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# NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ETHICS: ISLAMIC LAW PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*Year-in-year-out, scholars are being produced from Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. These scholars are well equipped with adequate knowledge. Our decadent environment has revealed that most of our scholars explore their acquired knowledge with no regards to ethics as if ethics is dispensable. This call for great concern. This paper, in addressing the issue, relied principally on doctrinal method. The paper examined the nexus between education and ethics from Islamic law perspective. The paper contends that education and ethics are inseparable both in theory and practice. The paper suggests, amongst others, that the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions should revisit the inculcation of ethics in their various curriculum.*

***Keywords:*** *Nexus, Education, Ethics, Islamic Law, Perspective*

## INTRODUCTION

Education and ethics play pivotal role in the life of every human being. This is because, education is a tool towards achieving life targets or goals.[1] Education may be formal or informal but the bottom line is that no one in this life succeeds without being educated in one way or the other.[2] It is wrongly perceived that modernization brings to the fore the importance of education. But the reality is that, even before modernization, education has been relevant and important in the lives

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[1] P. Collin, 'Education Development: Importance, Challenges and Solutions', *The Student Economic Review*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 149-57

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 150-151

of mankind across the world both among the rural and urban dwellers.[3] The reason being that, education precedes all things. If one has chosen to be bricklayer, carpenter, gold smith etc., one needs education first and foremost.[4] No matter how crude a profession might be, if it is devoid of education, such professional cannot attain the mastery of the profession.[5]

Ethics, on the other hand, is inseparable from education. It is taught and learnt alongside education to complement the required success or achievement expected through education.[6] Importance of ethics, these days, cannot be over-emphasized. Without ethical values reflecting in the way and manner a scholar showcases his knowledge, it makes mockery of the acquired education. In other words, ethics are what make the acquired education meaningful and useful for the purpose for which it was acquired.[7] Thus, acquisition of knowledge without internalization of certain ethical values makes the knowledge acquired vide education to lose its value in the society.

The foregoing represents the general notion of the importance of education and ethics. However, this paper contends that one cannot succeed by solely depending on the knowledge acquired through education at the expense of relevant ethical values. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the nexus between education and ethics from Islamic law perspective.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The topic under reference centers on the nexus between education and ethics from Islamic Law perspective. Thus, for better understanding, certain terms or concepts need be clearly explained.

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[3] D. Mosweunyane, 'The African Educational Evolution: From Traditional Training to Formal Education', *Higher Education Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2013, pp. 50-59
[4] *Ibid*, p. 57
[5] *Ibid*
[6] N. Y. Gulcan, 'Discussing the Importance of Teaching Ethics in Education', *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Science*, 174, 2015, pp. 2622-2625
[7] *Ibid*, p. 2624

'Education' has been defined as the process or art of imparting knowledge, skill and judgment.[8] It is also defined as the facts, skills and ideas that have been learned, either formally or informally.[9] It must be noted that the focus of the term 'education' in this paper is with respect to the one acquired formally.

'Ethics' has been defined as a set of principles of right and wrong behaviour guiding, or representative of, a specific culture, religion, society, group or individual.[10] It is also viewed as the morality of an action.[11] Ethics, in Islamic jurisprudence, is typically referred to as *Adab* (Islamic Etiquettes) which is the totality of the rules and regulations carefully deduced from the provisions of Quran and Sunnah with a view to shaping the Muslims' behaviours towards oneself and towards one another. [12]

'Islamic Law', otherwise classically known Shari'ah, is the totality of the Divine laws, rules and regulations contained in Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) guiding, dictating and regulating the affairs of the adherents of Islamic faith.[13] Shari'ah is divinely made by Allah (SWT) and it is distinct from every other law on earth because it is not subject to periodic amendments due to its comprehensiveness and pro-activeness.[14]

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[8] See 'The English Dictionary', available at http://www.wikitionary.org accessed on 18 September, 2019.

[9] *Ibid*

[10] *Ibid*

[11] N. Y. Gulcan, 'Discussing the Importance of Teaching Ethics in Education', p. 2622

[12] See 'Al-Adab Al-Mufrad' available at http://www.sunnah.com accessed on 18 September, 2019.

