

***A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan and Turkey's Educational Curricula:  
Islamic Teachings, Human Rights, and International Law Perspectives***

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***Abstract***

*This paper presents a comparison of the national education curricula of Pakistan and Turkey, which will be viewed in the context of Islamic teachings, fundamental rights and international law. The main objective of the study is to examine how both countries, through their educational curricula, maintain religious identity, Islamic values and meet the requirements of international law and human rights. Pakistan's National Curriculum emphasizes values and moral education, while Turkey's curriculum presents a unique blend of liberal and secular traditions with the growing religious trends of the past few years. This article examines the religious teachings, fundamental rights and especially the rights of minorities in the curricula of both countries in the light of international treaties. The results show that both states are trying to harmonize their curricula with modern global requirements; however, creating harmony between religion and the international legal framework is a challenge for both countries.*

***Keywords:*** *Pakistan, Educational curriculum, Human rights, law, Islamic teachings*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The education system is the backbone of the ideological, moral and social foundations of any nation. Education is not just a means of transferring information, but it is the means by which states shape the worldview of their future citizens. Pakistan and Turkey are two countries whose history, geography and political evolution are different, but both are trying to adapt Islamic identity to modern global requirements and establish a certain balance in them through their educational curricula.

Pakistan has recently laid the foundation of such a uniform system called the 'National Curriculum of Pakistan', which considers Islamic teachings as an important part of national unity. On the other hand, Turkey, despite its strong secular traditions, has been including religion and religious values in its curriculum for some years. This change is also giving rise to a debate.

Internationally, whether it is the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these treaties actually place the responsibility on states to foster an educational environment that promotes religious freedom and

respect. The article under consideration presents a comparative study of the educational curricula of Pakistan and Turkey in this context. It will analyze the extent to which the curricula of the two countries are in line with Islamic values and the international framework of human rights and where they appear to conflict with these principles.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the main difference between the methods of Islamic teachings included in the curricula of Pakistan and Turkey?
2. Are the educational curricula of both countries compatible with international laws?
3. Are there any reservations regarding the rights of minorities and their representation in the educational curricula of both countries?

## 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct a comparative study of the inclusion of Islamic teachings in the curricula of both countries.
2. To examine the educational curricula of both countries in the light of international laws.
3. To analyze the content in the curricula regarding the rights and representation of minorities.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology has been adopted for this research, which is actually comparative and descriptive. The material has been taken from secondary sources to achieve the research objectives. Official documents of the National Curriculum of Pakistan and the National Curriculum of Turkey and government education policies have been included. International humanitarian laws have been brought forward to examine the legal aspects of the curriculum.

## 5. RESEARCH & FINDINGS

The current educational curricula of Pakistan and Turkey reflect the changing educational policies, state priorities and social demands of both countries over time. The Single National Curriculum implemented in Pakistan in 2021, which is based on a central curriculum structure, now renamed the National Curriculum, aims to promote educational uniformity, national cohesion and ideological identity across the country. Islamic teachings are central to this curriculum, and the subject of Quranic translation has also been made mandatory. Islamic studies, Pakistan studies and moral training have been prominently included at all levels. Social studies and citizenship subjects introduce

the concepts of civic responsibility, social values and, to a limited extent, human rights, however, international law and universal human rights topics are mostly described in a religious and national context rather than in an independent global framework.

On the other hand, Turkey's current curriculum has been structured under the Turkey Century Education Model, which has been in effect since 2023–2024. The curriculum appears to deviate somewhat from Turkey's traditional secular educational heritage and places greater emphasis on national, cultural, and religious values. The curriculum emphasizes moral education, religious culture, and national identity, while presenting human rights, democracy, and civic education in the context of state ideology and national interest<sup>1</sup>. A notable feature of the current Turkish curriculum is that it attempts to create a harmonious blend between religious education (especially through imam-hatip schools) and modern skills, including critical thinking and scientific knowledge<sup>2</sup>. With the formation of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, the madrasah scheme was eliminated, and alternative schools called Imam Hatip Schools (IHSs), were set up to instruct “officials responsible for the performance of religious services” in 1924<sup>3</sup>. Critics argue that the depth of topics on universal human rights and pluralism is becoming limited.

Below, Pakistan's and Turkey's curricula are being compared in terms of human rights, Islamic teachings, and international laws.

