Are Madrassa and Mainstream School Educational Practice and Teacher-Pupil Relationship Mutually Exclusive? British Muslims discuss the influence of education institutions on their emerging identities

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Abstract
This paper presents the findings of a study exploring the attitudes, experiences and relationships of Muslim youth with their madrassa (supplementary school) and mainstream school teachers in the backdrop of British government's intense scrutiny and regulatory practices of educational spaces occupied by Muslim youth.
This study further explores the perceived pedagogy used in both educational contexts and its influence on the growth and development of the learners. British Muslims discuss how they negotiate their identities against a normalised societal narrative dictating diverse cultural, religious and secular educational contexts as conflicting polemics culminating in Muslim youth leading segregated lives.
The research was conducted in a small inner city, through an independent measures design involving two groups of 22 participants, current and ex-madrassa pupils, aged 11 – 19. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the data revealed that over the past ten years there has been a change in the attitudes of British Muslims towards their madrassa and school teachers. Due to the repetitive, impersonalised rote learning pedagogy inculcating little meaningful knowledge; the harshness and punitive nature of teachers and limited teacher-student engagement, the ex-madrassa pupils held a stronger relationship with their mainstream school teachers . In contrast the current pupils preferred their madrassa teachers describing them as 'fun and kind'. School teachers are perceived to develop them as wealth producing capital whereas madrassa teachers are seen as inculcators of moral character, laying the foundations for becoming a better human being.
British Muslims discuss the changing nature of their madrassa teachers from overseas, to home-grown British educated imams, who are helping to contextualise their understanding of Islam to their lives in Britain and now more recently to online tutors with British teaching qualifications . They compare these with professionally trained school teachers.
This evidence-based small-scale study identifies, through the voices of British Muslim youth, that school and madrassa education does not have to be mutually exclusive. Through mutual sharing of teacher training, pedagogy and curriculum planning, schools and madrassas have the potential to homogenise the learning experiences , helping Muslim youth inscribe their religious identities within a secular pluralistic British society. This paper provides British Muslim youth a platform to voice their felt experiences and make recommendations for madrassa teachers and leaders; school teachers and leaders and policy makers.
Keywords: British Muslim; madrassa; mainstream school; teachers; education; identity; pedagogy; secular.

Являются ли медресе и общеобразовательные школы взаимоисключающими? Влияние образовательных учреждений на идентичность британских мусульман

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Аннотация
В настоящей статье представлены результаты изучения взаимоотношений между мусульманскими школьниками и учителями: с одной стороны, с учителями медресе (учреждений дополнительного образования), а с другой – с учителями общеобразовательных школ. Исследование актуально в контексте пристального внимания британского общества к образовательным организациям, в которых учатся школьники-мусульмане, и практики нормативного регулирования их деятельности со стороны правительства.
Авторы рассматривают методику преподавания, принятую в двух школах, и ее влияние на развитие учащихся. Британские мусульмане поднимают проблему сохранения их идентичности. Существует общественная позиция, которая диктует разнообразие в культурной, религиозной и образовательной сферах. Однако это мнение вызывает противоречивую полемику, в центре которой – мусульманская молодежь, ведущая достаточно изолированную жизнь.
Исследование проводилось в центральной части города. В работе приняли участие 22 подростка, разделенных на две группы: нынешние и бывшие ученики медресе в возрасте от 11 до 19 лет. Феноменологический анализ данных показал, что за последние десять лет отношение школьников-мусульман к их учителям в медресе и общеобразовательной школе изменилось: у бывших учеников медресе были более тесные отношения с педагогами основной школы. Этот факт объясняется тем, что преподаватели медресе раньше требовали в основном механического запоминания, а студенты отмечали их чрезмерную строгость и отсутствие взаимодействия на занятиях. Нынешние ученики, напротив, считают, что учителя медресе «веселые и добрые», они «развивают личность учеников», рассматривая их как ценный капитал, выступают воспитателями нравственности, формируя качества хорошего человека.
Авторы настоящего эмпирического исследования проанализировали мнения британских школьников-мусульман об их иностранных учителях и имамах, получивших образование в Великобритании, о связи ислама с жизнью в этой стране, о деятельности онлайн-наставников, прошедших педагогическую подготовку внутри страны. В результате было определено, что общеобразовательная школа и медресе не должны исключать друг друга: их взаимодействие в сфере подготовки учителей и разработки учебных планов поможет мусульманской молодежи в плюралистической Великобритании. Данная работа предоставляет молодым британским мусульманам платформу, на которой они могут делиться опытом и давать полезные рекомендации руководителям и учителям как медресе, так и общеобразовательных школ.
Ключевые слова: британский мусульманин, медресе, общеобразовательная школа, учитель, образование, идентичность, педагогика, светский.

