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Justification of the Fusion of Islamic Ethics into Curriculum Content of Social Science for Universities of Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Social science is the field of studies largely concerned with the investigation on humans and the consequences of social actions and inactions. The scope of social science conceived the studies and the activities of all social institutions and strata such as the education system, socio-religious and the economic and political beings of the societies. The present curriculum content of social science in the universities of northern Nigeria has often disregarded the rudimental subjects of Islamic ethics and morality for training Muslim students. The secular mode of curriculum used in the Muslim universities have resulted to various social vices, example of which are insurgency, corruptions in different forms, economic fall and low learning outcomes and productivity. Therefore, the present descriptive study aims at describing the existing content of social science curriculum and presents a comprehensive justification on why such content should be enriched with the subjects of Islamic ethics for training in the universities of Northern Nigeria. Open-ended questionnaire is employed as a means for data collection and analysis in the present enquiry. Atlas ti-software of qualitative data analysis is also applied in the process of coding themes and sub-themes guiding the answers to the stated objective. The findings of the study indicate that the current state of social science curriculum content is ineffective and incomplete because it lacks the religious thought that can promote character and commendable actions in the Muslim societies. The study outcome also attests to the failure of non-integration the knowledge of Islamic ethics into conventional study of accounting, economic, sociology as the main factor that challenged the attainment level of Muslim-students in the universities of Northern Nigeria. The findings depict that integrating the existing western model content of social science with the relevant subjects of Islamic ethics will enhance the quality of training and student's moral conducts in all universities where Muslims are the target recipients of knowledge.

Keywords: Universities, Islamic Ethics, Integration, Social Science, Curriculum, Northern Nigeria.

Introduction

Northern Nigeria is the Most Populous Muslims region in the federal republic of Nigeria. Nineteen states and the federal capital (Abuja) are the three geopolitical zones covering completely the northern geographical location. The existence of Islam in Nigeria can be traced back to 11th century when a group of Muslim scholars (*Wangarawa*) from Mali introduced it, along with the Islamic system of education. Such integrated education of Muslims has longer existence in Nigeria than Christianity, because it is the only system that earlier comprised all facets of life; economy, politics, transactions, national and international dealings and, most importantly, human education at all levels during the old northern province (Dauda, 2002). This earlier integrated system of life in Northern Nigeria unified all areas of knowledge with real life, for it was fully guided by the fundamental principles of religion and cultural thought. The primary concern of education in Islam is the holistic development of man and the communities. Therefore, all philosophy and curricular programs in the system is designed towards the successful existence of Muslim in this world and the salvation in the hereafter (al-Attas, 1993). The curriculum in this point signifies technically the instrument through which educational activities thrives. It entails the syllabus and total learning experiences in a school system. The Curriculum serves the key determinant through which the success or failure of learning can be evaluated (Oladipe, 2011). The current university curriculum content of most colonized Muslim states is weak and incomplete because of its failure to integrate religious values for training in the Muslim universities. This phenomenon of curriculum integration becomes common educational activity between the experts since the beginning of 20th century with a view to enrich the education system to reflect the Muslim community demands and aspirations (Rufai, 2016). The main focus in this integration activity is to connect the conventional subjects of social sciences with the relevant subjects of Islamic ethics in order to address moral degradation and low learning achievements in the universities of Northern Nigeria. The higher education is entirely designed to cover the studies of all branches of knowledge and ensuring the continuous existence of desirable culture and the religious thought that are transmittable to the future generations (Hafiz & Fauziyya, 2013). Such integration of curricular content is an effort to stimulate these Islamic norms and values derivable from the holy Quran and Hadith because ethic itself denounce the cultural element conditioning the direct consequences of man social actions and inactions. The present study has broader significance particularly for the affairs of Muslim education and their civilization. The finding of the present study is an asset to all bodies responsible for planning and the management of higher education not only in the Muslim majority but to non-Muslims residing in the northern part of Nigeria. Nevertheless, this study is fundamentally set to achieve the below objective:

