

Reflections

a selection of articles for muslim schools

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Guidelines for Governors of Muslim Schools

1. Governorship is an Amanah. The Quran speaks about the concept of Amanah as a great responsibility. This Amanah must be respected.

2. The Niyah for being a governor must be pure and noble. The object should not be to seek name, fame or glory. The position should not be abused for personal gain or privileges.

3. Governors should lead by example. They should serve as an inspiration for staff and pupils. There is no point in making or ratifying policies for staff and pupils but not implementing it for oneself. Governors should uphold the institution's constitution, follow the code of conduct for governors and work to achieve the vision and mission statements of the school.

4. Commitment to the school and its needs and loyalty to the institution is a requirement for Governors. They have to be prepared to make personal sacrifices by giving time, energy and finances to the school. Shirking or "pass the buck around" and expecting others to do the work is incorrect. Fulfil the task assigned to you at meetings, carry out the functions relating to your post, portfolio or committee. "Every man to his post" is the guiding motto.

5. Attendance at board meetings is a must. Do not stay away from meetings unless there is compelling grounds.

6. Governors should strive for unity among fellow governors, avoid infighting, shun all factors of division, maintain a respectful attitude and relationship with management, staff and parents.

7. Governors need to be committed to an Islamic dispensation for the school. This will stem from a deep and profound respect for Shariah. They should seek rulings from scholars and follow these carefully.

8. Forward planning is essential. Governors should have "3 year or 5 year plan" for the school, so that these fledgling institutions make good future progress.

9. Governors should strive hard to procure funds and good staffing for school as an important priority.

10. Attending educational workshops, seminars and conferences for enrichment and inspiration is very beneficial. Trying to seek out new and good ideas is a healthy sign. Governors should be prepared to learn and benefit from the experiences of others. They should accept the need for increasing their own knowledge.

11. Tolerance to criticism and seeking the positive aspects therein is the hallmark of mature governors. Do not be defensive all the time by not accepting blame or acknowledging mistakes. Know your limitations and do not claim expertise in areas beyond your knowledge. Do not try to teach teachers and administrators their job. Constructive suggestions are good but should not be insisted upon.

12. Governors are required to be fair, just, balanced and objective at all times.

13. Cooperate and work closely with other Islamic schools, AMS and other organizations. Work towards improving the network of schools. Ethics are essential and "poaching" staff from other schools is unacceptable. Unhealthy competition and rivalries between schools must be shunned.

Sex Education

Al-Islam vs The West

For a successful existence on earth, all human beings are in dire need of guidance for every action and movement of their lives. A brief study of all the "isms" and religions of the world will reveal that Islam is the only system of life that has provided guidance for even the very basic and mundane actions of man's life on earth; guidance that other systems and religions have not even given the slightest thought.

Take for example the simple act of relieving oneself. Other systems and religions, especially Western culture and 'civilization' are silent, almost dumb on this basic aspect of human life. The outcome of leaving their followers ignorant or even misguided regarding such a simple matter as relieving oneself, has resulted in many health hazards for those poor people because they are constantly violating the basic rules of hygiene. When Islam has provided complete guidance for man in such a basic matter, then to a far greater extent it has provided guidance in all other areas of life. Another beautiful aspect of Islam's guidance, which is glaringly absent in other systems, is its totally balanced approach. All forms of extremes and excesses are avoided and shunned. This is all due to the fact that Islam is not the product of human

endeavour but is a divinely ordained way of life.

There are some areas where the other systems have just begun to recognize the need for providing guidance and education for their followers, which Islam had done centuries before. One such area is "sex education". The West, having just emerged from the darkness of the middle ages, has suddenly realized the importance of sex "education". Yet this is something which was part and parcel of Islamic teachings since its inception fourteen hundred years ago. It should however be borne in mind that Islamic sex education is poles apart from the Western concept of sex 'education', which could rather be termed as sex 'corruption'. There is a vast difference between the crude attitude of the West to this subject in comparison with Islam's refined approach. The west has thoroughly degraded the real (Islamic) concept of sex education by adulterating this important branch of learning, with its depraved values and outlook on sex.

The West has committed great excesses in its approach and attitude towards sex and sex education. Instead of benefitting its followers and guiding them correctly, the West has created more complications for its followers and corrupted their values. The West, through its depraved outlook on sex, is responsible for untold human suffering and misery. The consequences of 'free', uninhibited sexual indulgence that the West so brazenly promotes, is terrible; The ever-increasing spiral in the incidence of AIDS and HIV-infection can be directly attributed to the West's liberal attitude towards sexual indulgence. AIDS ought to have forced a change in their outlook on sexual "freedom". It has not, in fact, the West unashamedly continues in its promotion of corrupt sexual values under the guise of so-called "safe sex". (A leopard apparently doesn't change its spots).

