

To Map the Unstructured Areas of Religious Seminaries in Context of Contemporary Challenges and Needs

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Abstract

Undeniable fact that it is the education, playing a vital role, acts as lifeblood in building the individuals and Nations. The key behind the fast growth of developed countries in the world is only and only matured, mapped and practicable education. On comparison with them, gives the transparent picture that why our educational goals and objectives are not yet accomplished in better way.

It is pertinent to say that the religious education is of great importance and the religious institution i.e. Deeni Madaris are the core centers of it. In fact, they are busy in delivering the true and real message of Islam to the people and no doubt, they are performing their jobs honestly but it is also a reality that the system has a numerous loopholes which not only resist the change and development in order to meet the contemporary issues, also effects the spirituality and transparency leads to create wrong impression in the minds. In the light of mentioned points, there is dire need felt to assess the system thoroughly in order to highlight some of the basic gray areas.

The present study will specifically emphasis on those areas which badly effects the performance of Deeni Madaris and will present some remedial measures and recommendations in order to eradicate them and to make the system safe and sound for the better achievement of the goals.

Key Words: Deeni Madaris: Religious Institutions, Shariah

I. Introduction

“Our duty is carefully to watch the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it.”¹ This statement of Dr Muhammad Iqbal, clarify the duty of mankind in General and specifically the Muslim as they know the reality and fact beyond the Universe, that it is very

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important to observe and assess the human thoughts and not only assessment and evaluation is enough but one has to act accordingly and to adopt independent, free critical attitude towards that for accomplishing fruits. This is very important lesson for the philosopher and intellectual in order to know the actuality and existence of on-going happenings and activities related to Humanity. This was done by student of Jurist Imam Abu-Hanifa [80-150 H], Jurist Muhammad bin Hassan Shaibani [132-189 H] and compiler of his Fiqh and has great sayings;

من جهل عن اهل زمانه فهو جاهل²

The one, who is unaware of his era's practices, is considered ignorant.

The first religious school came into being by the revelation of the first verse of Noble Quran, Almighty Allah says in Surah Al-alaq;

اقرا باسم ربك الذي خلق³

“Read with the name of Allah, the creator”.

This was the formal start of learning and the tools and shapes of learning were changed according to the culture, social norms and civilization. The existent shapes of religious seminaries are because of the efforts and struggle of religious scholars of sub continent. They took the initiative and got start of this sacred, sensitive and tiresome journey which was one of the core necessity and requirement of that time. The journey started from that time is continue today, the number of these religious school are increasing day by day across the world in general and specifically the growth rate is very high in Pakistan because of different reasons.

Current status of Deeni Madaris or Religious schools shows that under the umbrella of five different educational boards, more than twenty five thousands Madaris are registered, among them 18677 Deeni Madaris belong to Wefaq-al-Madaris Alarabia.⁴ These boards are;

- Wefaq-al-Madaris al-Arabia⁵
- Tanzeem-al-Madaris Ahle- sunnat⁶
- Wefaq-al-Madaris Al-salafiaa⁷
- Wefaq-al-Madaris shiah⁸
- Rabita tul Madaris⁹

The curriculum teaches is same with little changes because of difference in school of thoughts. The root of the curriculum is actually to communicate the teachings of the Holy Book, Al-Quran and Sayings of Allah's Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) along with Arabic grammar, Islamic Jurisprudence and Islamic Law and some books of literature and all of them practices their own traditional ways according to the directions of teachers of that school¹⁰.

II. Rapid Expansion of Religious Seminaries

It is well known to all that the missions and objectives of these institutions are very clear from day first which is not only to protect the religious teachings from abolition but also to communicate these teachings to next generation in its true and neat form with clarity and soundness along with producing religious scholars, huffaz, Mufti to sustain this journey in future.

According to the religious scholars or concerned personnel's sayings that the productivity and output of the said schools is optimum and they are accomplishing their objectives and goals with high rate and frequency and their satisfactory level is also very far above the ground. The statistics shows that till late seventies, the potential of these schools was used to enhance the quality of the system instead of increasing the number i.e. quantity.

Afterwards the situation was changed and the rapid expansion was observed that numbers of these religious schools were exponentially increased. Three main factors played a prominent role in this regard.

- a) *Religious awareness*
- b) *Religious awareness coupled with US interest*
- c) *Jihad Motive against soviet Union in Afghanistan*

It is pertinent to mention that the intentions of the students studying religion is only and only to get the knowledge of Quran and Hadith with intentions to please Almighty Allah and to obey Allah's command and direction according to the Sunnah of Allah's messenger Mohammad. It is undeniable fact that students of Madaris are mostly from poor family background and they are more inclined

towards religion and some family may admit their children because of financial crunch and they can't afford their expenses. Singer, P.W.2001 stated that these Madras's are not necessarily the preferred option of many parents but rather draw students from felling of general desperation in the lower and deprived families of our society.

