Madrasa Education System in Bihar

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Abstract

Madrasas have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India. They are an indispensable component of the minority community, tasked with imparting the knowledge of Islam to the younger generation. This paper aims to assess the infrastructure facilities available in madrasas accounting for teaching-learning processes in Bihar. A Multistage Sampling Design (MSD) with different stratifying parameters was adopted for the selection of sample units at different levels. The present study was administered on a sample of 220 students and 22 principals from 22 madrasas in a district of Bihar. In order to map out the objectives of the study, two data capture formats (DCF) namely—Madrasa Management Schedule and Student Schedule were prepared and used for the study. The results show a lack of contemporary educational resources, such as proper school building, classrooms, furniture and blackboard, in some of the madrasas. Moreover, the quality of teachers was found to be unsatisfactory; they had never received proper training either from a government organisation or the Waqf Board. It is, hence, safe to conclude that the madrasas are not at par with government schools.

INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to evaluate infrastructural provisions available in madrasas accounting for teaching learning processes in Bihar. Madrasas are indigenous schools which form an integral part of the Muslim cultural tradition and play an important role in the enculturation process of their child. These schools are primarily designed to teach Urdu, Persian and Arabic literature, and Islamic theology. They are expected to cover the curriculum of modern education approved by the State Madrasa Board. The presumption is that students enrolled in madrasas would continue

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their education after getting the inputs of modern education. Studies (NCAER, 2005, Sachar Committee Report, 2006 and Desai et al. 2010) confirm that, "Muslims in India have a poor human development status. Widespred illeteracy. low income, irregular employment implying thereby a high incidence of poverty prevailed among them."

Madrasa, an Arabic term for a school or college, is no longer a strange word in today's world. The word which derives its origin from *al dars ('darasa')* that is, to teach or to learn, is synonymous with the traditional seats of Islamic learning today. Presently, there are four types of Islamic educational institutions prevailing all over India—*maktab*, madrasa, *jamia and darul qur'an* which are institutions corresponding to schools, high schools, colleges and universities respectively. These four type of Islamic educational institutions are all wrongly understood to mean the madrasa alone. However, our subject of discussion here is the second type of 'madrasa' which is funded and run by Muslims. Madrasas in India are mainly of three kinds—some madrasas are recognised and aided by the state government, like in Bihar, West Bengal, Assam and Jharkhand. Though small, these madrasas draw salaries and collect grants from their respective state governments. Thus, the curricula of these madrasas are by and large similar to those of state-sponsored schools or colleges, in addition to Islamic subjects. Their degrees are recognised by the state so that students having degrees from such madrasas can enter the 'mainstream' education. Then, there are the affiliated (unaided) madrasas, which do not receive financial support from the state but are affiliated to the State Madrasa Board which allows their students to appear in exams conducted by the Board. Apart from the aided and unaided madrasas, there are those madrasas which neither receive any financial aid nor want to be recognised by the Board, known as 'azad madrasas'.

A myth prevails in the society that a large number of Muslim children are enrolled in madrasas. Indeed, at the initial stage they join *maktabs* for religious education. This is not a formal channel through which Muslim children come into the purview of the schooling system. Moreover, madrasas have a long and distinguished history in India. They have existed since the early days of Islam in the subcontinent. While the history of major institutions such as Deoband, Nadwat al-Ulema and others are available, there are no reliable statistics for madrasa students and teachers in the past to measure their extent, geographic location and influence. For more recent times, there are some statistics. The Hamdard Education Society (2003) in New Delhi conducted a survey of 576 madrasas between 1989 to 1991. It reveals an expansion of madrasas from 1,06,678 in 1989 to

1,47,011 two years later. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) has quoted the NCAER survey (2004–2005) reports and NCERT (2005) reports. The NCAER claims, that "only about 4 per cent of all enrolled Muslim children in the school-going age group are enrolled in the madrasas. Consequently, this comes to about 3 per cent of all Muslim children of school-going age group at the national level. The NCAER data is supported by estimates made from school level NCERT (provisional) data; which indicates a somewhat lower level of 2.3 per cent Muslim children aged 7–9 years who study in madrasas. It is noteworthy that the proportions are higher in rural areas and amongst males." According to the Indian Human Development data of 2016, the enrolment figure in madrasas is only about one per cent (.98 per cent) of the overall population. This calculates to about 4.5 per cent of the Muslim children.

