96, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i1.8316.

[9] M. Amin Abdullah, "From Dialogue to Engagement: Experiences of Civil Society Organizations in Religious Literacy Programs for Multicultural Education Curriculum in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2023): 264–74, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.10234.

[10] Ahmad Amir Aziz and Miftahul Huda, "Contribution of Islamic University to Development of Mosque-Based Non-Formal Islamic Education in Lombok Indonesia," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 3 (2024): 983, https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.677.

[11] Arbain Nurdin et al., "Developing the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Inclusive Schools or Madrasah and Its Implementation: A Systematic Literature Review," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 94–110, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.6907.

lives of children and young individuals of Muslim communities.[12] In other words, a philosophical and ideological framework is essential for any educational curriculum, as it serves the primary social functions of transmitting culture, skills, values, and beliefs within any society.[13]

History of Islamic education in Malabar can be traced back to the advent of Islam in the land. Geographically, the Malabar Coast of South India, the area presently included in Kerala State of independent India and a well suited coastal plain for trade through waters; bringing not only Commercial interface but also a Cultural Interface.[14] In order to impart Islamic education, Muslims of Malabar instituted different systems from time to time.[15] The *Ottupalli* (*Kuttab*, where children were taught the basic tenants of Islam) and *Pallidars* (*Masjid* Institution) were the two most important systems of education in early times.[16] Later, the venues of Islamic learning gradually shifted into institutionalized system such as Madrasas and Islamic Colleges for providing primary and higher education respectively.[17] Evidences indicate that the initial mosques established in Malabar incorporated a learning structure, known as *Pallidars* similar to the educational centers found in the mosques of medieval Muslim world.[18]

One of the unique systems of traditional Islamic education in Malabar was and is still referred to as *Pallidars* tradition system,[19] which was prevalent in mosques throughout the region,[20] was inspired by the *Ahlus-Saffa* of the Medina Mosque during the time of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The persistence of this system in various mosques across Malabar, even after fifteen centuries, can be regarded as a hallmark of traditional Islamic scholarship in the land.[21] The term '*Pallidars*' is derived from two

---

[12] Nadhif Muhammad Mumtaz et al., "Educational Policy Analysis: Examining Pesantren Policies and Their Implications on the Independence of Kyai and Pesantren in the Contemporary Era," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024): 287–306, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.9612.

[13] Syukri Syukri et al., "Integration of Islamic Values with Environmental Ethics in Pesantren Education: A Case Study at Darularafah Raya Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2024.131.1-12.

[14] Ibrahim Badhusha, "From Arabia to Kerala: Tracing the Early Transmission of Islamic Knowledge," *HISTORICAL: Journal of History and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2025): 217, https://doi.org/10.58355/historical.v4i2.189.

[15] Abdul Karim, "Integration of Religious Awareness in Environmental Education," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 10, no. 2 (2022): 415–42, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i2.14404.

[16] Miftachul Huda et al., "Investigating Respect in Learning as Character Education: A Review of al-Zarnūjī's Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 209–32, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4187.

[17] Zainal Arifin et al., "Organization of Islamic Education Curriculum to Prevent Radicalism Among Students in Indonesian Universities."

[18] Masturin Masturin et al., "Tawhid-Based Green Learning in Islamic Higher Education: An Insan Kamil Character Building," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 10, no. 1 (2022): 215–52, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i1.14124.

[19] Jafar Paramboor and Mohd Burhan Ibrahim, "Islamic Higher Educational Institutions in a Secular Country: South Indian Lessons of Systemic Survival," *ISLAMIC INSIGHT* 1, no. 1 (2018): 110.

[20] Anas Edoli, "Shāfiʿī School of Jurisprudence: Circulation and Mobility across the Indian Ocean Region," *ISLAMIC INSIGHT 1* 1, no. 2 (2018): 69.

[21] CK Abdurahman Faizy, *Palli Dars: Charithram, Varthamanam (Palli Dars: Past and Present)*, 1st ed. (Book Plus, 2024), 173.

words: '*Palli*', a Malayalam word meaning a 'place of worship', specifically a mosque, and '*dars*', which translates to 'class.'[22] Thus, the educational framework associated with mosques is referred to as *Pallidars*. Among the most renowned *Pallidars* in Kerala was the Ponnani *Pallidars*, which was overseen at the Ponnani Juma Masjid by Shaykh Zainuddin ibn Ali (d.928H).[23] This esteemed center drew students not only from India but also from South and South East Asian locations such as Malaysia and Indonesia.[24] Ponnani grew into a significant Islamic educational center, earning the title of the 'Little Mecca of Malabar.

