

TEACHING OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AS A SUBJECT IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND MADARIS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

In Pakistan it is mandatory for all Muslim students up to Secondary school level to study Islamic Studies as a compulsory subject. In the government sector and private sector secondary schools provide education to the general youth of the country to perform services in all fields of life. Islamic Studies to the masses is also main component of the syllabi of the Islamic religious schools or Madaris in the country. These Islamic religious schools or Madaris mostly provide to the youth from poor class and those learning to be Islamic clerics. In the paper Education Policy of Pakistan with reference to Islamic Education will be discussed the education policy of the country clearly mentions that Education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah and to educate and train them as a true practicing Muslim. There are two main education systems running parallel in the country modern education system and religious education. The education policy of the country assures to evolve an integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni Madaris and modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education. In the primary education system Nazira Qur'an is introduced as a compulsory subject from grade I to VIII while at secondary level translation of the selected verses from the Holy Qur'an is also offered.

The paper will further discusses the teaching methodology regarding teaching of Islamic Studies, criteria for selection of Islamic Studies teachers, and their qualification. The paper will further discuss the course contents of Islamic Studies text books teaching in the

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government secondary schools and their comparison with the courses of other religious schools or Madaris.

KEY WORDS:

Islamic Studies, Islamic Education, System of Education, Secondary Schools, Madaris or Madrasas, Pakistani educational system, Quranic education, knowledge, objectives of education, curriculum, teaching methodology, education, Masjid Schools.

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that Pakistan is an ideological state, hence, due preference has always been given to such recommendations that help strengthen the Islamic values of education. In addition to the recommendations contained in this study those suggestions that flash the view-points of individuals and organizations of Pakistan will also be incorporated in the study and hopefully this will provide a short moment of thinking to the state officials and educationists both. The paper will also be interesting and helpful to the outside world to know the steps taken by the governments time to time regarding teaching of Islamic Studies as a compulsory subject in the country.

PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION POLICY

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, five Educational Policy Reports have been produced. These are:-

- (1) Educational Conference, 1947.
- (2) Commission on National Education, 1959.
- (3) New Educational Policy, 1969.
- (4) National Education Policy, 1972 and
- (5) Educational Policy, 1978
- (6) National education Policy 1998-2010.

In the silent features of the Pakistan's Education Policy 1998-2010 the aim and objectives about teaching of Islamic Education clearly mentions that "Education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah and to educate and train them as a true practicing Muslim. To evolve an integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni Madaris and

modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education. Nazira Qur'an will be introduced as a compulsory component from grade I-VIII while at secondary level translation of the selected verses from the Holy Qur'an will be offered. (**Pakistan's National Education Policy:1998-2010:2**)

According to the national education policy of the country Education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah and to educate and train them as a true practicing Muslim. To evolve an integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni Madaris and modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education. Nazira Qur'an is introduced as a compulsory component from grade I-VIII, while at secondary level translation of the selected verses from the Holy Qur'an are also being offered.

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Secondary education or secondary school education in Pakistan commence from class 9th. Upon completion of class 10th, students are expected to take a standardized exam taken by a Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE). After successful completion of this examination, the students are awarded a Secondary School Certificate locally known as 'matriculation certificate' or 'matric' later on students eligible for entrance to a college and complete grades 11 and 12 or inter classes. Upon completion of grade 12, they again take an exam test which is also administered by the regional boards. Upon successful completion of this examination, students are awarded the Higher Secondary School Certificate or HSC. This level of education is also known as F.A/ F.Sc. or 'intermediate'. During these classes students have choice to choose pre-medical, pre-engineering, computer science, social sciences, commerce etc.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS A SUBJECT

A Historical Study of the Determinants and Evolution of the Islamic System of Education relates to the analysis of factors that have led and still contain the ingredients for building a strong system of education in Pakistan. Islam, as a religion, contrasts with the European concept of a religion. It encompasses the totality of Muslim life that draws its inspiration from the Quran and Sunnah. This is a wide conceptual difference between the two

approaches – the one apparently individualistic and the other socialistic. In order to bring it home to the modern mind, Islam, as such, with all its radiations, through its fundamental sources, on the Islamic philosophy of life that vindicates the socio-economic, political, philosophical and ethical foundations, has been discussed in detail. Since, these aspects of life are fully expressed in the ideology of Pakistan which still continues to remain a living force in our country, today, this discussion would firm up the base on which the edifice of Islamic Education on stands. **(Tirmizi:258)**

The relationship between the ideology of Pakistan and Islam as a polity has been precisely expounded so that the modern mind may well understand the influence of Islamic philosophy of life that provides firm roots for developing a viable system of education in Pakistan. It is a chain development descending down as blending of revelational and rational knowledge that tightens together these determinants to promote and organize the education norm that bears its own credibility. It endears a growing entirety of its own, distlinguishable from other concepts.