Muslim Education in Bihar

As per the population Enumeration Data 2011, the state of Bihar has a sizeable Muslim population of 175.5 lakh or 16.86 per cent of the total population. Around 86.55 per cent of the Muslims in this state live in rural areas. The literacy rate of Muslims of Bihar is well below the national average at 44.94 per cent. A further breakdown of this figure shows wide disparity between rural and urban areas. The Muslim male literacy rate in Bihar is 51.05 per cent, while it is only 38.46 per cent for females (Bihar Religion Census, 2011). Moreover, regional variations do exist. Muslims in some parts of Bihar are more literate as compared to other parts. The Muslims are not a homogenous community in terms of their socio-economic characteristics; a majority of them suffer from the common problem of low income, widespread illiteracy and many other socio-economic and psychological disadvantages. Moreover, the type of educational institution in which children study is also an important marker of the educational status. This is because the quality and cost of education varies in different types of schools. There are some interesting statistics available about the type of the educational institution and presently school- and college-going students in the state of Bihar. Fifty-one per cent students opt for a government institution in rural areas and 54 per cent in urban areas, two per cent students opt for an expensive private institution in rural areas and 7.6 per cent in urban areas, 15.7 per cent go to an ordinary private institution in rural areas and 24.6 per cent in urban areas. Only 4.1 per cent students study in minority schools in rural areas and 3.2 per cent in urban areas. Nearly, 24.1 per cent of rural students and 9 per cent of urban students go to a madrasa (Kamaluddin, 2016).

In Bihar, about 1,145 recognised and 36 unrecognised madrasas accommodate 3.67 lakh students covering Faquania level (equivalent to Class X under the Bihar State Education Board), which constitutes 7 per cent

of the total Muslim population and 2 per cent of the total population of the 5–14 age group in the state (U-DISE, 2014–2015). The Government of Bihar (GoB) has set up a Board of Madrasa Education that frames the syllabus of madrasas affiliated with them, consisting of both traditional Islamic as well as modern subjects. Modernising madrasas by the government has been a very contentious issue with many differing viewpoints amongst the community. While there is a general acceptance of an urgent need for the modernisation of madrasas, the modernisation schemes of the government have not really provided much relief to the community as far as quality education is concerned.

All madrasas are covered under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Since the inception of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Bihar, some sincere efforts have been made to upgrade the status of madrasas, with a presumption that this would help facilitate the teaching-learning process of madrasas. Consequently, a plethora of teaching aids have been provided to madrasas for enriching institutional climate and classroom ecology. This study intended to map the infrastructure facilities available in madrasas for teaching-learning process (TLP).

Objectives of the Study

1. To measure infrastructure inputs available for the teaching-learning process
2. To assess the qualifications of madrasa teachers

Methodology

Sample

A Multistage Sample Design (MSD) was employed to cover units at different levels. At the first stage, a total number of 22 madrasas from six blocks were selected for the study on the basis of U-DISE (2014–2015) report. At the second stage, 220 students were randomly selected with the replacement technique. Finally, 22 principals participated in the study.

Tools Used

The tools were developed after a pilot study and the items were selected after pre-testing.

Madrasa Management Schedule

It was a multidimensional schedule covering various aspects of facilities available in madrasas such as infrastructure, TLM, ancillary facilities, qualification of principals and teachers, number of female teachers, student enrolment and teaching methods.

Student Schedule

It contained questions pertaining to the teaching-learning process of madrasas and the resources available in madrasas. It also covers the experience of pupils in madrasas through questions about the class work and home work given to them by teachers and whether it is checked or not.

Table 1
Distribution of Madrasa by Type and Management

Types of Madrasas	Recognised (Aided)	Affiliated (Unaided)	Total Number	Sampled Madrasas (%)
Boys'	–	01	01	5
Girls'	–	02	02	9
Co-educational	12	07	19	86
Total	12	10	22	100
Percentage	54.55	45.45	100	–

Results

Types of Madrasas

Table 1 shows that of the madrasas surveyed, 86 per cent had co-education, 9 per cent were exclusively for girls and the rest 5 per cent were for boys'. Of the madrasas surveyed, approximately 54.55 per cent were recognised by the state government and they receive grant-in-aid from the government. The rest were not getting grant-in aid but were affiliated to the state government.

