

Religious Education and community services: Importance of Islamic studies education as tool for social services and community welfare

Dr. Farhat Nisar

Assistant Professor
Comsats Univeristy, Islamabad

Dr. Aasia Rashid

Assistant Professor
NUML University, Lahore

Abstract

Throughout the world especially in west the stories concerning the occupation and subsequent siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, around the time of Easter 2001, presented some of the most compelling reasons why religious education needs to make a constructive contribution to community services. Majority of Pakistani culture, communal service is slightly non catalogued as different from daily occasions of life. Here, communal service may take the form in other countries especially in America Europe in the form of guide at church, raising extended blood and non-blood kin, when friends and neighbors are sick sitting in shifts at the hospital, before or after school looking after neighborhood children, bringing cooked meals to community events and funerals, and in the municipal governing processes organizing the community for activism and participation.

This paper has highlighted the importance of religious education especially Islamic studies at school, colleges and universities to educate students regarding the need of social services and community welfare. The first part of the paper is about the importance of social services in educational system. In the second part there is description about the role of religious education in

highlighting the social services which is followed by the system of religious education in Pakistan. The third part as an integral discussion presents Islamic teachings in social services and community welfare.

Keywords: *Education, Religious, Social services, Community welfare, Islamic studies.*

Introduction

No myth is more outrageous or clearer than that which says that in schools, colleges, and universities the knowledge, or whatever training is giving is nothing but based on a natural want which is certain to assert itself and to create a demand like the need of clothes, or accommodation or food. In fact the reality is totally opposite to this assumption... All leaders have to create this desire who have wanted to develop and instruct a nation.¹

The world today stands in an abyss of exploitation, chaos and despair such as has never previously been witnessed. We see around us a situation dominated by the strong oppressing the weak, the rich exploiting the poor and the ignorant ruling the enlightened. The mess humanity face is a result of one thing - the absence of Islam; from the hearts and minds of people, and the systems which regulate their lives. On a social level, we see that humanity has dragged itself to lower levels than ever before. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire there is no place to fully practice Islam For the neo-colonized ummat e Muslima because of which the Muslim world is persistently demanding for an instruction which is Islamic and educed from the Sunnah and Qur'an (plus the concern of the existing rich scholarship) that exemplifies the viewpoint in the light of Islam that how could moral ethics and knowledge be practiced to promote human development in the various disciplines of the educational system.² While teachers which has been created for the name of Islam in different places in the Muslim world even in Pakistan, often teaches Islamic and positivistic empirical sciences, both are following the approach of a banking theory that plays a very little role to improve critical thinking skills, let alone master basic conceptual knowledge. Apart from the inefficiency of these approaches, this teaching technique does not foster such citizens who are willing to work for social services and community welfare by spreading a passive slave-

like mentality to education.³ For this reason the current system of education in Pakistan has been creating doctors, engineers, scientists, architects, economists, finance experts, business men and women without humanity and compassion. There are multiple reasons behind this social phenomenon. Among them one is teaching with the business mind. Teacher of present time does not bother to transfer strong social values of society in such an effective way that students could not only learn these values but also follow them in their practical life. The only way to transfer the need of social and community services understanding in this regard is to practically involve the youth especially the students of school, colleges and universities to help the deserving people of the society. The institution which are gaining more prominence and schools, colleges and universities which are fighting with bigger challenges has more particular, significant and closest need for such an association. The resources of a university, can help in handling urban decay, environmental hazards, growing economic disparity, accommodation and health issues and immature justice issues via communal facility.⁴

Even at international level many institutions of higher education have started giving response to extensive condemnation of higher education's mismatch to the basic needs of societies and identifying a need to promote a student's public involvement to fully participate in a democratic society. Principles of community service differs from person to person and folks to folks and differ across socioeconomic status and culture. Majority of Pakistani culture, communal service is slightly non catalogued as different from daily occasions of life. Here, communal service may take the form in other countries especially in America Europe in the form of guide at church, raising extended blood and non-blood kin, when friends and neighbors are sick sitting in shifts at the hospital, before or after school looking after neighborhood children, bringing cooked meal to community events and funerals, and in the municipal governing processes organizing the community for activism and participation. It seems awkward, unfit, and even strange to consider such activities community service to those who thinks giving of their time, energy and service to others to be a usual part of their family legacy or cultural and existence. In these societies these are the forms of Experiential Education which is presented by the philosopher John Dewey, who claimed that "Events are operative and present anyway; what concerns us is their meaning" In other words, Empirical Education is transformed into working, usable knowledge

from analytic, beginning with “raw” experience that is processed through a deliberate learning format.⁵ A theory helps to deliver a detailed outline for explaining and understanding why, how, and under what parameters and limitations a process, model, or phenomenon takes place. Information and explanation generated from academic course materials is considered to be more valuable than the explanations which is presented by native communal associates due to the power differential which dictates that the explanation, information and knowledge from students and teachers are more reliable than from municipal organizations and local residents. Though numerous experts involve community partners as vibrant foundation of knowledge, not enough community expertise gets incorporated into community service initiatives.⁶

