

MADARIS OF PAKISTAN AND CHALLENGES OF MODERN WORLD

¹Niaz Muhammad, ¹Fazle Omer, ²Imran, ³Waseem Akbar & ⁴Wajahat Karim

¹*Center for Religious Studies, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat*

²*Department of Social Work & Society, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat*

³*Department of Mass Communication, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan*

⁴*Department Journalism & Mass Communication, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat*

ABSTRACT

Madaris have played a significant role in educating the masses and preserving Islamic values and traditions. Due to this major contribution, Madaris got a remarkable position in the history of Islamic society. Beneficence of Madaris is realized in Pakistan at each level of society because of offering free educational services across the country even in far flung areas where government has not established schools yet. However, Madaris, nowadays, are being criticized on national as well as international level for their outdated educational system and alleged linkage with militants as per critics' opinion. In this paper, important issues of Madaris have been discussed and recommendations have been made accordingly. The objective of the paper is to analytically discuss the system of Madaris and to bring forth the reformative measures in order to pace shoulder to shoulder with modern educational institutions.

Key words: Madaris, Reform, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Madaris

Islam has underlined the importance of seeking knowledge and it is termed as obligation of every Muslim man and woman (Soyooti, 2004). This incited the Muslims to attain knowledge right from the dawn of Islam, and various circles of education used to be established with the passage of time. During lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) Dar-e-Arqam, Suffah and Masjid-e-Nabavi were used as learning centers. The services of learned prisoners of war of Badr were utilized in

educating the companions of Prophet, is the interesting example of educational history (Nadvi, 2004: 65-72). The first ever, regular and disciplined institute was established in Cairo (Egypt) and named as *Al-Azhar*. In the Middle Eastern Asia the first madrasah was instituted by Saljuk Wazir Nizammuddin Tusi (Died 1274) at Baghdad in 459 A.H. The madrasah was namely Nizamiyya Tusi founded a chain of Madaris (plural of madrasah, literally means religious seminary) in the region (Khalid, 2004: 266). The inauguration of Madrasah in Indian sub-continent was

performed by Sultan Muhammad Ghauri (Died, 1206 AD) at Ajmer (Dogar, 2010, p. 6). Like Tusi, he founded many Madaris in the areas under his control.

The Madaris system of education reached its culmination during the Muslim rule in India and its declination began with the advent of British rule [1857-1947] in the region. The British introduced an education system recommended by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, [25 Oct 1800 – 28 Dec 1859] and substituted the official language Persian with English. These changes led to unpleasant connection between Madaris authorities and British government. Some of Muslim leaders established Madaris in order to compete with British and advised the Muslims to abstain from government schools. They tried their best to remain independent and safeguard their culture (Khalid, 2004: 96). Later on, the birth of Pakistan in 1947 provided an opportunity to the ulema to establish Madaris freely as the creation of Pakistan was based on the Islamic ideology. Now thousands of Madaris are running in each and every part of the country.

Curriculum

The evolution process of present

curriculum of Madaris is stretched to centuries back. Initially, Holy Quran and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) were the basic elements of curriculum, which are still occupying the core position in curriculum. Gradually, Madaris curriculum was expanded and new subjects used to be included in it. In Madrasah Nizamiyya in Baghdad, a specific multi-dimensional curriculum was introduced pertaining on various subjects including Philosophy, Logic, Astronomy, Physics, Mineralogy, Mathematics, Chemistry and Botany etc (Shalby, 1954).

In Indian sub-continent, a number of curricula were being taught in Madaris and each graduate from such curricula used to call a *Fazil* [Literally means a graduate]. Meanwhile, a scholar Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalwi (Died, 1748 AD) developed a curriculum under the patronage of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (Died, 1707 AD) which got popularization as Dars-e-Nizami, which refers to its founder. Although, most of the recommended books for literature, linguistics and grammar have been written in an out dated dialect, but the same curriculum is

followed in Pakistani Madaris till now with minor changes (Dogar, 2010, p. 9). Most of the recommended books for Dars-e-Nizami have been inscribed centuries ago when authoring of a book in most complex manner was the symbol of expertise in knowledge.

