

FOSTERING TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY THROUGH EDUCATION: ANALYZING PROF. DR. HUSSAIN MOHI-UD-DIN QADRI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This research explores the transformative role of Prof. Dr Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri in educating tolerance, religious moderation and interfaith dialogues in Pakistani society. In this research, the multiple initiatives toward creating novel academic programs at Minhaj University Lahore are discussed to show how his vision of education for peace and counter-terrorism could be implemented effectively. Interfaith studies, which aim at bringing people closer and fostering amity between them and different communities of the world are central to Dr. Qadri's approach. It also explores other aspects of his educational reforms, whereby he produced future generation of leaders who embrace tolerance and social cohesion. By doing so, the study demonstrates how Dr. Qadri's teaching model contributes to the development of the culture of tolerance and inclusive society in the context of Pakistan's complex socio-political landscape.

Keywords: *Transformative pedagogy, religious harmony, tolerance, interfaith studies, educational reform, peacebuilding, counter-terrorism, inclusivity, social cohesion.*

Introduction

In the contemporary era, education is considered as one of the most important instruments for changing people's attitudes and promoting tolerance, religious harmony and interfaith dialogue with an especial focus to such areas of the world that are experiencing sociopolitical and sectarian unrest. Thus, Pakistan, a country that embraces religious diversities as well as ideological ones, is unequivocally to decompress the society in which tensions persist. However, the issue is to develop educational models for carrying out this task that not only overcome division but also promote interreligious tolerance among different religious groups. In this context, the efforts of Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri particularly about the promotion of progressive measures in Pakistani Educational sectors are invaluable. Thus, Dr. Qadri's approach to education is being analysed by the framework of critical pedagogy, which has been proposed by Paulo Freire as education for critical consciousness and addressing power imbalance. (Freire, 1970). At the core of his vision is the launched project of interfaith studies like he started degree programs and short courses in the subjects of Religion and Philosophy, Peace and Counter Terrorism, Shaykh-ul-Islam Spiritual Centre etc. at Minhaj University Lahore (MUL), an educational institution he has transformed into a hub for inclusive and innovative education. Hence, integrating the principles of tolerance, respect, and dialogue with academic education, Dr. Qadri's initiatives correspond with one of Pakistani society's significant problem such as extremism and sectarianism.

Sociopolitical conflict and sectarianism issues especially ideological tensions are evident in the Pakistani society and therefore, the need to foster education against interfaith strife. According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2016 report, Pakistan continues to have a high level of intolerance towards religion in education systems, therefore there is need for change the education systems' bias (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2016). In this regard, this study highlights the educational contribution and achievement of Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri in the areas of educational reforms. His efforts in working towards designing programs to include Interfaith

Dialogue is one of the most proactive things in order to have harmony in Pakistan among the religious groups. For instance, he has organized seven international conferences at MUL since 2018. Each year in October the conference on World Religions has been organized to promote religious harmony. Many international speakers from different religions come around the world and present their papers (Minhaj University Lahore, 2024). The basic purpose behind arranging these conferences is to inculcate the real message of Islam in the mind of young students so that he may not be brain washed by any extremism on the name of Islam. This initiate by Prof. Dr. Qadri is revolutionary which is transforming the mind of young students who will be the stakeholders of the country in future. What appears to be the most important organisational educational philosophy that is implemented by Dr. Qadri is to trained the future leaders to live and thrive in a multicultural world. To this end, at MUL, also through different departments like Peace and Counter Terrorism, Religion and Philosophy, Shaykh-ul-Islam Spiritual Centre etc., ethical and social cohesion have been developed with the vision of arming students with practical skills as well as knowledge to tackle existing problems. As the influential contributors the Dr. Qadri's activities are meaningful especially in Pakistani context. His model of inclusive education doesn't only foster academic excellence but also adds values of tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility among students.

