

# Integration of Islamic and Secular Education in Kenya: A Synthesis of the Literature

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**Abstract:** This paper consolidates literature on the contemporary thought and practice of integrating secular and Islamic education in Kenya. Private schools mandated to provide secular education by the Ministry of Education offer Islamic education in addition. Integrated education seeks to bring together two educational paradigms that have different ideologies. On the one hand, Islamic education is part of the Islamic doctrine with the aim of inducting children to the Islamic faith so as to mould their character and help in their upbringing to become responsible citizens and religious leaders who will promote the continuity of Islamic religion. On the other hand, the primary dictum of education in a secular context is to prepare learners for productive employment. Integration of knowledge is premised on the philosophy that everything in this world is in some way connected with every other thing. Hence, religious education and secular education, which are linked to each other, should not be taught in isolation because they share the goal of eventually educating the child.

**Keywords:** Islamic education, Secular education, Integration, Integrated schools, Madrassa, Duksi.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Integration of secular and Islamic education is an emergent contemporary practice in Kenya, particularly in areas with significant Muslim populations. The practice is a response to demand for Islamic education to satisfy religious needs and demand for secular education to get socialized to the labour market and understand the secular world. Integration as a strategy refers to the concurrent provision of both Islamic and secular education in one institution. Integration is premised on overcoming dichotomy in education of Muslim children where the two types of education are traditionally provided by different institutions. The integrated education system foresees harmony between Islamic and secular education paradigms by giving adequate attention to religious instruction to maintain cultural values, while at the same time providing education and skills to students so they may succeed and contribute to the needs of a developing and modernizing world (Matovu, 2013).

The institutions that integrate the secular and Islamic curricular are called integrated schools. These schools, mainly private, are registered with Ministry of Education to offer the national secular curriculum but they in addition choose to offer a religious curriculum to accommodate demand for Islamic education. Before integration, Muslim students in secular-only schools usually attended Madrassa (Islamic School) and Duksi (Qur'anic School) to seek Islamic education in the evening and on weekends. While little research has been carried out in Kenya to provide statistical information on integrated schools, the popularity of these schools is evident from the results of a survey conducted on 66 faith-based education institutions. The survey found that 37 (more than half) of these institutions were integrated schools [providing secular and Islamic education] while the rest were either Qur'anic School or Islamic Schools (Abdulkadir, 2012).

## II. PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

### A. Philosophy of Secular Education:

Secular and Islamic education are premised on different philosophies underpinning secularism and religion. Philosophically, secularism refers to the belief in the existential and the empirical and a rejection of the transcendental and

the metaphysical (Hashemi, 2010). In the social sphere, secularism correlates with the process of diminishing religious influence in social institutions, communal life and human relationships (ibid). The product of secular education is, therefore, people with secular beliefs and practices as opposed to religious beliefs and practices.

Secular education is mainly premised on the concept of human capital theory which suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, which makes individuals employable in the labour market and assures them of future income and increasing their lifetime earnings (Rothbard, 2010). Human capital theory conceptualizes individuals as economic assets capable of contributing to economic growth and therefore education is only valued in terms of expected rates of economic returns. This concept of 'economic man' is the cause of material fixation accentuated by secular education in a world where material progress and prosperity is the goal of life (Fitzsimons, 1999). Secular education system is, however, faulted for focusing on material pursuits and in the process excluding spiritual and moral training (Sanjakdar, 2001). The ultimate aim of secular education, according to Yaacob, Fadilah and Embong (2008) is to produce secular individuals who will assimilate secular values and in the future would be able to develop a secular society that is averse to religion. Human capital theory also has equally been critiqued because of its narrow focus of education as an economic phenomenon rather than focus on the holistic goals of education, which should include spiritual and moral education. Since secular education aligns with labour market needs it has a standard curriculum that is tightly controlled, it is provided in standardized schools and taught by trained teachers all in an effort to make sure that the education provided conforms to market needs as subscribed by the human capital theory.

