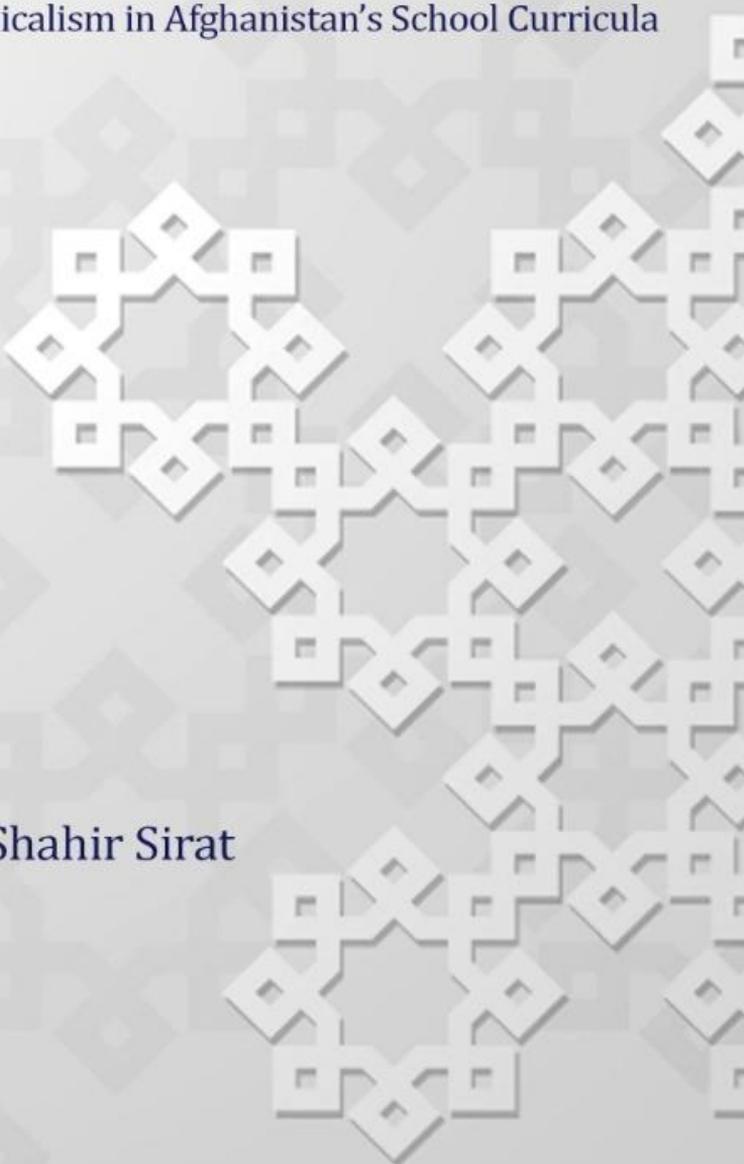


Education and Politics

The Roots of Religious Radicalism in Afghanistan's School Curricula

Shahir Sirat



Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies



**Education and Politics: The Roots of Religious Radicalism in
Afghanistan's School Curricula**



Radicalism VII

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The present research is one from the series of researches on study of radicalism in Afghanistan. The previously published researches on radicalism by AISS are as follows:

1. Trends of Radicalization among the Ranks of the Afghan National Police (November 2015);
2. Social Media and Articulation of Radical Narratives in Afghanistan (November 2015);

3. Trends in Student Radicalization across University Campuses in Afghanistan (October 2015); and
4. Trends in Radicalization across Unregistered Madrasas in Afghanistan (September 2015).
5. Religious Radicalism in the Higher Education of Afghanistan; Analysis of the Political System of Islam Course and Its Impacts of the Students (April 2019);
6. Islamic State Wilayat Khorasan: Phoney Caliphate or Bona Fide Province? (2020).

Shahir Sirat

ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to deconstruct and analyze the ways that religious radicalism effects the Farsi-Dari curriculum in schools across Afghanistan by devising research methods and conducting field research on how education relates to politics in Afghanistan. The research studies and investigates “religious radicalism” in the context of the curriculum in education of Afghanistan; therefore, the variable of “religious radicalism” is considered as a political-religious concept, and the variable “School Curriculum” is considered as an educational concept.

The study explores the relationship between politics, religion and education in Afghanistan. In a broader perspective, this research addresses the questions of whether religious radicalism originates in the school Farsi-Dari curriculum or not? If so, what are the religious origins of radicalism in the curriculum and how do they function? Additionally, what type of output would a religion-centered and politicized education system deliver to society? And, what are the outcomes of politicizing education in Afghanistan? These questions will be addressed in this research paper.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Society is a combination of sub-institutions and sub-structures that influence and are influenced by each other. Likewise, educational institutions are also in a mutual or multilateral exchange with the rest of existing institutions in society. The presence and influence of education can be seen in all aspects of social life, including cultural, political, economic, military and defense. The influence is such that the activity or inactivity of educational institutions can cause serious changes in society - whether progressive or regressive.

Radicalism in general, and religious radicalism in particular, are the most important mental tools used to dominate a country or society. Radicalism can form the psychological, social, cultural, and intellectual platforms for domination, and this fact has repeatedly been abused. In other words, when radicalism enters the education system and presents itself through different concepts, it would automatically affect people's mind and soul, as well as the culture and other social aspects of society like politics and the economy. In this way, radicalism will eventually impact and influence other factors. There is no doubt that radicalism comes with extremism, fundamentalism and violence; whilst being integrated with these elements, political and social actions will certainly be influenced by them. As a result, in the presence of radicalism; extremism, fundamentalism and violence are inevitable, which will end up to omission of prominent social groups and individuals.

In some closed societies, radicalism becomes the intellectual and practical foundation of forming authoritarian states. On the other hand, democratic

societies fight against the formation of radicalism and prevent its growth. From an ethical point of view, radicalism always brings extremism and violence, which is not acceptable for social stability and should be deemed inhumane behavior.

Under the special political circumstances that Afghanistan has endured, especially in recent decades, the horrible consequences of religious radicalism have hurt the country the most and continues to have a negative impact. Religious radicalism has found its way into different social institutions and sub-institutions – namely the educational institutions – through a special historical process within which the Taliban era can be named as the most prominent period of this process. This research intends to investigate and understand ‘religious radicalism’ in Afghanistan’s educational curricula focusing on Farsi-Dari curricula.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Education is one of the core functions and duties of every government; while religious groups, like other social or political schools of thoughts and groups, are trying to overtake national and international hegemony in order to achieve their own set goals. With a majority of the population being theists and religious citizens, Afghanistan has continuously struggled to balance the relationship between religion and politics. Religious leaders have been seeking political power over the course of history and have used various tools to achieve this power – be it jihad, or dialogue and education.

Religious radicalism, a key type of radicalism, originates from a violent and extreme interpretation of the religion itself. This type of interpretation becomes a problem when it influences the social system and subjects some

social institutions and sub-institutions to function in favor of religious radicalism, which will eventually allow religious radicalism to dominate politics. Afghanistan's education system is one of the most fundamental socio-educational institutions in the country, with curricula that are designed, composed and published by the government. The core questions of this study aim to evaluate the relationship between Afghanistan's educational curriculum with Islamic-religious radicalism, the role and position of Islamic radicalism in educational curriculum, and its political impacts in Afghanistan. These questions have not been addressed before. Addressing these questions is essential for improving education and achieving stable development in Afghanistan.

To reduce or even eradicate radicalism, especially religious radicalism, from Afghanistan's education system, this phenomenon should first be studied and understood realistically, and then fought against. This research is important as it will help to improve the understanding of religious radicalism, especially in the education system of the country. Furthermore, this research holds a special position in localizing and evolving the process of religious and political studies.

RESAERCH QUESTION

1. What is the impact of radical Islamic-religious teachings on Afghanistan's school curricula?

Sub-Questions

2. What are the most significant outcomes of radical religious teachings in Afghanistan, especially in politics, education, religion and society?
3. What is the relationship among education, religion and politics in Afghanistan?

Main Hypothesis

1. The Farsi-Dari curriculum of Afghanistan's schools is influenced by religious radicalism.

Sub-Hypotheses

2. The educational centers and socio-political lives of people in Afghanistan are widely influenced by radicalism and religious radicalism.
3. Religious radicalism influences politics in Afghanistan directly and through the educational system.
4. Education in Afghanistan is influenced by both, religion and politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theme of this research is relevant to subjects like religious studies, politics, and education. Although no research has been directly carried out on this topic so far, there are a number of relevant studies that may provide context to this research.

There are some written works regarding education in Afghanistan; however, most of them are reduced to the history of education in the country. Some of these works are *Education System in Afghanistan*, by Jamil-ur-Rahman Kamgar¹; *Educating Afghanistan's People in 20th Century*, by Saif-ur-Rahman Samadi²; *Modern Education in Afghanistan (1903-2010)*, by Ikram Andishmand³; and *Education Systems of Afghanistan Through History*, by Habib Panjsheri⁴. The focus of these books are mostly historic narrations of how education in Afghanistan evolved in light of structural and linear development. None of these books has studied education as an independent variable with other variables such as politics, religion, culture, and community.

Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) conducted a study in Herat in March 2018, *Typology of Religious Trends in Contemporary Herat*⁵. The researcher, Abdul Kabir Salehi, identified three religious trends in Herat: traditional conservative, political Islam, and religious intellectualism. The Hanafi Sunnis, Shiites, Outreach Society (Tablighi Jamaat) and Sufism fall

¹ معارف افغانستان؛ جمیل الرحمان کامگار

² تعلیم و تربیه‌ی جامعه افغانی در قرن بیستم؛ سیف‌الرحمن صمدی

³ معارف عصری افغانستان ۱۳۸۲ – ۱۳۸۹؛ اکرام اندیشمند

⁴ معارف افغانستان در گذر تاریخ؛ حبیب پنجشیری

⁵ گونه‌شناسی جریان‌های دینی در هرات معاصر؛ انسیتوت مطالعات استراتیژیک افغانستان، حوت ۱۳۹۶

under the category of traditional conservatives. Thus, Deobandi Sunnis, revolutionary Shiites, Salafists, Ikhwan-ul-Muslimin, and Hizb-ut-Tahrir are among political Islamic trends. The aforementioned study explains the typology of these religious trends in Herat, and also explores their ideology at the local level.

AISS published another study on a similar topic, *Religious Radicalism in Higher Education of Afghanistan, Analysis of the Political System of Islam Course and its Impact on the Students*, in 2019⁶. The researcher, Ramin Kamangar, has researched the Islamic Studies lessons taught during the fifth semester of government universities called: Political System of Islam. In addition to semi-regular qualitative interviews conducted on professors of this subject, many interviews have been conducted on students as well.

Another study, titled *Political Socialization in Elementary School Curricula of Afghanistan: A Comparative Investigation*⁷, was carried out by Sayed Asghar Haidari⁸, a student of Islamic University – Kabul Branch, in 2013. This research compared political socialization in elementary school curricula during the two periods of Democratic Republic and Islamic Republic.

In 2017, Abdul Hafiz Mansoor⁹, member of parliament, started a debate in media arguing that the Islamic Studies subjects at universities in Afghanistan spread terrorist ideology. Mr. Mansoor claimed that religious teaching of these subjects are greatly radical; therefore, [some] students are brought up

⁶ ریشه یابی رادیکالیسم دینی در نظام آموزش عالی: بررسی درسگفتارهای نظام سیاسی اسلام و تاثیر آن بر دانشجویان؛ انستیتوت مطالعات استراتژیک افغانستان، ۱۳۹۸

⁷ بررسی مقایسه‌ای جامعه پذیری سیاسی در کتب درسی دوره ابتدایی افغانستان؛ دانشگاه آزاد واحد کابل، ۱۳۹۲

⁸ سید اصغر حیدری

⁹ عبدالحفیظ منصور

as terrorists. Many radical and extremist groups denounced Mr. Mansoor's comments and even accused him of apostasy. Meanwhile, many others backed Mansoor through writing and speaking up for him. The compilation of what was written in support of Mr. Mansoor's comments got published in the form of a book, titled: *Absence of Thoughts and Escalation of Extremism: Struggles of Islamic Studies*¹⁰. The content of this book consists of journalistic or analytic pieces which cannot be counted a scientific work.

Yahya Baiza's doctoral thesis on *Education in Afghanistan: Developments, Influences, and Legacies since 1901* at Oxford University is specifically focused on education in Afghanistan since 1901. The researcher has partially investigated some social and political topics that influenced education; for example, chapter five provided a brief overview of ethnical politics and exclusive education between 1929 – 1978. Chapter six of this research studied education, war and immigration between 1978 – 1992. Additionally, chapter nine of this study is dedicated to promotion and amendment of modern education during 2001 – 2012. However, this book has not studied the relationship between education and religious radicalism.

¹⁰ جدال ثقافت در غربت اندیشه و غوغای افراطیت

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This research consists of two sets of objectives. First, the theoretical objectives which are listed below:

1. Theoretical evaluation and investigation of radicalism and religious radicalism and their influence on Afghanistan's school curricula;
2. Scientific explanation of religious radicalism in Afghanistan's school curricula;
3. Explaining the relationship between education, religion and politics in Afghanistan;
4. Discovering the causal relationship among various variables, especially politics, religion, radicalism and education in Afghanistan's school curricula.

Second, practical objectives which include the following:

1. Facilitating the opportunity to review and investigate Afghanistan's school curricula focusing on its relationship with politics and religion;
2. Presenting a primary plan for amending Afghanistan's educational system, focusing on school curricula;
3. Presenting reasonable suggestions based on achieved research results, to moderate and amend the educational system and curricula of Afghanistan.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study was conducted through the use of qualitative research methods. A number of theories are used to explain the themes of this study, in order to provide clear and understandable concluding results. The subject researched in this paper, religious radicalism in its specified context which is Afghanistan's school curricula, is studied upon an in-depth political, socio-political, and somehow psychological (deduction of indoctrination as a learning tool) point of view. Additionally, a significant qualitative analysis of the content was required to describe and explore the subject in a realistic and effective manner. Alongside the use of specific variables in this study, the researcher has aimed to contextualize the variables by providing adequate explanations and a holistic view.

The main method used to collect data for this study, involved the analysis of first-hand primary documents and texts. The Farsi-Dari curricula of Afghanistan's schools were studied and analyzed by the researcher. The main method of analyzing used is "content analysis" which is based on specific indicators. These indicators come from theoretical studies and are defined at the end of Part One. Defining these indicators provides an 'operational definition' for the researcher which will be the foundation of analyzing school curricula. Using 'content analysis' methodology, the researcher focuses on the meanings and concepts that the students learn based on existing educational curricula. The messages from curricula are extracted and their possible impacts and consequences are gauged. The 'content analysis' is discussed in Parts Two and Three. Moreover, the preliminary data and materials of the study were collected through desk research methods which were analyzed rationally through an analytical approach. The schoolbooks

used for this research were downloaded from the Ministry of Education’s website¹¹, and the books which were not available on the website were procured from other resources.

Since this is a qualitative study, the relationship between variables were investigated on the basis of theoretical studies for testing the hypotheses. The identified relationships are compared with the expected theoretical hypotheses to find out their contrast or alignment. If the contrast is very low or close to zero, it can be concluded that the hypotheses are correct; whereas, the hypotheses can be nullified if the contrast is deep. Eventually, in case of contrast, the researcher will explore the reasons of contrast.

The statistical population, which is the same as the statistical sample in this study, includes all the schoolbooks of Afghanistan’s educational curricula – collected from the Ministry of Education’s website –totalling 144 books.

The Structure of Study

The study is divided into three parts, excluding the research methodology and conclusion. Part One discusses theoretical concepts which are relevant to this study. These concepts include religion, politics, education and other concepts relevant to these three. This theoretical framework establishes the criteria and standards which are the basis of identifying and categorizing religious radicalism teachings found in Part Two. Part Two consists of the investigation and a review of all school books in Afghanistan’s educational curricula. All the books are studied and analyzed based on the content

¹¹ <https://moe.gov.af/dr/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%89>

analysis method, and any teachings from the books that are found to directly or indirectly lead to preaching, spreading, and promotion of radicalism are comprehensively investigated. The topics and discussions in Part Two are evaluated based on the theoretical framework provided in Part One. Part Three discusses the relationship among politics, education, and religion. This part begins with a comparison of open and closed political systems. This is followed by an explanation of the political structure in Afghanistan, in relation to the main variables of the research. Finally, all the facts are taken into consideration to explain the relationship among education, politics and religion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

To gain a clear understanding of the subject and contextualize the questions within a broader perspective, some of the key concepts will be defined first. This will clarify the theoretical and scientific boundaries of the researcher, and help the reader gain a better understanding of the researcher's point. Explaining the concepts and general topics will clarify the themes of the research. To analyze the existing teachings of Afghanistan's school curricula and to take a critical look to Afghanistan's Education Law, it is necessary to have a clear "operational definition" of radicalism. This "operational definition" will be defined based on specific indicators which will be the foundation of what Part Two will discuss. Therefore, this section is dedicated to explaining the key concepts which will be repeated throughout the research.

Politics

Like many other concepts in social sciences, the concept of politics is defined in many different ways too; thus, there are different understandings of it. According to Babaei, "Politics stands for *politique* in French which originates from *politicus* in Latin, or *Politikos* in Greek which translates into *city*... Politics in particular can be defined as measures that the governments exercise in governing affairs and also defining the form and content of their activities... These measures are exercised through interior and exterior

outlets... Politics is also used as ‘guideline’ in some cases,” (Ali Babaei¹², 2005, pp.357-358). In this definition, interior and exterior outlets mean national and international politics, referring to interior affairs and foreign affairs respectively.

Raymond Aaron gives a different definition of politics. He saw politics as “two terms, political commentary and action, and the place of retaliation and confrontation of political programs, opinions, and actions with the political scene. In his opinion, these two words are interdependent to one another, so that if the political scene is not right, the political opinion and program will not work in action, and if the political opinion and program are not measured and accepted according to the existing conditions, the desired reception and functioning will be stopped.” (Ibid.) Therefore, politics also means “issues related to governments and states, preserving national existence, internal and foreign security, and developing and implementing general principles on these matters,” (Agha Bakhshi & Afshari-rad¹³: 2007, p.515). This research considers both, general and specific concepts of politics.

Education

In this research, education is viewed from two perspectives: first, education as a personal action; second, education as a process. Therefore, any action or process which serves as tools for information, capacity building, acquiring knowledge or specific skills, becoming literate, and promoting critical

¹² علی بابایی

¹³ آقابخشی و افشاری‌راد

thinking is considered education. In other words, education is the process or action of preparing oneself or others.

Education exists in two types in the modern world: first is organizational education which is more systematic. In this type, education is applied through governmental or private institutions. These educational institutions are generally monitored by governments and the existing laws in a country. At a lower level, the managers and owners of these educational institutions monitor schools. The educational institutions may belong to the government or private sector. These institutions supply education as a service to the citizens at different levels (elementary, high school, and higher education).

The second type of education is personal and non-organizational. This type of education is based on personal studies and perceptions. Self-education is the foremost method of this type of education, which is open to studying resources and can be done at an individual's own discretion or through the advice of acquaintances.

Barrow and Woods define education differently: "Education is something worth while being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner," (Barrow & Woods, 2012, p. 26). This definition explains part of our inquiry; however, it complicates the inquiry as well. On one hand, it highlights the importance of transmitting something worthwhile intentionally in a morally and acceptable manner; while on the other hand, all of these concepts need more explanation. What is our definition of 'something worthwhile'? What criteria makes something worthwhile? How does time and place affect this worthiness? Why is 'intention' important? What is the relationship between intention and ways or process to acquire it?

How do we define intention? What is our perception of ‘something morally acceptable’? How do we measure morality, the moral, and moral manner? Tens of other questions can be asked regarding this definition. Each question will be addressed in a professional and methodical manner.

In terms of research area, this research focuses on organizational and systematic education in Afghanistan’s school curricula. In other words, when the term ‘education’ is mentioned throughout this research, it means education system in Afghanistan.

Religion

Religion is probably the most influential phenomenon in humans’ lives. Religion influences people’s private spheres, and sometimes impacts the public sphere as well. Religion has had life-changing effects on both private and public spheres in society. Therefore, various philosophical schools and branches of science are studying religion and drawing specific concepts from it.

Dekhoda Persian Dictionary¹⁴ defines religion as: Islamic doctrine, Sharia and opposite of infidelity¹⁵. The dictionary explains this term further, “The term ‘daena’ is repeatedly used in Sanskrit and Gatha and other Avestan scripts, which translates into creed, spiritual traits, spirituality and conscience. Thus, religion is one of five inner forces of humankind.” The Islamic philologist scholars have presented various definitions of religion which can be summarized into the three following meanings: A) Referring to

¹⁴ فرهنگ فارسی دهخدا

¹⁵ (Tariqa, Sharia, and opposite of Kufr)

its Hebrew origins, it metaphorically means calculation; B) In pure Arabic, it means ‘habit’ or ‘usage’ which both originate from the same root; C) A Persian word which translates into ‘honesty’. According to Dehkhoda Dictionary, religion is a set of inherited beliefs regarding human’s existence and the necessity of ethics and faith. Muslims regard religion as a set of rules and principles that bring mankind closer to God. In some cases, the concepts ‘nation’ and ‘sect’ are used synonymously with ‘religion’ by commoners; however, these concepts are very different. The Nation of Abraham and Abrahamic Religions are regarded as ‘Hanif’¹⁶ in Quran; thus, these religions are regarded religion of true believers and ‘religion of ethics’. Occasionally, the term ‘religion’ is used for sects and religion as a whole. (Ibid.)

Religion has been studied as a social institution, and also as a historical phenomenon. It has been regarded as both divine, and earthly. “In a philosophical categorization, we can compare two types of religions: one that is supernatural and has been descended from heavens, and one that is earthly and natural. The difference in these two is in their foundations. The foundation of descended religion is superficial world, and the foundation of earthly religion is humans’ nature and is accredited by humans’ mind,” (Akhlaq¹⁷, 2010, p.30).

Religion can be defined according to its function and essence as well. “Intrinsic definitions of religions, mainly focus on nature and functions of religion such as social and personal functions of religion, and also the

¹⁶ Hanif is an Arabic term which means ‘true believers’.

اخلاق¹⁷

influence and consequences of religious beliefs and behavior,” (Tasht-zar, Heidari and Rasaf¹⁸, 2012, p.104).

