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## **The Value of Teaching-Learning Religious Education to Students in the 21st Century Educational Systems**

<sup>1\*</sup> Fr. Baiju Thomas  
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute,  
Faculty of Disability Management and Special Education,  
Vidyalaya Campus, SRKV Post, Coimbatore – 20, 91 + 94124 28984  
<sup>1\*</sup>rtobaiju@gmail.com,

### **Abstract**

The contemporary study on fostering the value of teaching-learning religious education (RE) to students in the 21st century educational systems. With the trend toward more emphasis on science disciplines and technical advancement, whether or not RE should be taught in public schools has recently been at the heart of much dispute. RE is challenging to instruct since there is no reliable method for integrating lessons into a child's classroom. Teachers should welcome new solutions to RE teaching and evaluations and encourage their students to take part in experiences that may cause them to reconsider or broaden their views of the world. RE teachers should reflect their students' values and beliefs and see them at work in their everyday interactions and in the classroom. Outcomes showed that various stakeholders prioritized learning different soft skills as part of a RE program. For the most part, respondents felt that tolerance and fairness should be highlighted more in RE classes. In the future, it was predicted that both religious literacy and digital literacy would receive increased focus. Success in RE was also posited to require the ability to think critically. Spiritual lessons were favored above more modern subjects like economics and technology. When we talk about "religious education," we are talking about introducing kids to Religion for its own sake, whether that is because they are being called to a particular faith or because it is something that deserves to be read with respect and attention. Many political systems keep a careful eye on religious education and spark passionate debate. Diverse religious interpretations and levels of education are two of the known aspects of the interaction between religious communities and public policies in post-industrial political groups. Moreover, most RE programs concentrate on memorizing rather than fostering creativity and critical thinking. Teachers in higher education are discussing and adopting instructional modifications similar to what should be taught in secondary school religious education classes to prepare students for success in the 21st century educational systems.

**Keywords:** Value, Teaching-Learning, Religious Education, Students, 21st Century, Educational Systems

### **A. Introduction**

Today, when we talk about "religious education," we usually mean formal training in the tenets, rites, and responsibilities of one or more faiths. The term "religious education" is sometimes used

to refer to a different type of schooling that exists separately from the secular Western school system and views religious belief as a central tenet, guiding principle, and attendance duty. Some argue that religious rituals have no place in public life since they are ingrained in people's everyday lives. Others believe that the sole purpose of religious education is to convert students to a particular faith. Experts have chosen RE as a credible medium for spreading messages of integrity, compassion, accountability, and ecological stewardship. Many of the values we learn in RE involve creating societal harmony by an awareness of one another's similarities and differences and being responsible stewards of the land in our own right. The area of RE has a solid grasp on the dynamic nature of the public sphere and the dynamic nature of the roles that Religion plays in the private sphere, the workplace, and the wider society (QCDA, 1993)—as per a modern study on RE in secular cultures, developing a solid sense of self makes it harder for young people to participate in religious activities involving a community. In a classroom setting, students can get constructive RE. However, details about their work and achievements in this field are scarce. In modern elementary schools, the RE program's primary goal is to assist students in discovering and developing their own unique religious identities. RE enriches the cultural development of kids by exposing them to other faiths. If one takes this perspective, learning more about religious rituals is one method to improve one's own RE.

Although the essential infrastructure for such a thing has been around for some time, the concept of a link between higher education institutions is relatively new. The interpersonal theory posits that teachers' interactions with their students have a bearing on the outcomes, as mentioned earlier (students' motivation and performance). That is correct from several angles, including personal goal setting and environment-person compatibility (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1989). A child's long-term mental and emotional health can benefit from academic success if the youngster simultaneously pursues and achieves personal and socially meaningful goals, as per recent studies (Wentzel, 2012). Many countries worldwide have RE as a mandatory part of their curriculum. It is common practice for schools to include REs of various faiths and backgrounds as separate courses and integrated elements of a broader curriculum. The teachers' expertise, originality, interaction with their students, and social standing are crucial. There are four essential components to any classroom: the students, the instructor, the course material, and the teacher. This is all extremely important for the future of RE and modern means of communication. To satisfy RE requirements, elementary schools worldwide focus on ethics in a religious context in the 21st-century educational systems.

