ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FROM QUR’AN AND SUNNAH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper seeks to examine the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which is to “ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy” in the light of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. Literacy and numeracy skills are essential in achieving quality education and having access to acquire such skills is a fundamental human right. In relation to this, the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was “iqrāʾ,” which signifies the importance of literacy. In this paper, the Islamic perspective on ensuring quality education is described employing descriptive and analytical methods. The study provides new insights about ensuring quality education for all youth and adults in light of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. Acquiring knowledge is obligatory in Islam; when individuals have access to quality education, they improve their prospects in all avenues of life. Islam encourages the pursuit of knowledge and its application for the benefit of humanity. Every Muslim must be educated in order to fulfil their duties and obligations to Allah and mankind. Providing equitable access to education for all members of society is a central priority of Islam.

Keywords: Literacy and Islam, quality education, SDG 4.6, Sustainable Development, Education for all.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As Islam's ideology sets the agenda for development in Muslim communities, it is interesting to discuss how well the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are in line with the Islamic vision of development. Education is an important component of development in Islam. SDG 4.6 stresses on quality education for all. The Qurʾān and Prophetic traditions (Hadīth) emphasize literacy. The first revelation received by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was "iqrāʾ," which means read, recite. To achieve quality education, SDG 4.6 stipulates that: "By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults,

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² The first word revealed to our Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from Allah SWT was “Iqrāʾ” which means to Read, to seek knowledge. “Iqrāʾ” is a command to read the signs the Creator placed in creation so that we can understand something of His Mercy, Wisdom, and Power. It is a command to learn, through experience and understanding, the meaning of His creation.
both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”. This research describes SDG 4 "Quality Education" and one of its targets, which is "ensuring literacy for all youth and adults." Moreover, it looks into the Qurʾān and Sunnah's discourses related to literacy to provide a fundamental view of education from the Islamic perspective.

This research is divided into two sections for analyzing quality education in the light of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. The first section introduces sustainable development and one of its targets "literacy," which is part of the goal of quality education. It also discusses education for sustainable development (ESD), as UNESCO considers ESD to be an important component of quality education. The second section describes the concept of Islamic education and the significance of literacy in Islam. Education for everyone in Islam is also covered in this section as the target of SDG 4.6 is that all boys and girls have access to primary and secondary education and that a large number of adults, both men and women are educated.

2.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4.6
ESD is a very significant and widely discussed subject. All humans have the same basic rights regardless of their gender, group, or religion. The national, regional, and global strategies for ESD all share the same goal: to incorporate ESD in all forms of the education system. Education is crucial for human capital formation, which will subsequently impact development. However, due to incompetence in managing natural resources in most developing countries, it is impossible to educate the entire population through existing formal educational institutions. As such, some initiatives must be undertaken to improve education for all citizens. This section exclusively concentrates on sustainable development from the Islamic perspective and sustainable development literacy.

2.1 Definition of Sustainable Development
Sustainable development has been defined from various points of view and there is no agreed definition. World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It is also defined as “to improve the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of living

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Sustainable development covers sustainable prosperity and social responsibility in connection with the environment. According to Schmidheiny, sustainable development recognizes that economic progress and the preservation of the environment are closely linked, and that providing basic human needs without harming the environment is important to the quality of both present and future living. Development activities are carried out keeping in view that no natural damage is caused as a result of developmental activities. Sustainable development is not just about environmental protection and economic development; it also covers social and human development. For example, poverty alleviation through quality education.

From the Islamic point of view, the concept of sustainable development describes how to ensure people have a good life, the economy works well for them, and the environment is preserved simultaneously. This is called "the balanced and simultaneous realization of consumer welfare, economic efficiency, social justice, and ecological balance." Mehri Ahmadi states that “Sustainable development is human as representing Allah almighty in the earth by providing resources that benefit mankind without giving harm and selfishly monopolizing them.” Nouh argued that from an Islamic perspective sustainable development can be defined as “a multi-dimensional process that seeks to strike a balance between economic and social development on one side, and the environment on the other”. It also “seeks for humans to use resources in the best possible way, accounting for the environment upon which those resources rely”.

Based on the available definitions, it can be summarized that sustainable development is that which can be sustained for a long period, without harming anyone or any natural resource, and it emphasizes the social, economic and environmental aspects. Listed below are the SDGs:

1) End global poverty.
2) End hunger, enhance nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3) Set a standard of healthy lifestyles and wellbeing for all ages.
4) Ensure quality education for everyone and encourage lifelong learning.
5) Equality for women and girls.
6) Ensure universal access to water and sanitation.
7) Provide inexpensive, dependable, modern energy to everybody.
8) Ensuring adequate employment and good jobs for everybody.

