

MUSLIM EDUCATION: A RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and peace be upon the noblest of all the Messengers our Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his family and his Companions.

Neither educator nor historian can deny that Islamic education constitutes the foundation of Muslim civilization. Its ideals are consistent with modern trends of contemporary education. Islam has revered both learning and the learned to the extent that learning is placed on equal footing with worship. Islam has been concerned with all types of education, especially spiritual, religious and moral instruction. Islam requires that young, old, rich and poor alike should have equal opportunities for education, without reference to class distinction. Islam makes it incumbent upon every Muslim, man and woman, to seek knowledge and it aims to provide them with every means towards education if they desire knowledge. Thus presenting Muslim Education demands a policy Guide of Islam and education.

Schools, mosques, educational institutions, libraries, colloquia, literary and scientific societies, supposed to be open to those desiring knowledge, study and research. The state should provide them with the necessary food, lodging, medical treatment, and financial help to enable the students to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge.

How Western is Western Education?

None can deny that the West and its inhabitants owe much to the Arabs and the Muslims. Arab and Muslim sciences and civilization had a great influence upon the modern European renaissance. Arabic learning and culture, Islamic civilization and Eastern arts – after they had flowered and advanced, ripened and borne fruit through the efforts of Islamic scholars and philosophers – were introduced into Europe during its dark ages. To the Arabs, Islam and the East goes the credit for spreading learning, culture, civilization and art in the West and in modern Europe. Jonathan Lyon (2010) states that the arrival of Arab science philosophy, the legacy of the pioneering Adelard and of those who hurried to follow his examples transmitted the backward West into a scientific and

technological super power”. Arab science philosophy helped rescue the Christian world from ignorance and made possible the very idea of the West. He went further to ask ‘Yet how many among us today stop to acknowledge our enormous debt to the Arabs let alone endeavour to repay it? How many recognize their invaluable bequest of much of our modern technical lexicon from azimuth to zenith, from algebra to zero, “remember the use of Roman numbers to the worldly accepted 1,2,3,4 etc known as Arabic numbers”. The names al-khwarizmi, Avicenna, al-idrisi and Averroes – giants of Arab learning and dominant figures in mediaval Europe for centuries today invoke little if any response from the educated lay readers. Most are forgotten little more than distant memories from a bygone era. Yet there were just a few of the players in an extraordinary Arab scientific and philosophical tradition that lies hidden under centuries of western ignorance and outright anti-muslim prejudice.

To actualize the rubbishing of Arab/muslims scientific era, Peter the Hermit led what was termed the first crusade “war against infidels”. This was based on the charges against the muslims which includes idolatry and relevance in violence and coercion. They were central to the crusader narrative. Same of the war against the muslims in Southern Spain.

It appears in recent time that the Catholic world through the 2nd Vatican Council Declaration of October 28, 1965 on “Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (Nostra-Actate) that there is move from winning soul for Christ to promotion of mutual understanding. The Declaration states the church regards Islam with esteem and also the muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere him as Prophet. As believers in one God, both religions should unite us in the worship of God and in our joint commitment to address common human problems that affect all human beings. Our religions can also help us to approach life positively and to answer some of humanity most puzzling questions bordering on our common origin and destining. In an age where the actions of violent religious extremists are threatening to destroy the foundation of many years of good relations between muslims and Christians, we can easily get down into dialogue of extremism than engaging in accusation and counter accusations which further erode mutual trust and respect (Fr. Ojeifo, Priest of the Archdiocese of Abuja in Daily Trust of November 1, 2015, pp 40).

The perspective became necessary in this presentation to remind us of what was the situation in medieval period and what it is now and how it affected the promotion of muslim education in this part of the world.

Islamic Education

Islamic education had the greatest influence in encouraging all types of education, due to adoption of some of its religious and ethical principles, its concern for the human, cooperative and social aspects of life, such as brotherhood, freedom, justice, equality of opportunity, and spiritual unity among all the Muslims in the great Islamic Empire. This is not surprising, since Islamic education in its foremost era was based upon this strong foundation and these golden principles.

