

## **Minorities' Role in Education (A Case Study of Christians of Lahore)**

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### **Abstract**

*The majority of the Pakistani population is Muslim by religion. However, there are followers of other religions integrated into Pakistani society like Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsi, Buddhist, etc. The Christians form 1.6 % of the total population in Pakistan and they are the largest minority group by religion in Lahore. These days the role of minorities has become as important as of the majority for the development of any country. In Pakistan, the minorities' role in the national development is of great significance; especially the Christian Community of Lahore has been working day in and day out for the progress of the nation. This paper is aimed to explore and hi-light the Christians' services in educational field, a key factor for economic and social development. They have been running so many educational institutions in this part of the world for centuries. They have been serving the nation in the field of education very enthusiastically. Some of the leading educational institutions are being run by Christians in Lahore which proves that their role for the development of the country is at par with the Muslims.*

**Keywords:** Minority, Fundamental Rights, Christians, Education, Lahore.

### **Introduction**

Education has great importance in human life and especially in the present age, its effect is increasing on social life day by day. It is a powerful tool for gaining knowledge and improving our skills from day to day (Big Indonesian Dictionary 1991). It is a combination of growth and human

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development with a social legacy (Kohnstamm and Gunning 1995). It is directly related to the process of socialization, civilization, and economic development. It can be regarded as the soul of progress and development. No nation on the earth has ever made progress without a successful educational approach and policy.

Education according to Asemah is “a tool to create awareness in the individuals so that they may be better able to understand the core issues faced by society and participate in the prosperity and progress of the nation more actively” (Asemah 2010). The prosperity and development of any nation is dependent upon education. In this modern age of science and technology the economic progress of a state is directly linked with education. Even the progress of an individual is associated with education. It is through education that a person becomes aware of its rights and duties as a citizen of a state. Education also gives awareness, as a result of which an individual can participate in the political system more effectively.

John Dewey a great educationist is of the view that the only way of social reform is education. It is one the prerequisites of democracy. Education is way to make corrections in the economic system and obtain political ends which lead to the development of society. Dewey regarded education as a base of shaping a society where the resources are fairly distributed among all who participate in society (Sikandar 2016).

Education creates qualities of good citizenship like wisdom, tolerance, civic sense, and good manners in a person. It produces doctors, engineers, IT professionals, bankers, scientists; good teachers and police-forces, etc. and they work altogether for endorsing the national interest. All the creative works are the result of education which helps in the development of the county.

Illiterate masses are not able to understand their rights and responsibilities towards the state as well as society. It is education which gives us awareness about our obligations as a resident of any state. We cannot demand any right from the

state or government unless or until we have awareness of our rights within a political system.

Education enables a person to gain respect and confidence in society. It is a reality that employment does not depend only upon intellectual attainments but rather is associated with the financial improvement of a nation. Moreover, there are chances that an informed individual will find a decent position with a great salary to service their lives peacefully.

Illiteracy is one of the basic reasons of poverty and unemployment in most of the underdeveloped and developing countries. A report of “The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization” (UNESCO) shows that almost 171 million people could be carried out of poverty – a 12% drop in worldwide poverty can happen only if all children in developing nations left their schools with basic or essential reading abilities.

Unfortunately, health and education had never been a priority for any government in Pakistan. A very small amount of funds is allocated for education in the annual budget. UNDP annual report 2019-20 shows that even today the government allocates only 2.4% of the GDP for education in Pakistan (The daily Business Recorder). As a result, the literacy rate of the country is very low as compared to other countries of the region. At present the literacy rate of Pakistan is at 57% (UNESCO report 2019). According to official data of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Govt. of Pakistan, in the year 2022 current literacy rate of Pakistan has reached to 62.3% (mofet.gov.pk). The number of literate persons in the urban communities is satisfactory to some extent, but in rural areas it is very low. In a country where very less percentage of GDP is spent on education the chances for minorities to get education also become very limited.

