

# Islamisation of Education in Pakistan: A Review of Education Policies

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## ***Abstract***

*In the All Pakistan Educational Conference (1947) it was suggested to develop the system of education in Pakistan as per the guiding Islamic principles to uplift character of the students. The Commission on National Education 1959 forwarded the education system should enable Muslims to live their lives according Islamic ideology. To materialise this aspiration, Islamic studies was recommended to be put as compulsory subject at elementary level and as optional from secondary onwards to bachelors. The Education Policy of 1970 proposed that Islamiyat should be taken compulsory up to secondary level classes and beyond that stage it should be made an optional subject. The Education Policy of 1972-78, advocated the compulsory position for the subject of Islamic Studies within the curriculum for making students better Muslims. The Education Policy of 1978 advocated Islamiyat to be initiated as a compulsory subject up to the bachelors. The Education policies of 1992, 1998 and 2009 proposed teaching of Islamic education and the holy Quran to equip students with the knowledge of Islam. Teaching of Islamic contents to students was envisioned to train students to live in accordance with the ideology of Islam in their practical life. Overall, there has been a consistent effort at Islamising curriculum in Pakistan.*

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**Keywords:** Islamisation, Education policy, *Islamiyat*, Pakistan, Review

## **Introduction**

Since the independence of Pakistan in 1947 efforts have been going on to Islamise the socio-political system of the country. The Objectives Resolution of the Pakistani legislature, which was presented in 1949 to suggest measures to Islamise the constitution, was the beginning of a process which has never stopped. The Resolution later on became the preamble of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973. The constitutional amendments introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq, the former military president of Pakistan, solidified the process of Islamisation of the country further (Faizi, 2010). The education policy of 1978, which is popularly known as Islamic Education Policy by

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many people, is considered as the most radical shift towards the Islamisation of education in the country. One impact of the process has been changes in the Education Policies and the National Curriculum at the school and college level. Subjects such as the compulsory *English* language, *Pakistan Studies*, *Civics* and *Urdu* have been used to promote the process of Islamisation on a mass-level in Pakistan (Iqbal, 2013).

The current study aims at highlighting the process of Islamisation of the education policies in Pakistan; delineating the factors that impacted this process and exploring the causes and consequences of the process in the course of history in the country. Immediately after the creation of Pakistan in August, 1947, from November 27, to December 1, 1947, educational conference was conducted in Karachi in order to channelize on the contours of the future education system of Pakistan. Fazal ur Rahman, the then education minister, repeated the words given by Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah argued, in the light of almost a century rule by Britishers in India, to carry on with the education system as per the needs of the people. It was also suggested that the education system needed to be brought in harmony with the history and culture of Islam in the novice state of Pakistan.

Two resolutions were passed in the conference, the first one proposed Pakistani education system to be in line with the ideology of Islam and students should be taught tolerance, justice and moderation. The second resolution proposed that religious education should be made compulsory for Muslim as well as for non-Muslim students. The students of other religions would get the similar benefits through religious education such as moral and social grooming to become good human beings (Govt. of Pakistan, 1947).

## **Review of Literature**

### **Commission on National Education 1959**

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1958, a commission was made during the rule of General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the military ruler of Pakistan. The then education minister, SM Sharif, headed the commission. It was argued that it was the ideology of Islam which caused the creation of Pakistan and to enable the Muslims of the area to live according to the Islamic laws and practices. The basic aim of the secondary education was put forward as the development and promotion of the Islamic identity and nationalism of the Pakistani people (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959). The commission suggested to make Islamiyat as compulsory in primary and middle schools while at the university level, research in *Islamic studies* should be started. As well, the university teaching staff need to develop their expertise in the comparative studies of religions and world history. Teachers were expected to shed light on the importance as well as need of religious understanding in the current era of science and technology (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959).

The commission proposed the university teaching faculties to highlight the progressive and practical aspect of Islam in the curricula of higher education. At the same time, care must be taken to not reflect science Islamic religious learnings as opposing philosophy, economics, or any other subject. There is a need to show Islam as complementary to the rest of the disciplines. The curriculum at tertiary level must be brought in ways that fulfils the requirements of society in modern times (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959).

### **The Education Policy of 1970**

Air Marshal, Noor Khan, governor, West Pakistan, published educational problems which the Federal ministry of education proposed to solve in 1970. The policy proposed that Islam and the Islamic ideology of Pakistan should be promoted through the education system till

*Islamiyat*

compulsory

of the country. It was put forward to make secondary level classes and beyond to make it an optional subject

whereas the 1959 commission report proposed *Islamic Studies* in the category of compulsory subjects to the 8<sup>th</sup> class. It was proposed that science and mathematics should be taught in Madaras (religious seminaries). In this connection, the teaching staff at religious institutions must be provided with training in the subjects of the modern times. Islamic seminaries should be merged into the normal schools of contemporary education. It was also proposed that the missionary institutions such as Convent schools run by Christian missionaries should be nationalised (Govt. of Pakistan, 1970).

