

Islamization of Education in Pakistan From Rhetoric to Reality

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Despite aspiration, need and exhaustive policy work for reforming and modernization of education system in Pakistan, it has always been under criticism. Accusations like promoting fundamentalism, Islamism, jihadism and extremism are being associated with this system. No doubt since the inception of Pakistan, the Government has espoused several endeavors to shape education system in accordance with the principles of Islam but these efforts endured from poor execution and ineffective supervision. The present study is an attempt to analyze the planned measures for Islamization of education and the strategies adopted by the successive governments to realize the intended aspirations. The analysis of policies and plans revealed that neither the planners nor the implementers have succeeded in realizing the aims and objectives set forth in the successive educational policies instead of rhetoric proclamations and fervent documentation.

Keywords: Education policy, Islamic system of education, educational system of Pakistan, Islamization of education, objectives of education, Islamic education, madrasas.

Introduction

Education system in every state of the world in one way or the other is governed by certain policies, plans or declarations. These education policies are developed on an ideological basis at least for a predictable timeframe so that the upcoming generations may be taught in accordance with the national needs and beliefs. The same is the case in context of Pakistan, where the ideological base is essentially and historically provided by Islam as an ideology derived from Islam teachings (1).

Islam as code of life offers guidelines for all spheres of life. As a religion it differs from the European mythology. It encompasses the totality of human life and draws inspiration from Quran and Sunnah whereas two European approaches, individualistic and socialistic, focus upon certain specific aspects of human life. That is why the Islamic philosophy of life that vindicates the socio-economic, political, philosophical and ethical

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foundations, significantly differs from any other existing religion or myth in the world (2). Islamic system of education not only ensures the development of character needed for the success in the life but also in the life hereafter.

The importance of acquiring knowledge in Islam is obvious from the very first day of its beginning when Almighty Allah said that;

“Proclaim! (Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher,
Who created- Created man, out of a mere clot of congealed
blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful. He Who
taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew
not”(3).

This first revelation provided the foundations for sound knowledge-based Muslim society. In the same way the Knowledge is regarded as the symbol of honor and prestige for the human beings; “Allah exalts the believers [among you] in proportion, as well as the ones endowed with knowledge, and Allah is all-aware of what you do” (4). Finally; a distinction was made between the people who possess knowledge and those without it;

“Say (to them O Muhammad): Are those who know equal
with those who know not? But only men of understanding
will pay heed” (5).

There is need to impart education to the youth of a generation so that the might be trained as per the needs and requirements of the society. It has been acknowledged by educators throughout the world that education serves a dual purpose, one for the individuals and one for society. Through proper education, an individual's potentials - physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and emotional are drawn out, cultivated, and developed. Therefore, education system in Pakistan needs to be reformed as per the requirements of people and the teachings of Islam.

Purpose and scope of the study

Pakistan has a consistent long history regarding documenting educational schemes and strategies. Since its inception in 1947 several education policies and plans had been envisaged to streamline and reinforce the system of education in the state. Every subsequent ruler had criticized the previous efforts and proposed new plan for action during their regime. Despite political differences and varied plan of actions islamization of education had remained the common agenda for all the successive

governments. Therefore, all the policies and plans had made impressive and rhetoric claims for Islamization of education system. In the present study a comparison is made between all such proposed measures and practical efforts initiated to materialize these endeavors.

Methodology

The present study aims at exploring the measures proposed by the successive Pakistani governments and the corresponding efforts made to realize these proposed measures. Therefore, data for this study was extracted from nine education policy documents of Pakistan published during 1947-2009 (6). Hence this study is “document analysis”, a method of qualitative research in which different documents are analyzed by the researchers to determine the meaning and reality of the concept under study (7 & 8).

Policy Provisions for Islamization of Education in Pakistan

Pakistan emerged as independent state in 1947 at the demise of colonial regime in south Asia. Since the inception, education is being considered very important for the sovereignty, stability and progress of Pakistan. That is why in his message to the participants of first education conference in 1947 the founder of the nation 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” (9).

At the time of independence foremost issue was preservation and propagation of ideology Pakistan to the next generations. Hence, according to Lingard & Ali (10), at that time it was essential to specify the role of 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.

Soon after the independence in 1947 an educational conference was arranged by the government to layout fundamental guidelines for the future educational policies. While addressing the conference Mr. Fazlur Rahman said; “I consider it of vital importance that our education system should be animated and guided by these principles” (11)

While emphasizing upon the nitty-gritties for education system of Pakistan he further reiterated that (12);

“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 the Pakistan into that democratic state, which citizens have the physical, intellectual and moral qualities to lay a good life and for this purpose 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 school of thoughts which presents a complete code of human sympathy and unity. Without moral and spiritual training scientific progress can be harmful for humanity”.

After the conference no significant progress was made towards the improvement of education system in Pakistan because of the tragic death of the father of the nation and political instability during 1950s following the assassination of the first prime minister of Pakistan. 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 important role for protecting those theories by which Pakistan came into being. Struggle for Pakistan was actually shaping a path for the safety of Islamic way of life. The people of Indo-Pak demanded a separate country only for living their lives freely according to the Islamic values (13).”

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 (14). 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 (15). In the same way it was aimed to include Quraan (Nazira and translation), Seerat-Un-Nabi, Muslim history and literature in curriculum for the elementary and middle level students. For rest of the levels Islamic Studies was proposed as optional subject (16).

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 (17). 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 to shape education system according to “our religion and by remaining the great traditions of our civilization”(18).

