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Research article

Beyond a pedagogy of reason: exploring a pedagogical approach for a non-Western context

Aamna Pasha^{1,*} 

¹ IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, London, UK

* Correspondence: aamna.pasha.17@ucl.ac.uk

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Abstract

Global education is a broad field associated with educational traditions rooted in the objective of preparing learners to engage with a complex and interdependent world, and to respond to the needs of the planet. This article explores existing pedagogical approaches to argue for the need, in non-Western contexts, to make greater connections with existing religio-cultural orientations – specifically, to move beyond pedagogies of reason, that is, rational, linear, logical approaches that undervalue a range of human experiences and are independently insufficient in developing feelings of connection and commitment to issues of social justice in non-Western contexts. Examining an alternative pedagogical model, this article suggests that a framework for global education guided by the Islamic values of *rahma* (compassion and mercy) and *adl* (justice) in contexts such

as that of Pakistan can prove valuable in developing commitment and encouraging action for social change.

Keywords global education; pedagogy; Pakistan; non-Western; values

Introduction

Pakistan currently has the largest percentage (64 per cent) of young people under the age of 30 ever recorded in its history (Najam and Bari, 2017). This youth population signals a large emerging group that will be engaging with a complex, dynamic and interdependent world. However, shallow and disjointed initiatives, a lack of political will and accountability, corruption and short-term attitudes to economic policies and education plans are all to blame for failure to invest in the development of young people, an immense resource in terms of social and political participation and action (Ashraf et al., 2013; Hafeez and Fasih, 2018).

This demography is faced with a multitude of challenges that are crucial to consider in order to determine an appropriate educational response. First, Pakistan is a classic example of a developing country that is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but that has done little to contribute to the problem, in that it contributes a small share to the world's carbon emissions (UNDP, 2014). Second, Pakistan is among the top 30 most fragile states in the world, according to the Fragile States Index (n.d.). This index measures vulnerability to conflict and consists of 12 dimensions to measure the condition of a state at any given moment. The youth population will continue to confront challenges of the nature listed above. Pakistan was among the top 10 refugee-hosting countries, predominantly hosting refugees from Afghanistan (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019), with almost 1.4 million Afghan refugees in the country (UNHCR, n.d.). However, the government's approach to refugees and their legal position remains unclear.

Additionally, *brain drain*, the migration of highly qualified and highly skilled young people, is a continued concern for Pakistan, which ranks sixth in the world for human capital mobility (Farooq and Ahmad, 2017; Hashmi et al., 2012), and is in the top 10 countries receiving remittances from overseas (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019). Youth lived experience often involves a desire to engage with the outside world, with almost 48 per cent expressing a desire to move abroad (Ali, 2016). The strong emigration culture results in remittances that contribute to the country's gross domestic product. It also strengthens the narrative around 'human capital being the most important asset of a country' (Government of Pakistan, 2018: 4).

Despite a general lack of confidence in the state (Lall and Saeed, 2020), young people have a strong desire for engagement with social issues. The 2017 *National Human Development Report* found a 'surprising intensity and preoccupation with making a difference and taking a stand one way or another that characterizes Pakistan's youthful population, particularly in the urban areas' (Najam and Bari, 2017: 36). While students in Pakistan often do not feel that they have the opportunity to interact or impact outside their local contexts (Pasha, 2015), they have concerns about issues of social fragmentation and inequality (Kadiwal and Durrani, 2018), as well as about poverty and corruption (Lall, 2012). Students express alarm over issues of social justice as well as a desire to act; however, educational attainment is seen as the only expression of agency (Kadiwal and Durrani, 2018). In their study, Lall and Saeed (2020) found that the majority of young people were either apolitical or antipolitical, which they attributed to an education system that does not encourage critical thought.

