



PARENTS TEACHERS AND STUDENTS PERCEPTION REGARDING TEACHINGS OF THE HOLY QURAN AS A COMPULSORY PART OF CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Recently, the government of Pakistan has made teachings of the Holy Quran a compulsory part of the curriculum at the school level. Being an Islamic democratic state, it is a good initiative by the current government. Consequently, this study aimed to explore the parents, teachers and students' perceptions regarding the teachings of the Holy Quran as a compulsory subject at the school level. This study was qualitative, with a phenomenological approach, where semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data were collected from public and private school teachers, students and their parents using convenient sampling. A sample of four students, four teachers and four parents from public and private schools was collected from different districts of Punjab. Codes were given to each participant, and through thematic analysis, themes were drawn from their interviews. The study's results revealed that all participants were satisfied with this initiative and showed a positive attitude towards teaching the Holy Quran in schools. In addition, the government should take serious measures to make it long-lasting, and the privacy of other sects and religions ought to also keep in mind.

1. Introduction

Education in Pakistan is a federal and provincial concern that formulates and executes educational policies and plans according to their situations and available resources in Islamabad, upon which policies and plans the quality of education mainly depends (Saeed, 2007). Consequently, the Government of Punjab has made a

few amendments according to the teaching of the Holy Quran Act, 2018 and issued a notice on 13th December 2021 to include teachings of the Holy Quran as a compulsory subject as a part of the curriculum in the schools of province Punjab. According to this notification, all public and private schools will be responsible for including teachings of the Holy Quran as a part of the curriculum. In addition, will train and hire devoted and strongly qualified teachers for this initiative (Team, 2021).

Therefore, the objectives of this study were to take the perceptions of parents of students, teachers and students to know about their interest towards this initiative. To examine the qualification level of teachers regarding teachings of the Holy Quran and to inquire about the potential implications of this initiative and whether it improves students' religious, moral, academic and personal development. In addition, to identify whether this initiative proves long-lasting or not. Researchers designed four research questions based on these research objectives to attain the objectives mentioned earlier. These questions were, what are the opinions of parents, teachers and students regarding the inclusion of teaching the Holy Quran as a subject in schools along with the other compulsory subjects?

Furthermore, are all subject teachers well-versed in teaching the Holy Quran? In addition, what are the potential implications regarding this initiative, whether it improves students' religious, moral, academic and personal development? And will this initiative prove long-lasting, or is it a political step?

Moreover, through this study, the policymakers, curriculum developers and government bodies will become aware of the opinions and perspectives given by teachers, parents and students. Thus, after reading their point of view they will be able to make further improvement in this initiative.

1.2 Objectives

1. To know about the perception of parents, teachers and students about the teachings of the Holy Quran as a compulsory subject at the elementary level in Punjab, Pakistan.
2. To examine the qualification level of students regarding teachings of the Holy Quran.
3. To inquire the potential implications regarding this initiative whether it improves the religious, moral, academic and personal development of students.
4. To identify whether this initiative proves long-lasting or not.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the opinions of parents, teachers and students regarding the inclusion of teaching the Holy Quran as a subject in schools along with the other compulsory subjects?
2. Are all subject teachers well-versed in teaching the Holy Quran?
3. What are the potential implications regarding this initiative whether it improves the religious, moral, academic and personal development of students?

4. Is this initiative will prove long lasting or it is a political step?

1.4 Significance of the Study

- This study will prove beneficial for the government bodies in terms of knowing the perception of teachers, parents and students what they feel about this initiative. So that after reading their point of views, they will be able to make further improvement in this initiative and can take suggestions of educationists, curriculum developers and education policy makers before starting any program.
- Further, this study will be significant for future researchers if they want to do further study on this research problem.
- Moreover, positive reviews regarding this study can make this initiative long lasting and lead towards further betterment.

5. 2. Literature Review

Every policy of Pakistan emphasizes on teachings of the Holy Quran. For instance, the Educational commission 1959 stressed on teachings of the Holy Quran at the school level. Likewise, according to the policy of 1972, Quran must be taught from class three to eighth classes; after the educational policy 1978, Quranic education was enhanced; in this policy, new type of schools were introduced by the name of mosques of schools (Dehrai, 2018). These were at a primary level; in these mosques of school, a separate teacher for the holy Quran was posted by the name of the Imam Mosque, and in high schools, the post was announced by the name of an Arabic teacher. These were purely Arabic pass from any recognized Madrisa school, after this in 1998, it was also announced that Nazra Quran must be taught in early eighth classes after 8th class translation of Holy Quran must be taught to higher secondary classes, In addition, national education policy 2009 was also given stress on teachings of Holy Quran. (Faizi, 2020) Thus, Quranic education was given preference in all educational policies, but the implementation of this act is not strictly followed. In 2021 the Government of Pakistan had started on an ambitious plan to develop an exact and equal system and curriculum of education in the hope to provide uniform education at all levels, public and private schools. Under the National Curriculum Council, the task of a single national curriculum was undertaken over a stated period of three years which has now been approved for implementation phase-wise from Pre-I to V, from VI to VIII and from IX to XII from March 2021 to March 2023 (Tariq, 2022).

