

ISLAM AND WESTERN EDUCATION: THE NIGERIAN CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

Education as a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude is geared towards making an individual civilized, refined, cultured and educated. For a civilized and socialized society, education is the only means. Its goal is to make an individual perfect. Every society gives importance to education because it is a panacea for all evils. It is the key to solve the various problems of life. Education is a process of waking up to life (Parankimalil, 2012).

Conceptualization of 'Education'

The word education from diverse dictionaries perspectives has been described as '(Education) the act or process of acquiring knowledge, especially systematically during childhood and adolescence'; 'the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgment'; the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. (Collins English Dictionary, 2003; Webster's College Dictionary, 2010; DictionaryThesaurus, 2015 online).

Further conceptualization identified 'education' as a word that emerged from the Latin word '*educare*', meaning "to lead out," "to bring out." Hence to educate means to bring out of the

child, the student, that spirit of learning and wonder, the desire to know, that thirsts for knowledge (Rosado, 2000; Omeonu, Tayo and Oyinloye, 2001 & knight 1960). Rosado further asserted that despite the goal of education which is systematic acquisition of knowledge, some teachers' attitudinal methods of handing education have made this important process of human existence seemly unattainable and untrue.

Rosado, therefore, declared the existence of the true and the untrue education based on the content. This author in agreement with Omeonu, Tayo, and Oyinloye (2001) quoting White(1952) described true education as 'the harmonious development of the physical, mental, moral (spiritual), and social faculties, the four dimensions of life, for a life of dedicated service'. Globally education has been viewed as the bed-rock of nations' development. This then implies that education has tremendous impact on both individuals' and national actualization and sustainability. In collaboration with educational relevancy, a sociologist Rodney Stark declared that education is the cheapest, most rapid and most reliable path to economic advancement.

Having defined Education as measure of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life, it is glaring that education goes beyond the classroom experience into other areas of life. Basically, educative system classification comprises *the formal, non-formal and informal*.

Formal education basically corresponds to a systematic, organized education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology. It is characterized by a contiguous education process named, "presential education", which necessarily involves the

teacher, the students and the institution. It corresponds to the education process normally adopted by our schools and universities. It is a classroom type of education (Zib, 1988).

Informal and non-formal education happens outside the classroom, in after-school programs, community-based organizations, museums, libraries, or at home. These types of education are more flexible with their content. Moreover, both informal and non-formal education providers, by contrast, vary in experience and knowledge of teaching techniques, content expertise, and group management when compared with the formal type. Typically, materials for the non-formal and informal settings need to include a lot more structure.

Formal education in Africa with Nigeria as a case study is traceable to the efforts European Missionaries around 1842 hence it can also be termed 'Western education'. This form of Education at its commencement was regarded as of fundamental importance to the spread of Christianity(Online Nigeria, 2015).However before the year 1914, Nigeria existed as the Northern and Southern protectorates with the colony of Lagos. The Southern protectorate which was predominantly Yoruba and Igbo people imbibed this European form of education.(Jayeola-Omoyeni&Omoyeni, 2014).

The Northern protectorate was however predominantly dominated by the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri speaking people, who had for over a thousand years(700-1914) been wrapped with Islamic religion, Koranic Education and Arabic Literacy, and committed to Muslim and Arabic education, tradition and culture. Based on this existing religious foundation and education, the north rejected Christian Missionary form of education when it was introduced to the area in 1845 (Graham, 1966 in Jayeola-Omoyeni&Omoyeni, 2014). This of course resulted into formal emergence of Islamic Education.

Both Western and Islamic educations are formal in nature since the two have the

characteristic features of classroom- based education. However they also have distinctive differences as relating to their aims and philosophy of education which form the next points of discussion in this paper.

WESTERN EDUCATION DISCUSSED

Western education when view from diverse conceptual viewpoints may be defined in various ways which include:

Metaphysical and Epistemic Description: the nature and sources of the metaphysical and epistemic roots of knowledge that structure an educational curriculum.