Previous studies on *Pallidars* in Malabar have explored their role in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and culture in the region. Shafeeq Al-Hudawi,[25] K. Mohammed Basheer,[26] Sharafuddin K.V,[27] Dr. Thajudeen A.S. & Noushad V[28] who among very few recent authors, have contributed to the history and growth of traditional Islamic education in Malabar and their divergent influces in the socio-cultural life of the Muslims of the land. Among the limited works about history of *Pallidars*, many of them are silent about the evolution of curriculum in the *pallidars* education system during the early period. Interestingly CK Abdurahman Faizy[29] has paid his attention to study early curriculum of *pallidars* education of medieval Malabar. However, study on early curriculum of traditional religious higher education based on '*Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar*' was not conducted in contemporary academia.

In this context, this study is attempting to investigate with certain insights derived from '*Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar*' of Late Sayyid Abdurahman Alaidarusi Al Azhari. The author has included several references in his book that offer additional insights for scholars examining the history of Islamic education in Malabar. This work endeavors to elucidate the potential research avenues that the three curricula mentioned in this book present to researchers in the form of pertinent research questions. This investigation focuses on the medieval curriculum of *Pallidars*, suggesting that, based on the author's indications, it can be inferred that *Pallidars* education in Malabar adopted varying curricula at different historical junctures. In the work, the Author has introduced certain terms which pave ways to the historical research in connection with education history of *Pallidars* and other traditional religious education systems prevailed in

---

[22] K. Mohammed Basheer, *Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education: An Exploratory Study*, 1st ed (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 15.

[23] Dr. Thajudeen A.S. & Noushad V., *The Role of Arabic Colleges in the Development of Literature and Culture in South Kerala*, Project Pl.A/5466/UGC.XI.VII/Arabic/NRA/12 (University of Kerala, 2014), 44.

[24] Sharafuddin K.V, "History of Religious Organisations and Ideological Conflicts among the Muslims of Malabar from 1921-1989" (PhD, University of Calicut, 2022), 66.

[25] Shafeeq Al-Hudawi, "Evolving Trends in the Curriculum of Higher Level Islamic Education in Kerala: An Appraisal from Social Engagement Perspective," *First Annual Malabar Praxis Graduate Research Conference*, December 17, 2013, 1–24, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2368649.

[26] Basheer, *Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education*.

[27] Sharafuddin K.V, "History of Religious Organisations and Ideological Conflicts among the Muslims of Malabar from 1921-1989."

[28] Dr. Thajudeen A.S. & Noushad V., *The Role of Arabic Colleges in the Development of Literature and Culture in South Kerala*.

[29] CK Abdurahman Faizy, *Palli Dars: Charithram, Varthamanam (Palli Dars: Past and Present)*.

Malabar. Among these, the terms, *Ma'bari*, *Fakhriyya* and *Nizamiya* were taken as the attributes, indications from the book for qualitative content analysis.

The work entitled *'Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar'* was released in 1993 with the approval of the department of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Government of Dubai. The work is a sum of biography of Kaippatta Beerankutty Musliyar, a distinguished scholar of Malabar and relevant information about the traditional Islamic education prevailed in Malabar. The author was the president of Samastha Kerala Jem-iyyathul Ulama, the largest Muslim organisation in Kerala. He served as a Islamic and Arabic scholar and writer, teacher, and a reformist in the traditional religious education of Malabar. His family lineage has been connected with various traditional religious scholarships from Southern part of Arabian Peninsula to South India. He was born in 1930 in Edakaziyoor, Kerala. He studied in different religious learning centers including Baqiyat Salihat Vellore, Darul Uloom Deoband, Al-Azhar and Cairo Universities. He passed away on 22 November 2015.

METHOD

To generate a considerable number of research questions within the academic field, which is the core theme of the present study based on qualitative content analysis method, the work analyses the underlying themes, patterns, and structure of early curricula prevailed in the *Pallidars* in Malabar within the dataset referring to the work *'Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar'* of Sayyid Abdu Rahman Al Azhari. In fact, a Qualitative content analysis of a published work in education can be employed significantly, to investigate the fundamental forms of certain method of education of a particular region.