Pakistan's educational policy focus

A persistent thread when examining national education policies over the decades is the commitment to the ideology of Pakistan and the objective of developing Islamic values. A 2009 policy document correctly identifies that 'there is an unresolved and continuing debate on how and what religious and moral values [are] to be taught through the educational system' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 16). It is important to highlight that the debate is not about whether Islamic values should be included, but instead about how these values should be inculcated and what values should be focused on. The document does not resolve or attempt to address these questions.

Alongside the focus on national cohesion, the second main feature of almost all policies is competition-driven reforms. Pakistan's educational policies have been heavily influenced by global trends. Pakistan continues to receive a large amount of international aid, with the amount of aid for education alone standing at US\$650 million in 2015 (Sheikh, 2017). Aid for education is similarly tied to the import of specific reforms: 'funds are not simply transferred from the donor to recipient country. The entire package consists of both funds as well as policy ideas and reform practices' (Shams, 2015: 20).

Linked to global education, and pertaining to the focus of this article, the 2009 policy document states the following objective:

Emerging trends and concepts such as School Health, Prevention Education against HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, Life Skills Based Education, Environmental Education, Population and Development Education, Human Rights Education, School Safety and Disaster and Risk Management, Peace Education and inter-faith harmony, detection and prevention of child abuse, etc shall be infused in the curricula and awareness and training materials shall be developed for students and teachers in this context, keeping in view cultural values and sensitivities. (Ministry of Education, 2009: 45)

Many of the educational themes that encompass global education are grouped together in this objective as emerging trends, indicative perhaps of the lip service agreement to these externally driven, global trends that are part of travelling policy reforms. There is a particular mention of adhering to the values of the Pakistani context when developing these themes of study.

In summary, Pakistan's present-day policy agendas focus on Islamic values and character building, alongside a persistent focus on nation-building and the development of market-based citizens who can compete in a global arena (Dean, 2005). There is also a strong emphasis on the goal of being among the 10 largest economies of the world in the next 25 years (Government of Pakistan, 2015). Over the years, reforms driven by competition, finance and equity were evident in different policies. Ultimately, within education, what was prioritised centred on economic and political motives based on the return that these offered.

Given the breadth of challenges faced in Pakistan, it is increasingly important for education to teach young people to understand the complexities of issues that occur both inside and outside their national borders. For a country focused on singular identity formation and unable to heal the rifts arisen from ethnic, cultural or religious segmentation, focus on the themes, values and skills of global education is critical, all the more so as the sentiments, demographics and political inclinations of the country shift. Power structures, injustice, inequality, poverty and environmental sustainability impact on each other. They have implications beyond their immediate settings. Students' interest in social issues suggests a fertile ground for engaging with themes of global education. However, it is important to remain cognisant of the fact that global education is influenced by the broader social, political and economic structures in which it is embedded. Pakistan is prone to policy borrowing in education as a result of aid-driven agendas. There is a danger in adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, as it can become a 'civilizing mission' (Andreotti, 2011: 41), which propagates myths of universalism and a superficial preparation for a global world under the corrupted guise of a culture of responsibility from below (Spivak, 2004). There is therefore a need to examine global education in the context in which it is being applied. This article will not examine the breadth of global education in a non-Western context; it will instead focus on examining pedagogical approaches in the Pakistani context.

Global education and pedagogical approaches

Global education, as it has come to be known, has emerged from a long history of associated fields of study, with influences from policymakers, scholars, international organisations and government institutions, concentrated predominantly in the Global North. Principles underpinning global education have appeared distinctly in response to the sociopolitical climate in different countries. While the focus may be disparate, Bourn (2015: 12) suggests that global education must be seen as a unifying concept, encompassing the common grounds of the 'adjectival movements' to integrate a variety of educational traditions under one term and enriching the understanding of global issues from multiple perspectives. As Tye (2014: 858) summarises, common themes that underpin much of global education 'involve learning about those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries, and about the

interconnectedness of systems . . . perspective taking – seeing things through the eyes and minds of others and . . . taking individual and collective action for social justice and the creation of a better world’.