### **What Is Religious Education**

In common parlance, the term "religious education" is the instruction in the doctrines and practices of a particular religion. Teaching Religion in today's secular culture is characterized by a central focus on religious faith as the underlying philosophy and operational *modus operandi*, as well as a necessary condition of attendance, and by a teaching technique with few points of engagement with the academic world. Several RE concepts stress the value of teaching students to see the world from the vantage point of individuals who are different from themselves. Even if you attend a school that does not focus intensely on morality or Religion, you can still find direction in religious teachings. There is a lot of overlap in meaning between "religion" and "religious education"; therefore, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Wikipedia, 2010). There has been a steady increase in the inclusion of RE into public school curricula since 1989. While believers of all faiths should have equal access to educational opportunities related to their faith, not all religions have campaigned for their beliefs to be taught in the public sphere. We first asked educators whether or not they believed RE should be

mandated (Niculescu, R. M., & Norel, M, 2013). Since it promotes critical thinking, tolerance, a "living together" culture, and the acknowledgment of diverse identities based on respect for human rights, RE has survived and thrived as a topic in schools (Watson, 2012). At each stage of their education, students (elementary, middle, and high school) are expected to fulfil a religious studies requirement (primary, secondary, and tertiary). It is generally accepted that the core tenets of the world's religions share many commonalities; hence, there may be many concepts and themes that do not contradict any faith but serve the same purposes. We surveyed teachers to find out how they felt about including a religious unit inclusive of children of all backgrounds and beliefs. The region's increasing religious and cultural diversity has led to a proliferation of strategies for teaching Religion in local schools. Using ideas and views from critical education theories, this study describes and examines the core ideas of a study-of-religion approach to RE. There is a growing trend in national RE programs worldwide to highlight the significance of teaching students to think strategically about Religion.

### **The Significance of Religious Education in Schools**

Since everyone has unique experiences and beliefs to draw from, there is no fool proof method for analysing religious structures. The numerous sects and schools of thought within the world's major religions all adhere to a common framework of sacred and forbidden beliefs and practices. According to this line of thinking, all one needs to be religious is a confident attitude toward God. India is called secular since its people are allowed to practice any religion they desire, despite Religion being deeply ingrained in Indian culture. Teachers and students recognize and value RE's role in today's classrooms. People in India often believe that one's religious upbringing is responsible for teaching them the ideals of doing good deeds, speaking kindly to others, working hard, and giving their full attention and effort to whatever task. Studies have shown that seeing individuals face to face reduces people's anxiety when trying to strike up a conversation with a stranger. Concerns about expressing one's religious identity and the discussion of Religion in the classroom have profoundly affected how students view RE. (Valk, 2009). The primary objective of this study is to initiate a discussion on the value of teaching about Religion in the classroom. We will discuss the impact of religious belief and socioeconomic status on academic success and the necessity of RE for students. India is home to a diverse religious population that practices many different religions, including but not limited to Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Parsism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. Many religions share the concept of the soul's immortality, the ephemerality of the physical world, reincarnation, karma, good deeds, salvation, nirvana, introspection, and so on. Major religions worldwide believe in the need to treat others with love, compassion, honesty, charity, respect for life, and belief in a greater force. The potential effects of RE on global social cohesion have sparked a frenzy of public discussion. Considering how scientific advancement has displaced religious belief, it is reasonable for people to doubt the relevance of RE and wonder why it is still a part of the curriculum (Bausor & Poole, 2002). Religions besides Christianity are occasionally discussed in school. These beliefs include Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. There is no evidence that young children must be introduced to multiple religions simultaneously. It is laughable even to think that could happen. Religions taught, and their depth will vary according to elements such as pupils' ages, the type of school they attend, and the particulars of an agreed-upon curriculum. Students should understand what it means to follow one of the world's main religions in today's educational systems.