Objectives of Islamic Education

The student's goal in education is not to obtain power, money, or glory, or to act insolently, or compete with his fellows; he is limited to moral education. It is possible to summarize the goal of Islamic education in one word: "virtue".

Islam does not restrict the aims and objectives of education either to its religious or secular aspects. Instead, the Holy Prophet (SAW) called upon every member of the Muslim community to devote himself to spiritual as well as secular pursuits simultaneously, saying: *"Work for your worldly life as if you would live forever, and work for the after-life as if you would die tomorrow."* He did not consider the secular side of life only, or the religious aspect only, but the pursuit of both together, without neglecting either the worldly or the religious life.

Al-Farabi, Avicenna and the AL-khwarizm, were of the view that human perfection could only be achieved by a balance between religion and knowledge.

"The goal of study is not the acquisition of livelihood in this world, but also for good things of the hereafter so also is the attainment of truth and the strengthening of moral character," – in other words, attainment of scientific truth and perfect character.

In the words of Avicenna: "When the child finishes the study of the Holy Quran and the elements of language, he should seek what trade he wishes and direct himself to it...." He should undertake vocational preparation until he excels in a

profession, art or trade, and is able to earn his living, and lead an honourable life, preserving the moral and spiritual aspects.

Learning and Education as Viewed by Islam

Policy Guide

The first verse revealed to the Prophet (SAW), commanded him repeatedly to read and to praise knowledge and learning – praise which is evident in attributing education to God: *“Read in the name of thy Lord who creates, creates man from a clot, Read; and thy Lord is the most generous. Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he knew not.”* Addressing His Prophet God said in another place: *“And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge”*, and again: *“God bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining justice.”* In another verse God says: *“And these parables, we set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned.”* In other words, none but the educated scholars can understand them. The Quran says: *“say: Are those who know and those who know not alike?”* and *“Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, to high ranks.”* “Teach knowledge, for its teaching is reverence to God, and its seeking is worship. Its study is prayer, and its pursuit is equal to “jihad” (that is striving in the way of Allah). Teaching the untaught is like giving alms.

Muslim Education: Nigeria Perspective

The question now is with these inspired policy guides by Allah, through His Prophet, what efforts has the Nigeria Muslim Community made to ensure that “Nigeria Muslims acquire education?”.

At this point one need to state clearly that Islamic Education is the acquisition of knowledge that prepares a Muslim for this world and the hereafter, whereas Muslim education is the effective engagement of Muslims in acquiring education. Education in this sense refers to the acquisition of knowledge that guides one in the successive interaction with others in this world and lead to the attainment of eternal life.

Due to limited time at my disposal, I will summarize efforts so far made in providing or exposing Muslims to education.

The first contact with Nigeria Muslims was the Trans-Sahara trade. This contact exposed the Northern part of Nigeria to Islamic teachings, thereby providing them opportunity to acquire Quranic knowledge. Here Tsangaya where the totality of Islamic knowledge are acquired were established. Infact some of these became Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies which later became universities. A typical example is the Bayero University, Kano. Apart from the Tsangaya there are Islammiyyah where children learn both Quranic and modern day education. Children that are acquiring Quranic knowledge in these Tsangaya were identified as almajirai. Government efforts to integrate these children into the basic education system has not yielded the desired results as millions are still found along the streets of major cities and towns in the northern part of the country.

It is hoped that Government will review its strategies in this direction. From experience, the best model of intervention will be meeting the Alarammas in their location along with their learners with food, stipend for the Mallams and provision of basic education instructional materials with a teacher. This will assist in creating a period for the acquisition of what is termed western education until this is done, these almajiri will continue to be on the street.

