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Secularization of Education and its Hazardous Implications for Pakistan

Muhammad Shareef Khan*

Abstract

Pakistan is the first country that came into existence on the basis of Muslim nationhood. Hindus were anxious to marginalize the Muslims & condemn them to a permanent minority. This apprehension compelled the Muslim to carve out a separate geographical entity for themselves and for their coming generations. After partition the most important task for the founder was the preservation and promotion of Muslim ideology in the newly born state and it was possible through education only. Since its establishment Pakistan has been struggling hard to achieve this objective through different educational policies. After 9/11, Washington in particular & the West in general have been pressing Pakistan to modernize its education system on secular lines in order to curb Islamic extremism. It has also been recommended to limit Quranic references from the courses of study so as to appease the non Muslim minorities in Pakistan. This article tends to examine the aftermaths of secularization of education in Pakistan.

Keywords: Secularization, Education, Pakistan

Introduction

The word Secular as per Oxford dictionary means: "Anything not concerned with spiritual or religious affairs, which is purely worldly". Secular state means a state that does not allow religion to interfere with the collective affairs of the people. Secular education means education not based on any religious or divine faith. Secularization means a belief that moral education etc should not be based on religious or spiritual values. Any person who is believer and supporter of secularism will not believe in any Divine faith.

Secular education includes the study of public laws that protects their citizens against unfair preference and discrimination from a body of clerics who are organized for coercive purpose of performing an apostolic work, tradition of biased theological preaching and teaching

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passed down and a certain serious offenses specified in sectarian laws affecting specific religious communities. This study of public law involves secular trends, the amending changes of public laws over a long period of time generally years or decades. Having reviewed the related literature one may conclude that Secularization of education system would mean:

- Evacuating the moral contents from the system of education. Thereby denying cultivation of morals by closing the sources of virtues. When there is no moral content, no moral dignity, no God consciousness, it means there will be no piety and no control of wisdom over power. It will be like an elephant without any control, which may run over anything that happen to be on its way.
- Hence Secularization of education shall be producing and preparing succeeding generation without any God consciousness & respect for human dignity.
- Secularizing education in Muslim's states / societies would mean that text-books would be free from Quranic thoughts and prophetic injunctions.
- Secularization empowers individuals by allowing them to plan, choose, and legislate without any regard to religious or revelational guidance. In fact, secularism is committed to self-sufficiency of human reason.

An educational system considered highly secular would have to be the French Public education system going as far to ban conspicuous religious symbols in schools. While on other hand the Australian secular system of public schooling allows religion introduced by the Howard conservative government in an attempt to inject values into the public school system as it was argued at that time. Many other countries in the world like India claim to have secular education system yet their system is based on Hindu mythology. Many European countries claim to have Secular education system still their education system is subordinated by Christianity or other revealed religion of their own.

The Reality of Quranic Concept of Education

In the proceeding section, we have given an operational definition of secular system of education. Here it seems necessary to understand Quranic Concept of knowledge, which hopefully will add to the conceptual clarity of the readers. In order to understand Quranic concept of knowledge and education we may have to go to the origin of human history.

Human being has been sent to this world as vicegerent of God. His stay in this world is for a specific period. His success in the next world purely depends on the role he plays here. According to the saying of the prophet, "This world is the field for the next world". Whatever we do here, we shall get their full consequences in the hereafter. In order to get maximum benefit from this world and to be successful in the next world, God endowed man with two types of knowledge:

- **Acquisitional Knowledge**
  This type of knowledge is gained through the development of human faculties. The more we develop our faculties, the more we will extend the frontiers of knowledge. It goes from the depth of oceans to the height of skies. The modern inventions in the field of science and Technology, give you power over those who have not developed their faculties. But power is always blind without wisdom. If exercised blindly and forcefully, it leads to tyranny. Power needs to be subordinated to wisdom. History shows that all those who exercised power without wisdom have brought destruction to themselves and to mankind.
- **Revelational Knowledge**
  It is the type of knowledge revealed to mankind through His messengers (Prophets). This kind of knowledge deals with the conquest of human nature. It needs faith in God. Whereas, acquisitional knowledge does not need any faith in God. This knowledge guides man as how to use acquisitional knowledge. It gives us wisdom and values. It teaches piety. Exercise of power without piety leads to cruelty and injustice. Power must be subordinated by piety (wisdom). We cannot sacrifice either of them. Success here and in the hereafter will be possible by combining these two types of knowledge. This is what God has taught us to pray five times a day and end our prayer with such pray.

