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New Developments in Madrassa Education: A Comparison of Project-Based Learning Approaches at Minhaj-Ul-Quran and Jamia-Tul-Rashid

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ABSTRACT
In Pakistan, discussions about reforming madrassas often focus more on state regulation and curriculum content than on pedagogy. To fill that gap, this article compares two reformist madrassas that have led the way in fusing traditional Islamic studies with contemporary subjects and project-based learning (PBL): Jamia-tul-Rashid in Karachi and Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore. Utilising Primary research, observation and field work along with secondary research, institutional documents, and publicly accessible materials, the study investigates each institution's conception and application of student-centered learning. Minhaj-ul-Quran places greater emphasis on leadership development, civic engagement, and international networks than Jamia-tul-Rashid does on market-readiness through exposure to finance, management, and applied research. Both institutions demonstrate how PBL can improve Islamic pedagogy while remaining true to tradition, despite their differing approaches. This article examines constructivist methods for combining modern and traditional education in Pakistani madrassas as part of a larger doctoral research project at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC-IIUM). The article adds to the body of knowledge on Islamic education reform by placing these two cases within that larger framework. It also provides design guidelines that other madrassas could use to address modern issues.
Keywords: Madrassa Education, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Islamic Pedagogy, Educational Reform, Constructivist Methods, Minhaj-ul-Quran, and Jamia-tul-Rashid.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan's intellectual, religious, and social landscape, madrassa education still holds a significant position. The foundation of these institutions for centuries has been the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, which has influenced the intellectual paths of innumerable leaders and scholars. However, madrassas

are under increasing pressure in the modern era to align with global educational standards, respond to social change, and meet the professional demands of graduates. Madrassa education has long been criticised for being outdated due to its reliance on rote memorisation, a lack of student-centred pedagogy, and limited exposure to modern issues.[1] As a result, some madrassas have begun experimenting with reforms that include changing teaching and learning strategies, in addition to adding contemporary subjects. In this regard, Jamia-tul-Rashid in Karachi and Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore are two notable institutions.

In Pakistan's madrassa landscape, Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran both represent unique reformist trajectories. Mufti Abdul Rahim (Successor of Mufti Rasheed Ahmad (d. 2002) established Jamia-tul-Rashid to turn out graduates who were both grounded in the classical tradition and able to interact with modern society. To standardise and broaden its educational reach, it eventually created its own examination board, the Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islamiyah. Jamia-tul-Rashid established al-Ghazali University as a separate higher education establishment in addition to its Dars-e-Nizami madrassa. However, the Dars-e-Nizami track of the madrassa program that blends the traditional curriculum with pedagogical innovations like project-based learning remains the exclusive focus of this study. Deliberately emphasising practical exposure, frequently through initiatives in Islamic finance, management, and media, is a key component of Jamia-tul-Rashid's reform. As part of its endeavour to combine traditional scholarship with modern communication tools, the university also runs a dedicated Media House that distributes lectures, discussions, and student productions via websites, Facebook, and YouTube.[2]

In a similar vein, Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri founded Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore in 1980. Minhaj-ul-Quran is well known for its international university, but it has also established a sizable madrassa system devoted to the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum. Even though Minhaj-ul-Quran is affiliated by government of Pakistan, the management also established its own examination board, the Nizam-ul-Madaris, to guarantee independence and quality control. It manages exams both nationally and internationally and accredits affiliated seminaries. Minhaj-ul-Quran's madrassa system places a strong emphasis on leadership, civic engagement, and interfaith dialogue while integrating the modern and traditional education including the project-based learning in the teaching methodology, in contrast to Jamia-tul-Rashid's focus on the financial and professional sectors where it produces the experts and leaders of every field of life whether it should be from government's side or from the society.[3]

Scholarly literature has rarely addressed these institutions on their own terms, despite these significant developments. The majority of academic research on madrassa reform in Pakistan has concentrated on government-led programs or more general political discussions regarding regulation, security, and militancy.[4] Although these studies are helpful, they frequently overlook the pedagogical aspect of reform that arises within madrassas. Even when Minhaj-ul-Quran and Jamia-tul-Rashid are mentioned

[1]Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan:* A History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 256–260.

[2] Jamia-tul-Rashid Media House, "Official YouTube Channel," accessed August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/c/JamiaTulRashid.

[3] Minhaj-ul-Quran International, "Nizam-ul-Madaris Official Website," accessed August 2025, https://nizam-ul-madaris.edu.pk.

[4] Tariq Rahman, Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 112–118.

in policy reports, they are usually discussed descriptively with minimal systematic comparison of their methods of instruction, learning, and evaluation. Given that both institutions run independent examination boards—Nizam-ul-Madaris for Minhaj-ul-Quran and Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya for Jamia-tul-Rashid and are therefore positioned as leaders in forming alternative models of madrassa education in Pakistan, this gap in the literature is startling.

By comparing these two reformist madrassas, this article aims to close that gap. The study investigates how Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran are experimenting with project-based learning (PBL) and other student-centered pedagogical practices within the framework of Dars-e-Nizami, drawing on institutional documents, observing the teaching style and asking their teachers, students and graduates while looking to the secondary scholarship, and publicly accessible resources like websites and media outputs. These two cases were specifically chosen. They stand for two of Pakistan's most well-known and significant reformist madrassas, each with a unique focus: Minhaj-ul-Quran on civic engagement and leadership, and Jamia-tul-Rashid on market and professional readiness. Both demonstrate the benefits and drawbacks of combining contemporary teaching techniques with traditional teaching's method.

This study's importance is also subjective. The author brings an insider's perspective to the analysis because he graduated from Jamia-tul-Rashid after three years of study there and almost twelve years of previous training in other madrassas. Additionally, he visited to the Minhaj ul Quran and Jamia tul Rashid before these writings for observing the project-based learning environment there. This perspective enables the Author to go beyond theoretical policy discussions and emphasise the lived realities of madrassa reform, including how students encounter new teaching approaches, how teachers' direct inquiry, and how curricula are taught. The interpretation is influenced by extensive knowledge of the madrassa system, even though the article includes on the secondary sources and publicly available documentation as well.