For economic and social development there is a great need for good educational institutions in the country so that the literacy rate in the country could be enhanced. The responsibility lies not only on the shoulders of the government but also on all the segments of society no matter whether they

belong to the majority group or a minority. Though Pakistan was established based on Islamic ideology and the majority of people are Muslims but the followers other religions are also living here. The establishment of Pakistan on the basis of Islamic ideology does not mean that the other religions cannot live here. The religion of Islam has a long history of peacefully co-existing with other religions. Some prominent examples of Muslim peaceful alliances and co-existence are the Muslim community in Madina where Muslims co-existed with both Christians and Jews, Salah-ud-din Ayubi's kindness and protection of Christian community and worshipping places after his conquest of Jerusalem in 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, and the peaceful coexistence of Hindus, Muslims and Christians and many other religions in pre-partition India for almost 200 years. Thus, Muslims have been living in peaceful co-existence with other religion's followers for so many centuries and under Muslim rule, they are given equal opportunities to flourish and participate in nation-building programs.

### **The Rights of Minorities in Pakistan**

It is evident from the historical paradigm of the Pakistani state that Quaid e Azam envisioned Pakistan as a tolerant and pluralistic state. He announced to all Pakistanis, "...you are free to go to your mosque or any place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed... that has nothing to do with the business of the state" (11 August 1947). Later on in March 1949, the rights of religious minorities were reiterated in "Objective Resolution". According to it, the minorities are free to declare and hone their religion and secure their culture and dialect (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966). In the constitution of 1973, minorities were guaranteed all fundamental rights of life, equal to the Muslims i.e. right to life, property, faith, trade, business, profession, information, freedom of speech, religion, manage religious and educational institutions, non-discrimination with regard to access to public places, protection against discrimination in services, conservation of dialect, script and culture" (Ahmed and Hussain 2015).

While explaining the issue of minorities in Pakistan under the 1973 constitution Dr. Babar Awan, the former Federal Minister of Law (PPP) stated “All the legitimate rights of the minorities including political rights of representation in the assemblies shall be protected by the state.” (Awan 2014).

### **Christian Community in Lahore**

The majority of the Pakistani population is Muslim. However, after Hindus, Christians are the second-largest minority group in Pakistan which is composed of about 1.6% of the total population. Although all the minorities have been working for the progress of the country but the contribution of the Christians to the national development is somehow greater than any other minority community. Some of the Christians' educational institutions are among the best institutions of the country. Moreover, they are also working as teachers in different governmental institutions and playing a significant role in the accomplishment and welfare of Pakistani society (Majid 2014).

In Lahore, Christianity was introduced during Akbar's reign between 1580 and 1595. Father Jerome Xavier, Father Emmanuel Pinheiro, and Brother Benaduct Dugos visited Akbar's court and sought permission for missionary activities in the sub-continent. Some Christian historians are of the view that emperor was much impressed by Christian teachings and the subjects were allowed to convert to Christianity if they wished so. As a result of the missionary efforts the first person in the sub-continent accepted Christianity on September 15, 1595 (Pierre Du Jarric 2004).

The missionaries also took the responsibility to educate the children of the court and a school was established. First church in Lahore was also constructed in September 1597 (O'Brien, 2006). Fr. Emmanuel Pinheiro delivered regular sermons on Sundays which resulted in the conversion of some Indians to Christianity. Mostly the poor and lower class Hindus were attracted towards the teachings of Christianity (Edward Maclagan 1932). The Mughal period was not a story of success for the Christians because they continued their missionary work but only a few hundred people were converted to Christianity.

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However, during the British rule, the missionary work got momentum as an enormous number of Christian missionaries visited India. Along with the missionary work the local populace was also given the facilities of education and medical care. The circle of educational and health facilities was expanded to all over the country as a result of their sincere efforts. The local populace was impressed by their preaching and they started to embrace Christianity (Ali 1977).

### **Christian's Role in Education**

Lahore is an old city known for its instructive and abstract exercises. The instructive history of the city is inadequate without the services of the Christians because a considerable lot of educational institutions were set up by the Christian clergy. Teaching is a consecrated calling for the Christians. They teach individuals with religious enthusiasm and the nation also acknowledges their role in educational advancement of the society. The Christians of Lahore are proud of their educational services to the nation.