Introduction

The new millennium witnessed the September 11 attack, placing Muslims as suspects of suspicion as potential terrorists. In the UK this feeling was reinforced by the 7/7 bombings in London, cementing a *prima facie* case in stigmatising and discriminating against Muslims, as terrorists and extremists. The educational spaces, occupied by Muslim youth, have since been placed under intense scrutiny and suspicion as potential breeding grounds for segregation, radicalisation and terrorism (Cameron, 2011). The British government has been intent on monitoring, regulating and controlling all spaces

occupied by Muslim youth. As a measure, the Prevent Duty (HM Government, 2015) was introduced within the mainstream educational space and an 'Out-of-school education settings: registration and inspection' policy consultation was introduced in 2015, in an attempt to monitor and regulate the madrassas which are privately funded personal educational spaces. Both of these 'surveillance' policies have since come under intense criticism from academics, faith leaders and wider communities (Barnabus Fund, 2015; DfE, 2018).

These regulatory practices have been based on very little research evidence, contrary to the belief that these spaces incite terrorism, research indicates a positive influence of these education spaces on how Muslim youth inscribe their identities (Schofield et al. 2013; Cherti & Bradley, 2011a). The little research that does exist, the representation of Muslim youths' voice, seen to be the recipients of these regulatory practices, is visibly absent.

This study is part of a larger study attempting to explore the madrassa education life-worlds of study participants through an interrelated quantitative and qualitative approach. This article examines Muslim participants' attitudes and experiences of their madrassa (supplementary schools) and mainstream school educational practice and teacher-pupil relationship, in a small inner city in the UK, against a backdrop of intensification in scrutiny and monitoring and regulation of educational spaces occupied by Muslim youth.

Madrassas (supplementary schools) in Britain

The Muslim migrant communities, in the 1950s and 60s arrived in Britain, in pursuit of economic wealth without ever considering making Britain their home. Faced with the realization of the 'Myth to Return' to native lands (Anwar, 1979), it became imperative for Muslim parents that Islam was retained and practiced in the lives of Muslims born and bred in a secular western society. Thus, through Islamic education, the Muslim faith and cultural values were conserved, ensuring the transmittance of the parental cultural and religious identities within the future generations (Scourfield et al., 2013; Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Scourfield et al. (2013) note that 1960s and 70s witnessed the mosques undertaking the responsibility to provision for and safeguard the religious needs of the Muslim children, forming the education branch of the mosque known as the madrassa (supplementary school).

Initially, the madrassas' main focus was on teaching young Muslims how to recite and memorize at least the shorter chapters of the Qur'an properly, as well as teaching the rituals of how to make ablution and offer the five daily prayers. However today, in Britain, madrassas are described as Islamic educational institutions which offer instructions in Islamic education and operate outside the mainstream school system addressing the religious and cultural needs of the Muslim communities as an organised institution with classrooms and teachers for different levels (Valli, 2012).

It is understood that between 100,000 – 500,000 young Muslims attend these institutions across the UK (Abrams, 2011; Rosowsky,2012). The IPPR report discovered that a quarter of madrassas had over 140 pupils attending each week and were often oversubscribed and/or had waiting lists (Cherti & Bradley, 2011a, p.4). This is in proportion with the 2011 census data which identifies the disproportionately young Muslim population, placing an increased demand for religious education provisioning.

