

Role of Educational Institutions in Countering Extremist Narratives in Pakistan

Sadia Nasir

PhD candidate, SPIR, QAU Islamabad

Visiting Faculty

Bahria University, Islamabad.

Correspondence: sadinasir@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The educational institutions have a multilayered relationship with extremism and can be very effective mechanism to counter extremism and in building counter extremist narratives. Nonetheless, this relationship has not been positively utilized nor the extremist exploitation of students in particular, has been systematically countered by the respective governments. Moreover, the problematic syllabus and regressive educational system facilitates extremist elements in recruiting new members and in dissemination of their narrative. While these educational institutions also have been soft targets for extremists. There is need to counter the extremist narrative through effective dissemination of national perspective of peaceful coexistence and tolerance towards diversity, while targeting emotional and logical appeal of the masses.

Keywords: *Educational institutions, extremism, counter-extremism, narrative building, syllabus, educational system.*

Introduction

Education and educational institutions can be cornerstone of counter-extremism narrative building in any country. However, in case of Pakistan this remains a very under-utilized area. Although some studies have argued that education alone may not determine someone's opinion or inclination towards extremism, yet there have been direct and multiple linkages between education, educational institutions and extremism, which makes it imperative to study these linkages and find ways to change the relationship between the two for building counter narratives. Extremist have not only been targeting the educational institutions but also using education to disseminate their narrative within educational institutions. Educational institutions have become a recruiting ground for extremist elements and for acceptance of their narrative among the educated youth. This paper is an attempt to understand these linkages between extremism and education and to study the ways education and educational institutions can be effectively incorporated in building counter-extremism narratives. However, main focus of the study would be on mainstream public education system, with limited reference to madrassa system.

Before we start the discussion on counter-narratives and education, it is important to understand extremism and its linkages with education and educational institutions. National Counter Terrorism Authority [NACTA] (2018), defines extremism as, "having absolute belief in one's truth with an ingrained sense of self-righteousness. The entrenched sense of righteousness enables the holder of belief to

grow judgmental attitude towards other people's beliefs followed with intolerance." Thus, this sense of righteousness among the extremist elements and their supporters, has created intolerance in a large segment of society, for which educational institutions have been at the center. The multilayered relationship between extremism and education, has been one of the reasons of increasing intolerance in society, especially among younger generation.

The spread of extremism in society and in particular among the students, has not only resulted from the extremist elements' influence and infiltration in education sector, rather government endorsed syllabus at different levels of education has being one of the leading factors. The additions and changes in syllabus particularly during Zia's period led to development of the problematic syllabus and regressive education system. During Musharraf's tenure, Ordinance on Madrassa reforms was promulgated in 2001 and later with alterations and addition another Ordinance for Madrassa registration and regulation was promulgated in 2005. After mounting criticism government also initiated educational reforms leading to revised national curriculum of 2006. The late realization and systematic myopic religious indoctrination in the name of jihad since Zia's period has created a massive problem of vast acceptance of extremist tendencies and narrative within society and especially among the educated youth.

Education and Extremism

The connection between education and extremism in Pakistan has been of reciprocity. There has been endorsement and denouncement of both, towards each other, simultaneously. On one hand education is recognized as one of the key counter-extremism mechanism, promoting peace and harmony, while on the other, it has been promoting intolerance towards 'others', upholding image of Muslims as most pious community without emphasizing on the characteristics of mutual coexistence, harmony, peace and tolerance, required for a peaceful society, including a Muslim society. The relationship between education and extremism has been multilayered, and two-way. We will now look into different dimensions of this relationship:

The problem with syllabus

One of problems regarding rising intolerance and acceptance of extremist narrative, lies in the syllabus. The problematic curriculum, was shaped, adopted and endorsed during General Zia ul Haq' period, which was subsequently accepted and continued by the successors. *Crisis Group Asia Report N 257* (2014), notes that during Zia's tenure, political Islam, having limited interpretation, was incorporated in public sector syllabus, to justify role in Afghan jihad and to accumulate support from the Islamist parties for consolidation of his rule. A specific version of events was included in text at all levels and teaching fostering intolerance and prejudice were disseminated, specifically in religious domain. Similar account has been narrated by Nayyar and Salim (2003), regarding Zia's tenure. They have noted that Islamiyat was made compulsory subject up till graduation and Arabic was introduced in all schools irrespective of religion. Madrassa education was encouraged by granting madrassa certificates equivalent to regular university degrees. This trend was followed by the subsequent governments, partially to maintain support from the religious groups for their own political gains, and also because they in some ways agreed to the narrative built regarding religion and politics.