- i. To describe the reasons why the existing curriculum content of social sciences in the universities of Northern Nigeria should be enriched with the relevant subjects of Islamic ethics

Methods

This qualitative study is carried out using the descriptive and case study methods of enquiry. A total of thirty experts are consulted and divided into two categories comprising the deans of the faculties of social science in the five sampled universities and the lecturers teaching the subjects of social sciences. These teaming participants are purposely selected based on their relevance in

the effort to source and collect the required data to justify the need for the integration of existing curriculum content of social science with the subjects of Islamic ethics for training in the universities of northern Nigeria. Atlas ti-software application is also employed for coding the appropriate themes and sub-themes to answer the guided objective of the study. The investigation here is only limited to integration of curriculum content of social sciences in the universities of northern Nigeria. The content also reflect the specific disciplines of accounting, economics and sociology to represent the wider study areas of social science in the universities of Northern Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

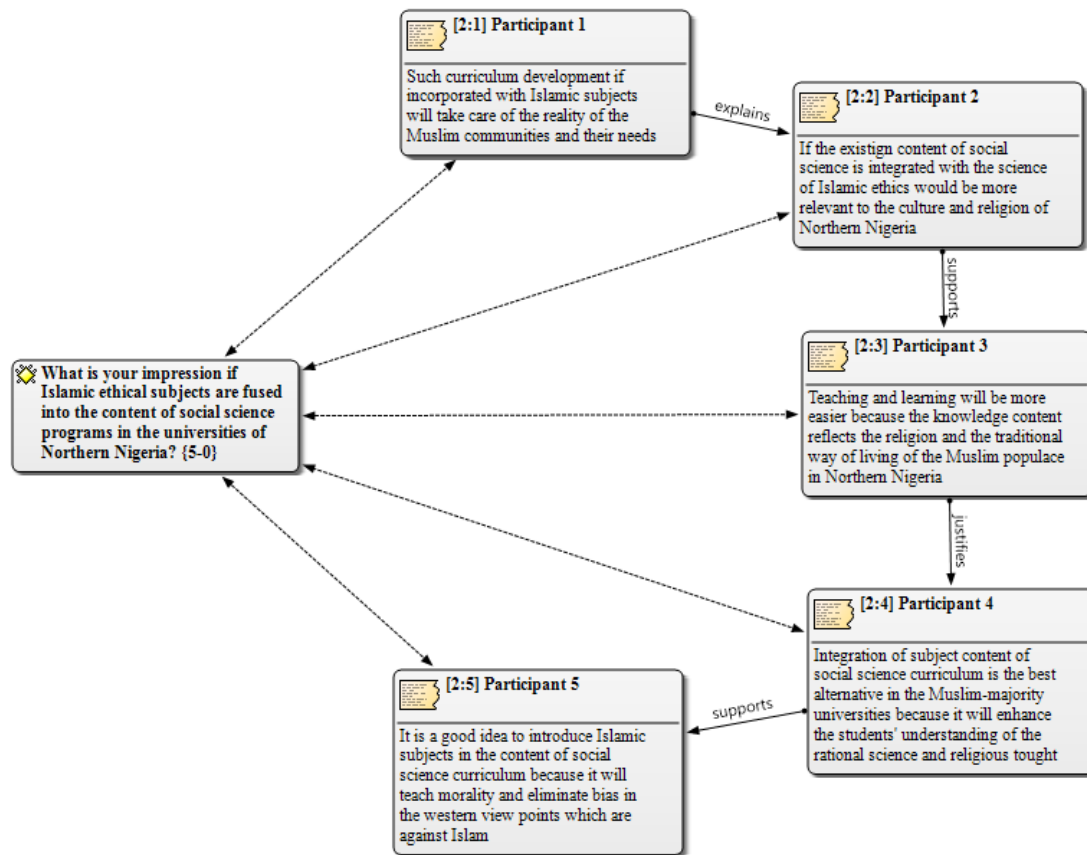


Figure 1: Coding of Themes Using atlas ti-Application Software of Qualitative Data Analysis