Infrastructure Facilities in Madrasas

Altogether, 14 relevant variables for various infrastructural facilities available in both types of madrasas — aided and unaided were considered for assessment (Figure 1).

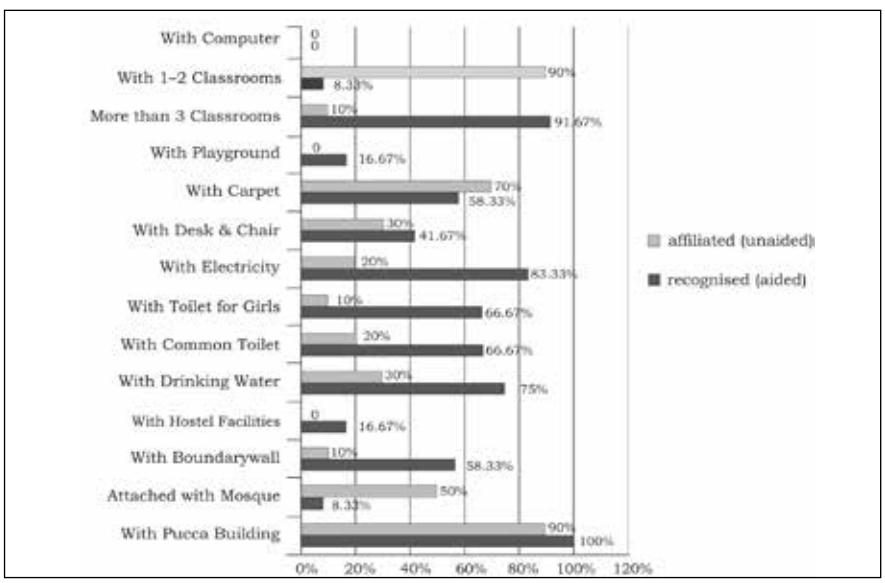

Figure 1. Infrastructure Facilities Available in Madrasas

Though all recognised madrasas had *pucca* school building, but they were running in dilapidated conditions. There existed about 8 per cent of the government aided madrasas running under the premises of a mosque. Furthermore, safe drinking water is essential for the maintenance of good health. About 75 per cent of aided madrasas were providing drinking water facilities either from taps or the hand pump. In addition, with regard to the availability of common toilets in madrasas, more than 66 per cent of madrasas (aided) had separate toilet facilities for girls. Ordinarily, separate toilet for girls in upper primary schools can reduce dropouts, absenteeism and ensure hygiene amongst adolescent girls. Further, 83 per cent of the sampled aided madrasas had electric connection, about 17 per cent had a playground and none of the sampled madrasas had a computer. This result further indicated that only eight per cent of the sampled aided madrasas had less than three classrooms whereas about 90 per cent unaided madrasas had less than three classrooms. Nearly 58 per cent aided madrasas had not provided desks and benches for students. Therefore, students as well as teachers in classes sit on mat on the floor of the madrasas and study.

Teaching Aid

Table 2 presents teaching aids available in madrasas. The results reflected a gloomy picture of both aided and unaided madrasas. In case of the aided madrasas, about 17 per cent had distributed textbooks among students. The same was not available to the unaided madrasas. By the same token, about 17 per cent of the aided had their own library madrasas. In terms of inputs of modern education like computer lab, ICT lab, LCD projector, science kit and mathematics kit, etc., madrasas remained deserted. The most common form of Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) such as charts, posters, maps were not found in any madrasa. Even the Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasa (SPQEM) was not implemented in Bihar. Further, there existed no scheme of health checkup and had no sports materials for students. Only Mid-day Meal were given to students of aided Madrasas. Urdu (L1) was the medium of instruction in all Madrasas followed by Arabic (L2) and Persian (L3). Surprisingly, Hindi, followed by English was the least preferred medium of instruction.