Structural Character of Cognitive Systems: in reference to a body of knowledge or a structure of ideas,

Metaphysical and Epistemic Roots: refers to the conception of the nature of the cosmos that underlies an educational curriculum.

Epistemic Roots: focuses on the publicly assessable use of reason as the primary method for arriving at knowledge.

Geography and Race: the geographical locations and races of the figures subsumed within and privileged by that educational system (Adepoju, 2012).

From the educative system point of view Western Education is the type of education that stemmed out of the western culture of reading, writing, arithmetic (3Rs of education). This is an European form of education that came in through the shores of most African countries with Nigeria inclusive. It is an educative system that entered into Nigeria through the southern

protectorate of the country between 1842-1914 with the establishment of missionary schools which subsequently made people become literates in Roman scripts and as well have impacts on the existing traditional education and culture of the people. As recorded by Bowen (1972) the function of western education was to enable people perform useful roles in their community or environment. Also for:

- i. Formation of character and discipline
- ii. Religious education and secular moral instruction
- iii. Better education in government assisted schools
- iv. Cooperation with mission and more grants -in-aid to mission schools
- v. Special encouragement for training of teachers
- vi. Adoption of education to the needs of the people
- vii. Government measure of control over all schools

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IDENTIFIED

Islamic education – as a formal religious education emerged from Islamic philosophy.

Islam as presented by Islamic scholars is not merely a creed, it is a way of life and a life to be lived. It is religion that is adherent to acquisition of knowledge of any sort whether art, Science, technology or theology. , All over the pages of the Holy Quran, there are verses and hadith which enjoin Muslims to seek Knowledge. This injunction made many of the earliest Muslims travel to various part of the world in search of knowledge.

In Islam, man is free to investigate not only the things on earth but explore the regions in space. A Quranic verse reminds the Muslim that a He (Allah) had made subservient to thee whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is in the earth's. Even in the Surah-Fatihah, which is regarded as the mother of the Quran, reference is made to Allah as "Lord of the Heaven" in

chapter 11 verse 190, the Quran sites "the sun and the moon follow a reckoning and the herbs do obeys" an expression of a basic geographical phenomenon which anecdotes its discovery in the west by several centuries.

Several passages can be cited in the Holy turban which show that, besides making it obligatory on the Muslim to seek knowledge, the Holy Quran itself contains, the gems of all branches of science, man must explore and reflect on the phenomena of nature. The Quran offers rudimentary explanations of such phenomena as the creation of the heavens and the earth, the change of the seasons, the rotation of the earth and its consequences, the nature and composition of the sun, the moon. Star, clouds, the winds, the seas and the sun and the laws of nature they obey.

Allah commanded His Messenger into 'Read! In the Name of thy Lord and Cherisher Who Created' The word 'Iqra' in the Holy Quran literally means to 'read' or 'recite'. The object of this proclamation is understood to be the message of Islam, meaning education is one of the major cardinal objectives of Islamic religion, hence the establishment of Islamic education.

In an attempt to declare the aim of Islamic Education, Ashraf's essay titled 'Aims Of Education (1979) an Islamic oriented work - separates the concept of 'education' from that of 'instruction'. This view indicates that 'education helps in the complete growth of a personality, whereas instruction merely trains an individual or a group in the efficient performance of some task'. Also that 'a human being may be a great [...] lawyer [...] but still remain [...] ill-mannered, immoral, unrighteous, or unjust'. This work presents the idea that a truly 'educated' person as one who 'knows and performs his or her duty towards [him]self, family, neighbours, and humanity',

As advocated by Sheikh Muhammad al-Abbasy. a senior lecturer and Professor in Madinah University, Islamic education aims at:

- provision of 'knowledge about how to earn a livelihood honestly',
- enable student know his or her duty to the Creator, Allah.
- moulding students' personality as well as their intellect .
- enable students enter into the world of work with sound mannerisms and knowledge of how to maintain their duty to their Creator and His Creation
- qualify the student to be good da'iah; a good caller to [the path of] Allah
- developing a student to be[come] a good man, a good Muslim, so that after that, they can pass the message to the others
- shaping the personality of the student to that of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

