

## **A Study to Investigate the Perception and Role of Teachers, Parents and Management about Religious Education at Primary Schools of Karachi**

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### **Abstract**

*The vision for education as expressed in the primary school curriculum is to enable the child to live a full life as a child and as an individual. The curriculum, therefore, take into account the affective, spiritual, moral and religious dimensions of the child's experiences. This study aimed to examine perception of teachers, parents and school management about religious education at primary schools. The study also focused on role playing by teachers, parents and management individually for RE. A sample of 200 participants was drawn from different private schools of 4 districts of Karachi including East Karachi, South Karachi, Malir Karachi and Korangi Karachi through using convenient quota sampling technique. Questionnaires were used as a tool for collecting data of research. The quantitative analysis of data revealed that teachers, parents and school management support religious education at school but findings also show the absence of enough interest for fulfilling the role and responsibilities of school management. The findings of this study have strong implications for policy makers, curriculum developers, and educationist for delivering planned and systematic teaching for promoting and enhancing effective religious education at each primary level school.*

**Keywords:** Religious Education, Education, Teachers, Curriculum, Teaching, Learning Process

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### **I. Introduction**

One's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. The purpose of this study is to foresee the perception of teachers, parents and management about religious education at primary schools. Religion and beliefs gives awareness of our norms and values. Religious education teaches the ethics of living a peaceful and loving life. It teaches individuals, families, communities that how they should take decisions for living a better life

full of peace and harmony. Patrick (2006) said that religious practice benefits individuals, families, and communities and thus the whole world.

Religious education is very important for students at early ages. It teaches them how to response others and tells them ethics of living a better life. Religion plays a significant role in history and society as well, study about religion is essential to understand both the nation and the world. It also makes great beneficence to other parts of school syllabus such as liberty, civil, crafts and disciplines for supportable development. John et al (2003) mentioned in his report that the curriculum needs to cater the child's affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious needs in order to develop the individual's full potential. RE plays specific role in developing spiritual and moral values of a child as well as to be aware to knowledge of God.

## **II. Literature Review**

Religious education make student broad minded but it happens when teachers teaches them with these clear concepts and practices about how to practice these thoughts as well as to communicate and deal with others in adverse community. Religious Education teachers need to have in depth knowledge of content and pedagogy as well as need to have quality assessment skills to deliver effective instructions as they are the pillars of teaching process. Dinama et al. (2016)

Liagkis (2016) supported the concept that pedagogically, all instructions are determined in the curriculum sequentially but religious education teachers are responsible to deliver effective teaching to learners to make them able to practice.

Geoff Teece (2009) proposed an article on learning about religion and learning from religion or religious education. In this article researcher said there is a lack of clarity in terms of learning and actually mean from the religion. Researcher also argued that the term religion is understood by applying a second order explanatory frame work that actually refers to the concept of study of religion such as rituals and myth. Religious education or religious instruction was a serious concern in education system.

To figure it out Gardner (1980) gave a solution that, not to make students committed towards any of the religion and instead of this teach about the events and lifestyles guided in different religions. The question arises after this given solution that is it appropriate to grow students up with the brought minds in sense of their beliefs in educational scenario? Or is it better not to go against the grain and follow the traditional style accordingly? The explorers of these questions were Gardner (1993) & McLaughlin & Hare (1994).

Leahy & Laura in 1997 gave their notion that religion is not restricted to be taught in inflexible environment. Religious concepts can be integrated in other subjects of curriculum to enhance knowledge (P.329).

Leahy (1998) considered that should the parents be allowed to take decision about their child's learning method of religious education by censoring the curriculum of school but she herself deny it because it will spoil the rights of other religious groups and kill the ways for different groups producing social imbalance.

According to John M.Hull there is a part for the school in preparing pupils to take an informed and thoughtful part in a pluralistic culture. When the society contains not one but several religions, the necessity for a thoughtful study of religion becomes greater, not less. (1984, p. 48.)