Reforms

Time does not stay on a single pattern; rather, it changes with its passage altering worldly things and feeling of people, resultantly. Things which fail to modify with the passage of time, face down fall or even disappearance. The process of Madaris reforms remained almost passive since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 till Soviet-Afghan war 1979. However, Madaris and its education system came under discussion in government policies and educational conferences to some extent. Madaris and their role in educating the public was debated in first educational conference held right after birth of Pakistan in 1947. President Ayub tried to bring changes in Madaris as mentioned in Sharif Education Commission's Report in 1959. Bright steps were suggested in

Noor Khan's Education Commission Report in 1969 but political instability in country made its implementation impossible (Pakistan, 1969).

A key revolution in the role of Madaris was observed when Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and Madaris students played significant role in this war. Unfortunately, a civil war broke out in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 which led to the emergence of Taliban in 1994 and later on establishment of their government in 1996. Taliban government was pointed at fingers by external world for their governing style. The leadership of Taliban had close relation with Pakistani Madaris as many of them got educated in these Madaris. This coincidence made possible to pressurize Pakistan for reforming Madaris by international community. On the other side, unfortunately, the role of Taliban and linkage of Pakistani Madaris was pointed out to some extent in the final analytical report of 9/11 disaster (Report, 2004: 367). This brought a bitter message for Madaris and Pakistani government was pressurized

by international community to police the activities of Madaris.

Amazingly, only a number of days before the incidence of this disaster, President of Pakistan issued an ordinance for establishing Pakistan Madrasah Education Board (PMEB) on August 18, 2001. Later on, three Model Madaris were instituted at Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad under the PMEB, in which former two were for boys and latter was for girls. Other Madaris prevailing in country were expected to register themselves with PMEB but the expectations could not be met. The government came with another ordinance namely Dini Madaris Regulating & Controlling Ordinance 2002. The ordinance was aimed to streamline, regulate and bind them under governmental control but the aims could not be achieved due to resistance from Madaris on large scale. The five representative boards of Madaris formed a federation under the name of *Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaris Deeniyya* Federation of the boards of religious seminaries) to resist against government plans and accordingly, the ordinance was

repealed by government. Still the Madaris' reforms are waiting implementation.

DISCUSSION

The tremendous technological advancement has turned the world to a global village where one can contact and interact with others in seconds. Life has gone very speedy and time is most precious gadget in present age. In such a revolutionary world, Madaris are clinging to its old curriculum and teaching techniques while modern education institutions are exploiting modern technology in educating their students. Amazingly, each effort or voice for reform is looked dubiously, whereas need for reforms have been realized much before this by many renowned scholars in past such as Hussain Ahmad Madani [Died. 1957] and Syed Anwar Shah Kashmiri [Died. 1933] and many others (Gillani, n.d). Hussain Ahmad Madani had developed a reformed curriculum but it did not get appreciation of Madaris authorities.

An organized effort for the reform of Madaris was the institution of

NadawatulUlema at Lucknow in 1898 by ShibleeNomani [Died 1914] (Nadvi, 2004: 168). However, the Madaris are following their old pattern in their curriculum and instruction still.

The challenges faced by Madaris are serious ones, demanding prompt and durable strategy's evolving to cope with them. This is the need of hour to modify the Madaris education system and educate the students using modern technology for easy and long-lasting comprehension. Similarly, the image of Islam and Madaris is damaged badly in international community as well as in the western media, both printed and electronic, as it played an important role in portraying the image of Islam, which needs to be transformed. The significant challenges faced by Madaris are as mentioned below.

Setting the Objectives and Goals

Such system or program leads to success which has pre-determined its vision, mission and objectives. Non determination can result in derailment or even failure of the whole system. Unfortunately, objectives and goals in

Madaris education system have not been determined. Therefore, religious circles of the country use the young Madaris students for such extra-curricular activities in different fields which defame Madaris. So, setting of vision, mission and objectives of Madaris with the determination of work boundaries for each level of education from primary to graduate level should be resolute in addition to displaying them at central visible points in Madaris for reminding these objectives to the teachers, students and administrators of Madaris. This will psychologically help the students especially and the whole system in general to refrain for extra-curricular activities. Determination of vision, mission, core objectives, strategy to achieve each objective and making the Madaris authorities aware of the importance of all these may be a challenging task, however, it is not impossible. Seminars, discussions and debates can be organized with the sponsorship of government and non-government organizations for the raising awareness in Madaris authorities.