Commonly, religion is known as: “recognizing a super-natural being who is omnipotent, and also believing in a God or Gods who are worthy of obedience and worship,” (Oxford Dictionary as cited in Hick, 2011, pp. 22 & 23)

From a psychological point of view, religion is “emotions, actions and experiences of people in their solitude, when they call everything ‘divine’,” (William James as cited in Hick, 2011, p.23). Whitehead, another theologian, defines religion as “the art and opinion of one’s internal life”, whilst viewing religion as a “direct rejection of any theory that considers religion prior to any social fact,” (Wach, 2006, p.35). Sometimes "religion is of the passionate and emotional nature that relies on faith in the harmony between us and the world, or the pure and revered state of the soul we call ‘rapture’; or, as Friedrich Schleiermacher puts it: “The essence of religion is a sense of absolute belonging.” In such definitions, religion is a special kind of feeling, (Ahmadi¹⁹, 2006, p.20) In the context of psychology, the most important issue about religion and religious experience is the individual-psychological experiences of people that emerge in the form of actions and reactions, as well as the individual’s mind’s fluctuation between his/her conscious and subconscious. Some would regard religion as a mental illusion that human beings seek to escape from themselves and their deficiencies in life. At a different context, religion "occupies the position of potential existential anxiety. That is, it can create anxiety and horror itself. Of course, it depends

¹⁸ طشتزر، حیدری، و رصاف

¹⁹ احمدی

on the type of religion; for example, the religions which are based on salvation often struggle between sin and the promise of salvation in the after-life. Such religion would only create more fear and frustration in life,” (Giddens as cited in Tasht-zar, Heidari & Rasaf, 2012, p.104). Religion, with its characteristics, is perhaps the strongest social institution in conquering people’s minds. By promising eternity and salvation, this potential of religion becomes even more profound. Whether this promise is fulfilled or not, it occupies people’s minds, and this scourge of conflict leads to the formation of religious motives in individuals. "Religious motives can be both: positive and negative; or, constructive and destructive. Whether the constructive force of religion overcomes its destructive force or not, depends on our point of view. However, religion should not be mistaken with its impacts,” (Wach, 2006, p.399). In many cases, people's religious motives relate to one another and evolve. The evolved form of these impulses effects the collective thought of individuals which can turn into one of the strongest causes at the level of major political and social organizations to make individuals believe their religion is superior.

In a naturalist point of view, religion is “a set of commands and prohibitions which impede the free functioning of our talents,” (Solomon. Reinach as cited in Hick, 2011, 23). “On occasions, religion is the ethics which transcends and enlightens our emotions,” (Matthew Arnold as cited in Hick, 2011, p.23). In some definitions, there are typically contradictory descriptions of religion; on the one hand, religion prohibits free actions by humans, and on the other hand, religion is assumed ethical which transcends human emotions. Religion is opposed to human nature and the essence of human’s free will and freedom. However, if we consider human nature in line with ethical principles, religion

can define its position by reinforcing these principles as being consistent with human nature.

In religious studies, some definitions are referred to as intra-religious definitions or definitions of religion by itself. This type of definition is typical of religious point of view and is based on religious logic only. In this view, “religion is a response to human by diety,” (Hick, 2011, p.23), and also “admitting to the fact that all creatures are manifestation of power beyond our knowledge.” (Herbert Spencer as cited in Hick, 2011, p.23).

In sociological definitions, “religion is a set of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions that all human beings have built in different societies,” (T. Parsons as cited in Hick, 2011, p.23). In such definitions, “every religious practice is a social action in spite of being done by individuals,” (Schiller as cited in Wach, 2007, p.32). In a sociological point of view, religion is regarded as a social institution and a historical phenomenon which has various functions at different times and the consequences of its presence or absence are different in different societies. “Religion, as a social institution, is interrelated with other institutions and social forces that constitute society. It is also an impetus for the members of society to follow the necessary norms of that society. Religion provides answers to existential questions of humans which cannot be accessed from any other source,” (Tasht-zar, Heidari & Rasaf, 2011, p.92). In the meantime, “religion is the main instrument for human to realize and connect to the environment,” (Ibid., p.103). In such contexts, it is claimed that, “the answer that religion gives to one's existential questions, relieves him of moral confusion and existential suffering and gives him peace and security of existence. Religion has a clear response to certain events, such as death, sleep, and calamities that other aspects of culture are

unable to handle. Death, for example, is a kind of 'zero point' whereby an external constraint destroys human control over its existence and life becomes meaningless to humans,” (Ibid., p.106). Thus, religion has attempted to establish a relationship between the visible world and the unseen world based on beliefs in the supernatural world. It can be argued that those who believe in the existence of an unseen world are more inclined to succumb to the demonic impulses of undemocratic values, and therefore democratic countries are more likely to attempt to secularize their political system. On the other hand, it is not always the religion that answers the existential questions of man, perhaps rather the answers that religion offers are more mythical and irrational. In such situations, science and philosophy have also attempted to provide answers to these questions and have been addressed more scientifically or based on rational and philosophical reasoning.

There are different theories on what religion does and whether religion as an institution collapses or not. Many believe in the survival of religion, while others view religion as a decaying phenomenon. However, the common idea of all these theories is that religion as a tradition, impacts numerous aspects of modern life. “Taylor, Frazer, Marx, and Freud had predicted that as science dominates modern thinking, the religion would disappear. In contrast, other groups, such as Kant and Durkheim, who took a functionalist approach to religion, predicted that only familiar and traditional forms of religion would disappear; instead of which there will be principles and beliefs that are not based on supernatural or metaphysics. Many recent theorists, including Berger, who has been a prominent secular theorist for many years, have taken a different stance by rejecting such ideas. These theorists believe that despite enormous changes specific forms of religion, it will continue to exist as part

of modern society. For example, Bella, relying on Christian context of secularism, believes that because of its important social function, religion will be the center of cultural affairs again. Many theorists, including Lockman, Stark, Bainbridge, and Wutno, have come to a similar conclusion with the advent of new religious movements, particularly, fundamentalism. Some even believe that despite the rationality and scientific and technological basis of modern society, religion will not lose its transcendental character," (Ibid., pp.93 & 94). What matters is how religion interacting with other phenomena, such as science and philosophy. In societies where the intellectual needs of humans are more attuned to science, philosophy and art, religion appears to lose its individual and social functions; though, in societies where modern science and philosophy and art are not responsive to human needs, religion emerges as a traditional-historical institution besides being a sacred institution. Religion exists powerfully in such societies and is likely to continue its strong presence.

Religion has two aspects at a political and social level: "one is the positive influence which unites people, and the other is the negative influence which segregates people," (Wach, 2006, p.38). The positive function of religion has shown that "religion is the strongest bond of humanity," (Bacon as cited in Wach, 2006, p.13), and religion "has proven to be one of the most effective and capable unifying forces in the life of states, although it is also known that if abused, religion will act against the government and its laws. Religious practices are established among the primitive peoples because of the concept and value of universal, moral, and religious law upon which comfort, and even the existence of a group, may depend. This establishment takes place under normal circumstances, but becomes more important in times of

distress, conflict, and crisis. For this reason, the importance of religion largely depends on its interpretation and interpreter. Since the social and political order of religion is not deliberate, but based on static religious principles, the government is obliged to conform to religious requirements. Though, it does not necessarily always happen this way; therefore, there are many examples of primitive religions that attempted to change, reinterpret, or ignore religious laws, or even blackmail, prosecute, punish or silence religious servants,” (Ibid., pp.290 & 291). On the other hand, religion is sometimes seen as a traditional phenomenon which goes against modernism, sometimes as the political basis of the state against secular systems, and sometimes it has a negative function that is more at a social level which typically causes divisive and violent clashes due to the multiplicity of religions in societies. In intra-religious discourses, however, this dual and contradictory function of religion is sometimes attributed to the interpreter's interpretation of religion. It is based on this argument that there is almost no religion that offers only one particular interpretation and that all its followers are committed to the same particular interpretation.

Marx, Durkheim, Giddens, and Weber on Religion

The most important religious theories in the field of politics and sociology are influenced by the ideas of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Giddens²⁰; therefore, the ideas of these thinkers about religion is partly discussed here. however, before going through the theories of these four scholars, we need to take a brief look at Auguste Comte²¹ (1757-1798). Comte is considered by many to be the founder of sociology. Comte had a particular view of religion and was keenly aware of the society and time in which he lived. According to Giddens, "Towards the end of his intellectual life, Comte had drawn ambitious plans for the rebuilding of French society in particular, and of human societies in general, based on his sociological perspective. He insisted on the creation of the 'religion of humanity' which was to abandon faith and dogmatism in favor of scientific thinking. Sociology was the center of this new religion," (Giddens, 2013, p.13)

Marx

In Marx's point of view, religion is "the soul of a soulless world" – a refuge from the violence and hardship of everyday life. According to Marx, the traditional form of religion will disappear, and it must go away, and the reason for this is that the positive values embodied in religion can be the guiding ideals of humans' transcendence in the world, not that these ideals and values are wrong. Humans should not be afraid of the Gods he, himself created, and must not give up the values a human himself can fulfil. Marx's

²⁰ مارکس، دورکیم، وبر، و گیدنز

²¹ آگوست کنت

famous quote states, “Religion is the opium of people.” Religion postpones bliss and prosperity to after-death, and spreads giving in to the existing conditions in this world. Thus, diverting people's attention from the inequalities and injustices of this world with the promise of what will come after death. Religion has a strong ideological element: religious beliefs and values often justify wealth and power inequalities, (Giddens, 2013, pp.776, 777 & 778).

Marx seems to have a class-based view of religion. On one hand, he considers religion to be an opiate for the working class and the masses; and on the other hand, he states that religion is somehow in collusion with the ideology of capitalism and the ruling class. Marx subtly states that religion, by promising redemption to its followers, impedes the serious and consistent activity of ‘Praxis’ which is the main progressive force of human history. Marx regards religion as an ideological phenomenon and recognizes its modern and realistic form as the creator of human aspirations. However, “Marxism also has its own ideals and utopia, which are the ideals of communism, historical determinism, sacred scriptures, prophets, saints and martyrs. To this end, it can be concluded that Marxism shares some of the features of great religions, while lacking some prominent characteristics of a religion. The question of whether a movement is religious or not, is not so important, what matters is the extent to which this concept is intertwined in a vast network of differences and similarities,” (Hick, 2011, p.25). Finally, two points in Marx’s view of religion can be highlighted: first, the similarities and differences of Marx's ideas and Marxism with religion; and second, Marx's and Marxism's views on religion.

Durkheim

“Durkheim does not relate religion to social inequalities or power, but the general nature of social institutions. He arranges his ideas based on Totemism in primitive Australian societies and argues that Totemism represents the ‘most primitive’ or simplest form of religion – hence is the title of Durkheim’s book,” (Giddens, 2013, p.778). However, whether Totemism really represents the simplest form of religion can be debated. Although Totemism has a foundation of beliefs, it actually originates from a belief in the reverence of the life and soul of other beings like animals and plants.

In his famous book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim defines religion as, “a system of beliefs and practices related to divine affairs, ie. separated from earthly affairs – the forbidden. These beliefs and practices unite all the followers of a religion as one moral community,” (Durkheim, 2006, p.19). Based on the presented definition, it seems that Durkheim is more focused on heavenly religions because he sets the earthly against the divine on one hand, and the prohibited against the permitted on the other.

The religions that do not promise immortality and do not represent afterlife somehow fall outside Durkheim’s definition. Even Durkheim’s Totemism has no connection to the afterlife. “Durkheim defines religion based on distinction between ‘the sacred’ and ‘earthly’. In his view, sacred objects and symbols are treated in a manner other than the usual aspects of life, aspects that are considered to be sacred,” (Giddens, 2013, p.778). In Durkheim's view, what separates the sacred from the earthly is the unusual behavior of human’s affairs. In line with Durkheim, Wach also regards religion as a "sacred experience," (Wach, 2006, p.19).

For Durkheim, "Religion is more or less a complex device of myths, dogmas, rituals and formalities ... Religious phenomena are naturally divided into two fundamental categories: beliefs and rituals. Beliefs are ideological, that is, they consist essentially of imagination; the latter are certain aspects of certain actions. There is a whole lot of difference between these two, beliefs and rituals, which separates thought from motion," (Durkheim, 2014, pp.47 & 48). Durkheim further emphasized the fact that religion is never just a matter of belief and faith. All religions involve ritual activities where they meet with a group of believers," (Giddens, 2013, p.778). For Durkheim, the most important function of religion is to create psychological peace and solidarity within the community. "In communal rituals, the sense of common solidarity and integrity is strengthened and nourished. The rituals divert people away from the worries of worldly unholy social life and bring them into a higher realm where they feel they are in contact with superior forces. These superior forces, ascribed to totems or heavenly beings or gods, are in fact the manifestation of the power and influence of the crowd upon the individual," (Giddens, 2103, p.779). For Durkheim, religion is not just about worship and rituals, but it also provides a certain vision for its followers to understand the world. (Durkheim, 2014, pp.593-594). Followers of every religion interpret the world in a particular way that is influenced by their religious teachings. On this, Wach states that, "all acts derived from or characterized by religious experience, are rites of practical expression. In a more restrictive view, the practicing of rituals is of a religious person. Religion in this sense is defined as worship. In all religions, sacred experiences are performed in a manner respectful of the transcendent essence, whose existence is literally interpreted in words such as myths, teachings, and dogmatic precepts," (Wach, 2006, p.29).

“According to Durkheim, as modern societies grow, the influence of religion decreases. Religious explanations are being replaced by scientific thoughts, and ritual activities form only a small portion of people’s lives. Durkheim is of the same idea as Marx that the traditional religion is diminishing. Durkheim writes: ‘The old Gods are aging or are already dead.’ Yet, he believes that religion will possibly continue to exist, maybe in other forms. Even the modern societies need some rituals and values for integrity and unity; thus, it is expected that the new forms of values and rituals will replace the old ones,” (Giddens, 2013, p.779). Durkheim’s fundamental opinion on religion can be summarized as something evolving. The evolution of religion causes various forms of religion, some of which are stable and some will disappear through the course of time.

Weber

Karl Maximilian Weber is another prominent scholar, as Giddens puts it, who not only wrote about economics, law, philosophy, comparative history, and sociology, but also wrote about the religions of China, India, and the Near East and thus played an integral role in understanding the sociology of religions. “Through comparing China and India’s prominent religions with those of the West, Weber concluded that some aspects of Christian belief have had profound impacts on formation of Capitalism in the West,” (Giddens, 2013, pp.21 & 22)

Weber published this research in the form of a book, titled *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In this book he argues as follows, “All those who are brought up in European civilization, would eventually ask this question: ‘What caused those specific phenomena to emerge in the Western

civilization only – at least in our perception – and become universal values?” (Weber, 2013, p.15). Weber regards the West as characterized by particular social structures that are more inclined to the use of science. According to Weber, “It was advancement of Western capital which put science and technology into use. Capitalistic views did not help emergence of mathematics or mechanics, but it was certainly in the West that the technical and conscious application of science improved people’s lives and caused further development. The incentives and privileges originate in particular social structure of the West,” (Ibid., p.24).

With this being said, according to Weber the important question is about “how some religious beliefs persuade ‘spirit of creation’ and become a special form of economic behavior. For instance, the relationship between a capitalistic life with the rational ethics of Protestantism is considered. Therefore, only one aspect of causes and effects will be discussed. The purpose of exploring economic behavior of great religions of the world which will come next is understanding the relationship between world’s greatest religions and social classification,” (Ibid., p.26). To study Christianity and define specific concepts of his research, Weber regarded Christianity as a ‘religion of salvation’. “If human beings conform to religious beliefs and accept its ethical principles, they can reach to salvation and redemption. The concepts of ‘sin’ and ‘salvation from sin’ through God’s blessing become important. These concepts create tension, anxiety, agility and emotional mobility which normally do not exist in Eastern religions. Salvation religions are ‘evolutionary’. The point when Eastern religions emphasize on passive stance of believers against existing order, Christianity teaches constant opposition to committing sin which can result in standing against existing

order. Religious leaders such as Jesus emerge and interpret the existing teachings in a way that would challenge the dominating power,” (Giddens, 2014, p.781)

Referring to the spirit of Christianity, Weber states that, “considering the job statistics in countries like Germany where a variety of religions coexist, you may face with a widespread phenomenon which has repeatedly caused fervent discussion in magazines, literary works, or Catholic councils: the directors of the biggest factories, owners of companies, the most qualified workforce, and even most of technical professionals with high degrees are often Protestants,” (Weber, 2013, p.31). In continuation of his studies, Weber narrows his religious studies to comparing Catholicism and Protestantism in order to strengthen the foundation of his argument. As he states, “Catholicism tends to be more mystical..., there are superior ideals in its elements, and emphasizes believers to relinquish worldly frills.” In fact, such descriptions are in line with general perception of the public.

Disparaging to virtuous ideals (realistic or imaginary), the Protestants point at how Catholicism suggests abstinence. Catholics, on the other hand, criticize materializing all aspects of life by Protestants. A contemporary author concluded the differences between these two sects of Christianity as follows: “Catholics are more comfortable for they have less voracity for earning more. They typically prefer a peaceful life with a relatively modest income over a risky and exciting life – even if it brings them wealth and pride. Folk wisdom says in humor, ‘Eat well to sleep well.’ In this context, Protestants prefer ‘to eat well’, while Catholics prefer ‘to sleep well,’” (Ibid., p.35). For Weber, these characteristics of Protestantism – materialism and desire to eat and sleep well – have influenced the social and economic spirit

of the West and have made it more secular and active. Secularism and activity have paved the way for the rise and development of capitalism.

“Through analyzing Eastern religions, Weber concluded that these religions pose an insurmountable obstacle to the development of industrial capitalism; not because non-Western civilizations are retrospective or backward, but because they have accepted values which are different than that of Westerners’. Weber points out that in old China and India, there had been remarkable growth in trade, handicrafts and urbanization during certain historical periods, but none of these resulted in creating social patterns like the West that helped Capitalism emerge. The religion was a significant obstacle for such changes,” (Giddens, 2014, p.780). In other words, Weber discusses the relationship between Protestantism and Capitalism, and compares the Western and Eastern religions in accordance to their social context.

Giddens

Giddens is probably the most important sociologist of the modern era whose diverse theories on different subjects are reflective in many ways and cannot be ignored. Giddens devotes a chapter of his voluminous book, *Sociology*, to religion and attempts to explain issues related to religion.

Before addressing any issue related to religion, Giddens is aware of the tremendous impact of religion and religious experiences on humankind throughout history. As he writes, “For thousands of years, religion has had a powerful impact on human life. Religion, in one form or another, exists in all known human societies. There are signs of religion or religious rituals in the

oldest societies we know of, or the ones that archaeology has found. Religion will always remain part of human experience and will influence our understanding of the environment and our reactions to it," (Ibid., p.766).

Anthony Giddens considers the study of religion a challenging task and insists that the sociologist must devote a strong mind to it. "To analyze religious practices, we must reveal the very meaning and concept of different beliefs and practices found in different cultures," (Ibid., pp.767 & 768). He further emphasizes that, "religious beliefs and organizations are so diverse that it is very difficult for scholars to come up with a comprehensive definition of religion," (Ibid., p.769). Given such a situation, Giddens makes a distinction between what religion is and what it is not. Regarding what is not religion, Giddens writes, "religion should not be confused with monotheism. Religion must not be conflated with ethical guidelines that control the behavior of believers. Religion does not necessarily have to do with explaining how the universe came about, and ultimately that religion cannot be considered as one with supernatural beliefs," (Ibid., pp.768 & 769). It appears that when Giddens says, "religion does not necessarily have to explain how the universe came about," he lacks a study of religious texts of world religions. For example, we can mention the creation of the universe in the Quran and other books of heavenly religions. There are numerous verses of the Quran on how the universe and humankind was created. Regarding what religion is, Giddens puts more emphasize on the common features of all religions. Giddens writes, "All religions contain a set of symbols that arouse a sense of obeisance or a respect for fear, and relate to rituals or practices (such as church services) in which the community of believers participates" (Ibid., p.769). Accordingly, Giddens seeks to develop a definition of religion

by listing the components of what religion is and what it is not. However, it seems difficult, or even impossible, to provide a general and comprehensive definition of religion.

RADICALISM AND RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

There are various definitions - both lexically and conceptually - of the word radical and radicalism. "Radical and radicalism are derived from the Greek word 'Radix' meaning root," (Gholami²², 2014, p.32). In the literal sense, the term 'radicalism' refers to a school of thought that seeks the root of a phenomena. Radicalism is translated in terms like extremism or fundamentalism.

In more specific definitions, "the term 'radical' is referred to all ideas and methods that are after sudden change in social or political institutions which are in power; also, radicalism is any theory of arts or science that is at odds with the existing ruling institutions," (Ibid.).

Radicalism can also be defined as, a "person, school or party that believes in immediate and fundamental changes in political or social institutions; especially if these changes are to modify social conditions or eliminate corruption," (Aghabakhshi & Afshari-rad, 2007, p.565). Hence, there are Left or Right radical parties in different countries. The radical left parties are more in favor of Marxist theories, and believe that political and social foundations need to be fundamentally changed to accommodate their own ideas, and consequently social conditions and even political structures must change. The far-right parties are in favor of liberalist theories that seek to bring fundamental social and political changes in the society by promoting and institutionalizing their own thoughts and ideas in other fields too. In a broad perspective, radical is defined as views that call for dramatic change in the social order by different means.

غلامی²²

The concept of radicalism is focused on the radical changes in the society, and to explain this change, radicals have their own direction and agenda in each country, (Tolouei²³, 2006, p.535). The radicals want profound changes in every country, a change that would transform all social institutions. The more radical people and groups there are, the more profound changes they demand. "Radicalism is usually associated with a movement for fundamental change; however, the ideal change is different from time to time. Moreover, although "radicalism" has often been used for left-wing democratic movements, it is sometimes referred to as right-wing oligarchic movements that seek to 'regenerate' the society," (Davis, 2008, p.153). It was mostly by American sociologists that the term 'radicalism' was used to describe right-wing movements. Right-wing radicalism, especially in the United States, is often confronted with traditional conservative groups and individual rights.

"The revolution or the practical implementation of radical political theory, inevitably leads to tyranny through anarchy. Radicals are turning to tyranny because they want to change society immediately and rapidly. However, according to Edmund Burke, they still act on insufficient knowledge. Radicals have a great deal of confidence in their theories. In fact, there is never enough reliable knowledge of social order given its complexity to justify destroying the existing social order and constructing something entirely new. In a political point of view, we must always act cautiously because of our limited knowledge of it," (Ibid., pp.157-158).

To this end, it can be implied that radicalism and radicals have the following characteristics: they want immediate change in the political structure and

social order of society; they typically stand against conservatism; they use diverse instruments to achieve their goals such as revolution and insurgency; and most important of all, their actions are characterized by tyranny and violence.

When combined with religion, the teachings and ideas of radicalism form religious radicalism. Some religions – including major heavenly religions – present concepts such as sacred war, jihad, preaching, spreading the religion and some other violent actions which are typically of the same type as radicalism. Considering the strong persuasive force of religion, these concepts have occasionally served in favor of radicalism. Radicalism has also been used as an instrument for spreading a specific belief or religion as well. When the radical ideology dominates in a society and disrupts the existing order, the new radical order forms itself based on religious teachings as a persuasive instrument, and does everything to keep the newly established order.

Islamic Radicalism

Islamic radicalism is a particular interpretation of religion based on religious teachings and radical ideas. Radicalization of religion changes according to the specific socio-cultural characteristics of each society. “In recent years, especially after the 9/11 incident, Islamic radicalism has become one of the most controversial challenges in academic circles, and also a hot topic for the media. Islamic radicalism is a modern phenomenon that has emerged in the last two centuries following the entry of modernism into the Islamic world. With the advent of modernism in the Muslim world, the traditional, social, political, and cultural construction of the Islamic world has undergone many changes, and many relationships with the past have been questioned. This has led to problems such as the identity crisis, the crisis of legitimacy, class conflict, military weakness and the cultural crisis,” (Sa’ei²⁴ et al., 2011, p.32). Here it is argued that Islamic radicalism has evolved in response to the West, be it at the political level or at the social and intellectual levels. Such an understanding of Islamic radicalism seems to reduce its impact and influence, and justifies its application over the course of time.

