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

Dr. Abdul Muhaimin
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic & Religious Studies, The University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan

Dr. Atta Ullah
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic & Religious Studies, The University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan

Muhammad Hayat Khan
PhD Scholar, Department of Islamic & Religious Studies, The University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan

Version of Record Online/Print: 16-12-2019
Accepted: 15-11-2019
Received: 31-07-2019

Abstract
This study focuses on the impact of Religious Education in Pakistan at individual and collective levels. The research discusses the educational basis for the study of religion and analyzes the contribution of religious education towards the intellectual growth of individuals. The study raises few questions regarding religious education in Pakistan such as: why has our education system been divided into religious and secular education system. Whether the existing religious education is able to create a linkage between religion and society or not, if not what are the areas which need to be focused. What are the possibilities of sidelining the religious education and what could be its effects. The research focuses on the aims and objectives or religious education in Pakistan by analyzing the nature of curriculums of religious education at various levels. This study highlights the deficiency of the inclusion of the teachings of other religions in our religious education. The research consists of a current survey of the said topic, some findings and conclusions on the issue and few recommendations as well.

Keywords: religious, education, madāris, ijtihād, islāmīyāt
Introduction:

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

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

Literature Review:

Because of the significance of the topic various books and articles were written on it such as the book of Mr. ‘Abdul Wahāb titled “Islāmī Tarbīyat”. “Tarbīyat Ky Taqādy” was written by Dr, Yūsuf al-Qardāwī and “Ta’līmī Tahqīq” was authored by Khālid Rashīd. Few research articles in regard with the said topic are, “The system of Education and Training in Sub-continent” by Dr, ‘Abdul Ghafūr, published in International Journal, Global Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities in July 2017. Few other articles are “The Paradox of the Religious Education in Secondary School Curriculum”, “The Impact of Religion on the Educational Achievement” and “The Effect of Religious Education on Academic Achievement”.

Basic Research Questions:

1. Why has our education system been divided into religious and secular education system?
2. Whether the existing religious education is able to create a linkage between religion and society or not, if not what are the areas which need to be focused?
3. What are the possibilities of sidelining the religious education and what could be its effects?

Research Methodology:

Following steps are followed during this research:

1. A short but brief history about the Education system of the sub-continent (Indo-Pak) is described as it shows the roots of division of the education system in Pakistan.
An Analytical Study of the Outcomes and Impacts of Religious Education of Pakistan, the Challenges and Opportunities

2. Islamic ideology about Education is discussed in the light of Qur’ān and Hadith.

3. An Analytical Study of the Textbooks of Islāmiyāt – Grade One to Bachelors Levels – is also included in order to show the contents of text books and their level.

4. The most important part of this research is a survey done by the author. Three hundred and twenty five students from undergraduate, graduate and post graduate level answered a questioner consisting on five questions.

5. After analysis of all the above mentioned data conclusions are presented along with few recommendations.

Facts and Figures on Education in Pakistan:

UNESCO\(^1\) in its report issued in April 2015, has indicated that Pakistan has failed to achieve its goals of education for all. Pakistan has the maximum numbers of ghost schools and teachers. There are 6480 ghost schools in Sindh and about 5000 in Baluchistan. Many ghost teachers are taking salaries for teaching in these schools. Pakistan has the world second highest number of children out of schools, reaching 5.1 million and two third of them are girls. There are 51 million illiterates and two third of them are again women. The country ranks 113 out of 120 countries in the Education Development Index. Pakistan has reduced spending on education from 2.6% of GNP\(^2\) to 2.3% and the country spends around seven times more on the military than on primary education. Moreover Pakistan has the widest education inequalities in the world.\(^3\)

The Division of Religious and Non-Religious Education:

Literacy rate in developed countries is hundred percent while in Muslim countries it is less than forty percent. The said gulf finds its roots way back in 1440AD when press was invented in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg\(^4\) and thousands of books were printed in Europe. And in the next two to three centuries more than eighty percent people got educated. About after three hundred years the same press came to Muslim world when first printing press was introduced in Turkey in 1730AD.\(^5\)

In the sub-continent education has never remained a priority of the Mughal dynasty. Education was mostly private and it was by and large in Persian. When the British came to sub-continent, education in English was also introduced as Persian was of no use to British. And this later on became the basis of two parallel educational systems. One system was led by Sir Sayid Ahmad Khan who thought that studying English is compulory for Muslims. On the other hand Mālānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānūtvī was of the opinion that
only religious education can safeguard the integrity of Muslims.

