

CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ISLAMIC STATE: REFLECTIONS FROM INDO-PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This paper will discuss the gaps in the current and Islamic education systems, focusing on Indo-Pakistan. Islamic education aims to bring attitudinal changes and build a value system among humans that should transform society by promoting love, peace, equality, purity, integrity, forgiveness, and justice.

Methodology: This is descriptive research where Islamic education and Contemporary education have been analyzed. Emphasis has been placed on Indo-Pakistan, the Western education system, and the Islamization of education in Pakistan and its future.

Principal Findings: As a state, Pakistan comprises politically, geographically, culturally, linguistically, and educationally diverse people. They cannot trace their origins by calling themselves Arabs or Indians. That conflict is reflected in Pakistan's education system – which has lost its identity to be called either religious or contemporary. The moral and ethical standards to bring any positive behavior change are hardly maintained to groom the graduates in the current education system. The Western education left by the British in the Subcontinent, including Pakistan, has its colonial drawbacks, which need to be addressed.

Application of this study: In Pakistan and other Islamic states, it is essential to instill Islamic values within the current education system. One of the viable solutions that could make the Muslim world, including Pakistan, move forward is to accept modern-day learning practices and introduce a hybrid education system. A system that safeguards Islam's values and principles and has rich content of research and development in various fields carried out by the West, irrespective of religious affiliation. This study would benefit researchers and policymakers in framing such an education system.

The novelty of this study: The paper frames some recommendations to tailor the existing education system according to the Islamic education system.

Keywords: *Contemporary & Islamic Education, Education System of Pakistan, Western & Islamic Education, Hybrid Curriculum, Islamization of Education, Islamic Values & Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is accorded high priority in Islam. As the number of Islam's followers started to increase and expanded to new and varied populations, education became one of the key pillars for establishing a shared social order in society at large.

Islamic education aims to train and nurture humans to enable them to uphold Islamic principles and values. Spiritual growth and change in behavior are achieved concurrently in Islamic education. In Islamic education, the methods and techniques that cannot raise human values are avoided. Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision was to have the 'right kind' of the education system for the people of Pakistan, education that could fulfill the scientific and research needs of the nascent state with 97 percent Muslims. It was the then Minister of Education, Mr. Fazal Rahman, who extended Mr. Jinnah's philosophy by adding the spiritual and vocational pillars to strengthen the education system and customize it according to the needs of the Muslim population of Pakistan ([Irshad & Ullah, 2018](#)). According to [Sayeed \(2001\)](#), it was important for the Muslims of Pakistan to introduce a system of education that embarked on Islam's principles and teachings. Mr. Jinnah knew that an education system with the potential to tackle and diffuse the colonial mindset of the British was the way forward for the people of Pakistan.

Following the visionary footsteps of Mr. Jinnah, teachings of Islam and the Quran were termed mandatory for Muslim students acquiring education in Pakistan. The aim was to inherit Islamic ideology and grow citizens with improved social and economic values. Islam's emphasis is on modifying one's behavior through education. A few scholars linked the change in behavior to cognitive development. For social change to occur, it is essential to mold the behavior first. If the students and teachers interact with their students daily and are left unmonitored by the state, the perceived change concerning developing an Islamic society will never materialize ([Sahin, 2018](#); [Shah, 2020](#)).

Many scholars argue that Islamic schools must be flexible enough to accept changes in behavior by adopting innovative techniques. Otherwise, Islamic ideology will cease to grow, and ultimately Jinnah's vision for Pakistan gets compromised.

With the above background, this paper will try to answer the following questions:

Research Questions

- What are the historical underpinnings of Islamic education, and how is it used as a political tool?
- How the Western education prevails in the Subcontinent under British rule?
- How the phenomenon of Islamization of education took place in Pakistan, and what is its future?

REVIEW ANALYSIS

The Politics of Islamic Education: A Historical Perspective

According to Plato, to bring equilibrium in society and to ensure justice among different classes, it is important that education may be disseminated without any prejudice within society. The rulers and the subjects must have harmony for a political system to survive and for social growth to occur (Lee, 1994). The Romans put a high priority on their children's education. Children would spend the night at school to return to their homes in the morning, and the purpose of education was to transform them into persuasive speakers. Initially, the poor would have their children taught by educated Greek slaves in their homes. Since understanding technical literature is increasingly essential in the technological age, education has taken on a new significance (Boven, 2017). Islam described similar phenomena and emphasized education of all kinds- religious, technical, or of natural origin – as they are trickling down from the same source: the divine forces of Allah.