Based on the model of Singapore, Cambridge curriculum, curriculums of Indonesia, Malaysia and our curriculum 2006, a new curriculum was designed and named as SNC 2020. Single National Curriculum means one system of education for all with regard to the medium of instruction, curriculum and uniform way of evaluation. Besides imparting quality and modern education across Pakistan, all children regardless of their background will, have the same opportunities, and will be the beneficiary of the same curriculum (Torwali, Z, 2020). SNC put forward by the present Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) that focuses on the reforms intended to merge public, private schools and Madaris into one uniform system to develop religious and cultural harmony as the provision of basic education is a basic human right of every person. This initiative is unprecedented and innovative. The design of SNC focuses on Islamic teachings and Urdu as a medium of instruction in all textbooks besides instilling beliefs in children such as creativity and critical

thinking (Bari, 2021). The development of the curriculum is driven by these key elements; however the top priority is given to the teachings of the Holy Quran in classrooms with a focus on the vision of Iqbal and Quaid and outcome-based learning. The recitation of the Quran is currently being taught as part of Islamic Education for guidance; however, it does not stress learning where students listen to the teacher, and the teacher listens to the student's recitation, rectifies any mistakes, and demonstrates the correct and proper way of reciting. The salient relevant features of SNC 2020 were that Islamiyat started from grade 1 to 12 as a separate subject, whereas in curriculum 2006, it was merged with general knowledge up to grade 2. Grade 3 started Islamiyat as a separate subject. A new subject Religious Education has been introduced from grade 1 onwards; recently, the government of Pakistan introduced and incorporated teachings of the Holy Quran as a compulsory part of the curriculum at the school level. (Bari, 2021)

However, several concerns and criticisms of major stakeholders have come who have highlighted the challenges for teachings of the Holy Quran that the single national curriculum (SNC) poses, such as the right to choose, rights of minorities, preservation of language and heritage to ensure access to education for all. The inclusion of the Holy Quran in schools is mainly targeted whether it should be the part of our educational system as there was no standards of learning objectives in the curriculum of 2006 that it may over burden the students. It is also in our constitution that nothing should not be added against Islam in the curriculum and the same thing has been practiced in SNC 2020. This paper will, therefore, take a closer look at the potential implications regarding this initiative, whether it improves the religious, moral, academic and personal development of students that may have on the rights of children, parents, minorities, provinces and other stakeholders with their opinions. In doing so, it will look closely to meet the rights of children as opposed to employing education as a political tool. It will also endeavor to address the willingness of the respondents at the elementary level to teach The Holy Quran in schools and are all subject teachers well-versed in teaching it. Whether the initiative will prove long-lasting, or is it a political step?

Consider the fact that the democratic right of parents to choose the kind of education that they would like for their children, as there may not be a single way to educate a child.

6.3. Method

This qualitative study was based on a phenomenological approach where all the public private school teachers, students and parents of province Punjab were the population of the study. As a sample, the researchers took 12 participants: 4 teachers, 4 parents and 4 students (two from public schools and two from private schools). All these participants were chosen by convenient sampling technique. As mentioned in figure 3.0

3.1 Data Collection

For data collection, researchers chose interviews as a data collection tool because here, participants can give detailed answers to the questions. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was designed for conducting this study. All three researchers collected data from participants. Researcher 1 interviewed teachers, while researcher 2 took an interviewed parents. Likewise, researcher 3 interviewed students of the school.

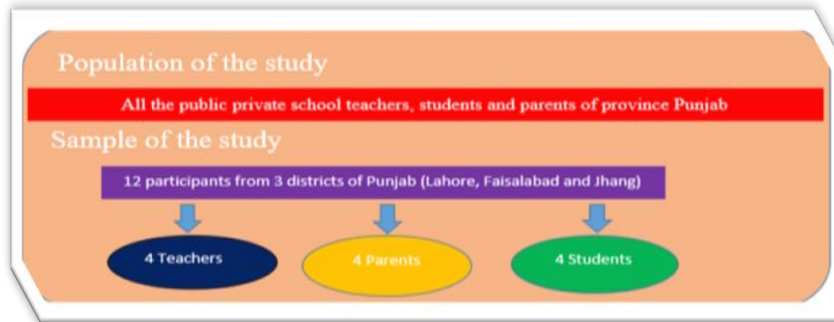


Figure 3.0

3.2 Data Analysis

For data analysis, researchers conducted a thematic analysis and drew themes from the interviews according to the above research questions. The codes were also given to each respondent to keep their identity confidential. T1, T2, T3 and T4 codes were given to the teachers' respondents, while P1, P2, P3 and P4 codes were assigned to parents' respondents. Similarly, S1, S2, S3 and S4 codes were allocated to the students' respondents.

