

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

**Re-Visioning Education Systems to Build a Better Future  
(An Asian Context)  
(Original)**

*Zainab Hassan*

*(Age 12, Pakistan)*

*Beaconhoue School system, Gulshan middle 2, Karachi*

It's a normal school day, one boy comes crying into the headmistress's office. The boy tells her, "Madam, Raheel says I cannot sit near him because I am a Shia (a Muslim sect)." The headmistress is shocked. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan created Pakistan with pluralistic vision and constituted first cabinet with various ethnic and religious groups.

What would be the future of humanity? Our world needs peace today more than ever, because reports state that 40,000 educated Muslim youth from 110 countries are traveling to join ISIS, Why are educated joining ISIS? Ideological motivated violence and actions are being justified by some religious groups but religious scriptures do not teach violence, we find that problem lies in people who misinterpret and misunderstand them and use them for political interests, and more so to protect the cultural and tribal values. What is the soundest and most effective method in deriving ethical principles from those scriptures and relating them to the life of an individual and society and redirecting the focus on sociology of religion instead of religion itself? It is said that education, is the master key to evolution, advancement, prosperity, justice and peace in society. Surprisingly with the increase in educational institutions, violence and wars have also increased in significant numbers, why? It is obvious that few unethical, irresponsible and corrupt educated individuals, turn the world into hell, how can education turn this hell into heaven? This can be done by peace education which teaches us how to live peacefully with oneself, with others, and with the environment, enabling children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence.

What is or are the solutions to this panic situation? The answer is integrated education which brings together children from various sects of the same religion and other religions to appreciate religious and cultural diversity. Many Islamic countries like Brunei and Kenya have integrated Islamic education with secular education leading to very positive results. At present education has been made more and more science and technology oriented with less significance on humanities courses, resulted bigotry among youth. Education produced robots instead of human beings with no feelings. Education of science and technology is desirable as long as they serve human values, bring peace and happiness, contribute to international harmony, and solve humanity's material and spiritual problems. It is highly probable that Aesthetic and mystical (powerful motivating forces) focus in education can bring positivity and flexibility in our young minds. Aesthetic and mystical messages should be reflected in symbols, arts, drawings and paintings and in assignments of students.

Islamic studies should be taught by trained religious teachers, having good intentions, knowledge and skills to inculcate the seeds of love of humanity in the hearts of students, to reshape the world. Man's conduct in life and his relations with his fellow citizens and all other beings are generally governed by the moral values and principles of the religion to which he adheres. Religion demands practical applications but religion is usually taught in highly theoretical ways. Ethics and peace courses are taught as a separate subject, if they are taught in integration with other subjects they will become more relevant and interesting. In recent years, there has been growing interest in peace education among international organizations, but conflict resolution/management, and anger control courses are offered in very few national institutions and at high cost.

Apart from skill development courses, equal importance should be given to character building activities and programs. Curriculum should be designed according to the needs of society. Most of the English medium schools (in Pakistani context) have imported their curriculum from abroad, which are contradictory with societal values (e.g. dancing and singing).

In the end, I'd like to say that in this changing world, where an atheist (having no religion) claims that he practices Hindu Yoga and do Buddhist meditation and believes in spirituality,

integrated education can lead to open mindedness and acceptance of others. Diversity is beauty, strength and is a core of human DNA, creation and nature. Respect is a two way street, if you want respect, you have to give respect.