Academic institutions show a great deal of interest in RE. Recent religious and philosophical developments in understanding and explaining human rights influence these perspectives,

especially those about children. The effects of modernity and invention on the status of human knowledge and culture today can hardly be overstated. Indeed, modern ideas of progress have significantly impacted RE in recent times. Thoughtfulness is one, and so is the value of personal autonomy and social justice. The struggles of modern living have posed severe tests to the religious beliefs of certain people (Religious Education in Schools, 2002). Students are more open to RE, which emphasizes helping others and group dynamics, than that which emphasizes personal development and introspection. What they stated, let me paraphrase (Bertram-Troost, 2009). Every student, irrespective of them RE, can obtain insight and knowledge through a course in religious and moral education by studying the world's great religions and philosophies and the issues they address. People's ability to reason and make ethical decisions improves. Students who get religious and moral education mature into more empathetic citizens because they acquire the capacity to see things from the perspectives of those different from themselves and appreciate the value that each person brings to society. With this kind of understanding and tolerance, we can better combat young people's discrimination and prejudice in various situations, including in classrooms, where teachers may favour one student over another based on their grades (Curriculum for Excellence, n.d.). However, RE remains a staple of the educational system in most nations. Educators' approaches to RE in the classroom mirror the goals of national policies that vary widely. While secularism as a concept does have an impact on RE, it is the level of secularism in a given state that ultimately defines how RE is implemented there. Moreover, RE has similarly been formed by each country's historical context and experience, making it communal or non-confessional, mandatory or elective. Due to their assertive secularism and communism, several nations, like France and the former Yugoslav republics of the Balkans, do not require or encourage the teaching of RE (Lähnemann, 2011). Yet, it cannot be denied that RE classes in schools frequently provoke deep reflection on such weighty topics as right and wrong, the nature of reality, the self, and the meaning of life. A significant tenet of UNESCO's approach to intercultural education is respect for every person's inherent worth and uniqueness, regardless of their cultural or spiritual background. Meeting society's social, cultural, and economic demands requires educational programs and materials that place a premium on experiential, collaborative, and well-understood learning processes (UNESCO, 2006). One can find a spiritual side in any person. He was born with the effects of his illness and has lived with them ever since. Even while Religion is an inherent element of being human, one's dedication to their faith might be influenced by exposure to other religions. Practice makes perfect, and so does the ability to have trust. Many children develop firm religious beliefs when they are old enough to worship formally. The comfort of one's own home is where one should first begin studying RE or any other topic. RE programs and media portrayals of diverse faiths in the popular media in the 21st century educational systems.

### **Ethical Values on Religious Education in Schools**

In schools, students do not learn about ethics. Though it is impossible to ensure that every child will develop these values, many educational institutions and organizations strive to provide their pupils with the tools and resources they need to succeed. Teaching about human rights, citizenship, and democracy creates citizens who care about others and are ready to take the initiative in protecting their liberties (Millî Etim Bakanl, 2018). This study aims to establish a database of primary school RE and social studies curriculum content to quantify the relative importance of the various values taught in these courses. Tolerance for the diversity of opinion versus conservatism, individualism versus collectivism, patriotism versus globalism, egotism versus relativism, and so on are all instances of such ideals. In light of this, it was concluded that

the most recent updates to both curricula demonstrate a shift from specific to overarching concepts, with social studies seemingly catching up to RE regarding the information it delivers. Using one's moral imagination is essential to learning. Ethical Values Education is a teaching method that uses RE to establish moral concepts in young children. Tolerance, love, responsibility, morality, courage, confidence, resolution, fairness, and self-discipline are a few of the fundamental moral and social attributes value-based education aims to instil in its students. The ethical focus of RE, however, is intended to help students succeed in the interdependent and complex world of the present (Altan, 2011). An institution of learning needs to prioritize the students' individual growth. It has been stated that religious and secular education are equally effective in forming young minds, but which is more crucial in the long term is still up for debate. The effect of youth RE on moral development was studied. Students who did not participate in RE displayed the most immoral behaviour, demonstrating that RE has a significant, beneficial effect on students' moral conduct. A moral chasm emerges when comparing students majoring in Islamic studies with those majoring in economic studies. Therefore, we conclude that RE positively affects young people's moral development (Batool, A., Ch, S. A., Naz, B. A., & Muhammad, N., 2021). Based on the outcomes of the current studies, it appears that schools are experimenting with a method of instruction known as "enhanced character education" to assist students in forming stronger moral convictions and ethical reasoning. Even as they promote students' right to free expression and thinking in areas like Religion, schools serve an essential social purpose. When viewed through this lens, the purpose of education expands to include not only the teaching of morals and ethics but also social and emotional learning and citizenship education (Demirciolu and Tokdemir, 2008). This research aims to analyse readers covering topics like religious culture and ethics for elementary and middle school students. These results are consistent with the pedagogical focus of most literature on religious culture and ethics. Students' fundamental viewpoints were uncovered through a process of value definition. The values were imparted using exposure to illuminating reading materials and involvement in various engaging activities in the 21st-century educational systems.