Participants	Question	Responses
1:5	What is your impression if relevant subjects of Islamic ethics are added in the curriculum content of social sciences in the universities of Northern Nigeria?	Adding subjects for teaching Islamic ethics in the courses of social sciences may improve students understanding to Islam
2:5		This will bring positive integration to existing content of social sciences. The additional subjects will add value to the training.
3:5		It will be a great help in the study of social science courses especially in a unified community like Northern Nigeria where majority are Muslims.
4:5		The integration of subjects of Islamic ethics in the syllabus of social sciences would yield positive result in many social institutions in Northern Nigeria.
5:5		Adding subjects that will teach Islamic ethics in the content programs of social sciences would certainly contribute of professionals to be produced.
6:5		It will boost the attainment level and the moral discipline of the graduates of social sciences in Nigeria.
7:5		Introducing Islamic subjects in the curriculum of social sciences would reduce the cases of mortgaging and in disciplinary acts in the public sectors of Nigeria.
8:5		Integrating social sciences courses with Islamic ethics subjects can contribute social harmony in Northern Nigeria. Alternative courses have to be provided for the minor non-Muslim settling in the region.
9:5		When the content of social sciences currently used in the universities of northern Nigeria is merged with the teaching of Muslim ethics; programs like accounting and economics would be more applicable.
10:5		It will be beneficial to some extent.
11:5		Such Integration can be very advantageous especially when considering the students

	backgrounds and the nature of environment where the universities operates.
12:5	It will usher better understanding to many theories of learning and field of studies more particularly social and economic theories.
13:5	The target recipients may gain knowledge from wider viewpoints.
14:5	This will increase the ethical standard and quality personnel in the work force in many social agencies in the northern part of Nigeria.
15:5	Fusion of Islamic ethics-subjects into the conventional system of social sciences would give more value to the studies because those Muslims students can be guided by the principles of Islam.
16:5	Integration of Islamic ethics into conventional studies of social sciences subjects would reduce conflicts and confusion between scientific and religious theories.
17:5	When the content of social science curriculum in universities of northern Nigeria is merged with subject of Islamic ethics, the learning objectives will be achieved to the maximum level.
18:5	It would certainly enhance morality and sanity in the student's attitudes and their interactions.
19:5	It is absolutely good idea because it will guide the students to analyses issues from general viewpoints.
20:5	This integration is good because social issues like security and leadership crises can be studied from religious viewpoint.
21:5	The total education system will be more effective if the curriculum accumulate culture and religious teachings.
22:5	The integration is good for our education system because of social problems such as insurgency, kidnapping and corruption cases commonly reported in Nigeria.
23:5	It is pertinent and recommended since the religious teachings always preach morality and character while education is working to develop character in individuals and the society.
24:4	It will enrich the content and the learning would become easier since the students might have

25:5	<p>previous knowledge on many aspects in the subject matter.</p> <p>It has advantages and some disadvantages because other religious groups may consider it as bias in the process of learning.</p>
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Table 1: Justification for Fusion Subjects of Islamic Ethics in the Content of Social Science Curriculum in the Universities of Northern Nigeria

Major responses in the above figure and table indicate the participant's curiosity on the needs to develop further the content of the present social sciences curriculum with subjects of Islamic ethics thereby responding meaningfully to the aspirations of the Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria. In this connection, n=88% (majority) have justified on the irrelevant of the existing curriculum content structure of social sciences programs in the universities of Northern Nigeria. These may however be understood in the present interpretation of the above original utterances of all the participants, i.e. the view of participant 1:5 with regard to the research question as presented in the table above. Participant 1:5 in line 1-3 in his words acknowledged strongly; the adding subjects for teaching Islamic ethics in the conventional courses of social sciences may improve the Muslim students understanding to the fundamentals of Islam.