The Southern part of Nigeria was exposed to Christian Missionaries unlike the Northern part. The Berlin conference of 1884, shared African countries to different countries for the purpose of colonization. Some of the countries included France, Portugal and United Kingdom. They colonized various countries in Africa and other parts of the world.

Nigeria became a British Colony under this dispensation, the colonialists while coming to Africa came with Christianity in one hand and education in the other, whereas the Muslims lost the luxury of a colonial master who could have championed the promotion and advancement of Islam and Muslim Education. While these Christian missionaries were busy establishing schools across the country, the Muslims were only using the little resources at their disposal to form local Associations through which they were able to establish few schools. Such early Associations include: The Ammadiyyah Jamat, Ansar-ud-deen Society and some others. They also established Islamiyyah and Quaranic schools where children acquired both education.

In addition to this, communities across the country who considered education as an important tool for development, established community schools, which

ownerships were later become missionaries, if they were to benefit from Government Aids/Grants. While, this was going on, the Christian Missionaries of Anglican, Baptist and Methodist (Wesleyan) identified dominant Muslim communities in the South-west Region and established not only Primary and Secondary Schools, but also Teacher Training Colleges. Iwo in Osun State had the Baptist College in 1896, Oyo had the St. Andrew College 1902, and in the same vein, Ibadan had Wesley College all to train teachers who will combine teaching with evangelism. These colleges today are universities, where as those of muslims like Ansar-ud-deen college Ota is now a secondary school. Muslim Teachers College is now a refugee centre.

These three towns were at the time 100% Muslim population. As time passed, Muslim children who wanted to be educated and admitted to these colleges either had to convert to Christianity or refused admission.

The refusal of Muslim parents to succumb to conversion of their children to Christianity through education, particularly in the South-west region denied them accelerated progress witnessed by their Christian counterpart as those high ranking intellectuals and professionals we found today were mostly born Muslims but lost their religion identity to Christianity. I was almost a victim. This was so because the Muslims had no foreign backers like the Christians.

The impact of these colleges spread across Nigeria as the first Northerner in person of Bala Miller from Kano was admitted to St. Andrew College, Oyo as teacher in training. So also was Dokko from Niger State. These two people, after graduation led the evangelization of Northern Nigeria. This was why the Yoruba Muslims turned their back to the so called Western Education as their children who left home for school came back as Christians. In the language of our non-literate parents, the Christian missionaries were regarded as kidnappers (Gbomo Gbomo), because they took away their children to religion not know to their race. Recent developments have started to bring hope to the Muslims, as few rich and informed Muslims are now establishing schools at all levels, i.e. Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Universities.

Kudos to Hon Justice Ajibola owner of Crescent University, Baba Abdulraheem Olademeji Igbaja founder of Al-Hikmah University, Senator Baba Ahmed founder of Baze University, Atiku Abubakar of AMTI University and Nasfat the owner of Fountain University.

In spite of these recent developments, the Muslims still have a long way to go, if we are to retain and sustain the identity of our dominant youths who continue to patronize the educational institution of Christians.

Conclusion

May I at this point plead with my fellow muslims brothers as well as leaders to consider the following suggestions:

- That Muslim leaders should invest in education particularly leaders like Aluko Dangote, General Babangida who at a time muted the idea of Heritage University, General Abubakar Abdulsalam, Isiaka Rabiou, Dahiru Manga, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Wale Babalakin, Senator Bukola Saraki, Senator Adamu Aleiro, Yahyale Ahmed, Umar Mutalab, The Dantata Family to mention but just a few.
- Encourage people to establish educational institutions in the rural areas.
- Provide social services like hospitals, commercial farms, small scale industries that will help muslims to earn a living that will support the education of their children.
- Government should review its strategies in the integration of the almagiri into basic education.
- Finally, Christians should open their educational institutions to all and remove all religion restrictions as a way of empowering human kind and not as a way of winning soul for Christ.

Thank you all.

References

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