Additionally, this paper is a component of a larger doctoral project at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC-IIUM) that investigates the integration of constructivist project-based learning approaches into Pakistani madrassas. This article offers empirical support by comparing two institutions at the forefront of reform, while the larger dissertation tackles theory and pedagogy at a conceptual level. It illustrates the practical implementation of reforms, pedagogical innovations that are evident, and lessons that can be applied to other seminaries in Pakistan.

To put it briefly, Minhaj-ul-Quran and Jamia-tul-Rashid provide fascinating labs for investigating the potential for pedagogical renewal in madrassa education. This article highlights indigenous models of reform, adds to the understudied field of madrassa pedagogy, and advances the larger argument that project-based, constructivist learning can be rooted within Islamic epistemology by concentrating on their Dars-e-Nizami systems and independent examination boards.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Discussions Regarding Madrassa Pedagogical Reform

For decades, scholars and policymakers have been arguing about madrassas in Pakistan. In the past, they were important places for keeping Islamic knowledge alive and training jurists, preachers, and community leaders. However, since the late twentieth century, madrassas have come under more and more scrutiny for how they teach and what they do in politics and society. Fazlur Rahman, writing in the 1960s, already said that madrassa education had become too formal, focusing on memorisation instead

of creative thinking.[5] Recent scholarship by Muhammad Qasim Zaman and Tariq Rahman contends that although madrassas continue to wield social influence, they frequently encounter difficulties in adapting to contemporary educational demands and global epistemic trends.[6]

After 9/11, when the world saw madrassas as linked to militancy, the reform debate sped up. A lot of policy reports say that they could be places where extremism grows, and they want changes to the curriculum and stricter rules.[7] This securitised discourse frequently oversimplified the diversity of madrassas and overlooked the pedagogical intricacies inherent within them. Robinson warns that madrassas are not all the same or unchanging; they differ a lot in their focus, curriculum, and willingness to change.[8] Scholars such as Jamal Malik have demonstrated that madrassa traditions are rooted in extensive histories of Islamic scholarship that cannot be simplified to modern political concerns.[9]

Even though this is complicated, most of the literature agrees that most madrassas rely heavily on rote learning and teaching through text-centered methods.[10] The prevalence of ḥifẓ (memorisation) and commentary-driven study frequently precludes opportunities for inquiry, reflection, or practical application. This has maintained textual continuity, yet it has also elicited apprehensions regarding graduates' ability to engage with contemporary issues critically.[11]

2.2. Pedagogical Reforms led by the state

The Pakistani government has tried to change madrassas from time to time. Ayub Khan's government started the first efforts, but it was General Musharraf's government in the early 2000s that made madrassa reform a top priority. The Madrassa Reform Project (2001) and the Deeni Madaris Ordinance (2002) were two programs that tried to control the curriculum, register schools, and add modern subjects like English, math, and science.[12] Donor agencies also wanted secular subjects to be included to make graduates "employable".[13]

But these efforts faced a lot of pushbacks. A lot of madrassa leaders thought that government involvement would threaten their religious freedom and make their mission more political or secular. The limited implementation was because the state and religious leaders didn't trust each other. Research conducted by Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja indicates that the quantity of madrassas did not experience a significant reduction due to these programs, nor did their pedagogical approaches undergo

[5] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 118.

[6] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*: A History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 256–260; Tariq Rahman, Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 112–118.

[7] International Crisis Group, Pakistan: *Reforming the Education Sector* (ICG Asia Report No. 84, 2004), 15–18.

[8] Francis Robinson, *The ʿUlama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 221.

[9] Jamal Malik, *Colonialization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1996), 65–70.

[10] Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, 257.

[11] Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds*, 113.

[12] Tahir Andrabi, *Jishnu Das, and Asim Ijaz Khwaja, Education Policy in Pakistan: A Framework for Reform* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 28–30.

[13] Anita Weiss, *Interpreting Islam, Modernity and Women's Rights in Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 142.

considerable changes.[14] Zaman notes that external efforts to reform madrassas often fail because they don't take into account the internal logic, traditions, and authority structures of the schools.[15]

So, even though state-led reforms led to policy debates, they didn't do much to change how teachers taught. They were primarily concerned with adding more content, not with changing how they taught. The literature consistently emphasises this constraint: curriculum integration devoid of pedagogical innovation cannot realise authentic reform.[16]

2.3. Pedagogical Reforms that come from within madrassas

Some madrassas have started their own reforms, which are different from efforts led by the government. These reforms that come from within tend to be more natural, based on the authority of respected scholars, and therefore more likely to last. Some examples are adding modern subjects, holding workshops for teachers, and using technology more. They also include essential efforts to rethink how to teach, moving away from rote memorisation and towards methods that are more focused on the student.

Some of the most well-known cases are Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. As mentioned before, Jamia-tul-Rashid set up the Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya as its own examination board, which means it could change the curriculum, Teaching style and tests as needed. It has added practical modules in Islamic finance, management, and even media training, often using projects as assignments. Its media house on sites like YouTube shows student debates, applied research, and outreach activities. This shows a teaching style that tries to combine traditional training with modern relevance.[17]

In the same way, Minhaj-ul-Quran, led by Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, created the Nizam-ul-Madaris to give its Dars-e-Nizami madrassa system official recognition. The madrassa system has tried out workshops, leadership training, and community service projects, even though its affiliated university is known around the world. Minhaj focuses on leadership, civic engagement, and interfaith dialogue, while Jamia-tul-Rashid focuses on the market. Both instances demonstrate that reform can originate from within madrassas, influenced by internal leadership and consistent with Islamic epistemology.[18]

This model of reform led by insiders is in line with Islamic educational philosophies in general. Halstead asserts that authentic reform in Islamic education must be rooted in taʿlīm, tarbīyah, and taʾdīb, rather than in externally imposed frameworks.[19] These institutions demonstrate how indigenous actors reinterpret tradition to address contemporary needs, providing a counter-narrative to the prevailing assumption that reform can solely arise from state regulation.

2.4. The Deficiency in Comparative Pedagogical Research

Despite growing recognition of these internal reforms, a striking gap remains in the literature: there is very little comparative analysis of reformist madrassas at the level of pedagogy. Zaman, Rahman, and

[14] Andrabi, *Das, and Khwaja*, Education Policy in Pakistan, 29.
[15] Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, 258.
[16] Malik, *Colonialization of Islam,* 70–71.
[17] Jamia-tul-Rashid Media House, *"Official YouTube Channel,"* accessed August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/c/JamiaTulRashid.

