

An Analytical Study of the Outcomes and Impacts of Religious Education of Pakistan, the Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of Religious Education at individual and collective levels. The research discusses the educational basis for the study of religion and analyzes the contribution of religious education towards the intellectual growth of individuals.

The study raises few questions regarding religious education in Pakistan such as; why has our education system been divided into religious and secular education system. Whether the existing religious education is able to create a linkage between religion and society or not, if not what are the areas which need to be focused.

What are the possibilities of sidelining the religious education and what could be its effects. The research focuses on the aims and objectives of religious education by analyzing the nature of curriculums of religious education at various levels.

This study highlights the deficiency of the inclusion of the teachings of other religions in our religious education. The research consists of a current survey of the said topic, some findings and conclusions on the issue and few recommendations as well.

Keywords: Religious education, Madāris, Ijtihād, Islāmīyāt.

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in an overall development of any nation. Without proper education no nation or society can achieve its desired goals. An ideal society is always based upon a sound system of education.

Education is not meant to provide jobs only; it is in fact aimed to produce such individuals who are useful for society in various spheres of life. And this ultimately leads a country to the ways of progress and prosperity. It is equally important that educational goals are in line with the civilization and culture of that specific country. Pakistan is an Islamic republic state and religion plays a vital role in our society. The teachings of the true spirits of any religion can help individuals and societies understand the purpose of living and give them the right comprehension of their religion. All kinds of educations are meaningless if they are not linked with societies and the division of religious and otherwise education further dents the objectives of a true welfare state.

Facts and Figures on Education in Pakistan

UNESCO¹ in its latest report issued in April 2015, has indicated that Pakistan has failed to achieve its goals of education for all. Pakistan has the maximum numbers of ghost schools and teachers. There are 6480 ghost schools in Sindh and about 5000 in Baluchistan. Many ghost teachers are taking salaries for teaching in these schools.

Pakistan has the world second highest number of children out of schools, reaching 5.1 million and two third of them are girls. There are 51 million illiterates

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and two third of them are again women. The country ranks 113 out of 120 countries in the Education Development Index. Pakistan has reduced spending on education from 2.6% of GNP² to 2.3% and the country spends around seven times more on the military than on primary education. Moreover Pakistan has the widest education inequalities in the world³.

The Division of Religious and Non-Religious Education

Literacy rate in developed countries is hundred percent while in Muslim countries it is less than forty percent. The said gulf finds its roots way back in 1440AD when press was invented in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg⁴ and thousands of books were printed in Europe. And in the next two to three centuries more than eighty percent people got educated. About after three hundred years the same press came to Muslim world when first printing press was introduced in Turkey in 1730AD⁵.

In the sub-continent education has never remained a priority of the *Mughal* dynasty. Education was mostly private and it was by and large in Persian. When the British came to sub-continent, education in English was also introduced as Persian was of no use to British. And this later on became the basis of two parallel educational systems. One system was led by Sir *Sayīd Aḥmad Khān* who thought that studying English is compulsory for Muslims. On the other hand *Mūlānā Muhammad Qāsim Nānūtvī* was of the opinion that only religious education can safeguard the integrity of Muslims. Sir *Sayīd* established Ali Gher College and *Mūlānā Nānūtvī* laid the foundations of *Dār Al ‘ulūm Deoband* in 1875AD and 1866AD respectively. All educational institutes established after that fell under one of these two categories and were considered religious or non-religious educational institutions⁶. And these institutions were not controlled and monitored by any government. As a result no scholarly research could take place in these institutions. *Allamah Waḥīduddīn* indicates towards this by saying that all kinds of research are only possible under the patronage of governments. When Muslim scientists did not get this patronage they entered Europe and it developed much faster⁷.

Non-religious educational institutions have further divided into three groups. The government school where the medium is mostly Urdu, the low standard private schools where the level of education is very sub-standard and lastly the high standard private schools where modern education is good but it is very expensive. One of the major problems of all these schools is that they cannot provide enough religious guidance to their students. This does not help produce individuals well equipped of required knowledge of their religions and leaves them in bewilderment. On the other hand religious institutions or *Madāris* have further divided into five various boards on sectarian grounds. Five boards of these *Madāris* are *Wifāq Al Madāris Al ‘Arabīyah*, *Wifāq Al Madāris Al Salfīyah*, *Wifāq Al Madāris Al Shi‘īyah*, *Tanzīm Al Madāris* and *Rābtah Al Madāris*. This division produces individuals who are very different to each other in terms of religious beliefs and deeds.