### **The Education Policy of 1972-78**

The reign of ZA Bhutto presented education policy 1972-78 in the country. The policy forwarded the process of Islamisation of the education system a step further. Islamic studies was suggested to made compulsory for the Muslim students till secondary school level. Some initiatives were taken to eradicate any un-Islamic content form in the text books or in the curriculum. At the same time, Radio and TV were suggested to broadcast recitation with translation of the Holy Qura'an, for students in the schools. Moreover, institutions of religious studies such as Wafaq ul Madaras Al-Arabia, Tanzeem-ul-Madaras Ahl-e-Sunnah and Wafaq-al-Madaras Al-Shafia were given permission to carry on with their task (Govt. of Pakistan, 1972).

### **The Education Policy of 1978**

The education policy 1978 appeared under the military regime of General Muhammad Zia ul Haq. In this policy the Islamisation of education got a great boost due to which it was also called as Islamic Education Policy. The policy focused on the promotion of Islamic ideology and religious identity of the people of Pakistan. The policy aimed at to groom students according to the teachings of the holy Quran (the Islamic sacred book) and Sunnah (sayings, actions and



teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) to pave way for becoming good Muslims (Govt. of Pakistan, 1978).

Several suggestions were presented to Islamise the education of Pakistan further. It includes to turn *Islamiat* as a compulsory subject in schools, colleges, universities, and professional and technical institutions of the country. All of the curricula and textbooks' alterations at all levels were suggested to modify education system according to the ideology of Pakistan and the principles of Islam. Besides this, Madaras, Makatab and Dar-ul-uloom were proposed to be given due importance and patronage so that these could impart adequate religious education (Govt. of Pakistan, 1978).

### **The Education Policy of 1992**

The education policy 1992 was furnished in the government of PM of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif. This policy also presented proposals to Islamise the system of education in Pakistan. It came to attention that the Islamised version of education is beneficial for students in true sense due to the fact that being Muslims that have the capacity to fully consume the message of Islam. Consequently, they could progress in the field of science and technology. It was proposed that only Islamising the education system of Pakistan was not enough. There is need to launch such programs that may help students better understand the actual essence of Islamic knowledge. They must be able to have an Islamic world view enabling them to grasp the subjects of science and technology by observing the Islamic principles in their practical life. Similarly, recitation of the Holy Qura'an supplemented by Islamic lectures should be conducted in schools' students' morning assemblies. It was proposed to have mere recitation of the holy Quran at primary level while the translation and interpretation, at secondary level (Govt. of Pakistan, 1992).

### **The Education policy of 1998**

The Education Policy of 1998 presented a number of points which were aimed at the Islamisation of education in Pakistan. The policy suggested teaching the translation of Holy Qura'an in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and must be carried out 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Furthermore, Deeni Madaras (seminary) system should be integrated with the formal education system to eradicate sectarianism and to provide opportunities of employment to the graduates of Deeni Madaras (religious seminaries). It was proposed that contents related to the holy Quran and Islamic principles, values, personalities and morals should be made part of the the textbooks as per the subject and class (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998).

### **The Education Policy of 2009**

In the Education policy of 2009, many measures were proposed to Islamise the education system of Pakistan. The religious as well as Islamic teachings need to be the portion of curriculum. The subject of *Islamiat* as a compulsory, from primary to the graduation within the whole general and professional institutions. Besides, *Islamiat* was put as an optional subject, termed as "Islamic Education", from secondary to higher secondary classes to give strength to the teachings of Islam (Govt. of Pakistan, 2009). Similarly, the propositions included to make the teachings of Islam as an integral part of the teacher training curriculum in order to make the student teachers faithful followers of Islam in the teachers training institutions. The policy stated not to allow the kind of ant-literature in the context of any sect or ethnic groups living in Pakistan. The non-Muslim students should be taught Ethics or moral education. Teachers should be hired for that sake as per requirement (Govt. of Pakistan, 2009).

### **Critical review of the education policies of Pakistan**

The All Pakistan Education Conference (1947) emphasised training students according to the teachings of Islam. Mainly, the

conference concerned the adaptation of education as per the needs of fast changing time. The conference also advocated science education complemented with knowledge of Islam for a balanced development of students. The Conference proposed measures to groom students as better Muslims but no practical action plan was proposed to make students better Muslims and self-sacrificing human beings. It presented some theoretical proposal to Islamise students which could never be practically implemented in the education system of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2009).