The IPPR report has demonstrated that madrassas have evolved in their provision over the decades since their origin in Britain, now playing an important role in supporting young Muslims with their mainstream school education. In order to raise attainment levels, madrassas are providing additional numeracy and literacy support (Cherti & Bradley, 2011a). Scourfield et al. (2013) note that in recent years madrassas' pedagogic goals and education provision has widened to include homework clubs, home-schooling,

and leisure activities such as Muslim Scouts and Beavers. Some madrassas offer youth clubs, providing structured activities for Muslim children to promote their self-esteem and confidence, and to develop the ability to think and work on initiatives as well as to form friendship groups (BMCS, 2010). More emphasis is placed on the need for the under-standing and application of Islamic education in the lives of young Muslims through the development of Islamic Studies classes which focus on belief, practice and Islamic history (Scourfield et al., 2013).

Supplementary schools place varying degrees of emphasis on specific aspects of the curriculum, some emphasize on children learning to recite the Qur'an correctly in Arabic, others emphasize more on understanding the Qur'an and the practices of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) than on reading and recitation (Scourfield et al., 2013). Studies have shown a positive correlation between attending madrassa with increased academic and social participation and sustained religious activity, involving significant amount of mental discipline over an extended period of time. For Muslin youth this is very significant in acquiring a secure Muslim identity as it promotes the religious, cultural and linguistic aspects of the Islamic life (Scourfield et al., 2013; Cherti & Bradley, 2011a), inculcating the principles and values of Islam in children which has a lasting and positive impact throughout their lives, by developing their ability to connect with Islam as a *'way of life'* (Valli, 2012).

William and Gregory 's (2001) study demonstrates how the discipline of the madrassa environment supports appropriate behaviour and attitudes of Muslim children to learning in schools, and how techniques used in the Qur'anic classes are blended by children, with strategies is learning how to read in mainstream schools (Gregory and Williamsons, 2000). This is further supported by Gent's study into Hifz classes (2013), the process of memorisation helps Muslim learners to 'internalise and embody' the text, where learners further utilise these skills in their mainstream schools in subjects such as law and mathematics.

Although these studies have highlighted a positive correlation, there are other studies which have shown dissonance between madrassa and mainstream school pedagogy. Cherti & Bradley (2011b) notes that madrassas also have the potential to create or increase division between a child's religious and British identity. Often the young Muslims fail to make a link between their secular (school) and religious (madrassa) education and the two-run parallel to each other. Dyke (2009) also advocates that madrassas can lead to Muslims distancing themselves from a British identity due to the curriculum and pedagogic styles. Strand (2007) through conducting the Longitudinal *Study* of Young People in England (*LSYPE*) found that attendance at madrassa classes more than once per week was associated with negative impact on academic achievement.

Critics see madrassas as discouraging debate, dialogue and critical reflection, treating all learners as passive recipients of authoritarianism. The rote learning pedagogy is regarded as deflecting attention from the moral development of young learners (Valli, 2012). However, Scourfield et al. argue that children who learn about Islam alongside other children experience religious socialization and the educational experience becomes a 'total social phenomenon' (2013, p.112); Valli (2012) also notes that madrassas help young people make friends for life providing a social dimension which is not always recognised. Cherti & Bradley (2011a) conclude that madrassas can strengthen the religious identity of young Muslims and help make sense of their lives as Muslims and as member of the wider society, giving young people the narrative to explain their lifestyle choices in a non-Muslim environment. This inculcates confidence and self-esteem within them. Young Muslims address their world through a lens shaped by their religious perspective, mainstream education and influences of the media, informing the choices and decisions they make (Valli, 2012).

Schools, Madrassas and the Government

The control of the education system in the 1970s by the centralised government was to manage educational change in the face of political, economic and moral challenges with the explicit aim of reshaping 'official' student, teacher and citizen identities (Bernstein, 1996). Over the decades the government has developed tighter control over education, The Education Reform Act of 1988 (HMSO, 1988) for the first time prescribed a National Curriculum, regular rigorous monitoring visits by Ofsted and the introduction of National Assessment Testing, setting new boundaries around teacher and student identities (Ball, 2007). Chapter 1 of the law requires collective worship, of a broadly Christian character, bringing religion back into the educational arena. Provision for the establishment of grant-maintained schools, independent of local authorities and under the direct funding from the central government gave rise to the formation of large semi-privatised academies.

Despite the semi-privatised academies coming into effect with the amalgamation of many schools into larger institutions, many schools are running into deficit unable to meet expenses and resulting in increased class sizes and reducing support staff. The Education Policy Institute (2018) analysis suggest that schools may struggle to deliver the cost savings needed without making reductions in staffing, which would have instrumental impact on educational standards.

