Review

Discrimination and problems of Religious Minority Students in Public Schools of Pakistan

Zafar ul-Islam Mehmood1*, Munawar s. Mirza2, KhudaBakhsh Khan3, Muhammad Shabbir4 and Sagheer Iqbal1

1University of Education Lahore Pakistan.
2Leads University Lahore Pakistan.
3Govt. College University, Faisalabad.
4Government College University, Faisalabad.

Accepted 6 October, 2014

The main objective of this documentary analysis was to identify the problems and discrimination of religious Minority Students in Public Schools. Seeing the minority problems in Pakistan, it seems too necessary to have a comprehensive insight exploring the available material in this regard. In order to treat Religious Minorities in an equal way and giving them their rights, we should have an introductory touch of their problems in Pakistan, the researcher has selected this area with his due interest and pleasure.

Key word: Discrimination, Students of religious minority, Public Schools.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of minorities has always attracted historians and social scientists. The concept and the problems of the minorities developed with the progression of the idea of political state. It does not mean that the concept of minority was not present before the establishment of the political state but its dimensions and extensions were different. In fact the concept of minorities started with the struggle for the resources among the human beings. Through maneuvering, a small group took control of all the resources and started to rule over the masses by dividing them into ethnic, religious and linguistics groups. The phenomenon of ‘have’ and ‘have not’ attracted sociologists and social scientists and they became interested in the situation of the minority groups in different parts of the globe.

The issues of minorities’ are global. The historical literature reflects that these issues are not only existed in the developing countries but these are also issues of the developed countries. In the last century, Before World War I, the minority problem was especially acute in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), and Russia. During the war, each side promised autonomy or independence to minorities in enemy states, and revolts (e.g., of Arabs and Czechs) were encouraged (Davis, 2005). President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points was about the acquittal of minorities. Hitler made adroit use of the minority issue to annex the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia and to attack Poland, thus launching World War II. After the war, Czechoslovakia and Poland took the extreme step of deporting all Germans. Many politically unstable African nations include disparate ethnic factions, frequently embattled because of national boundaries that were artificially drawn by European colonialists. In recent years, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan have been the site of severe ethnic, religious, or clan-based feuding. Pakistan was formed in 1947 for the Muslim minority of Hindu India, but the nation combined people of different cultures although they shared only one religion. Since the 1960s, Northern Ireland—largely Protestant with a sizable minority—has witnessed much sectarian strife, although the late 1990s brought the hope of peace. In the United Catholic States the toleration of legal discrimination against racial and ethnic groups has evolved (Davis, 1978; Hepburn, 1979).

Pakistan was formed in 1947 for the Muslim minority of Hindu India. It covers 796,095 sq km. It is the first ever

1*Corresponding author. Email: gallantup@yahoo.com
PREVIOUS RESEARCHES ON MINORITY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

According to landmark study of Nayyar and Salim (2003), they conclude that the rights of religious minorities—while partially codified in the Constitution of 1973—are not protected by the state, while Islam, by being promoted as a dominating force, is often made to encroach upon their lives. According to the study curriculum in the public school system reflects this reality and presents many concerns. In particular, Nayyar and Salim’s studies are on the basis of the following: religious diversity of the nation, incitement to militancy and violence, promoting prejudice, bigotry and religious minorities in the glorification of war against the use of non-Muslims and other religions blaming oppression and cruelty, inaccurate, omission of historical events and the lack of positive values in other religions. In addition, the study also finds some important Islamic teachings and Islamic characteristics of Pakistan underlined when the hatred of Hindus and Indians were involved. It is noted that these issues are directly linked with particularly Society and Urdu as well as English as medium of instruction and communication. While this study focuses on the school curriculum and textbooks, it focuses less on the relationship between rhetoric and the actual behavior of the Pakistani, who go through the education system.
issues related to minorities. Therefore, it is necessary to break the ice and start a series of effective research whose mark could be deeply felt. Actual educational problems of minorities have been existing and multiplying since the creation of Pakistan. Although social organizations are interested in improving the conditions of the minorities, they merely focused on issues of human rights and political aspects. They are not perfect in their educational development to the available constitutional guarantees, political opportunities and legal guarantees are based (Gill, 2006).

Unfortunately the Pakistani academia is silent especially on the subject and issues related to the minorities. Therefore, it is felt necessary to break the ice and conduct some effective research which could highlight the actual educational problems faced by minorities since the creation of Pakistan. Although the civil society groups are interested to improve the conditions of the minorities, they mostly focus on human rights issues and political aspects. They are not properly focusing on their educational development on the basis of the available constitutional safeguards, political opportunities and legal guarantees.

The current study has uncovered several issues related to primary education at grass root level. The researcher realized that some recommendations based on the conclusion of this study will also prove valuable in the promotion of Universal Primary Education in Pakistan. These recommendations are related to different types and are given as follows:

i. Initiatives should be taken for interfaith dialogue, joint academic and co-curricular activities with faculty and students of other religion should be conducted, where possible.

ii. There should be a confidential reporting mechanism.

iii. There should be a course compulsory for all the students titled “Ethics for Non-Muslim”.

iv. There should be training session for Public sector school teachers and leadership to adhere to anti-discrimination policies and to focus on the constitutional rights of religious minorities.

v. There should also be training sessions for promoting tolerance for diversity in class room pedagogy.

vi. There should be some committees in which representation of different religious minorities who look after the school matters; should be a must.

vii. There is severe need for public sector school curricula reforms. In these reforms focus should be on religious tolerance and modernizing the text books.

viii. There should be programs on print and electronic media on topic “tolerance” and “inter faith harmony”.

ix. Posters about unity and religious harmony should be pasted in school premises.

x. School management should arrange social activities and provide an equal opportunity for everyone to participate in these activities.

xi. Separate teachers for the teaching of subject “ETHICS” should be appointed in schools.

xii. While developing the curricula some experts from religious minorities should be hired so that they can participate and perform positive role for the development of unbiased curriculum.

xiii. Great saying of Quaid-e- Azam about the religious freedom and religious minorities’ rights should be written on the 1st or second page of text books.

xiv. Students of religious minorities should be allowed to celebrate and conduct functions on their religious events in school.

xv. Column of Religion in admission form may be exempted or it should be declared optional if someone does not like to expose his/her religious identity he/she should not be forced.

REFERENCES