Based on the work, this study examines the fundamental features of the early curriculum of the traditional religious education system that existed in the Malabar region of south India during the medieval era with two major objectives:- to identify significant patterns within the curriculum of *Pallidars* that was present in the Malabar region of South India to comprehend the interrelations among different curriculum patterns , and to formulate research questions aimed at generating new insights to the studies on curriculum of contemporary higher education institutions in the region in particular and to the Muslim world in general.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The introductory section of the book offers clear guidance for research studies concerning the religious education systems that were present in various regions of Kerala, with a specific focus on the Malabar area. Interestingly, this work sheds light on the different phases of curriculum of *Pallidars* education in the region. A significant feature of this work, which distinguishes it from others, the Author has presented specific terminology that facilitates historical research related to the educational history of the traditional religious education system in Malabar. Notably, the terms *Ma'bari, Fakhriyya,* and *Nizamiya* were selected as key attributes and indicators from the text for the purpose

of content analysis.

Ma'bari

The author presents the concept of *Ma'bari* to illustrate an early iteration of curriculum that existed in Malabar prior to the 20th century.[30] This curriculum was developed by Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdoom I and II who were notable scholars in medieval Malabar during the 15th and 16th centuries at Ponnani.

Interestingly the term *Ma'abari* sheds light to connection of eastern coast of India to southern coast of the land and it is associated with the lineage of the proponents of the *Ma'abari* curriculum. In fact this term can be seen in connection with education and anthropology relevance to the following questions. Who were the people who influenced the development of this curriculum? Is the *Ma'bari* Curriculum also known as the Ponnani Curriculum? Was this curriculum popular in Malabar for a long time? What are the basic features of this curriculum? In short the term *Ma'abari* not only open curriculum related questions but also enquire the system of traditional religious education prevailed in Malabar and its direct connection to *ma'abar*, coastal zone of the modern Indian state, Tamil Nadu.

Fakhriyya

By introducing the term '*Fakhriyya*', the author has unveiled another interesting subject in the historical studies of traditional religious education of Malabar.[31] He says that the *Fakhriyya* is the oldest curriculum prevailed in the region even before *Ma'abari* curriculum. The term *Fakhriyya* Curriculum opens up many research questions such as: - What does this term '*Fakhriyya*' refer to? Where did this curriculum exist? Who were the important students who studied in this system? And What are the contributions of Qazis of Calicut to the Curriculum Development of *Pallidars* in Malabar?

Nizamiya

While discussing the old curriculam that existed in Malabar, the Author mentions another curriculum called *Nizamiya*.[32] The author has also opened the way for discussion with the term of *Nizamiya*, which also includes the following questions: what is the *Nizamiya* curriculum? Is that the same application of the renowned *Nizamiya* syllabus prepared by Mulla Nizamuddin in North India? How did it become popular in Malabar?

Remarkably some of the terms used in this book provide traces to the early history of traditional Islamic learning areas in Kerala. Moreover, those terms is opening new horizons in the field of research studies on traditional religious learning systems in Malabar. Moreover, it refers to rare books housed in ancient libraries and the inscriptions found on their covers, which can serve as valuable historical sources. Among these, the ancient texts preserved in the old Mosque of Tanur offer significant insights into the curriculum of the past. The book could be seen as reflecting a rich tradition of religious curriculum and its impact on the community's values and social fabric within the Malabar

---

[30] Sayyid Abdurahman Alaidarusi Al Azhari, *Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar* (Dubai: Matabi al Bayan Atijariya, 1993), 49.
[31] Sayyid Abdurahman Alaidarusi Al Azhari, 47.
[32] Sayyid Abdurahman Alaidarusi Al Azhari, 53.

context.

Historical Background of *Pallidars* Education

Islamic education boasts a rich historical background rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, which are the two fundamental religious texts. Over the years, the curriculum has undergone significant changes, with early educational groups concentrating on these teachings and their oral exegeses.[33] The mosque school represents the earliest form of Islamic education in the history of Islam. In every Islamic community, the mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also as a vital center for education and training. Mosques hold immense importance in every Muslim society.[34]

Masjid-e-Nabavi, the mosque of the Prophet, became the focal point for all learning among Muslims, where the Prophet himself imparted knowledge. Students from various regions gathered at the mosque to learn from him.[35] Among these students, some were particularly notable and were referred to as *Ashab-u-ssuffa* (the people of the terrace); they resided on the terrace located in front of the mosque and were constantly in the Prophet's company.[36] They dedicated their lives to genuinely acquiring knowledge and embodying the spirit of Islam through their direct relationship with Prophet Mohammed. Graduates from this institution were dispatched to different parts of Arabia. Consequently, this esteemed institution established the groundwork for the Islamic education system. Following the Prophet's passing, his companions and the Ulama of Islam continued his educational framework.[37] Throughout the reigns of various caliphs, they constructed thousands of mosques and further developed the educational system over the centuries. This system evolved and adapted into various forms across different regions over the centuries. Makkah, Madina, Taif, Kufa, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Mosul, Mada'in, Bahrain, Khurasan, Baghdad, Damascus, Spain, and other locations became prominent centers for mosque schools.[38]