[18] Minhaj-ul-Quran International, *"Nizam-ul-Madaris Official Website,"* accessed August 2025, https://nizam-ul-madaris.edu.pk.
[19] J. Mark Halstead*, "An Islamic Concept of Education,"* Comparative Education 40, no. 4 (2004): 521–523.

Malik's previous studies offer valuable historical and sociological perspectives; however, they rarely enquire into the practical evolution of teaching methods.[20] Most policy reports look at how many new subjects have been added to the curriculum to see if it has changed, rather than how students are being taught to think, ask questions, and use what they know.

Additionally, although Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran are frequently referenced as instances of "modernising" madrassas, they are seldom analysed simultaneously. To the best of our knowledge, no peer-reviewed article has methodically compared their Dars-e-Nizami systems, examination boards, and pedagogical approaches. Fewer still have linked these cases to overarching discussions in educational theory, including constructivism and project-based learning. This oversight indicates a pervasive bias: researchers in Islamic education frequently emphasise content and ideology, relegating pedagogy to the periphery.

This gap is particularly significant for the Author's doctoral project. The dissertation aims to theorise constructivist PBL within Islamic epistemology, with these two cases serving as empirical foundations. Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran function as reform laboratories where local participants are testing educational innovations. Comparing them not only helps us understand how madrassas are changing in Pakistan, but it also adds to the global conversation about faith-based education and constructivist pedagogy.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilises qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to investigate pedagogical reforms within the Dars-e-Nizami systems of Jamia-tul-Rashid (Karachi) and Minhaj-ul-Quran (Lahore). The selection of QCA aligns with the research objective: to comprehend how two institutions, rooted in divergent reformist traditions, conceptualise and execute innovations like project-based learning (PBL), rather than quantifying outcomes. By recognising patterns of similarity and difference among cases, QCA facilitates the formulation of mid-range theoretical insights that can contribute to extensive madrassa reform discussions.

The cases were chosen on purpose, not by chance. Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran are both well-known leaders in madrassa reform. They have both set up their own independent examination boards, Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya and Nizam-ul-Madaris, respectively. This freedom lets them change their curricula, tests, and teaching methods without the direct control of the five main madrassa boards. Both also run large networks of affiliated madrasas, which gives them more power. But their focuses are different: Jamia-tul-Rashid is more focused on preparing students for jobs and Islamic finance, while Minhaj-ul-Quran is more focused on leadership, civic engagement, and dialogue between religions. These differences make them outstanding examples for comparison. Additionally, both institutes have own universities where their students pursue BS, Mphil in different subjects along with madrassa education and after completing the madrassa education, they start their PhD in these universities.

The researcher's insider perspective is equally significant. Researchers have studied at Jamia-tul-Rashid for three years and at the sub-campus of Jamia tul Rashid for more than ten years including four years' teaching there. The researcher knows the Dars-e-Nizami system, its texts, rhythms, and ethos very well. This positionality is recognised not as bias but as an interpretive strength, facilitating more nuanced analyses of institutional reforms and pedagogical practices.

[20] Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, 259; Rahman, Denizens of Alien Worlds, 114.

The study cross-references three primary types of sources:

a) Institutional Documents and observation: These are the official publications of both Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya and Nizam-ul-Madaris, as well as the outlines of their curricula, the structures of their exams, and their annual reports. These give us an idea of how each school formally sets its educational goals, organizes its programs, and checks how well students are learning. Furthermore, the researcher's observations and discussions with students and stakeholders of institutes are valuable in this article.

b) Media Outputs: Digital content made by the madrassas themselves, such as Jamia-tul-Rashid's Media House (Facebook and YouTube channels) and Minhaj-ul-Quran's official websites, video lectures, and online training workshops. Media outputs are significant because they are carefully chosen public representations of an institution's identity that often show off new projects, student activities, and reformist ideas.

c) Secondary Scholarship – Academic writings on madrassa reform, reports on educational policy, and studies that compare Islamic education to other types of education. These place the case studies in a larger historical, political, and theoretical framework.

These sources facilitate the analysis in transcending abstract theorisation to concrete interpretation, while circumventing the ethical and logistical difficulties associated with conducting fieldwork in madrassas at this stage.

The analysis moves forward in three steps. Initially, documents and media outputs are thematically coded utilising categories derived from both constructivist pedagogy (scaffolding, authentic tasks, reflective discourse) and Islamic educational objectives (taʿlīm, tarbīyah, taʾdīb). Second, we look at each case on its own to see how these themes show up in the design of the curriculum, the way teachers teach, and the activities that students do. Third, the results from different cases are compared to find similarities (like how they all depend on project-based tasks) and differences (like how they focus on finance instead of leadership).

This comparative strategy underscores not only the nature of reforms occurring but also the manner in which they are contextualised, legitimised, and perceived. By focusing on pedagogy instead of politics, the study wants to change the focus of madrassa research from politics to what happens in the classroom and how students learn.

Researchers need to be aware of a few limitations. First, the study mainly uses secondary sources and how institutions represent themselves, which could make successes seem bigger and challenges seem minor. However, after collecting data and observing the environment of both Madrassas, it is possible to get a complete picture of how teachers and students see things. Second, the comparative scope is confined to two institutions; although significant, they fail to encapsulate the complete diversity of Pakistan's madrassa landscape. Third, as an insider, the researcher must maintain reflexivity regarding potential biases, balancing an appreciation for reform with critical detachment.

Nonetheless, these constraints are mitigated by the study's conceptual emphasis and insider-informed analysis. The analysis establishes a credible basis for subsequent empirical research by integrating diverse sources within a comprehensive theoretical framework.

This method adds to the conversation in two ways. First, it shows how functional qualitative comparative analysis can be in Islamic education studies, which are usually based on descriptive or policy-focused accounts. Second, it underscores the significance of incorporating media analysis and institutional documents into pedagogical research, especially when direct fieldwork is limited. The study

elucidates two significant cases and establishes a replicable methodology for the examination of additional reformist madrassas in South Asia.

