



## CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING AND ADAPTATION: ENHANCING MADRASAH MANAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN THROUGH INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIAN MADRASAH

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### Abstract

*This article explores the applicability of management practices from Indonesian Madrasahs to enhance Madrasah institutions in Afghanistan. Through a comparative analysis of current management strategies in Indonesian Islamic schools, renowned for their strong tradition of Islamic education and modern management practices, the study identifies adaptable strategies for integration into Afghan Madrasah management. The research delves into organizational structures, teaching methods, and administrative frameworks in both Afghan and Indonesian Madrasahs, aiming to establish an empirical understanding of current management practices in Afghan Madrasahs. The article highlights challenges and areas for improvement in Afghan Madrasahs while presenting evidence-based recommendations for incorporating successful Indonesian management techniques. Despite contextual differences, the research acknowledges the impact of cultural and social factors on the implementation of management strategies. The findings contribute to the enhancement of Madrasah education in Afghanistan, human resource development, and cross-cultural collaboration in Islamic education management.*

**Keywords:** *adaptation, Afghanistan, madrasah, management, Indonesian*

### Abstrak

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi penerapan praktik-praktik manajemen dari Madrasah Indonesia untuk meningkatkan institusi Madrasah di Afghanistan. Melalui analisis komparatif strategi manajemen saat ini di sekolah-sekolah Islam di Indonesia, yang terkenal dengan tradisi pendidikan Islam yang kuat dan praktik manajemen modern, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi strategi yang dapat diadaptasi untuk diintegrasikan ke dalam manajemen Madrasah Afghanistan. Penelitian ini mempelajari struktur organisasi, metode pengajaran, dan kerangka kerja administratif di Madrasah Afghanistan dan Indonesia, yang bertujuan untuk membangun pemahaman empiris tentang praktik manajemen saat ini di Madrasah Afghanistan. Artikel ini menyoroti tantangan dan bidang-bidang yang perlu ditingkatkan di Madrasah Afghanistan, sambil menyajikan rekomendasi berbasis bukti untuk menggabungkan teknik manajemen Indonesia yang berhasil. Terlepas dari perbedaan kontekstual, penelitian ini mengakui adanya dampak dari faktor budaya dan sosial terhadap implementasi strategi manajemen. Temuan penelitian ini berkontribusi pada peningkatan pendidikan Madrasah di Afghanistan, pengembangan sumber daya manusia, dan kolaborasi lintas budaya dalam manajemen pendidikan Islam.

**Kata kunci:** adaptasi, Afghanistan, madrasah, manajemen, Indonesia

### Introduction

Religious schools or Madrasah hold a paramount significance within every Islamic community. These institutions play a crucial role in preserving and perpetuating religious knowledge, preventing its gradual decline and safeguarding against a fading, colorless religious faith that fails to leave a lasting impact on people's lives. An examination of

countries like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, which endured years of Soviet Union occupation, provides a clearer understanding of the matter. During this period, the Russian occupiers prohibited religious education, seeking to alienate Muslims from their faith. Islamic schools function as custodians of the torch of faith, instilling warmth into people's hearts through their teachings. They serve as factories that mold and disseminate the fragrance of faith throughout society. While one generation might manage to retain the correct understanding of their faith even in the absence of religious schools, subsequent generations gradually drift away from Islam, resulting in its existence becoming a mere name without a true influence. In Islamic countries, the persistence of religiosity owes much to the divine grace and the presence of these educational institutions. Esteemed scholars have invested tremendous effort, persevered through countless hardships, and safeguarded these schools, which act as strongholds of Islam, to ensure their continual operation. The continued existence and functioning of these Madrasah are vital in nurturing a generation that embodies a deep understanding and commitment to their faith, ultimately ensuring the longevity and prosperity of Islam within the broader global community.

Religious schools or Madrasah have played a significant and tangible role in shaping the thoughts and ideas of people, particularly the educated class, in Islamic countries, including Afghanistan and Indonesia. Throughout the socio-political transformations in these countries, these schools have always been influential. Over the past four decades, due to foreign invasions and internal conflicts, many Afghan people were compelled to leave their homeland and migrate to other countries, where they pursued studies in various educational institutions. Upon their return to Afghanistan, we have witnessed diverse inclinations in different fields, including religious and sectarian orientations. Some of these inclinations have led to the establishment of specific-oriented religious schools, which undoubtedly have had an impact on the country's social and political dynamics and are expected to exert their particular influence in the near and distant future. Therefore, examining the state of religious schools in Afghanistan becomes one of the major and fundamental responsibilities of researchers.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of Madrasah in Afghanistan is said to have originated during the Seljuk period, with the Seljuks being the first to initiate this endeavor. Notably, Abu Ali Hasan, also known as Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk, born in 804 AH, was the pioneer in founding independent educational institutions funded from his personal resources during the fourth century AH.<sup>2</sup> These institutions, known as Madrasah Nizamiyah, gained prominence in history and included significant centers such as Baghdad, Mosul, Nishapur, Balkh, Herat,

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<sup>1</sup> Mu'tasim, Amin Allah. "Barresi-e vaz'iyat-e madaris-e dini-ye konuni-ye keshvar e'lam az doulati va khosousi" (2018) accessed on 29\07\2023 from <https://pic.iuonline.org/uploads/books/%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C%20%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA%20%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%20%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C%20%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Anzar, Uzma. "Islamic education: A brief history of madrassas with comments on curricula and current pedagogical practices." *Paper for the University of Vermont, Environmental Programme* 55 (2003).