While standards such as admiration, acceptance, and treating people with kindness are clearly important plus constantly have been, new public currently furthermore prerequisite to understand the causes of, and possible solutions to, complex and global issues. (Nord and Haynes, 1998, p. 36)

Ethical reflection contributes to that understanding by helping young people see that tolerance of others is not enough; that a global, interconnected world calls for harmony by others whose outcomes and futures are intertwined, and that they want to be prepared to turn, not just personally, but also collectively and politically. (Freiler, 2009, p.15)

Susan D. Holloway in his article “The Role of Religious Beliefs in Early Childhood Education: Christian and Buddhist Preschools in Japan”. Off and on in western writing the Japanese are mark out as a non-religious people apart from it Japanese are considered the faithfulness that conflict with Americans. Japanese show up more prepared to put together and meet the doctrine that often appealing Shinto at the beginning and wedding whereas the Buddhism stand with silence/external rest through in spite of circumstances that work to darken the noticeable philosophical contribution of different doctrine, definite direction of Christians ideology and Buddhism are observed that pressure the school of Japanese.

The objectives of the study as given below;

- To find out teacher’s perception about religious teaching as an aspect of education.
- To find out parent’s perception about religious teaching.
- To explore the role of school management for teaching religious subjects in curriculum.

### **III. Methodology of the Study**

A quantitative research design was selected to conduct this study. In this study questionnaires were used as a research tool. In the educational research field questionnaires are worthily considered as a popular technique mostly used for investigating the opinions, attitudes, perceptions and preferences.

Questionnaires constitute an important and popular technique that is widely used to study the attitudes, opinions, perceptions and preferences in the field of educational research. Muijs (2004), Reid (2006).

Oppenheim (1992: 100) described questionnaires as: “The questionnaire is an important instrument of research, a tool for data collection. It is considered a set of questions arranged in a certain order and constructed according to specially selected rules”.

[Creswell (2008), Cohen et al (2007), Raid (2006)] all categorized questionnaires information as there are three types of data that may be collected about respondents through using questionnaires including Factual, Behavioral and attitudinal. Demographic characteristics of respondents are covered in factual questions; behavioral questions are used to investigate about the actions, habits, and experiences of participants; and to know about interest, belief, values, opinions and attitudes investigator uses attitudinal questions. In this study research tool is consisted on two elements from mentioned categories including factual and attitudinal questions.

#### **A. Development procedure of Questionnaires**

For the purpose of literature review author go through different research papers. During studies other’s questionnaires were analyzed to adopt as a tool but not found fruitful. Another option was to adapt other’s questionnaire but nothing found measurable for all concepts. Finally it was decided to develop own questionnaire as a research tool.

For designing questionnaire statements, researcher asked simple question to random selected 30 audiences specifically 10 management people, 10 teachers and 10 parents. All were asked same question that was open ended question about their perception related to religious education at primary schools as well as what they are doing at their own pace for religious education. All common concepts and highlighted opinions were selected to develop questionnaire statements. During questionnaires designing it was also considered that concepts, opinions and perceptions about religious education discussed and highlighted in past researches not to be neglected.

Three questionnaires were designed for each category of respondents. Respondents of the study were teachers, parents and management belongs to primary schools of Karachi. Total number of statements was 10 for each category of respondents. 30-40 minutes time duration was decided to fill questionnaires after the pilot study. Closed ended statements were used in questionnaires and respondents were asked to give their point of view by chosen rubrics of Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, to some extent, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree).

### **B. Pilot testing of Questionnaires**

Oppenheim (1992: 48) mentioned this “everything about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded, not even the type face or the quality of the paper”. 50 respondents were selected for pilot testing of questionnaires (20 teachers, 20 parents and 10 management staff). Piloting the questionnaires was aimed to ensure the layout of questionnaires, to cater the language difficulties, to check instructions needed to improve and to improve validity and reliability of questionnaires. The feedback received through pilot testing provides the clarity about statements of questionnaire, layout, instructions and validity as well.