These services were started in Lahore in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century during the rule of Akbar when three Christian missions visited his court. The credit of establishment of a proper educational system in India goes to British. So many educational institutions were set up on modern lines and a large number of prominent educationist and Christian missionaries came to Sub-continent. Aside from preaching, these evangelists additionally gave instructive and clinical offices to the nearby populace. The British took hold of the Sub-continent in 1859 but they had started interference in the educational and political affairs of India well before 1859. In 1757, the British defeated Nawab Siraj Udoula and Bengal came under their control. The Christian missionaries started preacher work there. However, the historians are agreed to the point that the Christians started their educational services appropriately in India in 1813 (Saldana 2011).

In this regard, the name of Charles Grant, (an employ of the East India Company), is worth mentioning as he was the author of the British educational policy in the Sub-continent. He believed that the people of India were not familiar with

modern political system as they were illiterate and had no political training so they would not be helpful for the British government to run the business of the government. Responsible and qualified individuals were needed to run the administration of different departments of the government smoothly. He advised the government to take the necessary steps for education of the native Indians. It was in their own interest to do introduce their educational policy so that they would get proper persons to run the machinery of the government properly. The British government was agreed with the proposals given by Charles and educational policy was introduced in India on the basis of the proposals of Charles Grant. For the acknowledgement of his services, he is called as the "Father of Education" of present-day India (Daniel 2005).

The Punjab came under complete control of the British in 1849 (Encyclopedia Britannica). They desired to strengthen their control through good governance in India. Along these lines, they introduced so many administrative reforms to enhance their influence on the society. A new educational policy was adopted to educate the local Indians. In this respect, the first Christian educational institution named "Mission High School" was set up in Lahore in 1849. Over time, numerous Christian educational institutions were set up in Lahore.

### **After the Independence**

The Christian institutions continued their educational services which were started long before the partition. The Christian institutions in Pakistan have been working with their basic goal of enlightening the nation. The people have complete trust in these institutions. With the complete confidence of the nation and support of the government, they have been carrying on their work with no kind of obstacle or dread.

A young Christian staff member of Kinnaird College, Lahore, told that as of now, the campuses of the Christian educational institutions all over the country have been running successfully and have thousands of students registered with them. It proves that these institutions of Christians are not confined exclusively for the people of Lahore but for the whole country. These institutions are educating the youth with no kind

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of favoritism or division based on religion, position, or race. All these things have won the confidence of nation and people like their children to be taught in these institutions.

The Christians are more active in the fields of health and education since independence. Numerous world-renowned educational institutions of Lahore like the Sacred Heart Cathedral High School, St. Anthony High School, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore and Forman Christian College University, Lahore etc. are being run under Christian supervision. No doubt, the role played by these institutions is very significant for the progress of the country, and especially for their own community.

These institutions have been rendering their services with no kind of bias or segregation based on religion. Special focus is on the character-building of the students that is the reason in their practical life they are more focused, liberal, and show religious tolerance.

The number of alumni of these institutions is in millions lot of them have earned good name for themselves as well as for the country in different fields of life (Zafar 2007).

### **The Christian Educational System**

The missionary schools of Christians are administrated by the Catholic Board of Education. The missionary schools impart education to the youngsters from Nursery to Matriculation. The matriculation examination of the students is given according to the policy of the Board. The administration of Christian institutions is very well aware of the challenges faced by the nation in this modern age of science and technology. The young generation is being trained to address these challenges. Along these lines, they are playing their part to serve the country quietly.

### **The Catholic Board of Education**

The most significant institution of Arch Diocese of Lahore is the Catholic Board of Education. It supervises administrative activities of the Christian educational institutions. At present more than 140 schools are being run



under its supervision and thousands of students are getting education in these institutions ([www.dailytimes.com.pk](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk)). It is the responsibility of the Board to take care of the issues faced by the workers of the institutions under its jurisdiction. It also provides for training of the staff to improve the standard of these institutions. To meet the day to day challenges, the board policies are formulated after consultation with experts and administration of the concerned institutions ([www.cbcl.com.pk](http://www.cbcl.com.pk)). The poor students are also provided with scholarships by the board so that they may continue their studies without any type of financial difficulty ([www.cbcl.com.pk](http://www.cbcl.com.pk)). To equip the teachers with latest teaching tools the Board also arranges training workshops for the teachers so that the quality of education could be improved ([www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com)).

