



ISLAMIC EDUCATION VALUES: A PANACEA FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss the relevance of Islamic Education to job creation and poverty alleviation towards sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper employs qualitative approach towards looking at Islamic education; related studies on the practice of Islamic education, its objectives and significances were reviewed. The exertion affirmatively revealed that Islamic education, through its aims and objectives, motivates and trains humankind to self-employment, self-independence and self-sustainability. It is the type of education that also promotes helping the needy through the practice of Zakat as charity act. Again, Islamic education calls for Waqf (Islamic endowment) that provides a means in which individuals can donate their wealth and properties in order to gain blessings from the almighty Allah (SWT); and this permeate individuals with morality. In addition, there are other recommendations and teachings of Islamic education that portray relevance of hardworking. Therefore, the aims, content and teaching of Islamic education are recommended to be explored for job creation and poverty alleviation.

Keywords: Islamic education, job creation, poverty alleviation, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Islam as a universal religion appreciates and commends knowledge acquisition for human development and recognition of Almighty Allah as the creator of the cosmos.

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This is why the very first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was specifically on seeking for knowledge. (Qur'an 96:1-5). Since the inception of Islam, education has been given priority over all other things. Consequently, Islam makes acquisition of knowledge compulsory for all Muslims irrespective of gender, age, tribe or nation. In Islam, the Qur'an is the moral manual that contains all the dos and don'ts. Its moral instructions are believed to be universal without boundary of time or space. This is believed that religion especially Islam cannot be completely detached from morality. Religion is the mother of morality and that is why Islam is a complete way of life.

1.1 The Concept of Islamic Education

Many attempts have been made to define Islamic Education. According to Ashraf and Hussain (1979), Islamic Education entails giving instruction on purely theological matters, such that the trainee would be able to practice the five pillars of Islam. Similarly, Muhammad (1980) opined that Islamic education is a process of self-discipline, which ensures spiritual and intellectual growth of the individual. According to Ajidagba Islamic education is a system of education which entails ideology concept expounding the nature of life (here and after), and prescribing the position of man and his role on earth.

1.1.1 Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education

The philosophy of Islamic education is centered on enabling individual who acquire it to become the kind of people an Islamic society conceives. Education in the Islamic sense is intended to build and develop man goodness that every individual has of birth so that he can hope to remain a worthy servant of Allah. This philosophy of education generates five major aims of education as follows:

- 1) Continuity of man's essential goodness: in Islam man never lose sight of his relationship with his Creator. Education for him is an unfolding of these strengths and sensibilities which draw him nearer to God. It inspires in him a consciousness of his obligations as the servant of God. It also teaches him to treat the world as a trust which must not be abused.
- 2) The development of piety: Islamic education aims at developing individuals who not only worship Allah but also lead a life that is in accordance with his ways.
- 3) Service to Allah and man: Education in the Islamic sense is not merely the stocking of knowledge. It is the way one's section is affected by the knowledge one has acquired.
- 4) Intellectual development: Most of the subjects offered in Islamic schools demand a high degree of intellectualism. They are philosophy, Psychology, Jurisprudence and literature. Thus a man does not only need to be pious or have faith in God he has to have a well-developed intellect.
- 5) Individual adjustment: Islam appreciates the high degree of change that characterizes any given society. Therefore, it strives to teach its members the tools with which they can equip themselves to cope with the ever changing

society. All learning must be put into practice otherwise the individual in question is not learned. (NTI 2000).

1.1.2 The Significance of Education in Islam

Islam is a religion that values education. The first verses of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) centered on education. The verses read: *"Read in the name of your Lord Who Creates. He creates man out of a clot of congealed blood. Read! Your Lord is most bountiful. He who teaches (the use of pen) He teaches man that which he knows not."* (Qur'an 96:1-5)

The searching for knowledge is encouraged in the Qur'an, for example (Qur'an 58:11) states. *"Allah will exalt in rank those from among you who believe and those to whom knowledge is given."* Another verse says: *"Say: are they equal, those who know and those who do not know?"* (Qur'an 39:9) The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also stressed the significance of education and enjoined all Muslims to seek for it. For instance he said: *"Seeking for knowledge is mandatory on every Muslim"* (Ibn Majah), he also said: *"A person who goes out in search of knowledge is in path of Allah until he returns."* (Tirmidhi) He even enjoined seeking of knowledge whenever it could be got. He said *"Seek knowledge even if it is in China."* (Shu abil Iman) The above Qur'anic and Prophetic injunctions explain to us significance of education in Islam. Islam considers education as a means for self-development and to know Allah. From the foregoing, it is established that education is made necessary and important in Islam.

2. The Relevance of Islamic Education on Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation

The philosophy of Islamic education is to inculcate moral values that constitute a wide range of virtues such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, truthfulness, self-discipline, humility, patience, industry and others. Hence morality should be the basis of every education given to record success. This type of education if effectively imparted to the people, they will be able to play the vital role in building a society being enriched with moral and spiritual values, and be really a place of peace and harmony and free from the chronic poverty. This type of society is highly needed in Nigeria today.