### **C. Sample selection**

Teachers, school management of primary schools and parents of primary grade children of Karachi, Pakistan were selected as a population of this study. Sample was selected district wise; there are 6 districts in Karachi namely Central Karachi, East Karachi, South Karachi, West Karachi, Malir Karachi and Korangi Karachi. By using convenient quota sampling technique 4 districts out of 6 were selected including East Karachi, South Karachi, Malir Karachi and Korangi Karachi. Total 200 sample size was selected for conducting this study. 50 samples were intended to select from each district approximately. For desired sample primary schools were selected through searching on internet and developed communication with concern authorities of all schools for asking their willingness to fulfill research needs.

### **D. Data collection procedure**

Researcher visited schools district wise one by one and distributed 250 questionnaires to participants more than actual sample size to get maximum return rate. 30 out of 250 participants did not return their questionnaires. 220 participants returned questionnaires on time. 20 questionnaires out of 220 were excluded due to incomplete responses. So finally researcher got desired sample size 200 out of 250. Remaining questionnaire responses was 40

(principals, wise principals), 100 teachers and 60 parents selected collectively. Whereas, 10 (principals, wise principals), 25 teachers and 15 parents were selected from each district.

**IV. Analysis of Data**

SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis procedure. 5-Likert scale responses were converted into numeric scale 1-5 to enter the data in SPSS. Through using SPSS researcher calculated the frequencies and percentages. After calculation, result is presented through generating graphs showing frequencies and percentages of responses of each category.

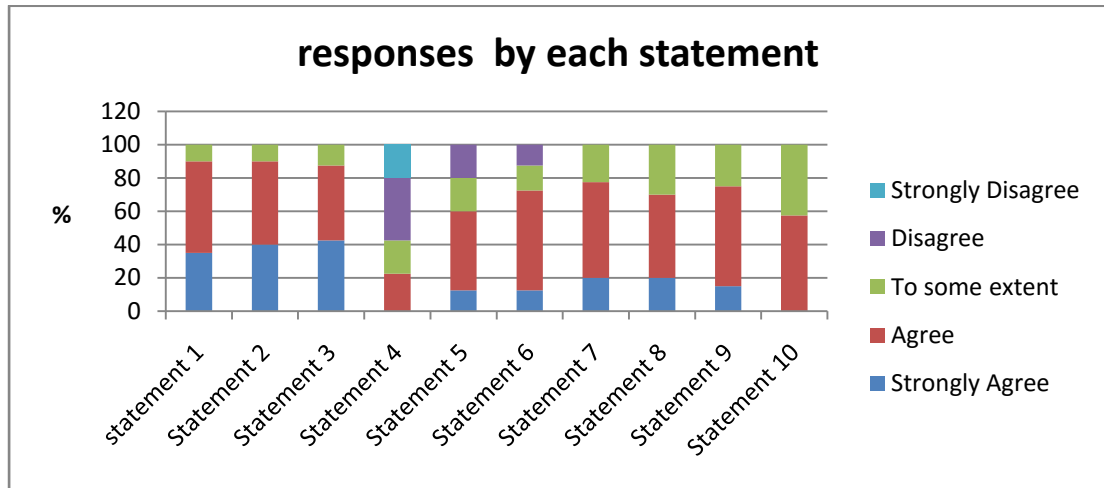
Analyzing the findings of research questionnaire statements is given below.