Another drawback of our religious education is that it disconnects its pupils from the outer world. Students go to these *Madāris* at a very early age and they never get contemporary education. And this is at times confessed by the associates of these *Madāris* themselves. An eminent scholar writes, ‘The founders of these *Madāris* should not get disappointed as their *Madāris* are not producing able and up to dated scholars⁸.

Moreover Islamic jurisprudence is the main focus of every school of thought as it strengthens their own ideology. *Qur’ān*, *Ḥadith* and *Sīrah* of the Prophet

(PBUH) are not taught the way they should have been taught. And the books of *Fiqh* which are taught were written many hundred years ago. Thus the education system of our country is divided into eight different categories.

According to a report the number of *Madāris* in Pakistan in 1947AD was 245. In the year 1988 the number reached to 2861 and in 2000 it touched 6761 and now the total number of *Madāris* in Pakistan has exceeded thirty five thousands⁹.

Islamic Ideology of Education

Islam advocates both religious and non-religious education and in fact there is no such division of education in Islam. Religious education builds the moral values of an individual and otherwise education equips him with the faculties to play his part in serving his nation in an effective and up to dated fashion. The word "علم" has occurred about 778 times in the Holy *Qur'ān* in various forms:

"وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا"¹⁰

"And say, O Allah increase me in knowledge."

Qur'ān not only advocates acquiring of knowledge but it emphasizes on comprehension and meditation of the knowledge one is getting. Allah Almighty says:

"وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا"¹¹

"And they think deeply about the creation of heavens and the earth, (saying), 'Our Lord! You have not created (all) this without purpose.'"

And again:

"فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ"¹²

"Of every troop of them, a party should only go forth, that they (who are left behind) may understand of religion."

And understanding religion means to comprehend it in a way that it can be applied to all the time to time situations and conditions. And same is the case with the *Aḥādith* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH);

"طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ"¹³

"Seeking knowledge is the duty of every Muslim."

"مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ"¹⁴

"When Allah wished good for someone, He bestows upon him the understanding of Religion."

"اللَّهُمَّ فَهِّمْنِي فِي الدِّينِ"¹⁵

"O Allah! Give him the understanding of religion."

The first saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); promote acquiring of knowledge while the last two insist on the understanding and comprehending of knowledge in its true sense which is the basis of epistemology.

Impacts of Religious Education in Pakistan

Religious education is expected to promote intellectual growth of students and make them live a peaceful and purposeful life as a well educated individual in religious and non-religious education. Unfortunately this did not happen in our country.

During President *Ayūb Khān's* regime (1958-69), this subject was made compulsory at the elementary level. Similarly, the 1973 Constitution also makes

Islāmyiāt a compulsory subject. Later in President Zia era (1977-88), the process of Islamisation was in full swing; therefore, the subject got extra significance. Its teaching was expanded even to students of professional universities. It was made a core subject in the training of doctors, nurses, engineers, the bureaucracy, armed forces etc. During the last sixty seven years, *Islāmyiāt* has been part of all the curriculums and is being taught in almost all schools across Pakistan. But its efficacy to inculcate Islamic values in students' lives, turn them into ethically conscious citizens with empathy for others and to mould them into one unified nation is yet to be seen¹⁶.

Nobody denies the importance of *Islāmyiāt*; rather, it is key to social transformation. It can be a base for building strong ethical and civic foundations for individuals alongside a healthy, progressive society. It should aim at promoting emotional, social and intellectual development through Islamic perspectives. But unfortunately, the concepts taught in *Islāmyiāt* courses are mostly learnt only to be regurgitated in examinations. True and honest teaching of *Islāmyiāt* can change an ordinary person into a better human being and subsequently create a peaceful society. However, this depends upon well-trained, well-versed and well-equipped subject teachers with a passionate sense of creating a God-fearing society. The subject's contents and pedagogy need to be in line with our national requirements¹⁷.