Marv, Amul, Gorgan, Basra, Shiraz, and Isfahan. These Madrasah played a vital role in shaping the educational landscape of Afghanistan and neighboring regions, offering education in various fields, and leaving a lasting impact on the region's intellectual and academic development.<sup>3</sup>

During that era, Madrasah held a prominent position among the academic centers of the time in Afghanistan. Dr. Abdul Hussein Zarnikob speaks of Madrasah as active hubs of scientific activities, with their teachers often being distinguished scholars of the era. From the ancient lands of Islam to this time, seekers of knowledge flocked to these Madrasah, which served as the oldest universities in the world, offering both accommodation and livelihood for their scholars. Additionally, they had access to libraries, hospitals, mosques, and places for religious sermons. The Madrasah had a hierarchical structure with instructors holding various titles such as "*ustad*" (master), "*mudarris*" (teacher), and "*mu'adhdhin*" (reciter), and they were easily recognizable by their distinctive attire. It appears that European universities took inspiration from these Madrasah, adopting certain elements from their organizational and academic practices.<sup>4</sup>

In Afghanistan, there are two types of Madrasahs: governmental Madrasah, established and funded by the state, and private Madrasah. The concept of government-run religious schools was first introduced by Amir Abdul Rahman Khan in the late 19th century, with the establishment of the Kabul School of *Chobfrushi*, which was financially supported by the government budget. The second type consists of private religious schools, which have a long-standing history. Typically, there are two subcategories of private religious schools. The first category comprises fully independent religious schools with no affiliation to the Ministry of Education. These schools often operate within mosques or community-funded facilities facilitated by local religious leaders. The second category includes semi-independent private Madrasah that have obtained authorization from the Ministry of Education. Approximately seventy percent of the curriculum for these schools is determined by the Ministry of Education, while funding, teacher selection, and student admission are overseen by the school's responsible authorities.<sup>5</sup>

The difference between private and government religious schools lies in the fact that government religious schools generally have a unified and organized framework with a formal administrative system, while private religious schools lack a standardized structure and administrative system. The effectiveness of private religious schools often hinges on the capability and competence of their administrators. If the school's director is proficient and diligent, the institution tends to be orderly and compliant with regulations. However, if the school lacks strong managerial qualities in its leadership, it may struggle to maintain order and efficient governance. Some researchers and scholars' express concerns that

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<sup>3</sup>Safi, Mohammad Aman, *Afghanistan Wal-Adab Al-Arabi 'Abra Al-'Usur*. (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1988 CE), pp. 632-672.

<sup>4</sup> Zarrinkoub, Abdolhossein. *Karnāmeḥ Islām*. (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Amīr Kabīr, 2008), p.38.

<sup>5</sup> Mu'tasim, Amin Allah. "Barresi-e vaz'iyat-e madaris-e dini-ye konuni-ye keshvar e'lam az doulati va khosousi?" (2018)

private schools, without strict oversight and control from the government, may lead to political and social issues within society. They argue that the existence of such schools could foster the spread of radicalism and fundamentalism in the community.<sup>6</sup>

In Afghanistan, the governmental Madrasah are obliged to follow the government's curriculum and cannot bring any changes to the curriculum, and privately-owned religious schools that are officially registered with the Ministry of Education are required to align their curriculum with up to seventy percent of the government's educational standards. However, they have more flexibility in the remaining thirty percent of their curriculum and can design it according to their preferences.<sup>7</sup>

The education system in Indonesia is divided into two main sub-systems, each overseen by separate ministries: the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). These subsystems encompass general education delivered by state schools and religious education offered by Madrasah. Among the 233,517 educational institutions in the country, approximately 82% are classified as state schools, while the remaining 18% are categorized as Madrasah. With a total enrollment of 49,402,000 students, state schools constitute the majority, accounting for 87% of the student population, whereas Madrasah caters to the remaining 13%. Notably, Indonesian laws and regulations emphasize equal treatment for both state schools and Madrasah. Additionally, Madrasah, in compliance with MoRA's guidelines, includes Islamic religious subjects in its curriculum alongside the national curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the function of Islamic educational institutions has expanded beyond their historical roles. While they were once responsible for transmitting Islamic knowledge, upholding Islamic customs, and producing scholars, these institutions now play a broader role as agents of progress. The reform aims to empower Islamic educational institutions to actively contribute to societal development, fostering critical thinking, promoting tolerance, and nurturing a generation of well-informed and engaged individuals who can positively impact their communities and the nation at large. The reform of Islamic education in Indonesia signifies a concerted effort to adapt to the challenges of the modern world while preserving the essential values of Islam. By embracing these changes, Indonesia's Islamic educational institutions are striving to play a more significant role in shaping the future of the country, not only as centers of religious learning but also as engines of progress and agents of positive social change.<sup>9</sup>

The comparative study between Indonesian and Afghan Madrasahs, and Afghanistan's potential utilization of Indonesia's experience to improve its own religious

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<sup>6</sup> Mu'tasim, Amin Allah. "Barresi-e vaz'iyat-e madaris-e dini-ye konuni-ye keshvar e'lam az doulati va khosousi" (2018)

<sup>7</sup> Mu'tasim, Amin Allah. "Barresi-e vaz'iyat-e madaris-e dini-ye konuni-ye keshvar e'lam az doulati va khosousi" (2018)

<sup>8</sup> Shaturaev, Jakhongir. "Financing and Management of Islamic (Madrasah) Education in Indonesia." *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochowskiej. Zarządzanie* 42 (2021): 57-65.

