

The Present State of Muslim-Education in Northern Nigeria: Progression or Regression

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Abstract

Northern Nigeria made up nineteen states and the federal capital territory (Abuja) which covers wholly the three geo-political zones; namely, northwest, northeast and north central respectively. The present educational dualism existing in most of the Muslim environments is indeed a distracting factor to the true path of the original principles and the objectives of Muslim education. The compartmentalization of the Islamic revealed knowledge in the curriculum of the colonized Muslim states, the separation between religion and education, knowledge and actions are of no doubt contributed to the social instability of Muslim communities especially in Nigeria (Rosnani, 2004). In Nigeria, "the secular nature of educational philosophy and curriculum has succeeded in producing various problems and corrupt related practices such as the inflation of contracts, frauds, falsification of accounts, examination malpractice, bribery, embezzlements of public funds, insurgency, pervasion of justice, collusion with multi-national companies to dupe the state, election rigging and many more of these" (Ibrahim, 2010). Therefore, the prime purpose of this study is first to describe the original principle of Muslim education. The study should also highlight the present unachievable education system existing in the Muslim communities in northern Nigeria and suggest out ways for progression. However, this qualitative study is designed as descriptive and case study as it is meant to uncover and describe the current phenomena of educational system in Muslim communities of northern Nigeria. As a review study, the paper uses secondary sources of data so as to technically analyse the past and present education in Muslim environs of northern Nigeria in order to observe the achievements made or otherwise. The paper is equally releases the integration of education system is at best to overcome all issues of moral decay and social fraud in the Muslim communities of northern Nigeria. Islamic ethics should be included in all curricular of sciences and social sciences through which the existing dichotomy between revealed and scientific theories can be eliminated and these needed moralities would be enhanced.

Keywords: Northern Nigeria, Muslim-Education, Educational Dualism, Islamic Schools, Integrated education

Introduction

Religion and education are twin inseparable mechanism through which changes and the guarantee of human development are assured. Education is a continuous process which evolved all acts of teaching and learning, while religion is making persistent effort in keeping both the body and soul developed (Abdul-Haqq, 1990). In this context, Muslim education entails more than the study of Islamic sciences but widely deals with all activities of intellectual development of man with no restriction to sciences, technology, religion or culture.

The Muslim education here signifies all effort to make man and his life meaningful and ensure that all knowledge are anchored with morality thereby bridging gap of the western dualistic system that differentiates education and divine service (Hussain, 1996). The revelation of *Surah al-Alaq* in the historical revelation of the holy Quran becomes the fountain through which education originally flourished. The earlier five verses revealed are solid testimony on the broader nature and the manner in which the Muslims can seek and approach education. Education to the Muslim entails more than the development of cognitive abilities, psychomotor or affective but further extended to spiritual service since education is an unending process and Islam is life in totality. However, education for the Muslim is fundamentally guided by Islamic lime stream as comprehensively summarised during the world conference on Muslim education of 1977 in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as follows:

“The fundamental aim of Muslim education is the creation of the good and Righteous men who worship Allah in the true sense of the term and builds The structure of the life on earth according to the Islamic law (*Shariah*) and Employ Allah’s bounties to sub-serve their faith” (Recommendation: 1977).

Nevertheless, Muslim world and even the west have achieved glory and derived much advancement from the original works of Muslim scientist and educationist during the glorious ages of Muslim civilization. The medical exploration of Abu Ali Hussein (980-1037) commonly known as Ibn Sina in medicine, the contribution of Abu Ali al-Hassan (965-1040) in the foundation of modern surgery and Abu-Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Musa (780-850) in the renowned field of Algebra can never be forgotten. The role of House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikmah*) in Bagdad during the pinnacle of Islamic civilization is enough evidence for the clear achievement of Muslim education in the past ages. Hence, Muslim societies must re-apply to the achieving integrated education through which the target of producing well rounded and balanced personalities can be realized (al-Attas, 1979). The characteristics of education needed are such fully built on the combination of learning and Muslim sublime moralities.

