

Effects of induction of English and General Science Courses in Wifaq-ul Madaris affiliated Institutions of District Quetta, Balochistan.

Muhammad Ali

M Phil Scholar, Department of Education,
 University of Balochistan, Quetta.

Memoona Saeed Lodhi

Assistant professor Hamdard University, Karachi

Muhammad Umar

Lecturer, Government Boys Inter college Killi Sheikhan, Quetta.

Abstract

Madrassa education is well deep rooted in indo Pak subcontinent including, Afghanistan and Bangla Desh. They are engaged in preparing the individuals typically from religious perspective and have engaged about one million youth both male and female across Pakistan. They often memorize the Holy Quran and also get education about Islam, history, basic Arabic courses, Tafseer and Hadith in eight years compulsory course. The curriculum was added with science and English in last decade. This study has been designed to evaluate the effects of induction of these courses in Wifaq-ul Madaris Madrassa functional in district Quetta. All the informations regarding the curriculum were gathered using prestructured questionnaire involving a sample of 300 students selected randomly from 20 different madrassas followed by a focus group discussion with the teachers of the same madrassas. The students who could answer about 50% of the given questions were considered pass. Results revealed that both of the subjects were considered with tertiary importance. Students were very weak in understanding the science concept. Similarly, learning capabilities of English language were also poor. The average qualification of recruited teachers for these subjects was undergraduate level. Further, science laboratory along with suitable conducive environment for these subjects was not found in the madrassa premises. These results depicts real weak picture of these subjects in the madrassas of the area. Government should implement strict and vigilant policies in order to regularize these madrassas and appoint qualified professional Science and English teachers in order to bring the educational standards of the madrassas at par with the globe.

Key Words: Madrassa, Curriculum, English, Science, Quetta

1. Background

Educated society plays key role in the success of any country. Government gives a very high priority to developing a high quality, equitable, and widely accessible education system in Pakistan. Overall, literacy rate is 58% in the country. The budget allocated for education is still very less (2% of the GDP) than many countries(Nabil, 2016-17). However, there is sharp increase in the literacy from last decade, but still is far lagging behind the many developing countries. Pakistan is Islamic republic, where 96.2 % populations are to Muslims(Statistics, 2016). Large numbers of students are enrolled in Islamic teaching based schools named Madrassas where huge number of students gets their religious education. Religious education remained a permanent character for many years especially in Indo-Pak Subcontinent. In last decade great changes were observed in the centuries old traditional curriculum of these schools (traditional madrassas) and some subjects such as, Mathematics, English and Science etc, were included in their curriculum (Iqbal & Raza, 2015).

Since our society is greatly influenced by western culture due to our colonial past. Our daily life is also under the influence of western community. Meanwhile, it is also necessary that being responsible citizen and member of the society, one should have updated knowledge of every day science in order to make a good placement in the society. Similarly, English language has got central position in our modern education and official affairs of the country, therefore, it becomes important for a responsible citizen to have some command over English language in reading, writing and speaking. It is also a well-known fact that it is the solid foundation of science at all school level coupled with the quality of the scientific research and its application at higher level of education, that enabled advanced countries of the world to banish poverty hunger and also provided for higher standard of living to its citizens. (Tilak, 2001).

World has transformed into a global village due to advancement in technology and science. Time, energy and resources have been conserved and distances have been shortened while communication services have been increased. In given conditions all government and private schools teach modern education while madrassas follow old traditional curriculum with old teaching methods. Few researchers stated that curriculum of Madrassas are devoid of modernity and economic growth and also does not support industrialization and business needed for the developed society (Jalal, 2008: Hussain, 2007: Chaudhary, 2005). Urdu is generally the medium of instruction in Pakistani madrassas. However, local languages are also used in far areas (Iqbal & Raza, 2015). Similarly, Tavernise, 2009 also criticized that most of the emphasis in madrassas are on Quran memorization only. While Riaz, 2008 stated that this system of education promotes sectarianism. This statement has also been supported by some other researchers that this system is involved in political activities. They were of the view that madrassas should focus only on educational activities (Magnier, 2009; Fair, 2007, Hussain, 2007). Conversely, Kachru, (1985) holds that Pakistan is one of the countries in the outer circle where English is one of the official languages along with Urdu and it is taught as a single compulsory language in the school. English is and should be more powerful language at university level and a compulsory subject at undergraduate level.

Keeping in view the dictates of globalized world and changes posed by advancement in Science and technology, modifications and advancements in syllabus are critical. Accordingly, the new contents and syllabus of most of the organizations are updated with innovative contents. However, for a long time the contents and syllabus of madrassas had remained unchanged. Owing to all the modern day dictates posed by globalization, efforts were made in the last decade by General Pervez Musharraf under the motto of enlightened Moderations, various modern subjects such as Mathematics, General science, and English were incorporated in Madrassa Curriculum. Since then, these subjects are taught in Madrassas. However, absence of empirical and scientific research on madrassas education system in general and curriculum in particular has created many myths and perceptions against these institutions. (Ali, 2005). This study has been designed to evaluate the effects of Science and English subjects in madrassas curriculum.