[13] See generally, I.D. Abdul Rahman, *Shari'ah: the Islamic Law,* (al-Yassar Publishers, Kurmi Market, Kano, Nigeria, 2007) pp. 1-6

[14] *Shari'ah* is all about justice, fairness, equality, observance of rule of law at all material times and shunning of favoritism, tribalism and other undue preferential treatments in favour some group of people at the expense of other group of people. See generally, A.A. Muhammed-Mikaaeel, 'Capital Punishment in Nigerian Courts: The Position of Abolitionists Vis-à-Vis Islamic Jurisprudence', *Law, Policy and Development Review*, in Prof. E.T. Yebisi, *et al*, (Eds) (EKSU Printing Press, Ado-Ekiti, 2020, ISBN 978-978-57307-6-0), pp. 222-223

'Perspective' is simply defined as the choice of a single angle or point of view from which to sense, categorize, measure or codify experience. Perspective is therefore subjective in nature and it is at the exclusive of individuals, groups, society, entity or institution. The term perspective, in this paper, is used with respect to Islamic Law point of view in relation to the concepts of education and ethics.

## SOURCES OF ISLAMIC LAW

By the consensus[15] of Islamic jurists,[16] the sources from whom the legal rulings of Islamic laws are drawn are principally categorized into four, viz:[17]

1. *Qur'an*
2. *Sunnah*
3. *Qiyas* and
4. *Ijma'a*

*Qur'an*[18] is the direct revelations and undiluted words and commandments[19] from Allah (SWT) sent to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through *Malaku*[20] Jibreel as complete message and guidance for all

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[15] A.A. Muhammed-Mikaaeel, 'Emergence of Usulul Fiqh under Shari'ah: From Developmental to Standardization Stage' *Maiduguri Law Journal (MLJ)*, Vol. 18, (2020), ISSN 11182717, pp. 412-413.

[16] Al-Amidi, Sayf al-Din Abu al-Husayn Ali ibn Abi ibn Muhammad al-Tha'alabi, *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam* (Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Vol. 3, 1985) p.11

[17] Sources of law under Shari'ah are not limited to Quran, Sunnah, Qiyas and Ijma'a, it classically include *Istihsan* (Legal Preference), *'Urf* (Custom), *Istislah* (Welfare), *Istishab* (Presumption of Continuity), etc. see generally, A.A. Muhammed-Mikaaeel, 'Emergence of Usulul Fiqh under Shari'ah: From Developmental to Standardization Stage', pp. 400-417.

[18] A. Zubair, *Al-Musadir al-Arba'atu Fi Tashri'i al-Islamiyyah (The Major Sources of Islamic Law)*, (Al-Madinah Heritage Publications, Lagos, 2005), pp.48-62

[19] A. Abd al-Aziz, *Kashf al-Asrar (Commentary on al-Bazdawi's Kanz wusul ila ma'rifat al-usul)*, (Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Vol. 1, 1997), p. 23. See also, A. Zubair, *The Rules of Law in the Shari'ah* (I.I.C. Publications, Lagos, 1994), pp. 12-13

[20] This means Angel in English language. *Malaku* is an Arabic singular form of *Malaika* which means Angels.

mankind.[21] Qur'an represents the primary source of Shari'ah upon which other sources derive validity. In a typical Islamic State, *Qur'an* (alongside *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)) is the grund norm which is binding upon all Muslims.[22] The commandments of Allah (SWT) contained in the Holy *Qur'an* are mandatory except where it has been expressly relaxed subject to certain conditions or occurrences.[23]

*Sunnah*[24] refers to the totality of the sayings, actions and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during his life time from the commencement of his Prophethood till his death.[25] Sunnah, like Qur'an, also enjoys primacy in the category of sources of Islamic Law. Sunnah and Qur'an are inseparable because the former complements the latter. The two together makes up the constitution of a typical Islamic State such that one cannot choose to depend solely on Holy *Qur'an* to derive legal rules of *Shari'ah* without taking cognizance of the position of *Sunnah*.[26]

*Qiyas*[27] is defined as analogical deduction of rules of law from *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. It is the secondary source of Islamic Law which derives validity from *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.[28] Therefore, for *Qiyas* to be valid

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[21] See *Qur'an* 2:2

[22] K.O. Salman, 'An Analysis of the Primary Sources of Shari'ah' *Maiduguri Law Journal (MLJ)*, Vol. 17, (2019), ISSN 11182717, pp. 341-347.