7. Result and Discussion

8. The results of the study drawn by thematic analysis are given below.

9. **Q1. What are the opinions of parents, teachers and students regarding the inclusion of teaching the Holy Quran as a subject in schools along with the other compulsory subjects?**

10. T1 teaching in a public sector school at the primary level said, "*it is a positive step by the government in the history of Pakistan, and this initiative will reflect the Islamic ideological state*". T4 working as a private school teacher, stated, "*the intent of this inclusion should be to teach students good morals, the understanding of the Holy Quran and their personal development*".

11. Likewise, P2 commented, "*Teaching the Holy Quran as a subject in schools is a good step. Almost all Muslim children recite Quran in Arabic in their homes. However, in schools, they are being taught the meaning of the Quranic verses*". In addition, P4 described their opinion in the following words "*it should not be a compulsory subject, in my opinion, suitable time will be before the start of regular school time. If school starts at 8, the Quran class may be started at 7. It will help minorities or the people from different sects of Islam to maintain their privacy regarding beliefs*".

12. Similarly, all the students also demonstrated a positive attitude towards the inclusion of the Holy Quran. S3 student of class 5 described her view as "*I enjoyed the Quran class at school. Here teachers taught us with full attention, and I am learning it with Tajweed, while Qari sb taught us Nazra Quran without any Tajweed*".

13. **Q2 Are all subject teachers who are Muslim well versed in teaching the Holy Quran?**

14. The thematic analysis of the second question described that being Muslim, all Muslim teachers are willing to teach the Holy Quran, but after completing training sessions, as all teachers are not well versed and learnt The Holy Quran with tajweed and Tafseer. T4 said,

“Although Quaid Academy conducted training sessions just for three days, but it should be extended further, and assessments should also be taken from teachers by master trainers.”

15. Parents gave their point of view in this regard as P1 exclaimed, *“I do not think, so all teachers are well-versed and able to teach the Holy Quran. Schools should hire trained and well-versed teachers for this purpose,”* P4 added. *“For teaching The Holy Quran, proper training sessions should provide to all Muslim teachers so that teachers can also learn it well with its Tajweed and Tafseer.*

16. On the other hand, all students agreed that their teachers are teaching them with proper care and attention and Nazra Quran with Tajweed. However, they are also taking training sessions.

17. Q3. What are the potential implications regarding this initiative, whether it improves the religious, moral, academic and personal development of students?

18. While answering the 3rd question, all teachers' respondents stated that, indeed, The Holy Quran is a complete guide not for all Muslims but for all humanity, so if this initiative will remain long lasting and they show themselves an ideal role model to their students then it will leads their students towards their all over development. In addition, if students will comprehend The Holy Quran with its complete meaning and translation as well as act upon its teachings, then certainly, it will make them good human being with good morals.

19. Likewise, parents' respondents also gave the same opinion, just like teachers, but P4 gave a different perspective than others. P4 claimed, *“I do not see any long-term impact on society because students will take it as a subject to earn marks. When any subject is learnt for marks, it does not impact students; Islamiat or Pak studies are the examples, even Ghalib and other great poets are part of Urdu curriculum students learn them only for the marks”.*

20. On the other hand, student respondents show their complete interest towards this inclusion, and S1 commented that *“as a Muslim, I will learn the teachings of the Holy Quran and fully act upon it as well as serve the other people with the teachings of the Holy Quran.”*

21. Q4. Is this initiative will prove long-lasting, or is it a political step?

22. Respondents gave answers to this question according to their experience and perception. Teachers' respondents explained that they wish it would become long-lasting without any hindrance from politics and that other governments should also imply this initiative.

23. On the other hand, parents' respondents claimed that this initiative might be a political step to earn votes. However, it can become long-lasting if privacy and respect for other sects and religions are kept in mind.

24. Students' responses also want to make it long-lasting beyond politics.

25. 5. Conclusion

The study's results revealed that this initiative is an excellent initiative by the government. All respondents are satisfied and content with this inclusion of the Holy Quran in the curriculum. All other old curriculums and education policies emphasized the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah, but the government did not do them properly implementation. Regardless of any prejudice and conflicts, the government of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf took this initiative seriously. This initiative will prove fruitful if it is long-lasting without any political benefit.

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