

Religious Education in the Arab World: Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt as Models

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Abstract

The study explored religious education (RE), Islamic and Christian, in the Arab world and its role in qualifying students to university education, taking Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt as models. A controversy about the validity of RE as a bridge to university education in the Arab world provided the impetus to carry out the present study. Using the descriptive analytical method, the author studied the reality of RE with its different types in the selected countries and the extent to which these experiences are successful. The results revealed that the three RE experiences are successful. RE was found to have many educational and behavioral effects, e.g., elimination of religious extremism, alleviation of oppression experienced by religious minorities and acquisition of good behavior. It also proved to furnish students with many important skills such as co-existence and respect for others. Students of religious schools in the three countries were found to achieve good results that qualified them to all branches of knowledge, applied and theoretical, in university education. They even excelled their counterparts in general education schools. Recommendations and suggestions for further research are offered.

Keywords: Religious education (RE), Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt

1. Introduction

Education is the backbone of development in any country. The difference between more and less developed countries lies in education. Thus, countries set it as a priority and allocate it a sizeable portion of their budgets. Recently, there has been astonishing developments in education thanks to technologies that reduced distances and facilitated the sharing of knowledge. Yet, benefiting from ever-increasing knowledge entails possession of required technology and the ability to apply it. This is what makes the difference between countries. In other words, possession of knowledge alone is not enough to achieve development. Applying knowledge to get innovative products is as important as possessing it, if not more important. Therefore, countries seek to apply advanced educational systems, making use of the latest technologies. Furthermore, countries place great emphasis on the professional development of teachers. All these efforts aim at improving the quality of education, so it can achieve aspirations.

There are several types of education within the same country: general, private, religious, etc. All world countries have religious schools related to the Islamic, Christian, Jewish and other religions. Education in religious schools in Saudi Arabia is based on the Islamic religion which is the only religion in the country. In Sudan and Egypt, on the other hand, education in religious schools is based on the Islamic and Christian religions, as Christianity is the religion of sizeable portions of population in the two countries.

Such models of RE exist in all world countries including European and American countries. Christianity-based education dates back to the Byzantine State where schools taught Christian theology like the Catechetical School of Alexandria and the University of Constantinople whose professors moved to Europe after it closed and adopted the same methods and curricula there. Developers of European Universities were pioneers of RE, e.g., the clergyman John Harvard who established Harvard University. At present, churches have schools and universities like Leuven University in Belgium and Boston College in the USA. There are also Jesuit schools and universities. Education all over the world is related to religion.

2. Statement of the Problem

Education is countries' means to achieve development. Recently, there has been a heated controversy about types of education and which type is better: religious, active or technical. This debate sensitized the author to search for a model of education that fosters learning and practicing of good behavior and in the same time uses recent technology and learning strategies that encourage active learning. Surveying educational experiences in the Arab world, the author found models of RE that meet the previously mentioned criteria of good education. The study therefore shed light on successful models of RE to rebut the arguments of those who argue against it. In order to find solutions for this problem, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the definition of RE?
2. Do RE curricula in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt conform to specifications of modern education?
3. To what extent are RE experiences prevalent in the three countries?
4. What are the effects of RE experiences on the education map of the three countries?
5. To what extent are these experiences successful?

3. Aims of the Study

- Identify the concept of RE.
- Explore the importance of RE to the individual and the society.
- Survey models of RE in Arab countries.
- Investigate curricula of RE in some Arab countries.
- Extract conclusions of RE experiences in the three selected Arab countries.

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Concept of Religious Education

RE is educating students based on religion to help them acquire both knowledge and good behavior (Al-Shaboul & Al-Khawaldah, 2014). Values and morals constitute an integral part of RE. It has the same subject matters included in curricula of general education, as well as religious subject matters that are concerned with spirituality and morality. It is, therefore, not limited to acquisition and retrieval of scientific knowledge. It associates cognitive learning with learning of virtues and good behavior. It seeks to regulate the application of knowledge by virtues ordained by religions (Ibrahim et al., 1972).