Role of Educational Institutions in Countering Extremist Narratives in Pakistan

The madrassa reforms introduced under Musharraf regime, aimed at bringing madrassas into mainstream education system, but the education system itself, in need of reforms was been ignored to a large extent. And even madrasa reforms remained limited to registration only. With the democratic governments back in power after Musharraf, not much changed on education front. Little changes were made after implementation of National Curriculum 2006, National Education Policy 2009 and National Education Policy 2017. These attempts failed to incorporate diversity and concerns of minorities, nor did these envisaged measures against religious discrimination in educational institutions. Even though the 18th Amendment in constitution, gave rights to provinces to review the curriculum of public schools, under provincial ministry of education which has a section for curriculum and textbook board. However, any progressive input from the provinces on educational reforms are still awaited. Now the current government is claiming to introduce a uniform national curriculum, however it has not been targeting education sector as a medium for building peace and tolerance among youth.

According to a study by *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, (Ghosh, Manuel, Chan, Dilimulati and Babaei, 2016) the text books introduced from the initial years propagate “an exclusivist ideology that propagates jihad as part of its security policy in a strategic manner” and the government sponsored religious teachings in educational institutions has been “highly intolerant and exclusivist form of religious teaching”. In addition to this the impression regarding minorities created through curriculum is not very positive which leaves less room for the role of minorities in the cultural and civil life in Pakistan. There has been glorification of wars and militancy, while creating an impression on student’s mind of Muslims against others. Even government has deliberately opted for a reductionist and chauvinistic approach towards syllabus. KPK government for instance, in 2014-15 made changes in school syllabus to remove ‘objectionable material’, which included removal of images in grade four science textbooks showing girls without their heads covered, removal of chapters on Raja Dahir and Ranjit Singh from eighth grade Pakistan Studies syllabus and replacement of chapter on Helen Keller with one on Allama Iqbal in grade ten English book, among other changes. (Rewritten: Revised Textbooks, 2015)

The regressive educational system

Syllabus is only one of the factors facilitating intolerance and creating conducive environment for acceptance of extremist narrative, the bigger picture highlights that the educational system itself is problematic. It discourages critical thinking and innovation systematically. The language division across English medium and Urdu medium, the public-private sector divide, along with another stream of education that is madrassas, reinforced gender divides and lack of teacher training; all contributed to further regression in education and polarization in society. The increasing intolerance and extremism in society seems to be the logical outcome of such polarized education system. (Ahmad, Kahil ur Rehman, Ali, Khan and Khan, 2014). Such a situation provides extremist elements to exploit children in two different ways. As Moeed Yusuf notes, that majority of students in Pakistan are taught through educational system that their country and religion both are under threat, providing them with sympathetic justification of militancy. Secondly, the different streams of educational system create disconnection and friction within society which is again easily exploited by the extremists. (Yusuf, 2011). These

problems have worsened due to little inclusion of educationist and academia in relevant policy formulation and implementation.

Madrassas have been mushrooming throughout the country over the period of time, for which along with local funding, foreign aid from Saudi Arabia and Iran has been significant. At present, there are estimated to be over 30,000 madrassas with around 1.8 million to 3.5 million enrolled students. (Hunter, 2020). These madrassas were to be reformed, however in spite of some initial efforts, no regulation mechanism has been implemented to monitor the syllabus and the activities within these institutions. Therefore, it appears that education and required reforms have not been government priority. Present government has even reduced education funds by nearly 50 per cent, which is bound to further compromise the capability of educational institutions. The gender imbalance reiterated by gender discrimination, cultural perceptions and poverty, affects the larger social and family systems. (Khan, 2020) With these ground realities, it seems that without concerted effort to regulate education system and syllabus, public schools are “as dangerous training centers for jihad as madrassas.” (*Crisis Group Asia Report No* 257*, 2014)