#### **(i) Comparative Analysis Concerning Human Rights:**

Pakistan and Turkey are both Muslim-majority nations with rich cultural histories, but they take very different stances on human rights and education. The similarities and differences found in the curricula of the two countries are discussed below.

Both Pakistan and Turkey are signatories to human rights treaties. They have ratified and are regular members of international human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both curricula place equal emphasis on the fundamental principles of human rights, including respect for diversity, equality, and non-discrimination<sup>4</sup>. All these principles are incorporated into various courses such as citizenship, ethics, and social studies<sup>5</sup>. Both countries' curricula place equal emphasis on tolerance and understanding of other cultures, religions, and beliefs<sup>6</sup>. Tolerance education is also part of the curriculum. Because they believe that it can help promote peace in society and prevent discrimination. National identity and civic responsibility are features of both curricula, thus preparing students for active citizenship and

nationalism. A human rights perspective on their curricula reveals some intriguing differences-

However, there are some differences and disagreements between the two curricula. In terms of human rights, there is a clear difference between the curricula of Turkey and Pakistan, which cover rights, social freedoms and justice. While the Pakistani curriculum discusses these rights based on religious teachings, that is, its discussion focuses on traditional interpretations. Similarly, when it comes to freedom of religion and expression, the Pakistani curriculum includes things that limit religious criticism. Or support a particular one, while the Turkish curriculum promotes debate and critical thinking. Across different subjects and grades, there are different levels of human rights education. However, in Pakistan, the education of rights does not seem to be spread in different directions, as it is in the Turkish curriculum, where the education of rights is much more coherent and stable<sup>7</sup>.

#### **(ii) Comparative Analysis Concerning Islamic Teachings:**

Pakistan and Turkey, as Muslim countries, have a significant history of incorporating Islamic principles into their education systems. However, their approaches diverge considerably in terms of focus, methodology, and historical background. Here is a brief comparison before discussing the similarities and differences.

- **Pakistan:** One of the main factors in the country's Establishment as an Islamic state in 1947 was the inclusion of Islamic studies in the curriculum. Religious values are to be promoted, and Islamic identity strengthened. Islamic studies, which emphasize Quranic recitation, memorization, and religious jurisprudence, are compulsory subjects from elementary school through university education<sup>8</sup>.
- **Turkey:** After establishing itself as a secular republic in 1923, the country sought to keep religion and education apart. However, religious education was reintroduced in 2012 due required; however, it is currently an elective<sup>9</sup>. It highlights the history of Islam, ethics, and morality in addition to the lessons found in the Quran.

The significance of Islamic morality, ethics, and values in moulding ideal citizens is emphasized in both nations. Both recognize the intricate connection between modern society and faith. Islam's fundamental principles, such as faith in Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran and Sunnah, prayer, fasting, zakat, and the hajj, are stressed by both. A common objective is to develop a substantial moral character founded on Islamic values. The significance of the Qur'an and Hadith is evident in the fact that both curricula require students to memorise and recite the Qur'an and study Hadith, which are the sayings and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The two types of seerah

studies focus on the leadership, moral behaviour, and social justice of Prophet Muhammad, as well as his life and teachings.

If we look at the difference between the curricula of Pakistan and Turkey in the context of Islamic teachings, it is seen that Turkey includes Islamic teachings and values in various subjects such as history and social studies<sup>10</sup>, while Pakistan has only one subject of Islamic teachings, namely Islamiyat<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, the Turkish curriculum reflects a secular perspective that is drawn from different schools of thought<sup>12</sup>, while the Pakistani curriculum seems to lean towards the traditional Sunni interpretation.

The curricula of Pakistan and Turkey have different emphasis on universal religious values, citizenship, Islamic identity and nation-building. This is because the political contexts and lessons of the two countries are different. As far as the content of the curriculum is concerned, the Pakistani curriculum has details of Arabic, exegesis and jurisprudence, while the practical application of Islamic values is seen in the Turkish educational curriculum<sup>13</sup>.

Overall, Turkey's curriculum is optional, but Pakistan's is more overtly Islamic and required. Islam education requirements vary immensely in terms of their level of instruction. Madrassas are widely distributed throughout Pakistan and provide an alternative educational experience to traditional schools.

### **(iii) Comparative Analysis in terms of International Laws:**

This Analysis aims to demonstrate the main similarities and differences between the national curricula of Pakistan and Turkey regarding their adherence to international educational law.

