

Islamization of Education at School level in Pakistan and its Ramifications: A Critical Understanding

Suaihiampou Kamei*

Research Scholar, Department of Defence and National Securities Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

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“There is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children and the way in which we bring them up as future citizens of Pakistan”

Fazl-ur-Rehman

Abstract

Islamic ideology permeating the entire education system of Pakistan is one of the serious issues confronting the state of Pakistan, with an increasing emphasis on religion with lesser rooms for pluralism and secularism. The muddle was brought about as the result of the various policy initiatives undertaken by the various governments of Pakistan since the 1960s. This paper highlights the policy provision, constitutional and legal provision for the Islamization of education and its ramifications in Pakistan. It also evaluates various textbooks and curricula of various Pakistani school boards. Specifically, this study reveals that the focus of the Pakistani education system is not to produce a global citizen with the ability to think rationally and logically but to produce a practising Muslim. The paper concludes that education in Pakistan promotes hatred, insensitivity towards the religious diversity of the nation; it also incites to militancy and violence, intolerance, and discrimination towards fellow citizens, and glorify war.

Keywords: Islamization of education, religion, Quran, education system in Pakistan, education policy, the ministry of education, Muslim.

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INTRODUCTION

Religion is perhaps the most significant issue impacting education in Pakistan. Islam is the religion of the state. Islamic education has been compulsory for Muslim students in Pakistan since the 1950s. The nation enjoyed a period of relative secularism (Roof, 2015, p. 43). Mohammed Ali Jinnah in the nation's constituent assembly in 1947 stated, "...you belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State" (Leirvik, 2008). Most importantly, Article 22(1) of the Constitution of Pakistan, states, "No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own" (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). However, since the 1970s there is increasing

religious fundamentalism. The National Education Policy of 1998-2010 had the stated objective of making Islamic studies the code of life incorporated in all education (Hosena et al., 2011,). Talbani (1996) stated that:

"Islamization can be seen as a movement to make Islam a relevant source of power and social control. Clifford Geertz viewed the movement as an effort to make Islam a universal, in theory, standardized and essentially unchangeable and usually well-integrated system of ritual and beliefs... not merely as a religion but as a complete and comprehensive way of life" (p. 14).

Education in this context plays a pivotal role in reproducing Islamic culture and promoting the ideological goals of Islamization. The transformation of social discourse sought by Islamization would

mean fundamental changes in the power structure and social controls that legitimize and regulate knowledge and meaning in society. (Talbani, 1996) Society discourse mediates its power and control through institutions and elites who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980, p. 131) A regime uses political, economic, and social apparatuses to control and dominate. Truth is established through the discourse of power that is relayed, preserved, and legitimized. This involves a struggle involving political debate and social confrontation- an ideological struggle (Foucault, 1980, p. 132). Hence, the creation of educational or social institutions is part of the power struggle to establish, expand, and sustain a particular notion of truth through control over the power of legitimacy. Foucault states that truth should be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements (Foucault, 1980, p. 33). Islamization has profound implications for education systems, as educational sites are centrally involved in the propagation, selective dissemination and social appropriation of discourses (Ball, 2013, p. 3)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Islam, the Quran is considered the core of knowledge. It is the power or force to legitimize, produce and operationalize truth in society (Nasr, 1981, p. 49). Hence the Quran believed to be divine, is the primary source of knowledge. Its transcendent divine nature guards it against human interpolation. According to this belief, the Quran contained everything in the way of knowledge needed to ensure salvation, plus the essentials in the fields of belief and rules of behaviour (UNESCO, 1981, p.40)

Traditionalists believe that the Quran is the source of perennial knowledge and provides guidance for all matters concerning human life. Change of time and place cannot affect nor invalidate the Quranic injunctions. However, its power of legitimacy is mediated through people who possess control over its interpretation. In other words, political power lies in the control of religious interpretation and the discourse that the religious group uses to exert such control (Talbani, 1996, p. 56). After the birth of Pakistan in 1947, most of the traditional madaris were replicated and many ulama from the region migrated there. Fundamentalists saw the nation as an Islamic state where Islamic religious law (sharia) should be implemented. The early struggle was at the constitutional level, where Islam was accepted as the religion of the state and sovereignty was attributed to God. The objective resolution of 1949 and the principles of state policy explicitly mentioned knowledge of the Quran and Islamiyat as essential for Muslims (Rosenthal, 2009, p. 349). In addition, the first all Pakistan education conference held at Karachi in 1947 proposed that the educational system should be inspired by Islamic ideology (Shahid, 1985, p. 10).