This view is concurrently agreed and supported by other participants who apprehended in the similar manner. Thus, participant 5:5 in line (1) also revealed the fusion subjects that will teach Islamic ethics in the content programs of social sciences is certainly an aspect of great benefit. The view equally emphasizes many other views of the participants who un-objectively opined that such integration of Islamic subjects in conventional programs of accounting, economics and sociology in the faculty of social sciences may bring outstanding achievements and enhance sound co-existence between individuals and the organizations within the Muslim settings. This view is strongly recommended by participants 4:5, 7:5, 8:5, 14:5 and 18:5 respectively. Another view in these participants' responses justifies the benefits of such integration to teaching and learning processes.

According to participants 6:5 and 11:5, the merger between these subjects of Islamic ethics and the western oriented content of social sciences would bring about balance of knowledge to be imparted in the Muslim students who are regarded the end users. Thus will also bring ease in the learning and teaching because the process rest not only in the conventional approaches but complied with the religious dogma. In line 1-3, 11:5 in his words emphasizes that "such integration can be very advantageous especially when considering the students background and the nature of the environment where these universities operates". Sequentially to this view, participants 12:5 and 13:5 have comprehensively supported the above presupposition with high acceptability. In their words, line 1 of 12:5 and lines 1-3 of 13:5 elaborated that the above proposal if implemented "will usher better understanding to many theories of learning" and that "the target recipients may gain knowledge from wider viewpoints".

However, the third in the series of these respondents' views referred upon the benefits of such integration of subject matter as this may bring holistic achievement that may not limit to

knowledge and skills but includes positive values and ethical conducts in the students. In lines 1-4 of 17:5 it is pronounced that “when the content of social science curriculum in universities of northern Nigeria merged with subjects of Islamic ethics, the learning objectives would be met to the maximum level”. Consequently, this view is being addressed by 21:5 who openly admitted that when such an integration is successfully practiced, the whole “education system will be more effective since the curriculum content accommodates culture and religious thought”. In short, only the last response becomes neutral in this view; in his opinion, for such thematic integration to be considered successful, there must be careful consideration and fair judgment to avoid misperception of being biased in the process of learning.

According to the advocator of this view (3:5), the proposal may be contrary to other belief and culture particularly the minority non-Muslims settling in the nearby Muslim communities in the region. In his words, “this integration has certain advantages but other factors in this proposal can also be seen with elements of disadvantage because other religious groups might consider the activity as planned bias in the entire system of education”. Hence, the view expressed by 9:5 is clarifying the aforementioned perception as sourced by 25:5 as presented. In line 1-2 of 9:5 it is suggested that alternative courses should be prepared to the minor non-Muslims settling in the region. Conclusively, about eighty-eight percent (88%) of the teaming participants shows the need to enrich further the existing content of social sciences with the subjects of Islamic studies thereby driving relevant Islamic ethics for universities of northern Nigeria.

An Overview on the Epistemological Conception of Ethics and Islamic Ethics

The term “ethics” and “Islamic Ethics” is separately treated in this point. Generally, ethics concerned with the principles of conducts and human actions or inactions. The Webster Dictionary also defined “ethics” as a science of morality or system of moral principles and or rule of conduct. Ethics can also be seen as the normative science of human behaviour living in a particular setting. The primary aim of ethics is the individual virtues and conducts in the identified society and in the larger communities (Archie, 2003). While Islamic ethics (*Al-Akhlaq al-Islamiyyah*) centrally entails the principle of laws derivable from the holy Quran and the authentic traditions (*Ahadith*) of the Prophet teachings and the views of the rightful predecessors (*Al-Salaf al-Salih*) for the total control and guidance of mankind. Therefore, the conception of ethics in Islam is not similar to the western viewpoint because righteousness is an important aspect of Islamic ethics that conformed many other Muslim values. Allah (The exalted) Says in the Holy Quran:

Righteousness is not that you turn your eyes towards the east or the west, but (true) righteousness is in one who believes in Allah, the last day, the angels, the book, and the Prophets and gives out wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask for help and for freeing slaves (and who) establish prayer and gives Zakat, (those who) fulfil their promises, and those who are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true and it those who are the righteous (al-Baqarah: 177).