An Overview on the Original Principles of Muslim-Education

The term education in Islam has a wider context and is covering the variety of aspects in Muslim-culture, religion, leadership, family system and every sector of human needs. Both the east and the west have believed that the education is the only reliable phenomena through which the religion and civilization can reign and continuously exist. Education for the Muslim signified life in entirety that is why, there is no division existed like in the western model of education between education and religion (Anzar, 2003). The simple answer to this perception is the revelation of first five verses of *Surah al-Alaq* in the Holy Quran as follows:

“Read; in the name of your Lord who created (Everything),

He created men from a mass suspended like a leach (in the mother's womb)
Read and your Lord is the most generous. He who taught men (Reading and
Writing) by the use of pen, He who (beside that) taught men (all that) which he
Did not know" (*al-Alaq*: 1-5).

Therefore, such type of education is not originally worldly priority and this is what created existing barrier between the objective of Islamic education and the western copy of educational philosophy who fails to identify the fundamental relation between the development of body and the spirit (Abdul-Hamid, 2011). Education in this sense, is the continuous integrated process through imparting meaningful knowledge that are guided by Islamic faith which the recipients can be fully equipped spiritually, intellectually, and physically in order to execute their primary roles as *Abd* (Worshippers) and as *Caliphs* (Vicegerents). Thus, education is the training for the development of balanced personality through teaching, learning, actions and application on the real life context. Muslim education must cater for the need and the aspiration of the immediate communities through which justice can prosper on the individual, groups and the world generally (Waghid, 2003). Hence, education from this point is an on-going effort to stimulate knowledge and skills that are integral to the action, training that are strongly connected with the ethics.

Education in Islam is primarily meant to provide human with sufficient knowledge in order to make them know and realize their creation, responsibilities and the way they should managed the responsibilities as the *Caliph of Allah* (Vicegerents). This education is indeed striving to improve the sublime qualities and characteristics of men that are demanding in the diverse challenging communities (Aminuddin & Abdul Razak, 2011). In short, Muslim education is a collective responsibility on every potential member in the Muslim society; this responsibility can be achieved through relevant educational aspects as epistemological production through experimentation, rationality and ethical methods that will constitute reference to the divine sources (Ryan, 2012). Nevertheless, the above assertions are solidly convincing evidence to the fact that, the present state of Muslim education is either deviating or truly collapsing from the original path.

The Tragic State of Muslim-Education in Nigeria

For the Muslim, education is the combination of learning and character, knowledge and divine service; therefore, education in the Muslim state must ensure balanced between professionalism and the socio-religious ethics. It is indeed unpleasant if the gigantic contribution and the impact made by the Islamic system of education on the millions masses in northern Nigeria can be ignore or nearly forgotten. The present encircling crisis of social corruption, in-morality and Indiscipline, educational malpractices, cultural and religious abuses as well as unethical practices by the so-called certified professionals are in indeed a result of the present empty-moral education existing in the Muslim-lands (Kamil, 2016).

History is positively attested that Islam is the oldest and the long recognized path for the totality of life in the northern environs of Nigeria through which all other social institutions coined their regulations. Prior to the western evacuation on Muslim repute in northern Nigeria, Islam is the order of politics, businesses, marriages, diplomacy, and all educational processes are guided by these principles of Islam. This integrated system practiced is undoubtedly built up the structure of the glorious Muslim civilization that wholly characterized with high sense of morality and scholarly achievements (Aliyu, 2002).

During those days, the supreme power for public control is fully vested on the trustful (*Amir*) emir, *Imam*, and the potential (*Aa-lim*) scholars who were accorded with the status of professor in the present secular system. The youth in these periods attained less academic or professional degrees but are bearing outstanding responsibilities in the matter of religion and community. The rate of enrolment into women education is quite inconsiderable in these periods but the rampant divorces of the present time in Muslims communities of northern Nigeria are completely opposite to what are regarded as the era of educated spouses. The Muslim-women of those days are defined with the required training concerning the couple relationship, house-management, child-bearing and sincere obedience towards the husbands to the expense that the whole marital life is exceeded with no any account of divorce (Aliyu, 2004). However, the irony to the above outstanding record of Muslim in Nigeria is generated from the western conspiracy on the enforcement of secular education on Muslims which brought expulsion on their unified lifestyle. The emanation of Muslim crisis in education is variously reported upon the domination of Christian on the scene of Nigeria education during the period of colonial government. Since these periods, Muslim parents have appealed with the agenda of missionaries for converting their child into Christianity through the use of schools (N.T.I. 1983).

