

Empowering Muslim Youth through Developing Argumentation Skills

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ABSTRACT

The progress of nations lies in the hands of educated youth. Presently, our Muslims youth are facing numerous challenges. This include western propaganda against Islam as a threat to peace, moral degradation, lacking spirit of inquiry, internet addiction, blind following of western norms and cultures and various kinds of social problems such as violence, gambling and pornography. Our Muslim youth is wandering in identity crises and have forgotten the true spirit of Islam and the achievements of our forefathers. Majority of youth are copying and adopting the western style of life and cultural involvement. One reason for this may be the education system that we have inherited from the colonial masters. This is also replicated by electronic media and the Western propaganda against Islam that we don't take pride to be staunch Muslims otherwise; we will be blamed as extremists. Our education system has also failed in instilling the spirit of inquiry, critical thinking and moral judgment in our youth. In order to develop the potential of our youth to reform our society and not to be led by baseless beliefs, the role of teaching is very important. With this goal in mind, the students should be empowered through argumentation skills. This requires teaching students through argumentation method by involving/guiding students to make a claim then write justification for their claim and finally counter argument to support their claim. The essence of argumentation is not new as the Holy Qur'an repeatedly stressed the believers to use their intellect, to critically observe their surroundings and avoid baseless information. Practice with argumentation will help in developing critical skills in our youth and in making informed decisions. They would not blindly follow western norms and would be able to answer western propaganda through solid arguments and valid justifications.

Keywords: *argumentation, critical thinking, Islamophobia, Muslim youth, social media*

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Introduction:

The Muslim world is facing diverse challenges at present. A few to mention are the western concept of separation of state from religion, the supremacy of positive law, the concept of citizenship and narrow scope of nationalism.⁽¹⁾ However, after 9/11 incident, a new wave of Islamophobia gained momentum in the West⁽²⁾ which is perhaps the most severe challenge for the Muslim at present.^{(3),(4)} This anti-Muslim campaign is threatening almost every dimension of Islam through its baseless and parochial propaganda. Islamophobia as a term was used in the Runnymede Trust Commission to represent the fear from Muslims and Islamic ideology.⁽⁵⁾ This is a soft definition of Islamophobia but the reality is different which is accurately depicted by Zine⁽⁶⁾ that Islamophobia represent hatred for Muslims and Islam which results in individual, collective and ideological reactions, discrimination and oppression.

The consequence of this phobia results in targeting Muslims as a group, labelling them threat to world peace, blaming them for persecuting women and against democratic norms thereby justifying oppressive actions against Islam.⁽⁷⁾

Moreover, the Muslims immigrants are blamed for their resistance to mutual co-existence with other communities and are regarded as threat to nation's security and peace.^{(8),(9)} The Western media is also driven by this Islamophobia which has resulted in an organized anti-Islamic campaign against Muslims. In this kind of situation, the role of Muslim youth becomes very important.

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- (1) William Quandt, Joel Beinin, and Joe Stork, "Political Islam: Essays From "Middle East Report"". *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (1997): 195
 - (2) Jasmin Zine, "Dealing with September 12th: The Challenge of Anti-Islamophobia Education". *Orbit* 33, no.3 (2002), 40.
 - (3) John Biles & Humera Ibrahim, "After September 11th 2001: A tale of two Canadas." 7th International Metropolis Conference, Oslo, Norway, September 11, 2002.
 - (4) Wayne Hanniman, "Canadian Muslims, Islamophobia and National Security", *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 36, no. 4 (2008): 273.
 - (5) Gordon Conway, *Islamophobia, A Challenge for Us All*. (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997).
 - (6) Zine, "Dealing with", 42.
 - (7) PEW Research Center, "Muslims in Europe: Economic worries top concerns about religious and cultural identity". Assessed on 02 March, 2016. <http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/7-6-06.pdf>.
 - (8) Jonas Kunst, Hajra Tajamal, David L. Sam, and Pål Ulleberg, "Coping with Islamophobia: The Effects of Religious Stigma On Muslim Minorities' Identity Formation". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36, no. 4 (2012): 519.
 - (9) Mark Elchardus and Bram Spruyt, "Universalism and Anti-Muslim Sentiment". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 38 (2014): 80.