“Islamic radicals believe that they are appointed by God himself to execute His will on earth. This extremist minority believes that violence is unavoidable since the rulers of the Islamic world are authoritarian and anti-Islam. They are trying to overthrow governments, seize power, and impose their views and interpretations of social Islam. The radical Islamist movements are working on the notion that Islam and the West are in a constant struggle and uneven conditions that go back to the earliest days of Islamic civilization,” (Gholami, 2014, p.34-35). However, what should also

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be considered is that Islamic radicals have not always been autonomous, and in many ways have been subordinate to other powers.

Islamic radicalism has several special features. “Islamic radicalism includes groups who, for some reasons, are opposed to the processes that govern the present world, and secondly, by referring to the fundamental foundations of religion and avoiding any historical or relative interpretation of it, criticize the ruling order. Islamic radicalism, therefore, has an ideal view of modern conditions to Islamic principles and origins. Thirdly, this movement is armed in special circumstances to achieve its ambitions and aspirations,” (Ibid., p.33).

There are two prominent ideas related to how Islamic radicalism and its relevant movements came to existence. Many people believe that this phenomenon of Islamic radicalism is a political and intelligence project created by non-Islamic countries for specific political objectives, such as . . . promoting islamophobia and creating excuses to invade islamic countries. The analysis and explanation of such interpretations originate from theories of conspiracy. In this point of view, the relationship between Islam and radicalism is so simple and plain, it sees no connection to fundamental .teachings of Islam, and often introduces Muslims as the greatest victims of it. This idea has even been used to mobilize Muslims against radicalism. The second idea states that Islamic radicalism comes from the innermost teachings of Islam and follows specific Islamic objectives. Followers of second idea believe that Islam has the potential to present such radical ideas which result in the formation of radical Islamic groups or movements

The most common principles that Islamic radical groups or movements find themselves bound to are listed as below:

1. “Islam is the ultimate response to all the problems of the society. The relative weakness of Islamic world comparing to the West, under-development, inequality, injustice and other similar problems are all because of not implementing Islamic principles.
2. “To put Islamic principles in use and solve problems in Muslim territories, the radical Islamic groups should be made powerful.
3. “The best interpretation from Islam is the one that these radical Islamic groups or their leaders present.” (Sa’ei et. al, 2011, p.34)

Fundamentalism & Religious Fundamentalism

Another notion related to violent and extremist narratives of religion is *fundamentalism*. Fundamentalism refers to a religious interpretation that bases the collective life and political systems on religious foundations,” (Erfani²⁵, 2015, p.267). However, fundamentalism does not always refer to the foundations of a particular religion. Fundamentalism cannot always be regarded as synonymous with religious fundamentalism. “Fundamentalism is a movement within a religion or a political system that is inclined to primary and central values of that religion or political system. Fundamentalism has a positive aspect and a negative aspect. The positive aspect is that it is principled, orthodox, and genuine, and the negative aspect is that it is class-centered and unplanned,” (Aghabakhshi and Afshari-rad, 2007, p.271).

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According to Giddens, “the term ‘fundamentalism’ can be used in many different contexts to describe rigid devotion and loyalty to a set of principles or beliefs,” (Giddens, 2013, p.809). Fundamentalism is more political rather than religious, and the type of fundamentalism is determined by a specific set of beliefs.

In general, “many fundamentalist groups that have been studied by researchers believe in this mythical idea that at some point in the past, the issues that plague the modern society such as drug addiction, sexual misconduct, criminal actions, and child abuse existed far less than the present time,” (Ruthven, 2010, p.58). In fact, fundamentalism is a form of protest against existing societal deficiencies. This protest is explained through teachings of the past and it aims to lead to action against present issues. To provide a good definition of fundamentalism, it must be studied conceptually and analytically. Gitasagal and Nira Yuval Davis²⁶ are among the authors who believe that fundamentalism can be used as an analytical subject. In their view, “fundamentalism has three main characteristics:

- 1) A plan to control women's body;
- 2) A kind of political action that rejects pluralism; and
- 3) A movement that uses the integration of religion and politics as means for following their own objectives,” (Saeid²⁷, 2011, pp.18 & 19).

²⁶ گیتاسگال و نیرا یووال دیویس

²⁷ سعید

When fundamentalist movements recognize religious beliefs as the main source of influence and act upon it, they are considered 'religious fundamentalists'. "Religious fundamentalism means the approach of those religious groups that desire literal interpretation of religious texts. They believe that the teachings derived from such interpretations should apply to all aspects of social, economic, and political life," (Giddens, 2014, p.809). Religious fundamentalist groups have been often formed in the geographical domain of great religions. There are active Christian and Jewish fundamentalist groups in the West, fundamentalist Hindu groups in India, as well as Islamic fundamentalist groups in Islamic countries. However, the measurement of these groups' activities and their impact on societies are different based on specific political, cultural, and social components.

"In the West, Islamic fundamentalism is a controversial term that is widely used in the United States and England to refer to any movement that advocates strict implementation of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sharia" (McLean, 2000, p.416). In the modern era, fundamentalism has had an effective role in the formation of national and international policies of many countries; therefore, religious fundamentalism cannot be understood solely on the basis of measuring its religious components. Some religious fundamentalist groups are furnished with strong nationalist identities which inevitably influence how these groups set goals and act.

Extremism and Religious Extremism

Although the term ‘extremism’ has some similarities to radicalism, it seems that radicalism does not fully cover the concept of extremism. “Extremists believe in extreme thoughts or decisions. Anyone who exaggerates in developing a religion, or one who agrees with extremist ideas (be it right-wing or left-wing), is called an extremist,” (AghaBakhshi & Afshari-rad, 2004, p.234). When someone is inclined to extremism, it effects various parts of this person’s life, including politics, economics, culture, education, and more. As this inclination turns into action, a new set of problems emerge that can be further explored in the context of extreme individual or collective actions.

Whenever extremism or extreme actions are justified by religion or are in favor of religion, it can be called ‘religious extremism’. Religious extremism is more prone to repressing other religions, or non-religious groups. In some cases, even violent means are used by extremists to achieve their goals.

Secularism and Non-Religious States

Secularism is another concept without which it is impossible to discuss the political base of governments and their relationship with religion. In the field of religio-political studies, “secularism is to transfer the authority from religious institutions to non-religious institutions. Based on this theory, politics dominate over religion in social affairs, because religion is something individual or devotional,” (Ibid., p.611). In secular states, people’s social life is divided into two public and private spheres, in which people have complete control over their actions, reactions, and choices. Religion is categorized as

existing within the private sphere of humans' lives, while the public sphere is controlled by the state. In secular states, the government is the ultimate organizer and implementer of politics. To this end, the secular state is referred to as, "a state that does not mention any religion as formal in the Constitution, and has no connection to religious movements, and also does not dedicate anything to religious purposes," (Ibid., p.612). In such situations, religion becomes a private matter under the government's control; though, the government, under no circumstances, acts in a way to encourage the propagation of any particular religion, nor the opposite, to blame and suppress any religion. In this way, the matter of religion is separated from governing. However, "secularism does not only mean separation of politics from religion, but also the freedom of individual's mind from traditional concepts and practices," (Shaw as cited in Saeid, 2011, p.85). It is better to institutionalize secularism in the society through peaceful approaches to provide people with a choice about whether to accept it or not. In other words, secularism should not be imposed on societies forcefully, because no society would become secular, unless the people of that society think secularly. Wach believes that, "a religious center is not a political center, and this may form a hidden duality that is not trivial," (Wach, 2006, p.299). This duality must be constantly monitored to prevent it from becoming more widespread.

Some Islamic scholars reject secularism and present 'political Islam' instead. The concept of 'political Islam' refers to those Political-Islamic movements that seek to establish a state based on Islamic principles. Political-Islam can be seen as an approach whose focus is on 'Islamic State'. This approach emphasizes the indivisibility of religion and politics, claiming that Islam has a comprehensive theory of government, politics and governance. In addition,

political Islamists believe Islamic teachings are based on divine revelation and are therefore superior to other political theories derived from human wisdom, which is exactly why an ‘Islamic State’ would be superior to any other political system. Proponents of political Islam regard Islam as a holistic ideology that encompasses a human’s life and afterlife. Moreover, they believe, Islam has commandments and decrees for all walks of life,” (Gholami, 2014, pp.31 & 32). Political Islam proposes the Islamic state to govern the public sphere, and it offers specific moral teachings to regulate the private sphere of individuals. Implementation of Islamic sharia is the most important part for the state, so the state intervenes in all areas of social life to apply Islamic teachings. Some reject the notion of “separation of religion and state” regarding secularism. They say secularism is not about separation, but rather dominance of state over religion.

Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism is another important subject in religious dialogues and the relationship of religion to politics. Religious pluralism is usually defined as, “the belief that truth and happiness can exist in all religions. Religious pluralism stands on two main points: 1) the diversity of human understanding of religious texts; 2) the diversity of interpretations of religious experiences,” (AghaBakhshi & Afghari-rad, 2004, p.580). In religious pluralism, it is possible that every individual has his/her own interpretation of religion and can act upon it.

In the native doctrines of our culture, Rumi’s ‘Elephant in the Dark’ anecdote is perhaps the most beautifully expressed example of religious pluralism. It suggests that whatever we know of religion is like our perception of what we

understood from touching an elephant in the dark. Everyone who touched the elephant in the dark would present his/her own impression of it. Despite the different impressions that would be given of the elephant, all are true and describe a specific part of an elephant's body. In religious pluralism, everyone has his or her image and understanding of religion, and no one is entitled to reject the understanding of another individual, and these different perceptions must be respected by all.

CONCLUSION

This section was a review of the most important theories and concepts regarding politics, religion and education. In addition, other topics such as radicalism, extremism and fundamentalism were also explained. A number of theoretical and conceptual frameworks were clarified by the provision of specific definitions. Furthermore, the presented topics in this section facilitated the identification of indicators of religious radicalism and made it possible to have an operational definition that would allow for a deeper analysis of Afghanistan's school curricula beyond a simple evaluation of Education Law from an educational perspective. According to the specific context of this research paper, the following are the indicators which will be the foundation of analyzing the teachings of Afghanistan's school curricula in the next parts:

1. Religious radicalism only focuses on spreading radical teachings unilaterally; in contrast, denies pluralism and eliminates opposition.
2. Religious radicalism promotes its specific point of view – which originates from violent and extreme interpretations of religion – upon all prominent philosophical and scientific aspects of human lives.
3. Religious radicalism reduces huge parts of cultural affairs to religious affairs in order to become a culture itself.
4. Some of the universal values which carry pluralism values, are reduced to religious values in religious radicalism; though, some of these values are pro-religious.
5. Religious radicalism divides the world, mankind, and almost everything into two groups: *we* versus *them*. In this point of view, *we* must be preserved and *they* should be eliminated.

6. Religious radicalism relies on violent depiction, signs, and symbols of a religion while only focusing on these elements of religions. Accordingly, other illustrations, signs and symbols cannot be publicized.

The abovementioned indicators regarding religious radicalism are specifically defined for this research which has a critical view on Afghanistan's education curricula; therefore, they cannot be extended to other research fields. In a broader circle and beyond this research, radicalism may have more characteristics such as the desire for fundamental change and the exercising of violence in society.

Certainly, there may be inadequacies to this research; therefore, curious readers who are interested in finding more information about these topics may refer to the resources listed at the end this research paper.

THE ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM IN THE FARSI-DARI CURRICULUM OF EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

In accordance with the theoretical foundation operational definition of the research that was established in the previous section, the researcher will, after thoroughly studying the Farsi curriculum of education in Afghanistan, examine those elements, which both directly and indirectly relate to and lead to Religious-Islamic radicalism. The theories which have been discussed in Part One will be used as indicators for the measurement of radical elements in the curriculum of education. At the core of Part Two, the curriculum textbooks are divided into two categories: first, those textbooks which focus directly on Religious-Islamic education, and second, those textbooks based on subjects, such as language, life skills, and social science. In addition to the Farsi curriculum of education in Afghanistan, the Education Law of Afghanistan is also discussed to provide an explanation of the legal bases of the problem. Excluding the first subheading, the other subheadings of this section are indicators of the full definition of religious radicalism in which the relevant issues are discussed. The recognition of radical religious elements in the first place and analyzing it in the second stage pave the way for further discussions, especially in the areas of the psychology of religion, educational psychology, and topics such as the relationship between ideology and education. Due to the specific structure and writing style of the textbooks of the education system of Afghanistan, the paragraphs cited in the texts of these books are source-text-based and in a specific form (Themes, Classes,

Lesson Title, published Year: Page), for example (Life Skills, First Grade, Harms of War, 2010, p.69)²⁸.

Some General Points

1. All the language and literature textbooks – both Farsi-Dari and Pashtu – begin with religious prayers and praise. Teaching religion can be part of the purpose; however, it should not be the whole of the education curriculum. From this point of view, religious education should be specified to religious subjects. In other countries with well-developed educational systems, textbooks focus on topics geared towards teaching, learning, writing, and thinking. These, not only encourage knowledge and learning, but also motivate students to pursue education. However, instead of all these topics, only God and the prophet are praised in Afghanistan’s educational textbooks.
2. The proofs and examples which are used in these textbooks – even in mathematics, chemistry, physics textbooks – are presented in religious forms. Since lessons and examples are the basis of patterns of thought and role modeling for students, the elements of thought of students will be influenced by religion and religious implications. As religion is mostly based on belief and faith, the students’ mind will use methodology based on faith and belief instead of thinking and reasoning. At the political and social level, a person whose whole life is based on belief and certainty, deals with issues instinctively rather

²⁸ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف اول، ضررهای جنگ

than rationally and is not always able to distinguish right from wrong through independent reasoning. This person is on the brink of radicalism and extremism – especially in terms of religion – and with a little pressure, he/she can fall down the brink of radicalism.

3. Pictures, symbols, and shapes are more religious. The individual and collective memory of humans operates in a way that makes symbols and shapes more memorable since the mind can recognize and recall them faster and better. This is the main purpose of using images and symbols in the education process. On one hand, images and symbols affect the student's mind in a number of ways (hearing, vision, sensory), on the other hand, by establishing such an effect, it sustains itself permanently in the mind. In a broader context, symbols and images are those elements which shape people's collective and historical memory, especially when these images and symbols are taught by the educational system and educational institutions. Thus, all groups and segments of society share a common and harmonious viewpoint. The similarity of images and symbols in the minds of society leads to the formation of the same symbol and image in the collective memory. On this basis, religious images, symbols, and forms lead to macro socio-religious patterns. These patterns become people's religious, individual, and collective memory and conscience. Consequently, people interact dogmatically based on belief and certainty rather than with logic, independent reasoning, and rationality.

4. The justifications and arguments are more religious than rational. The new philosophy of education is based more on thinking and causality. Nowadays, understanding and comprehension, which is the basis of scientific and logical reasoning have precedence over the imposition of a particular idea or ideology based on dogmatism. Besides that, education experts emphasize that a safe education system should enjoy rationality, creativity, and initiative. When justifications and arguments are found in the form of religion and belief, it implies the imposition of a particular view rather than using independent reasoning. In this way, the competence and ability of thinking and reasoning are eliminated. Consequently, this kind of education will yield a faithful believer – as one of the peculiarities of radicalism – instead of a freethinking rational person who can contribute to thought and knowledge in society.

5. Most social science textbooks, especially with religious themes, are informative and they are supposed to be preserved, memorized, and manifested. In new education, mere memorizing and storing of information is attributed to literally eliminating the mind and reasoning. With this system, the mind of students grows accustomed to memorizing and it loses the ability of thinking, analyzing and reasoning. Cultural senselessness – the clearest examples: social, civil, and political senselessness – is the most important result of educational systems based on memorizing. Those who have been educated in such an educational system are prepared for brainwashing and can be easily used by radical groups of all kinds, not only the religious ones.

6. The Quranic subjects of the Afghanistan's educational curriculum emphasize memorizing, reciting and reading correctly. These themes were compiled without translation, meaning that the student had to memorize them without understanding the meaning of the verses. It is worth noting, however, that there is also a subject called the interpretation of the Qur'an, which is quite different in content.
7. The words "Muslim," "person," and "human" have been used synonymously in a number of religious textbooks in Afghanistan. In such a situation, the student's subconscious mind may use this interchange of words to determine who is and insider and who is an outsider. Universal human values are reduced to Islamic values, which are ultimately leads to an interpretation non-Muslims are equated to non-human.
8. Religious issues have been discussed in many textbooks where the subjects are not focused on religion. It is seen mostly in the textbooks for Farsi, Dari and Pashto language and literature, as well as social sciences.
9. The subject of visual art is scarce in Afghanistan's education system. Visual art has a pivotal role in forming the mind of students. The mind of an artist or an art-minded person is open-minded, always thinking about the issues, daring to criticize him/herself and others, and relying on thought rather than instinct in the process of dealing with a multitude of issues.

10. The findings of the study show that the Afghanistan's school curriculum has many problems and failures in terms of literature and psychological prospects, which the reader will recognize during the reading of the following sections.

The reader will see the examples of above points in the course of reading the research paper. It is noteworthy, however, that similar problems and failures can also sometimes be seen in the school curriculums of western and developed societies, for instance the involvement of topics such as new or modern types of slavery. In the debates on modern slavery it has been emphasized that the new cultures of Europe and America – especially in liberal societies – has institutionalized slavery through organizational education. Nowadays, humans are brought up as slaves or obedient individuals. Macro-institutions (including the institution of education) have a significant role in this process. From this point of view, the education systems, institutions, and school curriculums should be critically reviewed around the world.

Propaganda of Religious Radicalism

There are some cases in the education curriculum of Afghanistan that directly promote radicalism or assist in the process of propagating and promoting these teachings. Radical practices that lead to radical movements at the national and social level, particularly religious radicalism, require radical education. Brainwashing takes place in the process of radical training, and the individual is prepared to accept radical thoughts and actions. Afghanistan's education curriculum seems to have such a capacity to lead the student towards being radical or at least ready to accept and engage with radical religious thought.

“In the civilized Islamic society, the bad is separated from the good, the good is given to the righteous people and the bad and frail people are punished. The punishment of individuals is based on the law. In the Islamic civilized society, it is a principle to invite people doing the good things and to stop them doing bad and evil things,” (Quran Education and Islamic Education, Fifth Grade, Civilized Society, 2015, p.67)²⁹.

Ethics is a matter of value and it is not an obligation. In civilized societies, law is not supposed to impose morality and ethics on anyone and punish those who are not following it. The above text shows that the religion is defined as a regulator for individual morality, despite a legal framework existing as well. Therefore, the issue of “enjoining good and forbidding wrong” is a doctrine and duty to everyone to enforce it. In this case, since ethics is an obligation and the doctrine of “enjoining good and forbidding wrong” is recognized as a matter of good and reward, religion is diffused from the private life and

²⁹ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف پنجم، جامعه متمدن

becomes a determinant factor of the social and public life of people. Every action which aimed to enforce, adapt, and impose a moral order on society through the doctrine of “enjoining good and forbidding wrong”, caused violence and the radicalization of religion.

Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban is called a Mujahid in one of the textbooks: *"In the month of January, Mullah Omar Mujahid, who led the movement of Taliban, came to power and declared the Islamic Emirate. He was ousted from power in October 2008,"* (Social Lessons, Sixth Grade, A Brief Review of Afghanistan Contemporary History from 1973 to 2001, 2011, p.15)³⁰.

In another textbook it is said:

"Anyone who equips and finances a Mujahid in the cause of God has in fact did himself a jihad" (Islamic Education, Twelfth Grade, 2011, p.54)³¹.

Regarding the distribution of Zakat, one of the textbooks describes:

"Zakat property will be used in the following cases:

1. *The poor: Those who are able to earn only their livelihood and they do not have the criteria for paying any kind of Zakat.*
2. *Masakin: There are those who have no finances.*
3. *The collectors: There are persons who are obliged by the Islamic State to collect zakat and have no livelihood from other sources.*
4. *Component: Those people that their loyalty is needed for Islam.*
5. *Slaves: Those who are slaves and need money to buy their freedom.*

³⁰ دروس اجتماعی، صنف ششم، مرور مختصر بر وقایع افغانستان از سال ۱۳۵۲ تا ۱۳۸۰

³¹ تعلیم و تربیه‌ی اسلامی، صنف دوازدهم

6. *Debtors: There are people who owe more than their income and have no money to pay.*
7. *Ibn Sabil: There are travellers who have no money or no access to their property.*
8. *Fi Sabillillah: There are those who strive to obtain God's favor, such as the Mujahideen and the scholars of the Shariah who need help,”* (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Sixth Grade, Zakat Uses, 2011, p.37)³².

The Taliban is one of the most radical and extremist religious groups still operating widely. The leader of the group, Mullah Mohammad Omar, is addressed in the school textbooks as "Mujahid". In other words, Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, has been called the real role model for mujahideen, and the Taliban war as the real jihad. In addition, Muslims in general and students, in particular, are encouraged to support and equip the Mujahideen, and it has also been acknowledged that one of the groups entitled to receive zakat is the Mujahideen and the scholars of Sharia. There are at least three serious criticisms of the above text:

First: It is against to all principles of education to encourage and systematically motivate students to radical thoughts and actions, and to publicize the ideology of the Taliban through school textbooks. The content of textbooks should be designed and implemented so that students learn the fundamental aspects of thinking and knowledge and thus students comprehend the school subjects. In other words, the ultimate goal of education is to develop rationality in minds through learning different

³² آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف ششم، موارد مصرف زکات

disciplines, especially basic science. However, in the above context, the whole picture is reversed; the rational mind and the logic of students are killed and replaced by the radical acts and practices that have a religious basis. With this educational context, the relationship between education and the formation of radical religious thought and opinion in individuals and societies becomes straightforward.

Second: From a philosophical perspective the concept of jihad can be critically reviewed. Jihad, as a religious matter, refers to a particular war that is waged against those who do not believe in Allah and the Hereafter.

"The Islamic order and regulations (Shariah law) are designed to help human being develop in life materially and spiritually and to prevail to all obstacles to accomplish perfection and peace. And Islam has instituted decrees to surmount barriers to perfection called "jihad". So it is good to know the meaning of jihad and its philosophy: ...

The etymology of Jihad: It is taken from the root of Jahd and means "to work hard and the ultimate power or ability". In verbal usage, Jihad means the attempt to struggle for the cause of God with one's life, property, words, and so on. ...

The reason for the legitimacy of jihad ... 1. From the Qur'an: Allah the Almighty says: ... Translated: "Fight those who do not believe in Allah and not in the Hereafter." 2. From the Sunnah: The Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) says: ... Translation: (Jihad continues until the Day of Judgment). 3. The Consensus of the Ummah: All the Islamic Ummah

from the past until now know jihad as an Islamic duty if its conditions are fulfilled,” (Islamic Education, Tenth Class, Jihad, 2011, p.129)³³.

