

BARAKA POLICY INSTITUTE (BPI)

SUMMARY REPORT

ON

3-DAY NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND MOBILITY IN POOR MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

OCTOBER, 2017

1. CONFERENCE FOCUS AND CONTEXT

1.1 Background

Education has been identified as the greatest panacea for poverty, social exclusion, underdevelopment and self-marginalization. Accordingly, a number of social groups including the Muslim community in Ghana have been identified as deprived and poor mainly due to the lack of educational achievements by its members, particularly the youth.

A recent study by the Baraka Policy Institute (BPI) revealed an abysmally low representation of Muslims in competitive courses at the various public universities in the country. Also, enrolments in second cycle schools for Muslim children across the country compared to the Muslim population size and the general national enrolments levels raises concern for the better future for the youth of the Muslim community. Over the years, little deliverable efforts have been made towards improving the socio-economic condition of the Muslim community in Ghana through the provision of quality education. Indeed, it has been identified that the absence of a general coherent strategy for improving education in Muslim communities in Ghana is one of the main obstacles for enhancing educational achievements in such deprived communities.

In the light of this, the Baraka Policy Institute (BPI) conveyed a national forum that brought together key Muslim stakeholders in the delivery of education in Muslim communities for critical deliberations. The conference sought to arrive at specific strategies and deliverable action plan towards improving education for Muslim communities in the country. Key stakeholders were drawn from the wider

Muslim communities nation-wide and engaged in strategic brainstorming sessions after receiving keynote addresses on relevant topic areas.

The conference was under the theme *“Towards increased positive educational outcomes for poverty alleviation in deprived communities in Ghana – The Role of Stakeholders in the Muslim Community”* It was held from 20-22 October, 2107 at the Institute of Local Government Studies in Accra, from 9:00 am -5:00pm on the first and second day and 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on the last day. Participants from outside Accra arrived on the 19th October, 2107.

1.2 Conference Core Objectives

The core objective of the 3-day conference was to strategize towards achieving higher positive educational outcomes and progression rate for the youth in poor Muslim communities in Ghana.

2. THE CONFERENCE

2.1 Attendance

Ninety-Eight (98) participants were drawn from all the ten (10) regions Ghana. The composition of the participants were Muslim Educationists, Policy Analysts, Education Managers including all the ten Regional Managers of the Islamic Education Unit (IEU) and the General Manager as well as members of the national Islamic Education Unit Council, Office of the National Chief Imam. Imams and Muslim Chiefs,, Civil Society leaders and Directors of NGOs providing educational services in deprived Muslim communities, among many others. Twenty-one of the participants were females representing 22% of the total participants. (The full Participants information and Attendance lists are attached).

2.2 Key Conference Business

2.2.1 Formal Opening

The conference was opened with a short ceremony on the first day, October, 20, 2017. In addition to the 98 participants invited for the 3-day conference, over 100 distinguished guests were invited for the opening ceremony. The Special Guest of Honour for the opening ceremony was Hon Minister of Inner Cities and Zongo Development, Alhaji Abubakar Saddique; and Madame Yvette Malcioln of the USAID represented the US Embassy in Accra. Other dignitaries were from the Diplomatic Corps, Heads of educational institutions, Opinion leaders and the Media also attended the formal opening of the conference.

Sheikh Ishaak Nuamah, a leading Islamic Scholar in Ghana, an Educationist and a Board Member of BPI spoke on behalf of the BPI Board and indicated in his welcome address that, the conference was expected to come out with proposals to help improve Muslim Education in Ghana. One core function of BPI he stated, is to deal with educational accessibilities for the marginalized communities in the country. He added that, BPI in partnership with other stakeholders succeeded in making Arabic language an examinable subject in Senior High Schools in Ghana. He mentioned that the Islamic Education Unit since its inception thirty years ago has been bedeviled with numerous problems which has affected the performance of the school it supervises. He therefore urge the conference to deliberate on these challenges and come out with specific deliverables on the way forward.

