

Citizenship Education in Pakistan

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This paper seeks to explore the context of Pakistan from the traditional vs. the modern, the religious vs. the secular, and the democratic vs. the autocratic, as well as to analyze how citizenship education is currently producing three outcomes: namely moral and law abiding citizens, market-based citizens (self created term coined for citizens created for a market based economy) and nationalistic and Islamic citizens. A critical discourse of the Pakistan Ministry of Education curriculum, policy documents and frameworks will be drawn upon to build the case that Pakistan's citizenship education is not producing critical thinkers who "develop their social consciousness to the extent that they become the agents of social change" and why this may be (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.14). Each political leader has aimed to create "good citizens", the term "good" can be debated as to definition. However, have "reproduced their government ideology" reflected in the citizenship education produced (Dean, 2005, p.36). Before exploring the citizenship education discourse, a brief historical context will be provided in order to understand Pakistan's educational system.

Historical Context

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the issues facing the country are both interesting and complex. The country emerged after gaining independence from the British colonial rule. The need for two countries (India and Pakistan) arose, because Pakistani people felt that they possessed a distinct identity; one difference being based on religious and ideological conceptions of being Muslims. Following the inception of Pakistan, however, the country has been mired in problems such as "[ethnic] conflict, language riots", political upheaval, corruption and poverty (Dean, 2005, p.36). This has further created a clash of identity in which governments from the founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah to Asif Ali Zardari debate whether the country should be "Islamic theocratic" or whether a "secular, democratic" nation is the way forward (Ahmad, 2004, p.41). Thus, understanding Pakistan through the clashes between tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, and democracy vs. autocracy have been three pivotal areas that are important to understand in terms of citizenship education. Each of these areas seeks a different kind of citizenship education. The different

“political transitions every ten years” have created a “new education policy (Dean, 2005, p.36).” Even though each political system may have aimed to create “good citizens,” the realization of this goal has faltered. The ruling “government’s ideology and conception of citizenship education” has modelled citizens within society. (Dean, 2004, p.1; Zia, 2003, p.153; Ahmad, 2008, p.97)

Context of Pakistan

Tradition vs. Modernity

Tradition can be a positive step towards decolonization, but the use of the term tradition has become problematic. For example, tradition has become associated with being backward and uncivilized; the mere reference of it is rooted in a negative connotation. The goal of traditional values has thus been framed to reject western notions of modernity and all knowledge of the West. The *White Paper on Education* was circulated in December 2006 as a pre-policy document created by the National Education Policy Review Team to incite dialogue surrounding major educational issues in Pakistan. After engaging in discussions with various stakeholders a draft policy document was to be presented to provincial governments to instigate a ten-year plan. Within the *White Paper* discussion of the education system, textbooks are said to be “written in a very traditional manner” which is critiqued as being caused by a lack of competition that has not incorporated “innovation” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.19). In this example, one can surmise that tradition equates to a static and stagnant way of doing things that does not lead to progress. It is interesting to see how this discourse continues to unfold in various facets. Pakistan’s traditional perspectives such as school examinations are criticized as not meeting “standardization criteria” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.20). The traditional teaching style and corporal punishment are two of the reasons cited for children exiting the education system. Furthermore, the traditional approach to measuring academic results in a quantitative way has led to a decrease in quality. Tradition has become a source of blame for educational factors that may have been related to a wider set of structural causes (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.36; Ghost, Abdu & Nasser, 2008, p.58).

The relationship with traditional knowledge has been referred to, since General Zia-ul-Haq, as the religious madrasah-style education. In this form, the “rigid classification of knowledge based on religious law and dogma” is transmitted from “traditionalists” claiming to be the “final authority on religious and worldly matters” (Nisar, 2010, p.48). Current traditional educational institutions such as the madrasah are viewed as “non-modern and backwards”

because the teachings in traditional languages such as Arabic and Persian exclude students from being a part of the western capitalistic, knowledge-based economy (Nisar, 2010, p.48). In a few examples, it is illustrated that tradition does not hold value for Pakistan to become a more progressive and advanced society. Modernity provides a possibility for change.