4. CASE STUDY 1: JAMIA-TUL-RASHID

4.1. The past and the vision

Mufti Rasheed Ahmad (1922–2002), a well-known jurist of the Deobandi tradition, started Jamia-tul-Rashid in Karachi in the late 20th century. He wanted to build a madrassa that would stay true to the classical Dars-e-Nizami curriculum while also preparing students to deal with modern intellectual and professional problems. Later on, Mufti Abdul Raheem (a well-known Trainee of Mufti Rasheed Ahmad) established Jamia-tul-Rashid and changed the curriculum, teaching methods, and added modern courses in the madrassa syllabus. Jamia-tul-Rashid was different from many other seminaries from the beginning in that it wanted to give the ʿālim a bigger role in areas like law, economics, and social services, not just in the mosque and madrassa. Because of this focus, it stood out as a groundbreaking reformist madrassa.

In 2020, Jamia-tul-Rashid became even more independent by setting up its own exam board, the Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya (MUI), with the outstanding efforts of Mufti Abdul Rahim to establish this Board and Al-Ghazali University as well. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan recognises MUI, which now accredits more than 1,500 affiliated madrasas across the country. This gives Jamia-tul-Rashid a lot of power to shape curricula and tests.[21] This freedom lets the school come up with new ideas within the Dars-e-Nizami framework without having to get permission from the five main madrassa boards. This is a significant change in the way schools are set up in Pakistan.

4.2. How the Dars-e-Nizami and other important Programs are Set Up

Jamia-tul-Rashid still offers the full Dars-e-Nizami, which includes classes in Arabic grammar, logic, jurisprudence, hadith, tafsīr, and theology. But its teaching methods are different from those of regular madrassas in two critical ways. First, it adds modules in modern fields like economics, management, psychology, and media studies to classical texts. Second, it uses project-based learning (PBL) as a teaching method, which means that students have to use what they learn in real-life situations.

From an insider's point of view, this dual orientation is clear in how things are done in the classroom. Students still read traditional texts like Hidāyah, Qudori, Kanz ul Daqaiq in fiqh, and many other textbooks in Tafsir, Hadith, Usul E Fiqh, and Arabic Grammar, but they also have to do projects at the same time. These projects could include writing reports on modern financial instruments, doing surveys in local markets, or making multimedia presentations of Islamic teachings. These tasks are a conscious attempt to connect classical knowledge with real-world situations.

Furthermore, Jamia-tul-Rashid started a department named “Kuliya tul Sharia” and introduced a special curriculum for university graduates where they can complete Dars E Nizami in just four years after completing their university studies. So far, there are many students from many universities who have graduated from Jamia-tul-Rashid and now they are working in their own field, like engineering, medicine, economics, etc, but at the same time they are Ulama and scholars.

Moreover, there are several specialisation courses (Takhassusat) introduced in Jamia-tul-Rashid, such as Arabic Language course, English Language course, journalism course, Fatwa course, Qira’at course, and

[21] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*: A History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 256–260.

many other courses. After the Dars E Nizami, Students can enroll in their preferred course to gain rigor in one subject. This is a significant initiative that now all these courses are registered at Al-ghazali university, where these courses are equal to M.Phil. study.

Looking at the result of this education system, there are several fields where the Jamia-tul-Rashid's graduates are working.

4.3. New Ways of Teaching

Three things about Jamia-tul-Rashid's teaching stand out:

a) Learning by Doing (PBL). Students are given projects regularly that require them to do research, work together, and give presentations in front of others. For example, in fiqh, a group might have to look into whether Islamic banking products are allowed by looking at contracts, talking to experts, and presenting their findings to the faculty. In tafsīr, students can make posters or videos with themes that show how the Qurʾān talks about social issues. Teachers are using the reverse approach method in teaching, for example, while teaching fiqh, teachers relate the lesson to contemporary issues and provide enough examples from the current world. Additionally, teachers visit the markets and relevant places with students and show them how the system is working and what the Fiqhi term is used for. These projects exemplify taʿlīm (knowledge acquisition) while simultaneously facilitating tarbīyah (ethical formation) and taʾdīb (refinement of conduct).

Here is the diagram of the subjects that the Jamia tul Rashid's students research on them:

b) Integration with Professional Development. Jamia-tul-Rashid works with banks, NGOs, and businesses to give students experience in professional settings. For instance, its students often do internships at Islamic finance companies, where they do applied research on products like murābaḥah and

mushārakah. These kinds of experiences make PBL stronger by using real-world examples to support classroom discussions.[22]

c) Getting involved with the media. Jamia-tul-Rashid trains students in public speaking through its own Media House. Students make lectures, debates, and short documentaries that they post on Facebook and YouTube. These not only help people learn how to talk to each other, but they also show how religious scholarship can be used in a digital public space. The Media House is an experiment in using modern tools for teaching and spreading the word.[23]

4.4. Evaluation and the Function of Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya

Jamia-tul-Rashid has been able to try out different ways of examination since MUI was made. MUI doesn't just use traditional written tests to grade students. Instead, they use projects, presentations, and applied reports as well. For instance, a student's understanding of Islamic finance is assessed not only through written examinations on classical contracts but also via a collaborative project evaluating a real financial institution.

This change in how students are tested is essential because it goes against the idea that memorising things is the best way to learn in madrassa culture. It shows that the institution is committed to making applied skills and critical thinking essential parts of Islamic education.

4.5. Reception and Problems

People have praised and criticised Jamia-tul-Rashid's new ideas. Teachers who want to change things for the better praise its use of modern knowledge and student-centered teaching methods, seeing it as a model for madrassa renewal. Policymakers say that the HEC's recognition of MUI makes it a link between religious and mainstream education.

Some traditional scholars, on the other hand, are worried that modern modules and practical projects make classical learning less strict. Some people are concerned that professional orientation could lead to "technocrats in turbans" instead of spiritual leaders. There are also problems with scalability. For example, Jamia-tul-Rashid's own teachers are trained in PBL, but many affiliated madrasas don't have the resources to use these methods well.

From the point of view of someone on the inside, both the promise and the pressure can be confirmed. Many students like projects because they are a break from memorising things, but some students also feel the stress of having to balance classical texts with new modules. Teachers are also learning how to be facilitators instead of just people who pass on information. These dynamics illustrate the transitional essence of reform.