Sir Sayîd established Ali Gher College and Mûlânâ Nânûtvî laid the foundations of Dâr Al ʿUlûm Deoband in 1875AD and 1866AD respectively. All educational institutes established after that fell under one of these two categories and were considered religious or non-religious educational institutions. And these institutions were not controlled and monitored by any government. As a result no scholarly research could take place in these institutions. ʿAllamah Wahîd Uddîn indicates towards this by saying that all kinds of research are only possible under the patronage of governments. When Muslim scientists did not get this patronage they entered Europe and it developed much faster.

Non-religious educational institutions have further divided into three groups. The government school where the medium is mostly Urdu, the low standard private schools where the level of education is very sub-standard and lastly the high standard private schools where modern education is good but it is very expensive. One of the major problems of all these schools is that they cannot provide enough religious guidance to their students. This does not help produce individuals well equipped of required knowledge of their religions and leaves them in bewilderment.

On the other hand religious institutions or Madâris have further divided into five various boards on the basis of the different schools of thought. Five boards of these Madâris are Wifâq Al Madâris Al ʿArabîyah, Wifâq Al Madâris Al Salfiyyah, Wifâq Al Madâris Al Shiʿiyah, Tanzîm Al Madâris and Râbtah Al Madâris. This division produces individuals who are at times very different to each other in terms of various religious beliefs and practices.

Another shortcoming of our religious education is that it somehow disconnects its pupils from the outer world. Students go to these Madâris at a very early age and they get very little or no contemporary education. And this is at times confessed by the associates of these Madâris themselves. An eminent scholar writes, ‘The founders of these Madâris should not get disappointed as their Madâris are not producing able and up to dated scholars’.

Moreover at times Islamic jurisprudence in comparison to Qurʿân, Ḥadîth and Sîrah of the Prophet ﷺ becomes the main focus of almost every school of thought as it strengthens their own ideology. And that is how the education system of our country is divided into eight different categories.

According to a report the number of Madâris in Pakistan in 1947AD was 245. In the year 1988 the number reached to 2861 and in 2000 it touched 6761 and now the total number of Madâris in Pakistan has exceeded thirty five thousands.
Islamic Ideology of Education:

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

"وَقَلِ رَبِّ زَدِني عِلْماً" 10

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

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

"وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ الْأَرْضِ وَالْأَسمَاءَاتِ وَقَالُوا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بِمَيلٍ" 11

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

And again;

"فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فَرَاطِقٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ يَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الرَّبِّينِ" 12

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

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

"طلب العلم فرحة على كل مسلم" 13

"Seeking knowledge is the duty of every Muslim."

"مَنْ تَوَّرَّدَ اللَّهُ بِهِ حَبَّتَهُ تَفَقَّهُهُ فِي الْأَزْمَمِ" 14

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

"الْبَيْنَتَ الْفَقْهَةُ فِي الْأَزْمَمِ" 15

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

The first saying of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasizes on acquiring of
knowledge while the last two insist on the understanding and comprehending of knowledge in its true sense which is the basis of epistemology.

Impacts of Religious Education in Pakistan:

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

During President Ayūb Khān’s regime (1958-69), this subject was made compulsory at the elementary level. Similarly, the 1973 Constitution also makes Islāmīyāt a compulsory subject. Later in President Zia era (1977-88), the process of Islamisation was in full swing; therefore, the subject got extra significance. Its teaching was expanded even to students of professional universities. It was made a core subject in the training of doctors, nurses, engineers, bureaucracy, armed forces etc.

During the last sixty seven years, Islāmīyāt has been part of all the curriculums and is being taught in almost all schools across Pakistan. But its efficacy to inculcate Islamic values in students’ lives, turn them into ethically conscious citizens with empathy for others and to mould them into one unified nation is yet to be seen.

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

Analytical Study of the Textbooks of Islāmīyāt – Grade One to Bachelors Levels:

Islamic studies books of federal board from Grade One to Bachelor level were analyzed in order to find out the course contents of Islamic studies taught at all these levels. Following lines contain a through detail and critical analysis of the contents of the religious education given from Grade one to Bachelors.
An Analytical Study of the Outcomes and Impacts of Religious Education of Pakistan, the Challenges and Opportunities

Grade One:
Oneness of Allah, Two Surahs from the Holy Qur’ân, Five prayers, Our religion, Islamic Information.