The government has also been working hard to control and regulate all forms of 'educational' spaces, including privately funded personal educational spaces, especially ones occupied by the Muslim youth, believing them to be potential breeding grounds for segregation, extremism and terrorism (Cameron, 2011). The Prevent Duty came into force on 1st July 2015, requiring all schools and registered childcare providers to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and radicalisation." There is an expectation that schools and childcare settings would be working closely with a multi-agency support network (including contacts such as the Police and the Local Safeguarding Children Board) to raise awareness of issues of extremism, and to support individuals vulnerable of being radicalised and thus drawn into terrorism (Prevent, 2015). In reality there has been a backlash by many academics, schools and parents that Prevent disproportionately targets and is focused on Muslim pupils. It is also criticised that the duty is exacerbating feelings of stigmatisation among Muslim students and normalising the securitisation within everyday practices of the mainstream education system (Davies, 2017) thereby 'encouraging mistrust to spread and fester' (Varsi, 2017).

The Department for Education also published its first provisional 'Out-of-school education settings: registration and inspection' policy consultation in 2015, quickly abandoning its plans to force out-of-school education settings to register and be open for monitoring and regulation, in the wake of backlash from faith leaders. It has now instead proposed another consultation to inform the dissemination of a draft voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out-of-school settings accompanying guidance for parents (DfE, 2018). This policy places the responsibility of monitoring these spaces on the shoulders of parents, for protecting the children from the risk of harmful practices. This includes the monitoring of, for example, unsafe premises, unsuitable staff, inappropriate forms of punishment and discipline, and exposure to harmful extremist views. This is in stark contrast to the 'laissez-faire' attitude the government had held towards places of religion.

Research Methodology

This study was prompted against the backdrop of the frustration felt by the Peterborough Muslim community in the wake of the introduction of the provisional 'Out-

of-school education settings : registration and inspection ' policy . This consultation sought views for registering and inspecting education settings which provided 'intensive tuition , training or instructions to children outside of schools ', especially in supplementary schools (DfE , 2015). As a researcher, I was curious to understand whether the government 's stance was justified in suggesting madrassa pupils to be susceptible to radicalisation and segregation from the mainstream British society (Cameron, 2011). The madrassa pupils were identified as the best primary source to gain comparative information of their educational pedagogy and teacher -pupil relationship experience across their faith-based education institutions and their secular mainstream schooling.

This study is part of a larger study attempting to explore the madrassa education life-worlds of study participants through an interrelated quantitative and qualitative approach. In this paper I shall focus on the participants' attitudes and experiences of their madrassa and mainstream school education and teachers . This study was conducted in July-August 2016 in a small inner city, 25% of its 190,000 population is below the age of 19 (Census, 2011). Muslims first settled in Peterborough in 1958 and built their first mosque in 1967 (Masood , 2011). It is now home to 7 mosques with affiliated madrassas , and caters for a wide spectrum of Sunni denominations including a Shia mosque. It also has 4 large registered non -mosque madrassas and an unknown number of unregistered private madrassas . The exact number of pupils attending these madrassas is currently unknown but is estimated to exceed 1400 registered pupils attending per week.

Twenty-two participants aged between 11 – 19 years took part in this segment of study. Nine semi-structured small group interviews were conducted in a centre frequently visited by madrassa pupils from the diverse Sunni denomination background , no participants were from the Shia denomination . The semi -structured interview schedule was developed by the researcher to investigate the understanding of, engagement with and reflection of various facet of madrassa experience and its implementation and influence in the participants' lives, providing an insight into the madrassa-school-education life-world -view of young Muslims.

The participants were divided into two categories: 11 current madrassa pupils, aged 11 –15, and 11 ex-madrassa pupils , aged 16–19. The sample was selected based on the criteria of being aged between 11-19, and still attending or having attended a madrassa to gain Islamic education through opportunity sampling . The sample comprised of 60% females and 40% males. Informed consent was gained from all participants and parental consent where participants were below the age of 16 years . All participants and parents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of data collected ; pseudonyms were used when participants were quoted . Using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique, the qualitative data was transcribed with accuracy and coded twice (see Smith et al., 1999), key emerging themes were identified. Care was taken that whilst the reading and rereading was undertaken the researcher suspended her critical judgement and succumbed to a temporary refusal to engage in researcher 's own presuppositions and experiences (Spinelli, 2005), thus undertaking the process of 'bracketing' (Husserl, 1970). The resulting sub- themes were clustered creating a hierarchy of themes which were then organised into a coherent account.