Establishment of Curriculum Review Body

Changing world situation demands for review of contents taught at educational institutions for review of Madaris curriculum with apposite intervals in order to keep it updated. As discussed earlier, the present Madaris curriculum is developed by Mulla Nizamuddin Sihlawi that is centuries old. However, it is a reality that time is running very speedily now due to technological innovations and failing to keep abreast with time can leave us years behind. Therefore, curriculum review committees should be instituted in Madaris which should review the curriculum of all levels after suitable intervals. To raise awareness in stake holders of Islamic seminaries, the government should arrange their visits and study tours to universities to be presented with demonstrations about the board of studies, board of faculty and advanced studies & research board's functions, so that such practices may be entertained in Madaris.

Combined and Integrated Education

Modern and secular subjects are

almost overlooked in Madaris, while adhering to centuries old books are stressed, viewing the worldly subjects worth less. However, some of Madaris have taken initiative in this regard through introducing of various certificate courses, e.g. the famous madrasah of Karachi Jamiatur Rashid has introduced journalism, Islamic banking & business, teacher training and computer training programs etc. But Majority of Madaris' principals regard modern education as rival and they discourage students to get it. Therefore, students remained unaware of modern education and thought. Integration of religious and modern education system is necessitated.

It is an interesting fact that the five representative boards of Madaris have agreed with government to introduce school education up to matric level but it is not implemented so far, therefore, to draw the attention of stake holders of the representative five boards will be productive to achieve the goal.

Provision of Skill Learning Facilities

In Madaris, skill learning facilities are very occasional and students come out

unskilled after graduation, looking for employment opportunities for earning livelihood. The problem of unemployment is one of the biggest problems of current age and employment chances for Madaris students are limited in shape of Imams (prayer leaders) at mosques and teaching in Madaris only as number of graduating students is in disproportion with number of new mosques or Madaris. Madaris graduates having modern education join public sector for employment as Imam/Khateeb and religious teachers.

Some unpleasant incidents of occupying the mosques of another sect are also reported which can be avoided if graduates of Madaris are provided with good skills (Khalid, 2004: 228-229). Even in DarulUloom of Deoband a centre for the teaching of skills was established in which specific skills were being taught e.g. Eastern medicine, calligraphy and carpet weaving. It means that DarulUloom of Deoband took the financial care of graduates on its priority (Nadvi, 2004 : 124). Simultaneously, the renowned scholar Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (Died

1944 AD) has contributed a specific chapter about preparation of some important household items in his famous book “*Behishti Zewar*”. It is need of the day to provide skill learning facilities at Madaris enabling its students to live in society with respect and honour. Expertise of Small Industries Board, Small Entrepreneur Board, Skills Development Council and Technical Educational Boards can be utilized for introducing skill learning services.

Encouragement of Research Activities

In Madaris, research activities are rare as most of students depend upon contents of books and lessons of teachers making them narrow-minded. This trend is slowing the effectiveness of Madaris in the contemporary age of competition. A graduated scholar should have knowledge of modern terminologies as well as modes of business etc. Resources for Research activities should be sought and research should be facilitated in Madaris. Establishment of well-versed and state of the art libraries boosts research activities in an organization. This will assist in producing decent

orators and writers for guiding the Muslims effectively. For this purpose, study tours of universities should be arranged for the creation of awareness in the students of Madaris which will result positively.

Currently, provincial government has announced to grant laptops to students of universities; the inclusion of Madaris students in this scheme can bring positive results. Establishment of digital libraries in prominent Madaris, as a model, can also be productive in developing the research activities.

Improvement of Hostels

From a typical religious point of view, worldly facilities are not looked with appreciation. This is; perhaps, due to the fact that physical conditions of many Madaris are miserable, providing low quality study and living facilities to students. Apart from the provision of proper physical facilities, proper attention must be paid toward the comprehensive personality development and moral values of the students. In many Madaris senior and junior students live together while educational and ethical philosophy

demand for separate boarding for each age group of kids and teens. It is suggested that younger students should not cohabit with elder ones. Quick and vigil surveillance should be ensured in boarding houses. Elder, married, serious and responsible persons should be appointed in hostels as warden or in charge.