Grade Two:
Qur’ânic Prayers, Two Surahs from the Holy Qur’ân, Eid Prayers, Good Manners, Islamic Information.

Grade Three:
Recognition of Arabic Words, Three Surahs from the Holy Qur’ân, Beliefs and Worships, Sîrah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Good Manners and Ethics, Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ, Abu Bakr ﷺ.

Grade Four:
Five Surahs from the Holy Qur’ân, Sîrah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Beliefs and Worships, Good Manners and Ethics, Prophet Musa ﷺ, Omar ﷺ.

Grade Five:
Memorization of Du’as, Beliefs and Worship, Sîrah of the Prophet ﷺ, Manners and Ethics, Prophet Isa ﷺ, Uthman ﷺ, Khalid bin Walid ﷺ.

Grade Six:

Grade Seven:

Grade Eight - Ten:
Selected Text from the Holy Qur’ân:
Sûrah Al Anfâl, Sûrah Al Aızâb, Sûrah Al Mumtaḥinah.

Selected Aḥâdîth:
Knowledge, **Durūd**, Faith, Kindness, Bribery, Prayer, Friday Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage, *Jihād*, Individual Responsibility


**Grade 11-12**

**Basic Doctrines:**

Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, Resurrection.


**Grade BA Compulsory (English):**

Introduction to *Qur‘ānic* Studies

*Sirah* of Holy Prophet (SAW) I

Introduction to *Sunnah*

Selected Study from Text of *Hadith*

Introduction to Islamic Law & Jurisprudence

Islamic Culture & Civilization

Islam & Science

Islamic Economic System

Political System of Islam

Islamic History

Social System of Islam

**BA Compulsory (Urdu):**

**First Chapter:** Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, Resurrection.

**Second Chapter:** Worships; Few Verses are to be taught

**Third Chapter:** Enjoining Good and Forbidding Bad: Few Verses are to be taught.

**Forth Chapter:** Unity of *Ummah* Few Verses are to be taught.

**Fifth Chapter:** Lawful Earnings
Sixth Chapter: Rights of Human beings

Seventh Chapter: Rights of Women

Eighth Chapter: Relation with Non Muslims

A thorough analysis of the contents of these books reveals that these contents at times lack in providing or highlight the need of educational basis for the study of religion. Moreover the reflections from the field reveals that the taught religious education may not be contributing fully towards the intellectual growth of individuals and no manifestation of this religious education is seen in the uplifting of the society in regard with the modern day world.

Moreover these contents are not able to create a linkage between religion and society. The question of the possibilities of sidelining the religious education would add to the complications as religion is a very sensitive issue in our country. The caliber of the teachers of religious education and lack of professional trainings are also one of the main reasons of such outcomes of religious education in Pakistan.

Another drawback of the system of our religious education is that it focuses only on one religion. Non-Muslims are also bound to study Islamic studies in most of the cases as it is a compulsory subject. Secondly Muslims are not taught about other religions and about the status and the rights on non-Muslims living in Pakistan. The Islamic studies course content from grade one to grade fourteen has only two topics related to non-Muslims i.e. the relations with non-Muslims and the rights of non-Muslims.

Grade 12 book has the following details under the heading of Rights of Non-Muslims; Security of Honor and Property, Legal Equality, Freedom of Religious Beliefs, Individual Freedom, Financial Freedom, Jobs (Except few places they can take any position). These contents clearly indicate that there is nothing in terms of current issues of our society such as blasphemy law etc.

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

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِنْهَا وَيَكُونَ الْدِّينُ كَلُّهُ بِلِلّٰهِ

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

The following two verses which are the basis of Muslim and non-Muslims relationship have not been mentions anywhere in the contents of religious education of our country.
"Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): “O people of the Scripture; come to the word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him."