1.1 Study Objectives.

1. To assess the effects of Science and English subjects on students in madrassas curriculum
2. To assess the students abilities towards these subjects.
3. To evaluate the intentions and importance of these subjects in the madrassa teachings.

2. Research Methodology

This study was carried out with the help of predesigned questinarae. All the informations regarding the induction of these subjects were gathered from teachers and students of the institutions. Twenty different institutes were selected from urban and rural areas of the Quetta. Most of the students were from both native ethnic group.i.e,Pashtoon and Baloch. Pre informed verbal consent was taken before the study. Similarly, informations were also collected from teachers who either were involved in teaching these subjects or were in the top management of the institute.

2.1 Study Design

The population of the study was all the students of madrassas in district Quetta, while the access population was all the students enrolled in different Madrassas associated with Wifaq-ul-Madaris Pakistan and studying English and General Science Courses. Random sampling technique involving 300 students in selected 20 Madrassas having proportional balance of rural and urban divide and Pashtoon and Baloch ethnicity. The Participants were all male and their ages ranged from 15 to 30 years. In terms of class, the participantswere from working class and belonged to Deobandi schools of thought. The instruments used for the collection of data were closed ended questionnaires (Likely Question paper) both for general Science and English courses and a focus group discussion with open ended semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers.All the students were evaluated for their concept about science subjects and English as language subjects. The teachers were also interviewed for their teaching methodology and student scientific and linguistic approach.

3. Results and Discussion

The data collected indicatedthe very lethargic approach of the students to both the subjects. As these subjects were considered at tertiary level importance. Their main focus was on the Arabic basic courses and books. The students were very weak in speaking, reading and writing in

English. Similarly, they were lacking scientific approach, even they were unable to explain the concept of science.

Discussion on General Science Subject

After going through the syllabus and relevant literature, question paper was developed for students Mutawassita level in Madrassas. The question paper was designed to assess the capabilities of madrassa students, aiming to evaluate the standard, quality and impact of introduced subjects. Questionnaire (likely Question paper) was developed from the syllabus of General Science taught to students. The questionnaires was not developed from the given exercises at the end of the lessons but designed conceptually while keeping in sight the ease and difficulty factor. The questionnaire was neither much easy nor too much difficult and was totally from the syllabus taught to students. While framing the questionnaire for general Science, a comprehensive strategy was observed. Firstly, multiple choice questions (MCQs) were included. It is useful because it require less time and material. The obtained results from such activity are more comprehensive and help in the evaluation of the candidate's extent of knowledge. Secondly, True/ False statements were incorporated. The purpose was to evaluate student's ability and conceptual clarity to identify between true and false statements. This would show whether students were conceptually clear or were using their guess power. Thirdly, Short Questions were incorporated from the syllabus for the purpose to assess student's ability to have comprehended the syllabus or not. Finally, two Diagrams were also incorporated. Labeling a diagram required applying knowledge of a concept. It is an effective form of self-assessment, enabling, students to check their own understanding.

The statistics obtained as a result of data collected and analyzed, it was seen that the madrassa students of district Quetta enrolled in General Science and English Courses did not perform well in General Science subject. In general Science paper, out of four sections, students only performed satisfactorily in one section that is MCQs, section. This pattern suggested that students passed the section having multiple choice questions (MCQs) that is four possible answers, out of which one correct answer is selected. This might have given students the opportunity to guess the right answer. Whereas, other three sections of general Science paper which were having exercises of true/false, answering short questions and labelling diagrams, the students could not rightly answer 50 % questions and

considered fail. This pattern proposes that students lacked conceptual clarity and command over the taught syllabus. This also indicated that the teaching methodology adopted for these subjects was questionable because most of the students failed to obtain desired aims and outcomes.

Discussion on English Subject

The questionnaire for English course involved the exercises for reading, writing and speaking capabilities. In reading exercises, two selected paragraphs from the syllabus were selected and students were asked to read them. The fluency and pronunciation of words were thoroughly observed. In writing exercise, two sections were made. In first section students were required to write a letter to their Father and request him to send them more money. In section two, ten short questions were made from the taught syllabus to answer according to the lessons. In speaking exercise, students were asked to explain daily routine orally. With regards to statistics obtained as a result of data collected for English subject, out of three sections, students only performed satisfactorily in one section that is reading section. In remaining two sections which involved exercises for writing and speaking, the students failed to answer 50% question correctly and therefore considered fail. This pattern suggested that students passed reading section which was having an unseen passage from the given syllabus to observe proper fluency in reading and pronunciation of words. Reading activity might have be given more time than writing and speaking and therefore students passed this section. Whereas, other two sections of English subject which were having exercises of writing and speaking, the students could not rightly answer 50 % questions and considered fail. This pattern proposed that students lacked conceptual clarity and command over the taught syllabus. This also indicated that the teaching methodology adopted for these subjects was problematic because most of the students failed to obtain desired aims and outcomes.