<sup>9</sup> Defnaldi, Yunani, Andi Warisno, An An Andari, and M. Afif Anshori. "The Evolution of Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia." *JMKSP Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, dan Supervisi Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2023): Pp.164-174.

schools, has been a relatively unexplored topic in academic literature. To date, no scholarly articles, books, or writings have delved into this subject matter. This underscores the originality and significance of the present work, as it seeks to contribute to the cultural exchange and mutual learning between the two nations. By examining Indonesia's successful approach, this study aims to shed light on potential strategies that Afghanistan could adopt to provide equitable opportunities for its Madrasah graduates.

### **Method**

This research employs an analytical and comparative research approach. The study relies on an extensive review of academic articles, books, and reports pertaining to Madrasah in both Indonesia and Afghanistan. By drawing upon these scholarly sources, the research aims to identify key points and insights that Afghan Madrasah can learn from their Indonesian counterparts. The analytical method allows for a thorough examination of the management practices and educational approaches implemented in Indonesian Madrasah, while the comparative approach emphasizes collaboration and knowledge-sharing between the two cultural contexts. Through this research methodology, the study seeks to shed light on valuable lessons that can be adapted and applied to enhance the management of Islamic Madrasah institutions in Afghanistan, ultimately contributing to the improvement of religious education and organizational efficiency in Afghan society.

### **Results and Discussions**

Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been deeply influenced by Islam, with its religious presence dating back to the seventh century. As a matter of fact, nearly 99 percent of the Afghan population identifies as Muslim. Islam plays a vital role in shaping the country's cultural identity and acts as a robust reference point for social norms, rights, and obligations, cutting across ethnic divisions. Traditional Islamic education had been the primary focus until the twentieth century, predominantly centered on religious sciences. However, the meaning and implementation of Islamic education underwent transformation due to geopolitical conflicts, particularly the contests between Britain and Russia. These rivalries sparked heated discussions concerning the role of education in Afghanistan's progress and development. Despite the contested influence of religious and external forces on the education system, various forms and levels of Islamic education have remained integral to Afghanistan's educational landscape, especially during periods of political turmoil. Over time, Islamic educational institutions have consistently attracted and provided education to individuals across the country, cementing Islam's profound impact on Afghan society and education.<sup>10</sup>

Islamic education in Afghanistan has a long tradition, and it encompasses both formal and non-formal instruction. The non-formal Islamic education takes place in mosques and Madrasah and is led by a designated teacher, known as the mullah. It involves the use of

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<sup>10</sup> Shirazi, Roozbeh. "Islamic Education in Afghanistan: Revisiting the United States' Role." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 1 (2008): 211-233.

written texts, primarily the Quran and hadiths. In addition to religious teachings, ancient Islamic schools also included subjects like reading, writing, arithmetic, moral education, and vocational training. Presently, children attend either Madrasahs for religious education or regular primary schools with some hours dedicated to Islamic education. Mosque Schools, which provide non-formal Islamic education, are prevalent in almost all villages. Attendance is not mandatory, and there are no specific administrative rules or examinations. The mullah plays a central role in teaching the children and guiding the community in Islamic matters. The fundamental objective of Islamic education is for children to learn to read the Quran, memorize parts of it, understand the five pillars of Islam, prayers, and moral values. While reading and memorizing the Quran are emphasized, understanding its meaning is often not given much attention.<sup>11</sup>

In Afghanistan, the religious education system, commonly known as Madrasahs, encompasses a diverse array of educational institutions catering to various levels of religious instruction.<sup>12</sup> These institutions serve the purpose of imparting basic religious teachings to children, training religious leaders, and educating religious scholars in matters of theology and law. Among the prevalent institutions, two stand out: the *dar ul hifaz* and the Madrasah. The *dar ul hifaz* is a specialized school primarily dedicated to the memorization of the Quran, known as hifz. Often referred to as Quran schools, their primary focus lies in the rigorous memorization and recitation (tajwid) of the Quran. The ability to recite the Quran proficiently is recognized as a specialized skill, and individuals who have memorized the entire Quran are referred to as hafiz, while those skilled in its recitation are known as qari. On the other hand, the Madrasah serves as an institution for providing a broader Islamic education. In contrast to the *dar ul hifaz*, the Madrasah typically offers secondary and higher-level religious studies, featuring a comprehensive religious syllabus. Many Madrasahs not only provide Quran studies and fundamental religious classes to younger students but also offer advanced religious education to older students pursuing secondary and higher studies.<sup>13</sup>

In Afghanistan, the number of religious schools, and religious educational centers lacks accurate data. A significant portion of these religious schools and mosques operated under the previous Afghan Ministry of Religious, Hajj, and Endowments. In 2013, the previous Afghan Ministry of Education had nominal oversight over approximately 1,300 religious schools. Simultaneously, there were 13,000 active religious schools across Afghanistan, none of which were under the direct control of government authorities, and their administrators were not accountable to the Afghan government. Education in religious schools in Afghanistan is provided free of charge, and many of these schools offer facilities such as dormitories and three meals a day for students. Some of these schools even

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<sup>11</sup> Karlsson, Pia, and Amir Mansory. "Islamic and modern education in Afghanistan: Conflictual or complementary." *Institute of International Education, Stockholm University* (2008): 1-24.