Meanwhile, the Muslim scholars are struggling to combat the western political ideologies as antagonistic to Islamic principles. These scholars are organizing their effort for seeking implementation of Sharī'ah as solution to contemporary problems.⁽¹⁾ In this direction, it is imperative that our Muslim youth shall also be fully equipped with modern education to enable them counteract the western propaganda. However, the education system of Pakistan is still based on policies of colonial legacy.⁽²⁾ The examination system is geared upon rote learning and the instructional method is predominantly lecture method.⁽³⁾ The teaching method also influences the assessment and evaluation techniques.

Moreover, our education system has failed to develop spirit of inquiry, creative thinking and the ability to make informed decisions.⁽⁴⁾ The Muslim educated youth is in a state of chaos. The students are not clear about their responsibilities as informed citizens. The desired moral conduct, behaviors, social and cultural values are missing in our youth.⁽⁵⁾ The students are not clear about their due role in society. Due to this, our educated youth have fallen a prey to diverse kind of problems and challenges at present⁽⁶⁾. Thus, there is a need to identify these challenges confronted by our Muslim youths.

1. Present challenges to Muslim youth

One of the challenges that the Muslim youths are facing at present is the ignorance about the true spirit of Islam. This is further reinforced by propaganda of West against Islam through electronic media and internet. The use of social networking websites by the youths have considerably increased during the last two decades.⁽⁷⁾ Some of these sites are Bebo,

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- (1) Ismail Guven, "The Impact of Political Islam On Education: "The Revitalization of Islamic Education in The Turkish Educational Setting"". *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, no. 3 (2005): 198.
 - (2) Filza Waseem, "The Legacy of the Colonial Project of English Education in Pakistan." *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 5, no. 11 (2014). 139.
 - (3) Fayyaz Faize, *Problem and Prospect of Science Education at Secondary Level in Pakistan* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). (International Islamic University, Islamabad: Pakistan, 2011), 144.
 - (4) Fayyaz Faize, "Introducing Argumentation at Higher Education in Pakistan- A New Paradigm of Teaching Ethic based Topics". *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 9, no. 1 (2015), 9.
 - (5) Raza Rumi, *The Prospects for Reform in Islam*, (<http://www.hudson.org/research/11172-the-prospects-for-reform-in-islam>) assessed February 20, 2016).
 - (6) *ibid*
 - (7) Tiffany Pempek, Yevdokiya A. Yermolayeva, and Sandra Calvert, "College Students' Social Networking Experiences On Facebook". *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 3 (2009): 235.

Friendster, Facebook, LiveJournal, Myspace etc. Because of this extensive use, the youth at present is termed as 'Facebook generation' which is addicted to social media and mobile.⁽¹⁾ These websites are flooded with diverse amount of information, clips, blogs, forums, portals, pictures, posts etc.

The youth at present is very involved in these websites through sending messages, expressing opinion, sharing pictures and videos with strangers, liking posts, giving comments, without verifying much the authenticity of the post/information.⁽²⁾ The youths trust the information without pondering that it may be a scam to defame Islam and to make Muslims hold wrong beliefs. In a similar manner is the messages on the mobile phones with unauthentic information asking the receiver to share on the consequence of getting some good news. The result is that many times, the youth are sharing distorted messages on mobile phones and social media resulting in spreading of wrong beliefs and practices about Islamic injunctions and teachings. Forcing someone to forward Islamic message to others on pretext of getting some good news and upon not sending getting something bad is equal to fortune telling which is not allowed in Islam as only Allah knows the future events.⁽³⁾

Regarding social media, it is claimed that Facebook posts shall not be trusted as the information is misrepresented.⁽⁴⁾ It is a source of spreading rumor.⁽⁵⁾ Despite this, Facebook has become an integral part of youths' life at present irrespective of how much busy they are.⁽⁶⁾ This is also keeping the Muslim youths stay away from offering religious practices and obligations due to wastage of time on Facebook. Facebook is the greatest time waster in the history of human civilization.⁽⁷⁾ The Muslim youth needs to be educated

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- (1) Stacy Kitsis, "The Facebook generation: Homework as social networking." *English Journal*, 98, no. 2 (2008), 33.
 - (2) Muhammad Zaki Mustafa et al., "Facebook as Social Media Tools among Muslim Youths in Malaysia." *American International Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 8 (2013), 175.
 - (3) Muhammad Al-Munajjid, "Text Messages and E-Mails Which Say: "Forward This or Else You Will Be Sinning and Such and Such Will Happen to You" - Islamqa.Info", 2016, <https://islamqa.info/en/101317> (assessed January 25, 2016).
 - (4) Michael Bugeja, "Facing the facebook." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 21 (2006)
 - (5) Atif Hassan and Rizwana Bashir, Social Networking (Facebook): Wastage of Time or an Important Web Resource. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Engineering* 3, no. 4 (2012), 13.
 - (6) Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, "College Students", 233.
 - (7) Christina Sagioglou and Tobias Greitemeyer. "Facebook's emotional consequences: Why Facebook causes a decrease in mood and why people still use it." *Computers in Human Behavior* 35 (2014): 359-363.