4.2 Significance of RE

- Providing education that is similar to educations provided in general schools with a religious element away from exaggeration or extremism.
- Conserving the Arabic language, the language of Islam.
- RE for the Christians uses the English language, the language of Christian books. It therefore teaches students the English language.
- Protecting religious doctrines from intentional and unintentional distortion.
- Conserving the Islamic identity and producing a model of education whose benefits are extended to learners from all over the world.
- Achieving political stability by educational models that refute extremism.
- Confronting religious extremism by providing educational models that are based on the right understanding of religion without exaggeration.

4.3 Aims of RE

- Enhancing values ordained by religions, e.g., virtues, identity, citizenship.
- Connecting Islamic countries by a unified model of education.
- Help Moslem scientists in their efforts to disseminate Islam all over the world.
- Religions call for peace and creativity and protect students from deviation.

4.4 Challenges Faced by RE

- Challenges related to curricula.
- Challenges related to educational cadre.
- Challenges related to the learning environment.
- Political challenges.

These challenges vary from a country to another based on capabilities, the demographics of the population and level of education. Curricula in religious institutes in the three countries are similar. These curricula include the same subject matters of general education in addition to religious subject matters. To some, the presence of religious subject matters is an added burden for students. However, the advantages of the religious element outweigh the disadvantages. The acquisition of good behavior and virtues leads to good results and no harm. The challenges related to cadre are evident in Sudan where unqualified persons are recruited to teach the Holy Quran. Those are not graduates of colleges of education who are specifically prepared to teach Quran sciences. The challenges related to the learning environment is being alleviated these days, but schools still need to be provided with recent technologies that help with the teaching of the Holy Quran. Finally, the political challenge is caused by the view held by many individuals and entities that RE breeds extremism. These fears can be dispelled by putting RE under the state's supervision and reviewing its curricula from time to time. This occurs both in Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

4.5 Previous Studies

Aysh (2015) conducted a study titled "Religious Education in the Arab World and Globalization Challenges". The study explored the history of RE in the Arab world and the challenges imposed on it by globalization with its different political and cultural forms. Results of the study revealed that (1) decision in RE are not affected by globalization, (2) RE undergoes continuous revision and evaluation and (3) research centers are consulted about RE inputs and outputs. This study was used by the present author in identifying RE, surveying some RE experiences and proposing a model meeting the specifications of good quality education.

A group of researchers from Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Center conducted a study aiming to reform RE in Arab and Islamic societies and to foster positive attitudes towards RE as an indispensable part of the educational system. The researchers offered suggestions for ongoing revision of curricula in RE schools and institutes. They also presented a number of guidelines for designing religious curricula that are open to modern culture and to the culture on non-Moslems.

Al-Sediq (2017) conducted a study titled "The Experience of Quran Schools in Sudan". The study covered the curricula taught at Quran schools in Sudan that combine curricula of both general education and Quran sciences. Results revealed that basic and secondary stage students in Quran schools achieve excellent results and excelled in internal and external competitions. For instance, students took the first position in the Arab Child Festival in Sharjah. All Quran schools achieved a success rate of about 100%.

Tarahib (2010) compared the achievement of Memorization of Holy Quran intermediate school students and their counterparts in general education schools in Saudi Arabia. Data was collected by a teacher questionnaire. Results revealed that Memorization of Holy Quran school students achieved better than their counterparts in general education schools in mathematics, the English language, literary texts and reading. Based on the results, the researcher recommended increasing the number of Holy Quran classes in general education schools.

In an essay on Al-Wafd Portal titled "Al-Azhar Curricula: the Innocent Suspect", Ahmed (2017) wrote about the nomination of a committee based on a decree from the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar professor Ahmed El-Tayeb in 2013 to reform curricula in Al-Azhar schools at all educational levels. All curricula (100%) were modified. Modifications were then presented in the Book Fair and were praised by attendants. Furthermore, a decision was made to update curricula every five years. It is worth mentioning here that Al-Azhar has produced prominent scientists in all branches of knowledge.