### **Religious Education in the Curriculum**

The RE curriculum aims to equip young children with the knowledge and skills they need to live out their religious faith in the world, beginning with their preschool years. The principles of our faith and the attainment of our spiritual aims permeate every lesson we teach. RE consists of two parts, education and spiritual formation, which are distinct but complementary aspects of the discipline. The first factor considers the classroom, where religious instruction is taught and learned. There is a wide variety of strategies and resources used in the school. The second component is a person's growth in their spirituality, which can occur in a variety of settings, including the home, school, and church. The pedagogical and spiritual dimensions are intertwined. Among the many factors that can help shape young people's spiritual development is exposure to Religion in the classroom. Everything you need to know, understand, appreciate, and celebrate our rich tradition is gathered here in this RE curriculum. Therefore, it equips young people with the resources they need to put their faith into action in the world as it is now. The primary mission of Religion is to prepare educators to teach about Religion in the classroom. This curriculum aims to provide parents and the community with better educational resources to educate their children in the faith. Learning how Religion has influenced national and global history is crucial. Some may believe they must be holy to retain their atheistic worldview by keeping religious teachings under wraps. Uninitiated in ceremonies but open to new ideas. Art, literature, and modernism have all felt the effects of Religion's profound influence on human

history. Refuting Warren A. North and Charles C. Haynes's "Take Religion Seriously in All Course Materials" (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1998). Childlike curiosity about death and its meaning has long fascinated humans. People worldwide and throughout history have used their religious beliefs and practices to shape their outlooks on life and their approach to living in it. The Judeo-Christian tradition has been instrumental in shaping Modern civilization and culture.

Religion is a vital part of human life, and it has always been, despite how it has changed and adapted over the ages. This has shaped many people's opinions on God, the world, and themselves. People worldwide continue to believe in humanity's potential on a spiritual level, although we are now well into the twenty-first century educational systems (Krogstad, K., 2016). Many people have an endless thirst for understanding the universe's most profound mysteries. Infants and toddlers, even before they can communicate verbally, seek solutions to the issues that affect society. This search encompasses every facet of human existence, from the meaning of life to the nature of happiness and sadness to the possibility of an afterlife. Every major world religion has answers to these issues; therefore, it makes sense to instill their beliefs in children from a young age. There is a reasonable probability that a youngster may have this kind of question, and a RE program will be able to give them some answers. However, a child's primary spiritual development occurs in the contexts of the home and the religious community. RE can help with all of these areas. The best way to help students find these answers is to give them opportunities to explore their religious traditions and compare and contrast the solutions and guiding principles they find there with those supplied by other faiths in both formal and informal settings in the 21st-century educational systems.

