



Traditional Islamic Education, Modern Western Schooling and the Urban Muslim Identity: Navigating the Past and Present

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This research tries to present Islamic and modern education in integrated methods with special reference to maintaining Islamic values in contemporary learning. In earlier times, the institution of Islamic education took place with great fervour at Al-Azhar, Darul Uloom, among other great educational centers. The colonizing process, along with the tides of globalization, however, destroyed the traditions. Examples of how religious and secular curricula have been balanced in countries studied include Malaysia's International Islamic University and Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. This sort of integrated education may help build robust identities that balance belief with vocational expectations. Yet the different sources of finance, societal perceptions, and curriculum development particularly in the diaspora and western environments remain some of the biggest challenges that must be brought into policy, education provision and community engagement together. The underlying message of this research is that integrating Islamic values into mainstream contemporary knowledge and practice will equip students with the skills needed to face a global world without losing their religious identity. The integrated education thus plays a significant role in the dialogue between cultures and in the continuity of Islamic values, proving its validity within an ever-changing world.

INTRODUCTION

Education has formed an important component of Islamic civilization, with the Quran and Sunnah contributing a great deal to its foundation. Education in Islam began in the earliest days of the religion as a divine duty when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made the pursuit of knowledge a duty upon every Muslim. This kind of ethos gave birth to a rich tradition of learning in all aspects of Islamic society. The madrasas thus became the hub of academic endeavors, offering studies in Quranic exegesis, Hadith, Fiqh, and the Arabic language. These were the places that preserved religious learning and promoted scientific, mathematical, philosophical, and medical knowledge, which eventually led to the intellectual and cultural contours of the Muslim world for centuries.

The University of Al-Azhar in Egypt and Al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco stood among the leading higher learning institutions in the golden era of Islamic civilization, attracting scholars and students from every part of the world. Their approach to education integrated spiritual, ethical, and intellectual development. The curriculum was designed to nurture individuals into those capable of making meaningful contributions to faith and society. This tradition was however to face major challenges with the advent of Western colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. The colonial powers imposed on the colonies systems of Western education that emphasized secular knowledge and relegated Islamic studies to a subsidiary role. This disruption created a dichotomy between traditional Islamic pedagogies and modern educational frameworks, leading to the gradual erosion of the comprehensive educational model that had characterized the Islamic world.

These challenges were further compounded by the process of globalization, wherein Western-style systems of education came to be equated with progress and modernization. In most Muslim countries, the secular system of education became dominant, and Islamic education played a subsidiary role, often viewed as irrelevant to the solution of modern problems. This has had profound implications for the identity and values of Muslim communities, especially in urban centers where there is greater exposure to Western ways of thinking and living.

The dual challenge faced by the urban Muslim communities today is holding on to Islamic identity and simultaneously becoming modern. This tension is felt much more in education, where one tries to strike a balance between Islamic principles and the imperatives of a globalized, western-influenced curriculum. Urbanization, coupled with rapid technological and cultural changes, has set traditional values directly at variance with current societal norms. In negotiating this balance for Muslims in urban areas school is a very significant battleground. This article explores how Islamic education intersects with modern educational paradigms, focusing on the implications for urban Muslim identity. The study examines historical developments, current practices, and integrative approaches to shed light on the successes, limitations, and potential of harmonizing traditional Islamic education with contemporary methodologies. These are exemplary bridges between religious and secular

education. Examples include the International Islamic University in Malaysia, Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. These are models serving the dual purpose of spiritual growth coupled with academic excellence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper intends to discuss the transformation of Islamic education from a modern perspective and its implications for urban Muslim identity. The qualitative nature of this study shall investigate how both Islamic and secular systems of education can coexist and what their coexistence implies for upholding religious values besides pursuing academic excellence in a globalized world. The findings represent an attempt to contribute to the continuing debate on educational reform in Muslim societies, yielding insights into how traditional and modern values can be effectively integrated to meet the needs of contemporary Muslim communities.

METHODOLOGY

The research design will be qualitative and underpinned by the textual analysis of sources of information from both primary and secondary sources. This will allow for a complex review of historical texts, academic studies, and contemporary research into Islamic education. The methodology is thus organized around tracing emergent patterns and themes associated with the integration of Islamic and modern systems of education and their influence on urban Muslim communities. The qualitative design would be best to understand how the interplay of the traditional Islamic pedagogies and secular paradigmatic educational interactions occurs.