With the introduction of Islam in Kerala, the local populace grew increasingly connected to the faith. They embraced Islam and focused their efforts on pursuing Islamic education. Individuals frequented the mosque to learn about the principles and practices of Islam. Muslim leaders sought to create a system to promote and disseminate the new

---

[33] Sarbini Sarbini et al., "The Character Education Model as a Strategic Framework for Nurturing Religious Moderation Within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 13, no. 1 (2025): 1–38, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v13i1.30618.

[34] Dwi Istiyani et al., "Challenges and Opportunities in Early Childhood Religious and Moral Education: A Perspective from the Evaluation of Logical Models," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 233–49, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4843.

[35] Lili Sholehuddin Badri and Ahmed Abdul Malik, "Implementation of Islamic Education Values in Building Students' Religious Character through an Affective Approach Based on the Qur'an," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 217–33, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.7260.

[36] Masturin Masturin, "The Power of Two Learning Strategy in Islamic Religious Education Material Shaping Character Student," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 250–69, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4678.

[37] Muh Ibnu Sholeh Sholeh et al., "Transformation Of Islamic Education: A Study Of Changes In The Transformation Of The Education Curriculum," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 39–56, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.6770.

[38] Muhammadullah Khalili Qasmi, *Madrasa Education: Its Strength and Weakness*, 1st ed, with Markazul Ma'arif Education and Research Centre (Mumbai, India) (MMERC ; Manak Publications, 2005), 6.

---

faith. Muslim missionaries endeavored to spread religious education through a structured approach. There was an interesting remarks by William Logan in his work about the legacy of Ponnani *Pallidars*. He Writes., 'a Mohammedan college in Ponnani, founded around 600 years ago by Arab Zeyn-ud-din. He was awarded the title of Mukhaddam (Makhdoom), meaning first in an assembly. Zeyn-ud-din married Mappilla women, and his descendants have retained the title. The current Mukhaddam is the Twenty-fourth in the line of succession. Students at the college are supported by the townspeople, with two students per house. They study in the public Jammat Mosque, and in their undergraduate stage, they are called Mullas. The Mukhaddam invites the most diligent and able Mullas to join him in public reading, indicating their fitness for the degree, which they assume without further preliminaries'.[39]

Evidences show the existence of many *Pallidars* centers in early Kerala, especially in the coastal Muslim dominated areas. Highly qualified teachers had attracted hundreds of students to *Pallidars*es they conducted in Masjid in different areas especially in the south Kerala, and Malabar. Besides the early ten mosques, there were a number of mosques came into existence in 8th and 9th century. With the conversion and growth of Islam Muslim colonies arise in different parts of Kerala. They construct mosques and started the *Pallidars*. The mosques in south Kerala, like Puntura, South Paravur, Puvar, Takkala, Tiruvankode, Kulachal, Tengapattabnam, Kotar, became major centers of Islamic education. In south Malabar, Kodungallur, Chettuva, Chavakkad, Pallipuram, Edavanakkad, Cochin, Aluva, and in central Malabar, Chaliyam, Calicut, Parapanangadi, tirungadi, Tanur, Paravanna, Ponnani, Veliyamkode, and in North Malabar, fakanur, Mangalapuram, Kasarkode, panthalayani, Nadapuram, Valappattanam, Kannur, Darmadam, Chemmalodu, Tiruvangode, Srikandapuram, Edakkad, Koilandi, Tikkodi mosques contribute to the development of the system of *Pallidars* in early times.[40]

Education at *Pallidars* was free and accessible to Muslims of all ages.[41] Many advanced students from Quranic schools pursued further education at the *Pallidars* institution. Students arrived with varying levels of knowledge and ability. The minimum requirement for admission to these centers was basic knowledge of Islamic studies and the Arabic language. There was no predetermined duration for education; students progressed from kitab to kitab at their own pace. If a student could master a *kitab* (text book) swiftly, they could begin the next one. In addition to Arabic, Arabi-Malayalam was also used for taking notes and references.[42] In early times, the system did not provide certificates upon completion of studies. Overall, the system was characterized by its unique approach to education, emphasizing flexibility and accessibility for all learners.