"Sex Education" - An Effective Tool Of The West For The Promotion Of Debased Sexual Values

The West is making a vigorous effort to promote their libertine culture and values upon the nations of the world. To this end, they are employing all the resources available at their disposal. One such powerful medium is education, via the Western, secular educational system. In order to promote its liberal culture on sex, the West introduced the concept of sex "education" (Corruption) as an important element of the educational curriculum. Through this, it hopes to imbue the coming generations with its corrupt values on sex from a very tender age. Corrupt and perverted values on sex are being foisted onto the minds of the unwary victims

in the name of sex "education". Young, impressionable minds are being slowly corrupted with debased Western sexual values at secular institutions under the guise of "education". Tangible examples of such degenerate sexual values is encouragement towards sexual "experimentation" in the form of masturbation, dating, viewing pornographic material, premarital sex, depraved sexual acts and practices and casting aside modesty and natural inhibitions. These are the anti-thesis of all that which Islam stands for. The danger this poses to the Muslims, especially the Muslim youth, is indescribable, as it shakes the very foundations of their faith, their morality and their value systems. Yet many parents and concerned citizens of society are blissfully unaware of the magnitude of the problem. If this trend continues unchecked, the tidal wave of depravity will certainly destroy the morality of the Islamic society. Every member of society has to play a meaningful role in stanching this rot and decay that is sure to devastate our present and coming generations.

May Allah protect one and all from this avalanche of pollution. Aameen.

How Muslim Schools Can Become Dynamic Institutions

Muslim Schools Are Here To Stay And Serve

"A strong, powerful Mu'min is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak Mu'min" - Hadith. This Hadith encapsulates the ideal goal and vision of a Muslim School in a nutshell. The scope of this Hadith is a very comprehensive one. A strong Mu'min is one who is strong in every sense; physically, morally, spiritually, intellectually and even financially, to meet the challenges facing Islam. The Muslim School's vision should be to develop a group of Mu'mineen (and Mu'minaat), who are strong in every way. In short, to strive towards developing a strong and dynamic Ummah!

Muslim schools have successfully completed the first leg of their journey in this country. The concept has taken firm root and needs no elaborate expounding or 'marketing' any more. Even nominal Muslims now understand the importance of these institutions. Many schools are already bursting at the seams. Wait-listing for a seat is not uncommon. This is a good sign. Many have now realised that we cannot entrust our children to 'others' for such an

important matter such as education. With lots of Duas, sacrifice, pain, hardship and planning, this phase was completed. It was no mean or small achievement. May Allah reward those who worked tirelessly in this arena. But is the journey over? Do we stop here? Are we to be merely contented with the beautiful buildings and modern infrastructure of our schools? Is this the end of the journey or is there still more to be achieved?

'Phase Two' Of The Building Project

Deep reflection will lead us to an answer. Yes, another phase of the construction has to be completed; the 'spiritual phase'. This phase has to be vigorously undertaken now and brought to completion. Otherwise it may well be a case of the proverbial 'Body without a Rooh (soul)'.

The next leg of the journey for Muslim schools is to focus sharply on the issue of cultivating a true Islamic ethos and the Sunnah culture of Islam within the school. Indeed, a few small steps have already been taken in this direction. Now big strides have to be taken. We should not be content with the present facade of a few external appearances of Islam at our schools, much like the glossy cover of a cheap magazine. A deep respect for the Sunnah culture and Islamic teachings must be fostered. A sincere fervour to practice and implement Islam in its entirety, not at random and will, is required of all role-players in Muslim Schools; from the governors, administrators, particularly the educators, pupils, and even parents. There are yet far too many complaints from the learned and the pious elders and Islamically-conscious parents in our communities about the luke-warm, half-hearted approach towards an Islamic ethos or 'Islamization' at our schools. This must change right away!

Another serious grievance surfacing frequently against Muslim Schools is regarding the inferior quality of Islamiyat education and the inadequate allocation on the timetable for Islamiyat as a subject. 3 or 4 half-hour periods a week is hardly adequate for Quran-Naazirah! A more realistic approach is required. These changes are vital if Muslim schools are to live up to their name and the great expectations that have been pinned on them!