This war is a sacred war that gifts mujahideen martyrdom and paradise, or the title of Ghazi (warrior of God). The Mujahideen, in its dogmatic view, seeks to destroy anybody who is an outsider (non-Muslim). One of the factors that pluralism – especially religious pluralism – does not form and spread in societies like Afghanistan is the extension of radical jihadist notions. Mujahid tends to eliminate and destroy his competitors and those who do not think like him, rather than negotiate and compromise, and this tendency is especially widespread when propagated by institutions such as education. Different societies have different individual and collective responses to radical phenomena such as jihad regarding their literacy, knowledge, and cultural status. Because of the particular cultural and historical context of Afghanistan’s society, it is more vulnerable in this regard and does not hesitate to accept the radical concept of jihad and its practices.

Third: The specific interpretation of jihad: A number of Muslim pluralist scholars have tried to redefine and interpret the concept of jihad moderately and peacefully. However, such interpretations of Jihad have not been mentioned in Afghanistan school textbooks. The developed Muslim countries have been more successful in providing such moderate interpretations, therefore, they have been able to have and institutionalize religious pluralism and tolerance of different beliefs and ideas. In other words, in the mentioned lesson (in the textbook of Afghanistan’s schools) above, the concept of jihad has been reduced to a particularly violent form of Jihad and there is no

³³ تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف دهم، جهاد

pluralistic interpretation. In religious interpretations, jihad is classified into two types: Akbar (Great) and Asghar (Little). Jihad Akbar emphasizes the struggle against the self-will for sin, which Muslims train themselves to practice through ethics. The importance of this kind of jihad is considerable especially in terms of ethics. Jihad Asghar focuses on the social and external struggle, as exemplified above. Jihad Asghar has many stages and the last stage is to take up arms and fight.

Another textbook of the Afghanistan education curriculum describes the psychological state of religious warfare and concludes that in case of any war, Muslims will prevail.

"Because Muslims believe in a life of prosperity after death, they will not get embarrassed into a confrontation with the enemy, and will manage their movements with great care and complete control of their minds. This is the key to their success," (Islamic Education, Ninth Grade, Badr War, 2010, 75)³⁴.

And when a Muslim is killed in the war, he attains martyrdom, which means going to heaven and attaining eternal bliss.

"The one who is killed for the cause of his religion is a martyr, the one who is killed for the defense of his life is a martyr, and the one who is killed to protect his property is a martyr and the one who is killed for the defense of his honor is a martyr," (Islamic Education, Ninth Grade, Self Defense, 2010: 131)³⁵.

³⁴ تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف نهم، غزوه بدر

³⁵ تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف نهم، دفاع از خود

And finally, stories related to Jihad from Afghanistan or world history are included in the lessons. In addition, there is a kind of propaganda geared towards solidarity between radical religious groups around the world, which persuades students to go around the world and partake in the sacred war of jihad, while other mujahideen can come to Afghanistan from around the world for Jihad as well. Finally, there is an emphasis on Islamic internationalism that moves the issue of Jihad from the national level to the international level.

"The great Imam Abu Hanifa (Allah bless him) arose from this land and got the title of the great Imam in the religious jurisprudence; Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznawi and Ahmed Shah Abdali were from this land and they abolished idolatry from neighboring territories of the great Khurasan and the territories of the Indian subcontinent and spread Islam in there. On the other hand, Sayed Jamal al-Din Afghani came also from this land, wherein the heroes are raised. He unified Muslims and fought against imperialism and colonialism, and he taught the nations of the world a lesson in liberation, a lesson of freedom and independence. The people of Afghanistan as the pioneer of independence have taught the nations of the world, the lessons of freedom and independence. The Afghan nation expelled the two superpowers, the British empire and the Soviet Union, from their land in the twentieth century by force of faith and patriotism. The Muslim nation of Afghanistan has always played a pioneering and active role in uniting Muslims and cooperating in Islamic cases, especially in the case of Palestine."

"Likewise, the Islamic Ummah, all across the Islamic world, likes Afghanistan and regards the faithful and courageous people of this country

with respect and appreciation. In the liberation battle by the people of Afghanistan, Muslims of the world stood with Afghanistan. The best example of which is the cooperation and participation of Muslims from around the world in the jihad of our nation against the invasion of the former Soviet Union. Many sons of the Islamic Ummah did the jihad and were martyred in this land from around the world. Therefore, the nation of Afghanistan can maintain its honor and strength and dignity by maintaining its ties and solidarity with the great Islamic Ummah, ” (Patriotism, Ninth Grade, Afghan Nation as an Inseparable Part of the Islamic Ummah, 2014, pp.25 & 26)³⁶.

In the quotes above, we are confronted with a complete package of propaganda on religious radicalism in Afghanistan's education curriculum which begins with “enjoining good and forbidding wrong” and ends with war and jihad. Meanwhile, the psychological state of war has been described as very provocative from a religious perspective. The final achievement of jihad is being a mujahid and a sacred warrior, and when the war is won the martyrdom of the Mujahid is jihad. The quoted and cited texts are from the textbooks for the fifth, sixth, ninth, tenth and twelfth grades. From the sociological studies of the students in these grades – they have just reached the age of puberty and are in the process of socialization. In this particular situation and age group, children begin to socialize and interact with society. Society affects them, and they affect the small groups they are involved in. One of the most important functions of education is cultural reproduction. This means schools and educational institutions can sustain or change social and economic inequalities intentionally or unintentionally. If we consider the

³⁶ وطندوستي، صنف نهم، ملت افغانستان جزء جدایی ناپذیر امت اسلامی

conflict between radical religious thoughts and open-minded ideas as the reaction of society to socio-economic inequalities, the schools and the education curriculum, in particular, here have two negative roles. First, it cultivates radical ideas and radicalism, and second, it encourages and provokes students to oppose and seek to eliminate the open-minded intellectuals through the process of socialization and cultural reproduction.

Generalization of Religious Ideology & Philosophical Issues of Human Life

For a few thousands of years, the human being has been turning towards philosophy in an attempt to be rational and logical. The great thinkers like Zoroastrian, Buddha, and Confucius in the East began to think about the existence of human beings and their surroundings and raised serious questions and issues. In the West, thinkers – including the naturalist philosophers and the Milesian School – founded a philosophical approach to the world. In the West philosophy was then continued by the work of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. These three thinkers were among those who first introduced numerous new debates, especially issues such as the theory of forms, ethics, metaphysics, politics, and epistemology. The schools of the Cynicism, the Scepticisms, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Neo-Platonists continued this tradition. Until this era, philosophers focused on issues such as being human as well as politics and ethics, but the subject of the state and its relationship to religion also entered discussions of philosophy. This occurred during the era of medieval philosophy and the main discourse of the time was the interaction between church and empires. The religion of Islam also developed and spread during this period. In the East, especially under Islamic education, a number of philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd emerged. On one hand, they attempted to reconcile Roman and Greek philosophy with Islam and, on the other hand, pursued and initiated philosophy on new subjects. It is noteworthy that a number of scholars, such as al-Ghazali, disagreed with the approach of reconciling revelation (Wahy) with philosophy and always emphasized the superiority of revelation, which is the source of religion. Following the end of the Middle Ages, emerged the Renaissance and modern philosophy. Modern philosophy is very wide in

terms of subjects and it embraces the subjects from religious reforms to knowledge, politics, epistemology, law and so on. Great thinkers like Descartes, Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, and Russell all came from this period. Since the late eighteenth century, many other philosophers have emerged in various fields of philosophy. Hegel, Rousseau, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and a number of other scholars and intellectuals of this period are known. Today's era also has philosophers like Popper, Zizek and others. We see various ideas and thoughts which sometimes conflict with each other, or they are similar and analogous, or they are unidimensional or multidimensional. Philosophy evolves our mind to the world and ontology. According to Russell, philosophy is the middle ground between theology and science, or the inferno between theology and science. Religion and theology can bring about dogma, and science can bring a definite result. Therefore, many of the key issues of human life either remain unanswered or they find a one-dimensional, reductionist answer with dogmatic and definitive conclusions by religion. It is here that philosophy comes in and provides multidimensional, relative and clear answers to key human issues.

It should also be noted that in the Middle Ages, Oriental mysticism emerged. Oriental mysticism and theological epistemology came under the influence of a particular (modern) interpretation of religion. From the mystical point of view, God's relationship with the devout (human) is like a lover and the beloved. God loves his devout and the devout loves God. Compared to other interpretations of Islam, mysticism has a more open and universal view of human beings and existence. One of the key teachings of Islamic mysticism is religious pluralism. In Rumi's interpretation, mysticism explores the brain

(depth) of the Qur'an and rejects luxury and passion and considers them irrational. The main focus is on the inside of human beings rather than the outside. The cognition of self is the basis for knowing the world and God. Mysticism has perfected the use of logic in the true understanding of religion and considers the combination of logic, love, and faith as the key to understanding human beings, especially Muslims.

Science has also played a crucial role in the social and historical evolution of human beings. After the seventeenth century, the view of human beings revolved around the notion of existence and the cosmos with new theories of astronomy and cosmology in Europe. Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus and Newton are among the pioneers of that era. In the fields of physics, chemistry, and biology, there were great inventions and discoveries. All of which undermined religious dominance in Europe. The advent of new technologies dramatically accelerated the growth of knowledge and science, and it highly affected human culture and thought, and paved the way for the formation of different intellectual and social schools in different fields of the sciences.

If we wanted to find the similarities between thinkers, scientists, philosophers, and mystics, we should definitely emphasize the importance of thoughtfulness. Along with all the functions and results that these philosophers have had throughout human history, perhaps their most important legacy and function was to continue the tradition of thought and rationality. All these thinkers, philosophers and mystics are evidence of the thinking and thoughtfulness of human beings.

Philosophers maintained and continued the tradition of thinking throughout history, and now modern education seeks to convey this feature to students. Modern education educates the next generation of open-minded, critical thinkers and pluralists through materials and textbooks based on basic philosophical foundations. The educational systems, in relation to the social characteristics of each respective country, use the methods of 'memorizing', 'practice' and 'intuition' to teach and transfer knowledge to student. "Memorizing" is the hallmark of the closed education system. In such systems, education is managed directly by the state or any other dominant social apparatus. In this way, the students are confronted with the materials and the lessons that the ruling machine gives them. The education system in the revolutionary-leftist states of the twentieth century can be a good example of this. The "practice" method has a technical form. In this way the main emphasis is on practice and repetition. The schools of natural sciences are a good example of this method. But the method of "intuition" has a philosophical form. In this way, the student tries to form his/her own opinion and learn from the opinion of others. This method allows the student's mind to be more prosperous and enables him/her to think and to cast his/her own opinions and ideas.

According to existentialists, human beings in general and students in particular are like non-painted canvases and they have to paint themselves by themselves. Human beings can develop themselves with thoughtful and rational actions and reactions. The intuition method helps human beings develop themselves more significantly and more meaningfully. The process of education can help human beings become rational by adopting an open-minded ideology and pluralism and by parting from dogmatism and

determinism. Modern education seeks to convey the foundations of human life to students with basic and simple language to help them to think more about existence and human beings and allow them to express and develop their opinions and ideas, even if those opinions contrary to existing traditions. However, in Afghanistan, it seems that the education system is still trapped by dogmatic ideology and that it has religionized the most fundamental and vital issues of human life. For instance, see the following texts from the school textbooks:

"We are studying to know God and ourselves. We learn to be a good person, to help others, to build our own home, village and homeland. For the good of life and the happiness of the hereafter, until we are alive, we must learn and worship God," (Life Skills, Second Grade, Why Do We Learn?, 2010, p.27)³⁷.

In this piece of text, the "goals of education" which is the basic foundation of the life of a modern human is defined as knowing oneself and God, becoming aware, helping others, building a home, village and homeland, living a good life, and the worship of God. Most of these goals have a religious basis. With such teachings students are taught to set straight and inflexible lines between Muslims and non-Muslims and they use this understanding as the basis for all the functions in their life. The minds of human beings are then closed to pluralism and there is no chance for free thinking. Determinism and dogmatism are the main outcome of this kind of education. At the political and social level, a student with this type of educational background will

³⁷ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، چرا می‌آموزیم؟

always have bias and be defensive with others and will always be ready to do anything to maintain a dogmatic and definitive ideology.

"Our body is a blessing from God. I keep my body healthy. The health of the body depends on work and worship, good nutrition, cleanliness and rest," (Life Skills, Second Grade, Self-Care, 2010, p.29)³⁸.

According to this doctrine, the body is God's blessing and worship is considered as one of the most important factors in health. The basis of human existence is defined on the basis of religion. In other words, a low-level type of religious ontology has been promoted. The student in this situation may reject other ideas, in particular, scientific theories about the existence of humans.

"Every human being, whether young or old, may be frightened at some points. But if the fear (whether awake or asleep) persists, it can cause illness. When we are scared, we have to chant the Noble Word (لا اله الا الله) several times and tell our fears to somebody," (Life Skills, Second Grade, Fear, 2010, p.49)³⁹.

The process for overcoming fear has been defined as reading the Noble Word and sharing one's fear with others which is based on religious beliefs. This way of coping with fear is irrational and instinctive. Fear is more of a feeling. The reasons for fear should be understood in the psychological situation of an individual and their social circumstances, and the student must be told about psychological and practical ways of overcoming fear.

³⁸ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، مراقبت از خود

³⁹ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، ترس

"Joy is a blessing. Someone who is always sad or angry loses his/her friends. Anyone who does not give thanks to the blessings of God is always unhappy and disappointed. Happiness is good for health, for being happy, we must thank what God has given us, tell our friend our fears and secrets," (Life Skills, Second Grade, Joy, 2010, p.55)⁴⁰.

All the joys and sorrows of life are tied to man's relationship with God. This relationship is not described correctly and reasonably. An undeniable fact is that there are many non-Muslim people living happily in the world, and likewise, there are many sad Muslims. This fact creates a contradiction in the mind of the student. This contradiction can be accepted with a dogmatic religious ontology, but otherwise, this paradox and contradiction cannot be resolved from a psychological perspective. More than that, this contradiction makes the students have an unclear and inconsistent view of joys in life. Ultimately this weakness has the potential to become a psychological and personality problem. A person with a mental or personality problem does not have a steady personality, and such a person may at any moment be inclined toward radicalism.

"God has given us eyes, ears, hands, feet, and abilities. We must thank God for what we have and what we can do. We must always remember that something wrong or lacking cannot destroy our goodness and ability," (Life Skills, Second Grade, My Goodness, 2010, p.59)⁴¹.

All the goodness of man is summed up to the generosity of God. This kind of view of human value is a reductionist and religious understanding of the

⁴⁰ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، خوشی

⁴¹ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، خوبی‌های من

notion of goodness. A faithful student, who is educated by these teachings, spontaneously concludes that: Every human being who does not give thanks to God is a bad man, and one should stand against the bad man.

"Ajmal was living in a village in Afghanistan with his family. A mine explosion killed his father and cut off his brother's leg. It was a very sad incident. Ajmal, who is in the ninth grade of the school, is one of the distinguished students of his school. He is never affected by the incident, even though he cared for his disabled brother and two younger sisters after his father's death. He stood up against all adversity like an adult and brave man. He patiently embraced his brothers and sisters, always guiding them to peace. It kept them away from hatred and hostility, showing the main way of life. He would tell them that the event was the destiny of the Creator (the God), and they should not be saddened by it," (Dari, Third Grade, Wound Healing, 2011, p.136)⁴².

The narrative and the overall result of the story lead to divine fate and the free-will of humans is rejected. In a specific definition, education is defined as knowledge acquisition and personality development. In this definition, humans learn from their experiences, and from what they study, hear, and read. From this point of view, schools as the medium of the education system have the mission and responsibility to give students those lessons that make them feel capable and that teach them that human beings have endeavored to free themselves from the determination of nature (causal determinism) and be free-willed beings. But the text above is the opposite. A fatalistic approach

⁴² دری، صنف سوم، علاج زخمها

to human life and the question of human's free-will trains the student's fatalism and destroys his intellectual and dynamic mind.

The more one can remove themselves from causal determinism, the more they will be able to gain independence and move towards subjectivity. Although we cannot fully attain definite subjectivity and independence, we have to be free and independent to be able to think and produce rational thoughts. In the process of education, the most important social base after the family is the school and university, which should create independence and subjectivity in students.

“The first purpose of life is to worship and praise the One God. Allah the Almighty says, ‘I did not create jinn and man except to worship me,’” (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, 4th Grade, Purpose of Life, 2011, p.56)⁴³.

Perhaps the most important question that has faced mankind throughout history has been the "purpose and meaning of life". Man has always asked himself why he was born in this world, and what is his ultimate purpose and destination. Who defines this purpose and destination? And how can he achieve its intended purpose? There are thousands of different answers to these questions today, and perhaps every person has their own unique answer to these questions. On this basis, there are two criticisms of the text above. First, the purpose of life is dogmatically reduced to worship. secondly, and at the intra-religious level, worship is not described. Even good religious principles related to the subject such as "one hour of thinking is better than

⁴³ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف چهارم، هدف زندگی

seventy years of worship" and "work is the best worship" are not mentioned at all.

“Enjoining the People to Good is: Calling on Worship of One God to Command the Divine Thought, Islamic Law and Good Ethics, calling for Brotherhood, Affection, Justice, and Fairness, so that everyone will know that the Salvation of the two worlds is enclosed in goodness. There is no path to Salvation except the straight path of Islam. ... Evil/Wrong is contrary to goodness, false beliefs and wrongness, bad morals, and wrongful conduct and speech are all misconducts, which must be forbidden by inviting them,” (Islamic Education, Twelfth Grade, The Enjoining to Good and the Forbidding Wrong, 2011: 62)⁴⁴.

What kind of a person is a good human and benefactor? Is the definition of good and beneficence changing or is it constant? What are the criteria for measuring goodness and beneficence? Is goodness inherent in human beings or is it acquired? Does society have a role in the development of good and beneficent humans or is the role of the individual more important? There are dozens of other such questions throughout the history of human thought as well as countless answers to these questions. But here, goodness is synonymous with the worship of God and belief in Islam, and the path to salvation is considered to be the only the direct path of Islam, and all evil or wrongness is contrary to goodness and against Islamic belief. On the one hand this response is not good enough, and on the other hand it is from a very dogmatic religious point of view.

⁴⁴ تعلیمات اسلامی، صنف دوازدهم، امر به معروف و نهی از منکر

In general, all of the foregoing considerations lead to some definite conclusions: The student is trained with dogmatic and deterministic views, rather than being free-minded and pluralistic views. The curriculum sidetracks a student's understanding of the world and creates a completely reductionist understanding of the most important issues in life. The students ignore the free-will of human beings and believes in absolute fatalism which would be a barrier for his/her dynamism and intellectual effort. A person with such a narrow understanding of the world may react negatively towards those who do not think like them. And this inability to understand other perspectives may allow a person to more readily embrace radical thoughts and to take radical action.

Culture and Religion in Education Curriculum

There are two levels to every person's life, the individual and the social and both are influenced by culture. Culture is defined as "the ways of life of the members of society, or of groups within a society," (Giddens, 2004, p.34) which includes how people dress, their marriage customs, language, and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits and identity. In other words, culture includes "conceptual activities and transcendent intellectual activities," (Ibid., p.34). Art, literature, cinema, music, and painting are examples of culture in this definition. By passing through these definitions, a number of scholars regard culture in its profound sense as the "condition of being human". In other words, it is the culture that gives us human identity. However, this relationship is not unilateral – the prerequisite for a culture to exist and grow, is for humans and societies to exist. Cultures are the basis for the formation of societies. Societies are the

products of certain cultures at a particular time and place. One of the most important factors in social change and development is culture. In the field of culture, the key question is: what is the culture formed on and on what basis? The answer to this question is usually "social traditions, values, and norms". When people's imaginations, their thoughts, and their subjective imaginations are brought into harmony with other people's imaginations, thoughts, and subjective imaginations, they become social traditions, values, and norms through a particular historical process. Culture, through education – both formal and informal – would be the basis of our imagination and thoughts. This relationship when interpreted end to end demonstrates that education would contribute to social imagination, inspiration, and thought, resulting in social traditions, values, and norms, and ultimately result in the creation of cultures. Of course, the role of other factors and causes is also notable and undeniable.

Humans are the product of a particular historical place. Humans live in a particular place at a given time. The relationship of human beings with their place and time are mutually exclusive and lead to the formation of social and individual cultures, and the everyday behaviours and habits that are rooted in the cultural values and norms of their society.

In a specific classification, human beings today have global, regional, national, local and individual cultures. But the importance of these - from an individual's point of view - is end-to-end. The most important type of culture for a particular individual is the individual culture, followed by local, national, regional and global cultures. National and local cultures are a mixture of universal cultures and subcultures that play a key role in the

process of human socialization. One of the most significant universal cultures is religion, and the other one is education as a social institution. A number of education experts believe that the primary concern of schools and educational institutions are the transfer of information, brainstorming, increasing students' thinking ability, training them with skills and techniques, and teaching them good manners and discipline. Schools play a crucial role in the process of culturalization and socialization by creating a sense of responsibility and teaching manners among the students. Socialization is the creation of certain behaviours, habits, and attitudes in individuals that are an indispensable and integral part of the culture.

Some components of a particular culture that dominate over a society can be appropriate, desirable and necessary for intellectual needs of a society; while some other components of this particular culture can be harmful or create obstacles to resolving particular problems at the society. The primary mission and responsibility of educational institutions, especially schools, is the development of appropriate, desirable and necessary elements of the culture, and the rejection/elimination (of course on rational and logical bases) of obscene, undesirable, and unnecessary elements of cultures. School textbooks have described and expressed some of the most appropriate elements of Afghanistan's society, but have also included a number of obscene, undesirable and unnecessary elements – some on a religious basis.

"We do not quarrel in the (wedding) parties and do not break things. In the funeral ceremonies, we do not annoy the elders and take care of young

children. In the days of Eid, we kiss the hands of our elders and call them 'Happy Eid'," (Life Skills, Second Grade, Family Ceremony, 2010, p.13)⁴⁵.

The topics mentioned in the above quote are part of the social culture of the people of Afghanistan that have been shaped and promoted in a particular historical process. To be clear, it seems that the mentioned topics, except kissing hands, are not so problematic when considering the particular social characteristics of Afghanistan's society, although all these topics may be criticized at some other level, especially from a philosophical point of view. Kissing the hand is promoted as a family tradition. At its most basic level, it develops unconditional obedience in individuals and rejects the freedom and free-thinking of individuals. Perhaps the reason for teaching students this subject is to promote an example of an act of respect for others, especially elders. In Afghanistan's society, there are many other ways of respecting each other and being humble and these are common cultural norms. In other words, respect for one another in society is also possible without kissing hands. Finally, it can be concluded that kissing hands cannot be promoted as an act of respect for others and is a ridiculous and harmful custom, so the education institution in Afghanistan should seek to disapprove it rather than promote it.

"Idols, which are all man designed and made, and can bring neither benefit nor harm to any man, shall not be regarded as a partner of the almighty Lord. Need and having a partner are signs of powerlessness; the essence who has needs and partner in power cannot be the God; Polytheism (multiple gods) is rejected as it can corrupt and destroy the discipline of the

⁴⁵ مهارت‌های زندگی، صنف دوم، مراسم خانوادگی

universe system,” (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Fourth Grade, The Reason for the Oneness of the Almighty, 2011: 54)⁴⁶.