The members of Pakistan's initial government were mostly Muslim educated in the West. However, because of the emphasized values such as social justice, democracy, equity, and individualism that were Western in character and had never been part of traditional Muslim societies, Islam came to be interpreted in more liberal terms. To overcome the conflict between the traditionalists and modernists, the first government of independent Pakistan suggested, as a compromise, that a course on Islamic religion and history be established for all grade levels. At the tertiary level departments of Islamic studies were proposed to be set up. (Foreign Areas Studies Division, 1965, p.203)

However, the ambiguity in the objectives resolution of 1949 about the definition and role of Islam made the religion a legitimate part of Pakistan's political discourse. The ulama who had opposed the very idea of Pakistan, manipulated the Islamic clause to change the nation into a theocracy its modernist leadership had never envisioned (Talbani, 1996, p. 62) In the 1959 report of the commission on education, Pakistan's president Ayub Khan stated that, there was a need for reorganization and reorientation of the existing educational system so that a national system could evolve which would better reflect our spiritual, moral and cultural values (Ministry of Education, 1961) The report of the commission on national education also emphasized the inculcation of values such as universal brotherhood, tolerance, self-sacrifice, social services, truth, justice, and so on. Religious education was a part of the curriculum from the first to eighth grades. The teaching of religion was intended to emphasize justice, equality among individuals, and the importance of practical goodness, piety, and virtue (Ministry of Education, 1961). In 1977 under the military dictator General Mohammad Zia ul Haq the government devised an education policy aiming to establish a new discourse and to socialize students into the official ideology of the state and of the religion of Islam (Geijbels, 1979, p. 41). As stated in the national education policy and implementation of 1979 the primary aim of education was to foster in students a loyalty to Islam, a sense of being a dutiful citizen of the Pakistani nation as a part of universal ummah (Muslim community) with a full knowledge of the Pakistani movement, its ideology implications based on the precepts of Quran and Sunnah (Dani, 1986, p. 64). Immediate measures taken by the government included the design of new syllabi and the writing of new textbooks. Other steps included the enforcement of women wearing the headscarf in educational institutions, the organization of congregational afternoon prayers during school hours, compulsory teaching of Arabic as a second language, reading of the Quran as a matriculation requirement, the use of religious knowledge for selecting teachers at all levels of education, and the revision of conventional subjects to emphasize Islamic values. (Hoodbhoy & Nayyar, 1958, p. 164)

At that time it was essential to specify the role of the Islam in curriculum and instruction. Since Pakistan came into being as a homeland of Muslim Indians the sentiments towards the position of Islam in education are always high. The same question remained central to this date. (Lingard & Ali, 2009)

Policy Provisions for Islamization of Education in Pakistan

In 1947 an educational conference was organized by the government to layout fundamental guidelines for the future educational policies. While addressing the conference Fazlur Rahman, the then education minister and chairman of the conference said, "I consider it of vital importance that our education system should be animated and guided by these principles" While accentuating on the essence for education system of Pakistan he further restated that: "Our educational policy should be according to modern requirements and also reflects those ideas which are the real base of the creation of Pakistan. We will have to change Pakistan into that democratic state, which citizens have the physical, intellectual and moral qualities to lay a good life and for this purposes, we will have to get benefits from Islamic values and civilization. Our educational system will have to get guideline from Islamic principles. It is only Islam in throughout the school of thoughts which presents a complete code of human sympathy and unity. Without moral and spiritual training scientific progress can be harmful to humanity." (MIED, 1983)