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”(19). According to the policy major objectives the education were

1. To create the sense among students that they are the members of Islamic world, side by side the members of Pakistani nation.
2. To construct and orientate the character of students according to Quraan and Hadith so that they would be sincere and faithful Muslims(20).

To achieve these objectives the policy suggested number of innovative measures. Some of the measures are listed as under;

1. Islamiyat will be included in all levels of academic, technical and professional institutions as a compulsory subject.
2. In all schools and colleges the teaching of Arabic will be organized.
3. A complete faculty of shariah will be established in Quaid-e-Azam University.
4. Changes will be brought up in the curriculum and text-books according to the principles and theory of Islam.
5. The important status will be given to mosques and five thousand mosque schools will be established for students in throughout country.
6. All Madrasahs, Maktabas and Darul-Uloom will be given full importance and all the students of Madrasahs will be given the same facilities like other formal educational institutions(21).

In 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 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” (22)

Another education policy was presented by the government in 1998. This policy also focused on the reforms in education system and to make it inline with the teaching of Islam. The education policy 1998 stated that;

1. There are some provisions of the policy regarding Islamic education: pp12-13
2. Teaching the Holy Quraan with translation shall be introduced from class VI and will be completed by class XII.
3. The basic teachings of the Holy Quraan shall be included in all the courses of studies.
4. Valuable and rare books on Islam shall be reprinted and distributed among Deeni Madaris for research and reference.
5. Curricula and text books of all the subjects shall be revised so as to exclude and expunge any material repugnant to Islamic teachings and values, and include sufficient material on Quraan and Islamic teachings, information, history, heroes, moral values etc, related to the subject and level of education concerned (23).

The education policy 2009 is the latest effort for improving 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 reforming the system by “infusing Islamic and religious teachings in the curriculum, wherever appropriate” (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

Islamization of Education: The Implementation of Policy Recommendations

The document analysis reveals that all the education policies provided clear directions and frame of action to Islamize the education system of Pakistan. However, there is need to determine whether the succeeding governments made efforts to

follow the directions. As far as the recommendations of the 1st educational conference 1947 are concerned, these had served as the foundation for all the education policies. As proposed by the conference participants the ideology of Pakistan had always been the key point of all the policies in Pakistan. Although, according to the recommendations of the conference, the Ideology of Pakistan had always been the integral part of all the policies, but Ahmad argues that the concept of the “Ideology of Pakistan” has had its share in the intellectual stalemate obtaining today. Therefore, this might be changed as per the requirements of modern era (25).

The recommendations of National Commission on Education 1959 and following education policy 1972 contributed significantly include to Islamize the education system. For the first time in the history of Pakistan Islamic Studies was taught as compulsory subject and measures were taken to promote Islamic norms and values among masses.

The educational landscape in Pakistan was entirely changed by The New Education Policy of 1979. Five thousand mosque schools were opened and the curriculum of the public schools was rewritten to include Islamic ideology. Ashraf (2009) observes that Zia’s Islamization reforms completely transformed the educational system of Pakistan. Religious schools, or *madrasas*, not only mushroomed, but also received official government support and finance from international organizations. Islamic studies became compulsory subject up to graduation level and Arabic was also taught as compulsory subject at elementary level. Degrees from Madrasas were recognized and the teachers of Arabic and Islamic studies were equally benefitted from government facilities. Up till now, the revised national curriculum still prescribes teaching of Islamic ideology and rituals in subjects such as Urdu literature and general knowledge that are mandatory regardless of a student’s religion. (International Crices Grpup, 2014).

Since education policy 1992 Holy Quraan, in one way or the other, is being taught with translation in Pakistani schools. Curriculum was revised by a number of times to accommodate religious sectors and to satisfy different pressure groups demanding drastic changes based upon Islamic rituals. Madrasa reforms had made its impact and more than ten thousand madaris

are registered with the government where 1.7-1.9 million students are enrolled (28).

Conclusion

There had been rigorous efforts and enthusiastic planning for Islamization of education in Pakistan. Instead of getting admirable results and desired change in the education system these measures had always been criticized for their failure in providing the intended outcomes. Al Migdadi noted that the priority to education could not move beyond rhetoric (29). A number of educational plans and policies have been put forward but without notable results. Similarly, Muti Ur Rehman describes that;

“From first educational conference till now , at government level for changing the educational system there were so many educational commissions, committees, conferences, boards, plans and policies been established but infact they became result less. The distribution of religious and non-religious subjects still exists. Although at degree level the teaching of Islamiyat and theory of Pakistan is considered compulsory but the total outcome of our all literary curriculum is still non-religious. In spite of this inner opposition the distribution of Madrasahs, Maktabas and common educational institutions are also seen in our society.” (30)

At the same time it is notable that despite claims of inculcating unity and equality Pakistan’s educational system is still subdivided into four tiers of education providers. Private elite schools usually accommodate the rich, while up to 90% of the school going children attends public government schools. Non-elite private schools primarily attract the upper middle class population whereas *Madrasahs* usually are attended by less than 1% of school-age children (31).

Moreover, in the evolution of an appropriate education system two main problems got entangled in the politics of education, one was medium of instruction and the other Pakistan Ideology. Conflicting opinions on both issues delayed the formation of a positive plan (Ahmad, 2009). Likewise, distorted version of Islam taught to children contributes to intolerance and sectarian tensions. It has further divided the nation rather inculcating the unity and brotherhood. Moreover, teaching of Non-

Islamic concepts, like interest, could not be eliminated from the curricula and no effort had ever been made to streamline the education system in one tier to fulfill the educational demands of all sectors.

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