**Table 1: Management Category**

Statement	Frequencies & Percentages									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		To some extent		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Religious education defines Virtue, Grace, Law and Sin.	14	35%	22	55%	4	10%	-	-	-	-
Religious education is a part of each individual’s statutory learning pathway.	16	40%	20	50%	4	10%	-	-	-	-
Religious education gives importance to moral values in life.	17	42.5%	18	45%	5	12.5%	-	-	-	-
The school should have no role in the religious formation of the child.	-	-	9	22.5%	8	20%	15	37.5%	8	20%
It should be the priority to have a religious education in the school.	5	12.5%	19	47.5%	8	20%	8	20%	-	-
Religious topic in curriculum enhances the explanation of the spiritual side of life.	5	12.5%	24	60%	6	15%	5	12.5%	-	-
Content is related to the student’s life during teaching.	8	20%	23	57.5%	9	22.5%	-	-	-	-
The curriculum is adopting instructional approaches to meet student’s religious need.	8	20%	20	50%	12	30%	-	-	-	-
Curriculum is supporting their responsibility to educate children through sharing resources.	6	15%	24	60%	10	25%	-	-	-	-

There are authorities in school to access overall effectiveness of religious practices.	-	-	23	57.5%	17	42.5%	-	-	-	-
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**Figure 1:**

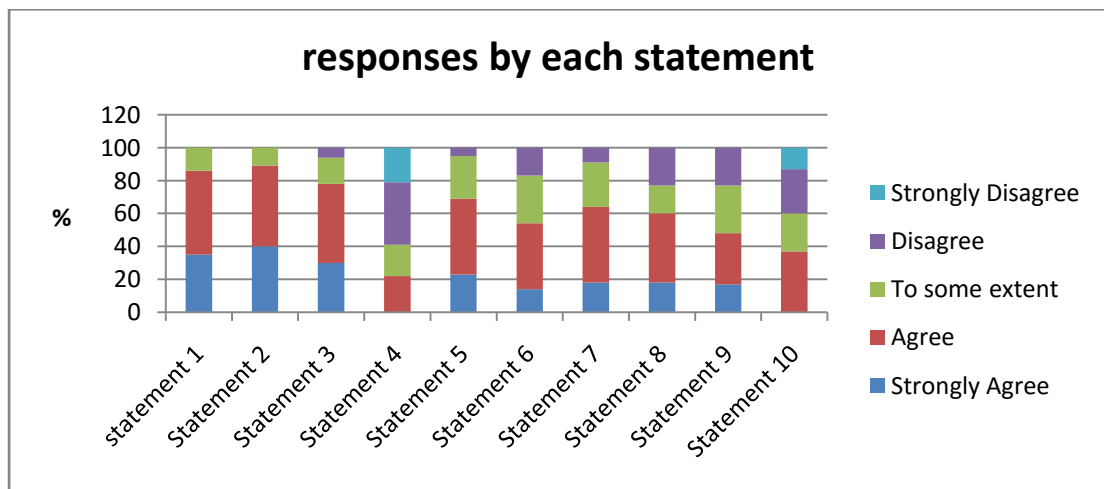


**Table 2: Teacher Category**

Statement	Frequencies & Percentages									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		To some extent		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Religious education gives importance to moral values in life.	35	35%	51	51%	14	14%	-	-	-	-
Religious education is a part of each individual's statutory learning pathway.	40	40%	49	49%	11	11%	-	-	-	-
Religious tradition cannot survive without recalling the chain of memory.	30	30%	48	48%	16	16%	6	6%	-	-
The school should have no role in the religious formation of the child.	-	-	22	22%	19	19%	38	38%	21	21%
You being a teacher relate content to the student's life during teaching.	23	23%	46	46%	26	26%	5	5%	-	-
Teachers are adopting instructional approaches to meet student's religious	14	14%	40	40%	29	29%	17	17%	-	-

need.										
Opportunities are provided to students to investigate religion practices and teaching explanation.	18	18%	46	46%	27	27%	9	9%	-	-
Schools are creating opportunities to persuade parents and teachers to play the role of religious educators.	18	18%	42	42%	17	17%	23	23%	-	-
Schools are providing spiritual support to enable staff and students to understand the concept of faith.	17	17%	31	31%	29	29%	23	23%	-	-
There are authorities in school to access overall effectiveness of religious practices.	-	-	37	37%	23	23%	27	27%	13	13%