Findings and discussion

Attending Madrassa in the Wake of the Erupting Storms of 9/11 and 7/7

The participants of this category made up half of the 22 participants interviewed, 8 girls and 3 boys aged between the ages 16–19 years . These participants began their madrassa education at the ages of 4-5 in 2001 /2002 soon after 9/11. They attended for 1-2 hours after school five days a week; some attended on a weekend. They note how in the beginning

they were excited to attend classes, they would sit on the floor and the teacher would teach them, often having far more pupils than could be managed by one teacher. The teaching pedagogy was oral and teacher-led. They would recite the Qur'an until they learnt the lesson correctly, wait in line to be heard by the teacher, thereafter the teacher would repeat the next few lines of the lesson and they would be told to go back to their seats and learn the new lesson. The final half an hour of the 1-2 hour lesson would be devoted to learning how to perform the salah (obligatory prayer) and memorising short chapters of the Qur'an. Many quantified their time of efficient learning to be around 15 minutes out of an hour.

The minimum parental expectation for the outcome of their attendance at the madrassa was to complete the Qur'an once, if not twice. All participants felt it to be a sacred duty to be able to recite the Qur'an correctly without making any mistakes in the Arabic pronunciation. After this accomplishment, they note that attendance at the madrassa became a chore. They did not understand the lessons taught in Arabic, a language they were not taught and neither understood, translating into little meaningful knowledge and practical application. The participants argue that if they were taught the meaning of the lessons, they would have applied it to their lives, similar to how they are applying the knowledge of praying their obligatory prayers, which were taught by all madrassas. Most of the time spent was clock watching.

Participants claim that when they were younger, they did not mind attending madrassa classes, they liked the structure and routine, however, as they got older the repetitive nature of the lessons coupled with the desire to play football with friends, play-station or visit town on the weekend made them evaluate the effectiveness of their time spent at the madrassa. Most note they were forced and cajoled by parents to continue attending so that they would set a good example for their younger siblings. Progressing onto secondary school gave them an ideal excuse and an opportunity to persuade their parents to allow them to leave their madrassa, having achieved the task of reading the Qur'an.

> 'From a young age you're more forced to go to the masjid so you wouldn't be attending after school clubs but as soon as you get to the secondary school age you're a little more independent, you just make time for yourself and say to your parents, 'I'm going to do an after school club,' an escape out of madrassa. I felt happier as I did something, I wanted to do instead of being forced to do. I had felt burdened' (Usama, 17).

Many participants left madrassa from the age of 13 as GCSEs then became a priority, for future successes they realised they had to focus on one of the education systems and it was usually the madrassa education which was forsaken, this is consistent with Davies (2017) study.

> 'The way the education system is structured, academic achievement is more important for future prospect, therefore you have to sacrifice one [education system] and its generally the madrassa education' (Ali, 17).

Experiences of participants attending private and mosque affiliated madrassas varied slightly, those attending mosque affiliated madrassas were more positive. Classes for the private madrasas would begin around 4 pm, which gave the participants very little time to come back from school, change, eat and relax before the next session of learning. They were tired and felt it difficult to concentrate. With little attention span to learn new lessons, they admitted that the whole process was a rote learning mechanical task. On the other hand, many mosque-affiliated madrassa classes began at 5 pm, which gave participants sufficient time to attend after-school clubs and tournaments and even watch TV before attending their madrassa class:

'I was luckier, ours [madrassa] started later, I used to watch TV, enjoy Horrid Henry!' (Qura, 19).

The participants claim that madrassas lacked a structured curriculum, the lessons were repetitive and sporadically delivered inducing boredom . The focus was on developing their character and teaching them the morals and manners of how to be a ' Good Muslim ' (Valli, 2012), rather than teaching them how to be a 'Muslim in Britain .' Their teachers were mostly from overseas , although they taught in English , they placed very little emphasis on how to apply their learning to their lives in Britain . They advocate the need for teachers to have the ability to understand the life-world of Muslim youth, and have the ability to provide contextualised learning.