The extremist tendencies such as non-acceptance of difference of opinion, seems to have grown over the past decade. The lynching of Mashal Khan, a student at Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan, who was killed on campus on the accusations of blasphemy - used to incite mob against him, later found to be untrue by the Judicial Investigation Team, (“Liberals in Pakistan”, 2019) is one of glaring example of violent reactions within youth. Not only extremist elements but religious political parties have also been promoting intolerance among the youth. The Junaid Hafeez case is an example of this. The blasphemy accusations by a student linked with Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT), led to arrest and later death sentence for the accused lecturer of Bahauddin Zikria University; Junaid Hafeezz, with much uproar against him by different segments of society, without much established proof against him. (“Blasphemy accused.”, 2019). Human rights activists claim that he was “targeted by the IJT-affiliated students because of his liberal views”. The lawyer, representing him in court was shot in 2014, for taking and defending his case. (Yusuf, 2016; Aslam, 2014). These incidents highlight the need to investigate that what has attracted the educated youth, particularly university students towards extremist ideology, although one of the main reason lies in the early education. Without focus on inclusive education, having no discrimination on the basis of gender, religious, social and language, the education system cannot build a tolerance towards diversity and refute the extremist narratives entrenched in the existing system.

Extremism, its narrative building and education

Now after discussing that how our education system has been conducive towards extremist narratives, it is important to look into extremists and extremism’ love-hate relationship with education and students. This is also not a single way relationship. Education and educational institutions have been used to promote extremist narratives. Education itself has become a tool for extremist elements, while educational institutions are the easily available recruiting ground. At the same time there is denouncement of education, since educational institution have been among the main targets of extremist elements to create fear among the masses and as the soft targets to destabilize peace and security (and threaten governments).

Education a tool for extremist narrative building

The weaknesses within education system have been fully exploited by the extremist elements. Madrasas, which were earlier considered to be breeding ground of extremism are no more the only torchbearer of extremist narratives, rather mainstream education has become a major source of new recruitments. The new slot of extremist mostly has some kind of basic education. There have been fewer studies focusing on school and colleges and influence of extremist elements in early years of education. However, these studies do indicate that there is greater influence of extremist elements since the early years of mainstream public education. A research done in 2008 shows that around 17 per cent of members of Lashker-e-Taiba held intermediate or higher level of education. (Fair, 2008) Later, one of the studies by *Combat Terrorism Center* on recruitment of Lashker-e-Taiba fighters show that most of the fighter had studied in mainstream education system till matric, rather than madrassa education. The religious education acted as supplement for regular education and most of the recruits did not attain high level of formal religious education. Those who had acquired some religious education had up to 3 years at most, from madrassas and among them mostly belonged to southern Punjab. (Rassle, Fair, Ghosh, Jamal and Shoeb, 2013)

A similar trend is pointed out in another research, which established transnational militant outfits, such as Al-Qaeda and Hizb ul tahrir to be inclined towards recruiting educated members in their group. (Yusuf, 2016). Likewise, the masterminds behind attack on MQM leader in Karachi were highly educated, one being a former Karachi University student and other from MED University of Engineering and Technology. (Khan and Ali, 2017) While earlier in 2013, nine al-Qaeda suspects were arrested, five of them had expertise in information technology, automobile technology, improvised explosive devices and media coordination. Their handler was later arrested, who was residing and operating from Punjab University hostel. (Startling revelations: 2013). A research finding of a study by Sindh Counter-Terrorism department from a sample of 500 'hardcore militants' in Sindh jail in 2017, revealed around 64 among them having master's degree or above, 70 had bachelor's degree while 63 had matric and intermediate degrees. (Cheema, 2017). Links of extremist elements, most of them involved in terrorist activities, with the students from Colleges and Universities and their recruitment, depicts that the educated middle class is becoming more prone to be influenced by the extremist elements and their narratives.