  > *"Oh God bless us with success here and in the hereafter and save us from Hell fire".*

  If we secularize our education system, we will be evacuating the moral contents from education whereas power should not be divorced from God-consciousness. This relation should not be lost sight of. Quran wants us to combine the two branches of the knowledge and utilize them for the well being of humanity.
- **Education relevant to the Context of Pakistan**
  Pakistan came into being on the basis of two nation theory. This is why Muslims from all over the sub Continent irrespective of

their regional, racial, linguistic or even sectarian differences favored the creation of Pakistan in principle. Although some of the Muslim factions have had their own reservations. However, after the emergence of Pakistan, all of them tried to strengthen it. The most important task before the founder of the nation was, the preservation and promotion of the ideology on which Pakistan came into being. This could only be possible through sound education system. In order to preserve and promote the socio-economic and cultural identity, every nation formulates educational policies, which serve as index of their national life. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah while in his written speech to the members of the first education conference said.

> *"You know the importance of education and the right type of education cannot be over emphasized. Under foreign rule for over a century sufficient attention has not been paid to the education of our own people and if we are to make real, speedy and substantial progress, we must earnestly take this question and bring our education policy and programme on lines suited to the genius of our people, consonant with our education, history and culture and having regard to the modern conditions and vast developments that have taken place all over the world."*[1]

Mr. Fazlur Rehman the then Minister of Education while addressing the conference said:

> *"It is therefore a mater of profound satisfaction to me, as it must be to you, that we have now before us the opportunity of reorienting our entire educational policy to correspond it closely with the needs of the times and to reflect the ideals for which Pakistan as Islamic State stands".*[2]

National Education Policy 1979 in its National aims of Education and their realization states.

> *"Aims of education are guide posts which provide purpose and direction to the educational system. Obviously they should be consistent with our faith, national ideology and aspiration. Since aims have to provide clear-cut*

> *framework, selection of the same need to be made boldly and with clarity of thought inorder to provide a sound and meaningful base to the educational efforts in the country."*[3]

It is interesting to note that according to Quran wherever there are two persons God is the third one, and wherever they are three, He is the fourth one and so on. It means that God adds a new dimension to human society. Our social order, so to say, has to be God conscious and we can ignore His presence at a grave risk to our own future. We may underscore that Quran wants the state/society to be vibrant with God consciousness. Secular state on the other hand is supposed to dismiss God as a foundational reference.

National Education Policy 1998-2010 vide Para 2.9-1 states

> *"Policy perceives the determination of the government to introduce Islamic order as one of the vital and important areas. It will present a strategy, which should enable the students to understand the message of the Holy Quran, imbibe with the spirit of Islam and appreciate it in the context of new scientific and technological advancement".*[4]

All the above policy statements show that Pakistan and Islamic ideology are inseparable. This has equally been recognized both at individual and collective levels. The very ingredients of Pakistan lie in the preservation of Islamic ideals both at the individual and state levels.

Overview and findings of the research study

This article is based on research study that aimed to explore whether Pakistan's prevailing system of education is in consonance with its ideological norms or otherwise. The research went at length ahead to determine whether the on going efforts of Education Sector Reforms is inspired by Islamic Ideology or conspired by some external forces to secularize our society.

For the purpose to make the study more authentic and reliable, a research study was conducted. Knowing the views of students, teachers and educational administrators, the study is summarized as under.

