

STRATEGIC ACADEMIC REFORMS TO STREAMLINE MADARIS IN PAKISTAN

Dr. Zil-e-Huma Rafique*, Dr Abdul Qadir Mushtaq**

Abstract:

At present, Pakistan faces the challenge of reinventing itself both at state as well as societal level. The present study suggests multi-directional reforms program with required enforcing machinery and procedures with proper schedule for Madaris and formal education system. The study emphasizes Madaris inclusion in education system with equal paradigm and accountability for their role and responsibilities like other educational institutions. The proposed reforms aim to merge three streams i.e. Public / Private schools and Madaris into one uniform system to develop religious and cultural harmony. For the purpose, education reforms including uniform administration, registration, academic structure, curriculum and cultures of these institutions are proposed. Further, introduction of messing & boarding system in the Public school and de-politicization of educational institutions is also recommended. Furthermore, Madaris reforms include grading of Madaris and its exposure, provision of necessary funding, teacher's selection and training, messing and boarding system, examination and scholarships programs are also proposed. The study suggests periodical survey and campaign for awareness about reforms, and further revamps the weakness and hurdles till required results. Madaris should be considered as educational institutes and account for its role and responsibilities accordingly.

Keywords: madarasa education, academic politics, reforms, Islamic educational system.

Introduction

More or less, all studies emphasize the requirements of reforms for Madaris as education means to equip and facilitate the nation to chase national goals and reinforce its ideological foundations. Education plays an important role in political solidity, economic growth and social evolution of a nation; by which good environment is created for better implementation of the ideologies and policies. The confusion regarding education system may lead to destruction and poor management; may hurdle in physical and spiritual development. So Madaris should not be excluded from government policies. The unified system of education is the basic condition for uniform culture and national solidarity of Muslim

* Assistant Professor, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Govt. College University, Faisalabad.

** Associate Professor, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Govt. College University, Faisalabad.

Ummah.¹ During his Address at Institute of Policy Studies, on August 13, 2000, Dr. Khalid Alvi said that Madrassa is not the name of simple educational institute but it is the name of a system, consisting on Mohtamim as administrator and religious leader, teachers and students as workers of educational activities and donors as financers and supporters including civil society and clergy of the system.² Madaris that are supported by 97% community as religious institutions; are blamed for insecurity, sectarianism and many more; has been proved to be responsible for that to some extent. If they are reformed, they surely might be a tool to save and transmit cultural heritage and traditional values for social changes and innovations. No doubt, the education is the effective weapon against sectarianism and terrorism.³

At, present, Pakistan is trying to solve its problems and reinventing itself both at state level as well as societal level. But more so, it requires implementation of a “top-down approach” to redefine and redevelop religious values. If the society looks unresponsive about the nature of religiosity as it is exposing to days; it may not only change cultural values but also caricature religion itself. The real clash is not between Islam and the modernists as projected; but it is indifferent attitude of the government towards religiosity; that requires some reforms and their strict enforcement. For the purpose, the mode and method of European secularism should not be conversed with extremists and it should not be unnecessarily exposed to local or international media that unconsciously favors ‘liberal’ ideology in the society that already have secular agenda to develop religious ideology into liberal one as “the equivalent of atheism;” that causes more resistance towards the west particularly, that expedites the recognition of extremism in the country.⁴ It is inevitable to mention here that the present study is specifically made to find strategic reforms to streamline Madaris education as formal education system.

Strategies Formulation

In order to counter the impacts of Madaris in present scenario, a comprehensive strategy demands a complete reforms package all educational institutions i.e. schools as well as Madaris. The following strategies are recommended:

	STEPS	AIMS	AUTHORITY	DURATION
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1	Concrete determination – political will	Requires clarity for decision making and implementation excluding fear	All parties committee (apc).	Adequate time but not more than three month
2	Preparedness – homework	Collection of professional team with proper briefing.	National religious reforms enforcement authority (nrrea) with its chairman supervised by pm	Adequate time but not more than three month
3	Formulation of religious reforms program	To develop reforms packages for mosques, madaris & organizations and exclude hate materials.	Nrrea	Adequate time but not more than three month
4	Define options and negotiation	To ensure negotiation with all stakeholders.	Nrrea	
5	Reforms enforcement	Excluding volunteer, compel all through stick and carrot policies.	Nrrea through leas and distt. Administration	At least not less than three years
6	Survey for success analysis	To evaluate reforms effort.	By private surveyors	After every three year
7	Review of hurdles and weakness	To remove hurdles and improve weakness.	Nrrea	-
8	Control over media & campaign for awareness	Control over live coverage of terrorist activities and shows for public awareness	Nrrea may involve dignitaries, ulema and journalists.	Slow and long term.