Hence, this scenario of western agenda through education is indeed an instrument through which the current challenges that are curtailing the character and identity of Muslims emerged. The trait of Islamic education in the schools of Muslim societies have been confined or else treated as a single exam-based subject. This do not contribute to the Muslim significantly as it paraded no enforcement and reinforcement on the implementation of Islamic culture within the Muslim-students but rather considered as irrelevant (Ismail, 2014). Additionally, the chronic damaged culminated into the present state of Muslim schools is on no small quantity assisted in the persistent insurgency that turned the northeast of Nigeria into land of war.

The studies often confirmed that the early emergence of the dangerous religious extremist (Boko-Haram) and their scrupulous activities is strongly connected with the religious misinterpretation and certain misperception on the holistic nature of education in Islam (Azeez, 2013). The failure to reconcile between the Islamic revealed knowledge and modern secular sciences in the existing curriculum of Muslim school is of no doubt helped in the production of cynic graduates who are neither judging the religion wisely and nor analysing the rational sciences intellectually. Such confused professional are sought to be responsible for many conflicts existing in their communities as they owes confidence to the role of changing the society through force and threat (Tahir, 2016). According to Human Right Watch research, no fewer than six hundred and sixty one (661) lives of teachers have lost their lives, and over nineteen thousands (19000) have flee from their school-stations for fear as a result of insurgency acts in the northeast of Nigeria. Nevertheless, many researchers in their response to address such problems have described that the system of education is with no option the most reliable alternative. The integrated education must be set in line with the principles of community believe and culture that will ensure harmony and balanced between knowledge and character

The Path to Progression

To bring the end of challenges in education and social life of the Muslim in northern Nigeria; this empty-moral based system of education and curriculum must be re-strategize and re-presented into the standard integrated manner in Muslim-schools. The schools in the majority-Muslim environments are needed to subscribe to the comprehensive integrated curriculum model which considered the fundamental aspects of religion, culture, and social ethics of the community. (Amin, 2012) also viewed that the integrated curriculum is needed to coordinate all learning experiences in schools and which is capable in summing out all misbehaviour problems and instability in the society. The integration in this context is to regularly recheck the theories of modern sciences with the Islamic norms and ensure that the relevance is made in the Muslim-schools system. The typical *Tarbiyyah* developmental schools (*Islamiyyah*), Quranic science and memorization schools (*Madrasah li ulumul Quran wa tahfiz*), *Kulliyat* (colleges) and even *Jamiat al-Islamiyyah* (classical Islamic universities) have to be reshape in order to compete with the western model advanced universities and to satisfy the modern digitalized system of education needed in the globalized world.

The content of the existing curriculum using in most of the Muslim schools must be technically review and the ethical subjects has to be added, with a view to respond to the issues of morality and wrong religious connotations. Al-Faruqi (1982) is equally supported that the system of education practiced in the Muslim-societies had to emphasize more on character than subject specialization; because specialization without character can be considered null and all the skills earned can never be meaningful and beneficial to others. Hence, the main of object of this alternate education is to produce balanced Muslim professionals who are truly skilful in their fields and at the same time equipped with the sound ethical values that can represent Islam in the true sense. Such integrated professionals are at liberty to reform the present state of education, politics, business, judiciary, industries, security service and all other social institutions for the wellbeing of mankind. The Muslim graduates must be able to maintain peace and preach it to other communities as Islam condemned terrorism and all forms of insurgency.

Conclusion

This piece of study is indeed contained a lot of teachings for responding to the contemporary state of education in the Muslim societies. Hence, the paper is beneficially addressing some suggestions. In a matter of necessity, all tiers of government in Nigeria must revisit the affairs of education in the Muslim majority communities and ensure relevance is made with the fundamental religious values of Islam particularly in the Muslim domain. The existing curriculum of Muslim schools at levels should be reviewed and connected with the ethical based subjects in order to extend character in all profession. The proprietors of school in the Muslim majority communities should also delved effort in realizing the fundamental aim and objectives of Muslim education without laying emphasis for maximization of profit. The teachers of the Muslim schools with no distinction of teaching area must accept and assume the responsibilities as counsellors and the agents of moral enhancement through which the target training can be active and prosper. Parents must also be able to observe and examine the conduct and behaviour of their child/sons through their approaches towards the religion and their appreciation to the cultural norms and values of their societies. More efforts are needed to be made by the various groups of conscious Muslim professional in responding to

the contemporary challenges of character decay and entire system of education from various phases.

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