Thus, from the above content of the verse, it may become clearer to comprehend the maiden principles of Islamic ethics that restates first the importance of *Tawhid* (belief in Allah) and all

the articles of faith as the bedrock of ethics in Islam that is why for the Muslim education to achieve its height, the studies of Islamic sciences become necessary (Abdurrahman et. al., 2016; Karkarkarku, 2013). Having examining the separate conceptions of these guiding terms leading to the integration of Islamic ethics in the knowledge content of social science studies in the universities of northern Nigeria. The then view also testifies present study effort to correct errors in the existing social science in the assigned context thereby replacing with sound values that are much relevant to the Muslims and their social life situations. However, the Prophetic description towards the concept of ethics, character or morality highlighted another distinguishing element of the scope of ethics between the perspective of Islam and in the western literature. The Prophet (SAW) said in the following hadith: "Righteousness (*al-Birr*) is good character and vice (*Ithm*) is that which you feel in yourself and you do not want people to know about it (al-Bukhari: 21).

Consequently, the above tradition of the prophet elaborate further the above verse on the wide conception of ethics which generalized all actions of Muslims that are guided by the fundamental principles of Islam can be described as ethical and all human inactions that are against to these principles and contradicts minds natural are those regarded as unethical. In this connection, the main focus of this integration activity is to stimulate these relevant ethics and connect students with the real life experiences that are only achievable in this integrated content. The idea is to ensure the curriculum coordinate all disciplines of need and teach in similar approach with view to achieve unified objectives (Relan, 1991).

The Benefits of Fusion Subjects of Islamic Ethics into the Existing Content of Social Science Curriculum for Training in the Universities of Northern Nigeria

Initially, life in Islam is an integrated system that entails all religious duties, education system, leadership and entire socio-economic activities of mankind. For centuries, Islam has substantially contributed to the world civilization and cultures. It was Islam that first revealed the human pursuit of various fields of sciences not the Romans. The modern world achieved the light and the power through the contribution of Muslim scholars in the area of medical sciences, applied sciences, social sciences and the notable inventions that the early Muslim Arabs developed during the pinnacle of Islamic Civilization. According to the epistemological viewpoint of Islam, the holy Quran and Hadith is the fountain heads through which all branches of knowledge thrived in whatever domain (al-Faruqi & Naseef, 1981). These original sources of human knowledge have played vital role in the creation and manifestation of diverse body of ideas in social sciences particularly in the aspects of economy and social regulations. Social science programs are these sciences of social related issues. The subjects cut across various perspectives and social milieu. They are science of societies that work to understand and provide insight about human actions and the mode of their behaviours in a particular setting. Despite these underlying attributes of social sciences, the social science programs currently studied in the universities of Northern Nigeria is not adequately prepared to meet the aspiration of the target Muslim trainees (Muhammad & Abdullahi, 2016).

The Participant 2:5 in his response to this issue described the fusion of Islamic ethics in the present state of social science curricular content will help Muslim students to acquire benevolent

ethics that will in turn build the required morality in their actions and characteristics. It is absolutely good idea to introduce these important subjects of Muslim morality because such process will sanitize the existing content against the available western viewpoint that is commonly confusing the minds of Muslim students on many ideologies (al-Faruqi & Naseef, 1981). This idea clearly indicates that the integration of the content this study seeks to achieve is the unified solution to ensure the original epistemological viewpoints of Islam as guided in the fundamental principles of Islamic education. The aforementioned views also collaborate with the conception of the renowned Muslim scholar Sheikh Muhammad Abduh of Egypt, who insists that only through the integration of such secular learning content in Muslim schools, the original ideas of Muslims and these spiritual truth enshrined in the revealed knowledge can be implemented. Therefore, the significance of the revealed knowledge as the true source of all knowledge has to be shown to the contemporary minds in order to identify the everlasting potentialities and intellectualism of Islam (Shafie, 2004). The prime benefit of the integration of knowledge content in this section is the ability to connect all disciplines with the principles of Islamic creed (*Aqidah*), science of Islamic ethics (*'Ilm al-Akhlaq*) in socio-economic policies and legal practices in the Muslim *Ummah* (al-Attas, 1979).