In summary, that the aim of an Islamic education is to impart on students the personality of the Prophet (SAW). Also to enable students have engrained in their minds the key Islamic concepts of *Tawhid, Hayat, Akhirah, Dunya, Jannat, Naar, Deen', Munkar, Nafs, Kufr, Ajr, Sabr, Fitrah*, and so on, all of which rule human lives. Islamic education is tailored towards enabling students have consistent self- assessment, so that whatever juncture they are at in their lives, Islamic students would consider such questions as 'how does this decision rest in relation to *Tawhid*, my belief in Allah?' 'Does it take me closer to *Jannat* or closer to the *fire*?(Ullah, 2012)

In Islamic education the responsibility of moulding the students rest on the teacher' just as it is in most faith –based institutions. It imbibed the view contained in' Learning To Teach In The Secondary School (2009),- a book in which its co-authors Andrew Green and Marilyn Leask state that 'teachers have responsibility for both the academic and the pastoral development of the pupils', with the outlining of the 'pastoral' role as 'getting to know the

pupils’, ‘registering the class’, ‘reinforcing school rules’, and ‘liaising with parents’(Green and Leask, 2009). Islamic education philosophical stand further holds that ‘the teachers teach, and give Tarbiyya [nurturing and edification] too [...] his is done through the good example [of the teacher] and the good books of Tarbiyya’

Islamic education tends to be conscious of the moral or ethical development despite its concern for intellectual knowledge of student. It tends to avoid becoming increasingly focused on improving grades and assessment marks rather than the personalities of the students. The issue of ‘Mindlessness’ (that is, being concerned with **what** of education rather **how**) is of great importance in Islamic education. This educative system dwells on the Islamic institutional idea which states that ‘Success will never be achieved if we set our sights *any* lower than on the personality, path, conduct, and advice of the Messenger of Allah (SAW)- the most influential man in history’(Ullah, 2012).

THE NATURE AND HISTORY OF WESTERN EDUCATION

Western education has undergone a lot of changes and reformations that it has metamorphosed into a force that many indigenous and religious affiliates are skeptic about its essence on livelihood. A writer iterates, ‘Every society gives importance to education because it is a panacea for all evils. It is the key to solve the various problems of life. Education is a process of waking up to life’ (Parankimalil, 2012). However, if handled or introduced wrongly, it may serve as a barrel for dispensing evils into the society.

A closer look at the history and changes western education had evolved from shows that there was a controversy between the church and philosophers during the middle ages. The church spoke of a God who could manifest himself in three beings; the trinity. One of the philosophers of the period, Descartes wanted to attain knowledge, including that of God by

pure reason thereby contradicting his Christian faith. The Christian Dogma, defining itself in the form of Trinity and Incarnation, in the doctrine of Original Sin and Vicarious Atonement (Salvation) was constantly being challenged by intellectuals and defended by the Church through executions and persecution. The scholastic Middle Ages had been confronted with the problem of reconciling religion and faith, reason and revelation. But since Christian theology was particularly unresponsive to intellectual queries, St. Peter Damian "deprecatd the application of reason to theology". Therefore, the concern of uniting faith and reason had to rest finally by separating the domains of philosophy and religion, of faith and reason.(Khalid El-Gharib)

the work of scientists and the contribution of philosophers, were together producing the intellectual climate that was gradually leading towards Naturalism, Atheism and Secularism. With the passage of time, further scientific discoveries were made that were at odds with the teachings of the Church. To preserve its authority, the Church took some harsh steps against the emergence of new ideas. Many scientists were branded as heretics, infidels and satans. The response to the oppression of the Church from the people, especially the scientists, thinkers and the philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau, was equally strong. They began to highlight the contradictions of the Church and called for nothing less than the separation of the Church and the State. Desperate measures were taken by the Church to deflect the criticism, frustration and anger that was vented by the people. These measures fell to halt the winds of change that had galvanised the masses. The Church realised that it could no longer stay in charge of the State without reforming itself. Thus, a period of reformation commenced. However, the Reformation did not guarantee any bright future for the Church as the struggle became intensified between the 16th and 17th centuries.