They explained how, with little understanding of how to implement their faith learning in their lives in Britain, they felt their madrassa and school lives were completely different environments . At school, they were in mixed gender classes, with Muslims and non-Muslims , people from different race and religion , the conversations they held were completely different from the ones undertaken at the madrassa . This supports Cherti & Bradley's (2011b) claim that madrassas have the potential to increase or create division between a child's religious and British identity . The participants found Islam held no place at school , most conversations were around Christianity , the dominant faith. However , over the years they had come to realise the need to take ownership in defining a niche which was inclusive of their faith and their presence . The myopic media and government scrutiny were forcing them to demand, from schools and public spaces, to be accepted as part of the British society inclusive of their faith. They were faced with an active need to raise awareness of their faith amongst people around them especially at school.

'…. nobody there (school) would speak about Islam, it was mainly about Christianity… My mosque life was my mosque life and my school life, was my school life back then when I was a kid…… now as you're older you mature, you have to mix the two together…. You have to mix Islam into your everyday life… you have to tell others who you are' (Zilley, 18).

These participants explain how the younger cohort are facing tougher challenges at school for being a Muslim than they had due to media and government rhetoric identifying terrorism with Islam. They claim that the younger Muslims need greater co-ordinated effort and support from the madrassas in helping them to understand and implement Islam in their lives . At the same time , they are confident that the younger Muslims are more aware of their faith and possess the ability to combine their faith and identity in the face of the Fight against Terrorism infusing into public educational spaces:

'Times have changed, I feel in recent times Islam is being smeared, at the time when I was young it wasn't a big deal, but now I feel the students at the mosque should be educated on matters of how to deal with them [issues linking Islam to terrorism].' (Usama, 17).

Participants emphasised the important role teachers played in defining their educational experiences; they related much more positively with their mainstream school teachers, with whom they had friendlier relations. Their mainstream school teachers were trained to teach , they explained the work and encouraged them to ask questions and explore topics independently . They could hold meaningful conversation with their school teachers without the risk of being belittled and embarrassed , they looked forward to being praised by their teachers and encouraged to do better. In contrast, their madrassa teachers were harsh and verbally punitive when they were unable to learn their lesson or answer a question.

'….. you get shouted at and embarrassed, so I'd keep quiet, whereas in school if you do it [ask questions] you get praised for actually asking' (Zilley, 18).

Some participants were critical of their madrassa teacher's limited subject knowledge, claiming that this hindered their ability to teach effectively and resulted in feelings of *'disappointment'* with their teachers:

'… sometimes the teachers don't always understand the meaning themselves, the teachers, if not know it all, should know a bit of it [lesson] to explain stuff' (Qura, 18).

Despite understanding the shortfalls of their madrassa teachers, they respected both, madrassa and mainstream school teachers equally, this was something their faith and their parents did not compromise on. Retrospectively they realise that they did not question what and how their teachers taught them, whether at home or school, this was simply not their upbringing. To question meant to challenge authority, very eloquently explained by Qura, 19.

'How we were ten years ago is completely different now…. I think as Pakistani parents came from a stricter background, they [children] were told to read the Qur'an and they were told to go to the mosque [madrassa] and they did it without questioning.'

As well as a well-planned curriculum, they felt the teaching style was also better at school consisting of activity-based work, presentations, role-plays as well as discussions and debates.

'The teaching style, of course is better at school. It's more understandable, not because the teachers are qualified but because there are more activities for children to get involved in, [at] the madrassa there are not' (Adeela, 19).