Analytical Study of the Textbooks of Islāmyiāt – Grade One to Bachelors Levels

Islamic studies books of federal board from Grade One to Bachelor level were analyzed in order to find out the course contents of Islamic studies taught at all these levels. Following lines contain a through detail of the contents of the religious education given from Grade one to Bachelors and analysis of these contents at the end.

Grade One

Oneness of Allah, Two *Surahs* from the Holy *Qur'ān*, Five prayers, our religion, Islamic Information.

Grade Two

Quranic prayers, Two *Surahs* from the Holy *Qur'ān*, Eid Prayers, Good Manners, Islamic Information.

Grade Three

Recognition of Arabic Words, Three *Surahs* from the Holy *Qur'ān*, Beliefs and Worships, *Sīrah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Good Manners and Ethics, Prophet Ibrahim Alay Salam, Abu Bakr R.A.

Grade Four

Five *Surahs* from the Holy *Qur'ān*, *Sīrah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Beliefs and Worships, Good Manners and Ethics, Prophet Musa Alay Salam, Omar R.A.

Grade Five

Memorization of Duas, Beliefs and Worship, *Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH), Manners and Ethics, Prophet Isa Alay Salam, Uthman R.A, Khalid bin Walid R.A.

Grade Six

Quranic Duas, Mosque, Funeral Prayers, *Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH), Rights of Fellow Beings, Honesty, Respect for Teachers Nuh Alay Salam, *Khadījah* R.A, 'Abdul Raḥmān bin 'ūf R.A.

Grade Seven

Quranic *Surahs*, Prophethood, *Zakāt*, *Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH), Extravagance, Hypocrisy, Generosity, Moderation, Islam and Environment, Lawful Earning, Hard Work, Musa Alay Salam, *Zyd bin Hārithah* R.A.

Grade Eight - Ten

Selected Text from the Holy Qur'ān

Sūrah Al Anfāl, *Sūrah Al Al Aḥzāb*, *Sūrah Al Mumtaḥinah*.

Selected Aḥādīth

Knowledge, *Durūd*, Faith, Kindness, Bribery, Prayer, Friday Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage, *Jihād*, Individual responsibility.

Subjective Study

Qur'ān, Love for Allah, Knowledge, *Zakāt*, Cleanliness, Patience, Thanksgiving, Family Life, Migration and *Jihād*, Rights of Fellow Beings, Equality, Rights of Women.

Grade 11-12

Basic Doctrines

Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, Resurrection.

Subjective Study

Islamic Identity, Rites of Islam, Cleanliness, Ablution, Dry Ablution, Prayer, *Tahajud*, Friday Prayer, Eid Prayers, Funerals, *Zakāt*, Fasting, Hajj, *Jihād*, Love for Allah and Prophet, Rights of Others, Parents, Children, Rights of Husband and Wife, Status of Woman, Rights of Relatives, Rights of Teachers, Rights of Neighbors, Non-Muslims, Abiding by Promise, Honesty, Introduction to Quranic sciences.

Grade BA Compulsory (English)

- Introduction to Quranic Studies
- *Sīrah* of Holy Prophet (SAW) I
- Introduction to Sunnah
- Selected Study from Text of *Ḥadīth*
- Introduction to Islamic Law & Jurisprudence
- Islamic Culture & Civilization
- Islam & Science
- Islamic Economic System
- Political System of Islam
- Islamic History
- Social System of Islam

BA Compulsory (Urdu)

1. **Chapter:** Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, Resurrection.
2. **Chapter:** Worships; Few Verses are to be taught
3. **Chapter:** Enjoining Good and Forbidding Bad: Few Verses are to be taught.
4. **Chapter:** Unity of *Ummah* Few Verses are to be taught.
5. **Chapter:** Lawful Earnings
6. **Chapter:** Rights of Human beings
7. **Chapter:** Rights of Women
8. **Chapter:** Relation with Non Muslims

A thorough analysis of the contents of these books reveals that these contents do not provide or highlight the need of educational basis for the study of religion. Moreover whatever is taught in the name of religious education does not contribute towards the intellectual growth of individuals and no reflection of this religious education is seen in the larger image of the society. Moreover these contents are not able to create a linkage between religion and society. The question of the possibilities of sidelining the religious education would add to the complications as religion is a very sensitive issue in our country. The caliber of the teachers of religious education and lack of professional trainings are also one of the main reasons of such outcomes of religious education in Pakistan.