1. Concrete Determination – Political Will

The government is confused and in fixes; unable to decide what he should do. Before taking any step, it requires concrete determination that meant to get involved whole nation and get them prepared for all consequences at any costs. When once the process is started; then there should be no reason to stop it till required results.

The issue should be debated in APC avoiding point scoring; practical and good suggestions from all corners should be welcomed. The tasks and procedure should be defined; this process may be completed within three month. Moreover, media must be taken into confidence.

2. Preparedness – Homework:

According to the objectives, a competent authority with its chairman and dedicated team should be appointed on long-term basis with the mandate to prepare a package of reforms in the light of previous Madaris demands that are considered as practical and negotiable. The proposed authority may be supposed as National Religious Reforms Enforcement Authority (NRREA). The Chairman and its team must have education from both institutions i.e. from Madrassa as well as from school; it requires the experience and inner knowledge regarding them so that they may be on same vibe with stakeholders and may develop and enforce required reforms to attain objectives.

Before introducing or enforcing reforms, NRREA should study the psyche of religious clergies and complete their homework. As per field studies,⁵the religious clergies enjoys prophetic respect by their students and devotees whereas the negotiation teams, generally consisting on bureaucrats or politicians, are not capable to understand their mindset and culture; and they desire to be respected and obeyed as by subordinate or worker; so all efforts remain in air and required results are exposed as unsatisfactory. So the NRREA must get aware about Madaris culture and clergies' mindset. During field study, it is observed that the boarding and messing system of Madrassa turn the institute into a family and Mohtamim, being the head of institute, is considered and respected as father; that do increase his importance. For staff and pupils, he is the most successful persons and is going to be followed as "role model". It is further found that pupils express intolerance, turn irritated and ready to across limit on any adverse remark against the said figure. To fulfill his command is not less than to perform religious duty. It is not due to any command or pressure from Mohtamim, teacher or other staff but extreme level of devotion and love. Even that any verdict uttered by him is attained as sacred saying without any verification or justification from Islamic reference or text. Moreover, practices started and adopted by him are treated and followed as Islamic tradition. As he attain such worth,

reverence and respect; he promote himself as authority and desire routine life around him to be so-called “Islamic one” (according to his own version and agenda) in locality; and in any critical situation, use pupils as his force. Some of them spend glorious life with magnificent homes, luxury cars and VIP protocol. They make use of pupils as their personal servants. Owing to these reasons, he is used to face submissive attitude. When government try to undertake negotiations for some reforms, they expect the same attitudes and resist over personal interests; desiring all reforms and financial assistance may be implemented through them without any check and balance system; just considering Madaris as their personal property while they (Madaris) are public property because they are developed and run by public donations. So NRREA must keep in mind the psyche and interests of clergies before negotiations.

3. Formulation of Religious Reforms Program:

No doubt, Madrassa reforms are causing severe difficulties to policy makers and LEAs in Pakistan, and serious issue not only for the Pakistani government, but also for governments in adjoining societies.⁶ There are many educational systems working in Pakistan, for example English medium schools, Urdu medium schools and religious Madrassa. These are entirely different in education and culture; ultimately produce three streams or classes that may lead to further clash in society. So, the entire education system requires some reforms that are inevitable to harmonize community. These reforms should be introduced and supervised through National Religious Reforms Enforcement Authority⁷ and implemented through Higher Education Commission and respective education departments. Some suggestions for educational reforms are detailed under two head i.e. Educational and Madrassa reforms as under:

3.1. Educational Reforms

These include reforms regarding system of education to convert it into uniform one. Three streams i.e. Public / Private schools and Madaris should be merged into one. For the purpose, administration, registration, academic structure, curriculum and cultures of these institutions are required to be reviewed.