In 1959 a commission was constituted to reform the existing system of education in the country. The report of the National Commission on Education stated that; "Our educational system must have to play an important role in protecting those theories by which Pakistan came into being. Struggle for Pakistan was actually shaping a path for the safety of the Islamic way of life. And, the people of Indo-Pak demanded a separate country only for living their lives freely according to the Islamic values" (Commission on National Education, 1961). Therefore, the commission suggested that measures should be adopted to educate the citizens in such a way that Islamic values and norms may be inculcated among them to enable them to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam. Moreover, the commission stressed upon enhancing religious education through schooling. It was suggested that the religious education should be provided in three stages i.e. compulsory, optional and research-based (Commission on National Education, 1961). In the same way, it was aimed to include Quran (Nazira and Translation), Seerat-Un-Nabi, Muslim history and literature in the curriculum for the elementary and middle-level students. For rest of the levels, Islamic Studies was proposed as optional subject (Faiz et al., 2012.) In 1969 proposals for new education policy were sought from the experts as well as from the

public. These proposals and subsequent education policy also addressed the issue of Islamization of education in the state. It was affirmed that Islamic studies will be made compulsory up to secondary level and research in this field will be encouraged at the university level. (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, 1969) Similarly, the education policy 1972 introduced revolutionary measures to Islamize the education. The policy recommended that Islamic values and beliefs should be part of the entire curriculum instead of teaching Islamic Studies as a compulsory subject. Moreover, the policy recommended shaping the education system according to "our religion and by remaining the great traditions of our civilization." (Ministry of Education., 1972) Significant contribution for Islamization of education in Pakistan was made through education policy 1979. The policy states that "it is the need of the day that we prepare clear Islamic aims of education and the method of their achievement should be done according to the theory of Pakistan" (Ministry of Education., 1979). According to the National education policy and implementation programme 1979, the objectives of education were to create sense of belongingness among the students that they are the members of the Islamic world as well as Pakistan, and also to bring up and groom them according to Quran and Hadith so that they would become sincere and faithful Muslims. To achieve these above stated objectives the policy suggested a number of innovative measures such as inclusions of Islamiyat as a compulsory subject at all levels of academic, technical and professional institutions, teaching of Arabic in schools and colleges, setting up of faculty of Shariah in Quaid-e-Azam University, changing of curricula and textbooks according to the tenets of Islam and also setting of 5000 mosque schools and giving important status and recognizing to all religious institutions like madrasa, Maktabs and Darul-Ulooms as other formal educational institutions (Ministry of Education, 1979).

In the continuum of the state efforts for making the system of education in accordance with the teachings of Islam the education policy 1992 again focused upon the issue. The policy affirmed and accepted that the actual results could not be achieved by only Islamizing the education. This policy suggests the program by which students could understand the real message of Islam and prepare them to adopt modern and scientific needs in perspective of Islam (Ministry of Education, 1992). Another education policy was presented by the government in 1998. This policy also focused on the reforms in the education system and to make the curricula and textbooks in line with Islamic teaching. Points of 1998 education policy which is worth mentioning are introduction of Quran with translation from class 6th to Class 12th, inclusion of the basic teachings of the Quran in all courses of studies, reprinting and redistribution of rare and valuable books on Islam among Deeni Madaris for

the purpose of research and references, last but not the least revising the curriculum and textbooks of all the subjects in order to expunge any educational material which is contradictory to the teaching and the belief of Islam and to incorporate enough material on Quran and Islamic teachings (Ministry of Education, 1998).

In the education policy of 2009, efforts have been made to improve the education system of the country and making it compatible with the rest of the world without compromising upon the Islamic thoughts and values. The policy focused on reforming the system by "infusing Islamic and religious teachings in the curriculum, wherever appropriate" (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Islamization of Education in Pakistan

In addition to the declaration made in the Objectives Resolution, Article 31 of the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan pertaining to the Islamic way of life reiterates:

- Steps shall be taken to enable the Muslims of Pakistan, individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam and to provide facilities whereby they may be enabled to understand the meaning of life according to the Holy Quran and Sunnah;
- The state shall endeavour, as respects the Muslims of Pakistan, to make the teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiyat compulsory, to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic language and to secure correct and exact printing and publishing of the Holy Quran and to promote unity and observance of Islamic moral standards (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012, p. 17).