---

[39] William Logan, *Malabar*, Facsim. ed. (Asian educational services, 1989), 408.
[40] PA Saidu Muhammed, *Kerala Muslim Charitram (History of Kerala Muslim)* (Al -Huda Book stall, 1996), 57.
[41] Ibrahim Badhusha Parakkallil, "An Intellectual Legacy: Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji's Role in Modernizing Madrasa Education," *Al-Fadlan: Journal of Islamic Education and Teaching* 3, no. 1 (2025): 129, https://doi.org/10.61166/fadlan.v3i1.90.
[42] Musadhique Kottaparamban, "Sea, Community and Language: A Study on the Origin and Development of Arabi- Malayalam Language of Mappila Muslims of Malabar," *Muallim Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, October 2, 2019, 406–16, https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/31.

In *Pallidars* system the content and methods of teaching depended on the teachers. Some of them followed the curriculum of their teachers and others developed their own method.

This educational framework persisted in *Pallidars* for centuries with minimal alterations in its structure and system until the early 20th century. The colonial experiences also influenced the operations of prominent centres. By this period, Ponnani had diminished in its role as a center for higher education, while Baqiyatus Salihat in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, emerged as the preferred institution for darsi-educated students pursuing advanced studies. To some degree, Baqiyat can be likened to the Deoband of South India, as many of the early notable and influential Ulama were alumni of this institution.

Teaching Method

In the *Pallidars* institution, the content and teaching methods were contingent upon the instructors, who were referred to as *Musliyar*.[43] These educators imparted knowledge in Arabic and Islamic studies. Unlike contemporary educational systems, there was no formal division of classes. Instruction was based on comprehensive textbooks, and those who studied a single textbook or kitab were considered part of one class.[44] Students were arranged in a semi-circle, with the teachers positioned centrally, facing them.

The predominant teaching methods included lectures, memorization, reading, and text copying. Students were perceived as empty vessels, prepared to absorb knowledge. Given that the texts were in Arabic, the teacher would clarify and elaborate on challenging words, phrases, and passages. The teacher would read the text meticulously, word by word, providing meanings and explanations. The teacher also reviewed the students' books as they read, repeating this process until the text was fully covered. Students were encouraged to pose questions. Typically, there was only one teacher, even though numerous students were engaged in various classes. Senior students often assisted their junior counterparts. The teacher commanded great respect, and most students exhibited seriousness and diligence in their studies. Class schedules in *Pallidars* were flexible. Classes were generally conducted after the fajr prayer and continued until approximately eleven o'clock; they resumed after the zuhar prayer and again after the magrib prayer, lasting until around ten at night.

Contents of Study

The curriculum is the core of the educational process, directly influencing outcomes and determining the process and outcome of an education system.[45] The

---

[43] U. Mohammed, *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective* (Indian Council of Historical Research, 2007), 32.

[44] Unais Koduvayakkal, "Indian Madrasahs: Evolution and Growth With Special Reference to Kerala Model," *Akademik Platform İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (2021): 188–217, https://doi.org/10.52115/apjir.947587.

[45] Muh Ibnu Sholeh Sholeh et al., "Transformation Of Islamic Education: A Study Of Changes In The Transformation Of The Education Curriculum," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 42, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.6770.

curriculum of *Pallidars* initially encompassed a variety of disciplines:[46] it originally consisted of a range disciplines like, Tafsir (commentaries of Quran), Hadith (Prophetic tradition), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism), *Akhlaq* (Moral sciences), *Swarf wa Nahvu* (Arabic grammar and syntax) *Tareeq* (History), *Falsafa* (Philosophy), *Ilm al handasa* (Maths), *Ilm al falak* (Astronomy) etc. But in general, the curriculum emphasized only revealed knowledge or the fard a'in. The text books of these subjects were common in all *Pallidars*.[47]

While in medieval Muslim world, with the expansion of the Islamic empire of knowledge, various scientific disciplines were incorporated into the curricula of educational institutions or centers of learning. The primary categorization of disciplines is divided into *Naqli* (transmitted) sciences and *Aqli* (intellectual) sciences.[48] Ibn Khaldun elaborated on this classification into philosophical or intellectual sciences, which included logic, natural sciences, medicine, agriculture, metaphysics, talismanic studies, alchemy, and disciplines related to quantitative analysis. In the transmitted sciences, the subjects covered included the Qur'an, its interpretation[49] and recitation, Hadith, jurisprudence, theology, Sufism, and linguistic studies such as grammar, lexicography, and literature. Throughout the medieval era, Islamic research centers and universities thrived, offering extensive vocational training and advanced studies in various professions. The curriculum included algebra, trigonometry, geometry, chemistry, physics, astronomy, medicine, logic, ethics, metaphysics, geography, political science, philology, poetry, grammar, prosody, law, jurisprudence, and all theological branches. Here the question arises that whether the three curriculum of Malabar had considered the intellectual development of medieval Muslim world or not?