### ***B. Secular Primary School Education in Kenya:***

European missionaries introduced secular education into Kenya in the mid nineteenth century when John Ludwig Krapf arrived in Mombasa in 1844. Krapf initially settled at Rabai Mpya before abandoning the mission and going back to Europe in 1853 (Nthamburi, 1991). He later returned to Mombasa in 1862 to establish a new mission station at Ribe and other stations along the coast. The chartering of the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1888 and the building of the Uganda Railway provided an impetus for different Christian missions from Europe and North America to move inland establishing schools, teacher training colleges, bible institutes, and hospitals (ibid).

The role of secular education is known to be the establishment of the human resource base for the generation of wealth and improved quality of life (Makori, 2005). Therefore, education is viewed as a productive investment to both the individual and the society. In Kenya, the provision of education at all levels is a partnership between the government, communities, the private sector, and civil society (religious organization and non-governmental organizations) (Jepkemoi, 2011). Primary education is free and compulsory in public schools. The formal education system is managed by the Ministry of Education through a network that extends from the headquarters to the counties (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). The secular education system in Kenya commonly called (8-4-4) has four levels: two years of pre-primary, eight years of primary, four years of secondary, and four years of university. Primary education is the first cycle of the national 8-4-4 system of education, introduced in 1985. The main purpose of primary education is to prepare students to participate in the social, political, and economic wellbeing of the country, and prepare them to be global citizens (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). It lasts eight years and caters for 6-13 year-old children. The course is divided into lower (Standards 1-3) and upper primary (Standards 4 - 8). At the end of the cycle (normally at age 14), pupils sit the highly competitive national Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination (KCPE).

The national primary school curriculum formulated by the ministry of education, which also oversees its implementation, has five examinable subjects (English, Kiswahili, Math, Science and Social studies) and three non-examinable subjects (Physical Education, Creative Arts, and pastoral programme) (Jepkemoi, 2011; UNESCO-IBE, 2011). Islamic Religious Education though taught separately, is but one of a number of subjects examined under social studies. Secular education is offered in public and private primary schools with English being the language of instruction. While integrated private schools purposely target the Muslim children, most Muslim children still attend public schools with some supplementing the secular education by attending Qur'anic schools and *Madrasa* during the evening or on weekends because Islamic Religious Education covered under Social studies is seen as insufficient for a good grounding in Islam (Abdulkadir, 2012; Williams, 2009).

### **C. Philosophy of Islamic Education:**

Proponents of integration view the exclusivity of secular education as being fundamentally at variance with Islam. Islam provides a complete code of life and strives for a balanced, harmonious *weltanschauung* (Mababaya & Mababaya, n.d.). As a teaching, Islam contains a value system on which the process of Islamic education developed its goals. Abdullah (2010) outlined four fundamental goals of Islamic education: (1) to assist the formation of a noble character, (2) preparation for the life of this world and the life hereafter, (3) growing scientific spirit through study of science and (4) to give students professional training so that they can find sustenance in life with dignity. Islamic education thus, envisages the complete person, including the rational, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions of the individual. Envisaged goals of Islamic education seem to suggest that, a comprehensive and integrated approach to education is required to produce a good, well-rounded person aiming at the balanced growth of the total personality (Cook, 1999). This balanced growth was evident in lives and works of leading Muslim scholars of the period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries when the Islamic empire was considered the vanguard of science and technology (Education Encyclopedia, 2013). However, there are concerns that Islamic education as outlined above is today not offered in traditional Islamic institutions, Madrasa and Duksi. In this respect, Tauhidi (2001) outlined five reasons to show that education in Muslim society today is wanting. First, it does not focus fundamentally on character development; instead, it focuses on facts and rote information. Second, much of the content taught is not directly relevant to the real lives of the students in terms of their needs, concerns, challenges, and aspirations. Third, Islamic education is inadequate because the method of instruction is centered on *teaching* rather than *learning*. Fourth, it does not prepare students with the real-life skills needed to function successfully in today's society. Finally, Muslim education often lacks a solid understanding of the psychology, pedagogy, and sociology of child development. For these reasons, Muslim education has resulted in little genuine education for a balanced growth of students.