<sup>12</sup> Sirat, Abdul Satar. "Sharia and Islamic education in modern Afghanistan." *The Middle East Journal* (1969): 217-219.

<sup>13</sup> Borchgrevink, Kaja. "Beyond borders: Diversity and transnational links in Afghan religious education." *PRIO paper. Oslo: PRIO* (2010). Pp. 15-16.

provide a small stipend to students, making them attractive options for the impoverished and deeply religious Afghan society. These schools operate independently and are not accountable to any individual or institution. As a result, many families who cannot afford the expenses of sending their children to official government-run schools prefer to send them to informal religious schools instead.<sup>14</sup>

Traditional Madrasahs, attended mainly by boys, have a long-standing tradition and are community-run institutions that offer a comprehensive religious curriculum. Students have the flexibility to study at their own pace, and the goal is to produce specialists in Islamic theology and law. In contrast, modern Madrasahs, combine religious education with elements of an ordinary primary school curriculum. However, girls and women generally excluded from formal Islamic education. Nevertheless, the Quran and hadiths emphasize the equal right and obligation of both men and women to seek knowledge in Islam. Furthermore, the wars and conflicts in the country, which contributed to the rise of modern Madrasahs as an alternative form of education.<sup>15</sup>

### **Islamic Education in Indonesia:**

Indonesia, with a Muslim population exceeding 200 million, holds the distinction of being the most populous Muslim country globally, despite not being an Islamic state and not declaring Islam as the state religion, the Indonesian government officially recognizes six religions, including Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The state ideology, Pancasila, embodies five principles centered around a belief in one supreme God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom through deliberation and representation, and social justice for all citizens. The country boasts a vast Islamic educational landscape with over 50,000 institutions. Among them are pesantren and pondok (mainly found in Java and Kalimantan), surau (in West Sumatra), dayah (in Aceh), Madrasah, and sekolah Islam (Islamic schools). Four of these institutions—pesantren, surau, dayah, and pondok—have deep historical roots dating back to the early introduction of Islam in Indonesia, whereas the Madrasah is a relatively newer establishment, introduced in response to the spread of Dutch schooling in the early twentieth century. The Madrasahs differ from traditional pesantrens in their graded and classical schooling approach, fixed curricula, and inclusion of 'non-religious' or 'secular' subject matters. Indonesia's education system is supervised by two state departments: the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) for Islamic educational institutions and the Ministry of National Education (MONE) for public schools. Madrasahs and pesantrens come under the supervision of MORA, while sekolah Islam, which adopts a general school system, falls under MONE.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Khabaronline, "Gozāreši jā'm'e az rāh-andāzi-ye madāres-e dini dar Afghānestān/ ṭālibān che naqṣa'i dar sar dārad?" (2022), Accessed on 30/7/2023 from <https://www.khabaronline.ir>

<sup>15</sup> Karlsson, Pia, and Amir Mansory. "Islamic and modern education in Afghanistan: Conflictual or complementary." *Institute of International Education, Stockholm University* (2008): 1-24.

<sup>16</sup> Azra, Azyumardi. "Reforms in Islamic education: A global perspective seen from the Indonesian case." *Reforms in Islamic education: International perspectives* 59 (2014).

The reform of Islamic Madrasah in Indonesia has been facilitated by various factors, with significant contributions from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). MORA's initiatives have aimed to modernize Islamic educational institutions and integrate them into the mainstream national education system. This endeavor gained momentum in the 1970s under President Soeharto's New Order government, which recognized the importance of modernizing Madrasahs to actively participate in national development. The Ministry's efforts led to the issuance of the Agreement of the Three Ministers in 1975, declaring that graduates of Madrasahs were academically equivalent to graduates of secular schools, facilitating ease of educational transition between the two.<sup>17</sup>

In 1989, Indonesia enacted the National Education System Law, further solidifying the position of Madrasahs within the national educational framework. Madrasahs were legally equated with general schools and required to participate in the government's nine-year compulsory education program. This law acknowledged the significant role of Islamic education institutions in character molding and nation-building. Consequently, Madrasahs evolved from purely religious education institutions to general schools with Islamic leanings. They adopted curricula issued by the Ministry of National Education (MONE), but the Ministry of Religious Affairs ensured that Madrasahs retained their distinctive identity by creating textbooks with an Islamic slant for general subjects. This approach garnered support from the Muslim community, as they desired the continued existence of Madrasahs and quality education on par with general schools.

The success of the Madrasah reforms can be attributed in part to the modernization efforts led by educated officials, many of whom were graduates of higher educational institutions, such as State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAINs), UINs, and State Colleges of Islamic Studies (STAINs). These institutions employed historical, sociological, cultural, rational, and non-denominational approaches to Islam, promoting contemporary ideas on the compatibility between Islam and democracy, gender equity, multicultural education, and more. Graduates of these institutions have played a pivotal role not only in reforming Madrasahs and pesantrens but also in influencing Muslim society as a whole. The integration of Islamic religious sciences with general sciences in UINs, which followed the conversion of IAINs, has further enhanced the educational background of graduates and broadened their potential contributions to society. As a result, Madrasahs in Indonesia have evolved into more diverse and progressive educational institutions, reflecting the changing dynamics of Islamic education in the country.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of the Islamic subjects taught in pesantren, there is a notable difference between modernist/reformist pesantren and traditionalist/classicalist pesantren. Modernist institutions, associated with groups like Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Islam, tend to focus on al Qur'an and hadith studies, while disregarding the kitab kuning tradition. In contrast, traditionalist pesantren, linked to organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), place