At first glance, some may argue that the above paragraph should have been analysed in the section " Generalizations of Religions Ideology and Philosophical Issues of Human Life" but the researcher's assumption is that the cultural dimension of the issue is more considerable than the religious dimension of the problem. However, the role of the above matter is not deniable as a religious matter. From the religious point of view, the above text is an acceptable argument for believers, and if it should be criticized, it must be done by an extrinsic-religious and philosophical perspective, because it is more an issue in theology and religious studies. The problem with the above text from a cultural perspective is that instead of bringing strong rational reasons on God’s oneness, it assaults other religions. According to the aforementioned paragraph, only after eliminating all Gods of other religions can the God of Muslims be proven the one God of all things. This kind of ideology has serious problems. First, it promotes a culture of destroying non-Muslims, including their gods, and turns it into a dominant social thought. Second, the mentioned statement is incorrect in terms of argumentation and reasoning. It seems that the above text has attempted to teach intelligent design argument (also known as a theological argument) to prove the existence of God, but this argument is flawed and defected. Additionally, this argument is accompanied by the elimination of the other, which overturns it. On the other hand, the first presumption of ‘intelligent design’ is that the entire being is set upon *order*; then, the intelligent design

⁴⁶ آموزش قران کریم و تعلیمات اسلامی، صنف چهارم، دلایل یگانگی خداوند متعال

defines the situation of being and demonstrates its order – only then can the ‘proof of God’s existence’ be concluded. But, as we see in the above text, the first two sections of ‘intelligent design’ are dropped, and it is only mentioned in the third part of the text. By promoting such doctrines in the cultural context, society becomes dogmatic and deterministic before seeking rational reasoning for its belief and faith, and this leads to the exclusion of others who do not believe in the same way.

"Science comes in many different types, some of them are assumed to be necessarily learned by both men and women, for example learning the Islamic-religious duties that God has obliged his servants (mankind) to learn, and some others are sufficiency which is imposed on the whole community, not on individuals. It means if a few people have learned these types of sciences (all other sciences) is sufficient and there is no need other people learn them as well," (Islamic Education, Ninth Grade, Learning is the Presupposed Science, 2011, p.98)⁴⁷.

At the beginning of this discussion, it was mentioned that cultural change can lead to social change. The way people look at issues influences the ideals and desires of a given group and it leads to the collective ideals of the people of a given society. According to development studies, one of the essential prerequisites for the change and development of societies is the level of knowledge among its people. The knowledge that is formed within the context of culture is the opportunity for its growth or destruction. Knowledge-oriented societies achieve development and modernity more rapidly than societies that reject science or pay less attention to fundamental sciences and

⁴⁷ تعلیم و تربیه اسلامی، صنف نهم، آموختن علم فرض است

more to religious sciences. Today, the basic foundation for development in the world is the fundamental and non-religious sciences. Therefore, it is necessary to be more focused on fundamental sciences and to encourage society to learn these sciences in order to affect change and achieve development. But in Afghanistan's school textbooks this does not appear to be the case, and is unlikely to be promoted.

"In the sacred religion of Islam, the method of governance is based on Islamic principles and is the absolute sovereignty is only for God and man is the caliph of God on earth. All human beings are equal to the divine laws. In this noble and precious religion, the ruler is chosen on the basis of competence, virtue and knowledge to rule and implement divine laws to the servants of God," (Civil Education, Ninth Grade, Types of Government, 2011, p.5)⁴⁸.

The Islamic political system has its own principles and rules. As mentioned in the above quote, according to Islam, sovereignty is only for God and the main task of the political system is to apply divine laws to the servants of God. But the current political system in Afghanistan is more democratic than Islamic. The Constitution of Afghanistan recognizes the national sovereignty of the nation in article 4, paragraph 1.

“National sovereignty in Afghanistan shall belong to the nation, manifested directly and through its elected representatives.” (Afghanistan Constitution, 2009, p.4)

⁴⁸ تعلیمات مدنی، صنف نهم، اقسام دولت

Therefore, the main task of the government is to meet the demands and needs of the people. A student who is brought up with such doctrines will have a contradictory understating of politics and sovereignty, one of which is based on religion and the other on government. When these doctrines are transformed into social culture, the capacity to destabilize society is formed and can result in conflict between the different social groups. This situation, on the one hand, creates and establishes radical minds and, on the other hand, it can be used as a tool for radical religious groups to misuse students for their own agendas. When combined with objective examples (say, historical achievements of the country), such educational propositions can do a lot of damage. For example:

"The greatest governments of this land have been formed by the power of Islam, and most of our nation's conquests and honors in the scientific, military and cultural spheres were in the Islamic eras. In the face of internal instabilities and external invasions, religious and patriotic spirits have always been the cause of our nation's awakening and reinforcement of the strongholds of jihad and unity of the Afghan people," (Patriotism, Ninth Grade, National Unions of Afghanistan, 2015, p.15)⁴⁹.

This paragraph shows that the awakening of the nation, in a sense, is related to the strengthening of the trenches of jihad in an Islamic state. Along with this assumption, the student's mind defines the awakening of the nation as the religious awakening. The tool of jihad is also intended for students who can benefit from awakening themselves and others. Promoting such a culture can lead society to the precipice of religious radicalism and bring it down.

⁴⁹ وطندوستي، صنف نهم، مشترکات ملی افغانستان

"Beliefs are the general principles of faith, generally and particularly, in a society that is accompanied by a performance bond and reflect the high values of society, such as the principles of religious beliefs, worship of the God, prayer, Zakat, fasting," (Civic Education, Tenth Grade, What Is Culture?, 2010, p.7)⁵⁰.

The first lesson defines belief as a cultural phenomenon. It then defines it as a non-personal issue but as a social phenomenon with a performance bond. It implies that beliefs are not voluntary and people should be punished if they do not follow them. Additionally, with the examples cited, the definition of beliefs has been reduced to a religious and inter-religious point of view which is objectionable. By this consideration, students are taught that there is only one type of belief, which is religious belief, and will therefore reject any other belief, which is the main source of radical religious minds at the individual level and religious radicalism at the social level.

"The word "religion" literally means reward and punishment. Here, the term 'religion' refers to beliefs, jurisprudence, and those orders which are revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad ... the literal meaning of "Islam" is submission and obedience, and here the word of 'Islam' refers the Hanafi (a sect of Islam) religion." (Islamic Education, Twelfth Grade, 2011, p.27)⁵¹.

The literal meaning of religion as a punishment and reward does not seem correct, as we have seen in the discussion on the definition of religion in Part

⁵⁰ تعلیمات مدنی، صنف دہم، فرهنگ چیست؟

⁵¹ تعلیم و تربیہ اسلامی، صنف دوازدهم

One of this research paper. Providing such an interpretation of the concept of religion can reduce it to a mere deal with God. In this view, the believer is trying to make more profit and is ready to do anything to earn it. In addition, the text above refers to Islam as the "Hanafi religion". Here, religious dogmatism is promoted, even on a religious and intra-religious level. When Islam is reduced to only the Hanafi religion, every religion even non-Hanafi Islam is rejected. But the social and cultural facts of Afghanistan's society are different. Non-Hanafi religions have many followers in the country. The above teaching reinforces the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims and even between Hanafi and non-Hanafi-Muslims. Creating such a culture of division is regressive and can lead to religious radicalism.

It should be noted, as discussed in the first chapter, that the Hanif religions include all the Abrahamic religions, within which monotheism is the most important characteristics of them. However, what is mentioned above is the "Hanafi religion", one of the four Sunni sects of Islam. The founder of this jurisprudence was Imam Mohammad Hanafi. The reader should consider the difference between the "Hanif religion" and the "Hanafi religion" which is mentioned above.

Reducing Universal Values to Religious Values

This topic may be viewed as a continuation of the discussion on "Culture and Religion in the Curriculum", however, due to the importance of this topic, the researcher prefers to explain it in a separate section.

In the field of cultural studies, a number of values are recognized as universal values. These values are relatively common among most people in the world. These universal values are present in the national and local cultures of most

nations. These values are constantly changing and evolving to suit for the expectation of the modern age. Therefore, most of the universal and global values are appropriate and desirable, otherwise they have little or no chance of survival and durability. The universal human values are better and more valid as compared to local and national religious values. Although social norms which are developed with global values are generally the same, these norms do vary from one society to another one depending on the particular social features of a given society. From a philosophical point of view, the determination of values, and the criteria for measuring an issue considered to be a value are very broad and complex. However, in practice a certain number of phenomena are known as values. Universal values belong to all human beings, and all human beings are responsible for protecting and promoting them.

A number of global values have been stated as religious, national, and local values in Afghanistan's school textbooks. On one hand, the society of Afghanistan as part of the entire human society has the right to consider the universal values as its own religious, national or local values; however, this right is acceptable only when the universality of these values are mentioned too. This could be due or both of the following reasons: first, incomplete knowledge of the authors of educational books on universal values; second, the influence of dogmatic, religious, radical and nationalistic ideology which refuses to present the universal values as a global phenomenon. The second reason seems to be more applicable to the authors of the school textbooks in Afghanistan because universal/human values have been reduced to religious and nationalistic values which are accompanied by the propaganda of religion and promotion of nationalist subjects.

"Greeting among us Muslims is a good attitude. Greeting increases love and respect. It is necessary for youths and children to greet their parents, elders, teachers and neighbours when they see them," (Dari, Second Grade, Rules for Greeting, 2010, p.113)⁵².

Based on this example, the greeting is considered to be a good practice only for Muslims. Although the above statement does not necessarily mean that the tradition of greeting is not a good practice among non-Muslims, however, it would be better to replace the word "Muslim" with the word "mankind" in order to be more inclusive. As such, the greeting has not been considered a cultural phenomenon which is universal. The likely outcome of such texts is more biased and dogmatic beliefs, which in turn automatically divides human beings into Muslim and non-Muslim. This division naturally defines the superiority of one over another. Condescension is one of the characteristics of the culture of radicalism, especially religious radicalism.

"Truth and honesty are the duty of every Muslim. We must always be truthful and honest, because the truthful person is beloved and respected by everyone. Truth and honesty make one prosperous. Every Muslim must avoid lying, as people do not like a liar. Lying in the religion of Islam is considered a great sin," (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Third Grade, Truth and Truthfulness, 2011, p.56)⁵³.

Truth is a universal human value. In all cultures and among all human beings, truth and honesty are praised, and falsity and lying are deprecated. When we

⁵² دری، صنف دوم، آداب سلام دادن

⁵³ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف چهارم، راستی و راستگویی

read the text above, it seems as if honesty is the sole duty of Muslims, and only Muslims avoid lying. It would be better if truth and honesty were defined as the moral duty of all human beings and if they were discussed as universal values that are part of all cultures.

"What is the one human being's right over another human being?" Ahmed asked. His father said that one Muslim has many rights over another Muslim, which Prophet Muhammad said: ... " (Dari, Fourth Grade, What is Human Rights?, 2010, p.146)⁵⁴.

In the brief dialogue between Ahmad and his father, Ahmad asks about the right of one human being over another one, but Ahmed's father's answer is about the right of one Muslim over another. 'Man' is the common noun for all human beings that includes both Muslims and non-Muslims, but Muslims are a proper noun for those whose religion is Islam. Although the text is very short, it reduces the large concept of the human being to the small concept of Muslims, and this approach can build and develop the student's sentiment and character on the basis of Islamic hegemony and the exclusion of non-Muslims.

"... All this dignity for man lies solely in Islam, it must be practiced," (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Fourth Grade, Self-Esteem, 2011, p.46)⁵⁵.

Dignity, which is based largely on the particular culture in which human beings are brought up, is here defined only for Muslims and emphasizes that

⁵⁴ دری، صنف چهارم، حقوق بشر چیست؟

⁵⁵ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف چهارم، کرامت نفس

dignity lies solely in Islam; therefore, everyone should follow and practise this religion. In addition, another meaning taken from this short text is that non-Muslims have no dignity. Therefore, a person who has dignity can have no problem harming a person that does not. Perhaps this is the most important motivation for religious radicalism. Those who engage in extremist activities, particularly the killing and assassinating of others, assume the others are inferiors and have no dignity justifying their death.

"Ethical virtues are the good morality and good habits that are in accordance with Islamic guidance. These virtues are attained by education," (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Fifth Grade, Ethical Virtues, 2015, p.57)⁵⁶.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle entered the discourse of ethical virtues into the philosophical and social debate. There have been numerous debates on this concept since Socrates, and different schools of thought and religions have provided various definitions for the concept. In the text above the definition of ethical virtues has an Islamic foundation, and the definition in this text is a religious definition rather than a general definition. In the general sense of virtue, man is considered more as a rational being than a believer. The above definition only considers those habits and moralities to be ethically virtuous which are in accordance with Islamic guidelines, so any ethical virtue that is outside the definition of Islam is rejected and the non-Islamic definition of virtue is not actually considered.

⁵⁶ آموزش قران کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف پنجم، فضایل اخلاقی

"Islamic society is a civilized society....," (Teaching the holy Quran and Islamic Education, Fifth Grade, Civilized Society, 2015, p.67)⁵⁷.

The title of this lesson is "Civilized Society" in a textbook for the subject "Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education". The lesson begins with the phrase, "Islamic society is a civilized society" which is followed entirely by a discussion about Islamic society and its traits. Only Islamic civilization is recognized as a real civilization, which seems to be based on a radical and extreme interpretation of Islamic religion that divides the school of thoughts and worldviews into Islamic and Kofri (infidels). This interpretation says that the Islamic worldview is the only true worldview which all of mankind should follow; but that the worldview of infidels is the world of ignorance, and those who follow such a worldview are all wrong. Even on the basis of this division, the world is divided into two categories: Dar al-Islam (the land of Muslims) and Dar al-Kufr (the land of non-Muslims). Dar al-Islam is a land in which Islam is the ruling ideology and Sharia law is fully implemented and is therefore considered the best land or the best society. Dar al-Kufr is a land that violates the commandments of God, so it is a bad thing and it is necessary for Muslims to conquer it and make them convert to Islam. The above text also implies to students that civilized society means Islamic society and Dar al-Islam, and non-Islamic society is anti-civilization and Dar al-Kufr is based on the worldview of ignorance.

⁵⁷ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف پنجم، جامعه متمدن

"The Holy Quran is the first and most important source of good morality and the second source is the tradition of the Prophet," (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Fifth Grade, Education, 2015, p.69)⁵⁸.

It determines the Quran and the Prophet's tradition as the only sources for identifying good ethics. Therefore, whatever is defined in these two sources as ethics are considered to be ethical and good and whatever is not mentioned in these two sources are rejected and are far from good ethics. This kind of attitude is more associated with religious dogmatism, which kills the student's critical thinking ability and pluralist mind and replaces it with a dogmatic and radical mind.

"Those actions and activities are defined and recommended by Islam are values and those are not recommended by Islam are valueless and forbidden. So whatever is recommended or forbidden by Sharia are measurable as cultural norms or cultural worthless" (Civic Education, Tenth Grade, what is Culture? 2010: 5)⁵⁹.

Religion is here defined as the measurement of values. Any thought or practice that is not defined by religious and Islamic guidelines is valueless, or on the basis of the text above, is "cultural worthless". The students who are taught with these lessons would be capable of destroying any other person who believes in different human values. This ideology of destruction can occur both physicaly or intellectualy.

⁵⁸ قران کریم و تعلیم و تربیہ اسلامی، صنف پنجم، تعلیم و تربیہ

⁵⁹ تعلیمات مدنی، صنف دہم، فرهنگ چیست؟

"Definition of Religion: it is a collection of God's guidance that helps free mankind to choose the best way and to create the boundaries of individual and social life. All in all, the term "Religion" is to be closed to the God for worshipping him, obeying his commands and living by practicing his orders and being fully obedient to him," (Civil Education, Tenth Grade, What Is a Social Institution? <2>, 2011, pp.53-54)⁶⁰.

The above definition by the author of the text is clearly the definition of Islam or, to a greater extent, the definition of Abrahamic religions, but it is not a generalized definition of religion⁶¹. In other words, the meaning of religion has been reduced to just one religion, Islam. In this case, the student assumes that the only religion which is right and selectable is Islam, and recognizes ultimately himself as a Muslim and the others as a non-Muslim. Religion as a cultural phenomenon is a feature of all human societies. Different societies have different religions and believe in different gods, and that each one has different values. The above definition seems to reject any other religion or other values in a broader meaning, this issue can lead to religious radicalism.

"Literally: Nikah means joining and getting together. In verbal usage, Nikah means a contract through that men and women can have Halal and lawful sexual relationships," (Islamic Education, Grade 11, Marriage, 2011, p.87)⁶².

Nowadays, the purpose and function of marriage varies in different societies. But what is certain is that marriage is considered as a common cultural

⁶⁰ تعلیمات مدنی، صنف دهم، فرهنگ چیست؟ <۲>

⁶¹ For more explanation on religion, see Part One of this research.

⁶² تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف یازدهم، نکاح

phenomenon in most societies. The definition of marriage varies in different societies, even differences in the definition of marriage can be found among all human beings. One of the functions of marriage in societies such as Afghanistan is to have lawful and so-called halal sexual relations, which is a simplified concept that has been changed in most other parts of the world. For many other societies, the function of marriage is not only related to sex, but also has numerous and other functions. The above definition is from a religious perspective that is somehow presented as the common and universal definition of marriage.

"The Reasons for the existence and unity of the One God: 1. Creation of the heavens ... 2. Creating the Earth ... 3. The Difference Between Day and Night ... 4. Floating ships at sea ... 5. Dropping water from the sky ... 6. Resurrecting the Earth ... 7. Stimulating and justifying the winds 8. Clouds suspended in sky," (Interpretation of Holy Quran, Eleventh Grade, The Reasons for Existence and Unity of God, 2011, pp.1-6)⁶³.

All of points mentioned in the above quote have been explained as beliefs based on verses of the Quran and hadiths that provide the reasons for God's existence. The scientific form of these reasons has been completely ignored. As a result, the student will be a believer with the dogmatic believing mind rather than a critical thinker with a science-oriented mind. The believing mind tends to create a religious culture and produce faith-based values. Critical thinking and creativity are nowadays considered the most valuable and educational phenomena. A creative person with critical thoughts is more valuable than a believer. Afghanistan's education curriculum seems to be

⁶³ تفسیر شریف، صف یازدهم، دلایل وجود و وحدانیت خداوند جل جلاله

seeking to religionize rather than to rationalize the lesson, especially in textbooks related to religious sciences.

Division into Self and the Other

One of the consequences of a dogmatic attitude can be said to be the division of human beings into two groups: the self and the other, or the insider and the outsider. Everyone who thinks like us and agrees with our beliefs is from among us, and the rest are all other, are outsiders. This attitude has two functions; one is positive and one is negative. At the micro-level and within a particular group, this division leads to religious solidarity and coherence, but at the macro level it generates great dissociation and a social gap. And social gaps lead to conflict and contradiction. The type and severity of the conflict and contradiction are more dependent on the level of the gap. If the gap is at the subjective level, the reaction is at the subjective (intellectual) level; if gap is at the social and political level, the reaction will be at the political and social level as well.

In sociology and political sociology, this issue is discussed. Social gaps can be active or inactive. Active social and political gaps have serious political and social consequences, sometimes even resulting in military and armed conflicts. Sometimes, social gaps can lead to serious political conflicts and religious wars. Sometimes, several gaps can be formed or activated simultaneously or in parallel. Sociological studies show that with the increasing number of gaps, societies will increasingly move towards social and political instability.

Due to the diversity of ideas, identities, religions and cultures it is natural and normal for gaps to exist among the member of various groups within societies and around the world. All gaps are naturally inactive, but it becomes a crucial issue for scientists and politicians when social gaps result in conflicts. As

such, all countries try to deactivate existing social gaps, and if they cannot, they try to minimize the level of conflict.

It appears that the issue of reducing these gaps has not been considered in Afghanistan's education curricula; nonetheless, such gaps have been amplified. See the following text as an example:

"The rights of the members of society can be discussed in two parts:

A. Muslim rights

B. The rights of other members of society

A. Muslim rights

A Muslim has rights over another Muslim that is not based on kinship

... Some Muslim rights over other Muslims:

1. To be kind; 2. To help the needy; 3. To respect; 4. To be friendly; 5. Not to betray in transactions; 6. Not to call a Muslim with humiliating names; 7. Not to talk behind someone; 8. To avoid being sceptical; 9. TO be with other Muslims in good times and bad times; 10. Not to quarrel with the Muslims and if two Muslim brothers quarrel with each other, another Muslim should reconcile between them.

B. The rights of other people in society

A Muslim has a religious duty to respect the following rights to other members of society, although they are non-Muslims:

- 1. Do not betray them in transactions.*
- 2. Treat them fairly and justly.*
- 3. Respect their property and honor.*
- 4. Do not disturb their religious ceremonies within the law.*

5. *Treat them according to Islamic Sharia,”* (Teaching the Holy Quran and Islamic Education, Sixth Grade, Rights of People in Society, 2011: 52 and 53)⁶⁴.

When members of a society are divided into Muslim and non-Muslim groups in terms of fundamental rights, the student's mind develops and formulates the notion of self (Muslim) and the other (non-Muslim). This subjective division of society leads highly to social conflict. This social conflict becomes more serious when the students see the inequality of rights which provide a non-Muslim with fewer rights than a Muslim member of society. Such lessons can create gaps and mental obsession among the students that would eventually turn the students into potential religious radicals. In addition, it seems that in terms of linguistics and content, the "right" and "duty" of an individual are somehow mixed in the text above. A "right" has a legal basis and has a binding force. While a "duty" has either a moral or human value basis or an administrative basis. As can be seen above, some of the duties have been explained as rights. The last paragraph "to treat them in accordance with Islamic law" is a good example.

Or consider this example, which was also discussed in the section on "Culture and Religion in Education":

“The word "religion" literally means reward and punishment, which means "religion" of the beliefs, jurisprudence, and those orders which are revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad ... the literal meaning of "Islam"

⁶⁴ آموزش قرآن کریم و تعلیم تربیه اسلامی، صنف ششم، حقوق افراد جامعه

is submission and obedience, and here the word of 'Islam' refers the Hanafi (a sect of Islam) religion." (Islamic Education, Twelfth Grade, 2011: 27)⁶⁵.

The last part of this definition promotes religious dissension by defining Hanafi Sect as the meaning of Islam. As the population of non-Muslims is not so high in Afghanistan, the dissension between Muslims and non-Muslims is not so serious, however, there is a capacity for discrimination between various sects of Islam. In such a situation, the mission of the institution of education is to offer lessons and instruction to students so that this gap and capacity for religious discrimination is first deactivated in the minds of each student and then in the social and collective memory. However, deactivating the capacity for social discrimination must always be done slowly and consistently with peaceful means, such as dialogue and negotiation. However, organized discrimination is another consequence of such training. This type of discrimination is most often created and reinforced by a specific group in the form of government policies and programs to pursue specific goals. And it is one of the main obstacles to the development of democracy and its values in underdeveloped societies such as Afghanistan.

Deactivating this social gap can have significant consequences: Relative solidarity among citizens is formed and strengthened. The acceptance and tolerance towards the views of others and even counterviews will be created and developed in the social context. Open-mindedness and critical thinking are promoted which drives knowledge production and development. Social and macro goals are defined more clearly by sharing the views of a large part of the population, therefore, a large part of the population strives to achieve

⁶⁵ تعلیمات اسلامی، صنف دوازدهم

these goals individually and collectively. Most importantly, radical thought and action, especially religious radicalism, will be controlled in society and will disappear. At the macro and global levels as well, a society with inactive social gaps is more stable, thus it can contribute to the creation and promotion of global culture, knowledge and global development.