Not only have the extremist elements established strong hold in education institutions but they are also "proliferating in the private sector". According to *Crisis group Asia Report N. 257* (2014), the JI- affiliated Dar-e-Arqam has over 425 branches and Dr. Tahir ul Qadri's Minhaj-ul-Quran international affiliated Minhaj Education Society schools has over 250 branches. Likewise, there are 73 schools that are run countrywide by the International Islamic University in Islamabad. These schools do follow the requirements of standard education but place special emphasis on religion, in particular on jihad. Therefore, it appears that the significance of education for narrative building and dissemination has been well recognized and utilized by the extremist elements, whereas at the state level, the gravity of the issue and its implications have either not been seriously considered or have been overlooked deliberately.

Now the question is why these educational institutions have been able to influence students from initial years up till universities? One of the reasons seems to be the preachers, who in many cases are teachers or faculty member. For instance, a former faculty member of Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, who was also a member of Jamaat-i-Islami, was found to be the facilitator for the GHQ attack in 2009. (Hoodbhoy, 2017). Another case in view from 2017, is of Professor Mushtaq, a teacher at Baluchistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, along with Habibullah who ran seminaries in Karachi and Hyderabad were arrested. Both were linked to Ansar-ul-Shariah Pakistan and were involved in attack on MQM leader Khawaja Izharul Hasan. (“University Professor”, 2017) Second reason may be that the educated members of an extremist outfit are better able to influence new recruits within an educational institution. In this regard, the anti-American appeal and general resentment against Western interference in Muslim countries, among youth has been fully exploited by the extremists, who build their narrative on the basis of particular events and emotional appeals. (Yusuf, 2016).

The third reason appear to be the usefulness of educated youth for the extremist elements for more effective propaganda purpose. For instance, the pamphlets thrown after targeted killings in Karachi had flag of Al Qaeda and IS on it and the language used on them suggested that the militants were “educated with sound technical knowledge of media”. (“The Rise and ‘fall’”, 2017). In addition to these reasons, another aspect is use of student unions for building extremist narrative within an educational institution, especially by the right wing political parties, who tend to enforce a conservation environment especially on university campus. The role of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT) in Punjab University is a manifestation of this aspect, who have been trying to impose authoritative religious codes on campus, and targeting students, staff and faculty for being ‘liberal’. (Hashmi, 2015). The multiple usage of education and institutions by the extremists has been conducive in promoting a limited version of religion on campuses and also in promoting intolerance among the youth towards diversity and co-existence.

Educational institutions as extremist recruiting ground

Linked with the previous issue is the use of educational institutions as the recruiting grounds of various political and religious elements. Extremist elements have been targeting and penetrating schools, colleges and universities for recruiting new members. Educated youth is becoming bearer of extremist’s narrative, which is partly because of persuasiveness of their narrative and mainly because of lack of an alternative narrative. As pointed out earlier the education system and syllabus itself promotes prejudice and intolerance, which makes it easier to influence students through hardline and myopic propaganda. The number of educated youth involved in terrorist incidents and even otherwise in terms of extremist view seems to have risen. And this is not limited to madrassas, as already highlighted, rather mainstream and renounced educational institutions seem to have greater number of readily available recruits.

To study a few of them; Saad Aziz, an IBA graduate was involved in Safoora Goth bus attack and also murdered human rights advocate, Sabeen Mahmud in 2015. His accomplice for some of these activities was Asadur Rehman graduate of NUST, Rawalpindi, while other suspects arrested were also university graduates. Similarly,

Role of Educational Institutions in Countering Extremist Narratives in Pakistan

Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Mailk, involved in killing of 14 people in California, were educated youth. Tashfeen was a graduate from Bahauddin Zakria University, Multan. This radicalization of educated youth is a big challenge and “militancy on university campuses is quickly becoming Pakistan’s next major counterterrorism challenge”. (Huma Yusuf, 2016). In 2017, Naureen Leghari, a medical student at the Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, was arrested during a shootout with security forces in Lahore, who along with her husband had gone to Lahore to join terrorist group (“Women held after.”, 2017). One study has found overwhelming number of educated violent extremists to be engineers. A possible reason for this may be fewer employment opportunities for the educated youth and same appears to be true for engineers as well. (Gambetta and Hertog, 2016).