It is pertinent to mention that the questionnaires were answered by students at the end of the session when they were fully prepared for final examination. Both the questionnaires were answered by students on separate days. It was also ensured that the students should take the questionnaires seriously that was possible in the presence of invigilators in an examination center with all required facilities.

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group was arranged with selected 20 teachers who were employed to teach these subjects from 20 selected madrassas. The participants in focus group were allowed to describe their lived experiences, observations in interview with the researcher while the participants were at liberty to present their ideas in written or oral form. The researcher remained non-directive as much as possible without directing or suggesting their description in any way. However, the researcher has encouraged the participants to give a full description of their experience and suggestions. All the results of the questionnaire were discussed and their views were noticed. A few general and open ended inquiries were made from them to comprehend the results. Finally a table is developed to represent the major themes of the discussion

Main themes	Sub Themes
Profile of Teachers	Mostly FSc /FA, BA level education
	No Professional training
	Average Age: 23-30 years
	Teaching Experience: 1-4 years
What are your views about poor performance of students in general Science paper?	Actually Students lack background knowledge
	Our system of examination requires writing answers and not concepts
	Students do not prioritize these subjects equal to others
How would you explain the poor performance of students in English subject?	English language has no utility in higher studies of madrassa
	Learning Arabic is preferred over English, due to prevailing environment
How do you see the incorporation of modern subjects like English and General Science in madrassa curriculum?	It is encouraging and must continue with quality assurance
	A Few teachers called it Western agenda
	Govt is interested to control madrassas
	These subjects give skills and not knowledge
	Equally important in order to face the challenges of new millennium.

The data depicted the real picture of the capabilities and command of the students over General Science and English subjects. Actually, most of the students were from rural villages with background of primary school knowledge only. The teachers deputed for these subjects were not

specialized in these subjects. Their average education qualification was FA that is Twelve years of Education. Further, in the provincial cultural context, people preferred to live simple life and had inherited hatred against English language. They were of the view that these subjects were just for awareness, but their ultimate aim and focus was on religious books. This surfaced the fact that Madrassa system does not warmly well come the changes with open hands. Further, Madrassas are divided on ideological lines into five different schools of thoughts, showing different sects. These ideological differences have caused gaps among various sects and consequently, weakened madrassas educational system.

It was learnt from the focus group discussion that Madrassas were various issues and challenges in the area due to abysmal attention of the subsequent government and fluctuating western interests. The madrassas that were known for free education are under harsh criticism of the media these days. Many internal and external challenges and issues were faced by madrassas in Balochistan. Its luminary past is vanishing. In past they enjoyed public confidence and respect for noble and human social services but presently, they are facing financial hardships. The communications gap between government and madrassas administrators, ideological, sectarian rifts and traditional curriculum and syllabus, apathy towards adapting changes in teaching methodology, have brought many issues and challenges for their system of education in the area. Sitting government should implement strict and vigilant policies regarding their registration, curriculum and make a concrete plan to appoint Science and English professional teachers in these institutes to bring at par these institutes compatible with the rest of the country.

Recommendations

1. Recruitment and professional training of teachers is critical to attain desired goals and students to become productive citizens of the country.
2. Students should be motivated to take interest in these subjects and hatred against English etc must be resolved.
3. As the graduates of Madaris had not been exposed to world views, so they had a narrow approach to the issues. They might be exposed to the world views so they could be in better position to compare them with the Islamic views.

5 As the Madaris were established without any feasibility, their standard of education was considerably low. Therefore, it is necessary to make a plan before the establishment of Madaris in the area.

6 In Madaris, the activities were mainly curricular that were carried out through lecture method and were primarily teacher-centered. Students had no exposure to the co-curricular activities. So that they become stronger that had an adverse effect on their growth and development.

7 The Madaris were primarily dependent for their financial needs, and had no mean of resource mobilization. That caused financial crunch, which resulted in substandard education as well as other sub-standard food, boarding and lodging for students, low pay for teachers. There should be their own sources of earning as well as access to the organization of the same faith and philanthropists that could help them for their financial needs.

8 The teachers in Madrassa are paid very less wages as compared to their duties, which also badly affected the standard of education in Madaris. They should be paid salaries and other benefits equal to that of the public sector educational institutions in order keep the standard of education.

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