



Religion and National Development: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

The study examines a historical account of the contributions of Islam to human, capital and national development. There is no doubt that Islam is not only a religion but a total way of life. Islam inculcates in its adherents uncompromised moral values, respect for human dignity and human life through adequate education and social responsibility. It has also contributed in no small measure in the area of education, health, agriculture, economy, diplomatic relation, social-psychology, security among others. These unparalleled contributions of Islam to national development are as a result of various Qur'anic verses that encouraged Muslims to research into space and earth. Islam is committed to upholding social justice, equity, fair-play and over-all welfare of people, regardless of religion and political affiliations, all of which helped a nation to grow. The main purpose of analyzing the contributions of Islam to national development is to correct bad impressions which the media and un-informed people might have painted Islam. The idea of using western education as a yard-stick to measure who is educated or not must stop in Nigeria. In thirteen century, Arabic and Islamic education had contributed immensely to national development six hundred years before the arrival of the white men into the country. Historical approach was used to achieve the aim of the study. The paper concludes that Arabic and Islamic scholars should be accorded their rightful positions in the scheme of things in Nigeria for their un-equal contributions to national development.

Keywords: Religion, Islam, National, Arabic, Development.

1. Introduction

Religion could be defined from various angles. Abe views it from sociological, political, ethical, philosophical and anthropological perspective.¹ The general definitions of religion spreads over the concepts of system of faith, belief, worship and practice which make dynamic impact on the control of human life.² Religion is derived from the word religion, which means to bind together. It is the thing that binds man to the truth.³

Moreover, a cursory look at the history of human civilization, one will agree that religion has been the supreme force in the development of mankind to its present status.⁴ There is no doubt that the moral and ethical development of man to his present condition, is due to religion. This is because truth and lofty morals are inspired only through faith in Allah (SWT). Indeed, love concord, sympathy, piety and kindness to human beings have been the main message of every religion.⁵ Islam, being a religion and a complete way of life,⁶ affirms the sovereignty of Allah over the entire human's life.⁷ Its teachings cover all fields of human activities be it education, spiritual, economic, cultural, political, health, national and international relations.⁸

In other words, religion as perfected by Islam laid down the basis for the unification of man, when religion is approached from the Islamic perspective, can bring the desired joy and happiness to the entire human race.⁹ Indeed, since Arabic is the religious language of Islam, early introduction of it to the Muslim children helps them in no small measure to understand the fundamentals of Islam, and the words of the glorious Qur'an exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, peace be unto him.

Through Arabic and Islamic education, Allah's consciousness is instilled in the minds of the Muslim children. This is because Arabic and Islamic courses such as Qur'an, *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, *Sirah*, *Fiqh*



among others that are taught in *Islamiyyah* schools help the children to respect their parents, teachers, elders and obey Allah. It also helps the learners to develop good moral and ethical behavior in society.¹⁰

2. National Development

National development is referred to as the ability to satisfy the needs of the present generation without impinging on future generations' capability to supply demands.¹¹ It could also be viewed as complete positive change at the individual and social, political and economic well beings. National development is also described as improvement of people's living standard in income and aid consumption level of food, medical services, education, road-networks among others. Through relevant economic growth, process, creation of conditions for the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic system and institution which promotes human dignity and respect, increasing people's freedom of choice available.¹²

3. Contributions of Arabic and Islamic Scholars to National Development:

The contributions of Arabic and Islamic scholars to national development cannot be over-emphasized. Moreover, the term development means different things to different people. Indeed, there have been divergent views between the scientists and the economists as to what really constitutes development. The emphasis that is laid on what constitutes development to economists is not the same with that of agriculturalists. For instance, economists lay much emphasis on increase in per capital income, while agriculturalists accept increase in agricultural output for measuring development. Ibraheem describes development as multi-dimensional process having radial implications not only on the economic, but also on the political, social-cultural, education, infrastructural and administrative aspect of society.¹³ On the part of Arabic and Islamic scholars, their contributions to national development cannot be over-emphasized. The graduates of Arabic and Islamic schools are found in every facet of Nigeria economy. In education sector for instance, they are found in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions contributing to the development of education in Nigeria. In education sector, there are Arabic and Islamic scholars such as Prof. M.A. Abdu Raheem of Ekiti - State University, Ado – Ekiti; Prof. M.A. Bidmos of University of Lagos, Prof. M.A. Muhibudin of Kogi State Univeristy, Ayingba, Prof. Galandanchi of Bayero University, Kano, Pro. A.R. Kilani of University of Port Harcourt, Prof. S.L. Jimoh, of Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin and Prof. Abdul Hafiz of Univesity of Ibadan, among others.

In public service, there are many Arabic and Islamic scholars' contributing their quotas to the development of the economy. Example of these is Prof. I.O. Oloyede of JAMB National Office in Abuja, Ustadh A.Y. Anola, the Chief Imam of Ondo State Government House, Akure, Prof. S.O. Eniola, Special Assistant to the Governors of Ekiti State on tertiary education, Alhaji Liad Tela, Chariman Governing Council of Federal College of Education, Iwo, in Osun State, he was also foreign editor of the defunct National Concord Newspaper in 1980s.

In media houses, there are numerous products of Arabic and Islamic schools in both prints and electronic media houses. Example of these are scholars such as Dr. F. Abbas of the National Newspaper, Alhaji Kamarudeen Ishola of Sun-Shine Radio Station in Akure, Ondo State among others. No doubt, the above Arabic and Islamic scholars are making waves in various sectors of Nigeria economy.¹⁴

4. Recommendations

The researcher humbly recommends the following for the robust growth of Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria:



- a. Muslim parents should encourage their children to study Arabic and Islamic education, so that they can understand Islam better and teach it.
- b. Federal and state governments, through the Ministry of Education should create a unit in the ministry to supervise public and private Arabic and Islamic schools so as to meet global standard.
- c. The National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) should organize regular workshops and seminars for the teachers of seminars for the teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies. NBAIS should also open an office in each state of federation for smooth supervision of public and private Arabic and Islamic schools.
- d. Government and her agencies should be impartial in their attitude towards Arabic, English and French. Arabic is indigenous to Africa while English and French are foreign to Africa. Six hundred years before the arrival of the white, Arabic language had been making waves in various economy in Nigeria.¹⁵ And that is why till date, reasonable number of Arabic terminologies are still in usage in both Hausa and Yoruba Languages.¹⁶
- e. Arab culture should be promoted and encouraged in Arabic and Islamic schools in Nigeria, this will assist the student to communicate in Arabic Language while they are outside the classroom environment.
- f. Muslim parents should motivate their children to study Arabic as this will expose them to numerous achievements and contributions of Arabic and Islamic scholars to world civilization

5. Conclusion

This paper has been able to examine some notable contributions of Arabic and Islamic scholars to national development. The paper revealed that in spite of the un-equalled contributions of the Arabic and Islamic scholars to national development, enough recognition and support has not been accorded Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria. Indeed, the power of literacy in Arabic which the scholars are privileged to possess is needed by the government at all levels to develop the country and enhance the smooth running of their political machinery. This explains why Arabic and Islamic education had been used as a vehicle of enlightenment before, during and after the Nigeria independence.

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