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9) Foster innovation and sustainable industrialization while building resilient infrastructure.
10) Reduce intra- and inter-country inequalities.
11) Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
13) Take immediate action against climate change.
14) Conserve and use marine resources for sustainable development.
15) Promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, restoring degraded lands and halting biodiversity loss.
16) Build effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.
17) Boost the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development's implementation mechanisms.\textsuperscript{13}

This Agenda is a set of goals for people, the environment, and economic development. It also aims to promote world peace within a greater context of liberty. The UN 2030 Agenda envisages: “A world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity.”\textsuperscript{14}

2.2 Islamic View on Sustainable Development
Islam provides guidance in all aspects of life. Therefore, we can infer from Islamic scriptural texts many guiding principles that are in line with sustainable development. According to Hamida Aburounia, sustainable development is not a new idea in Islam. We can find many references in the Qur’an and hadīth which provide the framework for human spiritual and physical well-being.\textsuperscript{15} Many āyāt and hadīth guide us on how to fulfill the basic needs of social and environmental life. In general, the three most important aspects of sustainable development are social, economic, and environmental. In addition to these three aspects, a focus on human spirituality would make it a highly Islamic concept. The concept of sustainable development is in line with the concepts of khilāfah\textsuperscript{16} (Allah’s vicegerent), amānah\textsuperscript{17} (trust), and ummatan wasaṭan\textsuperscript{18} (moderate nation). These must be fully understood and guide us in formulating solutions to modern global problems. Human beings will be more concerned about sustainable development once they realize they are

\textsuperscript{13} Desa, U. N. "Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development." (2016).
\textsuperscript{14} Carling, As. "The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals."
\textsuperscript{16} Al-Qur’an, al Baqarah, 2:30.
\textsuperscript{17} Al-Qur’an, al-‘Ahzab, 33:72.
\textsuperscript{18} Al-Qur’an, al Baqarah, 2:143.
accountable to God, themselves, and all creatures. This understanding makes them more aware of their responsibilities in this world as well as their accountabilities in the life of the hereafter.

In the case of economic growth, Islam encourages us to engage in economic activities as they are *halāl*\(^{19}\) and to seek the blessings of Allah.\(^{20}\) On the other hand, to alleviate poverty, Islam prescribes mechanisms such as *zakāt,\(^{21}\) ṱadaqāt,\(^{22}\) ṱawiyyat\(^{3}\) etc. From the Islamic viewpoint, those who are poor have rights in the wealth of the affluent in society.\(^{24}\) The Qurʾān has around 750 verses that provide instruction and foundations on scientific subjects, with a focus on the universe, environment, agriculture, and industrial development.\(^{25}\)

Moreover, social peace is considered as one of the main objectives of Islam. To establish a social connection and good relations among the people, Islam reminds us that we are all equal and created from One Being.\(^{26}\) We are not allowed to cause mischief in this world as Allah makes it ḥarām (prohibited).\(^{27}\) Allah SWT says in the Qurʾān: “Indeed, We have dignified the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures.”\(^{28}\) According to Ibn Kathīr in this verse Allah tells us how He has honoured the sons of Adam and made them noble by creating them in the best and most perfect of forms.\(^{29}\) This understanding will definitely foster harmonious social relationships which is important to sustainable development.

In the case of environmental and natural issues, the Qurʾān provides guidance on how to deal with them and many examples from the life and statements of Prophet Muhammad offer a model of justice and equality.\(^{30}\) Allah created everything for us as a blessing from Him so that we can praise Him accordingly. He says, “Have you not seen that Allah has subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and has lavished His favours upon you, both seen and unseen? ‘Still’ there are some who dispute about Allah without knowledge, or guidance, or an enlightening scripture.”\(^{31}\) In the explanation of this verse, Ibn Kathīr says that people are reminded of the blessings Allah

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\(^{19}\) Al-Qurʾān, al Baqarah, 2:275.
\(^{20}\) Al-Qurʾān, al Jumu'ah, 62:10.
\(^{21}\) Al-Qurʾān, al Baqarah, 2:43.
\(^{22}\) Al-Qurʾān, al-Baqarah, 2:261-263; 267; Al-Qurʾān, al-Tawbah, 9:103
\(^{23}\) Al-Qurʾān, al Baqarah, 2:140.
\(^{24}\) Al-Qurʾān, al Dhariyaat, 51:56.
\(^{26}\) Al-Qurʾān, an-Nisa, 4:1
\(^{27}\) Al-Qurʾān, al-Baqarah, 2:205
\(^{28}\) Al-Qurʾān, Al-Isra, 17:70
\(^{31}\) Al-Qurʾān, Luqman, 31:20.
has bestowed upon them in this world and the hereafter. It means human beings are entitled to utilise these resources to develop human civilization in accordance with Allah’s instructions. As we are using all of those ‘creations’ in our daily life, we also have some responsibilities to them. The vital legitimate rule set up by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is that “the benefit of a thing is in return for the liability attached to it.”