that Islam does not support time wastage in unproductive activities, spreading rumor and blind imitation as it is a legacy of period of *Jāhiliyyah* (the time before the advent of Islam). Rather, Islam encourages the Muslim to involve in critical and rational thinking.⁽¹⁾

Islam influences all the daily life routines of Muslims whether male or female.⁽²⁾ It is a complete code of life which stresses man to contemplate and inquire before believing in any rumor or piece of information. Islam does not teach blind following rather enjoins the believers to investigate before they trust any news.

The Holy Qur'ān refers to this in the following verse:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾⁽³⁾

Verily, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which is of use to mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and the moving (living) creatures of all kinds that He has scattered therein, and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed proofs, evidences, and signs for people of understanding.

Another major challenge to our Muslim youth is the assimilation and adoption of western culture and their customs which is disrupting our Islamic and cultural values on the pretext of modernization.⁽⁴⁾ These activities are not only against our socio-cultural norms but also anti-Islamic. These include celebrating parties, making friendship with opposite gender, romance, dancing, celebrating valentine's day, Halloween day,

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- (1) Muhammad Endut, Abdullah, W., & Suhaimi, W. (2009, December). Towards the conceptual definition of Islamic critical thinking. In The 7th World Conference on Muslim Education (World-COME2009). Selangor (KUIS) and Shah Alam.
- (2) Maria Jaschok and Hau Ming Vicky Chan. "Education, Gender and Islam in China: The Place of Religious Education in Challenging and Sustaining 'Undisputed Traditions' Among Chinese Muslim Women". *International Journal of Educational Development* 29, no. 5 (2009): 489.
- (3) Sūrah Al-Baqarah:164.
- (4) Hajira Parviaz, "Growing Menace of Western Culture in Pakistan". *Daily The Pioneer*, 2014. <http://thepioneer.com.pk/growing-menace-of-western-culture-in-pakistan/> (assessed on 28 February, 2016).

Christmas, new year celebration, etc.⁽¹⁾ This is resulting in formation of hybrid identity⁽²⁾ which also paves way for identity crisis in our youth⁽³⁾.

The Muslim youth shall be guided that these activities are not relevant to us and thus we shall completely stay away from them. Moreover, there is a serious threat to our modesty and chastity by the social networking sites and friend finder websites. The alarming thing is that half of the youth use social networking websites for making friends.⁽⁴⁾ Moreover, it was also found that female adults post more photographs as compared to male adults.⁽⁵⁾ This makes social networking sites a place for making friendship with opposite gender out of way from our cultural and religious norms and values. These sites encourage nudity and illicit relationships which tries to destroy Muslim traditions and their moral values.⁽⁶⁾

There is a positive relationship between the use of internet and social problems. The greater is the use of internet, the higher the intensity of social problems like violence,⁽⁷⁾ drug abuse, gambling, pornography.⁽⁸⁾ The situation is further worsened by the trend towards independence and individuality. The desire for independence is resulting in destroying the family affiliation and the affection bond that exists between family members. There is a large increase in divorce cases, psychological disorders, suicides, rapes and family cases in courts at present.⁽⁹⁾

2. Tackling the challenges

The panacea for all these challenges is through introducing a reformed education system⁽¹⁰⁾ blended with our Islamic values system.⁽¹¹⁾

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- (1) Abdulbaqi Jari, "Challenges of Muslim Youths in A Multi -Religious Societies". Newsrescue.Com, 2016. <http://newsrescue.com/challenges-muslim-youths-multi-religious-societies/#axzz41eEEMJqE> (assessed on 28 February, 2016).
 - (2) Waseem, "The Legacy", 141.
 - (3) Parviaz, "Growing Menace".
 - (4) Amanda Lenhart and Mary Madden, Teens, Privacy & Online Social Networks. (Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2007), 63.
 - (5) Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, "College Students", 227-238.
 - (6) Jari, "Challenges of Muslim".
 - (7) Parviaz, "Growing Menace".
 - (8) Jari, "Challenges of Muslim".
 - (9) ibid
 - (10) Sumon Kumar Bhaumik and Manisha Chakrabarty, "Is Education the Panacea for Economic Deprivation of Muslims?". *Journal of Asian Economics* 20, no. 2 (2009): 139.
 - (11) Charles Rarick and Thaung Han. "Islamic Finance: Panacea for the Global Financial System?." *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 11, no. 3 (2010): 27.