The current deterioration of *Pallidars* can be linked to a transition from a focus on purely religious subjects to an emphasis on purely religious subjects. There have been initiatives aimed at reforming the content, curricula, and methodologies of Islamic education in India[50] in general and in the region in particular.[51] Newly established Islamic Colleges are prioritizing the Islamization of all knowledge, while educational innovations

---

[46] Shafeeq Al-Hudawi, "Evolving Trends in the Curriculum of Higher Level Islamic Education in Kerala: An Appraisal from Social Engagement Perspective," 8.

[47] Jose Abraham, "Contributions to Educational Reform," in *Islamic Reform and Colonial Discourse on Modernity in India*, by Jose Abraham (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 66, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137378842_4.

[48] Wawan Saepul Bahri et al., "Integrating Naqli and Aqli Science in Islamic Education: Toward a Comprehensive Learning Model," *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 11, no. 2 (2025): 86–88, https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v11i2.31447.

[49] Muhammed Unais Kunnakkadan et al., "The Relevance of Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn among the Muslims of Malabar," *Al-Burhan: Journal of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 14–30.

[50] Achmad Zaini, "Modernizing Islamic Education in the Most Populated Muslim World," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022): 175, https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.175-196.

[51] Moh Ayyub Mustofa and Fawaidur Ramdhani, "Islamic Education and Contemporary Challenges," *Adabuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* 2, no. 2 (2023): 109–27, https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v2i2.1156; Sumarni S et al., "Urgency of Multicultural Islamic Education on Modern Indonesian Education," *Al-Jadwa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2024): 2, https://doi.org/10.38073/aljadwa.v3i2.1551.

within individual Muslim societies seek to integrate Islamic and secular disciplines.[52] However, to ensure value of the curriculum of *Pallidars* education, it can be added modern Arabic, studies on language and literature, history etc., as the need of time.[53]

CONCLUSION

Characteristically, the qualitative thematic content analysis method aims to uncover meanings and relationships among specific words and concepts within a text or a collection of texts, producing thematic data that provides deeper insights into the meanings of the text. Likewise, the work *'Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar'* has opened avenues for further research on traditional religious education in Malabar with following questions;- were these learning centers planned and implemented according to a specific curriculum?, Were they designed to meet the religious and material needs of the community? What was the general nature of the subjects included in the curriculum? Did maritime connections with other countries influence the curriculum in Malabar? These research gaps should be identified by budding researchers who focus on curriculum based studies of Malabar.

REFERENCES

Abraham, Jose. "Contributions to Educational Reform." In *Islamic Reform and Colonial Discourse on Modernity in India*, by Jose Abraham. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137378842_4.

Ahmad Amir Aziz and Miftahul Huda. "Contribution of Islamic University to Development of Mosque-Based Non-Formal Islamic Education in Lombok Indonesia." *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 3 (2024): 982–98. https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.677.

Akrim, A., Hasrian Rudi Setiawan, Selamat Selamat, and Nurman Ginting. "Transformation of Islamic Education Curriculum Development Policy in the National Education System." *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 17, no. 7 (2022): 2538–52. https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i7.7685.

Alamin, Nurul Salis, Zakiya Setyo Rahmawati, Marheni Br Maha, Shofiyyatun Nisa, and Ahmad Zalzuli. "Hidden Curriculum In Students' Activities At Modern Islamic Boarding School: Phenomenology Study at Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School, Ponorogo, East Java." *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 48, no. 1 (2024): 57–72. https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v48i1.1134.

Anas Edoli. "Shāfiʿī School of Jurisprudence: Circulation and Mobility across the Indian Ocean Region." *ISLAMIC INSIGHT 1* 1, no. 2 (2018): 65–77.

Arbain Nurdin, Hendra, Khozin, Abdul Haris, Nurul Zainab, and Mohammad Zaini Yahaya. "Developing the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Inclusive

---

[52] A. Akrim et al., "Transformation of Islamic Education Curriculum Development Policy in the National Education System," *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 17, no. 7 (2022): 2541, https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i7.7685.