The Education Policy (1972-80) decided to continue with the previous theoretical perspectives and declared that the study of Islamiyat will be compulsory for Muslim students up to class X. Steps will be taken to ensure that the curricula and textbooks for all stages do not contain anything repugnant to, or inconsistent with, the cultural and ethical values of Islam (Ministry of Education, 1972).

The National Education Policy and Implementation Program (1979) announced that the aim of education would be "to foster in the hearts and minds of the students a deep and abiding loyalty to Islam" and, accordingly undertook to review the entire curricula to ensure adequate content on Islam and ideology of Pakistan, in addition to teaching of Arabic at Middle level and making teaching of Islamiyat and Pakistan studies as compulsory subjects up to undergraduate

level. Mosque schools and Maktab schools were required to teach Nazira Quran while other students were required to complete Nazira Quran before appearing for Secondary School Examination. (Ministry of Education, 1979). Education Policies of 1992 and 1998-2010 also continued with the same policy regarding Islamic Religious education. Under Education Policy 1992, the teaching of Nazira Quran was retained as the compulsory component of school education. However, meaning and the detailed commentary of selected verses of the Holy Quran was emphasized at Secondary and Higher Secondary level (Ministry of Education, 1992). Education Policy 1998-2010 reaffirmed its commitment to the ideological basis of the country in the following words:

- An ideology of Islam forms the genesis of the state of Pakistan. The country cannot survive and advance without placing the entire system of education on a sound Islamic Foundation.
- The teaching of Nazira Quran was continued as compulsory from grade 1 to grade VIII, while translation and explanation of selected verses from the Holy Quran were offered at Secondary and Higher Secondary level (Ministry of education, 1998).

The Education Policy 2009 also provided as follows:

- The objectives of teaching Islamiyat shall be to ensure that all Muslim children are provided opportunities to learn and apply the fundamental principles of Islam in their lives with the purpose of reformation and development of society on the principles of the Quran and Sunnah.
- Islamiyat shall be taught as a compulsory subject from Grade I to Grade XII, extending up to graduation level in all general and professional institutions (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Now in the spirit of 18th Amendment in the Constitution, it is the responsibility of all provinces/areas governments to promote national cohesion and harmony through the development of Islamic Education in our education system with mutual understanding as per practice in the past (Haidar & Pakistan, 2010).

The Ramifications of Islamization of Education

The three major education policies adopted in Pakistan under three different regimes of Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul Haq have successively, adversely affected, pulled apart the fabric of education of the country. Ayub Khan sowed the seed of Islamization followed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto which

laid the foundation whereas Zia ul Haq built the enterprise of Islamizing entire Pakistan. The ramifications of Islamization of education are manifested in the curriculum of the existing education system and the nature of education being imparted to the students in the country. For instance, Sindh textbook board class 9th Physics has a section in chapter 1 namely section 1.3 and section 1.4 with a heading teaching of Islam and science, and contribution of Muslim and Pakistani scientists. Class 9th Biology textbook of the same board also has a similar section with a heading Quran teaching on animals and plant life with a subtheme Quran and Biology in chapter 1 of the Class 9th (Sindh Board, 2012a). It did not stop there because we do find the similar Islamic section in almost every science textbook of different school boards. Such as Class 9th Physics (Sindh Board, 2012d), Class 9th Biology, Class 11th Physics (Sindh Board, 2012c), Class 9th General Science, (Sindh Board, 2012b) and Class 9th Biology (Balochistan Board, 2012a), Class 9th Physics (Balochistan Board, 2012b) and Class 9-10 General Science, (Punjab Board, 2012), Class 9-10 General Science (Federal Board, 2012), Class 9th Biology; Class 9-10 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board, 2012b) General Science (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board, 2012a).