Aside from this, there are likewise Christian institutions for advanced education, for example, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, and F.C. College University, Lahore. F.C. College University, Lahore is the largest educational institution run by Christians in Lahore. Thousands of students complete their education from here every year and contribute to national development.

### **Saint Anthony's High School, Lahore**

It is a reputed and well known educational institution of Lahore. It was established in 1892 in Lahore by Marist Farist of Ireland. At first, it was named as St. Anthony's Catholic Day School later on it was given the name of Saint Anthony's High School, Lahore. In 2013 it was given the status of college. This institution has campuses all over the country but Lahore campus is the biggest one. The school has junior, senior and high section (<http://stanthonys.edu.pk/>). It is working under the motto of "Scientia Cum Virtue" which means "Knowledge with Virtue" (<https://prayerstanthony.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/st-anthonys-high-school-lahore-pakistan/>). At present the school has more than 1400 students and about 100 staff members.

The college staff and administration are well aware of their responsibilities and they are trying day in and day out to inculcate strong written, oral and quantitative skills in the

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students to prepare them to cope with the future challenges. School has given so many renowned personalities from all fields of life to the nation including politicians, scientists, artists, journalists, lawyers, doctors and engineers etc. (<http://nation.com.pk/business/06-Aug-2017/st-anthony-s-shows-outstanding-performance>)

### **The Forman Christian College University, Lahore**

Forman Christian College is a world famous institution established in 1849 as "Lahore Mission School" with a subscription from the government only with 4 students. Afterwards it got the status of college in 1864. The students from all over India and all sections of society got admitted to this institution. On 28th November 1894, it was formally named the "Forman Christian College (Hussain 2012). It was moved to its present building in 1940 which comprised 80 acres of land. The college was a success story before the partition. Partition greatly affected the strength of college as the number of students and teachers was greatly decreased.

In 1972, as a result of nationalization policy, the college was nationalized. However, it was de-nationalized in 2003 and the Church was again given the control of it. It was granted university charter and degree-granting authority in 2004. In order to prepare the youth of nation to cope with the future challenges, research and market oriented advanced subjects are being taught to them. The number of its alumni is in thousands.

The educational services of this institution are remarkable. Thousands of prominent names from teachers to scientists, from doctors to engineers, from lawyers to politicians etc. have been produced by this institution. All these personalities are proud of this sacred homeland.

### **Hurdles for the Christians and their Educational Institutions**

Most of the Christian Educational Institutions in Lahore were set up before the partition. They are serving the humanity with passion of nationalism but their journey is not as smooth as it seems. They have been facing some serious problems from the very beginning. During the 1970s, when these institutions were nationalized their performance was affected badly.

However, some improvement can be seen in the working of the institutions which have been returned to the Christians.

When these institutions were nationalized by the government very low fees was charged by the poor Christian community of Lahore. It was not less than a blessing for them but when these institutions were given back under control of the church the educational expenses were raised many times. At present most of the Christian institutions have been charging very heavy fee from the students that it has become impossible for the Christian families to get their children admitted to these institutions. The educational expenses of these institutions are unaffordable even for the middle-class people.

Most of the Christians reside in underdeveloped areas and have been deprived of basic facilities of life i.e. government schools, hospital and clean drinking water etc. Pastor Mahmood, a resident of Youhanabad, said that due to our inaccessibility of public schools, we are compelled to send our kids to private institutions that are highly expensive. The majority of the Christian families live in poverty and are therefore unable to send their children to these private institutions; consequently, they have been denied their fundamental right to education. Consequently, the youngsters are compelled to do menial jobs to support their families financially (Researcher's discussion with Pastor Mahmood).

