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SOKOTO EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

**Vol. 4
May 1997**

Published by
Faculty of Education and Extension Services,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto, Nigeria.

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ISSN: 079436653

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Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.

Cover Design: Mrs. Iyamide Sawyerr

Typeset by: Dr. Dogara Bashir



PRINTED AND BOUND BY
SIBIGRAPHIX NIGERIA
SOKOTO, NIGERIA

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ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS SELF RELIANCE

by

Ibrahim Abdulganiyu Jawando

ABSTRACT

In the colonial era up to the wake of independence, Nigerians demonstrated unreserved love for the acquisition of literary education considered the surest key to success at the expense of vocational Education considered a means to servitude. Today, vocational education is seen as impetus to creating an egalitarian and self reliant society which is Chief in the Nigerian philosophy of Education. Thus, successive governments in Nigeria gave science and vocational Education utmost priority.

It is against this background that this paper examines the stand of Islam in creating an egalitarian and self reliant society with reference to the practices of the first three generations of Muslims and compared with the practices of the recent generation of Muslims towards the policy of self reliance. Some militating factors against maximal realisation of self reliance as associated with the Nigerian Islamic Education system and societal attitudes are identified and suggestions offered.

INTRODUCTION

Islam and Islamic Education are intertwined as such they cannot be separated. This is why the two often go together or interchanged. Islam as a religion is described as a total way of life in the sense that its education touches factually all aspects of life and the hereafter. By this Islam could be regarded as a culture. Culture is differently defined by experts: According to Carter Good (1959) it is:

The aggregate of the social, ethical, intellectual, artistic, governmental and industrial attainments; Characteristic of group, state or nation and by which it can be distinguished from or compared with other groups, states, or nations; it includes ideas, concepts usages, institutions, associations and material objects. It is also the level attained by the individual or social group in the accumulation of knowledge and in the integration of social behaviour patterns, good taste in personal conduct, knowledge of the intellectual heritage of the race, appreciation of art and letters and of beauty in nature and a reasonable consistent personal philosophy of life. pp 13-14.

All these components of culture and a host of others are emphasised in the primary and

secondary sources of Islamic religion or education with a view to realising the aims and objective of Islam and its education. The purpose of Islamic education according to Abdulkareem (1990) is:

The attainment of Islamic virtue___ intergration of an individual into a sound and effective citizen, socially, economically, politically, culturally, intellectually, morally, spiritually, and developing people's talents and inspiring lofty ethical values in them. These goals are the main foundation on which Islamic civilization, society and people's personalities are built (pp. 20 - 21).

To successfully establish the lofty idea of moulding an individual to be upright in all ramifications, Islamic Education Concentrates on *Tarbiyyah* (education) *Ta'lim* (instruction) and *Ta'dib* (moral teaching) (Usmanu, 1994). These could be equated with the three domains of educational objectives- "cognitive, psychomotor and affective" (Blooms 1956).

Thus, like other monotheistic religions of the world, Islam emphasises literary education (reading and writing), technical education (mechanical or industrial arts involving motor-sensory) and moral education. This is in order to produce an individual who would be intellectually sound, economically self reliant and morally upright.

ISLAM AND THE POLICY OF SELF RELIANCE

It is established in the holy books and other related literature that some prophets of Allah were self reliant. For instance, prophet Adam (S.A.W) was a farmer, prophet Nuhu (S.A.W) a carpenter, prophet Dauda (S.A.W.) and a host of others were herdsmen. The prophet of Islam Muhammad bn Abdullahi Wa Aminat (S.A.W) was a herdsman and later a trader (Rahim, 1981). The rightly guided caliphs also engaged in one work or another to earn their living. Caliphs Abubakar and Usman (R.T.A) were traders. They used their wealth in the cause of Islam (Rahim, 1981). The agents of the spread of Islam from Saudi Arabia to North Africa and to West Africa, Nigeria inclusive, were all recongised traders (Abdol, 1971). Along their trading routes they spread the religion of Islam.