Modernity is the assimilation into Western imperialism in which, “everything from the west” is to be integrated and seen as a source of enlightenment (Nisar, 2010, p.48). Education that is situated in English with a British colonial framework is the route to a “modern nation” that sees “tradition as negative” (Qadir, 1009, p.107). Therefore, to “become a modern citizen,” Pakistani society needs to shed its “pre-modern narrower identities and loyalties” to open up the opportunity for a “modern consciousness” (Qadir, 1009, p.107). In the move towards modernity, education is seen as a way to create a unified ideology that develops the “subject” inspired by the state (Pocock, 1995, p.38). This does not look at multiple and alternative ideologies that provide varying worldviews as this could fragment society. Creating unity of thought through centralized government power allows society to build a knowledge-based economy in the industrial age, by acquiring global capital such as the universal language of English, to aid in the understanding of modern curriculum and methods that will allow Pakistanis to be on par with others in the global marketplace. Modernity seen from multiple narratives does not have to revolt against all that is traditional; rather, if tradition is seen as fluid and evolving it can be a strength, rather than a barrier to progress (Ahmad, 2004, p.42; National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.16; Pocock, 1995, p.38).

Religious vs. Secular

Islam is the faith of 97% of the country; however the role of religion has become a political ideology (Zia, 2003, p.153). Jamal Khan contends that the impact of colonialism has been instrumental in transforming Islam from a faith to an ideological state apparatus. As a counter-movement to Western domination in the 18th and 19th century, Islam has been revaluated as an ideology. Within the Pakistan studies curriculum for grades IX-X, the study of Pakistan’s ideology is referred to as “basic values of Islam” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.2). As each country has an ideological framework to guide its education system, in Pakistan, “Islam is the principal source of values for our life and ethical conduct is an essential precondition for social development” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.11). The debate regarding the kind of an Islam to be practiced has seen a wide range of perspectives from fundamentalist, conservatives, liberal and moderate interpretations of faith (Ahmad, 2008, p.93).

However, Islam and secularism do not necessarily have to be viewed as opposing forces. As the founder of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, stated to the Pakistanis,

you are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State (Ahmad, 2008, p.99).

Thereby, the liberal notion of citizenship education promoting national unity under the umbrella of respect, equality and “unity in diversity” provided the freedom of religion that was not to guide state affairs (Zia, 2003, p.158). The 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been the framework for excluding religious minorities from political engagement in leadership roles. The basis of religion as an ideology was seen by some scholars such as Raza to be a strategy for political leaders to consolidate power (Zia, 2001, p.154). Since the term “minorities” was not defined in the constitution, governments have used religion as the differentiation factor rather than taking account of varying ethnic, linguistic and racial background of people. The religion of its citizens has been an exclusionary factor in which the 1973 constitution's amendment to Article 260 states “non-muslims” being defined as “a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani group or Lahori group (who will call themselves “Ahmadis” or by any other name), or a Baha’i, and a person belonging to any of the scheduled castes” (Malik, 2002, p.17). Thus non-muslims classified by the constitution has provided discretionary frameworks for government to operate their state based ideology rather than focusing on nation building (Malik, 2002).

However, in the general sense, Islamic values coincide with secular notions of equality, religious freedom and good citizenship. Though the motive of a secular notion may be attached to the rights and obligations of the state, Islam surpasses responsibilities and rights to be attached to faith and God. In the sense that being a good Muslim equates to being a good citizen, rewards are connected to a higher moral value (Dean, 2005, p.41). The 1998-2010, National Educational Policy states that Islam is the foundational basis and sole identity of education. This linear objective portrays Islam as opposing secularism. However if one reverts to the past, the first education conference of 1947, Islam was situated as education based on the “universal brotherhood of man, social democracy and social justice” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.77), which realized that Islam,

democracy, universal human rights and secular beliefs can be intertwined. The dichotomous binary of religion and secularism can be disrupted as the two can coexist.