Another conventional view also highlights further the integration of such western model curriculum of social science is the only means to which the aspiration of Muslims in Northern Nigeria can be achieved. This process is undeniably beneficial as such effort might produce these integrated leaders that would be cautious on the sensitive aspects of social security and the social aspirations Muslims to the maximum height. Ahmad (2015) added vehemently the various importance of integrating the existing curricular programs in the universities of northern Nigeria thereby reflecting on the demands of the target Muslim societies. In this view, the integration of Muslim education curriculum has numerous advantages on the lives of individuals in Nigeria because the process relies completely on the issue of Islamic thought and morality.

Conclusion

The integration of knowledge and entire processes of Muslim education is an agenda profounded and encouraged by the holy Quran and Sunnah because such divine sources emphasizes the human pursue to all forms of knowledge as beneficial and a form of worship. The Muslim scientist achievements in the areas of mathematics, chemistry, geography, sociology, economy, philosophy and entire branches of social sciences cannot be forgotten. The present generation of Muslims are no longer relevant in the scheme of these glorious ages because of the decline of intellectual development that swept the educational glory of the Muslim *Ummah*. The integration of curriculum content of social science proposed in the present study is an avenue to provide new springboard through which the Muslim society could regain the lost glory and eliminate confusion existed in the theories of knowledge. The spirit is also agitated in the zeal and commitment established by the early Muslim scholars who strongly restated the need for Muslims to excel in all branches of knowledge with a view to transfer the ethics of Islam and re-analyse certain contradictory ideas. The literature studied in the present research holistically explains the benefit in the integration of school curricular programs. The integration of curriculum content will assist in reviving the true embodiment of teaching of Islam and accurately reflect its pristine values and principles. The effort reserved the only means to

provide another opportunity for Muslims to bring another world civilization that may be built on the same path with the previous achieved caliphates and dynasties in the annals history of Muslim civilization in the world. Such type of integrated content syllabus practiced during the glorious ages of Islamic civilization brought about progress that spread across Muslims and non-Muslims territories. The common success recorded under this integrated system of education is the Muslim effort in the scholarship and scholarly activities because during these periods, the exchange of knowledge between scholars of different faith becomes the surface features of educational activities.

Recommendations

The present finding is hereby addressing the following comprehensive recommendations for the hope of kind implementation and further development of this research outcome:

- The national government of Nigeria should re-formulate sound educational policies that can be fair to Muslims and their original integrated education system.
- The national government of Nigeria should accept and consider the affairs of Islam as the religion of majority and forward due consideration and assistance towards its sustenance and stability.
- The National Universities Commission of Nigeria (NUC) who is the sole regulating body of universities in Nigeria should advance plan to re-design and re-structure the existing secular content of social science curriculum of Nigeria universities to make relevance with the original culture and religion of the target recipients.
- Such regulating bodies and agencies in Muslim societies should also make effort to implement the aforementioned developed integrated curriculum for moral and character development of individual Muslims and the national communities at large.
- The Muslims experts specialized in the diverse areas of social sciences should commit fully in diversifying research towards the advancement of the integration of the Muslim education agenda.
- The curriculum planners in the Muslim states must ensure effort to dictate the principles of Islamic epistemology in setting school master curriculum in order to cultivate in the students the habit of honesty, trustworthy, trust, integrity, justice, hardworking and self-reliance.

The management of these universities in the Muslim communities should strategize plan to implement such developed integrated model and teach these fundamental Muslim ethics as regularly and compulsory. Thus, the true personality of Islam can be identified in all social ramifications.

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