Parents Have An Important Duty Towards Muslim Schools

The role of parents at Muslim Schools is that of ombudsman - a watch body - to ensure that the school is living up to its Islamic ethos and Sunnah culture. This should be their primary concern. If they find things going wrong in this area, they should notify the Shura Committee (Board of Governors) or the heads

with due respect and sincerity. The intention should never be to stir up trouble or to indulge in mischief-making. This is wrong. Sadly, parents are more concerned about so-called standards of education and matters relating to extra-curricular activities at the school such as sports, excursions, etc. They tend to complain bitterly about shortcomings in these areas. But when the laws of Allah Ta'ala are violated, or the school veers away from its true Islamic ethos, there is hardly a whimper of protest from parents. It seems as though some parents attach greater importance to the secular education of their child, but not that much to the morals and Islamic education of their child. Yet this is far more important for a Muslim in both the worlds. Parents will need to change their attitude in this respect.

Muttaqi' Ulama Are Needed To Steer This Ship

With consultation, assistance and expert guidance of Muttaqi' (pious) 'Ulama and learned elders, Muslim schools should now rapidly move towards 'Islamizing' or creating an Islamic-orientation in every area of the school. It is noted with a sense of gratification that Alhamdulillah, already a powerful wave of change-for-the-better is washing over many schools. May these gentle winds of change now turn into a gale force! If a sincere and concerted effort is made, over a reasonable period of time, the Islamic character and culture of our schools should change, Insha-Allah. The change has to come. We should not hold back too long. This change is vital to draw the help and approval of our Creator, without which our Muslim Schools would simply be lifeless corpses and not very much different from 'other' schools!

May Allah Ta'ala make the contribution of these institutions a means of taking the children of this Ummah to their rightful position in the both the worlds. Aameen

Muslim Schools:

Little Islands In The Midst Of Stormy Oceans

Muslim Schools are complex institutions, comprising many dimensions and facets. From the members of the Boards of Governors, the management, the staff, the pupils and parents, Muslim Schools are institutions that incorporate all strata and shades of people from the community. Unlike other Islamic educational institutions where homogenous (one) type of persons are found, the situation in Muslim Schools is not so. It is much more

complex and comprehensive. Here people of different levels of understanding, abilities and piety get together. This naturally leads to a situation where a variety of problems are created. Added to this, Muslim Schools are also relatively young institutions in this country. Most schools are still struggling to survive and are just about finding their feet. Despite all the problems associated with Muslim schools, one fact remains they are little islands in the stormy ocean of chaos in the prevalent educational systems in this country.

Although there are waves of problem after problem in the structures of Muslim schools, at the same time, the potential these institutions possess in terms of shaping strong future Muslims is unlimited. A Muslim School is an ideal venue where effective Tarbiyyah, Ta'leem and Da'wah of the coming generation of Muslims can be conducted. If only the leadership of our Muslim Schools can realize the gold mine they are sitting upon! This supreme opportunity should help to overcome all the little obstacles in between and they should serve to spur on and encourage all types of people involved in Muslim Schools towards an optimistic and positive outlook for the future.

It is the experience of seniors and learned people, that the children who remain sound Muslims for life are those who have had very strong Islamic tendencies in their families or those who have had a solid Islamic Tarbiyyah and grounding, by way of sound Islamic institutions. So while Muslim schools are not perfect (and who is really perfect), they are among the more effective ways that many children, especially those from weak Islamic homes will be saved from the onslaught of apostasy and Kufr. To save the Imaan of a single Muslim is a major achievement for any Muslim community. Imagine if hundreds of young Muslims can be saved ...

It is the cry of the hour for concerned people in the Muslim community to become much more serious about the Muslim schools in the midst and to put their full weight and support behind them. This is the only way we can make it happen.

Are Muslim Schools failing their students?

If Muslims schools are unable to prepare their students in the mould that is shaped by Allah, then they have 'failed' their students, even though they may produce a

hundred percent pass rate! The first purpose of Muslim Schools must be to produce good Muslims and dynamic leaders for the Islamic society. For this purpose, Tarbiyyah, sound Islamic moral training, must be an integral part of the school. This must be the very heart and soul of our education, and not a ceremonial husk. All plans for improving our education will be totally useless unless they are based on a full understanding of this key fact. Today we find many internal problems in the Muslim society everywhere. If we think about it, we may realize that most of these problems are of our own making. Which is another way of saying that they are largely traceable, directly or indirectly, to the education system and institutions that produced the people who cause these problems. Why are Muslim communities in the grip of so much materialism today? What should we expect when our entire education system is preaching the gospel of materialism? Why have we effectively relegated Islam to a small inconsequential quarter in our public life? Because that is precisely where our education system has put it. Why in our behavior toward each other we see so little display of Islamic manners and morals? Because our imported education system is devoid of all moral training. Why are our societies sick? Because our education system is sick. This is the real crisis of education today. Previously, education was never like this. Education in the past was always the means of nurturing the human being. Moral training, tarbiyyah, was always an inalienable part of it. The ustaz, (teacher), was not just a lecturer or mere professional, but a mentor and moral guide. Good moral training as exhorted in the Hadith, was considered the best gift a teacher could present to his student. Sadly, this is no more.