These above-listed science textbooks of different boards contain an Islamic section on the very first chapter of each textbook with different headings such as Quran and Biology, the teaching of Islam and science etc. Last but not the least the textbooks of Urdu, Social Studies/Pakistan Studies and English are filled with distorted facts and there is not a single positive reference to any non-Islamic character (Awan, 2012, p. 50). And when we glance through these textbooks of Urdu, Social Studies and English four important points emerge prominently as the constituting bulk of the curricula and textbooks of these three compulsory subjects. Firstly, Pakistan is for Muslims alone. Secondly, Islamic teachings, including a compulsory reading and memorization of the Quran, are to be included in all the subjects, hence to be forcibly taught to all the students, irrespective of their religion. Thirdly, the ideology of Pakistan is to be internalized as faith and hatred towards Hindus in Pakistan and India, in general, be created. Fourthly, students are to be urged to take the path of Jihad and Shahadat. For instance, for the students of class IV and V, the Urdu curriculum requires that a feeling is created among students that they are the members of a Muslim nation. Therefore, in accordance with the Islamic tradition, they have to be truthful, honest, patriotic and life-sacrificing mujahids (*janbaz mujahids*) (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p. 4). It is worth mentioning here that these textbooks of Urdu in Punjab and Federal region also have Islamic content in the following proportion: Class I, 4 out of 25 lessons, Class II, 8 out of 33 lessons, Class III, 22 out of 44 lessons, Class IV, 10 out of 45 lessons, Class V, 7 out of 34 lessons, Class VI, 14 out of 46 lessons, Class VII, 16 out of 53 lessons, Class VIII, 15 out of 46 lessons, Class IX-X, 10 out of 68 lessons. (Nayyar & Salim, 2003) On analyzing the prescribed textbook of this school board it reveals a very disturbing picture. And one could draw the conclusion that the education imparted to the students in Pakistan is replete with the tenets of Islam. An analysis of such content reveals certain precepts upon which Pakistan's national curriculum is prepared.

All positive things are found only in Muslim culture. Some Muslim sects diverge from the path of Islam and are therefore condemnable. Religion and nationalism are employed in the cause of war against all 'others', whether Muslim or non-Muslim others. Islamic/Muslim history is taught in a way that the easily impressionable minds of children can be moulded on extremist lines. The content about science & technology, modernity, peace, and tolerance is minimized while war and jihad (only in the limited sense of armed struggle) are glorified. Narrow-mindedness is inculcated by ignoring the good qualities of the rest of the world and thus militant nationalism is ingrained in the minds of the young (Awan, 2012, p. 50).

In the period before the 1970s the government-approved curriculum and textbooks of Pakistan did not contain any material which incites hatred, however, the present textbooks propagate the notion which is schismatic as a result fostered social evil (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). These textbooks proclaim that "All of us should receive military training and be prepared to fight the enemy" (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). And these textbooks contain "inaccuracies of fact and omissions that serve to substantially distort the nature and significance of actual events in our history" (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). Moreover, textbooks are found to be insensitivity towards the religious diversity of the nation. These incite to militancy and violence, encourage prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination towards fellow citizens, and glorify of war. The National Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum released in 2002 emphasizes the objective: "To nurture in children a sense of Islamic identity and pride in being Pakistani" (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). Urdu curriculum requires teachers to convince students that they are the members of a Muslim nation. Pakistani school textbooks promote the idea that Hindus caused the East-West breakup of the nation of Pakistan, terrorized Muslims throughout the region, remains a threat to both Muslims and Pakistan, and have committed atrocities against Muslims (Nayyar & Salim, 2003). In 2007, the Pakistani government announced an intention to change the school curriculum so that "textbooks used across the country will be free from biases against non-Muslim groups" (Leirvik, 2008). Clifford Geertz