The contention now is that if the religion of Islam emphasises intellectualism, economic advancement and a high sense of morality and the prophet of Islam led an exemplary life combining all these qualities an his companions as well as the Barbers followed suit. Why should the situation be different in Nigeria?

At the introduction of Islam in Nigeria, most of the adherents had one job or another through which they earned their living. Most of them engaged in crafts like weaving i.e (basket, mat hat cloth etc), knitting i.e (Cap, bed sheets, gowns, etc.) hunting and farming etc. The *Mallams* among them did not shun their earlier jobs rather they engaged in their handcraft whenever time permitted them. Some *Mallams* weave and teach simultaneously as the two did not disturb one another.

At the earlier *Makarantar Allo* the pupils did not only learnt the Qur'an from their *Mallams* but also "the language" and trade of the *Mallams*. (Aliy-Kamal, 1980). The pupils consciously or

unconsciously learned the trade by watching carefully their master at every time they saw him do it. Some *Mallams* requested the helping hands of some of their pupils while some did it for *Mallams* to earn credit. In whichever case many pupils become proficient in the trade of their masters. This was an advantage over their primary objectives; and it was gained without any hindrance on their initial goal.

THE COGS IN THE WHEEL OF PROGRESS

Today, many operators of the *Makarantar Allo* are far from being technical/craft oriented. They consider themselves as *Mallam* with no other jobs than to teach the Quran to pupils, preach the religion of Islam to would-be Muslims, conduct sermon at any given opportunity and perhaps lead prayers where possible. Such *Mallams* live practically on alms extended to them either by the parents of their pupils or their clients.

The *Mallams* are often found at naming, marriage and other ceremonies as well as burial gatherings whether they are invited or not just because of the material gain they are likely to benefit there. They send their pupils out, most specially those residing in their houses to go from house to house seeking alms from people and making returns to them. It is needless to emphasise here that such pupils will grow up to become professional beggars (*al-majiris*). Thus, in this way many of this day *Makarantar Allo* are day-in-day-out manufacturing beggars who are parasites in the society.

The modern *Madaris* (Arabic schools) are not helping matters. They are modern in the sense that classrooms are provided as opposed to learning under the trees and at *Mallams'* private houses, improved discipline and teaching methods, standard syllabus and qualified teachers provided. Teachers are being paid salary monthly, the students in some cases pay school fees and other levies and they wear uniform. The students are also awarded certificates upon completion of course (OWAN, et al 1987). The Arabic schools emphasised cognitive and affective domains at the expense of the psychomotor domain. The students are at best in reading the Quran by heart and perhaps at practising the religion but the knowledge gained could not make them directly self-reliant. If one is knowledgeable and morally upright he could be made to act contrary to his wish if hunger sets in. This is why it is extremely necessary to incorporate the psychomotor aspect of educational objectives into the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic Studies and should be faithfully implemented.

The syllabus of the Arabic and Islamic schools laid emphasis on *Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Quranic Exegesis), *Hadith* (Prophetic Traditions), *Sira* (history), *Ta'hdib* (moral instruction), *Nahw* (Arabic grammar) and other Islamic sciences which will only make students literate arabically and religiously equipped. This type of education turns out dependents who wander about from one ministry to another for white collar job. Those who are unfortunate to secure white collar job join their colleagues, turned out by the local *Makarantar Ilimi* (advance school) in visiting rich people at their houses in the name of wanting to pray for them.

A number of such jobless *Mallams* fend spiritually for men of the underworld who could afford to give them huge amount of money so that they could be successful in their nefarious activities. Some as a result of poverty became pro or anti government and continue to support or criticise blindly some

government policies at every given opportunity. Some descend so low to the point of discussing people at their preachings. They praise those personally close and generous to them and abuse those who turned deaf ears to their requests, some stretched their waiting hands to some unscrupulous and selfish individuals in the community who instigate people to cause trouble in the society to cover-up their atrocities when they are being caught up by the men of the law enforcement agencies. The *al-majiries* in some part of the country are often being paid to cause unrest be it social, political, economic, religious etc.