Another drawback of the system of our religious education is that it focuses only on one religion. Non-Muslims are also bound to study Islamic studies in most of the cases as it is a compulsory subject. Secondly Muslims are not taught about other religions and about the status and the rights on non-Muslims living in Pakistan. The Islamic studies course content from grade one to grade fourteen has only two topics related to non-Muslims i.e. the relations with non-Muslims and the rights of non-Muslims. Grade 12 book has the following details under the heading of Rights of Non-Muslims; Security of Honor and Property, Legal Equality, Freedom of Religious Beliefs, Individual Freedom, Financial Freedom, Jobs (Except few places they can take any position). These contents clearly indicate that there is nothing in terms of current issues of our society such as blasphemy law etc.

Grade fourteen book has only four pages with the title of relations with non-Muslims and it has the following verse of the Holy *Qur'ān*:

"وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِئْتَةً وَتَكُونَ الدِّينَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ"¹⁸

"And find them until there is no Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism) and the religion will all be for Allah."

The following two verses which are the basis of Muslim and non-Muslims relationship have not been mentioned anywhere in the contents of religious education of our country.

"قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا"¹⁹

"Say (O Muhammad! O people of the Scripture; come to the word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him."

And:

"وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ"²⁰

"And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge."

Survey

A survey was specifically conducted on the impacts of religious education in the University of Haripur, KPK. Three hundred and twenty five people answered five questions. The participants were under graduate, graduate and post graduate students. The asked questions and their answers are as follow;

1. Does the religious education in our country promote the spiritual and moral values of Islam in the students?

297 Yes, 16 No, 12 Don't Know

2. Do the course contents of religious education eliminate sectarianism in our country?
186 Yes, 112 No, 27 Don't Know
3. Is the religious education we get opening the new doors of knowledge and research?
184 Yes, No 52, 89 Don't Know
4. Will the religious education you have help you succeed here and here after?
120 Yes, 140 No, 65 Don't Know
5. Are you satisfied with the educational standards of Pakistan? 183 Yes, 97 No, 45 Don't Know

Majority of the participants are of the opinion that religious education of our country promotes the spiritual and moral values of Islam in the students, but as the matter of fact it is not seen anywhere. People expect that religious education will address the issue of sectarianism, but that is not happening at the moment. It can be respect and love for the religion that majority of the people think that religious education which we get opens the gates of research, but we cannot see that happening. When it comes to the question of having enough religious education, according to the findings of the survey, people are not clear on this as well. The mindset of the people and the impacts of our education system are reflected in the answer of the last question, where majority of the people say that they are fully satisfied with the educational standards of their county.

Findings

1. The system of religious education in our country does not promote the spiritual and moral values of Islam.
2. It does not address the issues of sectarianism, rather it promotes it.
3. Religious education is not able to address the modern day issues and bridge the gaps.
4. Religious education in our country is not able to set higher standards of learning and research.
5. The system of religious education lacks the approach of addressing the global issues with the help of *Ijtihād*.

Recommendations

1. Measures should be adopted to eliminate the division of religious and non-religious education.
2. Difference among the curriculum of various *Wifāq* may be removed and there should be only one curriculum.
3. There should be one curriculum from grade one to twelve in all formats of education in our country.
4. Social sciences should be taught in Urdu and natural sciences may be taught in English
5. Studying *Qur'ān* with translation must be mandatory for everyone
6. The need for religious education, its standards and objectives must be clear and apparent.

7. The requirements of state and civil society must be considered while designing the curriculums of religious education.
8. All educational activities whether religious or non-religious must be brought under the umbrella of the state.
9. Every child should be given basic education till grade 12 and he should be free to decide about his future.
10. Teachers of religious education must be given professional modern trainings.

Conclusion

Religious education provides guidance for each and every walk of life. But this will only happen when we know that what content is suitable for various standards and age groups. Education is a gradual and step by step process and the same applies to religious education. Keeping the spiritual affiliation away while designing the curriculums of religious education can bring much better results. The religious upbringing and development of our students are very obvious. These kids when grow up, carry the same religious thoughts which they get from their schooling and apply them in the society they live in. Reforms in the religious education of our country are the need of the time and require special attention.

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