The previously surveyed studies make clear the prominent role of RE in Arab countries. They concur that RE school students achieve well in all subject matters, even non-religious ones. They even outperform their counterparts in general education schools.

5. Method

The descriptive analytical method was used in the present study. RE in the three countries was examined to identify its position in relation to general education. Examination also identified similarities and differences among the three models.

6. Models of RE in the Three Countries

6.1 RE in Saudi Arabia

RE began with the revelation asking Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, to read “Read in the Name of Your Lord Who Created” (Al-'Alaq, Verse 1). The educational institute was the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah where the Prophet met his companions and taught them about religion. The Prophets’ companions then imparted what they were taught to their families. Education via mosques continued throughout the Islamic state during the rule of Rashidun Caliphate, Umayyad Caliphate and Abbasid Caliphate. During the Ottoman rule of Hejaz, schools were established with Turkish being the language of instruction. Those schools were supervised by Turkish Sultans and they taught the Holy Quran and its sciences. During the rule of King Abdulaziz, an organized form of education called kuttab was established. Kuttabs were annexed to mosques and in them children were taught to read, write and memorize Quran by writing verses with wooden pencils on wooden tablets (Alhaqil, 1420). After the Arabian Peninsula was unified, the teaching of the Holy Quran, reading and writing was implemented in a structure called cycles (a letter sent by the judge of Sudair Region Sheikh Abdullah Ben Abdulaziz to people in Al-Hotta urging them to establish Quran memorization cycles and award learners when they complete the memorization, 10/1/1343, Saqr, 2015: 5). Of the most reputable cycles were the cycles in Masjid Al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque in Mecca). In addition to cycles, there were kuttabs established by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Senari, still working under the name of Alfalah schools in Jeddah (Al-Oqail, 2005).

In Madinah, there were kuttabs of Sheikh Ahmed Abadi and Shekih Al-Arif Ben Salam. There was also the three-year school of religious knowledge that allocated 4 classes to the Holy Quran and two classes to the grammar of the Arabic language. Such schools evolved into Quran memorization schools that are now everywhere in Saudi Arabia.

Quran memorization cycles in Saudi Arabia are a form of RE where the Holy Quran and its sciences are taught to willing students at any age and from all educational levels. They are everywhere in Saudi Arabia and work at morning or in the evening. Students joining these cycles study the Holy Quran and its sciences, e.g., recitation and interpretation. They also accept illiterate persons and help them to memorize Quran by indoctrination.

Quran memorization schools in Saudi Arabia have kept the traditional form of RE that originated in kuttabs and cycles. Furthermore, they have the same curricula of general education. That is, they teach the same curricula of general education in addition to Quran sciences. Graduates of these schools can pursue their post-secondary education in universities that are joined by general education graduates. However, they have another avenue, pursuing the study of the Holy Quran and its sciences in the university.

The first memorization school to be established in Madinah, 1367, was called Qira’at (methods of recitation) School. It is still working nowadays under the name of Obay Ibn Kaab School for the Memorization of the Holy Quran (Educational Documentation Journal, 1414).

As mentioned earlier, Quran memorization schools have curricula related to the Holy Quran and its sciences, as well as the curricula of general education. Table 1 below presents curricula in these schools in elementary, intermediate and secondary stages.