Images⁶⁶, Signs⁶⁷ and Symbols⁶⁸

Human life has been full of signs, images, and symbols since the beginning of history. Man has evolved along with these elements and has a mutual relationship with them. Our world today is filled with more images, symbols, and signs than ever before. In the process of education, images, signs, and symbols convey the message easily and more effectively. It is believed that if images, signs and symbols are used properly, they can clear the path to understanding or conveying the message more easily; however, if not used properly, they can cause misunderstanding. Linguistic elements of images, signs and symbols can be used in different contexts and areas of human life. Roland Barthes, the founder of literary semiotics⁶⁹, wrote at the beginning of his famous work *The Empire of Signs*⁷⁰: "In this book, neither the text seeks to "gloss" the images, nor the images attempt to "illustrate" the text. Text and images are for me, just like a movement of visual oscillation, perhaps like a

⁶⁶ تصاویر

⁶⁷ نشانه‌ها

⁶⁸ نمادها

⁶⁹ نشانه‌های ادبی

⁷⁰ امپراتوری نشانه‌ها

meditative state in Zen⁷¹ which is so-called Satori⁷². From twisting text and images to rotating and exchanging formats such as body, face, and text, it is possible to read the meanings within them,” (Barthes, 2007, p.27). In the preface of the book, Nasser Fakuhi, the Persian translator of the book *The Empire of Signs* states: "The strong desire of Barthes which leads him for breakout of the limiting and determining ways and methods stemmed from the basic idea of how we see the reductive and restrictive ideologies under influence of modern society, and especially under influence of petite bourgeoisie that he names them (the collection of those reductive and restrictive ideologies) “Doxa” or a kind of public opinion. The pressure intended to represent artificial notions as natural truths. Semiotics comes here to help Doxa and its signs bombarding human thought by a designed plan. That is why Barthes knew the modern world where we are constantly bombarded with signs that others have designed and made,” (Ibid., p.13).

The two paragraphs above are mentioned because Roland Barthes is perhaps the only thinker who for the first time in his era realized the importance and meaningfulness of signs. He knew the complexity of modern life very well

⁷¹Zen is a school of Buddhism which was developed first in China and later in Japan. This school is called “Chan” in China and originated in Indian Mahayana Buddhism and Taoist Philosophy. The word Zen is Chinese and Japanese form of the Sanskrit word “Dhyana which can be approximately translated as “absorption”

⁷² “meditative state”. Zen is actually self-restraint and means to awaken and reach Buddha. It means actually everything in the world is connected to each other and it is denying the individuality. To reach Zen is through Satori (a kind of meditation) in Japanese philosophy. Satori or Kensho is an experience in Zen Buddhism which comes unlike Nirvana not gradually but suddenly in the Enlightenment process and brings a state of consciousness attained. In different Zen schools, satori can occur in different ways: in the two main branches of Zen Buddhism in Japan, Satori occurs in the Soto School while sitting and contemplating, while in the Rinzai School, through Sanzen, that is, the discussion arises with a method (Roshi) or master of Zen and questions and answers about Koan (problems). In some other schools, satire can also occur through martial arts, calligraphy, haiku, garden decoration or the so-called "NO" theatre.

and had found some aspects of complexity in signs. For Barthes, along with the other signs, the most important sign is language.

Modern languages are, according to one opinion, an evolved form of signs and gestures⁷³ used by early humans and Neanderthals (the primitive humans who lived in caves) to convey the message. It is assumed that humans evolved those signs and gestures to create language with the help of his own thoughts. But animals still use those specific gestures, signs, and special types of sounds to convey their messages. Even today, there are signs and gestures among humans that have a contractual message and a special meaning. These gestures are regarded as the common language which are subconsciously understood by all human beings.

Humans have different senses due to their specific biological structures. Their senses act as receivers and are the main (communication) tools that help them understand messages, concepts, and other essential information. The five senses – hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch – are known to be the primary senses of humans, although some (thinkers) recognize more senses. The modern education process tries to develop multimedia teaching materials based on all human senses such as text, sound, images, video, and so on, in order to make the lessons more effective.

The most primitive definition of an "image" is a particular form, illustration, and shape, often involving a particular message and notion. However, images can sometimes be without a message, or their message may not be understandable. Nowadays, it is important, in the creation of images, to

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consider elements such as aesthetics, semiotics, content, and the inclusion of specific messages. A good image should be beautiful, with clear and meaningful signs that carry a message or messages.

The above definition provides more of a materialistic view of what an image is. However, images can also have a subjective imagination. The subjective imaginations of humans are often shaped by the phenomena around them. The subjective images⁷⁴ of man influence the existence and humanity as well as the quality of his character and personality. Most artists, especially artists who work in the areas of painting, writing, theatre, and cinema are trying to present their own subjective imaginations. Of course, these subjective imaginations can be an imitation of the social and cultural environment surrounding an individual. Subjective images link directly to understanding the most important issues of life and being. When the subjective images of man are clear and bright, his understanding of being and life would be clear and bright as well.

Those images which are objective and that people are faced with outside of themselves in the context of social life, are connected to subjective images. Sometimes these objective images are the basis for the formation of human subjective images, sometimes these images align with or oppose pre-formed human subjective images, and sometimes the human subjective images are the basis for the creation and illustrate of external and objective images as authors and artists are mentioned above as examples.

⁷⁴ تصویرهای ذهنی

Through the education process, objective images of students interact multilaterally with their subjective images and their worldview towards the concept of being and existing. . The education agencies should understand this multilateral interaction and they must seriously take it into consideration when producing learning materials and school textbooks.

The definition of symbol can be different in terms of considering it a word, its implication, and its function. Literally, the symbol means sign, mark, character and code and is translated as a representation and diagram as well. This definition of the symbol has a more linguistic form, and it is used in the lexicon-linguistic conventions circle.

Every symbol carries a particular meaning in the context of particular conventions (especially linguistic conventions), and can itself become a concept and notion. From this perspective, human life is inextricably linked with symbols every day. Sometimes a symbol can present a different meaning in different contexts or in the context of different discourses. The recipient interprets and defines the symbol on the basis of predefined contracts and extracts the meaning from it, and enters it to the mind as data. The human mind processes what it receives and draws a definite conclusion from it.

Sometimes an act or action is known as a symbol. Actions that find symbolic identity emerge in the context of certain social norms, so it is possible that an action in one society and culture may have a different meaning and message than another. That is, to interpret and understand symbols, the cultural and social context of those symbols should be examined.

In the field of linguistics and from the point of view of De Saussure, there is a very complex relationship between sign, meaning and form. "A linguistic symbol links not only an object to a name but a concept to a sound-image"⁷⁵ (De Saussure, 2013, p.96).

De Saussure introduces the concept of the sign at a metalinguistic level. In other words, De Saussure emphasizes the structure and method of thought in recognizing signs. He also believes the process of thinking determines the meaning and form of those signs, rather than relying on the conventional language. By proposing such a case, De Saussure deals with the common language of all mankind, rather than one particular language. De Saussure adds more to the concept, "Ambiguity would disappear if the three notions involved here were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I propose to retain the word sign to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified and signifier; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts," (de Saussure, 2013, p.98). In summary, from a linguistic point of view, we deal with three concepts in this regard. The sign, the signified or the concept that the sign seeks to express, and the form or signifier that transmits as the medium and represents the sign.

⁷⁵The term "sound-image" may seem very limited, because besides the phonetic representation of a word, there is also the mode of production and the muscular image of that word's phonetic production. But for F. De Saussure, the language is essentially a kind of reserve that comes from the outside (p.20 of this book). The sound-image is, above all, the natural representation of the word as a phenomenon of language in its potential function, regardless of its actualization through speech. Thus the producer's side may be implicit or at least subordinate to the sound-image.

Images, symbols, and signs are capable of multi-interpretation. There are likely different interpretations of an image and sign related to the subjective and social contexts of the message recipient.

In the field of education, images, symbols and signs have always been utilized. The agencies and authors who produce school materials and lessons try to intercalate images, symbols, and signs which match the text (its message and concept) until the text and images support each other to be understood and interpreted effectively. Numerous images, symbols and signs have been used in Afghanistan's school textbooks, but they do not seem to be used appropriately in all cases and contain a meaning that could lead to radicalism and religious radicalism.

As an example, look at the following image:



فصل ششم ضررهای جنگ

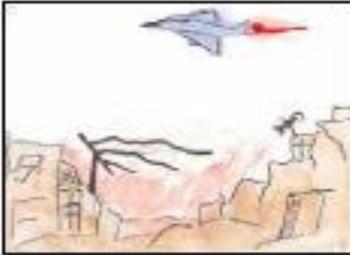
درس سی و پنجم

هدف درس: شاگردان با سه ضرر عمده جنگ آشنا شوند

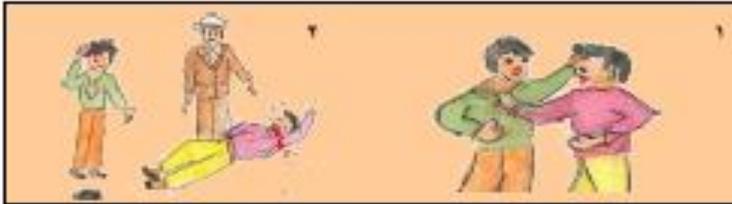
سوالها:

۱- جنگ چه است؟

۲- جنگ چه ضرر دارد؟



جنگ سبب ویرانی، معیوبیت، زخمی شدن‌ها و کشته شدن‌ها میشود.



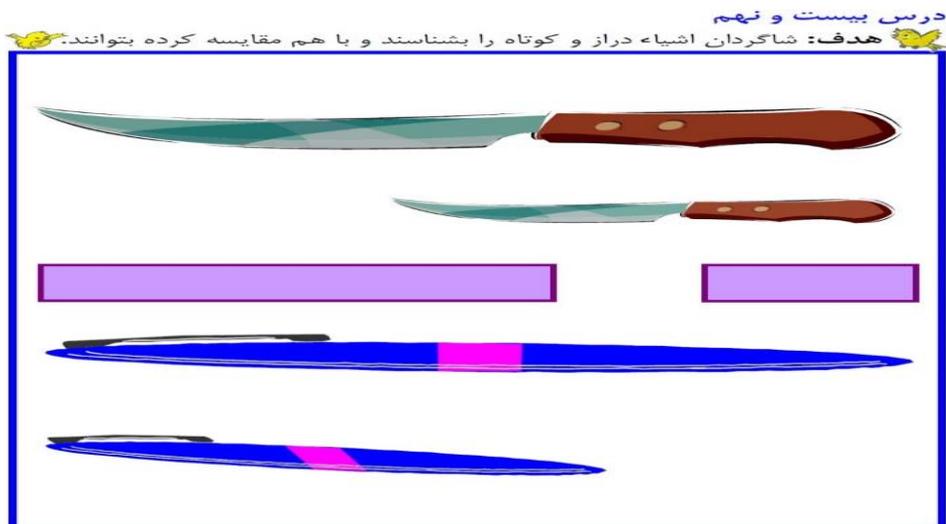
لت و کوب و استعمال الفاظ خراب، سبب آزردگی میگردد.



(Life Skills, First Grade, Harms of War, 2010, p.69)⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ مهارتهای زندگی، صنف اول، ضررهای جنگ

These images were used in the book *Life Skills of the First Grade* in a lesson entitled "Harms of War." First, it can be criticized in terms of content – both images and lesson content - as the relationship between harms of war and life skills does not seem very rational. On the other hand, speaking to a first-grade student about war – in any way – is harsh and not age appropriate. The images, which seem to illustrate war and aggression, affect the student's mind, and the student reconstructs his or her own subjective images by seeing the content of the lesson and pictures. Additionally, war is a symbol of destruction and bloodshed. Although war is a reality for every single citizen of Afghanistan, the mind of the first-grader does not have the capacity to decode the content of the issue. Thus, the only thing the first-grade student can extract from the above images is the violence that lies in the upper and lower layers of the images, which can unconsciously create the capacity for violence and prepare him/her for accepting radicalism.



(Mathematics, First Grade, Lesson Twenty-Nine, 2010, p.65)⁷⁷.

⁷⁷ ریاضی، صنف اول، درس ۲۹

This image is in the Mathematics book of first grade. Apparently the pictures of *knives* are for teaching numbers. However, it is clear that the picture of a knife which can be a tool for cutting and violence is not a proper image for a pupil in first grade. There is no rational reason to put a knife and a pen together even for teaching numbers. Putting a knife and pen together on the same page and at the same level creates some sort of conceptual and symbolic synergy in the mind of the student and she/he would believe that both are a tool at the same level and can even be replaced and substituted for each other.

درس بیست و ششم:

اماکن مقدس

هدف: شاگردان متن را بخوانند، بنویسند، اماکن مقدس را بشناسند و نامهای این اماکن را در متن نشان دهند.



پرستشها:

- ۱ - در تصویر چه را می بینید؟ کی می تواند چیزی بگوید؟
- ۲ - کدام جاها را اماکن مقدس می گویند؟
- ۳ - چرا جاهای پاک و مقدس پیش ما محترم است؟

جاهایی که از نگاه دین مقدس اسلام اهمیت خاص دارند و مسلمانان همه به آن ها احترام دارند، اماکن مقدس گفته می شود؛ مانند: کعبه معظمه، مسجدالحرام، مسجد نبوی ﷺ در مدینه منوره و مسجد اقصی در قدس شریف. اینها و مساجدی که مادر آن نماز می خوانیم و در نزد ما ارزشمند و دارای قدر و منزلت است، مکان های مقدس می باشند.

بر ما لازم است در هر جایی که هستیم وبه هر مسجدی که نماز ادا می‌کنیم، احترام داشته باشیم و دایم بکوشیم که آن را بسیار پاک و ستره نگهداریم. چون مسجد شریف عبادت گاه ما مسلمانان است، باید در حفظ و نگهداری آن از هیچ گونه سعی و کوشش دریغ ننماییم.

فعالیت شاگردان:

متن را بخوانند.
نام چند مکان مقدس را در متن نشان بدهند و آن را در نتیجه های خود بنویسند.
در باره اماکن مقدس باهم به طور گروهی صحبت کنند و یک تن از هر گروه مفهوم را در پیش روی صنف بگوید.

کارخانه گی: نام چند مکان مقدس را در کتابچه های خود بنویسند.

نقتهای:

شماره	نقشه	معنی	شماره	نقشه	معنی
۱	اماکن	جای ها	۲	عبادتگاه	جای عبادت
۲	اقصى	دور	۳	دریغ	صرفه، دوری

Jerusalem has always been a symbol of conflict between Jews and Muslims. A number of radical religious groups, on both sides – Jews and Muslims – have always used this conflict to propagate and attract fighters. In the belief of Muslims, Jerusalem reminds them of the oppression of Palestinians. Additionally, both Jews and Muslims claim to own Jerusalem, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews based on historical pieces of evidence. In this regard, Jerusalem can be interpreted and analyzed as an image, as a symbol, and as a sign. As a symbol and sign, this image could deeply affect the mind of a student as it is provocative and it would remind them of the oppression of his/her religious brothers and sisters. Therefore, it could imbue a sense of vengeance that will eventually lead to radical religious thought. Some may argue that the Jerusalem debate could be important as part of the history that still affects a part of the world. But a response to this claim that can be made is that this is not an internal issue of Afghanistan and is based on the theories of Islamic internationalism. It can also be argued that the text of this lesson is not related to history. Only the image of Jerusalem has been used as one of the sacred places of the Muslims, which is, of course, also sacred for the Jews.

At the same time, this image is used in the third grade Dari Book in the "Sacred Places" lesson, and the need for discussion on sacred places in a language teaching context is no longer justified. The subject of language and



أَهْهَ طِبِيَّةٌ؟ لَا، هَهْهَ مُرَّضَةٌ.

literature should be specific to linguistic topics, so as to be more useful and effective. Although the scope of the literature is wide-ranging and may include such topics such sacred places in some cases, the focus of this lesson is only on the sacredness of Jerusalem which may create unnecessary conflict in the mind of the student.

(Arabic, Seventh Grade, What is that?, 2011, p.10)⁷⁹.



تصویر (۲۹) دختران با لباس ملی



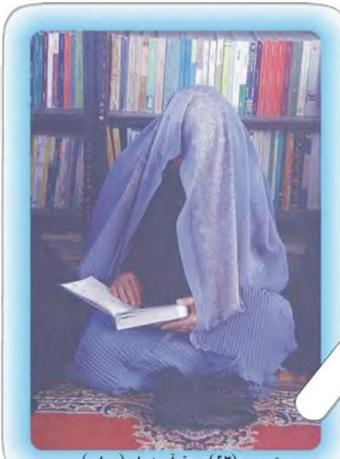
تصویر (۲۸) زنان چادری پوش در حال خرید

اما همهٔ مردم اعم از مردان، زنان، دختران، پسران و کودکان در مراسم خاص مانند جشن‌ها، عروسی‌ها و اعیاد، لباس‌های خاصّ زیبا، گلدوزی شده و پُر زرق و برق می‌پوشند که نوعیت هر کدام آنها در درس‌های جداگانه بیان می‌گردد.



تصویر (۲۲) لباس ملی مردم بختیا

در هرات مردان بر علاوهٔ اینکه لُنگی به سر می‌کنند پیراهن و تنبان را از پارچهٔ زیاد و پیراهن زنانه را به شکل چین‌دار تیار می‌کنند؛ همچنان پوشیدن چادر و چادری در تمام کشور ما میان زنان و دختران عمومیت دارد.



تصویر (۲۳) زن قرآن خوان (هرات)

⁷⁹ عربی، صنف هفتم، ما هده؟

(Culture, Eleventh Grade, The Clothing of Afghanistan's People, 2011, pp.30 & 32)⁸⁰.

In the pictures above, the "Burqa" has been used several times. The Burqa is a symbol of a closed society, especially during the era of the Taliban regime. At that time, women were deprived of their basic social and political rights. They had no right to education which is a very basic right. Today, Burqa is considered a symbol of a patriarchal, conservative and backward society. The burqa is a symbol of social anti-Semitism as well, which is also a feature of radical Islamic groups. The primary mission and responsibility of the educational institution is to eradicate this tradition and prevent it from being generalized. Therefore, such images and symbols should not be used in school textbooks.

Education Law

So far, the researcher has been looking for elements that directly or indirectly lead to religious radicalism in Afghanistan's school textbooks. It seems that there are legal reasons for having such religious radical elements in the school textbooks alongside other factors. Namely, there are some paragraphs in Afghanistan's Education Law that pave the way for the formation and production of such elements in education.

The law has two general definitions, first a common definition in terms of convention, and a specific definition from the perspective of constitutional rights. The law from the conventional perspective is all about regulations made by one of the government agencies, which includes all the legislative acts of parliament, the bylaws and administrative regulations. From the point

⁸⁰ فرهنگ، صنف یازدهم، البسهء مردم وطن ما

of view of constitutional rights, the law is referred to as a system of rules that are enacted by legislature in a specific formality, usually written in the constitution. Jurists and lawyers consider the characteristics of law to be: mandatory, a binding force, general, permanent (stability), and social. So accordingly, the function of law is crucial and decisive in important issues. That is, all the matters mentioned in the law must be observed in their respective affairs.

The current Education Law of Afghanistan has been promulgated by the President under the official name of "Education Law" which includes 11 chapters and 52 articles established in the year 2008. The Education Law has eleven chapters as follows: General Provisions, Intermediate Education, Secondary Education, Islamic Education, Technical- Professional, Vocational and Artistic Education, Teachers' Training, Center for Science and Educational and Training Technology, Educational Curriculum, Extra Curricula Activities, Literacy and basic practical Education, and Miscellaneous provisions.

A brief overview of the law of education is provided in this thesis, to see if there are any provisions in the law that form the legal foundation for the inclusion of radical religious elements in the curriculum.

Article two of this law says:

“The main objectives of this law are as follow:

1. Ensure equal rights of education and training for the citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through promotion and development of universal, balanced and equitable educational manner.

2. Strengthen Islamic spirit, patriotism, national unity, preservation of independence, and defence of territorial integrity, protection of interest, national pride, and loyalty to the republic system of Afghanistan.
3. Educate children, youth and adolescents as pious, Afghans and useful and sound members of the Society.
4. Develop and improve moral, sentimental, mental, physical nurturing capacities and sociable spirit of the students.
5. Strengthen the spirit of respect to human rights, protection of the women rights, democracy and elimination of every kind of discrimination, in light of the Islamic values and prevention of addiction to narcotics.
6. Strengthen the spirit of individual, social responsibilities and observance of law by teachers, lecturers, instructors, and the rest of the employees of the ministry of education.
7. Develop and improve the quality of education by applying modern experiences of the contemporary world, in accordance with the country's needs, Islamic and national values.” (Education Law, pp.9,10,11,12)

Some critiques that can be made of this article of education are: The second paragraph of this article mentions the Islamic spirit as one of the major purposes of the law, but no definition of Islamic Spirit, neither in this law nor in other laws and policies, have been presented. Additionally, this paragraph does not provide specific and clear guidance on the what the topics of Islamic

spirit are and in which subjects, textbooks, and grades these topics should be discussed. clearly stated that the topics of Islamic spirit in which subject and textbooks, or in which grades should be discussed.

The fifth paragraph of this article explains the issue of the elimination of discrimination in the light of Islamic values. This paragraph unconsciously forms a paradox; one side of this paradox is the elimination of discrimination and the other is Islamic values. In other words, the elimination of discrimination and Islamic values are in conflict. How is it possible to eliminate discrimination in the light of the Islamic values, since the existence of Islamic values are the causes of discrimination against Hindus and other non-Muslims in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, Hindus and Sikhs have been widely and systematically "discriminated" against. As can be seen, the education law has discriminated against this minority group as well. This discrimination is not limited at this level either. Paragraph 1 of Article sixty-two of the Constitution of Afghanistan specifies the qualifications for the nomination of the President.

“Shall be a citizen of Afghanistan, Muslim, born of Afghan parents and shall not be a citizen of another country,” (Afghanistan Constitution, 2009, p.27).

This paragraph means that non-Muslims in Afghanistan (Hindus and Sikhs) cannot become president in any way, because the law does not allow them. Ultimately, this kind of attitude is can undoubtedly be described as "organized and political discrimination" against Hindus and Sikhs. As can be seen, this organized discrimination has two religious and political dimensions that hinder the growth and prosperity of people who have different religions.

The seventh paragraph of this article states that the quality of education shall be in accordance with Islamic and national values and requirements. Previous discussions have raised the question of how some world values have been reduced to religious values in the curriculum; this seems to be the legal basis for this. It would be better if human values were mentioned, instead of specifying Islamic values, so that the qualification was more universal and more humane.

