

Essay

Challenges and Opportunities in mainstreaming Madrassa Education in Pakistan.

Outline:-

Introduction

- 1- Background of Madrassa Education in Pakistan.
- 2- Importance of mainstreaming Madrassa Education.
- 3- Madrassa Education in Pakistan presents both challenges and opportunities.

2. Challenges:

- 2a. Outdated curriculum and teaching techniques
- 2b. Registration of Madrassas
- 2c. The role of Madariss in terrorism
Lal Mosque Operation 2007
- 2d. Radicalization in Madrassas
 - 1. Jihadi commanders
- 2e. Security concerns
Perceptions of Madrassas as breeding grounds for extremism
- 2f. Limited Resources; Inadequate funding, infrastructure and teacher training.

Opportunities:

- 2g. Expanded Education Access
especially for disadvantaged groups
- 2h. Fostering tolerance and cohesion
- 2i. Economic empowerment
- 2j. International Recognition and Co-operation

Strategies for mainstreaming:

- 2k. Curriculum reform
- 2l. Teacher training
- 2m. Government support
- 2n. Infrastructure development

3. Conclusion:

The history of Madrasah education in Pakistan has been originated by the advent of Islam and Arabic culture to India with conquering of Sindh by Mohammed Bin Qasim in 712 A.D. After the formation of Muslim rule at Delhi in 1203 A.D., a quarter of Indian-subcontinent population had converted to Islam over the next five centuries and Madrasahs were established in India. Eventually the Madrasahs were grown up as school of learning in 11th century in Multan as stated in the book "Tareekh-e-Farishta". In Pakistan since Independence Madrasah has provided education to millions of students. As an alternative to formal education, religious education is a supplement for society from which large chunk of society is benefited. This needs not to be overlooked that Madrasahs have been in existence for centuries and produced several leaders and eminent leaders like President Erdogan of Turkey, Hassan Rouhani of Iran, who got their education from Madrasahs. Mainstreaming Madrasah education in Pakistan is complex endeavor that poses significant challenges, including resistance to change, curriculum differences, inadequate infrastructure yet simultaneously offers profound opportunities for promoting social cohesion, economic empowerment, and education equity, thereby contributing to a more beneficial society.

Most Madrassas teach mostly Islamic subjects such as tafseer (interpretation of Quran), hadith, fiqh and Arabic but include some non-Islamic subjects such as mathematics, logic and philosophy. On the other hand when talking about modern world education, the curriculum of these madrassas clearly not align with modern education standards. This outdated curriculum hinders student's ability to acquire relevant skills and knowledge needed for modern world. On the other hand teachers of madrassas feel fear to use technology and are concerned about whether is allowed in religion or not; feel afraid to do new experiments and technology work. Teachers beat students with sticks, corporal punishment is allowed which affects the student's motivation and inspiration to learn something new. Hence, making it overall difficult to get itself mainstreamed in education system of Pakistan.

Additionally, there are an estimated 30,000 madrassas in Pakistan that are registered and around 22,000 that are unregistered contrasted with only 244 colleges. This imbalance in the educational system has prompted a deficiency of trained specialists which has obstructed economic development. Mostly unregistered madrassas are used as a tool to brainwash people. Since 9/11 madrassas in Pakistan have been at the

vortex of international studies due to their alleged linkages with extremism subsequently leading to religious extremism.

Furthermore, the role of madrassas in terrorism is a complex and debated topic. While some Pakistani policymakers believe that a few elements of madrassas are involved in international terrorism. In fact studies have shown that less than 9% of known al-Qaeda terrorists attended a madrassa, and that most received most secular education from local or western institutions. Instead, Pakistani madrassas have been linked to domestic and regional violence such as Sunni-Shia sectarian violence and homegrown terrorism orchestrated by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Investigation reports revealed that Lal mosque operation in 2007, for instance, students of Jamia Fareedia and Lal Masjid established the "Ghaz" force to prepare suicide bombers to take revenge on government by attacking in Islamabad. The force took youngsters from Islamabad to tribal areas to train them as suicide bombers.

Moving ahead, the perceptions about madrassas promoting extremism and radical views are complex and multifaceted. On one hand, madrassas see themselves as custodians of Islam, providing education based on Islamic principles.

However, critics argue that some madrassas have been hijacked by extremist ideologies, perpetuating radicalization among students. Madrassas affiliated with jihadi outfits play a key role in radicalizing students, as they invite jihadi commanders to visit and recruit students by glorifying their experiences and cause. While leaders of sectarian outfits further motivate students against other sects through speeches and distribution of literature. For example, a group of Esmatullah Moavia, splinter of Jaish-e-Mohammad, a Kashmir focused group is affiliated with TTP and recruits from Madrassas.

Besides radicalization, security experts claim that some madrassas in Pakistan provide sanctuary to militants, particularly those with ties to banned organizations. Terrorism suspects have allegedly taken refuge in these institutions before carrying out attacks. In response the governments have conducted raids on several madrassas arresting terrorists and seizing weapons. For instance, a 2007 raid on Jamia Usmania Dera Ghazi Khan resulted in the death of one terrorist and arrest of two other along with a truckload of lethal weapons. Despite these findings madrassa leaders deny any involvement in terrorism, attributing allegations to political propaganda.

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Above all, the government does not invest enough in education. In 2017, it spent 2.2 percent of GDP on Training. This is well below the average of 4.6 percent for agricultural nations. The absence of interest in schooling has prompted a decrease in education. Madrassas have been especially impacted by this downfall. Numerous madrassas cannot give quality schooling because of such variables as absence of government financing, qualified instructors, and access to course readings and instructional material.

On the other hand, Madrassas can help address educational disparities in Pakistan by expanding the access to education in terms of providing accessible and affordable education to marginalized groups promoting educational equity, and ensuring that all citizens have access to quality education, regardless of their socio-economic background. As, madrassas provide their students with free accommodation and basic necessities of life.