3.1.1. Uniformity of Administration

There is no distinction of education as religious or secular in Islam. No distinction should be tolerated on political, social or religious basis in educational institutions. All educational institutions should be dealt and supervised by single authority whether they are public, private schools or

Madaris on equal basis.⁸ Executive District Officer (EDO) education may be mandated at district level along with his Assistants at Tehsil or Union Council level, depending over the strength of institutions to monitor the whole educational institutions instead different authorities for different institution under unified criteria and conditions designed at federal level by HEC. Furthermore, he may be authorized to get audits of educational institutions at his area of jurisdiction with the help of Auditor General through his district officers. The said authority should define contents regarding unified system of examination under education boards and get them implemented. Anyone whether it may be school or Madrassa; who disobeys, must be handed in accordance with law. On the basis of resources and efficiency, Madaris may get affiliated with government universities and colleges.⁹ Moreover, in all institutions teachers must be appointed on professional basis. No institution should be allowed to hire teachers unless they have been appropriately certified by the said authority.

3.1.2. Unified Registration of All Educational Institutions Including Madaris

Registration of Madaris as well as Public and private schools for quality and control purposes should be declared as essential with regular audits.¹⁰ HEC and respective education departments should be mandated to develop criteria and conditions for registration of all educational institutions. Inclusion of local council representatives and dignitaries from the society in the management committee or board of directors of all educational institutions (funded by community) must be ensured so that they may be involved and utilized in any critical situations. The same may be implemented through the Madrassa registration authorities and the EDO education to check Madaris from being persuaded by radical ideologies that are required to curb out from the communities in which they operate schools.¹¹ In this regard the public should be educated to get their kids admitted and donate funding only to registered institutions. All unregistered institutions must be banned for educational activities. Moreover, authority should be mandated to prevent Madaris with the help of LEAs from getting radical by extremists' ideologies that are required to cease by the society. In this regard necessary amendment in the existing law may be made.

3.1.3. Revision of Academic Structure

Revision of academic structure is strongly recommended. During informal discussion with general public, it is extracted that society

requires religious education. If government fails to provide the same, then they remain on clergies' discretion who serve the same as they are. Analyzing the discussion with general public including educationists and intelligentsia, society requires three categories of religious education: Firstly, to counter irreligious belief or on any particular religious issue at international / national level, a specialized course may be termed as Mufti, having capability to issue fatwa and may deliver lecture at university and college level. Secondly, for religious education and ritual services in mosques and schools may be called as "Khateeb or Imam". Thirdly, it requires religious sect-free education for public.¹² Some argue anxiously that medical education (Doctor) is the need of few ill; Engineering is the requirement for few industrialists; Agriculture and business is the necessities of farmer and businessman but religion is the requirement of all. Government has launched institutions for all other requirements; why does it not establish institutions for religious need? The government must arrange religious education for public otherwise they will remain on Molvi discretion for religious education. So some strongly recommended that Nazra at primary, Hifz-ul-Quran class at middle and religious sciences at metric level must be initiated in all public and private schools as that of natural science and arts whereas school education should be enforced in Madaris according to their resources. For the purpose, a balanced curriculum without any contested ideologies with all respects should be got prepared from education experts and impart the same with strong political will; that may ensure students for better future. Moreover, formal institutions should impart religious sciences to educate professionals that may fulfill religious requirement of societies and check extremists' interpretations due to their political or ideological association;¹³ so the discipline recommended at school level should be extended to higher education as proposed above. All other religious boards must be closed and Madaris examination should be conducted under education boards that may issue certificates to the candidates.