Therefore something ought to be done educationally and immediately to arrest the menace of beggary in our society. On the one hand it is anti-progress to Islam as some would be Muslims are associating beggary with Islam. To them the larger percentage of beggars in Nigeria came from the Muslim folk. On the other hand the beggars are rendering havoc to the nation's economy as they contribute nothing but consume much.

ISLAM AND BEGGARY

It should be noted that Islam instituted *Zakat* (religious tax) and *Sadaqat* (alms giving) in order that the poor and the needy may be helped with the wealth of the rich but it has not in any way professionalised beggary.

According to the Quran, *Zakat* is to be given to the poor, the needy, the wayfarer, the collectors of the tax, those whose hearts are to be harmonized, the debtors, to emancipate slaves and also to be spent in the way of Allah (Basheer, 1977). In return the receipts are to be good keepers of the rich from whose wealth they are benefitting.

It is disheartening to see that quite a large number of people hide under the canopy of the poor and the needy mentioned in the Quran to go on to the street to beg. Many of them deceive the public by being rag-tag and or by their pitiful ultrances to get money. It is needless to emphasis here that many of them have houses, lorries, taxis and other sources of income yet it is difficult for them to leave this shameful act.

Islam does not allow any form of parasitic attitudes in the society. Therefore, every Muslim should fulfil his/her obligations on his/her dependents. The prophet of Islam said:-

If one of you should take his rope and bring a bundle of fire-wood on his back and then sell it with which Allah should save his honour, it is better for him than that he should beg of people whether they give him or do not give him. (Doi, 1970)

The above hadith unequivocally states that it is dishonourable to engage in beggary whether or not one is given. Thus, it is important to re-orient young Muslims towards self dependent.

To be candid, there are unfortunate people in the society; the poor and the needy who became so as a result of pitiful circumstances. Duely, they deserve help and Islam made provisions for

them and made it compulsory. The Quran says;

"In their wealth the needy and the destitute have their due" (Doi, 1970).

This verse refers to the wealthy as the custodian of the poor and the needy.

SUGGESTIONS

It will be to the betterment of every Nigerian if the following inexhaustive suggestions are considered. A large campaign is necessary to the muslims, Islamic organizations and the rich Muslims in the society to organise *Zakat* collection appropriately so that it could be distributed to those that deserve it.

In the same manner the public need be educated on how to exterminate the artificial beggar class created by the parasites in our society who take pleasure in begging for their needs. This could be done (among other ways) by dishonouring their requests and speak some words of wisdom to them whether they take it or not. If these practices are upheld they could help reduce beggars on our streets.

The Muslim Council of Nigeria and other Islamic organizations in Nigeria should hold seminars to educate the local *Mallams* of the need to allow their pupils combine Qur'anic education with any trade of the pupil's choice such as; motor mechanic, tailoring, electrician, electronics, fabrication engineering, weaving, etc. Issue of proper collection and distribution of *Zakat* should also be considered.

The National Directorate of Employment should also carry their campaigns down to the grass root most especially among the *Mallams* so that the impact of the Directorate could be felt by them.

The Governments should compel, after due consultation with opinion leaders, all the grant aided Arabic and Islamic schools to incorporate all the trades in Junior Secondary School syllabus and Technical Schools into their syllabus and provide them with equipment.

Parents and guardians of the pupils should be made aware through the mass media that at this age only literary education may not be enough for their children to live a most comfortable life.

The governments should take strict measures against beggars on the streets. They should be provided with alternatives. The National Directorate of Employment could be asked to take care of them in a controlled environment. They should be cared for till they could stand alone. Their product could be bought by the governments and resold to the public.

Conclusively, if all these steps and others are taken into consideration, the spirit of give and take may be ushered into our economy as every one will be contributing in one way or another; hence the Nigerian objective of self reliance may be maximally realised.

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