Islamic concept of knowledge, objectives of education, curriculum, teaching methodology, evaluation, teacher-student relationship, education travels, women education and the role of Masjid (mosque) are a queer pronged manifestation of these determinants, spotted and seen in every Muslim society. The rationale behind the organizing and analyzing of these determinants is to evoke and foster scores of multifarious researches in multiple ways. This may eventually provide a norm-base to testify the think-tank of the educators and the active role of the educational institutions. **(Tirmizi: 258)**

ISLAMIC VALUES AND THE SUBJECT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AT SECONDARY LEVEL

Education in Pakistan remains within the public sector at all levels even though elite institutions are much more likely to be found within the private sector. The curriculum for the large number of public sector schools is given final approval by the Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education. The textbooks prepared by the provincial textbook boards follow the guidelines given by the Curriculum Wing repeatedly emphasize the need to inculcate a narrowly defined set of Islamic Values.

The emphasis on Islamic studies became much more pronounced after General Zia Ul Haq's coup in 1977. Islamiyat had been a compulsory subject from Class I up to Class X but it was now made compulsory up to B.A/B.SC (Bachelor of Arts/Science degree equivalent to 14 years of schooling). But it is not required at the M.A. stage, but when students appear in professional examinations such as MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of surgery) or CSS (competitive examinations for the Federal civil services) they again have to study Islamiyat as a separate subject and can qualify only if they pass in this exam as well. Under General Zia, from Class VI to Class VIII, it was made compulsory for students of all religions to learn Arabic. The justification was to enable Muslim students to acquire a better comprehension of Quraanic teachings. Previously, Arabic had been an optional subject. During the same period, a section of the Islamiyat syllabus was separated for Sunnis and Shias at the level of Class IX and X. Separate books were introduced for students of the two sects but a common book was re-introduced in 1999. However, they attempt distinct sections of the examination paper. **(Faizi: 2010:98)**

From Class I to Class VIII the subject of Diniyat (Religious Studies) was taught in government schools. But, in 1997, the subject of Islamiyat (Islamic Studies) was introduced. The former subject included space for an introduction of other religions, though in practice this does not appear to have been implemented on any significant scale in the classrooms. For students of persuasions other than Islam, there are few practicable options to studying Islamiyat. In Class VIII, there is special paper civics for non-Muslims, for which students of minority communities may appear. However, schools seldom have any provisions for the teaching of this subject. In 1987, a book on ethics to be used by minority communities' students was produced by the Sindh Textbook Board and subsequently printed by the Punjab Textbook Board, as well. Moreover, it is not now available. Mostly non-Muslims students take up Islamiyat as a subject even though it is not compulsory for them.

In schools, children generally have at least two or three periods of Islamiyat a week, sometimes more, of 45 minutes each. The Islamiyat curriculum places a premium on inculcating a Muslim identity among Pakistani children. In the subject of Islamiyat, concepts such as Jihad are framed in terms of waging war against the infidels rather than in the broader interpretation that would privilege Jihad against poverty, illiteracy or inequity. **(Faizi: 2010:99)**

MADRASA OR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

There are three main types of religious institutions or Koranic schools where only the Koran is taught, Mosque schools where both Koranic and secular subjects are taught and Madrassas where only Islamic learning takes place. The mission of most Madrassas in Pakistan is to prepare students for religious duties. Adhering to strict religious teachings, Madrassas teach Islamic subjects such as the Koran, Islamic law and Jurisprudence, Logic and the Prophet's traditions. Depending upon the level of the Madrassa (primary, middle or high), the concentration of religious teachings increases. *Hafiz-e-Koran* (the one who memorizes the Koran fully) or *Qari* (the one who can recite the Koran with good pronunciation and in a melodic tone) are produced at the lower level of Madrassas. The higher levels of Madrassas produce *Alim* – the Islamic scholar and/or teacher. An *Alim* certificate from a Madrassa is equivalent to an MA degree in Islamic studies or Arabic from a regular university. A Madrassa student after graduating from grade 10, is qualified enough to declare *Fatwas* – religious edicts. Those students who enroll in Madrassas full time do so with the knowledge that they will become well versed in religious studies only and will find jobs in the religious sector since very few Madrassas supplement religious education with secular subjects. **(Uzma Anzar:2003:14-16)**