The Executive Director of BPI, Mr. Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed gave a general overview of the conference. He mentioned that, one way a country could alleviate poverty for its people is through the provision of education. He mentioned that findings from some research conducted by BPI showed that, apart from the small percentage of Muslims in tertiary institutions, very minute percent of Muslims pursue competitive courses. He informed the gathering that three main issues were to be discussed by the conference; (1) How to strengthen the Islamic Education Unit (IEU), (2) Improving the quality of Islamic SHS's in Ghana and (3)

Increasing Access to tertiary education for Muslim students/youth. He encouraged all participants to get involved in order to get implementable and workable action plan at the end of the conference.

Madame Yvette Malcioln, an Education Specialist with USAID who represented the US Embassy, in her short speech touched on the significance of improving literacy and numeracy among children and called on the Muslim community to put all their efforts towards improving children's ability to read and write. She mentioned that a top priority of the USAID is to work with the Government to improve teaching and learning in primary schools.

Hon Abubakar Saddique Boniface who formally opened the conference said his speech that he was glad to be part of the conference for three main reasons. First, for the good work of BPI and the role they are playing in improving education in deprived communities. Second, conference theme was relevant to the work of his ministry and lastly, issues to be discussed at the conference were very important. His ministry, he said, had been engaged with BPI during its third anniversary in February this year where he delivered a paper on the vision of the Ministry. The minister also added that, he considered it a duty to associate himself with BPI and other Think-Tanks who are focused on education, since education is the greatest tool to alleviate poverty and a tool for the general improvement in the lives of people. He added that the cardinal factor to development is education and that one can confidently assert that the main medication for poverty is Education. On Islamic Education, he said, since time immemorial, Islamic education was not well catered for, hence, the establishment of the Zongo development fund becomes very important. He expressed his delight about the conference which he said should not become a talk show but geared towards the development of workable strategic plan to enhance education in Muslim communities. The Minister also spoke about the Zongo development fund bill which he said, was going through a strategic process

now and would be passed by first week of November. The opening ceremony was chaired by Alhaji Seidu Salifu, Former Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE).

2.2.2 Keynotes Addresses

Three keynotes addresses were delivered at the conference. The keynote address were delivered on the following sub-theme of the conference: These keynotes addresses were followed by Discussions.

1. Strengthening the Islamic Education Unit for Positive Pre-Tertiary educational Outcomes for the Muslim communities in Ghana, delivered by Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, a former Regional Manager of the IEU. Two Focused Discussion Papers on the topic were also delivered:
 - *Islamic Education in Ghana: The Issues, Challenges and Prospects by Dr Yunus Dumbe (Lecturer, KNUST)*
 - *How to strengthen the governance structure of Islamic Education in Ghana by Mr. Abdulai Issaka (Lecturer, Valley View University)*
2. The Question of Quality and the Proliferation of Islamic SHS's in Ghana, delivered by Prof Imoro Braimah, the Pro Vost of the College of Humanities, KNUST.
3. Ensuring Access to tertiary education for deprived Students in Muslim communities, delivered by Dr Gamel Nasser Adam, Vice President-Academic Affairs, Islamic University College and a board member of BPI.

Each presentation was allotted 40 minutes for the delivery and 2 hours for deliberations. Participants, having been well equipped with information from the presentations, engaged in in-depth deliberations and referred specific decision making issues to group deliberations for outcomes.