3.1.4. Unification of Syllabus

The unified curriculum should be introduced in all institutions without any distinction at least till metric level. Concerted efforts must be made to prepare curricula and published textbooks that would replace the present unsuitable / irrelevant textbooks at nearly every level of our educational system. It should be integrated as one step may lead to the next to enable a student to develop a truly sound base for the discipline

he or she is interested. The curriculum should be made updated in accordance with the modern world. Religious education should be incorporated in curriculum as detailed above at different levels. Curriculum should be accompanied by appropriate teaching methods that may make it easier and avoid feeling of burden. At the proper stage, Arabic language should also be introduced for greater unity in the Ummah and better understanding of Islam for students of all disciplines especially for those of religious sciences. Interesting and informative documentaries and activities should also be included. Contributions from the public can also be sought for this purpose. Medium of instruction should be harmonized at different level as required by subjects.

3.1.5. Unification of Culture

The projection of unified culture in all institutions is strongly recommended to avoid further division of the society. Presently Madaris, public and private students may be distinguished by bird's eye view as they have different uniforms, habits and atmosphere. All students should be looked "students", belong to single class; not be different as to days, representing different culture that lead to different streams in future. Above mentioned Registrar (RAEI) may be mandated to have surprise visits at all institutions to check discipline, culture and co-curricular activities that are being run in addition to the core syllabus.

3.1.6. Introduction of Messing & Boarding System in the Public School

In those public schools where religious education is required to be commenced, free messing and boarding system must be introduced with public private partnership like Madrassa at Union Council / Tehsil level with private partnership to attract poor segment of society, it would be more appreciable by public. It has multi-benefits; Firstly it attract poor to get Madrassa / school education to enhance literacy rate; Secondly it involve local dignitaries to perform good deeds as approved religiously excluding the monopoly of Molvi; Thirdly the needy may not be obliged by the Madaris administrators and they may keep safe from being part of their force as extremists and militants; Fourthly the needy students may spend more respectable and dignified life as they are not forced to collect donations for Madrassa as they are doing to days; Fifthly it provide justified utilization of donations and may divert flow of donations (Sadqat, Khairat, raw hides of sacrificed animals and Fitrana etc.) towards those government schools; Sixthly it prohibit the general trend to

commence Madrassa at mosque by Molvi as he get deprived of dignitaries' supports and finally it save the huge expenditure of the government at Danish schools and may deliver better results as compared to them. Some officers may quote the failure of previous experiment of model Madrassa but it would be different to that model. In my opinion the government should not expend on this system but it just permits the local society to construct hostels and arrange foods for needy students as that of Madaris. I believe the public execute it happily with the consent of concerned Head Masters. It just requires religious attribution and devotion.

3.1.7. De-Politicization of Educational Institutions

It must be strictly prohibited. No political or religious parties should be allowed to establish their youth wings in educational institutions. Likewise ban should be imposed on patronization of Madaris by any religious / political parties, failing which that party may be banned to contest election or run other activities. Madaris should be patronized by government alone on the basis of non-sectarian equality.

3.2. Madrassa Reforms

Under proposed religious and educational reforms program, besides mentioned-above, Madaris are required to be reformed to serve community and religion at their best. Some reforms are proposed here:

3.2.1. Grading of Madaris and Its Exposure

Madaris should be certified and graded according to the criteria and conditions of registration on the basis of resources as schools are graded into primary, middle or metric etc. and this awarded gradation must be exposed on board along with Madrassa's name so that public may get aware to level of education that is being instructed by that Madrassa to whom they are feeding.

3.2.2. Provision of Necessary Funding:

Mohtamim is to manage funds from public in addition to his institutional and educational activities. Sometimes he fails to manage funds as well as institute as required; that affect education as well as management and resulted poor standard of education ultimately. So like PEF, government should provide funds to Madaris whether through PEF or directly. That funding should be in the form of student fee on strength basis and

conditioned to enhance their quality in the fields of management and education as PEF is providing them to private schools.

3.2.3. Teacher's Selection and Training:

The registered and funded Madaris should be inspired to induct teachers on capability basis. The government should provide professional training to Madaris teachers as that to schools. The facilities and pay packages should be equal to that of public schools. Another problem with Madaris is brain drain; the capable and outstanding students who joins school at any stage, prefer to serve in other fields instead of Madrassa. Award system should also be introduced in shape of medals and increments for good performance for Madaris' teacher by the government.