Education and community services

The goal of promoting participatory community services in youth is not new rather it has driven school-based service learning efforts since the beginning the last century. Wade and Saxe's (1996) account of the historical roots of service learning in social studies connects the conceptualization of service learning to significant population shifts from rural to urban societies at the turn of the century.⁷ Within this changing context, the goal of eminent educators such as Arthur Dunn (1916) was to foster participatory citizenship through collective projects that connected the classroom to the needs of the community Kahne and Wertheimer (1996) also describe the enthusiasm for service learning of past curriculum theorists and educational campaigners such as John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, George Counts, and Paul Hanna. Dewey, for example, is well known for endorsing a vision of democratic education that promoted project-based training for developing collective commitment in team work and academic growth.⁸ At the end of the twentieth century, why has there been resurgent advocacy for community service in youth? Youniss and Yates (1997) point to several societal parallels between contemporary conditions and those at the turn of the century. They specify such conditions as an exacerbated split between the wealthy and poor, a peacetime outlook with a low possibility of military draft, burgeoning immigration, and dramatic changes in the labor market.⁹ These conditions have contributed to a general sense of social unease, tension, and questioning about the future. Within this societal context, it is not surprising that Contemporary youth are often portrayed as disconnected from society and as in crisis (Giroux, 1996; Males, 1996).

Nor is it surprising that educators and social policymakers feel a sense of urgency about providing youth with opportunities for meaningful participation in the workings of society.¹⁰ Many studies and surveys specified participation of youth in a range of community-based activities, including fund raising for orphanage houses and old houses, helping charity based hospitals, distributing food and clothing at homeless shelters, and cleaning up parks. People have always assumed an understanding and have this concept that they can pay back to community by their conversation., Campus partners can take the advantage to gain valued, moral and logical lessons during the service of challenging the conventional idea of “giving back” or community service, especially as it applies to the needs of communities of color and other consigned groups. This thing does not idealize the role of community agencies or residents, but rather highlights the combined study technique, the interdependence of civil rights issues and asset-based community tactic. Education in university and community services is often challenging and difficult to maintain. But this relationship is also successful because both entities value each other’s knowledge and experience and they work together to develop and implement a strategy to articulate the mission and identify the goals that they have determined together. When the collaborations are successful they can create sustainable change for both education and society. The question of what we teach is just as important as how we teach; undeniably they are closely interlinked. While the cognitive aspects of education is being focused by much of the literature in the field of education should be given in the classroom is being highlighted in more recent research. In America, principles are usually derived from the liberal arts public education system, citizen, various personal religious beliefs, or some combination of both.¹¹

Community services in religious education:

Throughout the world especially in west the stories concerning the occupation and subsequent siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, around the time of Easter 2001, presented some of the most compelling reasons why religious education needs to make a constructive contribution to community services. The history of religious education in recent decades has been one of a remarkable adaptation to changing attitudes and circumstances and, although it is operating against a background of diminishing formal religious practice, it seems to be emerging at the end of the process in a stronger position than it was in at the beginning.¹²

Religion is part of the discussion about citizenship at every level. Corruption, injustice, bribery, sexual license and a general moral decadence have pervaded all levels of political life, the civil service, teachers and doctors and even the police. The widespread decadence among the leadership, which should be a source of ethical inspiration for the young, is the first problem that must be dealt with. In other words, the priority must be on the reform of the adult society. Furthermore, scientific progress and development is often accompanied by the undermining of traditional religion, in the process of which a basic human dignity which is the foundation for ethics and morality is lost. And as humans are increasingly apt to be measured by quantifying and monetary values, respect and awe for human life is decidedly being lost. Herein lies the need to pursue values which ensure equal human dignity beyond economic values and regardless of traditional religious affiliation.¹³ Towards the end of the Edo period there were private places of education throughout Japan, known as temple schools. In fact, education nation-wide had by then caught up to the point where it was second to none, with in addition clan-managed schools and even some directly managed by the government of the shogun. The source at the very root of Japan's traditional culture is a unique spirit of animism which has adopted Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, and in modern times western scientific thought.¹⁴ The British experience of religious education is sometimes held up as a model of intercultural achievement. It is true that RE has changed dramatically in Britain, partly (and in terms of temporal sequence, initially) as a result of responses to secularization, partly under the influence of the newly emergent discipline of religious studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s and partly in acknowledgment of the increasingly multi-faith and multicultural nature of society.¹⁵ There are several educational pressure groups dedicated to preserving what they see as Britain's Christian cultural heritage and what are perceived as the old moral certainties that used to keep society well ordered. The outcome of religious education as relating to the dilemma in our society about the relationship between belief, morality and action: there is mention of the influence of personal ideas and values on behavior, of 'responding to moral dilemmas which dominate our lives', of 'giving pupils convictions and wisdom to change things', and there is a good deal about teaching respect for culture, law and morality. Teachers of religious education need to understand these motivations which, for many students, are more significant than subject knowledge.