Sura Al A'laq and Sura Ar Rahman state emphatically that Allah has developed humans so that some of the knowledge they gain may be readily available. However, humans do not know everything. Over time, human beings tend to explore and gain more knowledge. Here, the Creator (Allah) does not differentiate between the religious and natural sciences. It means there is no need to choose between two paths when learning, as all knowledge comes from Allah (Putra, 2017). Education remained one of the core areas during the foundation years of Islam. Daar I Arqam was one such initiative. It was an institution for gaining knowledge regarding religion and uplifting the people to wipe out social ills.

Muhammad founded Daar I Arqam in Makkah in the early years of Islam (Peace Be Upon Him). During Umer's administration, mosques were built in every village to serve as learning and social interaction centers. Rulers had a significant impact on the growth of educational pursuits. For the growth of education, it was necessary to implement Islamic law/Code (Shari'ah) since the lack of familiarity with Islamic principles is fatal to the implementation of Shari'ah. Moreover, it has been observed that the rulers used Shari'ah and politics to settle a political score and gain an administrative advantage.

Throughout history, mosques and madrasas have been used to bolster the political power of rulers. For instance, rulers of *Bani Saljuk*, established the *Madrasa Nizamiya*. It was a predecessor to Al-Azhar University in Cairo and was meant to insert religion as a powerful tool in the country's political system. The foundation of the Madrasah was to counter the Fatimid Dynasty of Egypt and to fight and decrease the influence of the philosophical underpinnings of *Buwaihi* and *Zaidiyah* Shia. Nizam's religious schools were purposely built to be used as a political strategy tool. The primary goal of establishing this network of religious schools was the indoctrination of a state theology that strengthened the monarchy. From his examination of the Nizamiya Madrasah, Putra (2017) concludes that 'the political position in Islam is as important as education; without political authority, the Islamic Shari'ah is difficult, even impossible, to uphold.' As discussed above, it is evident from history that two crucial components of every state's social and political structure are its educational system and its political structure – a fact accepted historically by Greeks, Italians, British and Muslim scholars. The fields of education and politics are generally treated as different entities despite their mutual importance to the functioning of the political system. The two spheres of influence, education and politics, work together to shape citizens' personalities. The political culture within the universities and colleges influences the government in power and vice versa. It serves as a breeding ground for future political leadership. These political leaders propel the state's ideology using educational institutions as a tool.

This study suggests that disseminating an Islamic ideology can be accomplished through the Islamic education system; however, political power is indispensable to achieving this objective. It is believed that society is regulated through power, so a well-governed religious structure is necessary. As a totalitarian faith, Islam regulates every aspect of a Muslim's life, from what they eat and drink to how they run their homes, interact socially, and even worship. In addition, Islam has a hard time separating political and religious issues due to political motives (Metcalf, 1978).

During the British rule in Subcontinent, a similar kind of strategy was adopted to influence the people of this region. The British used their political power to design an education system that left a colonial legacy in this part of the world – the traces of this legacy are still glaring in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Education in Indo-Pak and the Western Influence

Western imperialism threatened Muslim hegemony in many parts of the world. The Portuguese, the French, and the British were among the first Western imperialists to arrive in South Asia looking to gain a foothold. However, Britain

quickly became the region's dominant power. The Mughals' decline in power paralleled the British Empire's steady expansion into Indian territory. The British government used the strategy of 'divide and rule' to encourage India's diverse cultural groups to fight amongst each other. Moreover, it helped them achieve their goal of strengthening British governmental and cultural institutions. Both the English language and European pedagogical practices were pushed. There was now a third major cultural group in India – the one who had left their traditional religious practices and adopted the British religious code; they were called 'Anglicized Indians.' Such a mixed breed of British Indians was under the strong influence of Christianity ([Rahman et al., 2018](#)).