[53] CK Abdurahman Faizy, *Palli Dars: Charithram, Varthamanam (Palli Dars: Past and Present)*, 174.

Schools or Madrasah and Its Implementation: A Systematic Literature Review." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 94–110. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.6907.

Bahri, Wawan Saepul, Muhammad Zuhdi, and Suparto Suparto. "Integrating Naqli and Aqli Science in Islamic Education: Toward a Comprehensive Learning Model." *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 11, no. 2 (2025). https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v11i2.31447.

Basheer, K. Mohammed. *Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education: An Exploratory Study*. 1st ed. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

CK Abdurahman Faizy. *Palli Dars: Charithram, Varthamanam (Palli Dars: Past and Present)*. 1st ed. Book Plus, 2024.

Dr. Thajudeen A.S. & Noushad V. *The Role of Arabic Colleges in the Development of Literature and Culture in South Kerala*. Project Pl.A/5466/UGC.XI.VII/Arabic/NRA/12. University of Kerala, 2014.

Huda, Miftachul, Abu Zarrin Selamat, and Sultan Salem. "Investigating Respect in Learning as Character Education: A Review of al-Zarnūjī's Ta'līm al-Muta'allim." *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 209–32. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4187.

Ibrahim Badhusha. "From Arabia to Kerala: Tracing the Early Transmission of Islamic Knowledge." *HISTORICAL: Journal of History and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2025): 216–27. https://doi.org/10.58355/historical.v4i2.189.

Istiyani, Dwi, A. M. Wibowo, Mulyani Mudis Taruna, Titik Rahmawati, and Nugroho Eko Atmanto. "Challenges and Opportunities in Early Childhood Religious and Moral Education: A Perspective from the Evaluation of Logical Models." *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 233–49. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4843.

Jafar Paramboor and Mohd Burhan Ibrahim. "Islamic Higher Educational Institutions in a Secular Country: South Indian Lessons of Systemic Survival." *ISLAMIC INSIGHT* 1, no. 1 (2018): 103–23.

Junaidi, Afrinaldi, Febria Sri Artika, Mohammad Omar Al-Momani, and Halad Hulwana. "Islamic Moderatism in Curriculum Development Of Islamic Educational Institutions in Aceh." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (2025): 43–56. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i1.8313.

Karim, Abdul. "Integration of Religious Awareness in Environmental Education." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 10, no. 2 (2022): 415–42. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i2.14404.

Koduvayakkal, Unais. "Indian Madrasahs: Evolution and Growth With Special Reference to Kerala Model." *Akademik Platform İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (2021): 188–217. https://doi.org/10.52115/apjir.947587.

Kottaparamban, Musadhique. "Sea, Community and Language: A Study on the Origin and Development of Arabi- Malayalam Language of Mappila Muslims of

Malabar." *Muallim Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, October 2, 2019, 406–16. https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/31.

Kunnakkadan, Muhammed Unais, Nadzrah Ahmad, and Nashwan Abdo Khaled. "The Relevance of Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn among the Muslims of Malabar." *Al-Burhan: Journal of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 14–30.

Lili Sholehuddin Badri and Ahmed Abdul Malik. "Implementation of Islamic Education Values in Building Students' Religious Character through an Affective Approach Based on the Qur'an." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 217–33. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.7260.

Logan, William. *Malabar*. Facsim. ed. Asian educational services, 1989.

M. Amin Abdullah. "From Dialogue to Engagement: Experiences of Civil Society Organizations in Religious Literacy Programs for Multicultural Education Curriculum in Indonesia." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2023): 264–74. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.10234.

Ma'arif, Samsul, Ahmadi Ahmadi, Dzikrulloh Dzikrulloh, and Naily El Muna. "Pesantren Entrepreneurship: Harmonization of the Theories of Kasb Asy'ariyah and Locus of Control on Strengthening Santripreneur." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, no. 1 (2023): 31–64. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.17404.

Masturin, Masturin. "The Power of Two Learning Strategy in Islamic Religious Education Material Shaping Character Student." *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 250–69. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4678.

Masturin, Masturin, Mhd Rasid Ritonga, and Siti Amaroh. "Tawhid-Based Green Learning in Islamic Higher Education: An Insan Kamil Character Building." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 10, no. 1 (2022): 215–52. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i1.14124.

Mohammed, U. *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective*. Indian Council of Historical Research, 2007.

Moslimany, Raqib, Anzar Otaibi, and Frugo Shaikh. "Designing a Holistic Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities in Islamic Education." *Journal on Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 52–73. https://doi.org/10.35335/beztg009.