#### **Structure for Analysis:**

The following international legal instruments deal with education:

Article 26 provides for the right to education, i.e. both countries provide free and compulsory education. It is a different matter that the age limits are different in both countries, such as in Pakistan, from 5 years to 16 years, while in Turkey, free provision is ensured from 6 years to 14 years<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, Article No. 2 prohibits discrimination against any person, i.e. non-discrimination based on religion, is the objective of both curricula<sup>15</sup>. Turkey's secular system focuses on citizenship and social harmony, while Pakistan emphasizes Islamic values. Article No. 18 deals with freedom of thought and religion. Both the curricula of the countries respect religious freedom while maintaining

national ideologies. Optional religious education is provided outside the working hours of Turkish schools. While in Pakistan, only Islamic studies are included.

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):**

Article 3 deals with a curriculum based on the interests of the child. The curriculum aims to meet the needs and skills of the child. The Turkish curriculum focuses on life skills and critical thinking. While in Pakistan, the emphasis is on moral and spiritual development. Similarly, Article 28 deals with establishing non-violent discipline. The 2012 Turkish Law on the Protection of Children against Violence<sup>16</sup> and the 2015 Pakistani Child Protection Act<sup>17</sup> were actually the result of the implementation of this law. As a result, violence against children is an unforgivable crime.

### **UNESCO's Education 2030 agenda:**

The Sustainable Development Goals are covered differently in the curricula of both countries. Topics such as gender equality, environmental awareness and global citizenship are part of it. Similarly, the right to lifelong learning is also included in it. If skilled and adult people of both countries want to get an education, they are given funds for it. Because they want to adapt themselves to the demands of changing times.

Comparing the educational curricula of Pakistan and Turkey in the context of international laws, some similarities emerge. Both Pakistan and Turkey have ratified the above international agreements. Therefore, every child has the right to access basic education, which can be called primary education. Both countries work to provide access to compulsory and free primary education to every child. Similarly, basic subjects such as language, mathematics, science and social studies are also prominently included in the curriculum. Similarly, the curriculum of both countries aims to teach qualities such as tolerance, citizenship and respect for human rights. If we talk about religious education, then in the light of these laws, both countries include religious education in the curriculum according to the respective religious population of each nation.

Although there are similarities, there are also important differences. Pakistan's national curriculum, as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, seems to prioritize Islamic studies more than Turkey's curriculum<sup>18</sup>. Turkey's curriculum is based on the principle of secularism<sup>19</sup>. While Pakistan's curriculum is based on the religious component. Similarly, when it comes to gender equality, Pakistan still faces difficulties in some areas in ensuring girls' education or equal treatment<sup>20</sup>, although both countries have made progress in promoting gender equality in education. But Pakistan seems to lag in

this. Similarly, unlike Turkey's curriculum, Pakistan places more emphasis on national security and patriotism<sup>21</sup>.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the education systems in Pakistan and Turkey are designed to equip their youth with the knowledge and skills they will need in the 21st century. Pakistan emphasizes national identity and Islamic values, while Turkey focuses more on secularism and scientific thinking. Similarly, Pakistan focuses on religion and culture, while Turkey encourages critical thinking. However, the curricula of both countries have their own advantages and disadvantages. But no one can deny that each country, through its educational curriculum, aims to teach universal values, promote national pride, and enable students to face the challenges of the coming era. Pakistan and Turkey will face difficulties in adapting their educational curricula to social demands while maintaining their distinct cultural identities. However, it would not be out of place to say that the educational curricula of both countries seem to reflect human rights, Islamic teachings, and international law. And this educational evolution will enable both countries to face the challenges of the 21st century for their future generations.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Human rights education should be made a part of Pakistan's curriculum more comprehensively.
2. Comprehensive information on interfaith should also be a part of the curriculum so that religious tolerance is created.
3. Equal education of boys and girls in rural and backward areas of Pakistan should be ensured.
4. Information on international laws and global human rights should also be made a simple and understandable part so that students become responsible citizens at the global level.
5. Areas related to the application of moral teachings in practical life should be strengthened.
6. Along with focusing on improving resources in curriculum development, such workshops or seminars should be organized for teacher training, where effective methods of achieving the objectives of the curriculum are discussed.

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