### **D. Islamic Education in Duksi and Madrasa**

Islamic education was introduced into present day Kenya through the Somali-inhabited North Eastern region and pioneer Muslim traders who arrived on the Kenyan coast around the eighth century. Islamic education was typically provided in mosques, private homes, shops, makeshift structures and in the open. In the eleventh century the Islamic religious studies became institutionalised and classes were conducted in a formal classroom setting. In Kenya, Islamic education takes one of two basic structures: Qur'anic schools (*Duksi or Chuo*) and Islamic schools (*Madrasa*). Both supplement the secular education offered in public schools.

Duksi is a place where Muslim children go to read and memorise Qur'an only. Typically, a child attending only Duksi would take three to four years to memorize the complete Qur'an. Afterwards the child continues attending Duksi to take three or four complete cycles to ensure that the Qur'an memorized sticks (Anzar, 2003). Quran is organized into chapters called *surahs* and children memorise chapter after chapter. The approach to teaching Quran in Duksi is 'Multi-chapter' teaching, which involves the combination of children in different chapter levels taught by one teacher. Multi-chapter teaching has the unique advantage of giving every child individual attention and progression. Each child is taught independent of others and has adequate time to learn what is taught in a sitting. A Qur'anic school usually functions during hours that are most compatible to the time and work schedules of the students: either first thing in the morning or late in the afternoon after their school day (Anzar, 2003; Halstead, 2004; "History of Islamic Education.doc," n.d.; Iddrisu, 2002).

Madrasa on the other hand is the Islamic cultural education institution established to fulfil educational needs of Muslim children for cultural and social values. Unlike in Duksi where the goal is for children to memorize Quran, Madrasa offers more years of education, more depth in religious studies, and its graduates are qualified to enter Islamic universities or equivalent institutions. A madrasa education system is coherent, organized, and follows an Islamic curriculum. These schools may or may not integrate secular subjects into the curriculum. The *madrasa* system, adopted from Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, has four levels of education: Nursery (*Rawdhah*), six years of primary (*Ibtidai*), three years of secondary (*I'dadi*), three years of high school (*Thanawi*), and four years of university. The curriculum of the *madrasa* has between 14 and 20 subjects depending on the level. The primary level (*Ibtidai*) has 14 subjects, secondary (*I'dadi*) has 17, and high school (*Thanawi*) has 20 subjects. However, the number of subjects may vary from madrasa to madrasa depending on the curriculum adapted or adopted. The main subjects that cut across all levels are Quran, *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet), *Ta'rikh* (Islam history), *A'qeeda* (theology), *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), *Seerah* (the life history of

Prophet Muhammad), and Arabic language. Arabic is the language of instruction at all levels. Like in secular schools, under the madrassa education system students advance regularly from one grade level to the next since there is clear-cut division between primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, based on performance standards and examinations (Anzar, 2003; Blanchard, 2008; Education Encyclopedia, 2013; Lubis et al., 2009; Sanjakdar, 2001).

The curriculum of Madaaris (plural of Madrassa) is determined by different schools of thought. For example, Pakistan which has a number of Madaaris has five major Islamic schools of thought: Deobandi, Bareili, Ahl-ul-Hadith, Salafi, and Shia (Anzar, 2003). Each sect has their own Madrassa in which they teach their own version of Islam. Madaaris in Garissa follow the Salafi school of thought, which is popular in Saudi Arabia. The curriculum of Madaaris in Garissa is mostly from Saudi Arabia.

According to many Muslim thinkers, while the philosophical shortcoming of secular education is that it does not reflect the fundamental aims and objectives of Islamic education, the system of Islamic education itself remains merely a prescriptive or parochial litany of moral do's and don'ts (Abdullah, 2010; Hamza, Isa, & Janor, 2010; Hashim, 1996; Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi, & Liaghatdar, 2012; Omar, 2012). Hence, the need to weave intellectual and spiritual knowledge skill-fully and articulately throughout the curriculum and into the daily educational experiences of children (Abdalla et al., 2006). To achieve this requires a comprehensive and holistic approach to learning and a unifying principle of education where Islamic and secular knowledge are integrated (Tauhidi, 2001).