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Pp. 64-66.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Pp. 64-66.



significant emphasis on the historical development of Islamic sciences found in kitab kuning. Additionally, traditionalists tend to be more accommodating of local customs compared to their modernist counterparts. The introduction of non-Islamic subjects into pesantren curricula gained momentum since the 1970s, following the government's approved Madrasah schooling model. This integration of subjects like mathematics, geography, and language aimed to modernize and globalize the education system, preparing students to become well-rounded members of Indonesian society while maintaining their Islamic identity.<sup>19</sup>

However, the number of pesantren has steadily increased over the years, they still represent only about 13 percent of the total national student body in Indonesia. Some commentators argue that the significance of pesantren goes beyond their student numbers and lies in their strategic role in shaping the direction of Islam in a country with diverse sources of religious authority. Additionally, there is a notable shift in recent years, with some parents, even those without a pesantren education background, now showing interest in sending their children to pesantren. However, despite the growth in the number of pesantren, the increase in student numbers has not been proportionate, which might be attributed to the establishment of new pesantren that need time to build reputation and attract students. The tuition fees at pesantren are relatively lower than those at government schools, but many parents who send their children to pesantren come from low-income backgrounds, raising questions about the impact of current government subsidies on the institutional development of pesantren and their relationship with the wider community.<sup>20</sup>

Madrasah funding in Indonesia predominantly relies on government support, with additional contributions coming from the local community, although the latter becomes more significant at higher educational levels. The allocation of funds between government and community sources varies across different types of *Madrasahs*. State Madrasah *Ibtidaiyah* (MI) receives 96% of its funding from the government and 4% from the community, while State *Madrasah Sanawiyah* (MTs) and State *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) receive 91% and 88% from the government, respectively, with the rest from the community. For private Madrasahs, the reliance on government funding is more pronounced, with Private MI receiving 75% from the government and 25% from the community, Private MTs receiving 70% government funding and 30% community funding, and Private MA receiving 42% from the government and 58% from the community. However, it is important to note that even with these funding sources, private Madrasahs face significant challenges in meeting their financial needs, and the overall funding may still be inadequate to address all their requirements, as evident from other studies on Madrasah funding. Before the introduction of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) and the policy of free basic education, private Madrasahs heavily relied on parents and local communities to cover most of their financial needs. The shift towards increased government support has been crucial in easing the

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<sup>19</sup> Isbah, M. Falikul. "Pesantren in the changing Indonesian context: History and current developments." Pp. 65-106.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65-106.

financial burden on private Madrasahs; however, concerns remain about the sufficiency of these funds to effectively meet the demands of the Madrasah.<sup>21</sup>

Accreditation plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality and accountability of educational institutions, including Madrasah, in Indonesia. The accreditation process aims to evaluate whether these educational units meet the National Standards for Education (SNP) requirements. By recognizing the accreditation rank, it provides valuable information to both accredited educational units and the general public. Accreditation serves multiple functions: firstly, it serves as a reference point to improve the quality of Madrasah and their development plans; secondly, it acts as a motivator for educational units to compete comprehensively in enhancing education quality at regional, national, and international levels; thirdly, it offers beneficial feedback to enhance school performance in line with their vision, mission, and quality targets; and finally, it provides essential information for Madrasahs as learning communities to gain support from the government, local communities, and private sectors in terms of professionalism, morality, human resources, and finances. Ensuring proper accreditation is vital in enhancing the worthiness and accountability of Madrasah as service providers to the public and driving continuous improvement and development in their education quality.<sup>22</sup>

An ideal curriculum for Madrasah in Indonesia should adhere to the Curriculum of Educational Unit Level (KTSP). The curriculum development process involves the formation of a Madrasah curriculum development team, analysis of regulations, student needs, available resources, and involvement of various stakeholders such as teachers, counselors, and educational administrators. The curriculum document should include context analysis, fundamental development principles, educational unit's vision, mission, and objectives, curricular contents or structure, study and workload distribution, academic calendar, local contents, and assessment components, along with the Lesson Plan (RPP) and its various standards. Additionally, an effective learning process in Madrasah should consider appropriate teaching media, proper learning principles, humane class management, and various learning approaches and methods that align with the characteristics of subjects and students. These methods may include thematic approach, integrated thematic, scientific, student-centered, teacher-centered, inquiry learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and contextual teaching, among others. By integrating these elements into the curriculum and learning process, Madrasahs can strive to provide students with the necessary competencies and skills, including spirituality, social attitude, lifelong learning habits, mental and physical health, and knowledge in various fields, fostering an environment of academic tradition and excellence within the Madrasah community.

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<sup>21</sup> Shaturaev, Jakhongir. "Financing and Management of Islamic (Madrasah) Education in Indonesia." *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochowskiej. Zarządzanie* 42 (2021): Pp. 57-65.

<sup>22</sup> Nasir, Muhammad. "Curriculum development and accreditation standards in the traditional islamic schools in Indonesia." *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research* 3, no. 2 (2021): Pp. 37-56.

