

A STUDY OF MADRASSAS AND OTHER QURANIC SCHOOLING CENTRES (QSCS) IN THE GAMBIA, MALI, NIGER AND SENEGAL

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ABSTRACT

This study was commissioned by UNESCO and undertaken by an ERNWACA cross-national research team in 2006/07. It included a survey of a cross-national sample of 105 Madrassas and 79 other QSCs (in short, “schools”).

The results showed student enrolment increasing (but gender disparity decreasing). The increase was mostly in Privately-owned “schools” and Community “schools” but many had a financial deficit.

The drop-out-rate among teenage girls was higher than among teenage boys. There were no tracer studies of school leavers’ destinations into work. Schooling was mostly seen as irrelevant to work. Yet there was a *Life Skills* component in the curriculum. Particularly arresting was the high proportion of the total weekly teacher-student contact hours at “school” allocated to Islamic Studies and the study of the Arabic language. Teachers were not always involved in curriculum development.

“School” Governing Bodies were male-dominated with parents/guardians and Islamic scholars represented but not local employers. Many “school” Managers were inadequately qualified professionally. They attended professional development courses/workshops —but most teachers did not, even though they were unqualified professionally. There was evidence of imaginative management initiatives in all four countries.

Recommendations were made and elaborated into “*Concept Papers*” — proposals to underpin UNESCO’s intervention in the sector.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude a été commanditée par l’UNESCO et réalisée par une équipe de recherche transnationale du ROCARE en 2006/07. Elle a inclus un sondage transnational d’un échantillon de 105 Madrasas et 79 autres CECs («écoles», en bref).

Les résultats ont montré un nombre croissant d’étudiants inscrits (mais les disparités entre les sexes diminuent). La hausse est principalement dans les «écoles» Privées et Communautaires, mais beaucoup avaient un déficit financier.

Les taux d’abandon chez les adolescentes étaient plus élevés que chez les garçons adolescents. Il n’y avait pas d’études de suivi des sortants. La scolarité est souvent considérée comme sans rapport au travail. Pourtant, une composante du curriculum était les compétences pour la vie. Particulièrement frappante était la proportion élevée de la durée hebdomadaire de l’enseignement pour les études Islamiques et la langue Arabe. Les enseignants ne sont pas toujours impliqués dans le développement du curriculum.

Les Conseils d’administration étaient dominés par les hommes, avec les parents/tuteurs et les érudits islamiques représentés, mais pas les employeurs locaux. Plusieurs gestionnaires et enseignants étaient insuffisamment qualifiés professionnellement mais seuls les gestionnaires continuaient à suivre des cours appropriés. Les initiatives en gestion sont prouvées d’imagination.

Des recommandations ont été élaborées pour soutenir l’intervention de l’UNESCO dans le secteur.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing interest in Madrassas (Ahmad,2002), and in November 2007 the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), in partnership with UNESCO completed a 16 months study of samples of Madrassas and other Quranic Schooling Centres (QSCs), in Gambia, Mali, Niger and Senegal, respectively. UNESCO was interested in finding out how it could support the development of an innovative curriculum within the context of Madrassas and other Quranic Schooling Centres in Non-Formal Education (NFE) settings through additional Basic Education and the inclusion of Vocational skills training.

The context The Education-For-All (EFA) imperative

For centuries Madrassas have been a major instrument in Muslim societies for promoting the acquisition of a scholarly knowledge of Islam (Ca Da Mosto, 1895); and they have long been the guardians of Muslim orthodoxy. The students generally come from poor families who cannot send their children to the so-called “modern” schools because their parents/guardians must pay the school fees, even for basic schooling, and in Sub-Saharan Africa such charges can take up to a quarter of a family’s income (Brown,2006). Yet, the *Dakar Framework for Action* in the year 2000 had reaffirmed the vision of the World Declaration on *Education-For-All* (EFA) at Jomtien in 1990 and had emphasized “the central role of education as an engine for reducing poverty” (Tomasi,2002); and there were initiatives such as the NEPAD’s *initiative* and the World Bank’s *Fast-Track Initiative*.