Table 2
Availability of Teaching Aid in Madrasas (per cent)

TLM	Recognised (aided)	Affiliated (unaided)
Textbooks	16.67	NA
Blackboards	83.33	10
Charts/Posters	NA	NA

Computer Lab	NA	NA
Library	16.67	NA
LCD Projector	NA	NA
Math Kit	NA	NA
Science Kit	NA	NA

Note: NA— not available

Educational and Professional Qualification of Teachers

Table 3 displays a pattern of teachers available in madrasas. About 64.5 per cent teachers of aided madrasas and 68.34 per cent teachers of unaided madrasas had qualification acquired from a madrasa system which did not cater to the needs of the students, widening the gap between demand and supply. The result further supported that about less than 10 per cent madrasas had a science teacher. There was no English teacher in both the aided and the unaided madrasas. Similarly, about 5 per cent madrasas had teachers of social science.

Professional competence was a desirable input for teaching-learning process. Table 4 demonstrates professional qualification of madrasa teachers. By analysis, it was apparent that about 87 per cent teachers did not receive any professional training, nor had they received any in-service training. About 5 per cent teachers of aided madrasas had professional qualification.

Table 3
Distribution of Teachers by Qualifications in Madrasas

Qualification—Description	Recognised (aided)		Affiliated (unaided)	
	No	***Percentage***	***No***	***Percentage***
Hafiz (Quran)	8	12.90	12	20
Fazil only (postgraduate)	13	20.96	4	6.67
Alim only (graduate)	10	16.13	13	21.67
Maulvi (Hig. Secondary)	9	14.52	12	20
Inter/Higher Secondary	7	11.29	7	11.67
Matric/Secondary)	8	12.90	7	11.67
Graduate (Science)	04	6.45	5	8.33

Graduate (English)	–	–	–	–
Graduate (Social Science)	3	4.84	–	–
Total	62	100	60	100

Note: The total of first four is the percentage of teachers from madrasa background of aided madrasas and 68.34 per cent teachers of unaided madrasas.

Table 4
Distribution of Teachers by Type and Number of Training Programmes Attended in Madrasas

Professional Qualification	Recognised (aided)		Affiliated (unaided)	
	No	***Percentage***	***No***	***Percentage***
B.Ed or equivalent	02	3.23	–	–
BTT/Diploma in School Teaching	3	4.84	–	–
In Service training	–	–	–	–
No training	54	87.09	60	100
Others	3	4.84	–	–
Total	62	100	60	100

Female Teacher and Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)

Because of some constraints, only 11 per cent female teachers were working in the aided madrasas. There existed only one female Principal out of 22 madrasas (Table 5). Most of the sampled madrasas were co-educational, but the data primarily indicates that madrasas were headed by males even in girl's madrasas also. This is a major problem of madrasas and one of the main reasons of high dropout rate of girl students.

Table 5 enfolds description of pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and student-classroom ratio (SCR). The PTR in madrasas was noted at 42 which was a little bit more than the recommended PTR of 35, showing the demand for more teachers. Further, the classroom looked, to some extent, overcrowded. As against the standard norm of 40, the madrasas in Bihar had 47 students. However, boys: girls' ratio (1:1.09) was not very skewed. As against the boys (1,854), more girls (2,014) were enrolled in madrasas. While comparing the teacher strength, of teacher it was found that both the aided and the unaided madrasas had an equal number of teachers (average 5.17 and 6 teachers per madrasas respectively). There existed unequal distribution of classrooms between the aided and the unaided madrasas. In an unaided madrasa, only 19 classrooms were available to the students as compared to 65 classrooms for aided madrasas.

Table 5
PTR and SCR in Madrasas

Indicators	Recognised (aided—12)	Affiliated (unaided—10)	Total
Total enrolment in Wastania Level (1–8)	2,562	1,369	3,931
BG Ratio	1:1.23	1:0.94	1:1.09
Total Teacher	62	60	122
Total Female Teacher	07 (11%)	04 (7%)	11 (9%)
Total Classrooms	65	19	84
PTR	1:42	1:23	1:36
SCR	1:40	1:72	1:47

Summing Up

The study attempted to measure whether infrastructure inputs available for the teaching-learning process were adequate. To measure this objective, 22 madrasas were selected for the study. One common presumption was that if infrastructure inputs were sufficient to the madrasas, there would be a healthy teaching-learning process. The study noted insufficient resources in the madrasas. The aided madrasas had, to some extent, educational resources while the unaided madrasas were deprived of even basic inputs, resulting in two different patterns of educational resources. If educational resources were assessed on the parameter of the RTE Act 2009, all madrasas, irrespective of being aided or unaided, come under the category of non-complied schools. If the scenario was gloomy, how could one expect to ensure the quality education for madrasas? Under such circumstances, madrasas could not be modernised. The lofty goal of SPQEM becomes a distant dream.