Table 1. Religious Curricula in Quran Memorization schools in Saudi Arabia

Grade	Recitation from surat to surat	Memorization from surat to surat	Tajweed
1 st Elementary	Al-Buruj - An-Nas	Ash-Shams - An-Nas	-
2 nd Elementary	Al-Mujadilah - Al-Inshiqaq	An-Naba’ - Al-Balad	-
3 rd Elementary	Ghafir - Al-Hadid	Al-Mujadilah - Al-Mursalat	-
4 th Elementary	Al-Qasas - Az-Zumar	Ghafir - Al-Hadid	Introduction to methods of recitation; rules of recitation; ta'awwudh; basmala; rules of the still [n] sound
5 th Elementary	Al-Kahf - An-Nahl	Ghafir - Az-Zumar	Rules of the still [m] sound; almudood; places of articulation
6 th Elementary	Al-Isra - Al-Baqrah	Al-Kahf - An-Nahl	How to read Quran; mispronunciation; banned habits; introduction to narrators

The Intermediate Stage

Reviewing the whole Quran: memorization, recitation and tajweed

Interpretation

1st Grade: Interpretation of thirty part of the Holly Quran

2nd Grade: Interpretation of twenty nine part of the Holly Quran

3rd Grade: Interpretation of twenty eight part of the Holly Quran

The Secondary Stage

Continued recitation and tajweed Quran sciences and interpretation

1st Grade: from Surat Al-Faihah to the end of Surat At-Tawbah - Introduction to the seven methods of recitation

2nd Grade: from Surat Yunus to the end of Surat Al-Qasas - Sources of methods of recitation

3rd Grade: from Surat Al-'Ankabut to the end of Surat An-Nas - further reading in methods of recitation

It can be observed from table 1 that the study of the Holly Quran in Quran memorization schools continues throughout the educational stages. It covers memorization of Quran, its recitation and methods of recitation. The various subject matters included in the curricula meet the cognitive, affective and skill objectives of study. The cognitive objectives are met by memorizing and interpreting the Holly Quran with all lower (memorization, recall and understanding) and higher levels of cognition (analysis, application and evaluation). Students also acquire skills from imitation to creativity in recitation using different methods. The interpretation of the Holly Quran fosters in students positive attitudes, values and emotions.

In addition to religious classes, students in religious schools study the usual subject matters in general education: the Arabic language, the English language, science, social studies, family education and arts. Like general education graduates, graduates of religious schools attain knowledge of secular subject matters in addition to religious curricula that make them distinctive from general education graduates. The following table show the Quran-related curricula studied by general education students.

Table 2. Quran-related curricula studied by general education students in Saudi Arabia

Stage	Recitation	Memorization	Tajweed
Elementary	From surat An-Nas to surat As-Sajdah	From surat Al-Mulk to surat An-Nas	Introduction to the Methods of Recitation, rules of pronouncing the [n] sound, Al-Ith-haar, Al-Idghaam, Al-Iqlaab
Intermediate	Selected parts of the Holly Quran	Selected parts of the Holly Quran	-
Secondary	Selected parts of the Holly Quran	Selected parts of the Holly Quran	-

It can be seen from Table 2 that general education students study fewer chunks of Quran-related syllabi compared with religious school students. This way, religious school students attain more religious knowledge and develop more positive attitudes and emotions than do general education students. Recently, results of religious schools have outweighed those of general education in all subjects including those of secular studies.

In brief, RE in Saudi Arabia is presented in Quran memorization schools which are regular schools supervised by the state. Quran memorization cycles are supervised by charitable societies. Cycles are open to all people regardless of their age. Cycles do not grant a certificate that qualifies to a higher educational stage.

6.2 RE in Sudan

RE in Sudan dates back to the coming of Christians in the sixth century. Priests and monks taught local people using the Latin language and the Coptic language, as most priests and monks were from the Coptic Egyptians (Bashir, 1985: 33). Christian education continued in churches and missionary schools. Some of these schools are still working in Khartoum in Madani, Atbara and El-Obeid where there are Christians. Study in these schools includes the Arabic language, the English language, the Christian and Islamic religions (for there are Muslims in the areas where schools are situated) and the curricula of international schools (Shoqair, 1981). Before the separation of South Sudan, there were schools annexed to churches that teach subject matters related to Christianity like theology.