### III. INTEGRATED EDUCATION

#### A. *The general concept of integrated education:*

The idea of integrated education seems to be grounded in Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of organism and process thought. Whitehead believed that *nothing is in isolation and that everything in this world is in some way connected with every other thing in this world* (Fan, 2004). Whitehead's philosophy can be extrapolated to mean that religious education and secular education should not be taught in isolation because they share the goal of eventually educating the child, hence are linked to each other.

The concept of integrated education emphasizes development of various aspects of the student (mind, body, emotion and spirit) at the same time and integrating them into a whole person (Fan, 2004). Integrated education not only promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils but also prepares students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (Kay & Francis, 1997). In an integrated education, there is union of knowledge for students to study both Islamic and secular knowledge at the same time (Matovu, 2013). This is because Islam rejects the duality of religion and science, the world and the Hereafter, and virtues and vices because the natural and empirical sciences have the same religious status as theology and philosophy of the divinity (Lubis et al., 2009). Integrated education can also help students to uphold the Islamic belief, the laws, and the Islamic morals in their professions and all their ways of life (Yaacob et al., 2008).

The very notion of integration incorporates the idea of unity between forms of knowledge and the respective disciplines (Loepp, 1999). The premise supporting the move toward integrated curricula is that the current system of discipline-based education is not as effective as it must be. The assumption is that most real world problems are multidisciplinary in nature and that the current curriculum is unable to engage students in real world situations (Fogarty, 1991). Thus, a discipline-based curriculum should be replaced with an integrated curriculum. There have been attempts to integrate many things in the secular education. For instance, life skills education, peace education, sex education and HIV/AIDS education have been recently integrated into various academic disciplines. This paper is about Islamic curriculum being integrated into secular schools. While the secular curriculum is designed by the government, the Islamic curriculum is prepared by Islamic teachers in integrated schools who review and update it every few years (Williams, 2009).

#### B. *The Concept of Integrated Education in Muslim Society:*

Indeed the integrated education concept is critical in contemporary Muslim societies which exist in a dual system of education where secular and religious education are treated as independent systems upholding exclusive and possibly contradictory educational philosophies (Hashim, 1996). It has therefore been argued that education, whether Islamic or secular, when taught in isolation, have not succeeded in serving the needs of today's Muslim society (Thobani, 2007). This is because both secular and Islamic education are founded on separate and at times conflicting ideologies where

secular education focuses on human capital development which emphasises earthly material possessions, while Islamic education has its foundation on the needs of human spiritual development (Bryner, n.d.). Therefore, it has been difficult for Muslims to choose between the two forms of education which they feel are equally important for their children. The outcome of this challenge is efforts to integrate the two paradigms by establishing an integrated education system that calls for reformulation of educational policy and curriculum so as to integrate the two curricula (Hashim, 1996).

### ***C. Integrated Education in Kenya:***

Integration of education is not a new concept in the Kenyan school system. The 8-4-4 system of education which emanated from the Mackay Report of 1981 recommended integration of technical and vocational subjects in the curriculum, as a way of addressing the unemployment of school leavers (Makori, 2005).

The Kenya education system has been based on the principle of secularism since the colonial period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Oded, 2000). The absence of religious education in the curriculum in post-independence was a consequence of a 1964 recommendation by the Kenya Education Commission that religious subjects should not be taught in public schools in order to promote equality in education and prevent schools from becoming centers of religious propaganda and proselytization (Kenya Education Commission, 1964). This educational secularism was itself a logical outgrowth of the doctrine of the separation of church and state, which reflected aggressive and proselytizing unbelief (Phillips, 2006). However, In 1968 the government issued a law declaring that general religious education should be taught as a regular subject in every school (Oded, 2000). This resulted in the integration of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools (ibid). Despite this development, Muslim parents who were not convinced that IRE as a subject was sufficient for a good grounding in Islam, for being too narrow, continued to enrol their children in Madrasa and Qur'anic schools for evening and weekend instruction in Islamic studies (Abdulkadir, 2012).