[23] For instance, fasting is ordained on mankind but if one is sick or on a journey, he is given permission to leave fasting till some other time. *Salah* (five times daily obligatory prayers) is compulsory on Every Muslim but a menstruating woman does not observe *Salah* during the period of *Haydo* (menstruation) and does repay back when she is pure. *Zakat* is compulsory but only on wealthy Muslim whose money has reached *Nisab* and the condition of *Awl* met. And many other examples from the Holy *Qur'an*.

[24] A. Zubair, *Al-Musadir al-Arba'atu Fi Tashri'i al-Islamiyyah (The Major Sources of Islamic Law)*, pp. 67-93

[25] I.A.K. Nyazee, *Islamic Jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh)*, (Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi-2, Indian, 2004), p. 163

[26] See generally, Quran 4 verse 59. See also, K.O. Salman, 'An Analysis of the Primary Sources of Shari'ah', pp. 348-353.

[27] A. Zubair, *Al-Musadir al-Arba'atu Fi Tashri'i al-Islamiyyah (The Major Sources of Islamic Law)*, pp. 122-131

[28] A. Abd al-Aziz, *Kashf al-Asrar (Commentary on al-Bazdawi's Kanz wusul ila ma'rifat al-usul)*, p. 395

under *Shari'ah*, it must not go contrary to the aims and objectives of the divine messages contained in *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

*Ijma'a*[29] means consensus of the opinion of Islamic jurists on matters of Islamic Law. It represents the unanimous positions taken by recognized Islamic Scholars on Islamic law matters.[30] The validity of *Ijma'a* as secondary source of Islamic Law (like *Qiyas*) is also determined by Qur'an and Sunnah.[31] Thus, for *Ijma'a* to be valid, it must pass the validity and compatibility tests with respect to the provisions of *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* respectively.[32]

## CONCEPT OF EDUCATION UNDER SHARI'AH

Education is very important under Shari'ah because it is the bedrock of the development of Islamic law. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) before his Prophet was unlettered though he was versed and highly experienced in the business of trading.[33] To learn how to read was the first task confronted by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) when Angel Jibreel first came to him in the following words:

> Recite in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging substance. Recite and your Lord is the most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught man that which he knew not.[34]

The foregoing exemplifies the importance of education under *Shari'ah*. This is because, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was a novice of the knowledge of Islamic Law but Allah (SWT) appointed Angel Jibreel to

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[29] A. Zubair, *Al-Musadir al-Arba'atu Fi Tashri'i al-Islamiyyah (The Major Sources of Islamic Law)*, pp. 100-117

[30] Al-Amidi, Sayf al-Din Ali b. Muhammad, *al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam* (Abd al-Razzaq Afifi (Ed), al-Maktab al-Islaami, Beirut, 2nd Edition, Vol. 1, 1982), p. 195

[31] K.O. Salman, 'An Analysis of the Primary Sources of Shari'ah', pp. 353-357.

[32] See Quran 4 verse 59

[33] The Prophet (SAW) acquired mastery of skills required in Trading through informal education.

[34] Qur'an 96:1-5

The upper most hand is better than the lower most hand.[45]

Thus, the one who seeks knowledge of anything leading to enhancement of his/her sustenance, in a lawful manner, on earth and therefore becoming self-subsistence is better than the one who fails to do that but resorts to begging as means of livelihood. This is highly frowned at by the Prophet (SAW) when he laid emphasis through the above quoted Hadith. Be that as it may, the importance of education under Shari'ah can be briefly summarized thus:[46]

1. Seeking of knowledge is sacred and obligatory on every Muslim, male and female.[47]
2. Knowledge is pivotal because a person without knowledge is like someone walking along track in complete darkness.
3. Knowledge is identified in Islam as an act of *'Ibadah* (worship).
4. Knowledge pursued and practiced with modesty and humility leads to beauty, dignity, freedom and justice.
5. Knowledge brings one closer to his or her Creator.
6. Acquisition of knowledge leads to achievement of the bounties of this world.