Mustofa, Moh Ayyub, and Fawaidur Ramdhani. "Islamic Education and Contemporary Challenges." *Adabuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* 2, no. 2 (2023): 109–27. https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v2i2.1156.

Nadhif Muhammad Mumtaz, Evi Muafiah Alghani, and Doli Witro. "Educational Policy Analysis: Examining Pesantren Policies and Their Implications on the Independence of Kyai and Pesantren in the Contemporary Era." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024): 287–306. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.9612.

PA Saidu Muhammed. *Kerala Muslim Charitram (History of Kerala Muslim)*. Al -Huda Book stall, 1996.

Parakkallil, Ibrahim Badhusha. "An Intellectual Legacy: Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji's Role in Modernizing Madrasa Education." *Al-Fadlan: Journal of Islamic Education and Teaching* 3, no. 1 (2025): 127–36. https://doi.org/10.61166/fadlan.v3i1.90.

Qasmi, Muhammadullah Khalili. *Madrasa Education: Its Strength and Weakness*. 1st ed. With Markazul Ma'arif Education and Research Centre (Mumbai, India). MMERC ; Manak Publications, 2005.

S, Sumarni, Neng Aisyah, Abdurrahmansyah, and Tutut Handayani. "Urgency of Multicultural Islamic Education on Modern Indonesian Education." *Al-Jadwa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2024): 2. https://doi.org/10.38073/aljadwa.v3i2.1551.

Salim, Nur Agus, Mohammad Zaini, Abd Wahib, Imron Fauzi, and Asnawan Asnawan. "Fostering Moderate Character of Santri: Effective Hidden Curriculum Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools." *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 357–72. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4676.

Sarbini, Sarbini, Tahrir Tahrir, Endi Endi, Salami Mutiu Olagoke, Setia Gumilar, and Mursidin Mursidin. "The Character Education Model as a Strategic Framework for Nurturing Religious Moderation Within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 13, no. 1 (2025): 1–38. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v13i1.30618.

Sayyid Abdurahman Alaidarusi Al Azhari. *Min Nawabigi Ulama'i Malaibar*. Matabi al Bayan Atijariya, 1993.

Shafeeq Al-Hudawi. "Evolving Trends in the Curriculum of Higher Level Islamic Education in Kerala: An Appraisal from Social Engagement Perspective." *First Annual Malabar Praxis Graduate Research Conference*, December 17, 2013, 1–24. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2368649.

Sharafuddin K.V. "History of Religious Organisations and Ideological Conflicts among the Muslims of Malabar from 1921-1989." PhD, University of Calicut, 2022.

Sholeh, Muh Ibnu Sholeh, Habibur Rohman, Eko Agus Suwandi, Akhyak, Nur Efendi, and As'aril Muhajir. "Transformation Of Islamic Education: A Study Of Changes In The Transformation Of The Education Curriculum." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 39–56. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.6770.

Sholeh, Muh Ibnu Sholeh, Habibur Rohman, Eko Agus Suwandi, Akhyak, Nur Efendi, and As'aril Muhajir. "Transformation Of Islamic Education: A Study Of Changes In The Transformation Of The Education Curriculum." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 1 (2023): 39–56. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i1.6770.

Subhan, Subhan, Zaki Ghufron, Mufrodi Mufrodi, and Mohamad Khaidir Bin Sahid. "Towards a Tawhidic Framework in Islamic Higher Education Curriculum: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Malaysia." *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 12, no. 2 (2024): 333–70. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v12i2.28676.

Suud Sarim Karimullah. "The Role of Mosques as Centers For Education and Social Engagement in Islamic Communities." *Jurnal Bina Ummat: Membina Dan*

Membentengi Ummat 6, no. 2 (2023): 151–66. https://doi.org/10.38214/jurnalbinaummatstidnatsir.v6i2.184.

Syukri, Syukri, Sulaiman Muhammad Amir, Fitriani Fitriani, and Sarmalina Pane. "Integration of Islamic Values with Environmental Ethics in Pesantren Education: A Case Study at Darularafah Raya Pesantren." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2024.131.1-12.

Zainal Arifin, Thifal Khansa Nabila, Sri Rahmi, and Atika. "Organization of Islamic Education Curriculum to Prevent Radicalism Among Students in Indonesian Universities." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (2025): 81–96. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i1.8316.

Zaini, Achmad. "Modernizing Islamic Education in the Most Populated Muslim World." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022): 175. https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.175-196.