Problems Faced By Muslim Schools

Statement Of The Problem

The problem faced by some, in fact most Muslim Schools today, is the absence of a true Islamic atmosphere and spirit at these schools. As a result of this, pupils, the end-products of these schools, seem to lack the true and lasting Islamic values and the dynamism of a Mu'min when they leave the portals of the schools after spending almost 12 years of their lives there!

This is clearly evident in their behavioural patterns sometimes in school and mostly outside the school, when all vestiges or traces of Islam seem to disappear from their lives. Once they have graduated from these schools and gone out into the wide world, it is difficult to accept

that these are the same persons who had been exposed to the environment of an Islamic school for so many years.

Some of the areas of weakness observed in pupils in this respect are as follows: . Most pupils leave with a very luke-warm attitude towards Islam. They fail to properly carry out the fundamental pillar of Islam, Salaah and other acts of Ibaadah such as daily Tilawah, Zikrullah, etc. . Furthermore, they seem to lack the willpower to abstain from Haraam and un-Islamic acts. They are not imbued with a burning love for Allah and His Rasul (sallallahu-alayhi-wasallam) and for Islam as a way of life . They do not seem to be conscious to the suffering and hardship of the Ummah all over the world and they do not show any zeal or enthusiasm to serve the cause of the Ummah . The lofty Islamic qualities of Taqwa (fear of Allah), Sabr, Shukr, forbearance, generosity, humility, shunning of extravagance, shunning of love of the world and comfort, etc. have hardly found a place in their hearts .

The degree of respect that needs to be accorded to parents, elders, guests and teachers seems to be sadly missing. Compassion for the younger ones also is lacking . The language used and attitude displayed in some instances can hardly be expected of a pupil attending a Muslim School . The absence of the physical identification (dress) of a Muslim outside school hours indicates a lack of conviction or commitment to an Islamic identity . A degree of carelessness, irresponsibility, undisciplined behaviour is encountered at times . Pupils also have been affected by a liberal, free and non-conformist understanding or interpretation of Islam that has been promoted at certain schools, which has contributed towards the above state of affairs arising. This point is a very serious cause for concern . This is a brief statement of the problem which can be expanded in detail if necessary

Proposed Solutions

The solution's to the above mentioned problems can be varying. Various solutions could be attempted . However, a piecemeal or partial solution may only serve to treat the symptoms of the problem rather than the cause of the problem itself. This will result in a recurrence of the problem in short time. The school's code of conduct is an example of a partial solution that enforces a certain pattern of behaviour or dress code upon pupils, but only helps within the four walls of the school and not beyond. This type of solution is not a total or complete solution . The solution does not even lie in merely increasing the Islamic knowledge or

information of the pupils or carrying out spiritual programs in a perfunctory manner . For the solution to be effective and long-lasting, it will have to be a comprehensive and deep-rooted one, treating the problem at the very root instead of covering just the symptoms . The panacea for these problems lies mainly in the injection of a powerful form of spiritual awareness in a consistent, sustained and concentrated manner.

The other solutions will reinforce and enrich this very fundamental solution. A certain sustained spiritual atmosphere or climate must be created at the school in which pupils and others find themselves automatically inclining towards change and virtue. For this climate to be created and sustained, the presence of a spiritually endowed and imbued personage at the top of the school, whose spirituality would effuse throughout the school, is essential. All role players at the school, especially management, staff members and Boards of Governors must display a willing enthusiasm and inclination towards deriving maximum spiritual benefit from such a personality. All kinds of regular spiritual programs for all role players (including a segment of parents) must be organised frequently and the correct interpretation of Islam in its pristine purity must prevail over all else. When this environment is created, it is hoped that a revolution would take place and slowly but surely, the signs of change and transformation would begin to manifest themselves. At this stage, ancillary solutions would begin to help and become more effective, but not until then.

Ancillary solutions that could be adopted along with this fundamental solution are the following: holding short daily guidance/Tarbiyyah programs for pupils/teachers special emphasis to be laid on warning against various social ills such as customs, fashion, drugs, music, pornography, photography, videos, etc. Pupils/teachers to be encouraged to pose questions to Ulama to increase learning process and for the promotion and dissemination of correct knowledge to arrange short daily Tilawah and Zikr programs to instill spirituality teachers to serve as role models for pupils in all ways emphasis on improving the home environment by arranging programs for parents, particularly mothers inviting Ulama and pious elders to visit the schools and address the pupils/teachers Encouraging pupils/teachers to attend Ijtimas, Jalsas and going out in Jamaat etc.

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