However, it may be asserted that most of these educated recruits are indoctrinated or influenced during their student life. For instance, the Karachi chapter of Punjabi Taliban are said to have recruited numerous students of University of Karachi (Yusuf, 2012), similarly, a police investigation in early 2011 found several students of University of Karachi, affiliated with Islami Jamiat-i-Taulaba (IJT) to be linked with terrorist outfits. (Zia ur Rehman, 2015). The educated youth in particular, is used by the extremist after indoctrination to spread their narrative and to make further recruitments among students. The target in case of Hizb al-Tehrir has been elite English colleges, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and other places considered as “bastions of liberal thought”. (Nawaz, 2016).

The recent incidents depict that the previously held view of madrassas being the breeding ground of extremism is not entirely true. There have been proven linkages between extremist elements and mainstream educational institutions but no significant connection could be established between the major international terrorist incidents such as 9/11, London subway bombing or any other and madrassas. (Ashraf, 2012) A survey on religious schools showed few religious schools to be supporting extremist view of Islam. (Bano, 2007). Therefore, it is evident that the mainstream education system needs overhauling and scrutiny, while also there is need for formal inclusion of madrassa system in mainstream education system having uniform policy guidelines and syllabus.

Targeting of educational institutions by extremists

Educational institutions have been a tool and recruiting ground of extremism, at the same time they have been soft target for the extremists. The motives for targeting educational institutions, teachers or students have been diverse, nonetheless, these have been effective targets in not only resulting in loss of life, fear and chaos among public and material damage but also in creating law and order challenge for the state. According to the Global Terrorism Database, there were 867 attacks on educational institutions in Pakistan from 2007 to 2015, resulting 392 fatalities and 724 injuries. Whereas, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack recorded 203 attacks on schools in Pakistan between 2013- 2017. They also recorded, that the terrorist elements in Pakistan among other countries, have been using schools or schools’ routes for recruitment of children under 18 to act as fighters, spies or for domestic help. (“Education Under.”, 2018). With the increase in terrorist activities, peaceful areas like Swat became on hit list of extremists and schools became among main targets for extremists. During the period of 2007 to 2011, Tehreek-e-Taliban Swat, destroyed more than 400 schools within Swat region only. (Hashim, 2012).

Hence, for spread of fear and hatred, use of violence and terror has been instrumental.

The educational institutions have been targeted on all levels. Schools seems to have suffered most from these attacks though, yet the higher education institutions have also faced several suicide and other modes of attack. Islamic University Islamabad was targeted through suicide in 2009, killing 9 and injuring many, most of them were students. One of the deadliest attacks on educational institutions was Peshawar APS attack in December 2014, killing 140 people and forcing government to take extremism as an eminent threat leading to immediate approval of National Action Plan. Later, in January 2016, Bacha Khan University was attacked killing 20 people.

According to *Human Right Watch report* of 2018, the terrorist attacks has disrupted education for children especially girls and government has failed to protect schools from such attacks. (“Pakistan: Events.”, 2019) During the year 2018, there were six attacks on educational institutions, leading to three civilian casualties, whereas in 2019 two attacks on educational institutions were carried out, leading to two casualties. (“Pakistan Security...”,2019 and “Pakistan security.”, 2020) At least 12 school were burned down by militants in Diamer district in GB in the same year. (“12 schools burnt...”, 2018)

These attacks, at times are targeted against a specific ethnic, sectarian or gender group. *Education under Attack* (2014, p.), studies the pattern of targeting killings of academics and students of non-Baloch ethnicity in Baluchistan. While in 2010, students of Imamia Students Organization were targeted on Karachi University campus while praying, injuring some them and leading to protest against sectarian fighting on campus. In another serious incident, in 2013, bomb exploded on a bus in campus of Sardar Bahaddur Khan Women’s University in Quetta, killing and injuring many students. Later Lashkhar-e-Jhangvi accepted responsibility of the attack targeting women as it is the only all women university in Baluchistan. *Voice of America* (2017) reported that during last decade more than 1,100 girls’ schools have been targeted and destroyed in FATA. While, *Education under attach 2018*, notes that around one-third of schools attacked during 2013 to 2017 affected girls’ schools.