3.2.4. Messing & Boarding System

Madaris messing and boarding system must be on the top of reforms agenda as it provides most vulnerable areas to the militants. All Madaris administrator must be bound down to get permission for hostel facilities otherwise they should be ceased to run their activities. The hostel standard must be enhanced as provided by the public institutions.

3.2.5. Examination and Scholarships Programs

To show good results, Madaris should maintain periodical internal examination system. The government should support the intelligent and outstanding students on equal basis without prejudice.

4. Define Options and Negotiation

Madrassa graduate are specially trained in Ilm-ul-Kalam and may negotiate in better way as compared to school graduate. Before negotiation, NRREA must define maximum and minimum options as there should be no chance of failure. As shown by figures, more than 50% (that are already registered) must agree with government. In Chapter three, it is observed that in Sunny (Brelvi, Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith) Madaris, 60% are days and around 80% are memorizing the Holy Quran; shows that majority students want to memorize the Holy Quran in only nearby Madrassa. In other words, it may be said that they have no alternative religious education institute; they are compelled to join them. Before enforcing reforms, the government should take them into confidence over its reforms programs but should not be blackmailed by them. Whether they get agreed or not, the government should provide religious education in school without any delay; with the passage of time they must realize their mistake and follow government. If the government commences religious education, these students must join

government schools; means to check the influence of Madaris in public that ultimately affect their means and fund collection and they get compelled to follow government.

5. Reforms Enforcement

There should be consistency in these reforms which can provide gradual steps for one another for better implementation as they are suggested. All enforcing department must get educated about the reforms program from top to bottom level. Generally observed that top level of bureaucracy knew about policies whereas the enforcement body did not fully aware about agenda in real sense; due to which required results could not be attained. Particularly those departments or teams, who are mandated to register education institutions, must be properly briefed and trained. Further those teachers who are appointed for religious education must be kept under strict surveillance so that they may not pollute their students with sectarianism. In enforcement process, the district level officers / officials play very important role.

6. Survey for Success Analysis

A study must be worked out regarding the effectiveness of reforms from some private firms. The study should include reforms impact over society in different areas, its weaknesses and hurdles, suggestions to remove them and new proposals from stakeholders for further improvements. The study should be made from at least two firms so that by comparative analysis, the real facts may be abstracted.

7. Review of Hurdles / Weakness

The hurdles must be analyzed whether there are flaws in reforms or in implementation; further it is managerial, communicational or operational in nature. After thorough study, the required directions should be issued. The procedure should be repeated till required results.

8. Control Over Media & Campaign for Awareness

Media should be directed about coverage of terrorist incidents. There should be difference between coverage and proliferation of news. Media liberty should not be allowed at the cost of national interests. Moreover, it should be monitored whether anyone is working on foreign agenda or against national interests. Likewise, a campaign should be launched for public awareness. Public should be categorized on the basis of education and understanding. So accordingly, media should be utilized. The promotions should be made through dramas, documentaries, films, talk

shows through media. Besides it the Ulema and dignitaries should also be moved to play their role in this regard.

Conclusion

The strategies formulation and implementation require clarity for decision making, implementation with concrete determination, political will, collection of professional teams, establishment of National Religious Reforms Enforcement Authority (NRREA) with its Chairman supervised by PM and their proper briefing according to objectives. It proposes Educational Reforms as well as Madaris Reforms. Educational Reforms contains reforms for uniformity of administration, registration, academic structure, curriculum and cultures of these institutions. Madaris Reforms include grading of Madaris and its exposure, provision of necessary funding, teacher's selection, training and privileges, messing & boarding system, examination system and scholarships programs. The study recommends negotiation with all stakeholders and, excluding volunteer, all should be compelled through stick and carrot policies. Survey for success analysis requires evaluation of reforms effort by private surveyors to review of hurdles and weakness and suggestion for improve and re-enforcement. Control over media, campaign for public awareness and appeal for their contribution to implement reforms are inevitable.

Only Madaris reforms do nothing; the entire education system must be reform to achieve objectives. I ensure the devised reforms and implementing strategies provide guidelines to policy makers to include them in the normal course of life.

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