Moreover, the US interest was also attached with these religious schools in order to prepare the minds for fulfilling their own objectives with the help of Zia ul Haq regime and they done it. By the support of US financial aid and our own Government policy, this sector was highly appreciated and encouraged the religious scholars to open new schools.¹¹

That is why the strength of religious institutions was tremendously enhanced as compare to other decade. Here it is pertinent to notice that weather the policy to encourage these schools with mutual understanding of United States of America is right or not, this study is not highlighting this aspect.

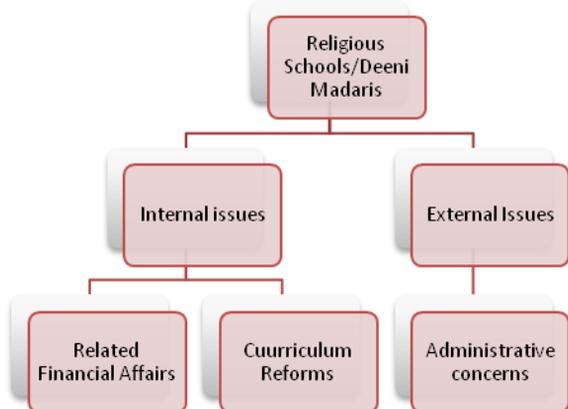
III. Proliferation from Spirituality to Materialism

It is common phenomenon that consistency or stickiness to pre defined patterns and layout always lead the individuals and institutions towards their destination and this feature make them able to accomplish their respective goals and objectives. The history of these religious institutions reveals that the key behind their long journey is the simplicity of system and objective oriented and the feature of spirituality play important role in flat survival of these schools, although they faced a number of different shocks and distress in different days which become the cause to make them more stronger and shock absorber.

The peak phase of religious schools was considered that when they are very enrich of spirituality and they stand for their core values and concentrated on their mission but after a long period of time the decline and downfall started because of different factors and almost the trend of these schools diverted and some cracks created which ultimately led them out from their predefined objectives. Among these one of the important loopholes was the materialism. The

same sense is supported by Sajjad and Hafeez (1981) that: In early 1980 some foreign elements coupled with negative forces of the society found their way in to Madaris and sowed the seeds of violence and extremism. The advance in curricula of Madaris embraced by one school of thought ,liberals which considers Deeni Madaris as only hub of extremists and advocates a radical change in their syllabi. Whereas, another section of society, more conservative in their approach. They feel no need of such modernity in the Deeni Madaris¹².

To summarize the above excerpt clearly depict that these schools have some of the lacking one way or other giving the impression of irregularity and misdeed leading towards intensive demise and breakdown. Following are some of the basic loopholes of these institutions;



It is important to mention that study about the unstructured areas of religious schools is very generic; including all types of Deeni Madaris related to any school of thought or belonging to any field of study, located in any area of the country. Here is also a chance that most of the Madaris evacuate from these deficiencies and they have very fine system but not specifically to one, almost all with exceptional cases have such lacking, effecting the performance of them in a very bad manner.

The table clearly depict the three main areas, problems related to financial affairs, some of the issues related to the curriculum and some lacking ate there in administrative correspondence. Here it will be discussed in detail coupled

Tahdhīb al Afkār To Map the Unstructured..... July-December, 2014
with remedial measures in order to make them more firm and sound for better result and outcomes.

IV. *Financial Gray Areas*

No doubt that transparent financial system of any organization play very keen role in enhancing the reliability and good well and make the institution one of the leading player of the market. On contrary to that, system without transparency in financial affairs cannot survive for long time and also lose reliability and good image. This is what going on in religious schools, though they are very honest and loyal but the system doesn't support them in this regard because of having no good system for proper record of financial matters.

a. Internal & External Audit

Accountability is the tool which makes the things not only in order and clean but brings them near to perfection and non objectionable. Through doing audit of the institution, one boldly claim of its honesty and transparency because internal or external audit is internationally accepted and it is considered as a certificate of transparency.

It is well known to everyone that like other institutions, Deeni Madaris have number of departments and different departmental interaction take place with deep involvement of finance like salaries to faculty members, residency expenses of students, different utilities of institution and so many hidden expenses. For all these correspondence there is no proper setup in these religious schools to handle these financial issues according to the worldly recognized format. This is one of the loop holes which may cause the ill reputation of these institutions. Here dire need is felt to adopt Auditing for their financial matters that clarify each and every transaction. The same is also encouraged by Shariah. Prophet Muhammad PBUH said;

“People will be dealing with each other but nobody will take care of dealing in a fair manner. A time will come when people will say, ‘That is the city where an honest person lives.’ After that, there will be another age, when a person will be declared as a skilled, wise and strong

person but his heart will not contain honesty even equal to a grain¹³.”

b. Record of Payment’s modes:

Shariah ruling strongly emphasis on having different accounts for different payments modes. It is not permissible to merge all type of money and use in a single way. The authorized person will spend different nature of money like charity, zakat and ransom money according to the predefined pattern and outline. So there must be separate accounts for it.