Building Counter Narratives and role of Educational Institutions

The analysis of multilayered relationship of education and extremism, shows that extremist have successfully targeted educational institutions for their multiple interests as discussed earlier, and the most significant aspect to note from the discussion is that the extremist narrative has been popularized and disseminated using our existing education system. Although educational institutions, students and faculty have been targeted by extremist to send the message of disagreement and discontent with “liberal” and in some cases “western” learning system and also to challenge state through targeting soft targets, however, it seems that the usefulness of education for extremist narrative has surpasses that challenge it poses for them. Whereas, state response despite realization, lacks concentrated effort. NACTA, National Action plan, educational reforms, and other initiative been introduced but not fully implemented and lacked resolve to actually provide an alternate narrative of peace and tolerance, while also not been able to tackle the problems in syllabus and educational system.

Role of Educational Institutions in Countering Extremist Narratives in Pakistan

Influence of extremist narrative in the educational institutions is only a manifestation of its entrenchment within society in general. Whereas the counter-extremism narrative does not seem to be properly built, disseminated or appear to echo the masses perception. One reason may be the articulation of extremist narratives, which has appeal for the students and faculty. Secondly there are no proper mechanism to identify extremist elements within educational institutions. It is important to devise some mechanism, such as teachers and student awareness along with training to identify extremist tendencies, students support groups and counselling facilities, to locate the target students of extremists, who they are more likely to be indoctrinated and influenced through their narratives.

The extremists' narratives are often rooted in biased interpretation of religious teaching, yet they are able to attract support and followers. Whereas the counter narratives have not reached to the targeted audience, since they have been state-centric. Government has mostly been following reactive approach not proactive. They have been taking leads from the extremists to build counter-narrative rather than adopting alternate narratives for promoting tolerance and peace in the society. And even the efforts on counter-narratives lack persuasion. There have been some positive steps since Mashal Khan case, such as 'signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between NACTA and HEC, HEC supported consultations with the university students and faculties on evolving practical strategies for countering on-campus extremism, National Youth Conference on Countering Violent Extremism on Campuses in July 2018, Holding of Vice Chancellors' conferences on the subject' ("Countering Violent Extremism.", 2019) While *NACTA Guidelines 2018*, provide for integrated education policy for private schools, public schools and madrassas, for which implementation is awaited. Even though these steps are a positive indicator however, youth involvement and input in policy making and in creating counter extremism narrative is still lacking. Only conferences or consultations cannot achieve desired results, a comprehensive framework involving students, teachers and academia to create understanding of extremism, its drivers and mechanism, counter-narratives cannot be created.

In spite of numerous attacks on teachers, students and educational institutions, and targeted killing of many educationalists, government has not prosecuted the criminals in most cases. *Human Rights watch report (2017)*, notes that eight out of the ten individuals arrested and charged for the attack on Malala Yousafzai, even after confession in court were acquitted. And for some of grave incidents like Peshawar APS and Bacha Khan University attacks, rather than investigating and prosecuting the accused in courts, government constituted military courts. Though many were convicted and executed but the secrecy of trail and punishment didn't convey the desired message. Narrative building has to be substantiated by the policy implementation. The state response on extremism and terrorism has not been very explicit, it does not, in many cases send clear message to public and the extremists of the government's stance and seriousness in dealing with the issue.

Keeping Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a model of narrative building at the center, an effective narrative would be based on messenger, having credibility and influence; the message itself having emotional and logical appeal and the audience. The narrative is built according to the audience sensitivities, and disseminated through a speaker who has credibility in the eyes of audience and his narrative should appeal to logic and emotional understanding of the targeted population. The extremists, in

case of Pakistan, have persuasiveness in their narrative because the influencer from their side has credibility for the people and he uses the language and issues that are emotionally and logically appealing for the masses. Whereas, when we view the counter-narrative efforts such as *Paigham-e-Pakistan* or *Dukhtaraan-e-Pakistan*, they have limited appeal, since they are not inclusive and are been administered and implemented from above without keeping the sensitivities of and including the targeted population. The speakers countering the extremist narrative are not persuasive enough, people are not influenced emotionally or logically by their appeal to form desired opinion, and therefore the counter-extremism narrative does not adequately persuade people. This is where extremist narrative gets advantage and countering it has not been effective.