And;

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

Survey:

Summary of the Survey:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Does the religious education in our country promote the spiritual and moral values of Islam in the students?</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do the course contents of religious education eliminate sectarianism in our country?</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Is the religious education we get opening the new doors of knowledge and research?</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Will the religious education you have help you succeed here and here after?</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Are you satisfied with the educational standards of Pakistan?</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed Commentary on the answers of the Survey:

Commentary on 1st Question:

Majority of the participants are of the opinion that religious education in our country promotes the spiritual and moral values of Islam in the students, but when it comes to the on ground realities we may get a different picture all together. Spirituality and morality are one of the most deficient values of Islamic teachings found individually and collectively.
Figure 1: Does the Religious Education in our country promote the spiritual and moral values of Islam in the Students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under-Graduate</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary on 2nd Question:

The survey shows the expectations of people for the eradication of sectarianism from society. As a matter of fact sectarianism has hurt our country to great extent. That may be debatable that religious education has not promoted sectarianism but there cannot be two opinions that religious education was never able to eliminate extremism and radicalization which remained very dominant in our societies.

Figure 2: Do the course contents of religious education eliminate sectarianism from our country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under-Graduate</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary on 3rd Question:

It is may be because of the religious affiliation of the participants that majority of the people think that religious education which they get opens the
gates of research, but on ground realities are very different. There are stern question marks on the validity and justification of the research being conducted in Islamic studies. Novelty and application are two of the most important missing factors in research being conducted in higher education institutions in various fields of Islamic studies.

**Figure 3:** Is the religious education we get opening the new doors of knowledge and research?

![Figure 3: Graph showing the distribution of responses to the question about the opening of new doors of knowledge and research.](image)

**Commentary on 4th Question:**

When it comes to the question of benefiting from the religious education here and hereafter, the participants who were describing many merits of religious education become confused and divide almost equally while answering this important question.

**Figure 4:** Will the religious education you have help you succeed here and hereafter?

![Figure 4: Graph showing the distribution of responses to the question about the success in religious education.](image)

**Commentary on 5th Question:**

The mindset of the people and the impacts of our education system are reflected in the answer of the last question, where majority of the people say
that they are fully satisfied with the educational standards of their county. There is no doubt that our educational system needs major modifications and the society needs uplifting in various terms but the satisfaction of the participants in regard with the standards of education reveals lack of critical thinking. The contradictions in the answers are very obvious which reflect that a complete review of the outcomes and impacts of religious education is required.

**Figure 5: Are you satisfied with the educational standards of Pakistan?**

![Figure 5: Are you satisfied with the educational standards of Pakistan?](image)

**Finding:**

- The system of religious education is our country lacks behind in promoting spiritual and moral values of Islam.
- Its role in annihilation of sectarianism is minute.
- Religious education is not able to address the modern day issues and bridge the gaps.
- Religious education in our country is not able to open new gates for research and may not be able to meet set higher standards of learning and research.
- The system of religious education lacks the approach of addressing the global issues with the help of *Ijtihād*.

**Recommendations:**

- More and more measures may be adopted to eliminate the division of religious and non-religious education.
- Stern efforts should be made to lessen the differences among the curriculum of various *Wifaq* and there may be only one curriculum.
- There should be one curriculum from grade one to twelve in all formats of education in our country.
• Social sciences should be taught in Urdu and natural sciences may be taught in English
• Studying Qur'ān with translation must be mandatory for everyone
• The need for religious education, its standards and objectives must be clear and apparent.
• The time to time requirements of state and civil society must be considered while designing the curriculums of religious education.
• All educational activities whether religious or non-religious must be brought under the umbrella of the state.
• Every child should be given basic education till grade 12 and he should be free to decide about his future.
• Teachers of religious education must be given professional modern trainings.

Conclusion:

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

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

References

1 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
2 Gross National Product
4 Johannes Gutenberg (1398 – 1468AD) was a German printer and publisher who introduced printing to Europe.
An Analytical Study of the Outcomes and Impacts of Religious Education of Pakistan, the Challenges and Opportunities


6 Ibid., p:88


10 Surah Ṭāhā: 114

11 Surah Āl ‘Imrān: 191

12 Surah Al Tawbah: 122


14 Al Bukhārī, Muḥammad bin Ismāīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al Bukhārī*, (Dār Ṭawq al Najāḥ, 1422), Kitāb al ‘Ilm, Bāb Man Uridillāhu Bihi Khairan Yufaqqihu Fid Dīn, Ḥadīth # 71

15 *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī*, Kitāb al Wuḍū‘, Bāb Waḍ‘ al Mā‘ ‘Ind al Khalā’, Ḥadīth # 143


17 Ibid.

18 Surah Al Anfāl: 39

19 Surah Āl ‘Imrān: 64

20 Surah Al An‘ām: 108