Data Collection

Materials Data collections were done through a critical literature review of academic works, historical texts, and policy documents from various institutions, including Malaysia's International Islamic University and Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. These were selected to understand the history and evolution, and present practices in Islamic education. Further, various reports and case studies of schools in Western countries, such as those in the UK and the US, were reviewed. These schools bring different perspectives on challenges and strategies in integrating faith-based education within secular educational systems. Selection was done to ensure diversity in contexts, especially the variation in approaches between different geographical and cultural settings.

It also drew on material emanating from state and nonstate organizations charged with educational policymaking and reform in both Muslim-majority and minority contexts. Other additions to the dataset, which yielded current perspectives and specific examples of integration processes, were media articles, conference proceedings, and institutional reports.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was done on the data collected, a method adopted for identifying recurring patterns and themes within qualitative datasets. The analysis focused on key themes, including:

1. Retention of Islamic Identity: How educational institutions maintain Islamic values and teachings amidst modern curricula.
2. Curricula Development: A look into how traditional religious studies is combined with modern academic subjects and the extent to which such curricula meet both religious and secular educational standards.
3. Balancing between Secular and Religious Education: An exploration into the challenges, including societal perceptions, financial constraints and policy barriers to effective integration between Islamic and modern education systems.

It entailed a comparative analysis meant to outline similarities and differences in the concepts of traditional and modern education, both in Muslim-dominated and Western countries. The approach was instrumental in the in-depth look into how different contexts shape the integration process. Attention was mainly paid to identifying best practices and innovative strategies that emerged as effective solutions in reconciling the two systems.

Triangulation was ensured through the cross-referencing of findings from a variety of sources to enhance reliability and validity. This would ensure comprehensive and balanced analysis, capturing the complexities of integrating Islamic and secular education systems within diverse environments. The process of analysis was iterative, enabling refinement of themes and inclusion of new insights as they emerged during the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Islamic education traces back to the very origin of Islam, when mosques were centers of learning. These institutions acted as epicentres in transmitting religious knowledge and building intellectual and spiritual growth among their followers. As time passed, some of the notable hubs of Islamic learning came to be Al-Azhar University in Egypt and Darul Uloom in India. Al-Azhar, founded in the 10th century, soon became a leading theological, legal, and philosophical center, attracting students throughout the Islamic world. Darul Uloom, which was established in 1866, has also made immense contributions in preserving Islamic traditions and shaping the contours of Islamic jurisprudence.

This tradition was disrupted in the colonial era as Western powers brought with them their system of education, emphasizing subjects such as science, mathematics, and modern languages and relegating Islamic studies to a peripheral position. This shift weakened the traditional prominence of Islamic institutions and posed a serious challenge to the survival of Islamic educational heritage.

However, attempts to reconcile the two models in a contemporary setting gave way to various hybrid models. This is, in fact, applied by Malaysia's International Islamic University when it put an integrated set-up of pure Islamic principles together with modern courses of Science, Technology, and Business in its educational disciplines. In essence, it pursues students with good academic standing combined with Islamic character models. The same has been happening with Imam Hatip schools in Turkey offering religious and

secular education with a double curriculum. They thus prepare their students for various careers without departing from their Islamic identity.

Challenges in Integrating Education Systems

The integration of Islamic and modern education systems has many challenges. In many Muslim countries, religious leaders' efforts to retain traditional Islamic curricula often clash with the interests of secular policymakers pushing for modernization. This often creates a divided educational policy that is far from integrating.

These schools also face other challenges in Western contexts. The accusations of promoting cultural isolation have often been paralleled by pressures concerning their failure to contribute to social cohesion. At the same time, they must comply with state policies that not infrequently reflect secular values that run counter to Islamic beliefs. Curriculum requirements in biology, ethics, and history classes are among those that pose ideological difficulties for Islamic schools. The integration process is further complicated by financial constraints. Most Islamic schools, especially those serving diaspora communities, barely survive on shoestring budgets. These financial constraints affect their ability to employ qualified staff, design appropriate curricula, and invest in proper facilities. The search for quality education that balances Islamic and modern values remains an uphill struggle.

Impact on Urban Muslim Identity

Most urban Muslims negotiate an amalgamated identity, one that juxtaposes Islamic values with the pressures of a modern cosmopolitan lifestyle. Education in such cases becomes a critical agent in the shaping of this identity—a medium through which the individual negotiates the pulls of his or her dual existence. The integrated model of education thus presents an opportunity for wholistic development but at the same time it is also a recipe for the conflict of values and identities.