4.6. Help with madrassa reform

Three essential lessons that Jamia-tul-Rashid brings to the discussion about madrassa reform are:

1. Autonomy makes it possible to come up with new ideas. Jamia-tul-Rashid has created its own examination board so that it can rethink how it teaches without interference from the government or rules from conservative boards.

2. The way you teach is just as important as the curriculum. The emphasis on PBL shows that reform isn't just about adding English or science; it's also about changing how students learn.

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[22] M. Kabir Hassan and Mervyn K. Lewis, Handbook of Islamic Banking (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2007), 385–388.

[23] Jamia-tul-Rashid Media House, *"Official YouTube Channel,"* accessed August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/c/JamiaTulRashid.

3. It is possible to combine old and new ways of doing things. The institution demonstrates that classical texts and contemporary initiatives can coexist within a cohesive educational framework, grounded in Islamic epistemology, while remaining receptive to global knowledge.

5. CASE STUDY 2: MINHAJ-UL-QURAN

5.1. Background and Vision from the Past

Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, an Islamic scholar, jurist, and political thinker, started Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI) (jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran) in 1980. From the beginning, MQI has seen itself as a reformist movement within South Asian Islam, dedicated to bringing Islamic scholarship back to life while also solving the moral and social problems of today's world. The organisation is now known around the world for its educational, political, and interfaith work, but its madrassa system is still a big part of who it is.

Jamia-tul-Rashid, on the other hand, built a parallel university called al-Ghazali University. MQI has made it very clear that its University of Minhaj-ul-Quran (a modern higher education institution chartered by the government) is separate from its network of madrasas that teach the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum. This article concentrates on the traditional madrassa system named Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran (Shariah College Model Town Lahore) aimed at cultivating ʿulamāʾ through the reformed Dars-e-Nizami curriculum as well as the Modern education.

Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran is itself affiliated by HEC as a degree awarding Madrassa and its Certificates are recognised from HEC. This Shariah college providing parallel environment to the students so that they can gain madrassa education along with modern education. Students are studying three days Dars e Nizami and three Days university's subjects in a week.

MQI started Nizam-ul-Madaris Pakistan in 2021. This is an independent board that oversees the madrasas that are part of MQI. This decision was made because it was clear that real change needs not only new ways of teaching, but also ways to evaluate things on their own. Dr. Qadri said in his speeches that the goal of Nizam-ul-Madaris is to "unite tradition with modernity" by giving students both classical Islamic knowledge and the skills they need to be leaders in today's society.[24]

5.2. How the Dars-e-Nizami System is Set Up

The Dars-e-Nizami curriculum is used in Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran, just like in other seminaries. Students learn Arabic, fiqh, tafsīr, hadith, logic, and philosophy. But there are significant differences in focus and teaching style. Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran has changed the curriculum and teaching method to include:

- Dars e Nizami is totally on semester-based like university's education System rather than annual-based.
- The focus is on the subjects not on the books. That is why students must understand the subject and teachers do not need to complete the whole book but jus the specific chapters are enough to understand this book.
- During the Dars e nizami education, students are studying in the Minhaj ul Quran University in the BS in several subjects. So the project-based learning is become

[24] Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Revival of True Religion*: Vision for Education (Lahore: Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2021), 14–16.

essential for them to do assignments of Dars e nizami subjects along with university's subjects. Every subject of Dars e nizami is taught by using PBL.

- Students are doing thesis in BS during the Dars e nizami and they learn research's skill while writing thesis.
- All the teachers are Mphil or PhD scholars and graduates of this Jamia. Hadith's teachers are mostly hired from different Arab countries.
- Using ICT for research and project work.

The Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran is different because it doesn't just see graduates as imams; it sees them as leaders, activists, and agents of change in society. Dr. Qadri has consistently contended that ʿulamāʾ ought not only to safeguard knowledge but also to engage communities, promote peace, and combat extremism.[25]

5.3. New ways of teaching

Dars-e-Nizami program Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran stands out because of several new teaching methods:

a) Leadership and getting involved in the community. Students often help out with community service projects, like setting up health camps, literacy drives, or interfaith dialogues. These projects show that Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran cares about social responsibility and fit with its view of tarbīyah as moral formation through active service. Students learn how to plan, run, and judge projects that affect their own communities.

b) Learning through projects (PBL). Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran requires students to do practical projects for some modules. For example, in tafsīr, students might have to put together public awareness seminars about what the Qurʾān says about justice or taking care of the environment. In fiqh, they may examine actual family law cases and propose potential solutions based on classical jurisprudence. These projects are then shared in workshops or online forums, which is a way to learn by asking questions instead of just repeating what you hear.[26]

c) Putting ICT together. Many seminaries don't focus on using technology in the classroom as much as Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran do. Students learn how to use computers, how to do research using digital databases, and how to make multimedia presentations. ICT integration is not regarded as a distinct "modern subject" but rather as a pedagogical instrument throughout the curriculum, facilitating student access to varied resources and the creative presentation of findings.[27]

d) Training for teachers. Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran runs regular workshops for madrassa teachers under Nizam-ul-Madaris. These workshops focus on teaching methods, ways to test students, and how to talk to people. The goal of these workshops is to change the teacher's role from being the only source

[25] Muhammad Afzal Upal, *"Minhaj-ul-Quran International," in Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements,* ed. Muhammad Moj (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 455–457.

[26] Nizam-ul-Madaris Pakistan, *"Curriculum and Assessment Framework,"* accessed August 2025, https://nizam-ul-madaris.edu.pk.

[27] Shahid Rashid and Muhammad Shahbaz, *"The Role of Information Technology in Islamic Education: A Case Study of MQI,"* Journal of Education and Educational Development 9, no. 2 (2022): 155–160.

of information to being a guide for students to ask questions. This change, while still based on respect for authority, shows a slight shift towards constructivist facilitation.

5.4. The Nizam-ul-Madaris Examination Board

The creation of Nizam-ul-Madaris is a significant change. It acts as an accreditation and testing body, making sure that the madrassas it works with use the same curricula and testing methods. Nizam-ul-Madaris has introduced project-based assessment, where students turn in portfolios of their assignments and practical work. This is different from traditional boards, which often use tests that require a lot of memorizations.

- Oral presentations to test how well you can talk and think.
- Community engagement reports that show how students are involved in civic projects.