A reading room in a hostel with the provision of different journals and newspapers and a common room with the facility of television can be advantageous. However, keeping in view the reserved environment of Madaris, only news channels and talk shows should be allowed for viewing.

Improvement of Instructional Methods

Teachers have deep influence over the students. Every act of a teacher is considered important while teaching in class (Siddiqui, 1998). Therefore, he should be aware of the suitable teaching and instructional methodology to cope with every situation. The teaching method in Madaris is still traditional one which is book oriented as a teacher comes to class and focuses all of his efforts on explaining the text of the book which

are authored centuries before. Emphasis is laid upon learning or even memorizing the book using corporal punishment as a tool for fearing students to learn (Khalid, 2004: 266). Modern educationists pondered over several methods for befitting the students of various levels.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) being a great teacher used various methods for the optimum comprehension of the companions. Accordingly, teachers of Madaris should know about suitable method of teaching as well as use of relevant audio visual aids to develop interest of student in teaching.

Education system of Madaris consists of different stages; primary stage is called as *Ibtedaiyya*, middle level as *Motawissta*, secondary as *Sanwiyya Amma*, higher secondary as *Sanwiyya Khassa*, bachelor as *A'liyya* and Masters as *A'lamiyya*. A teacher usually teaches to the above different levels with one method mentioned above without pre-teaching training and basic know-how of psychology of various ages of the students. Many ulema have realized this deficiency (Usmani, 2002:117). It is direly needed to introduce comprehensive

trainings to the teachers of every level comprising of teaching methodology, Madarasah management & organization, evaluation techniques, individual differences, and Psychology etc. TehreekIslah-e-Taleem of Dr. Muhammad Amin at Lahore and JamiaturRahsid at Karachi have initiated steps in this regard, however, their worthy to follow work has not got the support of the Madaris yet.

Personality Development & Training

Personality development is considered one of the most significant objectives of educating an individual. It circumscribes all perspectives of a balanced personality such as emotional, psychological, moral, physical, speaking, writing, tolerance and management skills etc. The role of Madaris is utmost important from this perspective because it has been ignored since long after the exclusion of subjects needed for inner purification and reformation of a human (Amin, 2004:183-186). Consequently, the feeling of superiority or inferiority hits them rigorously growing sentiments of

intolerance, narrow mindedness, prejudice and looking others as less of worth. A man having a sound personality and mind is considered civilized, cultured and tolerated in the present age. The modern curriculum caters for it while it is a fact that Madaris has not taken steps especially for the moral and ethical development.

Even some serious figures among Madaris authorities who underline the need of the inclusion of such subjects conducive for moral & spiritual development such as Muhammad TaqiUsmani, a renowned scholar, is of the opinion to inculcate the Islamic ethics i.e. *Tazkiyya&Tassawuf* as compulsory component of the syllabus (Usmani, 2002: 99).

Fund-Raising and Donations

Madaris provide free education as well as housing based on public donations. There are many ways of which are used by Madaris for collection of donations. One main source is the collection of hives on the event of Eid-ul-Adha, however, the most common way is the announcement or calling for donation in mosques after prayers. Some of

Madaris have engaged special envoys for collection of donations and get a pre-agreed share out of collected amount (Khalid, 2004:321). It has been observed that these envoys call for donations portraying Madaris and its students as poor as deserved to receive the *zakat*, needy and ever-demanding for funds hurting the self-respect of students and teachers of Madaris.

A respectable and dignified manner should be opted while requesting for fund-raising. Some alternate means can also be opted for collection of funds as mentioned below.

- Introduction of nominal fee on those students who do not deserve to receive *zakat*. The history of Islamic education has such evidences (Magdisi, 1994).
- Encouragement of day scholar system rather than compulsion of boarding system.
- Introduction of budgeting for academic year for bringing balance between income and expenditure.
- Boxes for donations may be affixed in Madaris and

Mosques instead of callings or announcements after the prayers.