### **Reform and Modernization of Islamic Education in Indonesia**

In Indonesia, the reform of Islamic education has been influenced by the modern dynamics of the country's educational institutions, accommodating three models of Islamic education: Islamic boarding schools, Madrasahs (both community and government-run), and Islamic public schools. The reform process involves three levels of modernization within the education system. Firstly, at the institutional level, efforts have been made to transform existing institutions and establish new Islamic educational institutions, promoting modernization and change in their approach. Secondly, there is a focus on the curriculum, particularly the integration of general sciences into Islamic educational institutions. This step aims to create a more comprehensive and well-rounded educational experience for students. Thirdly, addressing the methodological issue, the teaching methods previously employed by Islamic educational institutions have been under scrutiny for their lack of relevance to the changing times. This reform seeks to adopt more effective and contemporary teaching methodologies.<sup>23</sup>

The reform of Islamic education in Indonesia presents three significant implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners. Firstly, it underscores the importance of providing diverse types of Islamic educational institutions, including pesantrens, Madrasahs, and sekolah Islams, to cater to the varying needs of Muslims within society. This recognition highlights the need to address the diverse preferences and requirements of the Muslim population, ensuring that different segments are adequately served. Secondly, the successful reform calls for a harmonious integration of religious and secular education within Islamic educational institutions. Striking a balance between religious values and the demands of modernization becomes crucial in preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary world. An inclusive curriculum that embraces both religious concerns and the practicalities of the modern age is essential for students to develop a well-rounded and relevant education. Lastly, the reform experience emphasizes the necessity for Islamic education leaders to embrace openness and innovation, both within and beyond the boundaries of the Islamic faith. Embracing diversity and staying receptive to new ideas ensures the continuous evolution of these educational institutions, enabling them to remain culturally and socially relevant in a dynamic global context. By remaining adaptable and progressive, Islamic educational institutions can effectively respond to the changing needs of their students and society at large.<sup>24</sup>

Islamic Madrasahs in Indonesia have undergone significant changes in their educational arrangement over the years. Currently, they can be classified into three main categories. The first category comprises *pesantren kholaf*, which provide formal schooling through both Madrasah and sekolah systems, offering a balanced curriculum that includes

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<sup>23</sup> Defnaldi, Yunani, Andi Warisno, An An Andari, and M. Afif Anshori. "The Evolution of Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia." *JMKSP Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, dan Supervisi Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2023): Pp.164-174.

<sup>24</sup> Azra, Azyumardi. "Reforms in Islamic education: A global perspective seen from the Indonesian case." Pp. 71-73.

Islamic and non-Islamic subjects. The second category is *pesantren salaf*, which do not offer government-approved schooling and focus primarily on Islamic teachings, allowing their graduates to develop expertise in Islamic sciences. The final category is *pesantren modern*, with Pesantren Modern Gontor in East Java being a pioneering institution, emphasizing the teaching of Arabic and English and promoting the use of these languages in daily interactions. Graduates of Gontor have gone on to establish similar *pesantren* in various locations, adopting the 'modern' branding.<sup>25</sup>

### **Challenges of Madrasahs in Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, religious schools, known as Madrasah, face numerous difficulties and hurdles that impact their role and effectiveness in society. Historically, government-supported Madrasah did not receive comprehensive backing from authorities and merely held symbolic significance. Consequently, the significance of state-run religious schools has diminished in recent times, with less emphasis on the quality of education they provide, contributing to their waning prominence within Afghanistan's religious community. On the other hand, private Madrasahs, which constitute a significant portion of religious schools in Afghanistan, also encounter their own set of challenges. The first issue lies in the absence of a standardized curriculum and educational system. Instead, each religious scholar (mullah) selects the subjects taught based on their own abilities and interests. This lack of uniformity in educational content can result in significant disparities in students' academic capabilities, rendering some Madrasah ill-equipped to compete with schools in their region.

Financial instability is another prominent challenge for private Madrasahs. These schools usually lack designated funding sources, and the expenses for students and teachers, such as food and other necessities, are often met through collecting, cooked food, money and donations from local communities. This reliance on public contributions can lead to a negative perception of mullahs and Madrasah students, who may be viewed as burdens on society. Moreover, the uncertainty of financial resources means that a significant portion of students' time is spent on fundraising efforts, leaving them with limited time for actual learning and personal development. Another issue faced by private Madrasahs in Afghanistan is their often-tumultuous relationship with governments and political systems. Sometimes, these schools find themselves in conflict with authorities, while at other times, they may be exploited by political figures with vested interests.

Such circumstances disrupt the educational system, compromising the quality of education and impeding students' academic progress. Additionally, the curriculum of these Madrasahs predominantly focuses on religious teachings and Islamic studies, without accommodating contemporary subjects. The absence of modern sciences in their syllabi leads graduates to misconstrue the importance of non-religious knowledge and undermine the significance of secular education. This perception fosters a negative view of public

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<sup>25</sup> Isbah, M. Falikul. "Pesantren in the changing Indonesian context: History and current developments." 8, no. 1 (2020): Pp. 65-106.

schools, perpetuating societal backwardness and creating divisions among different segments of society.

### **Educational Challenges of Madrasah in Afghanistan:**

In Afghanistan, Madrasahs, encompassing both privately-run and government-funded institutions, confront a range of educational challenges that are emblematic of the society. These challenges pose significant hurdles to their educational endeavors, and the principal issues they face are as follows:

Firstly, a critical challenge plaguing religious schools is the weak alignment of their education with the intended objectives. This predicament is pervasive throughout the country's educational landscape, affecting not only Madrasahs but also other academic institutions. Education and learning are considered fundamental necessities for both individuals and society, pursued with the purpose of achieving substantial goals and broader societal objectives. However, when education fails to serve its intended objectives, it results in a waste of valuable time for both educators and students.