As an all-encompassing field of other closely related educational traditions, global education is framed within the Western intellectual tradition. The power–knowledge nexus comes into play with the disempowerment that occurs with a one-dimensional reading of the world, one in which marginalised populations are analysed from afar. This is particularly problematic as ‘anything that is classified as global, especially when it is uni-theoretically conceived and produced, can too easily be co-opted into serving neo-colonial, neo-imperial or even neo-patriarchy systems that deliberately globalise neoliberal ideologies which de-legitimate the needs and aspirations of marginalised populations’ (Abdi et al., 2015: 3). This discussion suggests that there is a need for investigation and deconstruction of the multiple and contested discourses, which must be done in tandem with a critical examination of the theoretical and cultural underpinnings from which the field has emerged.

The pedagogy of global education has predominantly centred on knowledge and skill acquisition, particularly where global education has been interpreted as education that makes learners more globally competitive. These have been characterised as neoliberal approaches to global education. Values complete the triad in the pedagogy around global education which is where deeper connections need to be made, particularly when global education is interpreted as having a social justice orientation. This interpretation of global education demands the scrutiny of issues such as equity, justice and sustainability; preparing students to be sensitive to the nature of the human condition in an interconnected world requires solidarity and a coordinated response.

Globally competitive approaches to global education also touch upon values and attitudes, although these are more competitively focused (for example, working with others to succeed in a global workforce). Values pertaining to social justice approaches would tilt towards valuing collaborative effort for the common good. While these values may certainly be overlapping, they are often competing.

Values have been defined as ‘principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable’ (Halstead and Taylor, 2000: 169). In his evaluation of literature, Onyimadu (2017) finds four different conceptual definitions, including the aforementioned definition of values as principles. The other definitions are values as beliefs, values as motivations and values as bases of establishing the hierarchy of human needs. Seeing values as motivations is what is important to an individual or group of people. These definitions are not disparate. In fact, one lends to the other: beliefs or convictions motivate actions and are often subscribed to by a group. Combined, these are a comprehensive way in which to understand values.

Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2011: 7) contend that ‘aspects of cognition that are recruited most heavily in education, including learning, attention, memory, decision making, motivation, and social functioning, are both profoundly affected by emotion and in fact subsumed within the processes of emotion’. Unsurprisingly then, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) describes values as being ‘emotionally charged; they give power to our ideas and understandings, such that they constitute the driving force behind individual and group behaviours’ (Quisumbing and de Leo, 2005: 15).

Reynolds et al. (2015) maintain that global education is rooted in a value base. They use a framework that looks at teaching practices about, for and with global education. Teaching *about* global education is to teach concepts and related information, *for* involves the development of skills and attitudes coupled with behavioural changes, while teaching *with* involves an action-oriented methodology. It is the ‘with’ that leads the *about* and the *for*. Combined, these present a holistic approach that employs both the cognitive and affective domains of learning, which are central to global education. Sharma (2018) stresses the need for making greater links with a value base in non-Western perspectives, crucially because of the strong link between values and beliefs and the motivation to take action.

To further highlight the potential of emotions in encouraging action, research on social movements suggests that emotions contribute immensely to internal group dynamics, which are crucial to sustaining any movement (Flam and King, 2005). Emotions translate grievances into action that ultimately leads to global social change (Castells, 2009). In fact, Walker and Palacios (2016: 180) argue that emotions are central to ‘recruitment, retention, and group galvanization; to disarm, persuade, and legitimate the movement to the public; and are, overall, related to “success” and “failure” of movements’. Thus, if global education is viewed as having transformative potential, by which students are being prepared with the skill set to act for lasting change, emotions play a key role in encouraging that action and mobilisation for a cause. Pakistan’s 2009 *Education Policy* document notes that globalisation ‘has created

opportunities and challenges for countries all over the world. An education system cannot remain in isolation of these challenges and opportunities' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 11). The policy argues for an education that allows students to be more globally competitive. The policy document goes on to add that 'a broad-based education system must be developed to ensure that graduates have not only mastered their respective areas of specialization but are also able to effectively interact with people having a wide variety of backgrounds' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 59), implicitly highlighting the need for skills that allow for appropriate engagement with diversity.