More than just destroying the foundation of Mughal historical legitimacy, the British did much more. The institutional innovations introduced by the British over nearly two centuries had the most far-reaching implications. The British laid the foundation of the justice system and, at the same time, devised a mechanism for choosing political leadership – calling democratic form an ideal one for this part of the region. Western conceptions of Law and its role in society differ greatly from Islamic ones. Shari'ah, the legal code followed by Muslims, is not written by human beings but is derived from the Quran and other religious texts through various processes, one of which is deduction. However, it was the education system that left deep marks on Indo-Pak society ([Mukherjee, 2009](#)). According to [Ali \(2016\)](#), the British introduced education system compromised 'the secular morality,' made education more commercialized, and detached religion to its core. It was contrary to Islamic education, whose spiritual foundations are revealed by God (Allah) through His Prophets. Western education will inspire an ideology of its own and can never develop the spiritual values of Muslim students. The British saw education as a means of imposing a Western pedagogy, body of knowledge, and application method on the indigenous Indian population in the Subcontinent.

The education system that was placed by the British divided the population into various classes and groups in the Subcontinent. This led to a substantial economic imbalance between different segments of society. Besides this, the British desire was to inject knowledge that could make the Muslim moderate enough to challenge the values and principles offered by the local education system of the Subcontinent. The educational tenets and methods of the British Empire were passed on to India and Pakistan, along with a wealth of information. However, as time passed, the British set the tone for Western imperialism in the Indian Subcontinent. Pakistan, India, and other nations of the Subcontinent inherited the systems left by the British. The parliamentary setup, legislative apparatus, education system, and military supremacy were some of the British innovations still deeply ingrained in the Indian and Pakistani political systems today. The British enacted Western-style legal procedures to ease the way for their commercial ventures. Western ideas about Law and its function in society differed significantly from those held in the Middle East and Asia, having a Muslim majority ([Putra, 2017](#)). For instance, Law in the Islamic world does not originate with lawmakers but is instead derived from scripture through inductive reasoning.

The British government saw education as instilling in its subjects a body of knowledge that originated in the West. This was seen as essential for reasons beyond the apparent British intellectual decree. After its independence in 1947, Pakistan adopted the subject matter of Western education and the philosophy and pedagogy of English-language schools ([Kamei, 2018](#)).

The need for a customized curriculum to promote Islamic education and the teacher's role in developing religious value systems in students was felt.

DISCUSSION

Curriculum and Philosophy of Islamic Education

The curriculum needs more cohesion, and communication can be vital in bridging scattered knowledge under one roof of Islamic education. Moreover, effective communication strategies can fill the gaps in political ideologies regarding education. The youngster's tendency to vote for educated political leaders is rising. A well-educated segment of society is more likely to vote for educated, honest, and trustworthy candidates in the future. For this reason, traditional politics embedded with power, graft, collusion, and favoritism have disappeared. To a certain extent, the evolution of Islamic philosophy is a natural cause of the rapid pace at which Islamic education is expanding ([Putra, 2017](#)). Therefore, it is the state's responsibility to shoulder the development of a curriculum tailored toward promoting Islamic values. Once the curriculum is developed, the role of the teacher comes into play to pass on Islamic values to their students.

The Role of Teachers

It is essential to reform the education system and hire teachers with a command of Islamic knowledge and the ability to transfer that to their students. Reforms in how we see knowledge and how we approach educational problems include comparing the 'ideal' teacher with those who consider teaching routine matter. Political interference is involved in most selections, particularly in Pakistan. Teachers are considered a central brick of the learning process. Transparency in the selection of teachers will ensure the trickling down of Islamic values to the end product, i.e., students, to build a society in line with Islamic principles.

Promoting religious teachers and adapting curriculum and pedagogy need attention, even in education. In Pakistan, during Zia Ul Haq's regime, an attempt was made to impart Islamic education in actual letter and spirit and minimize Western education's influence. Zia's era was the rise of Islamic education in Pakistan.