Apart from the group of parents who were not satisfied that IRE was adequate to provide Islamic knowledge, another group of parents was sceptical about secular education as a whole because it was associated with Western Christian missionaries and therefore did not take their children to secular schools (Williams, 2009). Instead, these parents enrolled their children in non-formal Madrasa and Duksi to acquire Islamic education (ibid). Rubin (2010) argues that it is this demand for Islamic education that saw Kenyan Muslims vastly spread Madrasa education in the 1970s. To date many Muslim children enrolled in madaaris are not formally recognized as part of the formal education system despite the Government intensifying its efforts to achieve the EFA goal of providing quality, accessible and relevant education (Abdulkadir, 2012).

In an attempt to provide an all-inclusive quality education that is accessible and relevant, the government through accelerated learning project of the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) introduced Integrated Islamic Education Programme. The programme trained some Madrasa and Duksi teachers on how to integrate religious learning with the secular Early Childhood Education (ECD) activities in Muslim dominated regions (Manani, 2007). While integration at ECD level was accepted after negotiations with Muslim scholars, offers of funding for the 'improvement' of Madaaris from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were rejected in 2004 by Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya citing an ulterior motive behind the offer (Rubin, 2010). Nevertheless, the government recently formulated policies that aim to integrate madrasa and Duksi in to the formal system of education.

Through the new Policy Framework for Education and Training 2012 and the Basic Education Act 2013, the government proposed to integrate the *Madrasa* and *Duksi* systems into the formal education system in predominantly Muslim areas to improve access and retention in primary schools (Kenya Gazette Supplement, 2012). This policy consideration follows previous initiatives of the government to integrate secular subjects into madrasa and Duksi curricula. This intended move by the government is however, being questioned by some Muslim clerics and parents who fear that *Madaaris* will lose autonomy once integrated. The motive of the government has also been associated with the global war on terror because of the modern perception in some quarters that *Madaaris* teach terrorism and the belief that if secular education was introduced in this madaaris then muslim students would be more rational and less inclined to support terrorism (Crisis Group Africa, 2012). Since the Kenya Defense Forces began 'Operation Linda Nchi' in Somalia on October 14, 2011, a number of terrorist attacks happened in Kenya (Nzes, 2012). According to a timeline of events in Wikipedia (2013), between October 2011 and December 2014, at least 53 attacks happened. The attacks mostly targeted Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu and Nairobi Counties. Much of these attacks were blamed on the al-Qa`ida-linked al-Shabaab, Somalia's most powerful non-government armed group. According to a Reuters report by Maclean, Khamis, and Ahmed (2012)

Kenyan fighters constituted 25% of Al-Shabaab's total forces. While the report does not explicitly mention or link madrassa or its graduates to al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya, responses to counter the attacks have involved instituting livelihood and workforce readiness programs, such as the Garissa Youth Project, for ethnic-Somali youth at-risk of al-Shabaab recruitment (USAID, 2013).

#### ***D. The Advent of Integrated Islamic Schools in Kenya:***

The high demand for secular education among Muslim parents and their great commitment to religious education needs to be balanced (Sanjakdar, 2001). This balance is traditionally attained by sending children to secular schools in the morning while providing madrassa classes in the evenings and on weekends (Williams, 2009). This system is however, reported to place a heavy demand in terms of time and workload on Muslim students who have to cope with two separate work-intensive curricula at the same time (Kadir, 2009). Over the past two decades, Islamic organizations and individuals found a possible solution to the problem. A new type of privately run school that teaches both secular and madrassa subjects has been introduced in parts of Kenya inhabited by sizeable Muslim populations. This school called 'integrated school' is the only chance students have to obtain an integrated education in primary schools (Williams, 2009). Students not only save time and energy by attending an integrated school but also achieve better results in the primary school leaving exams (Tan, 2011). Despite the prevalence and perceived advantages of integration, very little is yet known about the successes and challenges of integrating Islamic and secular education in the integrated schools.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This paper presented a synthesis of the literature on integration of Islamic and secular education in Kenya. The literature revealed that the government of Kenya's effort to integrate general religious education into the regular curriculum of schools was successful but fell short of meeting the expectations of Muslim parents who wanted a more Islamized curriculum. The recent proposal to integrate Dukki and Madrassa into the formal school curriculum is yet to actualize in the public school system. Meanwhile, the integrated private schools continue with the practice they introduced at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, very little is known about how these schools have succeeded in integrating two divergent, demanding and knowledge-intensive curricula.

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