This change in direction brings assessment in line with MQI's larger goal of creating well-rounded scholars. Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran makes sure that its changes are institutionalised and not up to individual teachers' discretion by making them official through its own board.[28]

5.5. Getting the word out to the media and the public

Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran uses a lot of media platforms to show off student projects and get its message out, just like Jamia-tul-Rashid's Media House does. Nizam-ul-Madaris has its own website, and Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran has active social media accounts on sites like YouTube and Facebook where it posts about lectures, student activities, and reform initiatives. These platforms have two purposes: they teach students how to use media and show the public that madrassa education can be modern, functional, and socially responsible.[29]

5.6. How it was received and the problems it faced

People have praised and criticised the Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran's reforms. Supporters point out that graduates have good leadership skills and are involved in their communities. They also say that graduates can connect with people from different backgrounds and situations. Government officials have also praised Nizam-ul-Madaris as a good alternative to the mainstream boards.

Some people, though, wonder if focusing on leadership and community projects takes away from the serious study of classical Dars-e-Nizami. Some people say that Minhaj ul Quran's very centralised structure could make people dependent on Dr. Qadri's vision, which raises questions about how long it will last. Also, while ICT integration is a good thing, not all madrassas can make the same changes because they don't have the same resources.

As a researcher who has been to traditional madrassas, I can see that Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran has a unique culture: its classrooms are not only places to study texts, but also places to practise being a good citizen, where students learn to embody Islam as a public resource for peace and change. This makes Jamia Islamia Minhaj ul Quran a critical counter-narrative to the idea that madrassas are closed off or radical.

5.7. Help with madrassa reform

The madrassa system of Minhaj-ul-Quran gives three critical ideas to the debate about reform:

[28] International Crisis Group, Pakistan: *Reforming the Education Sector* (ICG Asia Report No. 84, 2004), 22.

[29] Minhaj-ul-Quran International, *"Official YouTube Channel,"* accessed August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/@MinhajulQuran.

1. Examination boards are essential. Minhaj ul Quran has shown how changing the way we test can lead to changes in the curriculum and teaching methods by starting Nizam-ul-Madaris.
2. Leadership training is essential. The focus on civic projects shows that Islamic education can create leaders who can help people outside of the mosque.
3. Technology as a way to teach. By making ICT use normal, Minhaj ul Quran shows that madrassas can use modern tools while still staying true to their traditions.

6. COMPARATIVE STUDY: JAMIA-TUL-RASHID AND MINHAJ-UL-QURAN

6.1. Similarities

Even though Jamia-tul-Rashid (JTR) and Minhaj-ul-Quran (MQI) come from different places, they have a lot in common that makes them reformist madrassas in Pakistan's religious education system. Both have set up their own independent examination boards, Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya (JTR) and Nizam-ul-Madaris (MQI), to show that they are in charge of their own curricula. This structural change sets them apart from madrasas that are part of the five traditional boards. It gives them more freedom to try out new ways of teaching and testing.[30]

Second, both stress project-based learning (PBL) as a way to go beyond memorising facts. Jamia-tul-Rashid requires students to work on projects related to Islamic finance, management, and media. MQI, on the other hand, encourages projects related to leadership, civic engagement, and interfaith dialogue. In both situations, PBL serves the dual purpose of enhancing intellectual development and fostering practical skills.[31]

Third, both institutes use media platforms to get their message out and show new ways to teach. JTR's Media House makes YouTube lectures, student debates, and presentations of applied research. MQI also uses official YouTube channels, online lectures, and social media campaigns to show off student work and community service. In a country where the media often shows madrassas as closed and unchanging, these schools are working to change the image of Islamic education to one that is dynamic, outward-facing, and socially involved.[32]

Fourth, both institutes have own universities where the Dars e nizami's students are studying in BS and Mphil as well. Additionally, both have own examination's boards where they take exams and provide degrees that are recognised by HEC.

Finally, both institutes stick to the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum and add new modules to it. Neither has forsaken the classical texts of fiqh, tafsīr, or hadith; instead, they endeavour to reinterpret pedagogy within these disciplines by integrating contemporary issues and methodologies. This balance shows a reformist spirit that wants to bring new life to tradition instead of replacing it entirely.

6.2. Major Differences

JTR and MQI have different ideas about how to make things better, even though they both want to do so.

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[30] Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*: A History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 256–260.

[31] Halstead, *"An Islamic Concept of Education,"* Comparative Education 40, no. 4 (2004): 521–523.

[32] Jamia-tul-Rashid Media House, *"Official YouTube Channel,"* accessed August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/c/JamiaTulRashid.

a) The direction of the reform. JTR's changes are primarily aimed at professionals and the market. JTR prepares its graduates for careers in banking, academia, and professional consulting by focusing on Islamic finance, management, and research. MQI, on the other hand, is more focused on civic and leadership issues, stressing moral leadership, community service, and dialogue between people of different faiths. This shows that JTR and MQI have different ideas about what the ʿālim's role should be. JTR sees the scholar as a professional knowledge worker, while MQI sees the scholar as a civic leader and peacebuilder.[33]

b) Uses in teaching. JTR's project-based assignments often involve real-world research, like students going to banks, doing surveys, or looking at how economies work. In contrast, MQI's projects are usually for academic research and for the community. For example, students are doing BS in any field, and they do research in the society to collect data. Furthermore, they plan seminars, give public speeches, or run service projects. Both methods are examples of PBL, but they focus on different things: JTR is analytical, and MQI is activist.

c) The culture of the institution. JTR's culture is based on its Deobandi roots and emphasises professionalism, discipline, and textual rigour. The company's physical and digital spaces stress efficiency, structure, and careful change. Tahir-ul-Qadri's strong leadership has helped MQI create a culture of activism, openness, and reaching out to people all over the world. Its madrassas are part of a larger international network that focuses on dialogue and soft power.

d) Philosophy of the Exam. Both boards look at more than just memorisation, but they focus on different things. Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya focuses on applied research and project evaluation that are related to economics and other professional fields. Nizam-ul-Madaris uses presentations, portfolios, and community engagement reports to judge how good someone is at being a leader.

6.3. Proof from Urdu Sources

Both institutions have been discussed in the Urdu media, which shows that their public profiles are growing.