The Rise of Islamic Education in Pakistan

General Zia Ul Haq was a military dictator. He tried to bring about policy changes in the education system and introduced reforms to nurture Islamic ideology within Pakistan. Zia's plan for Islamization had both harmful and beneficial underpinnings. The new government in Pakistan believed it was necessary to eliminate all foreign institutions and practices within the country, particularly those that had been left over from the British era and were incompatible with Islam. Political chants based on the language, if not the spirit, of Islam were supposed to banish these ills. Removing these non-native additions to the political structure would pave the way for an authentic Islamic state. It was expected that the spiritual perfection of Islam's vitality and energy would be released to become the bedrock of Pakistan's political system in the long run ([Shah, 2012](#)).

The political philosophy of the modern state, notably its explanations of the nature and purpose of government, was one of the worst aspects of Western influence. Zia argued that it is necessary to recognize Allah's absolute sovereignty and to downplay, if not abandon, arguments that support democracy as inherently legitimate. General Zia believed there was no such thing as the people's will, so elections were just a mock exercise for him. Parties in politics were widely viewed with aversion. Zia made it clear more than once that he considered political parties un-Islamic due to their tendency to cause division within the community rather than foster harmony. Islam dictates equal status for all, so encouraging division and political conflicts contradict that ([Shah, 2012](#)).

The Islamic education program of Zia was ambitious. It was never completely implemented due to a shortage of teachers, materials, and financial resources. Nevertheless, religious education flourished as the number of religious institutions of higher learning (Madrasahs) increased dramatically. As a result of these programs, many more people got degrees in Islamic studies than the ratio of available jobs for them.

Many of these religious schools gave birth to radicalistic or reactionary elements in those segments of society that were economically struggling and were ignored by the state to provide the necessities of life. Their numbers multiplied, and eventually, these radicals crossed into Afghanistan to seek shelter and started to attack and damage public property in Pakistan as revenge ([Roy, 2002](#)).

The young population is confused either to acquire Islamic or Western education. One pathway is tagged for building spiritual values, and the other is considered an attractive way of finding a job with reasonable earnings. According to [Cohen \(2004\)](#), this confusion created a 'religious lumpen proletariat.'

The Islamization of education also includes the push to evaluate all fields of study, from anthropology to zoology, considering Islamic teachings to eradicate any content contrary to Islam's fundamental belief system. Further, fields such as anthropology, psychology, and economics evolved methodologies based on Islam. Fundamentally, these strategies start with the organic unity of Islam. Therefore, the various parts of society are not separated into their intellectual and institutional spheres; instead, all are considered interconnected. Zia's regime is remembered for splitting the gender and treating men and women as two separate entities for acquiring education. It can be rightly termed that Zia attempted to end the 'co-education concept' as left by the British in the Subcontinent. As soon as the Zia regime was over, co-education was restored in educational institutions. The separate education facilities incentivized tribal people of Pakistan to send their children to schools – particularly women. Many Muslims, especially tribal elders, believe that it is improper for men and women to interact outside the context of the family, especially when it involves children and teenagers in formal educational settings. It was also in line with the essential spirit of Islam to segregate genders once they reach puberty. Because this point largely integrated elementary and secondary schools, the initiative greatly affected postsecondary institutions, particularly universities. The proposal to establish a women's university served as the apex of the effort to segregate students by gender, and it was met with widespread opposition during Zia's era. Only a suggestion to add graduate programs to existing women's institutions came out of this notion, quickly abandoned due to exorbitant expenses and a lack of educated female teachers. Education in the Arabic language was suggested as a fourth option. The idea of introducing the Arabic language was inspired by the fact that Quran was revealed in this language. Therefore, a population fluent in the Holy scripture language must establish an actual Islamic state.

Along with the regional languages of Pashto, Baluchi, Sindhi, and Punjabi at provincial levels, Urdu was declared a national language by the government of Pakistan. Besides this, English was mandatory for official communication, whereas Arabic was added to the language list to promote Islamic script effectively ([Rahman, 2004](#)). This program achieved very little success due to a lack of resources. Moreover, General Zia lost his life in a tragic air crash. After his death, the idea of reforming Pakistan's education system according to Islamic ideology lost momentum. Zia's policies were considered by some as too hard to be implemented. Therefore, these policies were soon shelved, and the newly formed governments brought in their flexible policies, including education policy. The new establishment claimed that the revised education policy was designed according to the public's aspirations ([Singh, 2014](#)).