The other type of RE in Sudan is the education focusing on the Holy Quran as the main curriculum. This type of education began with the advent of Islam to Sudan in the eighth century. Remains of a mosque were found in the Suakin Region that dates back to 831 (Saad, 1960). Mosques were places for teaching and learning Holy Quran-based curricula. Imams of mosques were the teachers who taught the curriculum.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Khalawat (places annexed to mosques for educating children about the Islamic religion) were approved as educational institutes. The first Khalwah was established by Gholam Ben A'ed (Attayeb, 1991). Khalawat continued to work during the rule of the Ottoman Empire but to a lesser extent, as general education schools began to be established to teach curricula unrelated to religion (Abiad, 1980). During the Mahdist State, Khalawat led the educational institutes in teaching children to read and write. Khalawat set back during the British occupation leaving the front to general education schools.

6.2.1 Types of RE in Sudan

1. The Khalwah as an educational institute where education focused on teaching the Holy Quran, reading and writing (Qassem, 1990). Students wrote on wooden tablets by pens made from reed and ink made from grease (a black substance formed on cooking utensils by the effect of fire) that was mixed with Arabic gum or sand and sometimes supplemented with colors from tree bark. Students kept writing alphabets until they mastered them. Students wrote Quran chapters on tablets to memorize them. Chapters were erased, so children could rewrite on the tablets. This process continued until children memorized all parts of the Holy Quran. There were also higher institutes where education focused around Quran sciences (Ibrahim, 1987).

Khalawat and higher religious institutes continued till 1991 when Quran schools were established, e.g., Al-Rakhaa Quran School in Khartoum (Reports of Parents' Meeting, 1994). Quran schools in Sudan combined general education curricula and the study of the Holy Quran throughout educational stages.

2. Quran Schools. Study in Quran schools has two parts: curricula of general education and Quran sciences. That is, there are two types of curricula and teachers in these schools. The school day is also divided into two parts with the first part dedicated to the study of the Holy Quran. Teaching in this part is similar to teaching in Khalawat in that students use wooden tablets, ink and pens made for writing on tablets. Students proceed according their own pace. Thus, groups include students with different achievement levels. It can be stated then that Quran schools excel other schools in considering the individual differences among students (The Evaluation of Quran School Symposium, 1995). In addition to religious studies, students study the general education curriculum. Students of these schools have the right to join all higher education institutes.

In the Higher Education Conference, a decision was approved to initiate a general administration for Quran schools and was executed in 2014. One fourth of general education schools were converted to Quran schools because of the clear success of these schools. Quran schools always rank first among all other types of schools in terms of results (Sediq, 2017).

Table 3. The Holy Quran curriculum in Sudanese Quran schools

Stage	Recitation	Memorization	Tajweed	Teaching method
Pre-school	Parts 29 and 30	Parts 29 and 30	Parts 29 and 30	
Basic education	Parts 1 to 30	Parts 1 to 30	Parts 1 to 30	Individualized instruction
Secondary	Revision of the whole Quran	Revision of the whole Quran	Revision of the whole Quran	

3. Religious institutes: These institutes have curricula focusing on methods of recitation. They are joined by persons who memorize the Holy Quran by the age of 15. Mostly students in these institutes are graduates of Khalawat. Study duration is six years: two years for revision and recitation and four years for methods of recitation. At the end of the sixth year, students sit for the secondary school certificate exams. Success qualifies graduates to the Holy Quran University and Omdurman Islamic University.

4. Secondary religious institutes: Study duration in these institutes is three years. They are joined by graduates of general basic education students. As the case with the 6-year institutes, students at the end of the third year in these institutes sit for the secondary school certificate exams that qualify them to the Holy Quran University and Omdurman Islamic University.

5. The African International University has a pre-university annex where speakers of languages other than Arabic are admitted to study the Arabic language and Islamic sciences. Students can then join the African International University.