## CONCEPT OF ETHICS UNDER SHARI'AH

Islamic law defines the way and manner Muslims should behave in all situations.[48] The technique with which Shari'ah achieves this is through the rules of ethics (*al-Adab*). The rules of ethics under Shari'ah are elastic and comprehensive. However, recourse shall be made to the ones relevant to the topic under discussion.

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[45] See 'Saheehu Jaami'I, No. 8195' available at http://www.sunnah.com accessed on 18 September, 2019.

[46] See 'The Importance of Education in Islam' accessed at <https;//www.islamawarness.not/education/importance.html> on 18 September, 2019.

[47] See Suratul Zumarah verse 9

[48] R. Muhamad, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: An Islamic Perspective', available at https://www.google.com/search-Corporate-Social-Responsibility-An-Islamic-Perspective/ accessed on 16th November, 2020.

It is noteworthy that pursuit of education principally brings to fore the achievements of three things: that is, being able to become a scholar, being able to earn means of livelihood and being able to be at vantage position for act of worship. Thus, after the attainment of the aforementioned consequences of education, adherent to rules of ethics determines one's success or downfall.[49] To this end, some of the rules of ethics under Shari'ah that are indispensable for seekers knowledge or who those have acquired knowledge shall be briefly discussed under the following subheadings:

## KINDNESS TO PARENT

As a student of knowledge or scholar, kindness to parent must be observed at all times. This is because acquisition of knowledge exposes one to certain arrogant behaviours that if caution is not observed, one tends to misbehave to his or her parent or elders. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was reported to have said:

> The pleasure of the Lord lies in the pleasure of the parent.
> The anger of the Lord lies in the anger of the parent.[50]

## GIVING RESPECT TO *MAWLAS* (MASTERS/SUPERIORS)

Giving respect to one's *Mawlas*[51] is a very important attribute that students of knowledge and the scholars must inculcate. To this end, the Prophet says:

> No one will lower himself because of Allah except that Allah elevates him.[52]

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[49] The scriptural story of the down fall of *Iblees* as told in the Holly *Qur'an* is a case in point. See *Qur'an* 2:30-34

[50] See *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* 2 Book 1, Hadith 2 available at http://www.sunnah.com accessed on 18 September, 2019. See also, Q17:23.

[51] *Mawla* is an Arabic word literally meaning Master, not necessarily in the sense of Master-slave relationship because it is used for people whom one has passed through by learning certain types of knowledge or the other from whether formally or informally. It also refers to someone whom one is still working under who is in a higher rank/position.

[52] Reported by Muslim

In another hadith, the Prophet said:

> It is not part of us, he who does not know the rights of our elders.[53]

## ADHERENCE TO CORRECTION

As students of knowledge and even scholars, it is important to adhere to correction whenever one makes mistake after being corrected. This is deeply rooted in the popular saying that 'no one is above mistake; perfection belongs to Allah (SWT) alone.' Failure to admit mistakes is the attribute of an arrogant person. Thus, one should at any material point in time endeavour to yield to correction in order to attain success in this world and in the hereafter. The Prophet was reported to have said:

> The people that adhere to correction in this word are the people of correction in the Next world. The people that adhere not to correction in this world are the people of the incorrect in the Next World.[54]

### CONSULTATIVE TECHNIQUE

No one has monopoly of knowledge and two heads are better than one. Hence, it is highly imperative for students of knowledge or the scholars to make use of consultative technique in their areas of study or research for the best outcome to avoid evitable mistakes. According to Prophet Muhammad (SAW):

> People never seek advice without being guided to the best possibility available to them.[55]

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[53] Saheehu Jaami'i No. 15444
[54] See *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* 221, Book 11, Hadith 1.
[55] See *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* 258, book 13, Hadith 3. See also Q42:38

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

Students of knowledge must be trust worthy in all ramifications otherwise the purpose of the knowledge sought to be acquired will be defeated. The position of students is symbolic of the concept of *Amanah* (Trust) in Islamic jurisprudence depending on whichever angle one perceives it. Students must therefore not betray the trust entrusted on them by their parents in terms of being serious with their studies, not engaging in examination malpractices, not engaging in social vices etc.