Democracy and Autocracy

Although Pakistan has a short history since gaining independence, the question of whether the country is a “democracy, autocracy or theocracy” has lingered (Dean, 2004, p.3). Every ten years, the political history of Pakistan has shifted with military takeovers that have implemented a different government system and ideology. Of the 63 years of Pakistan’s history, 27 years have been of military rule (Dean, 2005, p.42). In each case, rarely has society felt democracy practiced; rather it has been used as a “propaganda” tool in the education system. The social studies national curriculum for grades IV-V outlines the objective to educate students as “citizens able to participate actively and responsibly in a democratic society ... through being informed about public affairs, act to safeguard their rights, fulfill their responsibilities as citizens and engage in community service and actions aimed at improving their own communities, nation and world” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.1). However, the reality that relates to democratic theory remains disjointed. The powerful elite, being the ruling class, seem to be the only ones who are provided the opportunity for engagement, action and a voice in society (Dean, 2005, p.36).

Democracy provides equal participation for everyone, yet Pakistan can be viewed to be between democracy and autocracy as continuous political transitions have left the country in a state of question. Autocracy has effected citizenship education by tailoring the structure to serve the needs of the governing bodies in order to reproduce society which continues to support the amalgamation of power and authority. However, the educational curriculum does not address why “48% of the population-women are excluded politically, economically and socially” (Zia, 2003, p.161) Women have been marginalized from participating in democratic arena, in which small strides are being attempted as 33% of women representation in government systems has been reached (Zia, 2003, p.153). At the same time, minorities have also been excluded from the citizenship in terms of not being able to be actively engaged in political arenas. Yet the discussion of democracy does not address how citizens are to participate when many feel voiceless in being able to assert their basic freedoms. The “commitment for cause of democracy” cannot be created, when citizens have yet to experience it (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.59).

Current Citizenship Education Outcomes

Citizenship education is a political objective that strives to shape citizens for the future the nation seeks to build. It is the “vision of a desirable society”, that is ever shifting in the socio- political landscape. Each government will have a different understanding and goal in terms of framing the country; this in turn leads to multiple citizenship education discourses. The following are some of the main citizenship discourses that are prevalent through the Ministry of Education in Pakistan. In an attempt to explore each of these discourses within policy and curriculum frameworks, the need for a “critical and active citizen” discourse will be built upon (Janmaat & Piattoeva, 2007, p.530).

The Moral, Law Abiding Citizen

The aim for creating dutiful citizens that are obedient to the state is a notion of citizenship education that situates the citizen as a subject that is to be loyal. This does not provide citizens the space to think or question the nation in terms of inequities or points of improvement, as the state is in a naturalized and unquestionable position. In the national curriculum, the objective of students learning the most “appropriate and right” way seems to underlie a disciplining premise, in which knowing the best possible way of answering or doing things creates a sense of unity in obedience (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.17). The citizens should understand their duties to the nation and be ready to perform these responsibilities. An example of the value of law abidingness in terms of gearing citizens towards obeying rather than analyzing or questioning the formulation of such guiding principles is seen in the political science benchmarks for grades 1-3 that emphasize “making rules and identifying the consequence of breaking each rule” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.7). The adherence to rules should be taught as the “consequence of not having or observing rules” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.7). The significance of rules to guide the lives of citizens is established, in which “good moral leaders” of the past are studied so that students can seek role models that engrain such values (Dean, 2004, p.8).