In summary, RE in Sudan has two avenues based on the religion of people in the place where education is provided. There is Christian education that appeared first, but later constricted because of changes in the demographics of Christians in Sudan. It is still provided in missionary and Evangelical schools. These schools also teach the Islamic religion because they have Muslim students. The language of instruction in these schools is English. The other avenue is the RE focusing on the Islamic religion in Quran schools and Khalawat. The most prevalent schools throughout Sudan are Quran schools. These schools are preferred because they teach the curriculum of general education in addition to the Islamic curriculum. Khalawat, on the other hand, teach only the Quran-related curriculum and graduates of Khalawat are admitted to general education when they pass exams at the end of any of its stages.

Analysis of results reveals that students in all types of RE schools achieve better than their counterparts in general education schools (Sediq, 2017). This is due to moral discipline that students acquire from the religious element in RE schools. Furthermore, students in Christian schools have the advantage of mastering English, the language of instruction in their schools. This is an advantage that qualifies students to join prominent international and local universities. The study of the Holly Quran and its sciences help students acquire important skills like inquiry and interpretation, which impact their achievement of general education curriculum positively.

6.3 RE in Egypt

RE in Egypt began in the ancient Egyptian state (the Pharaonic state) where Hieroglyphic writing was invented. The first school was established in 60 BC. Schools were annexed to temples. Later the Catechetical School of Alexandria was established. Schools during the Christian state were annexed to churches. Then after the Muslim conquest of Egypt, schools were annexed to mosques. The first school was annexed to the mosque of Amr Ibn Al-As. Later, RE began to be managed by Al-Azhar Mosque. Education provided in Al-Azhar institutes is similar to general education with an additional religious curriculum. During the rule of Mohammed Ali, modern schools were established and RE kept to be provided in Al-Azhar institutes. Al-Azhar provides the basic avenue of RE in Egypt (the Free Encyclopedia, Education in Egypt).

6.3.1 Types of RE in Egypt

6.3.1.1 First: Islamic Education

1. Al-Azhar Schools: Study in these schools proceeds from pre-school, the elementary school, the preparatory school to the secondary school (only for Muslims). They teach the curricula of the Ministry of Education in addition to the Holly Quran and its sciences.

Table 4. The curriculum of the Holly Quran and its sciences in Al-Azhar elementary school

Elementary school	The Holly Quran	Other religious subjects
1 st Grade	Opening and part 30	
2 nd Grade	Parts 28 and 29	
3 rd Grade	Parts 25, 26 and 27	Religious Education
4 th Grade	Parts 21, 22, 23 and 24	Quran
5 th Grade	Parts 17, 18, 19 and 20	Social Studies
6 th Grade	Parts 13, 14, 15 and 16	

Table 5. The curriculum of the Holly Quran and its sciences in Al-Azhar preparatory school

Grades 1, 2 & 3	
The Holly Quran	Parts 7 to 12
Islamic Jurisprudence	Hanbali, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi (the student selects a school to spend the whole stage studying it)
Other Religious Subjects	Oneness (Tawhid) of God and groups, interpretation, Hadith, Grammar, Syntax, Rhetorics, Seerah, Literature, Reading and Writing

Table 6. The curriculum of the Holly Quran and its sciences in Al-Azhar secondary school

Grades 1, 2 & 3	
The Holly Quran	Parts 1 to 6
Islamic Jurisprudence	Hanbali, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi (the student selects a school to spend the whole stage studying it)
Other Religious Subjects and Arabic Language Subjects	Oneness (Tawhid) of God and groups, interpretation, Hadith, Grammar, Syntax, Rhetorics, Literature, Reading and Writing

2. Model Institutes: These teach the curricula of the Ministry of Education in English in addition to Islamic study in Arabic.

3. Language Schools: These teach the curriculum of Al-Azhar in addition the curriculum of the Ministry of education. The language of instruction is English.