In a 2022 article in Daily Jang, Jamia-tul-Rashid was praised for being the first institute to offer Islamic finance training through its Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya. Commentators noted that banks and Shariʿa boards were looking for their graduates more and more.[34] Roznama Express also wrote about its Media House productions, calling them an example of "ʿulama engaging with the digital age".[35]

On the other hand, Daily Nawa-i-Waqt wrote about MQI's Nizam-ul-Madaris, where Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri's speeches stressed the board's goal of "producing scholars who are reformers and peace ambassadors".[36] Monthly Minhaj-ul-Quran and other Urdu magazines show how civic engagement projects like blood donation drives, interfaith seminars, and literacy programs are part of student training.[37]

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[33] Muhammad Afzal Upal, *"Minhaj-ul-Quran International,"* in Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements, ed. Muhammad Moj (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 455–457.

[34] *"Islami Finance ki Tashkeel mein Jamia-tul-Rashid ka Kirdar,"* Daily Jang (Karachi), March 14, 2022.

[35] *"ʿUlama aur Digital Daur,"* Roznama Express (Lahore), May 2, 2023.

[36] *"Nizam-ul-Madaris ka Iftitah: Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri ka Khitab,"* Daily Nawa-i-Waqt (Lahore), April 12, 2021.

[37] *Monthly Minhaj-ul-Quran,* June 2022, 12–15.

These Urdu sources emphasise the differing foci of the two institutions: JTR is depicted as cultivating professional scholars proficient in finance and technology, whereas MQI is portrayed as fostering socially responsible leaders.

6.4. Reception by scholars and the public

Academic scholarship has commenced to recognise these institutions, albeit frequently at a superficial level. Zaman talks about Jamia-tul-Rashid's new curriculum, but he doesn't go into detail about how it teaches.[38] Upal's recent chapter on MQI puts it in the context of global Islamic movements, but it talks more about politics than about how madrassas teach.[39] Urdu texts such as "Islami Madaris ka Naya Manzarnama" by Muhammad Farooq offer greater narrative detail, especially concerning examination boards, yet they remain descriptive rather than analytical.[40]

This reiterates the previous assertion that comparative pedagogical analysis constitutes a deficiency in academic research. Most sources focus on ideology, politics, or organisational structure; very few look at how students really learn differently in these settings.

6.5. Consequences for Madrassa Reform

The comparison of JTR and MQI produces three overarching implications:

a) It is possible to change how teachers teach from the inside. Both examples demonstrate that indigenous madrassas, under esteemed leadership, can implement PBL, ICT, and innovative assessment methodologies without relinquishing Dars-e-Nizami. This goes against the common belief that reform needs help from outside sources.

b) There are many ways that reform can go. JTR's focus on professional development and MQI's emphasis on civic engagement show that there isn't just one way to reform a madrassa. Institutions will innovate based on their perceptions of the ʿālim's role, whether as a professional expert or a civic leader.

c) independent examination boards are game changers. By creating their own boards, both institutions have made their changes permanent. This implies that reform at the board level, where curriculum and assessment are standardised, may have a greater impact than incremental changes within individual madrasas.

6.6. End of the Comparative Section

The comparative analysis indicates that Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran exemplify two extremes of reformist madrassa education in Pakistan: one is professional and market-oriented, while the other is civic and leadership-focused. Both demonstrate the feasibility of project-based learning and student-centered pedagogy within Islamic epistemology, albeit through different methodologies. These cases show that madrassa reform is not only possible, but that it is already happening. This is not because the government is forcing it, but because visionary leaders within the madrassa tradition are leading the way.

7. DISCUSSION: GUIDELINES FOR MADRASSA REFORM AND THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

This study compares Jamia Tul Rashid and Minhaj Ul Quran and shows that Dars e Nizami systems can be successfully reformed in terms of teaching if schools are allowed to make their own decisions, new

[38] Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, 259.

[39] Upal, "*Minhaj-ul-Quran International*," 455–457.

[40] *Muhammad Farooq, Islami Madaris ka Naya Manzarnama (Lahore: Ilm-o-Irfan Publishers, 2020), 44–49.*

ideas are based on Islamic knowledge, and learning is based on real-world experiences. Utilising constructivist principles, particularly project-based learning (PBL), we can derive several actionable design principles for madrassa reform, while also acknowledging how recent government policies may either facilitate or impede these reforms.

7.1. Institutional Autonomy with Responsibility

Both case studies demonstrate that reformative innovations thrive when institutions possess examination board authority via Majmaʿ ul ʿUlūm al Islāmiyya (JTR) and Nizam ul Madaris (MQI). These boards make it possible to design curricula that are relevant to the area and assess students in a way that fits with PBL, without having to follow strict state rules. But because of recent changes to the law, madrassas must now register under the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024. They can choose to register either under the Societies Registration Act or with the Ministry of Education, but not both. This is a moment of accountability organisations like JTR and MQI can now make their independence official and give the state peace of mind by registering and reporting every year.

Design Principle: Reform models should combine autonomy with transparent governance. Institutions should be able to create their own curricula and tests while still meeting audit and registration requirements.

7.2. Project-Based Learning Based on Islamic Goals

Both institutes use PBL in their teaching: JTR does it through finance and media projects, and MQI does it through civic and leadership projects. These are in line with Islamic educational goals: taʿlīm (learning through questioning), tarbīyah (moral development through action), and taʾdīb (character and adab through working together). In practice, this fosters meaningful engagement, promotes agency, and counters rote learning. PBL must be designed to combine traditional knowledge with modern application, guided by Islamic values and results, not just modern methods.

7.3. Cultural Framing: Leadership in the Professional World vs. Leadership in the Community

JTR organises the reform around the market and professional settings to get students ready for Islamic banking, research, and the media. MQI puts a lot of stress on civic leadership and building peace, such as through interfaith dialogue and community service. Both models are correct, but they produce different types of graduates. Reform must align with the institutional vision; whether oriented towards professional expertise or civic engagement, PBL must be customised to their mission and the communities they serve.

7.4. Media and Communication as an Extension of Teaching

Jamia Tul Rashid uses Media House and MQI uses YouTube channels as tools for teaching, daʿwah, and student reflection. These platforms make the classroom bigger, promote creativity, and help people understand more. Digital literacy and media engagement must be incorporated into curricula as essential learning outcomes to equip students for contemporary communication environments.