The above are some of the ethical rules under Shari'ah as relevant to the topic under discussion. It must be noted that the list is endless.

## NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ETHICS

As posited above under the introduction, education and ethics are inseparable as far as Islamic law is concerned. The reason being that knowledge has the risk or likelihood of intoxicating the person who has acquired it. The majority of the Islamic jurists are of the view that knowledge intoxicates and brings about arrogance and showing off on the part of knowledgeable. Arrogance and showing off are some of the attributes seriously detested by Allah SWT and His Messenger (SAW). In many traditions of the Prophet, he discouraged all sorts of behaviour depicting arrogance.[56] To show the gravity of hatred for arrogance in the sight of Allah, the Prophet warned that any one who exhibits an iota of arrogance will not smell the fragrance of *Jannah* (Paradise). The Prophet was reported to have said with respect to a scholar who shows off with his knowledge thus:

> The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be ... a man who has studied (religious) knowledge and has taught it who used to recite Quran. He will be brought and Allah will know him, His favours and he will recognize them. The

[56] It is important to note that Knowledge is *Amanah* under Shari'ah and an act of worship. Arrogance, if found its way into one's act of worship will do nothing than to ruin it.

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> Almighty will say: and what did you do about them? I studies (religious) knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Quran for your sake. He will say: you have lied - you did but study religious knowledge that it might be said (of you): He is learned. And you recited the Quran that it might be said (of you): He is a reciter. And so it was said. Then he will be dragged along his face until he is cast into Hell-fire ....[57]

To therefore be freed from the danger of arrogance and showing off associated with acquisition of knowledge which could cost a Muslim to lose his/her *Akhirah* (Hereafter), it is better to adhere strictly to *Shari'ah* rules of ethics which are designed to checkmate unwanted behaviours on the part of Muslim students and scholars. Thus, both scholars and seekers of knowledge must be humble with their knowledge at all time and see knowledge as act of *'Ibadah* rather being arrogant with it.

## CONCLUSION

In Islamic jurisprudence, the importance of seeking knowledge by way of education cannot be over-emphasized.[58] This is because knowledge is the bedrock of Shari'ah itself. *Al-Adab* (ethics) is a special and unique branch of knowledge which is separate on its own but not usually learnt independently.[59] Invariably, it is usually learnt together with substantive education because of the impact it should have on the seekers of knowledge. Thus, education and ethics are inseparable and very important under Shari'ah. Infact, a knowledgeable man without *Adab* is worse than an ignorant man.[60] The reason being that ethics (*Adab*) check or prevent a knowledgeable man from unwanted behaviour such

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[57] See Hadith 6 of 'The Forty (40) Hadith *Qudsi*' available at http://www.sunnah.com accessed on 18 September, 2019.

[58] Z.A. Wani, and T. Maqbol, 'The Islamic Era and Its Importance to Knowledge and Development of Libraries', *Library Philosophy Practice E-Journal*, 4-1-2012, ISSN 1522-0222, PP. 1-4

[59] T.J. Al-Wani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (International Institute of Thought, London/Washington, 1426 AH/2005, ISBN 1-56564-414-X), pp. 21-55

[60] I. Sukardi, 'Character Education Based on Values: an Islamic Perspective, *Journal of Islamic Education* Vol. 21, No. 1, June, 2016, pp. 43-53'

as arrogance, showing off, disrespectfulness and other negative behaviours which are capable of ruining the life and hereafter of a Muslim.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above discussion, it is hereby recommended thus:

1. Every seeker of knowledge must be prepared to be humble during and after acquisition of knowledge pursuant to the relevant rules of *Adab* (ethics).
2. Acquisition of knowledge must be viewed as an act of worship that does not accommodate arrogance, showing off, disrespectfulness and allied negative behavious.
3. Ethics (*al-Adab*) should be incorporated into each subject taught from primary school to secondary school level.
4. Our Tertiary Institutions should incorporate compulsory courses on ethics in addition to courses being undertaken by students.
5. Periodic awareness in terms of conferences, seminars, symposium etc. on the importance of education and ethics should be organized with a view to sanitizing our rotten environment.
6. Muslim law students and students generally should adequately be exposed to importance of education and ethics from Shari'ah point of view to increase literacy level amongst the Nigerian populace.

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