Besides. There is a strong need to reform our teaching and assessment techniques. In the late twentieth century and the beginning of the present century, the educationists and researchers in the West experimented with a teaching approach termed as ‘scientific argumentation.’^{(1),(2)} The method gained extensive popularity in teaching of science subjects. The method was found effective in developing conceptual understanding of students⁽³⁾, promoting their critical thinking skills⁽⁴⁾ and enabling them to make informed decisions⁽⁵⁾.

2.1 Introducing Argumentation

Argumentation is a scientific method that works on similar pattern as scientists work to discover new knowledge.⁽⁶⁾ The use and application of argumentation in teaching topics of religious studies will be of greater significance in educating the Muslim youth in meeting the challenges of the present times. Though here, the objective shall not be to create new knowledge in religion which cannot be tolerated. The focus shall be to develop critical thinking skills in the youth so that they are able to refute anti-Islam propaganda and justify the cause of Muslim. Argumentation as an interaction process is very helpful in teaching. It is not one-way delivery of information, rather it is a dialogic process in which the individuals interact with one another.⁽⁷⁾ This distinguishes argumentation from lecture method so commonly and frequently used in teaching of religious studies. The mutual interaction between the participants helps in improving their understanding.

- (1) Ebru Kaya Erduran, S., & P.S. Cetin, “Discourse, argumentation, and science lessons: Match or mismatch between students’ perceptions and understanding?” *Mevlana International Journal of Education* 2, no. 3 (2012), 11.
- (2) Grady Venville and Vaile M. Dawson, "The Impact of a Classroom Intervention On Grade 10 Students' Argumentation Skills, Informal Reasoning, And Conceptual Understanding of Science". *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 47, no.8 (2010): 966.
- (3) Jonathan Osborne et al., "Learning to Argue: A Study of Four Schools and Their Attempt to Develop the Use of Argumentation as A Common Instructional Practice and Its Impact On Students". *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 50, no. 3 (2013): 325.
- (4) Ebru Kaya. "Argumentation Practices in Classroom: Pre-Service Teachers' Conceptual Understanding of Chemical Equilibrium". *International Journal of Science Education* 35, no. 7 (2013): 1148.
- (5) Tim van Gelder, Melanie Bissett, and Geoff Cumming, "Cultivating Expertise in Informal Reasoning.". *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology/Revue Canadienne De Psychologie Expérimentale* 58, no. 2 (2004): 142.
- (6) Richard Duschl and Jonathan Osborne, "Supporting and Promoting Argumentation Discourse in Science Education". *Studies in Science Education* 38, no. 1 (2002): 55.
- (7) Jonathan Osborne and Alexis Patterson, "Scientific Argument and Explanation: A Necessary Distinction?". *Science Education* 95, no. 4 (2011): 635.

2.2 Components in Argumentation

Argumentation in teaching refers to a method in which the students are involved in thinking, constructing and critiquing knowledge.⁽¹⁾ The students while constructing their argument, are guided to follow a certain structure. This involves some specific number of components. A good argument consists of six components though it may be less sometimes. This includes claim, data, warrants, qualifiers, backing and rebuttal.⁽²⁾ However, the structure can be made simpler by reducing the components to claim, ground and rebuttal. This is done to avoid the confusion in differentiating between backing, warrant and data.⁽³⁾

The claim is the choice or decision made by a person on a specific topic or issue. A ground consists of proof, example or elaborations to support one's claim and rebuttal is to pick weakness in the argument of the opponent. Rebuttal is the most important and difficult part of argumentation which tries to refute the opponent's argument.⁽⁴⁾

The process of argumentation indicates a rational mechanism of convincing others of one's claim. It opposes blind following of the views of others unless backed by forceful argument. Toulmin is credited for introducing Toulmin Argumentation Pattern (TAP)⁽⁵⁾ in which he explained scientific argumentation and its components. TAP was further applied by Western educationists in teaching science subjects. These researchers found argumentation as an effective method in improving conceptual understanding of students and making them think critically with justifications.^{(6),(7),(8)}