They reveal certain intellectual orientations and skills compatible with understanding and evaluating religious ideas.¹⁶

Religious education in Pakistan

Pakistan as an Islamic Ideological state declared in its constitution that all students up to undergraduate level have to have been taught the Islamic studies as compulsory subject on a mandatory basis. The aim of teaching Islamic studies up to undergrad level is ensuring the religious basis of the students. Focus of teaching Islamic studies to the students should be reflective altogether in their mind as well as practices especially as human beings and firm Muslims. In this regard the teachers must give practical and reflective education and learning to the students. But unfortunately, reality is different from the aim of learning Islamic studies or Islamic education. Because the religious education as compulsory subject is taken by the students only to fulfill the compulsory requirement except for a few learners who opt for the said subjects to get guidance in applying religious education as standard code of life, hence, restraining the students from grasping the true and practical meaning of Islam.

Islam, religious education and community services:

Islam is the only religion which has encouraged learning, teaching and education from the very first day of first revelation as the first revelation revealed to prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) started with instruction of reading.¹⁷ The whole narration states that, Angel Gabriel was assigned the task to teach and help Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in memorizing the verses of Quran in such a way that would enable Him to deliver the verses to all and followers effectively. 2800 references shows that the word ilm is ranking third behind 'Allah' and is written 750 times in the Qur'an. Practical learning is encouraged in Islam even Prophet of Islam (S.A.W) has delivered revelation of Allah not only by recitation and the verses but by giving the practical implication of these verses through following the instructions of revelation. Modernism views everything as a matter of opinion; religion does not have any constants but is merely a product of its environment and therefore inherently variable in all aspects. Due to Modernism's secular nature, notions of providential guidance are not entertained. Contrary to Modernist claims, the ulemaa of the Islamic sciences in the Muslim world have always taken the context of revelation into consideration when discussing scripture; hence, the emphasis on the Sunnah and Seerah (essentially the biography of

prophet Muhammad which gives the context that he and his companions lived in while the Qur'an was being revealed) which are their own sciences. Ethical education based on community service is one of the first and foremost objectives of all religions including the religion of Islam. Besides its ethical and moral teachings that are meant to provide man with a sound and perfect belief system, Islam offers man both a theoretical and a practical program for education and moral training and fresh interpretations of these teachings can prove to be very beneficial for the present day human society.

Knowledge in Islam is divided in to two types. One includes which is comprehended to the matters of this world and second which are hidden. The first type of knowledge includes service to humanity in general and to Muslims in specific. Knowledge in Islamic domain is that Allah has made available both two types, whether it is comprehended to this world or hereafter can benefit to us if we use them for the welfare of individual and society. The concept of worship generally defined as anything that delights Allah as mentioned in the Qur'an:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ¹⁸

“Say: (O Muhammad S.A.W) Verily my Salat (prayer), my sacrifice, my life (living) and my dying, are for Allah, the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).

The knowledge which is used for the benefit of society can only be ensured by proper character, a doctor, engineer, biologist, economist, social scientist or business professional with higher bidder doesn't benefit society with his or her theoretical knowledge. Hence, in Islam character education is equivalent to the role played by civic education in Western secular societies. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W) shows the importance of moral education by saying:

“I have been sent to perfect good character.”¹⁹

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

In fact, it is through these proper manners in Arabic called “khuluq” which means to have a proper relation with one's Lord, family, society, etc., that God would teach humans that which would benefit them.²⁰ Regarding the importance for the welfare of individual and society, the first of the two wide categories of this knowledge is that which is mandatory on every person called “Fard-ayn” the