The equation between extremist and educational institutions can be reversed, if students, teachers and staff are involved in narrative building by the government. The extremist tendencies cannot be changed until serious efforts are made to change the biased syllabus and regressive education system. Basic religious concepts, which are interpreted and preached by extremist according to their own interests, such as jihad, peace, tolerance and minority rights need to be defined and studied from early years. Undue emphasis on a specific interpretation of religious concept or undermining diversity of society by selective literature in the curriculum needs particular attention. The review of syllabus requires careful deliberation as it is the foundation of education system. A research carried out in 2016 in China shows that changes in curriculum had desired impact on attitudes of students. Reforms introduced in syllabus shaped a positive perception among students regarding Chinese political system and created distrust regarding market economy. (Cantoni, et.al. 2014) Therefore the concepts of extremism, terrorism, peaceful coexistence and tolerance must be included in curriculum with due consideration of the desired impact for the society.

The counter extremism narratives need to deal with the multi-layered relationship between education and extremism with multilayered response. At one hand a counter narrative is required for the extremism, while on the other hand an alternate narrative to that of extremist needs to be formed. Counter-narrative would as have discussed earlier, require change in syllabus, teacher and staff training and sensitization on extremism, inclusion of students and faculty in policy inputs and policy making, thus an overhauling of education system itself. The alternate narrative should not focus on extremist narrative only; it needs to look beyond. It needs to look at the influencers in education system and society at large, whose persuasion can emotionally and logically shape the mindset of youth. The alternative narrative my emphasis on the positive characteristics of our cultural and society; such as our festivities, cultural heritage, our languages and ethnicities, while being inclusive of our religious and cultural diversity.

References

- [1] Ahmad, Iqbal. Khail ur Rehman. Ali, Asghar. Khan, Itbar. And Khan, Fazal Akhber. (June 2014). Critical Analysis of the Problems of Education in Pakistan: Possible Solutions. *Internal Journal of Evaluation Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 3(2), 79-84.
- [2] Ashraf, Sarah. Religious education and training provided by Madrassas in Afghanistan-Pakistan boundary area. *AHRC Public Policy Series No. 5*, 2012. Retrieved from <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/ahrc-public-policy-series/religious-education-and-training-provided-by-madrassas/>
- [3] Aslam, Irfan (2014, 18 May). The murder of reason. *Dawn*.
- [4] Bano, Masooda. (2007). Beyond Politics: The Reality of a Deobandi madrasa in Pakistan. *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 18:1, 43-68.
- [5] “Blasphemy Accused Junaid Hafeez Sentenced to Death”, (2019, 22 Decemeber), *Newsweek*, retrieved from <https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/blasphemy-accused-junaid-hafeez-sentenced-to-death/>
- [6] Cantoni, Davide. Chen, Yuyu. Yang, David Yufan. Yuchtman, Noam. and Zhang, Y. Jane. (2012) “Curriculum and Ideology,” *NBER Working Paper no. 20112*, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. For an overview of the results, see VOX CEPR Policy Portal, May 2014, “Curriculum and Ideology,” <http://www.voxeu.org/article/curriculum-and-ideology>.
- [7] Crisis Group Asia Report N*257. (June 2014). *Education Reform in Pakistan* (p. 10 and 22). Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/education-reform-pakistan>
- [8] *Countering Violent Extremism on Campuses: The Need for Institutionalization* (2019), CORE PAKISTAN.
- [9] Dreams Turned into nightmares: Attacks on students, teachers and schools in Pakistan (2017, March 27), *Human Rights Watch*, Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/27/dreams-turned-nightmares/attacks-students-teachers-and-schools-pakistan>