The draft of the 2017 *National Education Policy* has similar underpinnings to the 2009 policy, stating more bluntly that 'global competition demands human capital that is creative, constructive and contributing to individual and collective wellbeing' (Ministry of Education, 2017: 4). The 2018 *National Education Policy Framework* (Government of Pakistan, 2018: 5) reaffirms worries about being 'left behind in global competition'.

While the emphasis is unevenly tilted towards knowledge and skill acquisition for the purpose of being globally competitive citizens, there is a nod towards values. The educational policy underscores the need 'to raise individuals committed to democratic and moral values, aware of fundamental human rights, open to new ideas, having a sense of personal responsibility and participation in the productive activities in the society for the common good' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 18). The policy declares that the greatest challenge in today's global world is to secure values without regressing into 'unnecessary anachronism and parochial insularity' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 19). However, discourses carry implicit implications of what is valued in terms of what is focused on and presented as being important. The education policy document is tilted towards valuing human capital and the economic dimension of our interlinkages (Ministry of Education, 2009).

This section has highlighted that for global education to be transformative, and to respond to the complex and dynamic nature of the world today, there needs to be an equal recognition of the importance of knowledge and skills alongside social justice values. In essence, global education needs to be enriched with the whole range of individuals' lived experience, in which learners' social and emotional realities play a pivotal role. While certainly not absent, the attention and importance attributed to affective domains needs to be strengthened at the policy level in Pakistan, and within discourses of global education. The next section turns to the practice of teaching and learning, with the aim of presenting the relevance of current approaches and the possibilities in non-Western contexts.

Pedagogy of reason and of sentiment

Around the same time that the field of global education was establishing its roots, secularisation was at its peak in the West. Secularisation came to be characterised as the privatisation of religion and as a process of disenchantment (Fordahl, 2017). The Age of Enlightenment brought a focus on reason and individuality to the West, as the control of institutionalised religion loosened. Religion was relegated to the private realm and 'traditions of practical, lived reason withered and ceded ground to accounts of (objective) reason and (subjective) emotion as polar opposites' (Davison, 2008: 56). As a result, Western philosophical tradition has been shaped by pedagogies of reason and rooted in rational argumentation that was privileged over emotionality, religion or myth (Dirkx, 2008; Kahane, 2014; Lupton, 1998).

However, the South Asian context is crucially different from those in which the doctrine of secularism originated, where religion was kept outside sociocultural institutions (Lobo, 2020). South Asia's experience has differed crucially from that of the West and this separation of reason and emotion, science and religion, and public knowledge and private tradition is not as pronounced. Instead, lived experience is more deeply rooted in communal bonds, as opposed to a focus on individuality.

In South Asia, recognising the role that such knowledge plays in the organisation and world view of the community should be embraced and included in educational practices. This article argues that religio-cultural ontologies that centre on conceptions of compassion and justice, as well as epistemologies that relate to the community-centred orientation of Pakistani culture, can be drawn on to localise global education.

Kahane's (2014: 12) 'pedagogies of sentiment', in which acting ethically is guided not by abstract principles but by a sense of connection are most suited to this context and to making connections with the plight of the world's least well-off. Sociologists, anthropologists and educationalists alike have argued that in building knowledge and connection with others, reason becomes a narrow frame that needs to

be enriched by the whole range of individuals' lived experience (Davison, 2008; Kahane, 2014; Lupton, 1998; Ruiz and Vallejos, 1999). This is not to say that one should take precedence over the other. Indeed, a pedagogy of sentiment alone is insufficient in addressing these issues and may propel an uncritical understanding of their complexity. Combined, however, they provide a crucial framework with which to approach global education.