The commission of 1959 impacted the education system in terms of structure and outcomes in Pakistan. *Islamiat* was proposed to be made compulsory for the students of elementary classes. Moreover, *Islamic studies* was proposed as an optional subject for the students of secondary to graduate classes. Research related with Islamic studies was also encouraged to present solution regarding the problems of modern times. So, this Commission presented its proposals for Islamisation of the education system of Pakistan. As an outcome, the elementary curriculum received *Islamiat and Islamic studies* as compulsory and optional subjects respectively (Ahsan, 2003).

The Education Policy of 1970 continued the legacy of Islamising the country because *Islamiat* was proposed as compulsory subject to the secondary level. After that stage, as an optional subject, it was recommended. The teaching of *Islamiat* received a gradual enhancement. As per the report of the commission (1959), *Islamiat* was declared as a compulsory subject for elementary classes (Hammed-ur-Rehman & Sewani, 2014).

The Education Policy of 1972 envisioned to make students better Muslims and the duty was assigned to parents, teachers and media. The policy commended Islamic studies as compulsory subject till secondary classes. Also, any material found against the teachings of

Islam, should be removed from the textbooks (Ahmad, Rauf, Imadullah & Zeb, 2012).

The Education Policy (1978) is regarded as an indicator to Islamise the system of education in Pakistan. For the first time, *Islamiyat* was taken as compulsory subject till the graduation level. Besides, Islamic lessons were introduced in *English* language textbooks, *Pakistan Studies*, *Urdu and Civics* (Ahmad, 2009). This policy made conscious efforts to Islamise education system by introducing Islamic contents in the textbooks other than *Islamiyat*/Islamic studies (Shah, 2012).

The Education Policy of 1992 laid emphasis on the spiritual aspect Islamic studies as a teaching subject. The purpose was to make students tolerant and true practising Muslims by following the tenets of Islam. The translation of Holy Qura'an should be the guide for moral and spiritual development. The proposals of the policy could not be practically implemented because forthcoming government did not continue the policies of the former government (Shah, 2012).

The Education Policy of 1998 continued the process of Islamising the education system of Pakistan which was started from the inception of Pakistan in 1947. The policy aimed to prepare enlightened and civilized Muslim students. In order to achieve this, it was recommended to revise, update and modify the current curriculum in the light of the teachings of holy Quran and practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (Hasan, 2007).

The Education Policy of 2009 proposed to Islamise the curriculum of Pakistan by continuing the practice of teaching *Islamiyat* as a compulsory subject from elementary to degree classes. In addition, publication in opposition to any sect, minority, or religion inside the country, was gravely forbidden. It is, also, a constructive measure to

make people tolerant as well as broad-minded in accordance with the true spirit of Islam (Ahmad, et al, 2012).

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The above presentation indicates that there has been consistency in the Pakistani education policy making regarding Islamisation of the education system. There has been no significant counter narrative to this process mainly because of the Islamic ideological foundations of the country and the subsequent politico-religious climate. Despite this seemingly smooth progression regarding the increasing Islamisation of the education system in the country, the process has been received both with enthusiasm and apprehension by different schools of thought in the country. Those who are in favour of Islamisation (Mawdudi, 1998; Valliani, 2014) believe that introduction of Islamic contents in the textbooks will make the Pakistani students good Muslims and better human beings. Moreover, they will become members of the universal Islamic community that will encourage them to work for the betterment of humanity. Being true practicing Muslims they will become truthful, honest, sincere, modest, tolerant, moderate and virtuous.

There is also the view that by unifying the majority of the Muslim population of the country through the bond of religion, the forces of regionalism and ethnic political leanings could be countered effectively. Nationalism based on religion could be merged with patriotism among the inhabitants of the state of Pakistan to make the country stronger and stable internally and externally (Hasan, 2007). Supporters of Islamisation also believe that teaching the Islamic injunctions of love and respect for humanity will help create a peaceful and harmonious society in the country (Faizi, 2010).

Those who are skeptical about the process of Islamisation (Nayyar & Salim, 2005; Haqqani, 2010) argue that the promotion of a national identity based on religion could lead to a rigid unified religious

society which could lead to the exclusion of minority groups from the main stream. Moreover, the curricula especially the contents related to Islamic or Muslim history could transform the impressionable minds of students on extreme conservative and exclusivist lines. This could lead to narrow mindedness, lack of tolerance and respect for other beliefs, religions and cultures (Haqqani, 2010, Ahsan, 2003). This narrative, however, does not seem to have any significant impact on the content and structure of an education system oriented towards a religio-ideological identity formation of the Pakistani society over the years since its independence.

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