Prof. Dr. Qadri's educational reforms also reflect transformative learning approach by incorporating elements such as critical thinking, active engagement, reason, voice and relation with or within the context of, existing knowledge and learner's experiences (Mezirow, 1997). In so doing, he has revolutionized the place of education in Pakistan as an instrument of social change and conflict prevention. This introduction of interfaith studies at MUL has faithfully captured his vision of fostering an environment that will allow students of different faith to fully understand one another. This study is intended to discuss the efforts made by Prof. Dr. Qadri for initiating the process of tolerance building in relation to religious education at Minhaj University Lahore. Ethnographically grounded in critical pedagogy, the analysis explores how his model of education is a concrete idea to foster societal harmony and prevent radicalization in Pakistan. This study also raises further positive implications about education by discussing the general sense of his work in relation to the issue of intolerance and interfaith conflict in Pakistan.

Indeed, Dr. Qadri believes that education can help promote tolerance, and minimize the differences, his concept of education as means towards improving the sociopolitical situation in Pakistan is valuable. By creating exciting academic initiatives and pursuing unity between religious groups he has proved that education can be the key to positive change. This research also explores additional related aspects of his endeavours as practical and theoretical, along with the reflection on potential application of his work in shaping educational context of Pakistan.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri's contributions to transformative pedagogy in fostering religious harmony and interfaith dialogue through the lens of Critical Pedagogy Theory
2. To evaluate the impact of interfaith studies at Minhaj University Lahore in promoting critical thinking, inclusivity, and social cohesion among diverse religious communities
3. To assess the broader implications of Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri's educational reforms in countering extremism and shaping leaders committed to peace and tolerance

Rationale/Significance

This study is significant in filling the existing gap which demands effective educational framework that practices tolerance and discourages extremism in Pakistan. By advancing a Critical Pedagogy Theory framework by Freire (1970), this research provides a complex view of the ways that liberatory education can work through power relations that oppress and create a sense of unity. From diverse professional backgrounds, Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri adjusted his academic and organizational achievements to fit MUL, putting such approaches into practice and exploring the prospects of peacebuilding and social reconciliation in divided communities for educators and policy-makers.

Research Gap

Though there is literature available on transformative education and peace building yet literature concerning the Critical Pedagogy in context to interfaith dialogue and religious harmony in Pakistan with practical implication is limited. Moreover, new developments in MUL by Prof. Dr. Qadri have not been analyzed by the academia comprehensively. This research fills these gaps by analyzing his contributions against a theoretical backdrop, while also evaluating their applicability to combating extremism and creating social cohesion.

Research Questions

1. How have Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri's contributions to transformative pedagogy fostered religious harmony and interfaith dialogue, as viewed through the lens of Critical Pedagogy Theory?
2. What is the impact of interfaith studies at Minhaj University Lahore in promoting critical thinking, inclusivity, and social cohesion among diverse religious communities?
3. What are the broader implications of Prof. Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri's educational reforms in countering extremism and shaping leaders committed to peace and tolerance?

Literature Review

In his article, Qadri (2015) himself cites an example of education as the best tool to eliminate violent extremism because it seeks to go to the root of the problem. In the context of Pakistan, analyzing its history of educational system and describing the failures of the system to oppose the extremism. He emphasises the need to integrate critical thinking, peace, and intercultural respect into curricula, based on the three-phased educational-social transformation movements of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. This accords with the present study conducted on Prof. Dr. Qadri's contribution and strategy on how his scholarly approaches advocate for tolerance and religious harmony with the focus on education as the weapon against extremism.

According to Qadri, Hussin & Dar (2024), Islam has an opportunity in eradicating extreme ideologies since religious education indeed espouses for humility, goodwill, and responsible understanding. Several past researches discuss how affairs of interfaith dialogue and critical thinking should be reflected in curriculums combatting extremism. Best practices take effort further out of classrooms making their calculated efforts as facilitated the peaceful community relations. The educationists need to be trained in cases where there is need to teach complex issues and affecting tolerance. This study is related to the present study that emphasizes the transformative role of education in fostering tolerance, religious harmony, and countering terrorism, as demonstrated by Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri's contributions to education in Pakistan.