2.3 Example of Argumentation

In order to understand argumentation, consider the following example on Tawhīd. The question under discussion is "Is the universe came into being by itself or is it created?" The argumentation report for this question is as follows:

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- (1) Ibid.
 - (2) Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, (England: Cambridge University Press, 1958).
 - (3) Chan-Choong Foong and Esther G.S. Daniel, "Students' Argumentation Skills Across Two Socio-Scientific Issues in a Confucian Classroom: Is Transfer Possible?". *International Journal of Science Education* 35, no. 14 (2013): 2335.
 - (4) Shu-Sheng Lin and Joel Mintzes. "Learning Argumentation Skills through Instruction in Socio-scientific Issues: The Effect of Ability Level". *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* 8, no. 6 (2010): 1011.
 - (5) Toulmin, *The Uses*.
 - (6) Osborne et al., "Learning to Argue", 333.
 - (7) Kaya. "Argumentation Practices", 1139-1158.
 - (8) Osborne and Patterson, "Scientific Argument", 629.

[Claim]: The universe is created by a supreme being.

[Ground]: The orderliness, balance and the systematic organization in the universe is a proof of universe being created by one supreme power.

[Rebuttal]: Had there been more than one creator, then the whole system of the universe would have been ruined due to differences and conflicts between them.

[Another Rebuttal]: Even, Newton's Laws states that a thing cannot move by itself so how can this giant universe move by itself, Thus, there is one powerful creator who is making all this universe in motion.

The above is an example of strong argumentation with all the necessary component consisting of claim, ground for justification and rebuttal to refute the views of opponents.

2.4 Argumentation and Holy Qur'an

While Toulmin introduced TAP⁽¹⁾, it is worth mentioning that augmentation is not a new approach in teaching. The Holy Qur'an mentions the same at different places asking the believers to contemplate and ponder rather than accept things without justifications. The essence of argumentation is supported by Islam as well. The Holy Qur'an uses various words to encourage the Muslims to use their intellect such as tafakkur, tadhakkur, tadabbur, tafaqquh, tabaṣṣur, tawassum, naẓar and i'tibār.

﴿لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ﴾⁽²⁾

Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) ālihah (gods) besides Allah, then verily both would have been ruined. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, (High is He) above all that (evil) they associate with Him!

At another place in the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

﴿مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ﴾⁽³⁾

No son (or offspring) did Allah beget, nor is there any ilah (god) along with Him. (If there had been many gods), then each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have tried to overcome others! Glorified be Allah above all that they attribute to Him!

(1) Toulmin, *The Uses*, 175.

(2) Sūrah Al-Ambiya: 22.

(3) Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: 91.

Both the above verses offer rebuttals to polytheists who believe in the existence of many gods responsible for their specific duties. These verses negate the polytheists' beliefs by giving counter argument that if there were many gods, then the whole system of this universe would have been spoiled and ruined due to their split responsibilities and different roles. But we know that the universe operates in a very systematic and organized manner and there are no inconsistencies or disparities which is a proof of Oneness of God who is Allah.

2.5 Developing Argumentation in Students

The skills of argumentation can be taught to students through the medium of education and inquiry based teaching. This requires the teachers to teach their classes through argumentation method. The teacher shall avoid the traditional lecture method in his/her class. The students are given a topic for discussion in small groups. The students are also instructed to write answers to the topic of discussion by first writing a claim/decision about the topic. Then the justification for the claim shall be written which is called ground. The stronger the justification, the stronger the argument. Lastly, the student shall write rebuttal or counter argument to further support their claim. Practice with such sessions will finally train students in writing good arguments and to practice it in their life in other situations.

2.6 Role of Argumentation in Meeting Muslim Youth Challenges

1. Argumentation can be channelized for instilling spirit of inquiry⁽¹⁾ in Muslim youths. At present, our youth have lost the spirit of curiosity, the desire to investigate and to verify the authenticity of information. The Muslim youths are influenced by the modern intellectuals, thinkers, writers, actors, commentators etc. under the umbrella of modernization, globalization and enlightenment. Argumentation has the capacity to enable our Muslim youth develop their spirit of inquiry and to discover the hidden motive behind various initiatives, policies, programs and propaganda.
2. Argumentation will help the Muslim youth develop their critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is defined as reflective thinking that helps a person choose what to do or believe.⁽²⁾ But it may also include an informed decision based on evidence, interpretation,

(1) Heather Clayton, "Teaching argument writing: An inquiry process." *Making the Common Core Come Alive!* 4, no. 1 (2015).