In Pakistan, an individual who can read and write is viewed as educated. Following even this definition the literacy rate in Christians is very low i.e. 8% in males and 4% in females which implies majority of the Christian Community are illiterate (Shamsi 2011). However, it must be kept in mind that the literacy rate of Christians in remote areas of Pakistan is far less than Christians of Lahore.

According to the survey, conducted from the platform of the Forman Christian College, University, Lahore, the educational composition of the Christians of Lahore is as under:

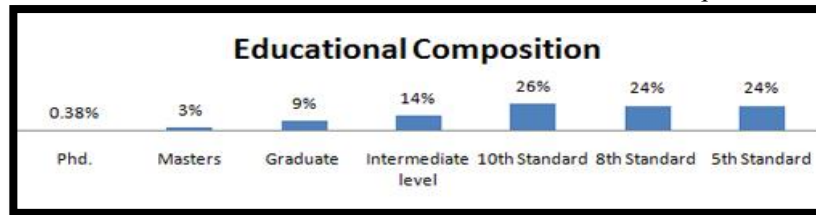


Fig:1.1 Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/socio-economic-conditions-of-christians-in-lahore-pakistan-education/>

As per this survey, very few Christians are highly qualified while majority of them leave the institution before completion of their education. Basic reason behind low literacy rate in Christians is ignorance and poverty among Christian families. A great number of the Christian children cannot get the chance to go to an educational institution because their parents are illiterate and unaware of the significance of education; they don't care about education of their kids. Mostly, the family's economic condition doesn't allow them bear the cost of advanced education. They need their youngster to leave the studies and find a job so he can support his family financially.

### Conclusion

Pakistan is a developing country established on the ideology of Islam. The Indian Muslims were forced to live under Hindu domination which was a bitter experience for them. Quaid-e-Azam wanted to guaranty equivalent status to all the minorities living in Pakistan. They have granted all the fundamental rights under the constitution Therefore, they can contribute effectively for the progress of the country. The political system provides such an environment that everybody can participate actively in every field of life. It is responsibility of the minorities as citizens of Pakistan to work for the betterment and prosperity of the country. As a matter of fact, they are fully aware of their duties towards the state and working with the passion of patriotism in different walks of life especially in health and education.

The educational activities of the Christians could be seen in Lahore long before the partition i.e. 1849. As of now, numerous Christian educational institutions are operating in

Lahore and have produced many famous figures from around the world who have made a good name for the nation in various fields.

Quality education and discipline are the most distinguishing features of the Christians' institutions. Special attention is given to teach the students core values of unity, faith, and discipline, as advised by the father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam. These educational institutions were nationalized in the 1970s during the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto which affected the performance of these institutions badly. It also became a cause of the low literacy rate in Christians.

### **Recommendations**

- In a country where the number of illiterate persons is greater than the neighboring countries these Christian educational institutions are a not less than a valuable asset. Such measures should be taken which could be helpful for smooth working of these institutions i.e. government should provide as much facilities to these institutions as it can.
- Almost all the reputed private sector educational institutions have campuses all over the country. The Christian institutions must be encouraged and provided proper facilities and funds by the government to open campuses throughout the country. It will definitely help increase literacy rate in Christians.
- The staff of Christian institutions is professionally trained to work in competitive environment of the present age. If these professionals are given chance to work in public sector institutions it will be of great benefit.
- Another step that can be of great help in this regard is that the staff of the public sector institutions can be trained under "professional development training program" conducted by these Christian institutions.
- Most of the Christian institutions which were nationalized by the government have not been returned

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back to them if these institutions are given back to them it will help raise literacy rate in their community.

- Most of the Christian colonies lack educational facilities. In order to raise literacy rate of Christian community government should establish educational institutions in these localities.
- Our educational policy should be reflective of national outlook. It must not to encourage bigotry or disregard for minorities.
- The services of the Christian must be given coverage in the national press and society must be made aware of their contribution in nation building. Acknowledgement of their services by the society and the government will create a new passion in them and they will participate in nation building programs more actively.

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