“Article Eighteen: Objectives of the intermediate (basic) education are:

1. Understand the basic principles and commandments of the sacred religion of Islam and strengthen Islamic belief and values. Non-Muslim students are exempt from this provision.
2. Improve and strengthen Islamic sensation and spirit of patriotism and unity and national solidarity, justice, equality, peaceful coexistence, peace loving, tolerability and self-reliance....,
3. Develop and expand training physical education, cultural and artistic programs in accordance with the Islamic values,” (Education Law, 2010, pp.22-23)

The primary purpose of secondary education is here defined by an understanding of the fundamentals of Islamic religion and to promote Islamic beliefs and values, while emphasizing that all educational, sporting, cultural and artistic subjects must be based on Islamic values. This article has two drawbacks. First, it takes away the optional form of belief from students, which can be seen in open societies in which faith and belief are optional, and second: it makes the system of education generally ideological and, above all,

makes it mandatory for anyone including those that are atheists or non-Muslims.

“Article Twenty:

The objectives of the secondary general educational level, in addition to the objectives of article eighteen of this law are:

1. Develop and strengthen understanding and solidify Islamic belief and values of the students. Non-Muslim students are exempt from this provision.
2. Develop and strengthen the spirit of loyalty to the homeland, the system of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, preservation of independence, defending territorial integrity and national values, protecting properties and public assets, consolidating democracy, in conformity with Islamic values and nationally accepted traditions.”
(Education Law, 2011, p.25)

The consolidation of faith as the primary purpose of public education is means to promote religion. Namely, the education system is actually used as an agency for propagating religion, which is the specific function of mosques and other religious institutions. The consolidation of democracy in line with Islamic values still demonstrates the dominance of religious ideology over the education system.

“Article Forty:

1. Political and partisan activities of the student’s, teacher’s, lecturers, instructors and other employees of the ministry of education in the

premises of the educational institutions and educational and training programs stated in this law, are forbidden.

2. Individuals, organizations and political parties, are prohibited to use educational institutions stated in this law and educational and training programs for achieving their political purposes.” (Education Law, 2011, p.47-48)

This article of the Education Law emphasizes on prohibition of affiliating schools or educational institutions with political parties or organizations of the country; whereas, as seen in the previous chapters of the present research, Afghanistan’s education curriculum promotes political Islam and its content is affected by political Islam.

Article thirty of Education Law defines the educational curriculum:

“Article Thirtieth:

1. Unified educational curriculum, is the standard which sets forth general and specific objectives of education and training and based on that, the ministry of education provides and organizes the content of educational textbooks, method of teaching and evolution, teaching material and its auxiliary.” (Education Law, 2011, pp.35-36)

According to this article of the Education Law, all materials and modules of the curriculum have been developed based on this law; thus, it can be concluded that the Education Law itself is flawed and causes promotion of religious radicalism. The basic structure of the education curriculum, including its subject matter and content, is determined by the education law.

Finally, the direct relationship between the education law and the structure of the curriculum is discovered, which means that we are facing a problem that is bigger than the origin of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Martin Heidegger has a beautiful quote in the paper “*What Is Thinking?*”. He says: “The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking,” (Heidegger, 2006, p.14). Our time is very thought-provoking but we are not thinking and we have no rational and logical view of being and life. As a result of the thorough study of the Farsi-Dari curriculum of Afghanistan’s education, it is found that the most important issue throughout the curriculum is that thinking is avoided. In the process of examining the educational curriculum, it was found that belief and faith are prioritized over reasoning and thought. The curriculum promotes dogmatism and determination rather than allowing the students to think freely and creatively. Afghanistan's education curriculum seeks to support and promote religious culture. The view of Afghanistan's education agencies to culture is completely conservative and this is criticisable. It is, therefore, important to note that the education system should be based on rational and reasoning-based educational practices. In addition, a look at the Education Law has shown that it is also necessary to attempt to change and review the legal bases of education in the political and legal levels in order to avoid religious radicalism.

EDUCATION AND POLITICS

Introduction

Following to formation of nation-states in seventeenth century in Europe, the states created some institutions to manage their affairs. Each social institution interacts multilaterally with other social institution to accomplish their national or even universal objectives. The most important institutions of modern states are: politics, culture, education, religion, economics, and the military. It is important to mention that in more recent studies, religion is categorized as cultural studies and is assumed to be part of the cultural phenomenon. Social structure is defined by how much the aforementioned institutions influence or are influenced by one another. In closed and ideological societies, politics dominate all other institutions and is the ultimate determiner. In contrast, all the social institutions in open societies equally influence one another and are mostly independent.

In this part, the two types of societies –closed and open societies) – will be discussed and subsequently, the situation in Afghanistan's society will be explained. Furthermore, the study of open and closed societies and Afghanistan's society specifically will be based on the relationship between the institutions of politics, education and religion in accordance to ideology. The religion in Afghanistan is political on one hand, and ideological on the other and the people's social and personal lives are often controlled by religion.

Ideology

The concepts of religion, politics and education and what the researcher means by them were explained in Part One. Now, in this part, the concept of ‘ideology’ will be explained..

The most primary origins of the concept of ‘ideology’ is often sought in Francis Bacon’s (1561-1626) and Thomas Hobbes’s (1588-1679) theories. In his famous work, *New Organon*, Bacon names some of the false and ignorant imaginations of mankind which create a barrier to the proper comprehension of society and the universe. Bacon names these imaginations ‘idols’, “There are four kinds of illusions which block men’s minds. For instruction’s sake, we have given them the following names: the first kind is called idols of the tribe; the second, idols of the cave; the third, idols of the marketplace; the fourth, idols of the theater,” (Bacon, 2000, p.40).

Bacon regards the entirety of humanity as a single tribe and says that the ‘idols of the tribe’ are as a result of human inclination towards accepting the traditions which are formed based on continuation and repetition. The most important characteristic of these idols is their ‘irrationality and sacredness’ which are huge obstacles to direct observation and experience. The ‘idols of the cave’ which include a number of myths and illusions, may remind the reader of ‘The Cave Theory’ by Plato, in which every individual has his/her own unique ‘cave’ that prevents them from the light of nature and knowledge. Various factors can be involved in the formation of ‘idols of the cave’, such as the books one reads, the intellectual tendencies of a person, one’s taste or their natural and unique traits. ‘Idols of the marketplace’ are formed as a

result of social gatherings or conventions. These idols are mostly linguistic. Since societies are always formed on the basis of linguistic understanding and interconnectedness, incomplete conversations lead to the formation of incomplete social contracts. This way, all mutual social interactions will be formed based on this defected social contract and against social facts. In Bacon's opinion, sometimes dogmatic beliefs and ideas can find a place in people's minds, which is a demonstration of 'idols of the theater'. The dogmatic beliefs that have come to human's mind from philosophers and thinkers of the past without any empirical or intuitive backing, are among 'idols of the theater'. Bacon's theory of idols is the basis for the study of ideology, because it leads us to the concept of ideology.

Hobbes is another materialist scholar and philosopher whose theories are considered to be the main origins of ideology. In his famous book, *Leviathan*, Hobbes discusses the concept of 'state'. "Unlike most advocates of authoritarian regimes, Hobbes believes that human beings are naturally equal. In the natural state, before a state is created, everyone has the desire to maintain his freedom while at the same time, dominating others. Both of these desires come from the instinct of self-preservation. The conflict of these desires causes the 'fight of all against all' which makes the life 'frivolous, animalistic and short'. In the natural state, there is neither property, nor justice or injustice – just war. 'Deceit and force are in the great war,'" (Russell, 2017, p.699).

According to Hobbes, people seek help from an omnipotent ruler in such situations which normally lead to the formation of social contracts. The citizens are on both sides of Hobbes's social contract, but after endorsing the contract, people will become absolute subordinates while the state will have

the absolute power. The citizens have no rights other than the ones that the state passes for them. Hobbes calls such societies a 'Leviathan'. In Hobbes's point of view, monarch states are the best form of government in which the ruler has boundless power. As Hobbes puts it, there are no possessions at the natural state, and the governments create possession; therefore, governments are allowed to control these possessions the way they desire. In the end, Hobbes stresses that if a ruler cannot support a person, then this person has no obligation or commitment to serve the ruler. As Hobbes is a materialist philosopher, he believes that 'movement' is the main element of nature and society. He even defines 'freedom' as a "lack of exterior obstacles to movement".

Hobbes's and Bacon's theories have played significant roles in the formation of the concept of 'ideology'. Through the direct influence these two philosophers had on science and enlightenment, they helped in the creation of ideology. "Thomas Hobbes and Francis Bacon are two prominent scholars of the concept 'ideology'. Bacon's theory of 'idols' constitutes the origins of the modern social science. His theory had a profound influence on England's empirical school as well as on Hobbes and Locke, and also on French enlightenment movement which ended up in creating of the concept 'ideology'. The thinkers of the Enlightenment movement were the intellectual scorers of French Revolution in 1789. It was the direct outcome of French Revolution that the term 'ideology' first came into being. Antoine Duterot Dutrass was the first person to use this term in the year 1797," (McLellan, 2011, pp.16,17 & 19).

Two different aspects of ideology were born during the primary years of the term's existence. The positive aspect refers to how ideology helps mankind

gain a better understanding of the universe and society. The negative aspect is similar to ‘ambiguous metaphysics’ which was first used by Napoleon, and later Marx, who is believed to be the greatest scholar to promote the concept of ‘ideology’, also presented his ideas on ideology in a rather negative way. Through writing the book ‘*German Ideology*⁸¹’, Marx had a significant role in including this concept in political discourse.

According to Marx, ‘ideology’ is a false consciousness. This theory of Marx originates in his studies of religion and politics. In his belief, ‘God’ was the projection of the human mind and emphasized that mankind created religion, rather than religion creating mankind. Marx had a similar opinion about governments. Marx believed that the ‘ruling class’ always seeks to create an ideology to be able to dominate the working class. In other words, Marx regarded ideology as a tool for the rich to dominate over the commoners in order to exploit them. Marx’s famous quote says, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,” (McLellan quoting Marx, 2000, p.32).

Ideologic beliefs are potentially able to change social facts which leads to incomplete analysis of economic and class relationships. In the context of base and superstructure, Marx believes that religion, culture and ideology are all superstructures that serve the base. In Marx’s opinion, sometimes ‘economics’ is the base, and sometimes, the ‘praxis’. According to Marx, as the ruling class shifts from bourgeois to capitalist, their ideology changes too.

⁸¹ ايدولوژی آلمانی

It is also surprising that the later Marxist branching traditions have emerged in the form of ideologies that have become increasingly intense.

The present definition of 'ideology' is greatly influenced by the theories of Marx, Bacon and Hobbes. Today, ideology is defined as a set of beliefs, concepts, norms and opinions regarding the social and individual world with clear values and goals. The concept of ideology is closely related to social beliefs and their origins. Therefore, definitions like that of Parson's regard ideology as a type of 'beliefs system' that is participated in by members of a community.

In some cases, ideology is also defined as, "a verbal image of a good society and of the chief means of constructing such as a society," (Martin, 2015, p.12). Apparently, ideology has an idealistic form in this view. In other words, human's systematic efforts in reaching their utopia is only possible through ideology.

Ideology has a complex relationship with religion. Sometimes, religion takes the form of ideology, and in some cases, ideology tries to promote its 'holy aspect' which makes it similar to a religion. There are similarities and differences between religion and ideology. Compared to religion, ideology has a lower level of dogmatism and can be flexible, dynamic, mobile, and changeable. Ideology comes from human's thoughts and their view of the world, while religion is more metaphysical. Thus, ideology can act more rationally rather religion, because religion never loses its devotionism.

Like religion, ideology has its particular set of commands through which society is controlled. Ideology and religion, both have the potential and capability to create integrity and harmony in society. Both, religion and

ideology, have their own cognitive systems which help the believers to better understand the universe and its relation with humans. Though, this cognition is often one-dimensional and combined with dogmatism. Ideology and religion, both are conservative and commonly resist against theoretical, empirical or normative changes.

In politics, ideology presents a pattern which consists of a clear structure on political thoughts. Some believe that ideology refers to the support of a particular identity. Ethnic or identity ideologies are in this group. However, supporting such ideology does not project a positive image and can be used as an instrument to force a particular identity over others. Finally, the major function of ideology in politics is the creation of a powerful and dynamic force which stands with or against the ruling class. The most prominent example of such ideology can be seen and studied in class conflicts of Left Marxist groups.

Education and Politics in Accordance with Religion

This section of the research serves as its main pillar for analyzing the relationship between education and politics in accordance with the role of religion. First, the relationship between education and politics in closed or ideological systems will be reviewed, followed by a review of open or non-ideological systems. Afterwards, this relationship will be analyzed within Afghanistan's social context.

In closed or ideological systems, the ruling ideology controls and organizes all social structures. In such systems, politics is the main implementing factor to consolidate the community. The particular interests of a state in ideological

systems will form interactions among politics, education, religion and other social institutions like culture. (Figure 1)

In such systems, humans have a dogmatic definition which influences the ruling ideology. This causes countless limitations to the most basic freedoms of a human, like the freedom to think. Human beings, especially the poor, are often used as instruments to expand the ideology; therefore, humans are strictly brought up as ideologic beings. Under the influence of the ruling ideology in such systems, politics, religion and education are all in mutual interaction.

Some closed societies like Iran and North Korea are examples of such systems.

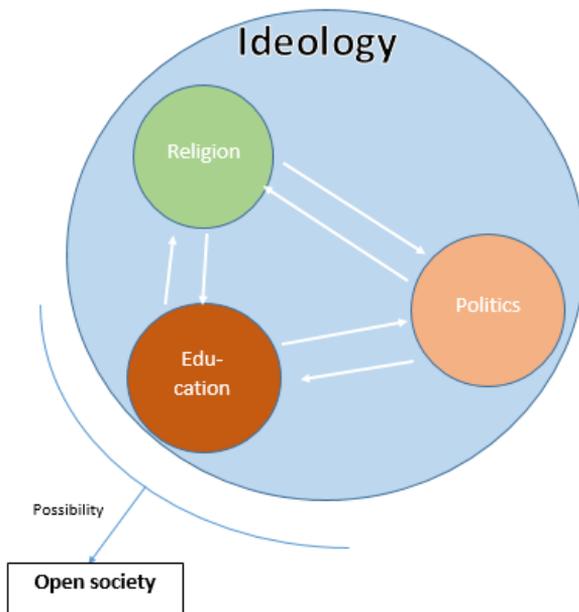


Figure 1: The relationship among religion, education and politics in closed societies

In open and non-ideological societies, religion, politics and education independently interact with one another. These interactions are based on social needs and facts, as well as democratic values. In such systems, freedom, free thinking, and pluralism are the main principles of social and political life. (Figure 2)

Humans are born free and live a free and effective life. The social and individual needs of humans are the foundation of all plans and policies of the government. Canada and Switzerland are good examples of such systems.

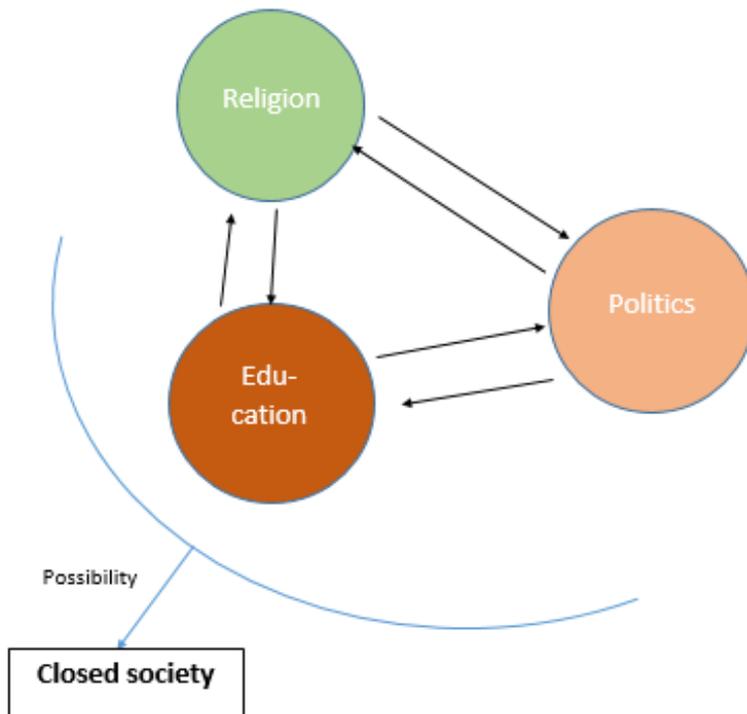


Figure 2: The relationship among education, politics and religion in open societies

The closed and ideological societies can change into open and non-ideological societies by bringing changes and reforms. Though, it is just a possibility. As the system of governing changes, the relationship among social institutions like politics, education and religion changes too. These two systems, closed and open societies, are discussed here as two prominent examples of governing, however it should be noted that there are other forms of systems that can be considered in the middle of closed or open.

In closed and ideological systems, religion either stands by the ruling ideology and supports it, or stands against it which probably leads to suppression. In another form, religion can be seen as a weak social institution which plays a neutral role in politics. In this kind of system, if religion stands by the ruling ideology, or in other words, the religious ideology dominates, religion can be active in public and private spheres of society. Meanwhile, in open societies religion has a cultural form and mainly functions in private sphere of society.

From a psychological point of view, “If a thought is formed in an individual’s mind, it is considered ‘subjective’, but when that thought is collective and approved by many, it becomes objective,” (Jung, 2011, p.3).

Comparing religion with thought may not seem appropriate; however, as an acknowledged belief religion can play that role. In open and non-ideological systems, religion only exists in people’s minds and is a private sphere. Though, in closed and ideological systems where the ideology is religious too, religion is regarded as a collective matter and is enforced on every

individual. In the book *Psychology and Religion*⁸², Gustav Jung⁸³ writes, “As it comes from the Latin root of the term, religion is ‘thoughtful thinking by conscience’. Likewise, Rudolph Otto⁸⁴ chose the title ‘*the sacred and luminous object*’ for religion.... Religion is the state of careful attention to some influential factors that human beings refer to as ‘omnipotent power’ which is usually depicted as ghosts, demons, gods, laws, perfection, etc.” (Ibid., pp.4 & 5).

Apparently, Jung’s idea of a closed systems is collective thought and individual thought exists in open systems. Additionally, the ‘sacred and luminous object’ may have a similar and undeniable form in closed systems, while in open systems it can be different for every individual with a particular form.

In closed ideological systems, education functions under the influence of the ruling ideology. Thus, enforcing and inculcating are the key methods of education. Most educational plans are utterly controlled and managed by security or intelligence organs of the government. Creativity and spontaneous thinking in any field, especially education, are strictly forbidden, unless they are in favor the government.

From an educational point of view, “realizing the difference between the two meanings of ‘understanding’ is very important. Such understanding would enlighten the ambiguity in the famous slogan: teaching for understanding. It is possible that when using this slogan, the speaker means ‘knowing the

⁸² روان شناسی و دین

⁸³ گوستاو یونگ

⁸⁴ رودلف آتو

procedure’ (which is used as ‘mechanical understanding’ in this text. Although it is very improbable, because the other type of understanding involves a theoretical interpretation and justification. It is better to call it ‘intellectual understanding’, which in itself will be superior to the mechanical type. Moreover, one who is capable of intellectual understanding will not only know how to do things in the light of the circumstances, but will also be in a better position to adapt to changing circumstances,” (Barrow and Woods, 2012, p.61).

The main purpose of teaching in almost all systems and societies is to increase understanding and to convey meaning. The closed and ideological systems often focus on mechanical understanding. In such systems, the method of teaching is mostly memorization which eventually results in mental and intellectual retreat. “Focusing on mechanical learning and its associated methods is likely to produce inflexible and automated machines rather than rational humans,” (Ibid., p.62).

On the contrary, rational learning is the foundation of all teaching methods. Such systems encourage the mind to think at first, and then nurture and improve it. It will all result in creativity and thinking among students.

It is necessary that understanding should be complete or nearly complete; although, there are no practical benchmarks for measuring it to find out the level of understanding. “One cannot claim of understanding or having learned something without realizing or having a general comprehension of the topic. However, understanding the general principles is not just about memorizing the relevant topics. In fact, memorizing the basic relevant propositions, does not help understanding the main subject,” (Ibid., p.65).

To this end, teaching should always happen both ways: top to bottom, and bottom to top. Both, generality and detail should be considered seriously. The origins of the topic have to deal with basic materials and information of the mind. Therefore, the education institution has to define and manage the range of subjects throughout schooling very carefully.

Throughout a systematic education process, all the students are considered active subjects who are at the same level; therefore, the learning materials and data are equally distributed among students. Since the students come from different social, cultural, family or even genetic backgrounds, a problem rises: “a child could be very talented in a subject which is somehow neglected at school. This is more common among practical talents,” (Jung, 2010, p.18).

Open societies attempt to solve this issue of not paying attention to some talents of children at school. Creating specialized schools is one of the solutions. It is assumed that the children who are stronger in theoretic subjects are somehow weaker in practical subjects; while on the other hand, some children may be keener in technical and empirical subjects, but weaker in humanities or social subjects. However, such division in abilities and potentials is not always accurate; there are students who have considerable talents in both, theoretical and practical subjects. From an educational-psychological perspective, “To identify talents, the natural character traits of a child as it is at home or school, should be analyzed.... The talents can be distinguished by the kind of imagination. Certainly, smart and silly imaginations should be differentiated,” (Ibid., p.16).

This possibility can only be realized in open and non-ideological systems, because in such systems rational understanding is emphasized more and the

ultimate goal of education is to cultivate thought. On the contrary, in ideological systems this problem is not very significant, because the foundation of ideological teaching is based on indoctrination. Indoctrination is irrational and seeks to form a particular belief or ideology in people. Such systems often seek to place the education institution under the influence of the state or ideological policies. Regarding what indoctrination is and what features it has, Barrow and Woods write, “The most obvious sign of being indoctrinated is when somebody has a particular attitude and would never agree to the possibility of being wrong. Regarding being right or wrong, this person is committed to a wrong teaching which has closed his/her mind. The second condition for making ‘indoctrination’ come true is that the indoctrinators have some people come to an ‘unshakable commitment’ regarding some verifiable facts. The third condition is about subverting the beliefs. This method is an essential part of the indoctrination process. If the doctrines can be indoctrinated and if the content of indoctrination is to be accepted (unshakable commitment), so, indoctrination is a process that is brought to mind by irrational methods,” (Barrow and Woods, 2011, p.76 & 77).

In other words, the educational systems that use ‘indoctrination’ as their main method, actually educate the students with a particular ideology which is usually dogmatic as well. The people raised in such systems judge individuals, phenomena and events based on the dogmatic beliefs they have learned, and their judgement remains constant and unchanging. The other issue that rises is the purpose of indoctrination. In closed and ideological systems, the exploitation of indoctrination is based on a particular purpose. The students are instructed to the destination set by the indoctrinating system.

“Deliberation in indoctrination is essential in the concept of indoctrination. The fact that the ‘unshakable commitment’ is raised as a criterion confirms the presence of intention in indoctrination; because talking about creating or instilling such a belief without referring to the intention of the inducer seems strange. Here we deal with the difference between expressive intention (what the inducer states), and the real intention (what the inducer really seeks to accomplish. As far as the real intention is concerned, the evidence can only be obtained from observing the quality of teaching the indoctrinated subject,” (Ibid., p.77).