4. Methods of Recitation Institutes: Study in these institutes begins at the age of 9 and above. Study lasts for eight years divided into three stages: two years for recitation, three years for methods of recitation and three years for the specialization. Graduates of these institutes can pursue higher studies in Quran colleges for four years to obtain the bachelor degree and can pursue study in even higher stages.

5. Islamic Delegation Schools: These receive students from other countries. It teaches the Islamic religion sciences and qualifies them to RE institutes in Egypt.

6. Special Studies Institutes: These provide education in the Arabic language and Islamic sciences to students from outside Egypt. It is not an educational stage and it does not grant a qualification.

6.3.1.2 Second: Christian Education

1. Schools annexed to churches: These schools teach theology and its graduates join higher studies in the same specialization.

2. Missionary Schools: These teach general education curricula in English in addition to the Islamic and Christian religions according to the religion of students (The Encyclopedia).

In summary, RE in Egypt is of three types. There are Al-Azhar institutes where instruction is delivered in Arabic and in English. There are religious institutes for delegated non-Egyptian students. There is also Christian education.

Al-Azhar bore the burden of education for centuries not only in Egypt but also in the entire Islamic world. It has been the leader in RE in the whole Islamic world. Its curricula are updated every four years in order to assimilate change which is the very characteristic of the modern time (Ahmed, 2017). Revision seeks to assimilate innovations in instructional technology and teaching methods. Al-Azhar curricula include the computer from the elementary school and it also teaches English and French (Al-Azhar Portal).

6.4 Comparison between RE Systems in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt

Listed in the following table are aspects of similarity in RE in the three countries, e.g., type of RE, curriculum, educational stages.

Table 7. RE systems in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt compared

Country	Type of education	Curriculum	Educational stage	other
Saudi Arabia	Islamic religious education	Quran memorization, recitation , tajweed, sciences	Elementary, intermediate, secondary and university Education is open to all ages and levels	
Sudan	Islamic and Christian religious education	Quran memorization, recitation , tajweed, sciences Teachings of the Christianity	Islamic: Basic education, the secondary stage, the university Education is open to all ages and levels Christian: Basic education, secondary	
Egypt	Islamic and Christian religious education	Quran memorization, recitation , tajweed, sciences Teachings of the Christianity	Islamic: Basic education, the secondary stage, the university Education is open to all ages and levels	Religious schools using English as the language of instruction except the Holly Quran and the Arabic language

7. Results

RE schools in the three countries teach general education curricula and are subject to the same revision and updating processes. Teachers in religious schools in the three countries have the same qualifications and get the same training as teachers in general education schools. Religious secondary schools in the three countries rank first in results of the exams qualifying to university education (mass-media that announce results in the three countries). RE has several benefits to students, the society and parents:

A. Students

- Learning the religion is a considered a type of worshipping.
- Students learn the right form of religion from valid sources (qualified teachers).
- It creates competition by multiplicity of education models.
- It satisfies conservative families.
- It eliminates extremism by spreading the right understanding of religion.
- It extends the spirit of justice to the Christian minority.

B. The Society

- It secures justice for people from different religions.
- It reduces religious conflict resulting from the erroneous understanding of religions.
- It fosters acceptance of different others.
- It secures the freedom of selecting among types of education.
- It encourages cross-cultural exchange among students from different religions.

C. Parents

- It satisfies parents with the education their children receive.
- It qualifies their children to higher stages (with the exception of traditional RE).

8. Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be offered based on the results. First, religious schools should be supervised by the state to prevent alteration of curricula. Second, there should be more religious schools. Third, Curricula should be updated with innovations in academics and pedagogy. Fourth, teachers in religious schools should receive continuous training and rehabilitation. Finally, there should be a focus on practical aspects and on the acquisition of good behavior.

9. Suggestions for Further Research

There is a need to conducting more research on RE in terms of use of innovative teaching methods and inclusion of recent teaching technologies. Another area for further research is comparing RE systems with modern education systems in order to refine the experiences of RE.

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