noted the effort made in many Islamic majority countries to make Islam "a universal... and essentially unchangeable and usually well-integrated system of rituals and beliefs ... not nearly as a religion but a complete and comprehensive way of life". This is the case for Pakistan in recent years, and today Pakistani schools do not promote concepts such as human rights. On the other, teachers utilize the basic tenets of Islam to explain acceptable codes of conduct. Thus, religious education and civics education in Pakistan have become inherently linked. Rather than creating democratic citizens, the focus has been on developing practising Muslims (Leirvik, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The scale in which schools are now perfused by a fundamentalist and fanatical form of Islam is frightening because it promotes bigotry and xenophobia. Since the 1970s, religion has permeated the entire education system, and there has been an ever-increasing focus on religion with less tolerance for pluralism and secularism. Indeed, contemporary educational documents in Pakistan focus on the Islamic training of youth (Talvani, 1996) The highest priority is given to the revision of the curricula with a view to reorganizing the entire content around Islamic thought and giving education an ideological orientation so that Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation, and helps them with the necessary conviction and ability to refashion society according to Islamic tenets (Hosena et al., 2011). In fact the purpose of school is not to be an Islamic ideological orientation center rather it should be a place where education is imparted, a young mind is groomed which means not just the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think rationally, critically and logically, in other words nurturing and fostering the students and guide them so that the student is capable of thinking logically, rationally and critically. Sadly, the existing education system in Pakistan neither equips the student for rational thinking nor logical analysis but rather it is propagating a narrative which is entirely Islamic and has an adverse effect on the thought process of its student. The very textbooks they use are filled with Islamic teachings and thoughts apart from the Islamiyat studies as a separate subject that is a compulsory subject for every Muslim student in school. The education system does not promote social change (Bray, 1983) and also failed to incorporate democratic values into education (Nazir, 2010) but rather the education system in Pakistan promotes violence, intolerance and germinating hatreds especially against India and Hindus since the textbooks are infested with contents which incite aversion and making enemy images. Not only that the textbooks also glorify wars and the use of force, but also add incitement to militancy and violence and insensitivity to the actually existing religious diversity of the nation. The present curricula and textbooks openly eulogize Jihad and Shahadat (Ministry of

Education, 2002b, p. 34) and encourage students to become Mujahids and martyrs. This is a dreadful trend which will eventually lead to a disastrous Pakistan in the future. Hopefully, Pakistan could avoid such infernal future if the government dares to undertake a massive curriculum reforms with the objective to create a tolerant, peace-loving and secular global citizen by replacing the Islamic based curriculum with the international level curriculum that incorporates democratic values, secularism and tolerance.

The question arises will Pakistan ever undertake steps to rectify the existing curriculum? This is a question that the state of Pakistan itself has to answer because the path it treads will eventually decide the fate of its children. It is high time that it sobers up from the Islamic elixir that it has consumed for many decades. If one were to ask why issues like terrorism, sectarian violence, religious intolerance and hatred among various ethnic groups emerged as major reasons for instability in Pakistan. Then the answer will be traced back to the schools where the young minds have been poisoned for many years by an education where the young students are made to see and learn everything through the prism of Islam. So the education that we impart to our children in the schools and the way in which we bring them up is vital for a future citizen of a country. Since the kind of education, nurturing and guidance the children receive at the young age will mould and shape their perception and thought process it will, in turn, determine what kind of person they will become. Fazl-ur-Rehman, the then minister of education, while addressing the congregation as the chairman of the first education conference said, "There is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children and the way in which we bring them up as future citizens of Pakistan" (MIED, 1983). Fazl-ur-Rehman has rightly pointed out 70 years ago the utmost importance of the type of education we impart to our children and the way we bring them up. And if one had to look back at the past one would draw the conclusion that the hellish situation in Pakistan went through the decades is mainly because of the type of education which Pakistan adopted to impart to its children and the way in which it brought them up. Pakistan is an Islamic state where there is no tolerance for even other sects of Islam. Practically it is a failed state, a failed democracy which the founding leaders of Pakistan had never envisioned.

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