It was revealed that students who received both Islamic and modern educations could cope with this complexity more successfully. They have more balanced knowledge and understanding of their religious and cultural background, along with the skills and abilities to confront the challenges in a global world. However, the tension between secular and religious values is evident and manifests mainly in the internal conflicts on moral and lifestyle issues. Students of integrated education can experience conflicts for example, in articulating Islamic modesty and morality with liberal values typical in the Western setting. Besides, modern education focusing on individualism and material success could contradict the basic approach of Islamic education with an emphasis on community and spiritual life. With the presence of obstacles that would create tension within them, the system of integrated education builds a framework allowing students to gain a resilient identity, embracing tradition along with modernity.

Successful Integration Models

Examples of successful integration include:

1. Malaysia's International Islamic University: Malaysia's International Islamic University represents one of the first attempts to integrate Islamic ethics

with modern academic disciplines. Founded in 1983. IIUM claims to fill the gap that has existed between traditional Islamic education and contemporary fields of study. Its curriculum is designed to include Islamic principles within various disciplines like law, engineering, medicine, and social sciences. For instance, business students are exposed to conventional theories of economics, besides Islamic finance for a broad foundation in both the world and faith-based practices. The dual approach would thus prepare graduates with the tools for navigating complex professional environments while still upholding Islamic ethical standards. Besides the research emphasis laid by the university in areas like *maqasid al-shariah* or objectives of Islamic law, it encourages innovations that conform to religious values and modern needs.

2. Turkey's Imam Hatip Schools: Another example is the Imam Hatip schools in Turkey, which integrate religious and secular education under one comprehensive framework. Founded in the 1920s, these schools had the original purpose of training imams and preachers. Today, they are a well-entrenched educational system that trains students for any career. The subjects included the usual mathematics, science, and history, among others, taught with Islamic studies, Quranic recitation, and theology. This system of balance ensures that the students will be appropriate for professional functions both within religious and secular circles. The schools strive to inculcate character development for the students to become ethical and socially responsible citizens. Besides, Imam Hatip graduates contributed much to various fields ranging from academia to public service, proving their integrated model of education was successful.
3. Islamic Schools in the West: In Western contexts, Islamic schools have demonstrated innovative strategies in integrating faith-based education with state-prescribed curricula. Highly noteworthy is the Islamia Primary School in the United Kingdom, founded by Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens. Since its establishment in 1983, the school has successfully combined Islamic teachings with the UK's national curriculum and has thus been able to offer students a balanced education that fosters both academic excellence and spiritual growth. The school approach is focused on Quranic studies, Arabic language teaching, and Islamic values, yet also follows the government standards for English, mathematics, and science subjects.

A prototype like this has since inspired the establishment of similar schools throughout the Western world, wherein lie Muslim communities' aspirations to retain a religious identity by providing quality education for their children. Despite the myriad of challenges emanating from economic or fiscal restrictions on one hand, and societal scrutinise on another such institutions have become hotbeds of confident and accomplished Muslims ready for life in cosmopolitan cultures. They also feature sites of interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange that testify to the compatibility of Islamic values and Western educational frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It provides a viable solution to the multifaceted challenges facing contemporary Muslim communities, including the integration of Islamic and modern education systems. Throughout history, the need to reconcile traditional Islamic pedagogies with the imperatives of modern education—whether under colonial disruption or globalization pressures—called for innovative approaches. Institutions such as Malaysia's International Islamic University and Turkey's Imam Hatip schools are examples of successful integration that have managed to place Islamic ethics within modern disciplines and equip students for globalized environments without loss of faith. The study underlines how integrated education might play a truly transformational role in the lives of urban Muslim people in building up resilience. Harmonizing spiritual responsibilities with professional ambition, these models let individuals play their parts relevantly both at the community and wider societal levels. Such duality of focus on faith and knowledge maintains Islamic values while providing leeway to negotiate contemporary demands.

The only issue is that integrated education has major financial hindrances, ones which reduce quality programs and social perceptions of Islamic schools being in isolation from or opposed to mainstream integration. Not least curriculum development—synthesizing faith-based instruction with modern demands—remains an emerging task. It involves various policymakers, educators, and leaders of the communities to come up with strategic investments in infrastructure, training, and curriculum design.

The future of Islamic education is to innovate within the bounds of its core principles. Through the synthesis of Islamic and secular knowledge, integrated education can redefine educational paradigms by fostering well-rounded individuals who can address societal needs while maintaining their faith. This synthesis positions Islamic education as a critical contributor to global academic and ethical discourse. Integrated education, on the other hand, favors intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, taking off stereotypes and acceptance of Muslim communities in pluralistic societies. These models will further act as templates for other faith-based systems in their struggle to balance between tradition and modernity.

FURTHER STUDY

This research has limitations, so further research on this topic is still needed.

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