The participants offered deep insight into how the madrassa experience could be improved for the younger generation:
- Madrassas should have well-planned curriculum with clear objectives and outcomes, inclusive of current topics affecting the society. Muslim youth relate how the Qur'an is applicable today addressing topics of homosexuality, LGBT, acceptance and diversity, the environment and science. They recommend these should be included within the curriculum and be discussed during the lessons – this links well with the Spiritual Moral Social Cultural development taught in mainstream schools, a potential area for shared school-madrassa engagement.
- The curriculum should provide lessons regarding the practice of different religions to provide an insight into the lives of the followers of different faith groups. The Religious Education curriculum is another platform for collaborative madrassa-school working partnership.
- Teaching Arabic language should be incorporated in the madrassa provision so that learning becomes meaningful and easier to implement.
- Madrassas should use a variety of pedagogy techniques, *'Madrassas should teach like schools.'*
- Teachers need to be role models supporting in the implementation and contextualisation of Islam in Muslim youths' lives, teaching them how to construct language to respond to *'attacks'* on their faith rather than responding with anger, which further fuels a negative portrayal of Islam.

Battling through the Regulatory Storm – the Current Madrassa Pupils

The current madrassa pupils', 5 girls and 6 boys, experiences were surprisingly mirror-opposite to the ex-madrassa participants. Where the latter had vocalised holding stronger

relationship with their mainstream school teachers, the pedagogy and the lessons, the former preferred their madrassa pedagogy, lessons and teachers.

The current pupils found it harder to concentrate at school and wanted to spend more time at the madrassa. Over the years, the madrassas had reduced the number of days and hours their pupils attended, changing the timings to be more suitable for young people to attend after-school clubs. These changes, however, were not appreciated by their students, three of the pupils from this cohort were attending two madrassas to make up the five-day week. They felt they belonged at the madrassa where they were welcome and weren't judged, they felt relaxed and not guarded all the time, contrary to how monitored and regulated, disengaged and alienated they felt in their school space. They explained that the madrassa was a peaceful, calm and a safe space for them.

> *'At school they [teachers] tell you to come to school on time and then they tell you to go home, don't hang around …. after mosque [madrassa] you can stay here, its free up to any time and even before the lesson you can come as well….'* (Tariq, 15).

According to these experiences the prevent strategy is seemingly counter-productive, the constant scrutiny and regulation is seemingly unnerving the Muslim youth, who feel uncomfortable in school spaces not accepting of their faith (Davies, 2017; Varsi, 2017). They profess to being Muslim and British at the same time, whether they are at home, school or in any other public space, they were born in Britain and Islam is their faith (Gilliat-Ray, 2014).

The participants enjoy the pedagogy employed at the madrassa, entailing group and individual work, poster making and presentations . They have open discussions with their madrassa teachers , who are British born and trained , and readily contextualise their faith- based learning to their lives in Britain. However, despite enjoying the lessons, the lessons are *still* regarded, by some, to be repetitive and boring, *'repetition puts you off '* (Suhail , 14). They compare this to their mainstream school lessons where they mechanically copy copious amounts of information from text books or power -point slides with no meaningful understanding . They perceive their madrassa teachers to offer greater individualised attention as the number of students per class are more ' manageable '. In comparison their mainstream school class has too many students per teacher; the teachers have less time to offer individual attention , if any, and believe that the teachers care little for their outcome , thus they question their attendance at school. They are anguished at the poor pupil behaviour in their classrooms, this is not evident at the madrassa.

> *'[At school] everyone is messing about, you get distracted by everyone and everything, your teachers half the time don't pay attention on you, you think, like (sic), why am I here in the first place? I'll just mess about'* (Danish, 14).

They are aware and respectful of their school teachers' level of education and training, which is more than their madrassa teachers . However , their madrassa teacher 's religious subject knowledge and passion for teaching motivates them to understand the lessons taught and to consciously implement the teachings in their lives. The madrassa teachers ' ability to speak English and understand the contextual realities occupied by Muslim youth is instrumental in creating a sense of belonging to the madrassa . They believe the madrassa teachers ' role to be synonymous with parental guidance , they are kind and want them to succeed in life because they are accountable to God , whereas their school teachers hold no such perception . The participants share insight into their school teachers' reasons for teaching, feeling some are very passionate about teaching and are very good at it, and others are only doing it to get paid.

> *[the teachers] say It doesn't matter to us how [well] you do, we're still getting paid at the end of the day'* (Subhan, 14).

Young Muslims reflect on the future of madrassas, how they perceive the number of pupils attending madrassas will slowly decrease due to the busy work-life schedules faced by younger Muslim parents, encouraging them to engage with the online social media platform to access Qur'an classes for their children from their living rooms. For convenience, parents are searching for qualified imams as tutors to teach their children online.