Research on a pedagogical approach to global education, as conducted by Sharma (2018, 2020), and approaches that integrate compassion ethics into development education, including those of organisations such as Children in Crossfire (CIC; Murphy et al., 2014), make similar calls for the field of global education to be informed more directly by a values approach. While the discourse is around values, the link here is in the understanding that values influence human behaviour or are the precursor to the expression of sentiment (Onyimadu, 2017). A values-based focus would be rounded within a pedagogy of sentiment.

A pedagogical approach for post-colonial developing countries must break away from an uncritical and often irrelevant adoption of practices, ideas and knowledge that are often reductionist and dogmatic. These are most evident in approaches towards the environment. By breaking away from anthropocentric, neoliberal world views and by moving towards greater links with Asian perspectives and, for example, non-secular views of the delicate balance of the universe and the importance of preserving that balance, greater connections can be made with local ways of knowing and being. This essentially requires stronger links with a values perspective, as opposed to only a transference of facts, for example, about the environment and its degradation. Furthermore, the latter approach is limited in terms of responding to the needs and aspirations of Pakistani youth, and in equipping them with the tools necessary to engage with their dynamic context.

Rahma and *adl*

Religion itself must be understood as a discourse, where culture and traditions guide the way in which people think and act upon their world (Nye, 2018). In his book *Genealogies of Religion*, Talal Asad (1993) argues that the concept of religion emerged from historical power relationships, particularly European colonialism. Tomoko Masuzawa's (2005) *The Invention of World Religions* similarly demonstrates how the framing of differences as *world religions* can be traced to late-nineteenth-century European colonialism. Both argue that religion seen in this way has an ahistorical conceptualisation that does not acknowledge the complexities of the traditions and cultures that become condensed within it, rejecting the lived experience of particular traditions. Furthermore, the colonial understanding of religion is rooted in clearly defined boundaries that disregard the permeation of religious experience in every aspect of life (Lobo, 2020). In South Asia, the recognition of the role that such knowledge plays in the organisation and world view of the community should be embraced and included in educational practices.

The concepts of *rahma* (compassion and mercy) and *adl* (justice) are central to Islamic theology. The concept of compassion is an ancient one. Indeed, most Abrahamic religions characterise God with compassion, and it is also the cornerstone of most other religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. The term *rahma* does not directly translate to mercy. In Arabic, the term relates to the womb and it can be understood as an emotion closely linked with motherhood (Chittick, 2010; Majid, 2012; Nasr, 2004). The term denotes an analogy between the kind of love a mother has for her children and the mercy that God has for His creation. It is understood as evolving from being an emotion into a value, then into a norm, successively organising the whole of life.

In Islam, the reality of existence is itself the overflowing of mercy to all things (Düzgün, 2017). *Adl*, or justice, however, is linked to the idea of balances: that God created all things in proportion and harmony, and that this balance applies to the world in all matters and manners. To realise and give each thing its due is to live in justice. To establish that balance, and to work for *adl*, are considered acts of worship, which are given greater value over pious acts of devotion.

The theme of justice permeates Islamic life and the divine law, the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of justice (Nasr, 2004). The concept of *adl* is dominant, corresponding closely to that of compassion and it is identified as a central religio-ethical concept and a prominent theme in the Quran (Hashmi, 2002). Substantive content of the text of the Quran itself is focused upon social justice, and on descriptions of God as compassionate and just (Bassiouni, 2014; Rahemtulla, 2017).

The concept of *adl* denotes a relationship with God in terms of divine justice, but it extends to a relationship of justice with each other. The latter is an extension of the former, in recognition of the fact that all creation is God's and that all humans have been created equal in the eyes of God, which is fundamental to issues of equality. *Adl*, therefore, is the foundation of social life in Islam, referring to distributive justice, which is the equitable distribution of resources and the promotion of social justice (Askari and Mirakhori, 2020; Sardar, 2003).