- [10] “Education Under attack 2014” (2014). *A Report by Global Coalition to protect education from attack*. Retrieved from http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_country_profiles_pakistan.pdf.
- [11] “Education Under attack 2018” (2018). *A report by the Global Coalition to protect education from attack*. Retrieved from <http://eua2018.protectingeducation.org/#child-recruitment>
- [12] Fair, C. Christine. (2008). The educated militants of Pakistan: Implications for Pakistan’s Domestic Security, *Contemporary South Asia*, 16(1), 100.
- [13] Gambetta, Diego. and Hertog, Steffen. *Engineers of Jihad: The curious connection between violent extremism and education*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016
- [14] Ghosh, Ratna., Manuel, Ashley., Chan, W.Y. Alice., Dilimulati, Maihemuti., Babaei, Mehdi. (2016). Education and Security: A global literature review of education in countering violent religious extremism. *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, Retrieved from https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Education%20and%20Security.pdf
- [15] Hashim, Asad (2012, October 15). The fight for education in Pakistan’s Swat. *Aljazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/10/2012101516347715708.html>
- [16] Hashmi, Zeeba T. (2015, November 5), Growing extremism on campus. *Daily Times*. Retrieved from <https://dailytimes.com.pk/97860/growing-extremism-on-campus/>
- [17] Hoodbhoy, Pervez. (2017, September 23). Deradicalising our Universities. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1359388/deradicalising-our-universities>.
- [18] Hunter, Robet. (2020, February 25). Education in Pakistan. *WENR: World Education News + Reviews*, Retrieved from <https://wenr.wes.org/2020/02/education-in-pakistan>
- [19] Khan, Momina Manzoor. and Ali, Imtiaz. (2017, November 07). Profile of a radicalized young man from Karachi. *Herald*. Retrieved

- Role of Educational Institutions in Countering Extremist Narratives in Pakistan
 from <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153883/profile-of-a-radicalised-young-man-from-karachi>.
- [20] Khan, Nouman (2020, January 13). Problems of education in Pakistan, *Daily Times*.
- [21] *Liberals in Pakistan fear hate crimes following lynching victim Mashal Khan's death*. (2019, March 22), <https://www.dw.com/en/liberals-in-pakistan-fear-hate-crimes-following-lynching-victim-mashal-khans-death/a-48022110>
- [22] National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). (2018). *National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NCEP-Guidlines.pdf>
- [23] Nawaz, Majid. (2016). *Radical: My journey out of Islamist Extremism*. Connecticut: Rowman & Littlefield.
- [24] Nayyar, A. H. and Salim, Ahmed. eds., (2003). *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan*. Islamabad: Islamabad Sustainable Policy Development Institute.
- [25] Noor Zahid and Muhammad Ishtiaq (2017, September 3), “Tribesmen Return to Destroyed Schools in Pakistan’s Tribal Region,” *Voice of America*.
- [26] Pakistan: Events of 2018 (2019). *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/pakistan>
- [27] *Pakistan Security Report 2018* (2019), and *Pakistan security Report 2019* (2020), Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.
- [28] Ressler, Don. Fair, C. Christine. Ghosh, Anirban. Jamal, Arif. and Shoeb, Nadia. (2013). *The fighters of Lashkar-e-Taiba: Recruitment, Training, Deployment and Death*, Occasional Paper Series, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Retrieved from https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Fighters-of-LeT_Final.pdf
- [29] Rewritten: Revised textbooks distributed at schools, (2015, March 24), *The Express Tribune*.
- [30] Startling revelations: Nine Al Qaeda suspects arrested. (2013, September 2013). *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved from

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/602715/startling-revelations-nine-al-qaeda-suspects-arrested/>

- [31] The Rise and ‘fall’ of Ansarul Sharia Pakistan. (2017, September 09). *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1356467/the-rise-and-fall-of-ansarul-sharia-pakistan>
- [32] University professor ‘linked to Izhar attackers’ arrested in Balochistan. (September 07, 2017). *Dawn*.
- [33] Women held after encounter I Lahore went to Syria for training (2017, April 17), *Dawn*.
- [34] Yusuf, Huma. (2016). *University Radicalization: Pakistan’s Next Counterterrorism Challenge*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 9(2). Retrieved from <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss29.pdf>
- [35] Yusuf, Huma (2012). *Conflict Dynamics in Karachi*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace.
- [36] Yusuf, Moeed (2011), A society on the Precipice? Examining the prospects of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan, in Micheal Kugelman and Robert M. Hathaway, ed., *Reaping the Dividend overcoming Pakistan’s Demographic Challenges*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- [37] Zia ur Rehman (2015, May 23). Besides madrassas, varsities also on watch list. *The News*.
- [38] 12 schools burnt down overnight in Gilgit- Baltistan’s Diامر district (2018, August 3), *Dawn*.