**Figure 2:**



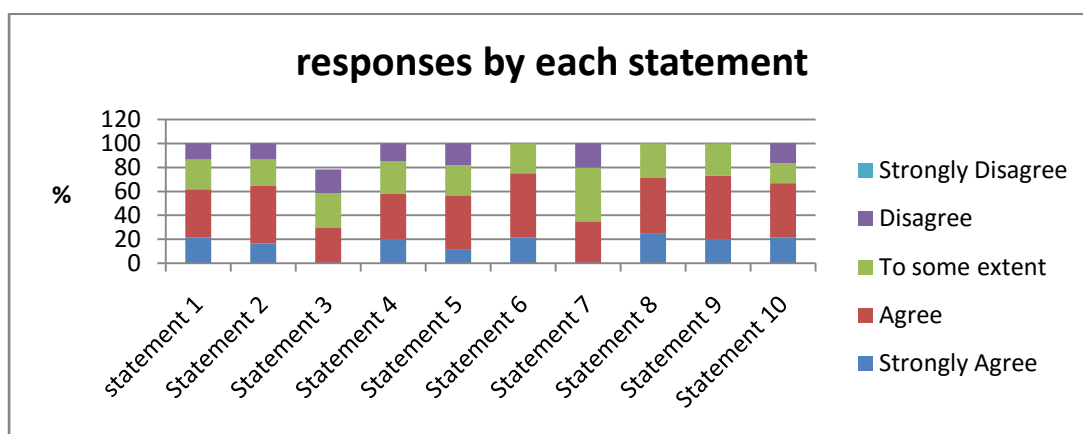
**Table 3: Parent Category**

Statement	Frequencies & Percentages									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		To some extent		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
My child shows enthusiasm for the teaching of R.E (Religious Education)	13	21.7%	24	40%	15	25%	8	13.3%	-	-



The teaching of RE has an impact on my child and is done well at this school	10	16.7%	29	48.3%	13	21.7%	8	13.3%	-	-
The school acts quickly on parents' suggestions and concerns	-	-	18	30%	17	28.3%	12	20%	13	21.7%
The attitude of your child to Religious Education is positive	12	20%	23	38.3%	16	26.7%	9	15%	-	-
You are satisfied to the teaching of Religious Education at your child school	7	11.7%	27	45%	15	25%	11	18.3%	-	-
I provide good level of care and support to my child at home	13	21.7%	32	53.3%	15	25%	-	-	-	-
My child participates in religious programs.	-	-	21	35%	27	45%	12	20%	-	-
I provide religious enrich environment to my child at home	15	25%	28	46.7%	17	28.3%	-	-	-	-
I am providing spiritual support to enable my child to understand the concept of faith.	12	20%	32	53.3%	16	26.7%	-	-	-	-
Schools are creating opportunities to persuade parents and teachers to play the role of religious educators.	13	21.7%	27	45%	10	16.7%	10	16.7%	-	-

Figure 3:



It is interesting to note that most of the people supported RE and learning about religion. Also support for RE helping children to understand a range of religious values and beliefs. But some gaps are found in management role in adapting instructional approaches in curriculum to meet student's religious needs, not providing enough resources and absence of authorities to monitor effectiveness of religious practices.

Somewhere teachers and parents also blame management for not providing spiritual support and not creating enough opportunities for teachers to play the role of religious educators. Hence, findings provide clear perception of teachers, parents and management about RE.

## **V. Discussion**

Religion has direct relationship with the learning habits of an individual. It may directly influence the belief, attitude and ideology of an individual. Due to this fact the educators always try to devise curriculum keeping in view the religious backgrounds of the students, through which personal, social and moral development of an individual may fulfill.

According to Flourish (2013): Establishment of religious education is a fundamental part of national curriculum for primary education. It could be astonishing but it is all about the truth of some of the unique people showed religious relations with social intimacy and they also have discussion that religion is not applicable or transferable whether in workplace or schools. Meanwhile many believe religious education encourages students within the careful faith.