Citizenship education geared toward creating obedient citizens is problematic because rules, duties and responsibilities in relation to the nation are seen to be positive. Positive in this sense means that the rules which are created by the government in power are to benefit the citizens in an ideal society. However, the autocratic and political instability that is coupled by the self and private interests of the elites in power can make the adherence to rules questionable. The structural foundation of the rules that citizens are to abide by

needs to be examined as to what the intention is and who is benefitting from them. One example is the provision that has excluded minority groups that self-identify as Muslims, but because of differing sects have been recognized as non-Muslims by the state as defined in the aforementioned 1973 Constitutional Amendment. This law excludes minorities from political and social positions, as they are not able to engage in deliberations; further marginalizing them. One is not suggesting lawlessness or fracturing the notion of cohesion that is necessary to bind people, but obedience and dutifulness needs to provide space to think critically and act to keep the government in check of unjust practices and laws. As the laws are to benefit the people, they should be publicly deliberated to discuss their impact (Nisar, 2010, p.51; Dean, 2004, p.40).

The Market-Based Citizen

In the market-based framework, citizenship education prepares citizens as objects of the knowledge-based economy to be able to capitalize in the economic sense. The *White Paper* discusses the objectifying of citizens as the “raw human resources of [Pakistan that need] to [be] chiselled and refine[d] into the finest exponents of social and economic power that they can be” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.3). A citizen is seen as the “economic man,” as one who strives for wealth and is able to capitalize on gaining the most efficient means to do so. This perspective is viewed by some scholars as the “modern man’s real identity” as the other legal conceptualizations are abstract and not connected to the day-to-day lives of people (Ignatieff, 1995, p.64). However, the marketplace is assumed to provide equal opportunity and accessibility, yet it is a capitalistic system in which resources and wealth distribution is unequal, and some are prospering while many have nothing. Therefore, The capitalistic notion of success is a reality that is not “universally available” and choice and competition further limit the access to economic opportunities for numerous citizens (Walzer, 1995, p.159).

In the national curriculum, the aim of education is to create citizens that are “capable of effectively participating in the highly competitive global knowledge based economy and information age” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.3). The aim carries the universality that all citizens can realize their potential through education; however, in Pakistan, this is not the case. Women are excluded from various economic sectors in which the highly patriarchal society limits opportunities for mobility; “only 3.74% of women are employed in various formal professions” (National Education Policy Review Team, 2006, p.26). The low participation rate of 3.74% does not allude to women being excluded from work. Rather a significant number of women work in home-

based, family-owned businesses, education and agricultural sectors. However, much of the work performed by women is relegated to less desirable positions as a result of the lack of education and gender stereotypes fuelling the patriarchal system. Much of women's participation in the labour market is unaccounted for since it is hidden or not recognized. Furthermore, the job market is tied to the connections one has, in which it is more important who you know rather than your qualifications. The social capital of individuals becomes important in being successful on the market.

Thereby the market-based education also teaches grade 4 & 5 students in economics to “compare prices, quality and features of goods and services, and weigh/identify alternatives/opportunity costs in personal, local, provincial, and national decision-making situations” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9). This aims to create smart consumers who are able to make effective economic decisions. The cost vs. benefit decision-making model is seen in the education curriculum objectives, in which reaching the best solution in the most effective and efficient way is an instrumental role of the teacher to guide students to this point. This line of analysis does not question overconsumption or whether citizens have agency in their role as producer or consumer (Soares, 2003, p.211).

The Nationalistic and Islamic Citizen

An important goal of Pakistan's citizenship education is to create nationalistic and Islamic citizens. By relating to a patriotic sense of Pakistani identity the connection to Islam is fundamental to a Pakistan ideology. Since the “Islamisation of Pakistan in the 1970s, the national identity has become synonymous with a Muslim identity” (Dean, 2004, p.9). This framework creates national cohesion of people through the “Ummah” Muslim nationhood (Ahmad, 2008, p.104). Positioning religion as more than faith, but a political ideology can create citizens who believe in only one worldview and are not open to understanding alternative views (Ahmad, 2008, p.100). The goal of education to understand unity in diversity may not be achieved by only learning the Islamic perspective. The Ministry of Education's educational policy from 1998-2010 implicitly states that,

Education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah and to educate and train them as a true practicing Muslim. To evolve an integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni

Madaris (Islamic Schools) and modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education (2010).