Another critical challenge is the apparent disregard for contemporary needs in the educational system of Madrasahs, whether they are government-funded or privately operated. The present era starkly differs from the time of the Prophet's companions, Imams, and scholars from past centuries. For any domain of knowledge or expertise to thrive, there must be a harmonious connection between the educational system and the prevailing conditions in society. In today's age of information explosion and globalization, it is imperative that contemporary aspects are fully integrated into the teaching of religious sciences. However, the current educational system of Madrasahs falls short in bridging the gap between the subjects taught and the objectives they seek to achieve. For instance, students studying subjects like Arabic grammar, syntax, logic, and rhetoric often fail to perceive the relevance of these sciences in facilitating their understanding of religious teachings and their responsibilities towards the divine religion and apply these roles on their daily educational materials.

The neglect of essential contemporary sciences necessary for a contemporary religious scholar is another significant challenge faced by religious schools in Afghanistan. Proficiency in the Arabic language, which serves as the common language of Islamic texts and is essential for effective communication among scholars worldwide, does not receive adequate attention in Afghanistan Madrasahs. Moreover, crucial skills such as writing and rhetoric, which significantly impact the presentation of religious teachings to diverse audiences, are not prioritized in the curriculum.<sup>26</sup>

In the modern world, leadership and management have become integral disciplines across various fields of expertise. Scholars, regardless of their area of study, must possess sufficient knowledge of leadership and management principles to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. However, Madrasah do not adequately address this critical aspect of

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<sup>26</sup> Mu'tasim, Amin Allah. "Barresi-e vaz'iyat-e madaris-e dini-ye konuni-ye keshvar e'lam az doulati va khosousi" (2018) p. 89-94.

education. Furthermore, inadequate focus on continuous learning in various fields poses yet another challenge for Madrasahs. In this age, it is crucial for Afghan religious scholars to engage in continuous study across a diverse range of subjects, including history, contemporary Islamic thought, global affairs, the condition of the Muslim world, and the region. Without such ongoing intellectual engagement and a comprehensive knowledge base encompassing jurisprudence, translation of the Quran and Hadith, religious scholars may struggle to effectively carry out their responsibilities in the current era.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the quality of academic graduates from Madrasahs emerges as a pressing concern. This issue may stem from insufficient attention from the government towards the quality of teaching in religious schools and the enduring impact of prolonged wars in the country. These factors have not only affected the learning environment within Madrasahs but have also left an imprint on the overall educational system in Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup>

The curriculum of religious schools in Afghanistan has not been fixed and has undergone changes with the advent of different political regimes. For instance, during the reign of King Mohammed Zahir Shah, there was one educational curriculum, while under Dr. Najibullah's rule, a different curriculum was implemented. The Taliban government introduced yet another curriculum. The most recent curriculum designed for religious schools in Afghanistan was implemented during Hamid Karzai's government in 2002. In this curriculum, students of religious schools studied modern academic subjects up to the third grade, learning reading and writing skills. From the fourth grade onward, they began the specialized religious curriculum. Alongside traditional subjects taught in religious schools, some contemporary subjects were also included, however, these subjects were seen as an extra and non-beneficial subject for Madrasahs and their students. The curriculum covered subjects such as Tajweed (recitation of the Quran), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Theology and Philosophy, Numismatics and Grammar (Sarf and Nahw), Islamic literature, Principles of Hadith (Usul al-Hadith), Hadith, Principles of Jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh), Logic, Rhetoric, Heritage (Mirath), Biography of the Prophet (Seerah Nabawiyah), Principles of Interpretation (Usul al-Tafsir), Interpretation (Tafsir), Islamic History, Arabic literature, Jurisprudential rules, and languages like English, Arabic, Pashto, and Persian, as well as Geography, Mathematics, Calligraphy, Science, Teaching Principles, Psychology, and Physical Education.<sup>29</sup>

Some issues and challenges observed in this curriculum including the lack of alignment between the students' levels of knowledge and the subjects being taught, and the curriculum not being fully in sync with the contemporary spirit of the age. On the other hand, private religious schools have their own customized curricula, which can lead to problems such as disparities in the subjects taught based on affiliations with different ideologies and sects. These issues stem from the absence of a unified curriculum, subjective

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-94.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-94.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-94.

nature of curriculum development, lack of a review and innovation system, and adjusting the curriculum according to teachers' preferences rather than selecting teachers according to the curriculum requirements.<sup>30</sup>

### **Madrasah and Radicalism:**

One of the significant challenges that some researchers and policymakers consider a serious issue in Madrasahs in Afghanistan is the promotion of radicalization and extremist ideologies within the country. These scholars assert that in private and non-governmental schools, teachers often encourage students to adopt personal biases and political inclinations, which can lead to the fostering of self-destructive attitudes, suicide, violence against others, and the spread of radical beliefs targeting religious and ethnic minorities. Moreover, this kind of indoctrination can pose both short-term and long-term risks to Afghanistan and neighboring countries in the region.<sup>31</sup>

The influence of such ideologies in Madrasahs can have detrimental effects on the social fabric of Afghanistan. Encouraging extremist thoughts and behaviors in young minds not only threatens the stability and security of the nation but also undermines efforts towards fostering a peaceful and harmonious society. Furthermore, it can lead to a loss of focus on holistic education and the development of critical thinking skills, hindering the potential for constructive and positive contributions to the nation's progress. Addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach involving collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, religious leaders, and civil society organizations. Implementing measures to promote tolerance, respect for diversity, and critical thinking in Madrasahs is crucial to counter the spread of extremist ideologies. Equipping teachers with appropriate training to create a conducive learning environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness is vital. Additionally, the integration of contemporary subjects and global issues into the curriculum can broaden students' perspectives and help them engage with diverse ideas and viewpoints.