Bridging the Gulf of Sectarian Attitudes

Pakistani Madaris belong to different schools of thought and different Boards. There are five boards which are constituted on the basis of a specific school of thought. *WifaqulMadaris Al-Arabiyya* Multan belongs to Deobandi school of thought, *TanzeemulMadaris* Lahore to Brailvi School, *RabitaulMadaris* Lahore to Jamat e Islami, *WifaqulMadaris Al-Shia* Lahore to Shia school and *WifaqulMadris Al-Salafiyya* Faisal Abad belongstoAhl-e- Hadith school of thought. The whole system of Madaris revolves around the loyalty to its own school of thought while considering another as absolute wrong. This attitude has brought very bitter fallouts as not offering prayers behind the imam of other school of thought, not performing prayers in other sect's mosque and even, sometimes occupying the mosque of rival sect (Amin, 2004:291).

All boards of Madaris based on different schools of thought are federated as *Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaris Deeniyya*, so it is a great opportunity to have them agreed on a

code of ethics by their mutual understanding for bridging the gulf of sectarian attitudes.

Defending Islam and Communicating its True Message

Islam is the religion of tolerance and forbearance. Diversity and difference is the beauty of the universe, which can be observed in day to day life. Quran has not imposed its doctrines over peoples rather it clearly announced that there is no imposition in embracing a belief or religion of any kind (Qur'an 02:256). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was directed not to compel mankind against their will to believe (Qur'an 10:99). As per teachings of Quran, we should not consider ourselves as monitor of all humans and do not impose our beliefs over other (Qur'an 88:22). In the religion of Islam thatthe Prophet said that whole creature is the family of God and the most desirable to God is one who is the most beneficial to His family. (Masnad Abi Yaala).

The world is now a global town where one has to contact and deal with people from different religions and regions. Accordingly, it becomes the responsibility of Islamic seminaries to

train their graduates in such a manner that they should be messengers of peace, harmony and tolerance in current world of pluralism. To achieve this glorious purpose, the study of various religions and study of Qur'anic dialogues may be included in Madaris curriculum.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Government of Pakistan has not paid proper attention to Madaris systems of education since the very birth of the country and whatever has been done in this regard, that was done half-heartedly. Similarly, the responsible figures of Madaris continued to look the Pakistani government as rival as they used to look at British government and they did not welcome any reforms nor they took initiative for the reforms. Adherence to old curriculum and out-dated teaching methods made the education system of Madaris dull and ineffective. It is expedient to exclude the centuries old classical books from the curriculum and include modern books (developed in easy comprehensible and deductive manner) should be recommended. It is suggested to bring effective series of reforms in Madaris through mutual consultation and

consent of Madaris and government. Government should pay heed to the concerns of Madaris and should not impose decisions while people of Madaris should avoid the mindset built as anti-government during British rule.

REFERENCES

- Amin, M. (2004). *Hamara Deeni Niazam e Taleem* (1st ed.). Lahore: Darul Ikhlas.
- Dogar, N. T. (2010). Madrasaa Reforms-Problems & Prospects. *National Defence University's Journal*, 9.
- Gillani, S. M. (n.d). *Sawaneh Qasmi* (Vol. 2).
- Khalid, S. M. (2004). *Dini Madaris men Taleem*. Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies.
- Magdisi, G. (1994). *The Rise of colleges: Institution of learning in Islam & the West*. Jeddah: Markaz Ilm ul Nashr KAU.
- Masnad Abi Yaala*. (n.d.). Retrieved 2012, from Islam web: http://www.islamweb.net/hadith/display_book.php?bk_no=327&hid=3266&pid=62906
- Nadvi, S. S. (2004). *Hamara Nisab e Taleem Kia ho?* Karachi: Majlish Nashriat-e-Islam.
- Pakistan, G. O. (1969). *Proposals for a New Educational Policy*. Islamabad: Ministry of Education.
- Report, T. 9. (2004). *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks*. New York: WW Norton &

Company.

Shalby, A. (1954). *History of Muslim Education*. Beirut: Dar al Kashf.

Siddiqui, M. u. (1998). *Taleem o Tadrees: Mabahith wa Masail*. Islamabad: Pakistan Education Foudation.

Soyooti, J. u. (2004). *Al-Jame Sagheer Hadith No. 3913*. Beirut, Lebenon: ", Darul Kutub Al-Ilmiyya,.

Usmani, M. T. (2002). *Hamara Nizam-e-Taleem*. Karachi: Maktaba Darul Uloom.