The eventual outcome of the struggle for power between the Church and the thinkers and philosophers was the separation of the Church and the State. This solution limited the authority of the Church to preserving the morals in society, and left the administering of the worldly affairs to the State. The separation was completed by the 18th century, and formed the basis of capitalism, marking the beginning of the enlightenment period that sparked the industrial revolution in Europe. The inevitable outcome of separating the Church from the State was the application of secular schools of thought in politics, economics, sociology and cultural affairs. But the most serious victim of secularism were the educational systems since they are directly responsible for the intellectual quality of human beings. Because of the unstable nature of the secular educational system, all manner of beliefs and ideologies plague it. It is therefore the duty of the tutored to carefully choose what he or she will be schooled in and how far he or she intends to allow these ideas to control his or her livelihood. 'The education of an immoral human being gives him or her, the tools to be more wicked and destructive in this world'. (Khalid El-Gharib) So also, the education of a moral individual gives him or her, the tools to be positively productive. The decision rests solely on the individual.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION VERSUS WESTERN EDUCATION

From ascertions made above, it is evident that Western Education is the type of education that stemmed out of the western culture of reading, writing, arithmetic (3Rs of education). This is closely related with the ethos of western lifestyle. The role of Muslims in the advancement in the fields of sciences and humanities is directly related to the driving force of Islam. It is this Islamic ideology that deserves the credit and not the individual Muslims. Islam is not merely a religion but rather a unique and comprehensive ideology that guides the life of the human

being. Islam has made it obligatory on all believers to acquire knowledge for themselves. In the very first verse of the Qur'an revealed to him, the Prophet (s.a.w) was instructed to read:

"Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists). Has created man from clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. Has taught man that which he knew not. " [Qur'an 96:1-5].

The importance of reading, writing and acquiring knowledge has been explained in this verse in a most forceful and direct manner. Since it is obligatory for every believer to obey Allah's commandments, it was therefore announced by the Prophet (s.a.w) that learning and searching after knowledge was a sacred duty of every Muslim.

The Qur'an appeals constantly to reason and experiment which is a blessing indispensable to arrive at proper judgement.

"Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who know not?' It is only men of understanding who will remember (ie. get a lesson from Allah's Signs and Verses)" [Qur'an 39:9]

The Qur'an also directs man to study the physical world in order to understand the reality and to appreciate more the greatness of the Creator. Although Islam points to the physical world to make people think, it encourages people to discover more laws. The Qur'an is fundamentally a book of guidance and a code of life for mankind to enable it to differentiate between the right and the wrong.

And Allah has brought you out from the wombs of your mothers while you know nothing. And He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts (intelligence and affections) that you might give thanks (to Allah) " [Qur'an 16:78].

Allah (swt) reminds the human being that he is born into this world without any knowledge of the existence, but He has equipped this human with the tools -the five human senses- that

he needs to explore the might of the creation in order that h e/she may give thanks to the Creator. The Creator, Allah (swt), has taught man since his presence on earth, "**And he taught Adam all the names (of everything)**" [Qur'an 2:31], through the agency of wahi (revelation). The last revelation that is composed of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, does not establish itself in its followers by blind faith or imitation, but rather by an invitation to the human being to think deeply about his existence and his surroundings.

Islamic methodology calls human beings to ponder upon the profound nature of this universe and observe its many phenomena that establish a definitive proof for the existence of One Creator. We are constantly discovering more and more laws that make up this order. The motives and objectives of all civilisations (and the resulting urban growth world-wide) is firstly, to discover and research the resources in the universe and aspects of matter and energy that are useful to man. This is asserted in the Qur'an,

"Do they not look in the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all the things that Allah has created?" [Qur'an7:185].

The second step is then to utilise these discoveries rationally for the benefit of man. Again, this is a direct command from Allah (swt):

" See you not (O men) that Allah has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever in the earth?" [Qur'an 31:20].