Moreover, developing robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the content of religious teachings and materials in Madrasahs is essential to identify and address any potential radicalization trends. Encouraging interfaith dialogues and initiatives to build understanding and cooperation among different religious communities can foster a sense of shared identity and belonging, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies. Engaging with parents and communities to promote awareness about the importance of a well-rounded education and the dangers of radicalization can also contribute to mitigating the challenge. Empowering parents to play an active role in monitoring their children's educational experiences and supporting their broader development can help create a strong network of accountability and protection against extremist influences.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-94.

<sup>31</sup> Hosseini Madani, "Madāris-e Dīnī-ye Ṭālibān va Āyandeh-e Waḥshatnāk-e Afghānestān" (2023) accessed on 30\07\2023 from <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/article/159910/>

### **Lessons Afghan Madrasahs Can Learn from Indonesian Madrasahs:**

In examining the challenges faced by Afghan Madrasah, one can draw valuable lessons from the experiences of Indonesian Madrasah. Indonesia, with its diverse population and significant Muslim community, has made strides in reforming and modernizing its religious educational institutions.

One of the essential lessons that Afghan Madrasah can learn from their Indonesian counterparts is the importance of a standardized and well-structured curriculum. In Indonesia, efforts have been made to develop a balanced curriculum that encompasses both religious studies and contemporary subjects. This approach acknowledges the significance of providing students with a well-rounded education that equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge for success in the modern world.

Indonesian Madrasah have also demonstrated the benefits of incorporating modern sciences and technology into their teachings. By integrating subjects like mathematics, science, and computer literacy, they bridge the gap between religious education and the practical demands of the contemporary job market. This emphasis on broader academic subjects not only enhances students' prospects for higher education but also prepares them to contribute meaningfully to society. Furthermore, Indonesian Madrasah have taken significant steps in professionalizing their teaching staff. By providing continuous training and development opportunities for their educators, they ensure that teachers are equipped with up-to-date teaching methodologies and can effectively engage with students. This approach fosters a positive learning environment and promotes a culture of academic excellence.

Financial sustainability is another area where Afghan Madrasahs can benefit from observing Indonesian models. Indonesian Madrasahs have sought innovative ways to secure funding, including collaborating with the government and seeking support from private donors. Establishing reliable funding sources would allow Afghan Madrasahs to focus more on academic pursuits and improve the overall learning experience for their students. Another noteworthy aspect of Indonesian Madrasahs is their active engagement with the broader community. These institutions strive to be relevant and responsive to the needs of society. By being involved in community development initiatives, they gain the support and appreciation of the public, dispelling any negative perceptions associated with Madrasah.

Moreover, fostering an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusivity is fundamental to Indonesian Madrasah. Emphasizing the shared values of diversity and respect for others, they contribute to building a cohesive and harmonious society. Afghan Madrasah can benefit from adopting a similar approach, promoting a sense of unity and understanding among different religious and cultural groups.

Another aspect that Afghan Madrasahs can draw valuable lessons from their Indonesian counterparts, is in addressing the rights and privileges of their graduates. It is crucial for both the government and people of Afghanistan to strive for equal rights and benefits for those who complete their education in Madrasahs, similar to the privileges



enjoyed by graduates of other schools. Indonesia has successfully implemented this practice by providing equal rights to Madrasah graduates comparable to those of public-school graduates. By adopting a similar approach, Afghan Madrasahs can ensure that their graduates are not disadvantaged in accessing opportunities and resources in the broader society.

Another important lesson that can be learned from Indonesia's religious education system is the necessity of registering and accrediting all Madrasahs under the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan. The proper registration and licensing of new Madrasahs should only be granted in cases of genuine need, where there is no existing Madrasah in close proximity to the desired location. This measure is crucial to prevent an excessive proliferation of Madrasahs, as an abundance of institutions could potentially dilute the quality of education provided. By maintaining a controlled number of registered Madrasahs, the focus can be shifted towards improving the overall educational standards and ensuring that students receive a high-quality religious education.

## Conclusion

The role of Madrasahs in religious and community education in Afghanistan is clear, yet they face challenges in applying modern management principles. This research comprehensively evaluates the management strategies and systems used in Islamic schools in Indonesia. By identifying successful strategies in Indonesia, this research provides valuable insights for integrating improvements into the management of Madrasahs in Afghanistan. The research also identifies potential challenges and areas for improvement in Afghan Madrasahs. Evidence-based recommendations for integrating management strategies from Indonesia have been presented. Although there are contextual differences between Afghanistan and Indonesia, the research recognizes the influence of cultural and social factors in the implementation of management strategies. This research has significance in improving Madrasah education in Afghanistan, building human resources, and promoting cross-cultural collaboration in Islamic education management.

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