There are five major Islamic schools of thought in Pakistan: Deobandi, Bareili, Ahle- Hadith, Salafi, and Shia. Each sect has their own Madrassas in which they teach their own version of Islam. The two main sects of Sunni Islam - Deobandi and Bareili - dominate the Madrassas system in Pakistan²⁶. Deobandi schools are most commonly found along the Afghan-Pakistan border and within the city centers. The Deobandi and Bareili sects originated in the colonial Indian sub-continent in response to the perceived imperial plot to destroy Islam and its followers by enforcing its own version of education. The Deobandi sect is considered the most conservative and anti-west. The core religious curriculum in Pakistani Madrassas is similar to any other Madrassa in the world except that it had a few more books in Persian. It focuses on the teachings of Islam – *Hadith*, *Fiqa*, *Tafseer*, *Sunna* and the like. A typical model of what is taught in Madrassa schools in Pakistan is provided as under:-

First Year Biography of the Prophet (*Syrat*), Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Chirography, Chant illation (*Tajvid*)

Second Year Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Jurisprudence (*Fiqa*), Logic, Chirography (*Khush-navisi*), Chant illation, (*Tajvid*)

Third Year Koranic Exegesis, Jurisprudence: (*Fiqh*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, *Hadith*, Logic, Islamic Brotherhood, Chant illation: (*Tajvid*), External study (Tareekh Millat and Khilafat-e-Rashida – these are Indian Islamic movements).

Fourth Year Koranic Exegesis, Jurisprudence (*Fiqa*), Principles of Jurisprudence, Rhetorics, Hadith, Logic, History, Cant illation, Modern Sciences (sciences of cities of Arabia, Geography of the Arab Peninsula and other Islamic countries)

Fifth Year Koranic Exegesis, Jurisprudence, Principles of Jur isprudence, Rhetoric, Beliefs (*Aqa'id*), Logic, Arabic Literature, Chant illation, External study (History of Indian Kings)

Sixth Year Interpretation of the Koran, Jurisprudence, Principles of Interpretation & Jurisprudence, Arabic Literature, Philosophy, Chant illation, Study of Prophet's traditions

Seventh Year Sayings of the Prophet, Jurisprudence, Belief (*Aqa'ed*), Responsibility (*Fra'iz*), Chant illation, External Study (Urdu texts)

Eighth Year Ten books by various authors focusing on the sayings of the Prophet. (**Course Contents Dar-ul-Uloom Dewband**)

Pakistani Madrassas pay heavy emphasis to the teachings of Arabic and Persian. The languages in the Pakistani Madrassas are not taught for their real worth but because they facilitate mastery of the religion and because they are necessary for an *Alim*. For this purpose Arabic, of course, occupies the centre stage. Persian, which was socially and academically necessary in Muslim India, still forms part of the curriculum. Urdu is generally the medium of instruction in Pakistani Madrassas. Urdu is, indeed, the language in which Madrassa students become most competent in most of the *Madrassas*. Most of the books from which languages are taught are very old Arabic and Persian books that were written in the 1500's or before. Pakistani Madrassas today still teach many of the *Dars-e-Nizami* texts. These are some of the oldest exiting Arabic books. Students also study the Persian translation of Arabic books. "The Arabic books are treatises on grammar in rhymed couplets. One of the best known among them, *Kafia Ibne- Malik*, is so obscure that it is always taught through a commentary called the *Sharah Ibn-e-Aqil*. The commentary is often the dread of students and a source of pride for the teacher who has mastered it. In the Madrassas Arabic is not taught as a living language. (Rehman:1998 :197-214)

The teaching style of a typical teacher in a Pakistani Madrassa, especially, in lower grades is very autocratic and little children are punished for not conforming to the rules and regulations. Severe corporal punishment is the norm, which results in high drop out rates. A Majority of the teachers is males who are the product of the Madrassa system. A few have attended Al Azhar University in Cairo to gain specialized Islamic knowledge. Al Azhar University also seconds some of its Islamic scholars to various Madrassas all over the world where they teach religion to students in higher classes **(Rehman: 1998:210-11)**