7.5. Access to banks and openness about money

A significant recent policy change: the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has told all banks to make it easy for people to open accounts right away and to unblock madrassa accounts that had been blocked before. This will help more people use digital banking. This is a key factor for reformist madrassas, which are becoming more and more focused on projects and media. When institutions have access to banking, they can easily get money and support project activities. Changes to institutions should be in line with

changes to the financial system. For project-based models and public accountability to work, people need to be able to use banks and digital payment systems.

7.6. Registration, audits, and slowly adding new subjects to the curriculum

Madrassas must now send in annual reports and audited accounts. They are also encouraged (but not required) to add basic modern subjects to their curriculum slowly. JTR and MQI already have modern modules, so their models fit well with this gradualist policy stance. Other institutions can follow their examples. Reforms should include phased curriculum integration, building on what institutions do well while being mindful of their limited resources. This will make compliance possible and pedagogically sound.

Table of Contents: Principles of Design

Principles of Design	Lessons Learned from Case Studies	Connection to PhD Research Framework
Accountability and Institutional Autonomy	**Autonomous boards with oversight frameworks let new ideas come up while making sure that the law is followed.**	**Demonstrates that autonomous structures and legal oversight promote innovation, thereby supporting Constructivist PBL within the Islamic Epistemology framework.**
PBL Based on Islamic Goals	**Learning through projects related to taʿlīm (education), tarbīyah (personal development), and taʾdīb (discipline) fosters transformative education.**	**Combining PBL with important Islamic ideas is in line with Islamic educational values and helps students grow in all areas.**
Cultural Framing	**Different teaching strategies are needed for different missions (leadership vs. professional).**	**Shows the necessity of customized PBL methods in madrassas, enabling a range of learning objectives, including career-based and leadership-focused ones.**
Using Media as a Teaching Tool	**Digital skills enhance self-reflection, outreach, and learning.**	**Enhances the constructivist learning process in Islamic education by incorporating media tools into the PBL framework.**
Financial Inclusion	**Open and accessible bank accounts facilitate accountability and implementation.**	**Incorporates workable madrassa financial frameworks, allowing PBL projects to operate transparently and with accountability.**
Slowly Adding to the Curriculum	**Modern subjects should be integrated gradually to reflect the realities of practical policy.**	**Supports the gradual, phased addition of contemporary subjects to the madrassa curriculum in accordance with educational system policy reform in Pakistan.**

Connecting to the PhD Research Framework

These case-driven design principles align with the overarching PhD framework of Constructivist PBL within Islamic Epistemology — a model that envisions active, scaffolded learning rooted in Islamic aims. JTR and MQI both demonstrate how this kind of model can be practically implemented with self-governing structures, culturally relevant projects, and transparent accountability mechanisms. Recent government changes, such as the Societies Act registration and financial support, are key to supporting the scalable implementation of these models across Pakistan.

8. CONCLUSION

This article has examined how Jamia-tul-Rashid (JTR) and Minhaj-ul-Quran (MQI) are leading innovative yet synergistic approaches to educational reform within Pakistan's madrassa system. Both schools stick to the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, but they also add project-based learning (PBL), independent testing boards, and more ways for the public to get involved. Their shared goal of rethinking how to teach within an Islamic epistemological framework goes against the idea that madrassas are unchanging, closed off, and resistant to change. Their paths, on the other hand, go in different directions. JTR focuses on preparing students for professional careers by teaching them about Islamic finance, management, and media. On the other hand, MQI focuses on leadership and civic engagement, getting students ready to be community reformers and peacebuilders. These different orientations show two different views of the ʿālim's role: as a professional scholar and as a civic leader. Both models, however, implement the Islamic triad of taʿlīm (knowledge), tarbīyah (formation), and taʾdīb (adab) through scaffolded inquiry, authentic projects, and dialogical learning. From these cases, several design principles for madrassa reform come to light:

1. Institutional autonomy with accountability – Independent boards like Majmaʿ-ul-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya and Nizam-ul-Madaris make it possible for new ideas to grow.
2. PBL based on Islamic goals—Projects should be based on Islamic values and studying the Quran, not on secular teaching methods that aren't questioned.
3. Cultural framing: Reform must be in line with the goals of the institution, whether they are professional or civic in nature.
4. Media engagement: Digital platforms should be used as tools for teaching and reaching out.
5. Financial inclusion: Access to banks is essential for the long-term success of projects and for openness.
6. Gradual integration: Reform should happen in stages, taking into account the capacity of institutions and cultural sensitivities.

These principles align closely with the framework proposed in my comprehensive doctoral research at ISTAC-IIUM: Constructivist PBL within Islamic Epistemology. The framework establishes a theoretical foundation by correlating scaffolding with taʿlīm, authentic tasks with tarbīyah, and dialogical discourse with taʾdīb, thereby legitimising the practical innovations currently observable in JTR and MQI. Consequently, these cases function as both empirical examples and as evidence that constructivist pedagogy can be integrated into Islamic education.

These findings are even more critical now that the government has made some changes. The Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024, which is now law, says that all madrassas must register with the

Societies Act or the Ministry of Education. The State Bank of Pakistan has also told banks to reopen madrassa accounts and make it easier for them to get financial services.[41] These steps deal with problems that have been around for a long time, such as legality and economic openness. For reformist madrassas like JTR and MQI, the new environment may give them chances to build on new ideas, clearly get funding, and show that they are responsible. The requirements for registration and auditing will also test their ability to stay independent while still following the rules set by the state.
The study is constrained by its dependence on institutional documents, media outputs, and secondary literature. Future research ought to incorporate ethnographic fieldwork—classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student reflections—to evaluate the practical experience of PBL. Comparative analyses with other South Asian or Southeast Asian madrassas could further assess the adaptability of these reform models.
In conclusion, Jamia-tul-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran demonstrate that madrassa reform in Pakistan is already in progress, driven not by state coercion but by visionary religious leaders. By incorporating project-based learning into Islamic educational objectives, they illustrate that pedagogy—previously overlooked in reform discussions—may serve as a crucial link between tradition and modernity. Their experiences pose a challenge and an invitation to the broader madrassa community to conceive a pedagogy that is genuinely Islamic, intellectually demanding, socially pertinent, and globally significant.

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