The findings of the study show a lack of contemporary educational resources, such as a proper school building, classrooms, furniture and blackboard, in some of the madrasas. The condition and especially, the availability of physical facilities can have an effect on the teaching-learning process. Another revealing fact observed was that they receive aid from the government alone only for the teachers' salaries. They hardly get any other of the finances which are essential for the teaching-learning process and for the quality improvement of madrasa education. Therefore, because of lack of these facilities (playground, furniture, library, toilets, etc.) and in the absence of quality improvement funds, madrasas are struggling

hard to compete with other schools. Moreover, there existed a constraint of resources for the modernisation of madrasas. Almost all madrasas could not avail themselves of SPQEM because they were not aware of the Centrally Sponsored madrasa modernisation Schemes. Even the Government of Bihar (GoB) could not initiate any drive to gather a substantive plan of SPQEM from madrasas.

Classroom inputs are as essential as material inputs in achieving quality education. The most critical input in the classroom is the teacher. In most of the madrasas, there was a general lack of modern, subject-specific teacher (English, science, Maths and social science). Further, the study disclosed the fact that about 87 per cent of teachers in madrasas were untrained and unaware of the teaching methods. They frankly admitted that there was no provision of pre-service or in-service training of teachers in madrasas. A similar finding was noted in the previous studies (Ali, 2015; Pandey, 2017 and Syed, 2001). With such negligible attention given to capacity building of the teachers, one can imagine the quality of teaching that they are able to provide to students. Additionally, madrasas could not make functional linkages to the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), District Institutes of Educational Training (DIETs), or Block Resource Centres (BRCs). As a result, the teachers were deprived of getting adequate inputs of the teaching-learning processes. In addition to the aforesaid ones, they did not have any inputs of teacher training. Moreover, many important inputs in this category were not adequately provided. They employed fewer teachers than required and on the other hand, the teachers were paid less than those teaching in government schools. The number of female teachers in administrative and teaching positions was very less, even in girls' madrasas too. Further, these institutions did not have adequate and functioning laboratories for science teaching and other facilities. Findings also revealed that there was a gap between what exists in madrasas and what is needed in terms of quality improvement of teaching in modern perspectives. There were still unmet needs in the madrasa education system that negatively impact Muslim education.

There existed variation in the learning space. Even the previous study supported the assumption that adequate learning space and quality of school facilities seems to have an indirect effect on learning, an effect that is hard to measure (Shukla, 1994; Saxena, 1996; Singh, 2006; Goyal, 2007 and Srinivasan, 2010). Some conflicting findings on a relationship between learning space and pupils achievement were noted irrespective of socio-economic background (Bhunia, 2012; Lahon, 2015). In a few studies, there existed no relationship between the learning

space and achievement. However, a good number of studies lend support to the notion that adequate infrastructural facilities available in the madrasas contributed to ensuring quality learning. Govinda and Varghese (1993) found that students in schools with very good facilities scored high as compared to those in schools with no buildings and poor facilities. Other researchers have found that students in schools with adequate classroom facility scored higher than those in schools which were lacking them (Shukla et. al, 1994; Aikara, 1997; Singh, 1996; and Bashir, 1995). Studies also showed that schools where children had textbooks scored two to three times higher than children who had no textbooks (Govinda and Varghese, 1993; Saxena, Singh and Gupta, 1996). Teacher quality was another variable that has significant impact on pupils' overall achievement scores. It was found that Teacher Education or qualification was one of the important determinants of students' achievement in both advantaged and disadvantaged regions (Govinda and Varghese, 1993; Saxena, Singh and Gupta, 1996).

There exists a dearth of studies on madrasas, capturing a linear pattern of infrastructural facilities in relation to the quality of learning. Madrasas were not at par with the government schools. Even the aided madrasas had poor infrastructural facilities. The unaided madrasas were running under deplorable conditions. These two different scenarios adversely affect the quality of learning. The findings suggested additional infrastructural facilities in both aided and unaided madrasas. More attention needs to be paid where infrastructure facilities are least visible. In addition, teachers of madrasas are required to be trained for ensuring quality teaching. At the same time, more female teachers should be included in the madrasas.

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