It is observed in so many religious schools that concerned person not give too much concentration and seems very careless in this regard which ultimately gives the impression of financial dishonesty. In spite of this there should be the complete record of all expenses made inside institution and outside the institution for the students directly or indirectly.

c. Counter check of Specialist

It is uttered that absolute power leads to corruption. There is always chance of miss happening if there is one man show. A single person cannot be able to handle all matters by his self. He or she may divert intentionally or unintentionally.

Religious schools are normally run by a single person, the only incharge of all. The head of school, normally called him, “*Muhtamim*” responsible for all correspondence and there is no any counter check on him to reconcile his errors or blunders. This is one of the other lacking leads to impression of irregularity and ill performance of these religious institutions.

d. Sources of Income

Income sources of all religious schools should be well known and legal. There is tough responsibility of incharge to check all income sources and be sure about the identity of donor and also avoid the ambiguous donation i.e. from outside the country with un-known identity. Some of the so-called religious schools found had links with anti-Pakistan

elements. In order to make their selves clear and transparent, all Deeni Madaris must have a proper book record of sources of income.

V. *Curriculum Reforms*

In fact that syllabus of educational institutions play, not only very vital role in intellectual development of the student but also impact on his moral and social behavior one way or other. This is curriculum responsible for bringing up the attitude, mentality and building personality positively or otherwise.

It is pertinent to mention that there is big space between the student mind setup and the syllabus teaching to them specifically the course of initial academic years fails to convince the students in this regard that what is going to study, students are emphasis on memorizing the things only.

a) Specialization of Syllabus [not everything for every one]

The educationist Sharun added that; "The syllabus is a small place to start bringing students and faculty members back together." ¹⁴ Normally it is observed that in these religious seminaries, the course is not framed properly according to the interest and expected field of the student. Each and every thing is going to teach to the student which ultimately discourages the student's enthusiasm and keenness towards study and no soundness and reliability observe via keeping in view the skills, knowledge of students. The system fails to produce specialist in any field. There is dire need to review the syllabus according to the interest and to produce specialist in each category like Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence, tafseer and its Principles.

b) Lack of Modern Educational Approaches and Techniques

No one can deny the role of modern educational approaches and Techniques because along with the global change in every field also has great impact on the minds of students. The innovative and modern approaches are

introduced to elaborate the hidden and complex concepts in an easier and better way. Globally the modern techniques and approaches are accepted and they get useful and effective results from it. The educationist, Derebssa Dufera Serbessa states;

“Throughout the world, people are looking to education to pave the way for a more just social order on the grounds that education instills in the young crucial humanitarian values such as equity, tolerance and peace. Progress in education is taken to be essential for sustainable development, environmental protection, improvement in maternal and child health and participation in democratic social and political processes. Education is also currently becoming the most important contributor to national economic growth”¹⁵

The responsible and concerned religious scholars must care of it because without the new and modern approaches the fruits will not be accomplished.

VI. *Administrative Concerns*

Along with other mentioned gray areas, there are also some loopholes regarding administration. One of the factors which become the worse symbol for these religious seminaries is lack of good administration. This point is highlighted by media across the world and the anti Islamic elements count them in uncivilized circle and linked them to terroristic activities and consider them one of the groups of extremists and fundamentalists. It doesn't means that they are just blaming but there are some schools which only use the Deeni Madrasa name as a symbol and hide behind it and have involvement in mentioned activities.

Keeping in view the practices of Deeni Madaris, Administratively following steps should be taken in order to survive smoothly and to avoid objections of the people.

- There should be proper registration of every Deeni Madrasa if it is for Hifz or Darse-Nizami. The concerned Wefaq (Board) must know about their profile; student's strength, faculty members and syllabus.
- Wefaq must care about newly open schools and direct some tough measures and standard for them

and also investigate about the nature, qualification and social reflection of owner of that school.

- Admission criteria of all Deeni Madaris should be clear and there should be proper investigation of each and every student while giving admission to him in Deeni Madrasa. The management should know about his birth place and family background.
- The management should also look after all activities of students after the class timings.

Conclusion

Comprehensively, there is dire need to eradicate mentioned unstructured areas and special emphasis on remedial measure stated above to get the real and sound fruits of these Religious Seminaries otherwise slow and steady these institutions will lose its goodwill and they will be deprived of public sympathy and confidence. Moreover, by adopting new approaches and techniques, innovative transparent financial system and to overcome administrative lacking will enable these schools to accomplish their goals and objectives in a better way and will consider centers of religious teachings and spirituality.

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