Findings

i). The purpose of education in Pakistan should be

	Options	Response	Percentage
a.	Preserve and promote the identity and cultural heritage of the state	39	45%

b.	Be secular and free from biases	12	14%
c.	Meet the global agenda	14	16%
d.	Promote public good fundamental human rights.	19	22%
e.	None of the above	2	3%

Explanation

- 45% of the respondents opined that education in Pakistan should promote and preserve identity and cultural heritage of the state.
- 22% of the respondents favored promotion of public good & fundamental human rights.
- 16% favored for global agenda.
- 14% favored Secularization of education.

ii). Survival of Pakistan depends on

	Options	Response	Percentage
a.	Secularization of education	0	0%
b.	Economy prosperity	16	19%
c.	Modernization of education	28	32%
d.	Strengthening its ideological foundations.	42	49%

Explanation

- 49% of the respondents gave their opinion that survival of Pakistan depends on strengthening its ideological foundations.
- 32% favored for modernization of education
- 19% favored for economic prosperity.

iii). To make public school system more meaningful, education in Pakistan needs to be

	Options	Response	Percentage
a.	Secularized.	2	3%
b.	Privatized	09	11%
c.	Ideologized	26	30%
d.	Streamlined	49	56%

Explanation

- Secularization of education has been rejected by almost all the respondents.
- 56% of the respondents have opined for streamlining of the public school system.

- While 30% of the respondents opined for ideologizing the system.
- 11% of the respondent have opined for privatization of education

iv). The recommendation of International Crises Group (ICG)[5] to limit Islamic references to the courses at school level so as to appease the religious minorities in Pakistan will:

	Options	Response	Percentage
a.	Help Pakistan to become moderate	16	19%
b.	Negate the ideology on which Pakistan came into being	37	41%
c.	Be according to the norms of democracy	04	05%
d.	Be serviceable to humanity	28	32%

Explanation
Majority of the respondents rejected the idea of limiting Islamic references to the course of study at school level as it stands against the basis of Pakistan on which it came into being.

v). The above issue was floated among the students & teachers of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools of Khyber Pakhtun Khawa. Their response is as under

Explanation
71% of the students opined that eliminating Islamic references from the courses of study at school level will weaken the basis of Pakistan.

Research Conclusions
The findings of the research studies led to the following conclusions.

- The above research study concludes that unlike other states of the world, Pakistan is a state, which came into being on the basis of Muslim ideology. The very basis of this ideology needs to be strengthened.
- The survival and progress of Pakistan as an independent and sovereign state is directly proportional to survival and progress of Pakistan's ideology.
- All the educational policies to be formulated in future should preserve and promote and reflect the basis on which Pakistan came into being.

- The rights and interest of all the religious minorities of Pakistan can be safeguarded better through preservation and promotion of the basis of Pakistan.
- Secularization of education system in Pakistan means weakening the basis of Pakistan.
- Elimination of Quranic references from the courses of study especially at school level will naturally weaken the basis of Pakistan.
- Majority of the respondents opined that education in Pakistan should preserve and promote the identity and cultural heritage of the state.
- Solution to the problem of the inefficient and dwindling state of Pakistan's public school system does not rest on secularization of education but in streamlining and reforming the system in the following directions.
    i). Improving mismanagement and introducing the culture of accountability.
    ii). Encouraging private sector to share the burden and create competitive environment on the qualitative and quantitative footings.
- This proves that the aim and objective of education system in any society is to inculcate culture of understanding and setting the path to achieve the national goals of that particular society. This accepts the right of freedom of thoughts and action for every society.
- Unlike other states of the world, Pakistan is a state which came into being on the basis of Muslim nationhood. This needs to be strengthened and all the educational policies should reflect, promote and preserve the very basis on which Pakistan came into being.

End Notes:

[1] Message to The All-Pakistan Educational Conference, held in Karachi on 27th November, 1947
[2] Mir Mohammad Ali, *Milestones: Progress of technical education in Pakistan. 1947-1997*. Sindh Board of Technical Education, Karachi, 1998
[3] Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, National Education Policy-1979
[4] Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, National Education Policy-1998-2010
[5] Pakistan Reforming the education Sector OCT 2004, ICG Report No.84

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