### **Importance of Religion and Moral Education in Schools**

Education in Religion and morality helps young people grow up with a better knowledge of the world's major religions and beliefs and an appreciation for the problems encountered in embracing those beliefs. To put it another way, this aids in the development of children's moral orientations. One of the most direct impacts of Religion and moral education on generosity is a heightened appreciation for the unique worth of every person in a diverse society. The next generation's understanding and acceptance of the necessity of a worldview for understanding and conquering issues like sectarianism and discrimination will be crucial in the fight against bigotry and intolerance. Teenagers today actively seek more profound insights into the nature of reality, with religious and moral education as a background. Humans, through many years and generations, have built the institution of Religion. Definition: a community of people who have similar beliefs and work together to strengthen their mental and physical fortitude in the face of adversity. Suniti (1996) noted that most people have a religious upbringing but acknowledged that some grow up without religious or spiritual orientation. Suniti (1996) argues that Religion has benefited society by making people more disciplined and able to keep track of their everyday lives using several different scripts. In contrast with the imposition of secular and social norms through other forms of penal law, this tradition emerges naturally. RE, however, is a part of the academic program so that its moral precepts can be assimilated. Having a poor education or Intelligence is irrelevant if one does not develop ethical principles during their time in school. Teaching that emphasizes the cultivation of moral principles is essential. As three of the most influential forces in society, education cannot be separated from its moral and religious components. To achieve this goal, one must reflect on one's beliefs and how one communicates those beliefs to others. While it is essential for people of all ages to have a good grip on traditional values and beliefs, young people must realize the importance of maintaining peace and security in their communities and the globe at large. Young people gain a great deal from RE because it

helps them get perspective on the rich diversity of our society and figure out where they fit in that mosaic. Possessing the skills of self-reflection and evaluation and gaining a more thorough understanding of the beliefs and ideals of individuals who are different from oneself are all potentially helpful resources. To realize one's full potential, one must adopt a moral way of life and be provided with moral education. As per Kant, moral education can be encouraged by a sound mental environment.

For this reason, a morally-sound education places importance on the knowledge, skills, and experiences one acquires in nature, society, and the self. Taking ownership of our social lives empowers us to become contributing members of our communities. However, our rationality and emotions are intertwined in profound ways. It is crucial to discuss how RE can assist develop a child's character for the better since even atheists can make moral decisions. More study is needed to understand how different worldviews influence people's moral development. Whether or not they are punished or rewarded for doing so, most individuals consider moral obligations to be just that (Barrow, 2007). Knowing that theft is wrong is not enough; you must also understand why it is wrong. A person who displays a sign imploring an onlooker not to steal may be met with hatred and mistrust. With all these potential benefits, is there any reason why one should not engage in theft? Looking back, it is clear that the leader of that society enforced group standards through the form of sanctions to guarantee the society's success and decrease the chances of internal unrest. The dilemma of responsibility leads us to question the righteousness of some practices. Students who study world religions are expected to develop a stronger moral compass, a greater capacity for empathy, and tremendous respect for the variety and depth of human culture. To what extent does one feel "driven by the faith?" and what factors lead to the adoption of particular ethical judgments are crucial issues in the 21st century educational systems.

## **B. Conclusion**

The importance of learning right from wrong is stressed heavily in RE. It is an excellent tool for shaping young people's moral growth since its rationale motivates them to do good and prevents them from doing evil. However, this cannot occur unless individuals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to make sound choices on their own. In today's multi-ethnic society, teaching civic responsibility is crucial. There has always been a need for moral guidance from public characters like prophets and avatars. Ram, the Buddha, and Muhammad are all held up as models of good behavior by many. A leader who appreciates this link will actively inspire followers to draw one. There is general agreement about RE's importance. However, this research will concentrate on the country of India alone. At the start of each day, the students and faculty gather for a time of prayer and contemplation called an assembly, during which they look to God for direction. The same holds proper from kindergarten to senior year of high school. Every morning, millions of individuals pray to God for the strength to pursue their ambitions. Many people, in the wake of a terrible event, gather for private prayer services. People's upbringings and religious convictions shape their worldviews and moral compass. Discrimination, in any form, is condemned by every significant Religion. The homeless and the unskilled are among the most helpless people worldwide. Including RE in educational settings is helpful for society at large and the individual students who participate. To speak frankly, many teachers care more about themselves than their students. Ignoring this issue will have disastrous effects on our entire society. The responsibility for developing students' moral character is joint for the students and

the schools they attend. Schools should be welcoming and safe places because students develop their best selves, not because they are taught to be in the 21st century educational systems.

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