In this excerpt, the good citizen is equated to the good Muslim. The value system, beliefs and interpretations of Islam are diverse in that there are varying schools of thought on how the Muslim should be. The white papers on education in Pakistan, reflect that the role of Islamic education should guide towards a “modern Muslim.” The modern Muslim follows Islam in essence as a guide to the “modern environmental pressure.” Islam and modernity can be interlinked in such a way that one does not clash with the other. The importance of creating Islamic citizens who are “proactive thinking rather than reactive” is to counter the fundamentalist ideologies. On the other hand, extremist groups such as the Taliban believe that Islamic education has not been able to realize the goal of an Islamic republic, so this has become the drive for them. (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.56)

The majority of the population is only learning about Islam, therefore the ethics curriculum can be an element that is made compulsory for all regardless of religion, as it broadens the mental horizon for citizens (Zia, 2003, p.153). In the current socio-cultural climate, citizens need to be aware of the types of Islamic education that they are learning in terms of the multiple perspectives, and also be provided an opportunity to delve into alternative world perspectives. The types of Islamic education refer to the varying spectrum of methodologies referring to modernity, liberalism, fundamentalism, and traditionalism to name a few positionalities. Varying Islamic perspectives as well as alternative religious world perspectives need to be taken in account as the current societal reality that student are living in. The national curriculum of ethics for non-Muslims in its introduction states that “students will realize that all religions teach the similar values and there is no reason to have negative values. The experience of learning common moral teachings will bring people of different faiths closer to each other.” This diverse learning of various religions aims to create a society of “tolerant and sound moral character” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.7). If only 3% of the population is comprised of non-Muslims who would be taught the ethics curriculum, how would this have an impact on the nation?

The Future of Critical Citizens

In examining some of the citizenship education discourses, the role of citizens is positioned in a passive state. It does not matter whether one is a moral law-abiding, market-based, or nationalistic Islamic citizen; each of these does not seek to provide an opportunity for the citizen to explore their own social consciousness and “actively participate in society” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.1). Going back to the foundational issues of citizenship education, one needs to look at “who learns what, where, how, when and with what purpose” (Williams & Humphreys, 2003, p.10). Citizenship education needs to be defined by the citizen as to understanding their local and global contexts. Space needs to be provided in understanding multiple perspectives as knowledge is not “the knowledge” but several world perspectives that knowledge is rooted in (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.56). Therefore, any knowledge relationship needs to be seen with an objective and critical perspective, rather than the final truth.

In looking at the national social studies and Pakistan studies curriculum, the approach toward issues is one that does not go into a wider critical perspective. For example, in the Standard 6 Social Studies curriculum, the benchmark of “describing the role of citizens in democracy,” can be a platform to discuss Pakistan’s democracy and what kind of a role students believe a citizen should have and whether a democracy is being realized (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.8). Instead of only studying the political leaders and eras that Pakistan has gone through curriculums should provide a critical perspective into why military upheavals and democracy are continually unattainable. Reframing the question of democracy into one in which the very notion of democracy in Pakistan is explored can provide an opportunity for citizens to explore what kind of agency they have in understanding different aspects and working toward their own thoughts in formulating a position. One may say that this may be a sensitive topic to explore, as the very government in power can be challenged and evaluated regarding what kind of a political system they are operating. Scarcity is referred to a given state that people should accept rather than question who is constantly facing scarcity and why there is an unequal distribution of resources, both nationally and globally. Looking at how capitalism has fuelled the notion of scarcity, in which many individuals are led to believe they must accept that a lack of resources is important. If one of the key objectives for students through education is to learn to challenge the status quo, how will this be realized if issues and systems are framed in a narrow framework in which words such as “describe, analyze and identify” are used to explain or reiterate

information? (National Education Policy Review Team, 2007, p.56). Education is not a neutral endeavour, but a politically driven mechanism. Challenging the status quo as a goal of education can be instrumental in bringing change to improve the multifaceted societal aspects (Dean, 2004, p.40).