> *'The British children, I think, have become so modernised, that I think once they grow up [become parents], I don't think there will be many people going to the madrassa, I think it will be relevant on social media because it will always be there and you won't have to go to the mosque …. You don't have to be close to Allah to come to the mosque you can do it from home. I think people, nowadays, get so busy in their lives they don't want to come to the mosque … for, like, convenience ….'* (Mehreen, 15).

Participants understand that attending a mosque isn't a prerequisite to becoming aware of or closer to God, however they comment that it '*makes you a better Muslim,*' being around other Muslims socialises you into the family of Islam (*the ummah*). Schools are regarded as materialistic and school teachers are perceived to develop them as wealth producing capital, enabling them to be successful in their careers, earning money to have a good life. They envision this success to be short lived ending with life. In contrast, the madrassa teachers are regarded as inculcators of moral character, laying the foundations for becoming a better human being, a good Muslim and hence a good British citizen. They synonymise their madrassa education with success in the Hereafter, although this is latent gratification, its impact is perceived as everlasting.

> *'You can't be a good Muslim without being a good person, and to be a good Muslim in Britain makes you a good British Muslim'* (Danish, 14).

Muslim youth, of this cohort, recommend the mainstream schools, *'Teach like madrassas.'*

Conclusion

Concerns of madrassa pupils' vulnerability and susceptibility to radicalisation and segregation from the wider British society has prompted the government to regulate and monitor both private and public educational spaces occupied by the Muslim youth. Contrary to this, Muslim youths' accounts do not indicate any cause for concern. They describe madrassa as spaces which are safe and peaceful and offer a sense of belonging, where values of truth, justice, acceptance and respect for all are taught. This counters the concerns and speculations afforded to madrassas. Over a period of ten years, according to the study participants, madrassas have progressed greatly in forging stronger teacher-pupil relationships, aligning the pedagogy with mainstream schools and updating the curriculum to contextualise Islam to the lived realities of the youth. Schools, once the preferred place of gaining education, are now seen to have regressed in their teacher-pupil relationships and pedagogy. The increased focus on monitoring and regulation seems to have successfully alienated Muslim youth from these public 'safe' spaces.

The drive against Islamic extremism, painting madrassas as breeding grounds for segregation and radicalisation has helped madrassas to not only engage in retrospective inward-looking analysis but also take pre-emptive outwardly-focussed measures to safeguard its provision for the future Muslim generations. This has brought about positive changes for the Muslim youth. Madrassas are now more focussed on helping the

youth to strengthen their faith by implementing the Islamic teachings in their lives, trying to amalgamate the madrassa -school experiences to formulate an integrated coherent British-Muslim personality.

Muslim youth are offering recommendations, to madrassas, schools and the government, to align their educational experiences to reflect their faith as an essential component of their being and their presence. Schools and madrassas should form working partnerships, mutually sharing good practice of teacher - training, curriculum - mapping and planning and behaviour management. Changing technology is ushering in new ways of teaching, many younger parents are opting to access online imam service to provide their young children with Islamic education. As convenient as this seems it has great ramifications for the regulation and monitoring practice of the government. A safer option for both the government and the Muslim community is to work together to strengthen existing madrassa spaces and structures to cater for British Muslims' religious and social needs.

Muslim youth have vocalised the importance of the need to define a space which recognises their faith and their presence. They are challenging the status quo of mainstream schools and madrassa educational institutions, demanding the bridging of the two in support of unifying their religio-socio-cultural identity make-up. Further research needs to be conducted on how the two epistemologically different educational frameworks could be unified to mutually support each other in the quest for a coherent British Muslim personality of the present and future Muslim youth.

Muslim youth argue that school and madrassa education systems do not have to be mutually exclusive. Through mutual sharing of teacher training, pedagogy and curriculum planning, schools and madrassas have the potential to homogenise their learning experiences, thus helping Muslim youth inscribe their religious identities within a secular pluralistic British society, as increasingly Muslim youth find themselves the *bête noir* of the British society. These findings have important ramification for madrassa teachers and leaders; school teachers and leaders, policy makers and think tanks.

Acknowledgment

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