For the Muslim, these processes are an act of worship that have to be guided by revelation in order to understand the reality of nature and the limitations of the human being.

the Islamic educational system should utilise the expertise and experience of the material systems in the fields of applied sciences and industry and reconstruct their data on the basis of Iman.

The achievements and contribution of early Muslim scholars which have been completely neglected and overlooked in the Western books on the history of sciences, should be unveiled and incorporated into the curriculum's of the Islamic educational system. Since the Islamic civilisation was the longest in the history of humanity, scientific and humanitarian branches of knowledge flourished under its rule, and Muslim scholars led the world in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, agriculture and sociology, to name a few. The unveiling of this heritage which paved the way for the emergence of the modern sciences will dignify the sense of originality and belonging in the Muslim youth. Evidently, islam is an ardent promoter of secular education as some of its earliest scholars were even forbearers in the fields of science.

WESTERN EDUCATION AND ISLAMIC PERCEPTION IN NIGERIA.

Islam came to northern Nigeria more than 1,000 years ago. But secular education is a relatively recent arrival.

British forces, using mainly African troops, captured Kano in 1903. Since then, there has been a degree of resistance to "Western education" because of the link to colonialism and a perception that Islam was under threat. This has been the bone of contention in Nigeria concerning western/secular education as western education came hand in hand with christianity. Little wonder why the terrorist group 'boko haram – meaning- western education is forbidden' campaigns vehemently against western education as it is perceived as a christian tool used to overrun their ideological values. Boko haram's campaign is against western education, rather they struggle for a strictly islamic education and only for boys. Recently, they have included a demand for an islamic state. They recruit uneducated youths to fight their cause.

For Muslim children in northern Nigeria, memorising and reciting the holy Koran is an integral part of growing up. They do this for hours each day. For most of these boys, this is the only education they get. (Will Ross, BBC 2014) Many come from villages far away. Across northern Nigeria, it is estimated that about 11 million children get no access to mainstream education. (will Ross, BBC 2014) however, secular education is a relatively new phenomena in northern nigeria. many mallams have in recent times recognised the need to include western education in their curriculum, so as to prepare the children to meet up with the challenges of the society. Yardada Maikano, an educationist, says “Western education is very relevant, Islamic education is very relevant and of course they have to go side by side,” he says. "That is the only way we can really make progress in this part of the country." (Will Ross, BBC 2014)

Recommendations

The Muslim student when seeking knowledge and education must consolidate his/her faith by purifying his/her intention, since sincerity is the foundation upon which every work is established. The Prophet (saws) said: "**Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended**" [al-Bukhari and Muslim]. Hence, the Muslim should pursue education for the pleasure of Allah (swt) and not for material or social gain.

There is no question that seeking knowledge and education at universities is necessary for Muslims to meet the formidable challenges of the massive poverty and illiteracy, which they face. However, who don't apply a sense of reason to their acquisition of secular knowledge, allah says;

"Whoever wishes for the quick-passing (transitory enjoyment of this world), We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then, afterwards, We have appointed for him Hell, he will burn therein disgraced and rejected" [Qur'an 17:18].

Therefore, it is crucial that students at universities do not compromise their Islamic education with the excuse of their studies. They should also be cautious of teachings that challenge the code of belief (Aqeedah) and law (Shari'ah) of Islam and adopt the criteria that would enable them to distinguish these secular thoughts and ideas from their field of interest. Seeking a profession that provides income sources is also the priority of the Muslim.

The Muslim student should develop a professional attitude towards his/her education and cherish their work and career prospects. The Prophet (saws) said: **"Allah likes it when the one amongst you perfects his works"** [sound hadith, reported by Bayhaqi in Shoua'bul Iman]. This prophetic guidance clearly directs the believer to perform tasks to the best of his/her capabilities. Hence, excelling in the field of study should be the aim of every Muslim student. However, the Muslim student should not have ambitions that selfishly neglect his/her obligations towards his/her Muslim society and Ummah . In fact, his/her prime ambition should be gaining the necessary expertise and experience to participate in the reconstruction of the Islamic State. It is essential that Muslim students evolve this Islamic state of mind, otherwise the Islamic hope will remain a dream.

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