For centuries religious education has been supported the values of many qualities like intelligence, fairness, respect and standard for living styles. Religion in education showed appreciating effects among the children.

Religious education is also familiarized with the changing in the environment including practicing and outcome religious authoritarian in nearby society as well as globally (QCDA (1993)). One of the major obstacles has been recognized that to give respect and consciousness for diverse religious customs and beliefs is a sign of an effectual learning environment. It develops skills in students to deal with different religious perspectives present in a society where they live.

To come to know about others belief is not enough for students. Beside the review the cognitive domain, also promoting and contributory aspects of affective domain must be the part of learning environment. Student- centered activities should be used to fulfill the developmental needs of students and activities that are used in learning atmosphere should be

according to age of students. Celebrations, traditions, dishes or role plays may be the source of getting experiences.

Beside all, it should provide an opportunity to express what must be learned. Therefore, an effective religious education environment must be student centered, engaging and relevant, respectful of diversity, inviting and inclusive, participatory, interactive and collaborative, reflective and celebratory, integrative, challenging and inquiry based.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This research study has aimed to investigate audience's perception about religious education importance at primary schools of Karachi. The research focused on three main research questions in order to explore the teacher's perception about religious teaching as an aspect of education, parent's perception about religious teaching, role of school management for teaching religious subjects in curriculum.

The results of this study indicates that the 70% of management reported their perception that religious education is a part of each individual's learning process and it should be the priority to have a religious education in the school. 68.8% teachers accepted the importance of religious education in schools. 58.34% parent's responses indicated the acceptance of religious education at schools.

70.5% management responses indicated that they appreciated the religious practices at schools as well as selected the curriculum that is adopting instructional approaches to meet student's religious need. Whereas, 52.6% teachers indicated that they relate content to the student's life during teaching. 60.34% parents indicated that they fulfill their role by providing religious enrich environment to their children at homes.

15.5% management, 14% teachers and 12.32% parent responses indicated that they do not appreciate religious education at schools. As well as 22.4% responses of teachers and 19.34% responses of parents indicated that they are lacking behind in fulfilling their role and mentioned that management is somewhere the reason of this gap.

Mainly it is the role of school management then teachers and parents to promote peaceful environment and the concept that we live under the same sky but with different living standards. Similarly, we share different faiths and traditions but with different characteristics. Thus, in short school management is somewhere not providing and promoting opportunities for effective religious education this carelessness may affect the learning of children.

Well, it is also true that it is quite difficult for the teachers to integrate religious diversity in learning but we could make an effort to devise our curriculum in such a way that caters the religious needs of an individual. To be able to live in society of diverse religions it is important to understand and acquire religious concepts and beliefs.

After the whole research the major aspect I found that religious education has great importance and it is a compulsory part of education in other religions including Christianity, and Buddhism. Being an Islamic state there is a need to focus more seriously towards religious education as an effective part of children education. As it is found in researches that use of curricula, teaching and learning materials introduced the learners to an understanding and an appreciation of their cultural heritage. So, the teaching methods for RE should be based on practical, participatory and contextualized learning techniques that are linked to the community's social, cultural and religious needs.

## **VII. Recommendations**

- Religious education should be included in curriculum with authentic knowledge.
- Religious must be a part of curriculum not only on content base it should be integrated with student's daily life.
- The existing condition of curriculum has already the religious concept but there is need to teach and develop instructional approaches according to understanding level of student's concept and synthesis process should be implemented.
- According to children's age different programs should be arrange related to knowledge about religious, moral and Islamic teachings.
- Quranic ayah and Hadees should be introduced through the impatient instructive stories in the course at primary level.
- School management should promote religious education through tableaus, dramas and use of multimedia at primary level.
- Arrangement of Naat and speeches competition related to religious topics can be the cause of promotion and religious spirit.
- Educational institutions should arrange the celebration of religious festivals as well as religious historical days.
- Most important school management should coordinate with parents and ask for their opinions for enhancing religious teaching.

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