Considering indoctrination as a method which is the key determinant of the quality of teaching, it can be deduced that indoctrination is a tool for understanding what the indoctrinator actually has in mind. On the other hand, course materials and data determine what the indoctrinator is looking for. If the material is more inclined to religious beliefs, it is likely that the indoctrinator intends to develop religious ideology as a dominant social thought, so that all individuals or at least a large part of the community are committed to it. If the material is more in line with non-religious, but political ideologies, it indicates that political ideology would overtake religious ideology; for instance, communist teachings. Sometimes, the indoctrinator may have specific purposes at first, but fails in the process of defining his intention; so, the overall outcome of the process may be unintended and far from expectation. In ideological and closed systems, the ultimate efforts are made to form the relationships between ‘real’ and ‘expressed’ intentions in a way that they are directly and easily linked to one another. And, most important of all, the main purpose of the education process must be accomplished.

Another issue that has always been under consideration by education psychologists and the philosophy of education is the diverse talents of students and children. Talents are of different types; intellectual talents, emotional talents, empirical and theoretical talents. Schools and universities seem to focus more on empirical and theoretical talents, and to some extent, intellectual talents are considered as well. Emotional and instinctual talents that are central to the socialization of children and adolescents are no longer considered. Psychologists and education scholars believe that key talents, including emotional and instinctual talents, should be nurtured in parallel. Since there are no ideological barriers to a student thinking in open and non-ideological systems, this principle is taken into consideration. Whereas in closed and ideological systems, they are always trying to break down the nurturing of different talents and put the main focus on the one or two talents needed for that particular ideology. It is actually different for students with extraordinary ingenuity. Such children are always able to transcend the usual educational and educational norms, although they are sometimes caught in these norms. "Great talents are the most beautiful talents, but they are also the most dangerous fruit on the tree of humanity. These talents are based on weak branches that are easily fragile," (Jung, 2010, p.21).

Unfortunately, it is often the society or the institution of politics that determine what areas a child with special talent should improve and how his/her talent should be put to use. The great talents in ideological systems are often used in service of politics, whereas in open societies such talents can be used in favor of civilization and humanity.

Ideological systems often try to separate a child from his/her cultural-historical background, otherwise, they would not accede to the desired

ideology. However, such cultural-historical separation has devastating consequences. “Childhood is a state of the past. During its development, the fetus replicates the same evolution that the human species has undergone, and the child’s soul fulfills the ‘duty of the past humanity’. The fetus lives in a pre-rationality or pre-science world. That is, the world that was once the world of humanity and our roots are immersed in there. From these roots children ripen and grow up... One who is unaware of historical continuity and whose links to the past are disrupted is at risk of being blinded by indoctrination and perversion of what is called modern or new,” (Ibid., pp.27 & 28).

In open and non-ideological systems, every effort is made to maintain and strengthen this historical-cultural continuity in order to preserve the ‘duty of the past humanity’. In such systems, the students are considered as temporal and localized beings who have the capacity to refine and nurture in various fields, and this capacity only becomes action when education is based on this continuity to form a historical-cultural solidarity.

Another important point to note is that in the area of politics and education some countries are neither ideological, nor non-ideological; yet no country can step beyond the general circle of these two systems (ideological, non-ideological). All societies are either inclined to one of them, or maintain the average level between the two. However, it is also possible that societies get seriously influenced by both, ideological and non-ideological systems, and develop their own educational system based on their social facts. Considering its indigenous specialties which are not that realistic, Afghanistan is also one of the countries that has built its own unique educational system using these two types of systems – whether consciously or unconsciously.

The main elements of education in Afghanistan, which is mostly made up of the curriculum and learning materials, is influenced by the religious and political institutions. As discussed in the second part of this research paper, some of the religious teachings that underpin religious radicalism and religious dogmatism have been brought into education by the institution of religion. In addition, ethnical and tribal fascism and some Liberal-American teachings are other important elements that have been incorporated into the institution of education. The presence of these two additional elements make up the institution of education's ideological. In other words, although the social and political environment in Afghanistan is open, certain ideologies are also being injected into the main body of Afghanistan's society through education. Moreover, some other teachings, mainly basic sciences, are among other elements that have entered Afghanistan's education system independently. (Figure 3)

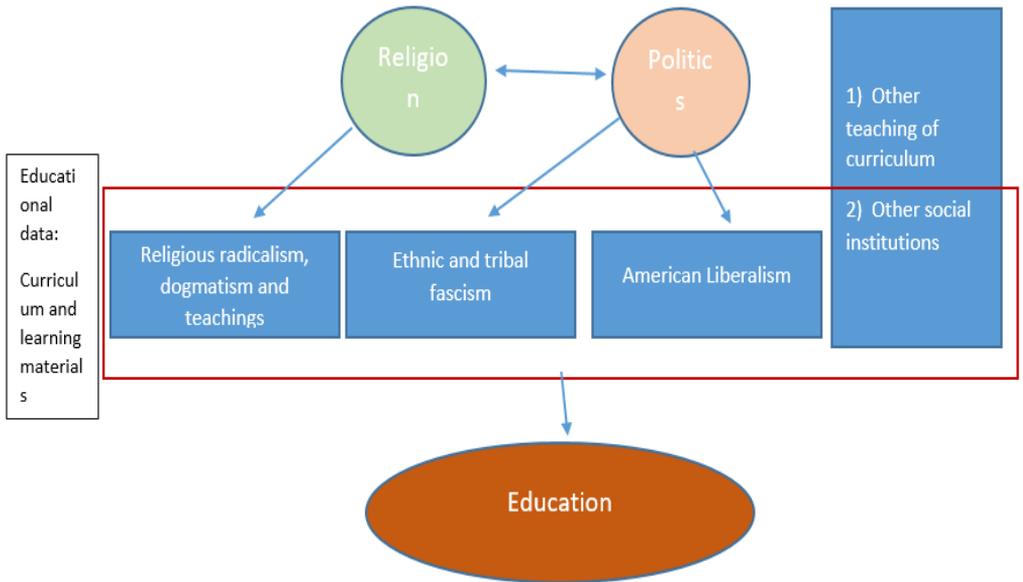


Figure 3: The relationship between education, politics, and religion in Afghanistan

From a political perspective, there are two types of fascism in Afghanistan’s schoolbooks: Islamic-religious ideology, and political-tribal ideology. Additionally, American-Liberalism is also seen in some parts of it. The subjects like English, life skills, civic education and others are influenced by the Western and American education system.

Here are some examples of political-tribal fascism:

The following are excerpts from Afghanistan's curriculum books that clearly represent historical forgery.

“Our beloved Afghanistan has a very ancient history. People formed social life in this territory thousands of years ago. Some fabulous cities like Balkh,

Takhar, Bamyan, Gardez, Kabul, Zabul, Jawzjan, Uruzgan, Herat, Kandahar, etc. with bright history had been created,” (Dari, 5th Grade, Afghanistan, 2007, p.132)⁸⁵.

Another case which is often noticed in Afghanistan’s schoolbooks is imposing ‘Afghan identity’ on all, though not every one is in agreement about what ‘Afghan identity’ is. The main problem in this case is a lack of discourse on identity and the historical definition of identity in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan have not yet reached an agreement on whether to accept ‘Afghan’ as a national identity; though, Afghanistan’s educational institution appears to be taking the opposite approach and violating the people’s right to a political identity.

“Our beloved country is Afghanistan. All the people living in this country are called Afghans. The term ‘homeland’ is precious to all Afghans. Afghans are brave, pro-freedom, and hospitable people. We, Afghans, love our country,” (Dari, 3rd Grade, Patriotism, 2011, p.7)⁸⁶.

There are many Pashtu words in different parts of Dari schoolbooks which represents the dominance of a type of ethno-linguistic fascism in Afghanistan. Some examples of this can be seen in the following quotes.

“His father said: ‘Peace means convenience and comfort. To avoid war, we need to try day and night. We need to live in harmony with others and avoid hostility. When there is peace, we can work well, go to school or university⁸⁷,

⁸⁵ دری، صنف پنجم، افغانستان

⁸⁶ دری، صنف سوم، وطندوستی

⁸⁷ The term ‘university’ translates into ‘pohantun’ in Pashtu which is repeatedly used in Dari textbooks while its Dari form ‘daneshgah’ has been ignored.

reconstruct the damages, build hospitals to cure patients, help the poor and build the country,” (Dari, 3rd Grade, Peace, 2011, pp.68 & 69)⁸⁸.

“The districts⁸⁹ of Baghlan province are: Dahan-e-Ghori, Doshi, Tala-o-Barfak, Khenjan, Banu, Pul-e-Hesar, Deh Salah, Nahrain, Baraka, Khost-wa-Farang, and Pul-e-Khumri,” (Dari, 6th Grade, Baghlan Province, 2011, p.23)⁹⁰.

“The people of Kapisa province are fond of science and like education. The schools are open for boys and girls in each district [wuluswali] of this province and students eagerly attend these schools. Al-Biruni University [pohantun] and the Teacher Training Center in this province are examples of their interest in learning,” (Dari, 6th Grade, Kapisa Province, 2011, p.109)⁹¹.

“The villages, towns, districts [wuluswali], and provinces form a country. The common transportation ways of people are horse, wagon, bicycle, motor-bike, car, etc. The cities are often more crowded than districts [wuluswali], and districts are more crowded than villages,” (Dari, 6th Grade, Traffic Police, 2011, p.125)⁹².

⁸⁸ دری، صنف سوم، صلح

⁸⁹ The term ‘district’ translates into ‘wuluswali’ in Pashtu which is repeatedly used in Dari textbooks while its Dari form ‘shahrestan’ has been ignored.

⁹⁰ دری، صنف ششم، ولایت بغلان

⁹¹ دری، صنف ششم، ولایت کاپیسا

⁹² دری، صنف ششم، پولیس ترافیک

“Jawid graduated from Habibia High School in 1945. He completed his bachelor’s degree in Literature and Law Faculty [pohanzai⁹³] of Tehran University [pohantun⁹⁴]. Later, he achieved his doctorate in the same university [pohantun] in Literature and Linguistics. Jawid served as a university [pohantun] lecturer in Kabul and Tashkent for long years,” (Dari, 7th Grade, Dr. Abdul Ahmad Jawid, 2011, p.110)⁹⁵.

In the social lessons subject of sixth grade (2010, pp.30, 31, 32) there is a lesson titled ‘Parliament’ where the terms ‘Wolesi Jirga⁹⁶’ and ‘Mishrano Jirga⁹⁷’ are repeatedly used all along the text. Using Pashtu terminology in the Dari curriculum of Afghanistan’s education is a sign of the politicization of education in Afghanistan.

The Durand Line is a political issue in Afghanistan and has no connection with educational affairs. By involving this issue, which has no factual historical basis, into the school curriculum, the institute of education in Afghanistan has made the education curriculum politicized.

“The northern and eastern borders of Afghanistan to Islamic Republic of Pakistan are marked with the compulsory Durand Line. This line has not

⁹³ The Pashtu term ‘pohanzai’ translates into ‘dankhada’ in Dari which has been ignored in Farsi-Dari schoolbooks of Afghanistan

⁹⁴ The Pashtu term ‘pohanton’ translates into ‘daneshgah’ in Dari which has been ignored in Farsi-Dari schoolbooks of Afghanistan

⁹⁵ دری، صنف هفتم، داکتر عبدالرحمن جاوید

⁹⁶ Equivalent to ‘lower house’ in English and ‘majles-e-awaam’ in Dari.

⁹⁷ Equivalent to ‘upper house’ in English and ‘majles-e-bozorgan’ in Dari. s

been endorsed by Afghan people,” (Social Lessons, 6th Grade, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2010, p.1)⁹⁸.

As stated above, there are numerous examples of politicizing education and making it ideological. This is ethnic and religious fascism. Its most prominent form is noticeable in the *Education Song*.

Education Song

O’ our Afghanistan, our world and our soul
You are our entirety, our sinew
We are of education, so we learn
We shout ‘science’, and we’re proud
We say no to ignorance, no to illiteracy
To acquire knowledge, we are decisive
We are of education, so we learn
We shout ‘science’, and we’re proud
We strive, we endeavor
To make you florid once again
We are of education, so we learn
We shout science, and we’re proud
Chastened be your enemies, if slander you
Your iron figure, your floral land
We are of education, so we learn
We shout science, and we’re proud
God be with you, O’ home of Aryans
Thus we pray all days and nights

⁹⁸ دروس اجتماعی، صنف ششم، جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان

Sayed Mahiuddin Ra'ei⁹⁹ wrote the *Education Song*. This song appears on the back or front cover of all schoolbooks in Afghanistan. The song starts with a line about Afghanistan and after every two lines, it states that students are of education and they learn which makes them proud of themselves. Afghanistan is regarded as the 'home of Aryans' in the final lines and it appears that protecting Afghanistan is students' constant prayer.

The song has two main themes: country and knowledge. The song somehow states that the ultimate purpose of education is thinking about the country and protecting it. It is so emboldened that the last four lines of the song are dedicated to this issue. The last two verses of the song tie the students' mind unconsciously to metaphysics and causes them to reach out to a power other than science through prayer.

The main critique that can be made of the song is that it states that the ultimate purpose of education is considered protecting the country. Acquiring knowledge is reduced to this specific function. The most important purpose of knowledge is cognition. It is through cognition that humans are able to achieve development at a social level, and at an individual level are able to achieve perfection and assertiveness. Reducing the purpose of knowledge to country makes the student a religious, unstable and idle person.

There is a delicate metaphor in one to the final lines which regards Afghanistan as the 'home of Aryans'. Reading this line, one would unconsciously think of the racial superiority of the Aryan race. However, in scientific and genetic studies it has been proven that there is no pure race in

⁹⁹ سيد محي الدين راعي

the modern world, and there is no proof that the Aryan race is superior to any other race. Stating Afghanistan as home of Aryans is a null and void claim. On the other hand, it can be as catastrophic as NAZI Germany. Besides knowledge, the *Education Song* spreads a type of mythic legendary Aryan history which is based on historical forgery. Furthermore, with slogans like ‘chastened be your enemies’, this song spreads political discord.

The aforementioned examples all indicate politicizing education in Afghanistan. Politicizing education means politicizing the culture which leads to the deterioration of the cultural foundations of a country and the collapsing of the spiritual body of society. In education studies, the institution of education is defined as the main base for processing teachings. After analyzing the primary data, this great processor presents the data to students. The outcome of which is visible in all students of different levels. While processing, both mind and self are active and interacting with the data. The more profound and conscious this interaction is, the better outcome it has; and if the interaction is shallow and irrational, the outcomes would be shallow too.

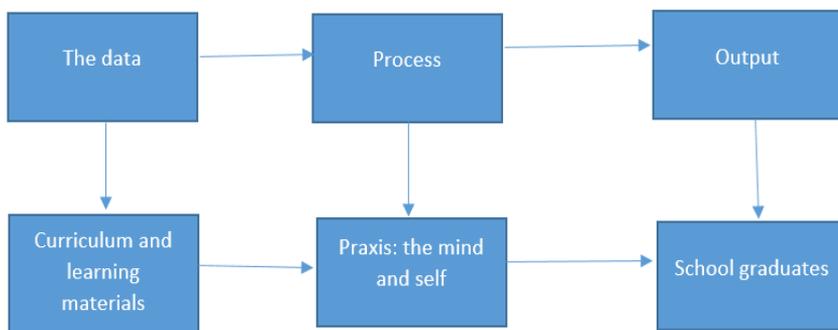


Figure 4: The relationship among primary data; data processing and its output in institution of education in Afghanistan

The relationship among primary data; data processing and its output in institution of education in Afghanistan

The curricula and learning materials in Afghanistan’s educational system are influenced by radical teachings, and they are affected by tribal and ethnic fascism. Additionally, the western and American teachings have also been added to them. Therefore, it can be concluded that whatever is presented to the students by the educational curricula in Afghanistan is somehow affected by fascist and political elements which may result in an output that is also shallow and inappropriate.

Roger Bacon¹⁰⁰ is a medieval scholar whose teachings were the primary sparks of the Renaissance in Europe. Bacon says, “There are four causes for ignorance: submission to faulty and unworthy authority, influence of custom,

¹⁰⁰ راجر بیکن

popular prejudice, and concealment of our own ignorance.,” (Russell, 2015, p.592).

All the abovementioned causes can be found in Afghanistan’s educational curricula, either directly or indirectly. The scientific or religious resources of educational curricula – as discussed previously – are all weak and inappropriate. In addition, the social habits that are formed in the existing cultural context are not so pro-science, which is unwise. The educational system of the country has not been successful in changing these habits, not even in the educational organizations. The mass beliefs are also set on irrational bases which control the individual minds of students and also the collective mind of society. People claim knowledgeability when they do not own real wisdom or an open mind – which is how education in Afghanistan bring up the students.

To sum up, the educational system in Afghanistan suppresses thinking and creates dogmatic religious and political beliefs rather than cultivating thinking or nurturing the culture of learning. The majority of educational methods are based on memorizing the generalities and political indoctrination.

Conclusion

Part Three provided an explanation of the relationship between education, religion and politics in Afghanistan. At first, the two ideological systems, open and closed, were discussed comparatively. Subsequently, the relationship among the aforementioned social institutions, which is the baseline of this research, was explored in accordance with Afghanistan's educational characteristics. Education in Afghanistan is in a complicated relationship with the institutions of religion and politics. This relationship has been problematic and detrimental rather than being useful and effective. The interference of politics and religion in the institution of education causes disruptions in the education process and its outcome would not be what society requires of education. In many cases, the outcome is so disastrous that education functions contrarily: instead of bringing social comfort, constant development, and the nurturing of the cultural-intellectual community, bad education destabilizes society and weakens the cultural-intellectual community.

CONCLUSION

The key points of this research paper – religion, education, and politics – were studied and discussed in Part One. The stated problems in Part One led to an ‘operational definition’ of specific indicators which facilitated the opportunity to analyze and deconstruct Afghanistan’s school curricula. In Part Two of the research paper, all the teachings and factors which either directly or indirectly lead to religious radicalism were highlighted and analyzed. Afterwards, the opportunity to discuss the relationship among education, politics and religion was provided in Part Three. In the third part, the aforementioned relationship was scrutinized, and the influence of politics and religion on education was explained.

The main hypothesis of this research focused on the influence of religious radicalism on Afghanistan’s school curricula. The accomplished results indicate that the hypothesis is proven affirmative. The presented arguments in Part Two are the main examples of this assertion. The other hypotheses of this research were mostly focusing on the relationship between religious radicalism and politics. In Parts Two & Three, this research identified and explained a few of these relationships and connections. Another hypothesis which focused on the relationship among politics, religion, and education also achieved a clear answer: politics and religion influence education in Afghanistan at a great scale. More specifically, the results of this research are as follows:

1. Afghanistan's educational curricula is designed and composed inexpertly, especially from a philosophical and political sociology point of view. The work on Afghanistan's education curricula has been widely influenced and weakened by religion and politics.
2. This research identified and analyzed more than fifty cases and examples that reinforce the spread of religious radicalism through teachings and lessons within Afghanistan's school curricula. These lessons directly train students as extremists, radicals, and fundamentalists. Therefore, it can be claimed that Afghanistan's educational curricula is greatly influenced by radical thoughts.
3. Spreading and preaching anti-thinking beliefs is clearly visible in Afghanistan's educational curricula. This curriculum is based on indoctrination rather than rationality.
4. The epistemological and ontological elements of certainty and belief are seen in the educational curriculum of Afghanistan more than rationality and thinking.
5. The existing educational system leads students to be dogmatic and deterministic rather than creative and free-thinking.
6. Afghanistan's educational curriculum is inclined to spreading a specific religious culture that carries radicalism with it.
7. The educational leadership in the country has a rather conservative and non-critical view of education.
8. This research has identified more than ten cases that indicate education in Afghanistan is political. It is important to mention that these ten cases are repeatedly used throughout school textbooks.

9. Politics and religion have widely influenced education in Afghanistan which has had a negative impact. In other words, education in Afghanistan is religious and political.
10. The educational curricula and its teachings mostly have an opposite outcome than what is expected. Instead of bringing stability and convenience to society, and allowing for constant development by strengthening intellectuality, it has caused more destabilization and has weakened the intellectual community of the country.

This study does not claim perfection, and there may be deficiencies. Surely, there are subject or research gaps in different parts of this research paper. There are numerous opportunities to conduct further research in this field. The researcher hopes that more studies of this kind will bring a deeper understanding on the subject.

CHALLENGES

It is very common for a researcher to face various challenges in different fields of researching. This researcher has faced a number of challenges which are listed below:

The first challenge is access to resources. Although the firsthand resources – school textbooks of all grades – were available at the market, the researcher had faced difficulties in finding them as one complete package. Other resources used in this research were also procured with difficulty.

The research theme strongly opposes the existing norms and traditions in Afghanistan's society. In some cases, the typical norms and traditions are expressly rejected, and in some other cases they are challenged. Additionally, some of the research results are expressly against the common policies of Afghanistan's government; therefore, despite the possible dangers, the researcher has seriously tried to maintain objectivity and avoid bigotry.

Since the relationship between the themes and the content had to be maintained, it became very time consuming and difficult to arrange the raw materials collected from Afghanistan's schoolbooks. This challenge was more considerable while preparing Part Two of the research.

The research organizations and individuals who do research activities are not very supportive to other researchers. Therefore, the relationship between the researchers and research organizations is usually weak and not many resources are shared.

Lack of academic and research atmosphere in Afghanistan is another challenge that often causes difficulty in analyzing the data, accessing

information or conducting research in general. This challenge also prevents academics from criticizing other researchers or doing research in response to one another.

A final time and energy consuming challenge that the researcher had to overcome was having to patiently read all the schoolbooks of Afghanistan's education curriculum which counts up to 144 books in total.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A study such as this typically follows a specific objective which the researcher has to stick to throughout the course of the study. Moreover, actions have some intended or unintended consequences. In other words, the consequences of a researcher's work can have some unintended consequences other than what the researcher had set out to achieve, especially at a social level.

The recommendations provided in this part are based on predictable and hypothetical consequences of this research. Evidently, the present research has the potential to motivate others to do more of this type of research, especially in the field of religion, politics and education in Afghanistan.

Additionally, considering the studies conducted on Farsi-Dari educational curriculum of Afghanistan, it is necessary that researchers of other fields such as psychology, educational psychology, analytical psychology, psychology of religion, literature, art, educational aesthetics, philosophy, philosophy of education, sociology of religion, political sociology, educational sociology, and other fields which are relevant to current topic, do more researches about education in Afghanistan considering the content of schoolbooks. It is recommended that beyond Farsi-Dari educational curriculum, Pashtu and other textbooks also should also be evaluated and reviewed.

In the end, considering the results of this research, the following recommendations are made for improvements to the educational system in Afghanistan:

1. Educational curriculum should be revised, reconsidered, and rewritten.
2. The educational curriculum should be de-politicized and all cases that lead to political bias should be removed. Particularly, the tribal fascism cases should be removed.
3. All Radical-Islamic teachings should be removed from the body of educational curriculum.
4. The Islamic-religious teachings should be specified to religious subjects. Religious topics should be removed from other subjects, especially language and social lessons. In addition, the method and content of Islamic-religious teachings should be revised.
5. The subjects that stimulate critical thinking in students, such as art and philosophy, should be added to the curriculum more than before.
6. The educational curriculum in Afghanistan should create teaching methods that foster creativity and nurture the mind.

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