2.2.3 Focus Group Deliberations

In the afternoon of the second day of the conference, participants were put into four thematic groups to deliberate and come out with deliverable Action Plans on the key conference themes which were as follows:

1. *Towards making the Islamic Education Unit more effective and responsive to its mandate.*
2. *Ensuring Quality Islamic Senior High Schools In Ghana*
3. *Ensuring Access To Competitive Tertiary Programmes For Students From Poor Muslim Communities*
4. *Muslims inputs on Government new 30% SHS admission Policy into elite schools in Ghana.*

2.2.4 Conference Outcomes

At the last plenary session of the conference after group deliberations, the conference agreed on following specific action plans to be implemented:

Restructuring the Islamic Education Unit for positive learning outcomes

1. Restructure the current National Council of the Islamic Unit Council to include diverse expertise. In addition the National Council should have the following four sub-committees.
 - Technical or Educational committee – to be in charge of educational policies
 - Fund raising and Management Committee – For mobilization of resources and management of the fund
 - Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee – For curriculum review and development, quality assurance and training.
 - Audit assurance committee – to make sure all money mobilized are properly accounted for.
2. Working to strengthen the partnership agreement between government and Islamic education unit in order to help achieve the goals of Islamic education.

3. Set up an adhoc committee to look at the proposed structure further and make proposal for the selection, representation, tenure and accountability of offices and office holders.
4. Pursue a sensitization effort in order to make key stakeholders understand the proposed change in the structure and try to get them buy into it.
5. Prepare detailed guidelines or statute to govern the operations of the Islamic Education Unit based on the new proposed structure.
6. BPI should prepare implementation action plans and set up a committee to effect the restructuring
7. BPI should organize a workshop on effective educational administration procedures for Managers of the Islamic Education Unit.

Ensuring Quality Islamic Senior High Schools In Ghana

1. Every Islamic Senior High School should have a clearly defined mission and vision statements with stated objectives towards attainment of the vision. These must be at the fingertips of every actor in the school and not just posted on the board.
2. We should ensure quality human resource exhibited in functional Board, Administrative and management staff.
3. Remuneration and motivational packages must be put in place in order to retain good teachers and Endowment funds can be established to support brilliant but needy students and also for teacher motivation as well as Award schemes can also be put in place for outstanding performance among teachers.
4. Each Islamic Senior High School should have guidance and counseling personnel to take cater for the academic and disciplinary needs of the students.
5. There must be well planned effective supervision in schools to enable quality education.

6. BPI should organize capacity building workshops for Headmasters of Islamic Senior High Schools.

Ensuring access to competitive tertiary programmes for students from poor Muslim communities

1. The Islamic Education Unit Council in collaboration with BPI should put in place a committee to engage students at the JHS and SHS on course choices and its ramification.
2. Headmasters of Islamic Schools should be engaged on performance contracts to boost performance in deprived Islamic schools.
3. Identify role models in our communities to visit the students and talk to them in order to inspire and motivate them to aspire higher.

Muslims inputs on Government new 30% SHS admission Policy into elite Schools in Ghana.

1. Designate Model schools in each region, resource them for positive outcomes
2. Set targets for the headmasters/Headmistress and as well as ensuring Monitoring, Evaluation and feedback must be in place.
3. Annual vacation classes should be organized by Islamic NGOs in education for pupils in Islamic schools.
4. Institute Speech and Prize giving day. This will enhance the commitment of students to learning.
5. Establish community libraries and reading clinics for children in poor Muslim communities.

2.2.5 Closing Ceremony

The 3-day conference on educational achievements and mobility in poor Muslim communities in Ghana was closed with a short ceremony with speeches from the Chairman of the Advisory board of the Office of the National Chief Imam, Alhaji Mohammed Gado, the General Manager of the Islamic Education Unit, the Deputy Chairman of the National Council of the Islamic Education Unit and other key stakeholders.

4. CONCLUSION

By and large, the conference was impactful and the participants have resolved to do more for development towards education in their communities nationwide. It is expected that participants and close collaboration with Baraka Policy Institute (BPI) will organize consultative meetings to be able make these action plans work. We at BPI will continue to pursue these resolutions and work closely with key stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the resolutions reached at the conference.

Haruna Zagoon-Sayeed

Executive Director

Baraka Policy Institute

East Legon

Accra