(2) Stephen Norris and Robert Hugh Ennis, *Evaluating Critical Thinking*. (Pacific Grove, CA: Midwest Publications, 1989), 65.

deduction, evaluation, analysis ... and contextual considerations.⁽¹⁾

The Muslim youths shall not get influence by any information unless it is critically examined. It is imperative that Muslim youths shall carefully go through the information which is pouring in bundles without any censorship through social and electronic media. Where any vested group or individual can add his views and ideas; easily and quickly communicated to millions. The Muslim youth shall take the information responsibly, shall inquire in to the source of information, the nature of information and shall verify the motive behind the information. The research founds that students do use Facebook for learning about Islam which may not be a reliable source, though there were other students who expressed that they don't rely on Facebook posts for learning about Islam rather they use other Islamic websites for learning about Islam.⁽²⁾

3. The Muslim youth shall verify the truthfulness of information by searching the online reliable Islamic sources or by contacting the religious scholars before sharing any unverified post/information.⁽³⁾

The beautiful verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt also discourages.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِيبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴾⁽⁴⁾

O you who believe! If a Fāsiq (liar - evil person) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done.

The Muslim youth bears a responsibility to check for authenticity of any post related to Islam and Muslims. Any post which is defamatory or contains incorrect information about Islam shall be immediately reported to the administrator of the blog or social media.

4. In the post 9/11 attacks, the Muslims educational institutions are facing the blame as being nursery for extremist and militants by the West. One reason for this blame is that Taliban emerged from these madrassas and maktabas. There are efforts from the government as well as other international organizations on reforming madrassah

(1) Peter Facione, Executive Summary of Critical Thinking. (Millbrae, California Academic Press, 1990), 49.

(2) Mustafa et al., "Facebook as", 173-177.

(3) ibid

(4) Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt: 6.

education through various initiatives and policy matters.⁽¹⁾ Argumentation can help the Muslim youth rebutting the fallacious western propaganda against Islam. It can develop the capacity of Muslim youth in providing forceful argument in support of Islam through strong backing/support and offering of rebuttal to weaken the western accusation against Islam by portraying the true picture of Islam as religion of peace. The example of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) during conquest of Mecca and how the Prophet (S.A.W) pardoned all his enemies is an eye opener to western critics.

5. The Muslim youth shall counteract and dissociate from the activities and ideology of extremists. Islam condemns the killing of innocent people and inhuman punishment. In The Holy Qur'an , Allah says,

﴿مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ﴾⁽²⁾

if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.

At another place in the Holy Qur'an is mentioned,

﴿وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾⁽³⁾

And let not the hatred of some people in (once) shutting you out of the Sacred Mosque leads you to transgression (and hostility on your part). Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancor: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment.

The above verses make it very clear that killing of any innocent person is prohibited in Islam and transgression is not allowed. Thus, kidnapping and killing people, which has wrongly been associated with Islam as extremist activities cannot be justified. The verse supports the cause of Islam as a religion of peace and its affection for humanity. Islam

(1) Robert Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics). Princeton University Press, 2007.

(2) Sūrah Al-Ma'idah: 32.

(3) Sūrah Al-Mā'idah: 2.

is strongly against the use of force and violence for spreading its cause. Allah says in The Holy Qur'an ,

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾⁽¹⁾

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah hearth and knoweth all things.

Conclusion

The Muslim youth are seriously facing severe kind of challenges at present. However, we shall not be dismayed by these. Our youth possess the ability and potential to overcome all the challenges and to achieve the set targets.⁽²⁾ The anti-Islam propaganda by the West, the higher frequency of unverified posts on Islam on social media, mobile and electronic media may be corrupting our youth. However, we need to stand as a unit to combat these challenges. The Muslim youth shall use the internet for the cause of Islam and spreading its teaching and message throughout the world. The Muslim youth supported by religious scholars, preachers, experts shall fully utilize the power of internet for 'da'wah' of Islam and struggle against un-Islamic practices and propaganda.⁽³⁾ The Muslim youth shall be trained and educated by inculcating spirit of inquiry, improving their critical skills and the ability to make informed decisions. This can be achieved through revisiting and reforming our teaching and assessment strategies. This shall include teaching Islamic studies, humanities and science subjects through scientific argumentation that has the capacity to realize the aforementioned goals.



(1) Sūrah Al-Baqarah: 256.

(2) Rumi, The Prospects.

(3) Mustafa et al., "Facebook as", 175.