Citizenship education needs to be defined by citizens in which “learning is seen as citizenship” rather than “learning about citizenship” (Istance, 2003, p.48). Instead of placing citizenship education into social studies, Pakistan studies, and Islamic studies, in which citizenship is seen to be boxed into a specific subject for the allotted grade levels, it needs to be ingrained as an underlying foundation of education in all subjects, but in various aspects. This can be achieved in the methodology, teaching perspectives and decision-making processes which seek to instill active and critical citizenship as a lifelong learning journey. Students need to be challenged into thinking that normative assumptions are not neutral; rather than seeking the “right way” or morally good role model, the opportunity to take on a challenge and look at an issue from a critical perspective needs to be recognized as this builds the bridge towards a social consciousness and justice stance (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.26). The morally good role models do not let students explore what morality is and how good is not a definitive line. Rather political ideologies and dominant discourses tend to frame role models for citizens that seek to reach a specific outcome. For example the national curriculum for social studies grades IV-V outlines two themes, one focusing on personalities and the other on the contributions and virtues in regards to the personalities. In both sections the outcomes seek to identify heroes/personalities and their characteristics which are admired. A surface level understanding is being established that role models or heroes are firstly to be admired in the form of a hero and are classified through specific traits. However, one student learning outcome provides some space to be a further point of critical thought in terms of looking at “individual beliefs, cultures, times and situations that change of our choice of heroes/heroines” (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.16). This outcome can serve as a stepping stone to becoming more effective in opening discussion of choice, heroes not necessarily being seen as definitive moral poles of good or bad and how varying factors influence our selection of role models. For students to explore and assess their own role models as well as relate to their personal and societal context is fundamental for such learning outcomes to have a substantial impact. A critical citizen would need to relate learning with wider contexts and the power of discourses (Knight, 2008, p.122; Janmaat & Piattoeva, 2007, p.530; Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2007).

The context of citizenship education in terms of tradition, modernity, secularism or religion has bound society in deciding that one needs to choose between these goals. Traditional education systems have value; that is they are a valuable source of identity formation in recognizing and reclaiming spaces that the colonial system has eroded. Rather than looking at tradition as hindering modernity, education can connect both realms in which the western means of modernity may not be fully adequate to the Pakistan context. Instead, Pakistan can develop its own hybrid framework of traditional and modern education. Understanding these stances is important to the creation of active critical thinkers, who are able to find their own place within these contexts. It is not to say that one should disregard some contexts, but one should have the choice to decide whether his or her values and goals in seeking education are aligned with interpretations of tradition, religion, modernity, etc. Only by moving forward from the perspective of seeing conflicts and clashes of contexts can the citizen move forward, bridging gaps to redefine what is most beneficial (Merryfield, 2008, p.93; Richardson, 2008, p.135).

Realizing the goal of active and critical citizens may not be possible with the political instability that faces Pakistan. It may be that the government feels that creating national cohesion through a unified identity is the only way to move forward. Citizenship education can be a stable platform in an unstable environment. However, it is the current instability that requires the stagnant and status quo thinking to be dismantled. This thinking will not be able to empower society through education to provide change. Although the democratic framework, to provide the space for an active citizenship is not present this needs to be challenged to “develop new, creative responses to those occasions where we no longer recognize the context of action” (Isin & Nielsen, 2008, p.5). If citizenship education can provide Pakistanis an opportunity to question and think of the assumptions that they take for granted without realizing the broader context and power relations, then this can be considered a move of active and critical citizenship. Citizenship education teaching students to taking this line of thinking further into life after a formal setting can open numerous possibilities. If even one student realizes this goal, then it can be said that the citizenship education has fulfilled its goal (Ahmad, 2008, p.104; Williams & Humphreys, 2003, p.34).

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