Paulo Freire's idea of liberationist pedagogy critical consciousness and students' ability of learning where students during their learning, reject the conventional structuralist approach

to teaching. Thus, Beckett (2013) suggests that though Freire (1970) brings about great emphasis on dialogue, reflection, action the negative aspect the wider totality in which education is located is not well addressed, aspects of cognitive development are not given adequate consideration. Such a critique raises concerns on how Freirean view of education can be expanded to fill the gaps of educational context that his theory horizontally overlook besides the Think or Awareness and Other Education that he remains strong on.

In interpreting education, Paulo Freire has it right, where education is the basic human right that helps the oppressed groups to act, to gain power, and progress a higher sense of social justice. He perceives an educational system as one that is not just informative or indoctrinating; he wants the learners set free through discovery and involvement. From the Freire's perspective education emancipates, and helps change people and the society by enhancing on equalization and humanization. His strategy defines education as the process of acquiring knowledge, but also the process of becoming and creating the society (Freire, 2000).

Terrorism and extremism are some of the chaotic phenomena that negatively affect the world and humanity in general. Nonetheless, such problems still remain today, which proves that the application of forceful measures by the international legal subjects is ineffective. In the past few years, people have realized that there is a need for better strategies to mitigate such risks. This change in attitude presupposes that cooperation with local population, its inclusion and getting its support in fighting extremism is crucial. Accepting that terrorism is the product of a gradual process of radicalization, currently there is an emphasis on addressing its root causes through preventive measures, reforms in education, dialogue, and community-based interventions. (Qadri, 2013).

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research method to analyse the role of Prof. Dr. Qadri as an educationist in promoting tolerance and religious harmony. The study uses the theoretical models, documents and interviews, and a case study research method to ensure that the information collected is comprehensive. The literature is also reviewed to map the fields of peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, and transformative education as a context for Dr. Qadri's initiatives in education. Therefore, this study adopts Paulo Freire's (1970) Critical Pedagogy Theory advanced in 1992 with the notion that education is a potent force towards critical thinking and change, and nurturing power (Leonard & McLaren, 1992). This aspect is similar to what Dr. Qadri has been doing, self-reflection and dialogue in order to solve cultural/religious differences.

In analyzing specific educational initiatives at MUL, a case study mode-of-analysis is employed focusing on the university's interfaith studies programs that foster understanding, respect and tolerance. Interviews were also conducted to faculty, students and administrators as part of sampling to gather more qualitative data about the effects of these programmes. Informal interviews with faculty and students at Minhaj University Lahore were conducted to explore perceptions of interfaith studies. While detailed transcripts were not maintained, key insights were documented and used to inform the analysis. Therefore, the outcomes of the study are backed up by document analysis of curriculum, university policies, and publications. Based upon the theoretical framework, case studies, interviews, document analysis, this study examines how Dr. Qadri's educational changes promote religious diversity, acceptance, and integration in MUL and other institutions headed by him.

Discussion and Analysis

Education serves as a powerful tool for controlling misconceptions relating to tolerance, religious meanings, and interfaith dialogue in parts of the world for example Pakistan that faces sociopolitical and sectarian issues due to the diverse sociopolitical and religious structure. Prof. Dr. Qadri has pioneered transformative educational reforms at Minhaj University Lahore to address such deformed realities in Pakistani educational institution, he has taken revolutionary steps to implement critical pedagogy to educate the minds for a critical consciousness. His programs like Religion and Philosophy, Peace and Counter Terrorism and Shaykh-ul-Islam Spiritual Centre introduce values of tolerance, dialogue, and ethical harmonization into academics so as to equip students for a multicultural society. To some extent, Dr. Qadri's activities are similar to the task formulated by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (2016) to address existing prejudices in the education system of Pakistan. Through critical thinking, active participation and learner centred principles, his work aligns with educational to counter extremism and sectarianism in Pakistani society and to help to serve as a model to promote dialogues and harmony along religious divides.

Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Education

Prof. Dr. Qadri has a revolutionary role in changing educational dynamics. The educational work of Dr. Qadri can be analyzed through the lens presented by Paulo Freire in his theory concerning education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1992). Education for Freire is viewed as form of dialogue which seeks to transform oppression and domination by encouraging the learners to reflect on their oppressive world forms of oppression and initiative to change the status quo. Prof. Dr. Qadri, it should be noted that an instance of application of this principle at the MUL is the introduction of the interfaith studies that involve critical analysis of religious and cultural narratives by Qadri (2012). It empowers different communities to have mutual respect and understanding with another group, something that the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wants education should do—cultivate critical consciousness and social justice. Furthermore, the use of community service learning, as well as conflict solving sessions, also is harmonious with Freire's notion of the practice and reflection technique (Freire, 1992). These methodologies enable students to interface with profound social concerns, making them execute change on the current social hierarchy, embrace more diverse and unified society.

Institutional Development and Social Impact

From this perspective, Dr. Qadri's vision of change in pedagogy can be seen in the establishment of the School of Peace and Counter Terrorism and School of Religion and Philosophy at MUL. These departments are the perfect example how educational changes can help to solve the problem of ethical leadership and critical thinking. For instance, such departments will not only promote students' tolerance to religious differences but also equip them with sets of interfaith conflicts solving checklists. Informal interviews with the students and the faculty from MUL show the manner in which the participants have changed, stating more understanding of cultural diversity. Another student stated, "The program has enriched me with the understanding of other religions and altered my conflict solving approach at home too" (Minhaj University Lahore [MUL], personal communication, 2024). It has focused on the fact that Dr. Qadri's approach of teaching brings out the tolerance needed in society and hence harmony.

Countering Extremism through Critical Engagement

The educational reforms that Dr. Qadri is encouraging are some of the most progressive in the religiously conservative Pakistan and arguably the most effective in counter-extremism as it provides the university students a way of critically negotiating socio-political ideologies they are exposed to. The approach that he adopts has a strong connection as it obliges

students to think deeply about elements of oppression and extremism and, as a result, they learn how to develop a transformative action (Freire, 1992). In this respect, Dr. Qadri's pedagogy erases the conventional educational dichotomy bringing the sources of terrorism: oppression and ideology. Consequently, his educational model does not only equip the students with ways of responding to the radical interpretations but also builds the framework for long lasting peace (Qadri, 2012). This mastery of the principles in MUL's curriculum provides a preventive perspective to extremism by nurturing students to be able to confront the violent extremism and to build a society for the common good.

These mentioned educational changes and accomplishment reflect how Dr. Qadri avails education to bring about changes in the society positively. Focusing on critical pedagogy together with the means necessary for interfaith dialogue, his pedagogical model is a response to the emergent issue of radicalization and aids to establishing the culture of tolerance and respect.

Conclusion

This paper establishes and proves how Prof. Dr. Qadri's educational kind of change processes that three fundamental tenets established by Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy Theory: Tolerance, Religious tolerance, and dialogue in Pakistan. Applying Freire's (2000) premise in practical way, Minhaj University Lahore (Minhaj University Lahore, 2025) witnessed all reforms acclaimed from critical thinking, multicultural society and social justice. Thus, Dr. Qadri's vision not only aims at eradicating the roots of extremism but also at building up the ethical leadership for educational institutions of the world, which are interested in uniting people in divided societies. The study emphasizes the possibilities of transformative education for a different more positive Pakistan socio-political environment, whereby the programme laid out can be a model for other countries on how to build a tolerant, accepting and therefore a peaceful nation.

To sum up, Prof. Dr. Qadri via introducing new educational trends at MUL has spearheaded identification of religious tolerance through annual international conferences on World Religions each year, held in Pakistan. He has had a great impact in the shaping of the next generation of students for development that is not only of good academic Intellectual ability but also of good moral and ethical standards as well as being socially responsible. His revolutionary approach to inclusive education, emphasizing tolerance, empathy, and cultural understanding, is a powerful tool in eradicating extremism and building a more harmonious society in Pakistan. Prof. Dr. Qadri's vision that he himself has brought into practice and focus for the Minhaj University Lahore is successfully building future leaders capable of effectively and positively contributing to the growth and economy of Pakistan as well as being competent in the cultured and multicultural environment required in the advanced elaborate global world.

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