understanding of one's commitments as a Muslim which includes articles of faith and pillars of Islam. The second category of knowledge is not obligatory but recommended as long as someone in the community accomplishes it called "Fard-e- kifaaya". Service to humanity at large scale is from this category of knowledge like business and inheritance laws, where if some do it, then it is not necessary of the rest of the community excluding if they explicitly deal with the issue (like a family lawyer knowing inheritance laws for example). But for both the knowledge it is recommended that it should be used to please Allah. Knowledge is like fruit tree if it is based on truthfulness and Iman its branches will filled with righteous deeds both for individual and society.²¹ The importance should be given to utilize this knowledge to cleanse the soul because this is what inspires a person to see and be the worst or best of people regardless of the practical knowledge one is having. If tutors and candidates takes gaining knowledge as a deed of worship, then this is a dominant inspiration given the harsh socio-economic conditions in Muslim countries. Once, students and tutors have straighten up this concept in their minds, then it becomes understandable that with theological knowledge one has a need to have knowledge about other types as well (like empirical knowledge) to improve the institutes which is necessary to nurture their society. In Islam paradise and hellfire is not directly related to gaining knowledge rather how we use this knowledge, If any skill or knowledge has made it easy to access a certain type of human activity. The positive use of empirical knowledge is if someone uses this skill and knowledge for constructive reason, like to feed someone else or himself so that they can accomplish their routine tasks. On the other hand, the negative use of this knowledge is if someone utilizes it to just to kill animals with no reasonable need and hunt for fun. Subsequently, use of empirical knowledge has made permissible by Allah for example sense used by the dog to understand and fulfill permissible human needs.

Findings

Keeping in view the whole discussion of this research following are the findings of this study.

- There is no doubt that education system for delivering awareness or whatever knowledge is giving in schools, colleges, and universities is nothing but based on a natural want which is certain to assert itself and to create a demand like the

need of clothes, or accommodation or food. This system of education is keeping students away from ethics, social responsibilities and community development.

- The mess humanity face is a result of one thing - the absence of Islam; from the hearts and minds of people, and the systems which regulate their lives. On a social level, we see that humanity has dragged itself to lower levels than ever before.
- For this reason the current system of education in Pakistan has been creating doctors, engineers, scientists, architects, economists, finance experts, business men and women without humanity and compassion. There are multiple reasons behind this social phenomenon. Among them one is teaching with the business mind. Teacher of present time does not bother to transfer strong social values of society in such an effective way that students could not only learn these values but also follow them in their practical life.
- Even at international level many institutions of higher education have started giving response to extensive condemnation of higher education's mismatch to the basic needs of societies and identifying a need to promote a student's public involvement to fully participate in a democratic society.
- The only way to transfer the need of social and community services understanding in this regard is to practically involve the youth especially the students of school, colleges and universities to help the deserving people of the society. The institution which are gaining more prominence and the universities and colleges which are struggling to deal with greater challenges has more particular, significant and closest need for such an association
- The social service guaranteed by Islam cannot be provide to Muslim societies without Muslims youth students who specifically have concern about these ethical issues and then make a way to practically implement these through community services activities in school, colleges and universities.

Conclusion:

On the practical grounds it is deliberate and obvious even in the Muslim world, from the last 10 years, while gaining the university

education to be professional and to be a part of societal modification. Muslim students are forced to learn Islam on their own. But on the practical grounds the importance of both practical and religious knowledge has been clearly highlighted by Islam which is already many youth in the Muslim world knows therefore it is not difficult to employ in inspiring students to consume both in working towards social services or community services. So far as the point of motivation is concerned the emphasize on “Forbidding the Evil and Commanding the Good “by Islam should be highlight to teachers and students. The Islamic analogue to “social activism.” Allah says “You Muslims are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin goodness and forbid evil, and you believe in Allah”.²² Allah has promised that the area which has still some Muslims on it will not be destroyed.”(Muslims who forbid from wrong and invite towards good deeds) among them.²³ Since the importance of social services or community welfare is obvious among youth specially students who can be best Muslihoon than the teachers. They can motivate their students through engaging them in social services activities as part of their curriculum and subjects. Through this compulsory inspiration that they are participating in an incredible deed of worship for example forbidding the evil and commanding the good as Muslims, professors are engaging their students to take part in vigorous working for community welfare and social services

As recent psychological studies show that Spiritual motivation act as a powerful incentive in initiating social change and community services, so the question arises if it is already present as a noticeable force in the society or religion then Who is going to teach properly and effectively that how moral conducts give benefit to our society? Who is going to emerge the need of social justice and compassionate feelings among the youth? No one is else better than their teachers because school takes most time of the day for the student to interact with their teachers, colleges and universities. We do not have enough leaders and role models but as far as this deficiency is concerned the best and the most direct opportunity is teachers by establishing and presenting them as role models we can offer students practical demonstrations of how to be an active participant in society with academic content and morals. Muslim societies are not going to change on their own, teachers are in an essential position to be Muslihoon and create others who will change society through their education as well.

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