According to government statistics, there are currently 11,491 madrasas in Pakistan, although unofficial sources have estimated their numbers to range from 12,000 to 15,000 with a total student enrollment of 1.7 million. *Pakistan Education Statistics* gives the total number of madrasa students in the country as 1.518 million out of which 140,431 have been listed as enrolled at the tertiary levels, i.e., in Sanavia Aama, Sanavia Khassa, Alia Almia and Darja-e-Takhassus. Most madrasas are identified with a particular school of doctrina orientation—Deobandi, Barelwi, Ahl-e-Hadith and Shia. Each doctrinal school has established its own federation (*wafaq*) of affiliated madrasas that prescribes curriculum, establishes standards, conducts examinations, and issues diplomas. **(Pakistan Education Statistics: 2004:225)**

The following are the major madrasa federations in Pakistan:

Wafaq-ul-Madaris Deobandi Multan 1959

Tanzim-ul-Madaris Barelwi Lahore 1960

Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia Shia Lahore 1959

Rabitatul-Madaris-al-Islamia Jamaat-e-Islami Lahore 1983

Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia Ahl-e-Hadith Faisalabad 1955 **(Education System in Pakistan: 2006:26)**

CONCLUSION

The syllabi of three types of secondary Education in Pakistan are different from each other, In the private schools Islamic Education is a compulsory but confined upto the Islamic teachings, in the government secondary schools besides other compulsory and elective subjects Islamic Studies is a compulsory while in the madrasas the most of the syllabi based on the Islamic Studies only. If we critically analysis the Islamic Studies subject at secondary level in Pakistan we observe the subjects of Islamic Studies at class IX and Xth levels we come to know that to some extent they

cover Islamic values but very less number of students have the complete awareness about Islamic civilization. In the class room the teachers by the help of charts show the reflection of Islamic values in the compulsory subjects of Islamic Studies..

The main causes of non effectiveness of the Islamic Studies at Secondary level besides financial problems are the less interest of the parents, Separate family system, Negative role of media, Illiteracy, parents are busy in their jobs, incomplete material about Islamic values in text books, all subjects have no connection with Islamic values, non sincerity of the teachers in professional training etc.

On the other hand education system in the traditional religious schools known as madrasas or madaris or Islamic religious schools have been the focus of Western media in general and the intelligentsia's attention in particular since the last over three decades. The Pakistani madrasa curriculum remains virtually unchanged.

The government blames madrasa authorities for the failure of its reforms. However, these reforms were prepared in haste by government officials with little understanding of traditional education, and without any input from the madrasa *ulama*. The *ulama's* opposition to these reforms was then used by the government to excuse its lack of commitment. Madrasa curriculum may be said to have played a role in creating an environment that encourages hostile or, at least, negative attitudes toward the "other." However, to claim that there is a direct causal relationship between madrasa education, on the one hand, and anti-Americanism or anti-Westernism, on the other, is, at best, a tenuous proposition. Madrasa education *per se* is entirely devoid of political content. With the same curriculum, madrasa students were never shown to be anti-American until the 1990s. Furthermore, anti-Americanism is not something that is exclusively confined to the madrasas or, for that matter, to Muslims alone. The Bush administration's policies in the Middle East; the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq; the scandals of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay; the widely-reported stories of torture and "extraordinary renditions;" and the general perception that the "global war on terror" is primarily directed against Muslims have all irreparably damaged the moral standing of the United States in the eyes of Muslims. There is now a great deal of pessimism among the madrasa *ulama* who largely feel that the situation will not "change for the better."

For advanced and scientific learning through higher levels of Islamic education systems (in Madrassas), major changes would be required. For

example, in Pakistani Madrassas mere introduction of math and computer courses will not change the views of the students towards the society and the world at large. Computer and English language courses cannot do much to alter the mindset of students in Madrassas . The first thing to consider, in this regard, is the *orientation* of the Islamic education curricula. The questions that Islamic scholars and teachers must be pushed to ask are, currently what types of religious ideologies and beliefs are being promoted by Islamic curriculum in various Madrassas? Are they compatible with the prevailing political, religious, human rights, women's right realities that surround the Muslim world today? How through Islamic education systems in combination with scientific interventions, Muslim nations can advance in the 21st century? Could the Madrassas be brought back to the point where they lead the debate on *Ijtihad* –independent reasoning and pave the way for advancement in Muslim societies?

The answers to these questions should come from the Muslim leaders and scholars themselves. At present, it would be wise for the international donors and educators to facilitate this dialogue. Only if Islamic leaders and scholars are able to articulate the answers to the above questions and are willing to a change, the world could witness another Islamic renaissance.

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