Except for Zia's military rule, little effort was made to promote religious education in public schools or to adapt curricula and teaching methods to meet the needs of Muslims. Zia took a keen interest in the education system of Pakistan and made systematic efforts to transform Pakistan's educational system along Islamic lines ([Geijbels, 1979](#)).

With the end of Zia's era, the chances for Islamic education to grow further in Pakistan faded away.

The Future of Islamic Education in Pakistan

The blueprint that Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi provides for an Islamic state is 'clearer than any other fundamentalist advocate of such a state'. Unfortunately, despite his considerable intellectual influence, Maududi could not bridge the gap between political ideology and the problems that a common man encounters. He was not particularly enthusiastic about institutional mechanics and design. He thought that with the right combination of spiritual script and education, a systematic change could take place in such a manner that it will encourage natural adaptation to be more in line with Islamic principles. His primary focus was on the creation of theoretically abstract formulations and ethical pedagogical material. He was less concerned with economic freedom than he was with the survival of traditional Muslim attire, language, and practices (Nasr, 2000). Maududi's speech painted a vision of a strong, authoritative state that could count on the support of the people so long as it upheld Islamic values. Education in the true teachings of Islam would guarantee widespread support and would discourage the state to misuse its power in implementing its agenda forcefully. No one could reasonably expect an Islamic state to use oppression or abuse of power in accordance with the Shari'ah's precepts.

Seasoned educationist, and freedom fighter, Sir Syed was among the first Muslim leaders who realized that the Hindus are taking a lead and are adopting the education system introduced by the British in Subcontinent. He started to advocate for an inclusive education system that promotes Islamic values and fits into the Western style of learning. He tried to introduce a unified curriculum using the language of Islamic conviction. So, these reformers sought to combine Islam with contemporary ideas by means of schooling by stressing the common ground of Muslim identity (Rehmani, 1959).

On many occasions, Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, stressed the need of investing in education as a precondition for growth and development, particularly the economy. There was no doubt in his mind that Lord Macaulay's system was designed with the demands of the British rule in the Subcontinent. Since it was difficult to find workers for the kind of jobs the British colonialists intended the Indians to do, it attempted to train battalions of clerks and subordinate officers from among the Indian population to administer this part of the world. Therefore, Jinnah contrasted the British educational system in India with the 'ideal' educational system, which was inaccessible to most Indians. While addressing the All Bengal Students Federation on August 18, 1936, he pointed out;

'We want to produce independent progressive and fearless men who will work sincerely for the country and when we have done that we mean to make as great a contribution to the freedom of our motherland as any other community'.

The next day, on August 19, 1936, he urged them not to participate in active and violent politics but to stay informed about what was happening around them. According to Jinnah, eradicating ignorance could be accomplished via formal education. To him, learning was the cornerstone of improvement and growth (News Desk, 2004).

In short, there is a need to change the direction and make policy interventions to accept the modern-day challenges in education as envisioned by the founder of Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The citizens of Pakistan have been going through identity crises since its inception. Although independent, its people have not shared a common history or culture. As a state, they comprise politically, geographically, culturally, linguistically, and educationally diverse people. They cannot trace their origins by calling themselves Arabs or Indians. That conflict is reflected in Pakistan's education system – which has lost its identity to be called either religious or contemporary. The man in the street is perplexed about which education system benefits his survival. It is hard for all institutions and policymakers to reconcile Islam with Pakistan's current form of political and bureaucratic mechanism. Lack of understanding in the field of education is a problem for both policymakers and the general population. The choice between the Islamic educational paradigm and the current Western will stay unresolved. No matter how peculiar or varied its reaction is, it may be attributed only to religion and the contemporary world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the viable solutions that could make the Muslim world, including Pakistan, move forward is to accept modern-day learning practices and introduce a hybrid education system. A system that safeguards Islam's values and principles and has rich content of research and development in various fields carried out by the West, irrespective of religious affiliation. In this way, Pakistan may realize Jinnah's vision that he perceived after the independence of Pakistan in 1947.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to the Western and Islamic education systems in Indo-Pakistan only.

COAUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

The first author conceived the presented idea. The second author developed the idea and reviewed the relevant literature. The third and fourth authors verified the written text and methods. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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