Islamic education provided the needed mechanisms for the alleviation of poverty suitable to any society. These mechanisms were well explained in the glorious Qur'an and Prophetic teachings. These include:

A. Zakat

The word "Zakat" is derived from the Arabic word "Zakah" literally means *"cleanliness, purification, increase, growth, righteousness, blessing and praise"*.

The word "Zakat" is derived from the Arabic word "zakah" literally means cleanliness, purification, growth, blessing and praise (Al-Qaradawi, 2003). Zakat is paid on the net balance after a Muslim has spent on necessities, family expenses, due credits, donations and taxes. Every Muslim male or female who at the end of the Hijri year is in possession of a prescribed amount called (Niasab) in excess of his needs, that person is

required to pay his or her zakat at the minimum rate of 2.5 percent or 40th part of the wealth to the poor and needy.

Zakat has a deep humanitarian and social-political value. This religious act prevents the hoarding of wealth and advocates solidarity among Muslims because excessive wealth is distributed amongst the poor. The paying of zakah also helps purify one's soul and encourages a Muslim to have gratitude towards God's bounties.

Zakat is one of the most effective mechanisms designed by Islam to alleviate poverty. It improves the economic condition of the poor as well as awakens in man the sense of brotherhood with destitute members of the society and stirs man's moral conscience to make him sacrifice for the sake of others.

B. Waqf

Waqf is an Arabic word derived from the root verb *Waqafa*. It can be defined as holding a *Maal* (an asset) and preventing its consumption for the purpose of repeatedly extracting its usufruct for the benefit of an objective representing righteousness and/or philanthropy. (Kahf 1998, p. 4)

Waqf is playing the most gigantic task in poverty alleviation because schools, hospitals, roads are being created through waqf. In these waqf institutions many students are studying free or in a low cost, many people are having free treatment when they are ill. These institutions are helpful in building efficient human capital as well as efficient manpower. They are self-motivated, more productive, more innovative and able to work. By this way, waqf is playing a role in poverty alleviation.

C. Injunction on Work/Labor

Work is one of the strongest mechanisms stipulated by Islamic education to alleviate poverty in the society. In Islam everyone is required to work in order to seek sustenance. The Glorious Qur'an encourages skills and professions. It gives the example of a number of prophets and righteous men who were skilled craftsmen. Nuhu (AS) was a carpenter who built boats, Ibrahim and Ismail (AS) were builders of the Ka'abah, and Daud (AS) was a blacksmith and used to make shields (Al-Khattab, 2007).

To alleviate poverty Prophet (SAW) encouraged Muslims to work no matter how people look at it. He is reported to have said. *"If one of you were to make a rope and bring a bundle of firewood on his back and sell it, so that Allah may protect him from humiliation, that would be better for him than begging from people who may give him something or refuse to give him anything"* (Bukhari).

It was also reported that Umar bin al-khattab saw a group of people sitting in the mosque, he raised his whip and uttered his famous saying: *"None of you should sit searching for provision and say: O Allah provide me while he knows that the sky neither rains down gold nor silver. Allah says: And when prayer is finished then disperses in the land and seeks Allah's grace."* (Qardawi, 2007).

In order to root out poverty, Islam stipulates that any field of lawful activity is a chief way of acquiring wealth. One may work in agriculture, mining, medicine, engineering, transportation, trade and so on. (Abubakar and Danyaro, 2013)

D. Injunction on Trade

Participation in trade is one of the Islamic mechanisms geared towards poverty eradication. The Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) urged Muslims to actively participate in lawful trade and commerce. Most of the wealthy companions participated in trade which is a clear justification that through trade poverty can be eradicated and there will be peace and peaceful co-existence (Abubakar & Danyaro, 2013).

5. Conclusion/Recommendations

There is no doubt that Islamic Education is very relevant to job creation and poverty alleviation. The paper hereby recommends the following:

- 1) Muslims should seek for knowledge of Islamic education in order to be able them carry God's obligation as assigned on to them.
- 2) Muslims should strictly follow the teachings of Islam, since Islam is a complete way of life. It should be noted that nothing but confusion and decay can be expected when people lose their hold on religion.
- 3) Muslims should seek for knowledge of western education also, so that they could participate in the present day technology, by doing so, more job opportunities will be available for them and much dependence of the government will grossly reduce.
- 4) Government should create more chance of preaching Islam in this country because it contains good moral values and discipline to mankind.
- 5) Muslims should stay in peace with non-Muslims, since the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself stayed with the non-Muslims in peace. This is because if there is no peace there will be no development.
- 6) The Ulama including imams and teachers of religious institutions should motivate the rich people to create Waqf and give out Zakat accordingly.

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