There is a direct relationship between rights and justice. The rights of a person are God-given. The role of the state, meanwhile, is to work to administer justice, so no discrepancies are assumed to exist between the rights of the individual and state power (Bassiouni, 2014). However, justice is not solely the responsibility of the state. Individuals and the state are expected to ascribe to the same set of values. For individuals, justice is connected both to an inward quality of the soul (being just to oneself) and to an outward quality of virtue (being just with everything and everyone around) (Mohamed, 2020). Hence, Mohamed (2020) argues that there is a need to strengthen justice as a virtue of political institutions and justice as a virtue of character. The Islamic perspective on justice is that individuals are responsible for acting to improve the human condition and to strive against social evils and tyranny, which is also the purpose of existence. The power to act therefore justly lies with each individual and is not restricted to those in positions of power or to political institutions. *Adl*, then, is also a value.

It is crucial to clarify how this discussion about *rahma* and *adl* is situated. This argument does not seek to suggest that global injustice and inequality persist simply because of a lack of compassion and other positive values; neither does it suggest that global justice depends on addressing the lack of such values. Such a perspective would ignore the deep-seated nature of injustice and inequality. Indeed, for broader global social justice, the extent of the deep-rooted structures that fuel inequality needs to be understood alongside an acknowledgement of broader political and economic structures, which have evolved from colonial exploitation, and which continue today through globalisation.

It is also important to clarify that my reference to Islam as a fundamental component of the framework for the construction of global education within Muslim communities does not mean to suggest that it is the only reference point, nor that Islam is understood and practised in the same way in all contexts. Nevertheless, it is argued that this framework is significant enough for many Muslims; understanding global education as an ideology consistent with Islamic principles will uphold motivation to adopt the concept. Furthermore, truth is not objective and hence, it is also crucial to acknowledge that religious interpretations will always exist, which may justify other values and attitudes, such as those of intolerance and violence. It is important to highlight that the values put forward are not definitive, objective or absolute.

At the same time, being cognisant of the risk of appropriation of Indigenous knowledge systems is critical, as can be seen with the concept of Ubuntu. The use of the term has, upon gaining popularity, been detached from its roots and applied in tokenised and decontextualised ways (Pieniasek, 2020). The approach proposed is one of self-reflection and respectful engagement with traditional cultural values and norms that can advance a case for the relevance of alternative perspectives upon the discourse around global education.

In summary, themes of global education, such as social justice, power and environmental sustainability, are so complex that they need to be examined critically through dialogue and reflection, guided by positivistic religious values of *rahma* (compassion) and *adl* (justice). Turning to what this means in practice, the theme of diversity provides an example. Under the guiding principles of *rahma* and *adl*, diversity would be seen and interpreted as a sign of God's mercy, which must be acknowledged and admired. To act justly to protect this diversity is to safeguard the balance of God's creation. Teaching the concept of diversity would thus entail a link to this ideology to connect with students' world views.

Conclusion

Pakistan's multifaceted social construction and its geopolitical position demand a sound balance of approaches to deal with the challenges of the future. Mainstream approaches to global education do not adequately consider non-Western cultures and traditions, and they do not do so within their post-colonial realities. In turn, an uncritical adoption of these approaches by governments fails to achieve the end objective. The need is for a robust and holistic pedagogical model that accounts for, and makes deeper connections with, local epistemologies and ways of being. A pedagogy of sentiment needs to

be matched with the pedagogy of reason. Religio-cultural ontologies that centre on conceptions of compassion and justice, as well as epistemologies that relate to the community-centred orientation in Pakistani culture, can be drawn on to localise global education. This is particularly crucial in post-colonial developing contexts, such as Pakistan, where there is often an uncritical adoption of knowledge as a result of the loss of connection with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

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Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

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