Islam advises, as Llewellyn states, that “environmental disruption of any kind must be avoided for two reasons. First, it is an ethical command of Islamic jurisprudence and law and second, it is essential for protecting the public interest and universal common good of all mankind”. The Islamic view encompasses that all things on earth are created for humanity and are God’s bequeath to people. However, this is attached with conditions and it unquestionably carries responsibilities. The world is humanity's training ground. The test measures of training assess the acts of appreciation of humans. On this matter Allah says:

"Allah sends down water from the sky and by it brings the dead earth back to life. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who hear. There is instruction for you in cattle. From the contents of their bellies, from between dung and blood, we give pure milk to drink, easy for drinkers to swallow. And from the fruit of the date palm and the grapevine you derive both intoxicants and wholesome provision. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who use their intellect. Your Lord revealed to the bees: Build dwelling in the mountains and the trees, and also in the structures which men erect. Then eat from every kind of fruit and travel the paths of your Lord, which have been made easy for you to follow. From inside them comes a drink of varying colors, containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect.”

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, also reminded us “not to harm women, children and the infirm, not to harm animals, destroy crops or cut down trees”. He said, "There is none amongst the believers who plants a tree, or sows a seed, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats thereof, but it is regarded as having given a charitable gift for which there is great recompense.”

These āyāt and ḥadīth acknowledge the human condition and the value of nature. They have never been separated from each other. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also

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33 Sunan al Tirmīdhi, Hadith 1268, 3: 582.
36 Al-Qur’an, An-Nahl 16:65-69
37 Muwatta Malik, Book 21, Hadith 971.
38 Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith 2320, 3: 513
advocated the sustainable use of land, water, air, trees, animals, birds etc. as we all have equal rights to them. We should not be a cause of environmental destruction. We are responsible for conservation of all the resources surrounding us for ourselves and for the next generation. This responsibility is commanded by Allah SWT and guided by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. The Qurʾān states: “And do good as Allah has been good to you. And do not seek to cause corruption in the earth. Allah does not love the corrupters”\(^40\). As Masri notes that “the ecological problems we are facing today arise from the fact that we have started using very scarce resources wastefully and in such a way that we are not giving nature a chance to reproduce the things we are taking out of it”\(^41\). Allah SWT commands us that “Eat and drink, but waste not by excess; “He” loves not the excessive.”\(^42\) It can be said that human responsibility to nature is very crucial and we should care for the environment.

2.3 Sustainable Development Literacy

It can be said that literacy is the key to achieving SDGs; when individuals have access to quality education, they improve their prospects in life, including improved health, more career possibilities, and enhanced political engagement. Furthermore, reading is regarded as the foundational ability upon which all other abilities are developed. The first step in attaining sustainable literacy is to develop literacy education via substantial human capital investment. In the second step, futures, values, systems, and strategic thinking must all be addressed in literacy instruction in order to assure long-term progress.

Learning about sustainable development starts with understanding its three spheres: economic, ecological, and social. Sustainable development literacy involves environmental and ecological literacy, and knowledge of these literacies is a prerequisite for sustainable development education. This includes knowledge of various views, different scales of interaction and numerous complex systems perspectives that embrace both the parts and the whole in dynamic interactions. The fundamental prerequisite of sustainable development literacy is "adaptive flexibility, meaning that the capacity to respond to changing situations via a continual adaptive learning process and the ability to embark on new developmental paths."\(^43\)

The emergence of disciplinary ideas from both the natural and social sciences has resulted in literacy in sustainable development. With the support of the United Nations,

\(^{40}\) Al-Qur’an, Al Qasas, 28:77
\(^{42}\) Al-Qur’an, al-A’raf, 7:31
environmental education entered the mainstream of thinking in the 1970s. Environmental education aims to raise awareness, educate about the environment and its problems, develop environmentally-friendly attitudes, values, and behaviors, teach problem-solving skills, develop situational awareness, and involve individuals and groups in implementing environmental solutions.

Early environmental education presented the environment as a collection of issues that needed to be fixed and avoided. These deficiencies have been addressed in part by the discipline of ecology, which has evolved from a problem-solving focus to a systems approach stressing interconnection and interactions between organisms and communities. Ecology has progressed toward a complex system view based on interaction and change. The understanding of network structures, nested systems, continuous cycles of energy and resource exchanges, fluxes of energy and matter, development and co-evolution, and dynamic equilibrium is essential to this transition. Reconciling the natural and man-made systems is important to sustainable development literacy.

The epistemology of sustainable development literacy is derived from environmental and ecological literacy, with an emphasis on the interaction between human and natural systems. Norgaard expanded this perspective by describing human and natural systems as co-evolutionary. In fact, many experts argue that ecological theories should be re-conceptualized in light of the evidence of the consequences of human activity systems on the bio-geophysical elements of the natural world. The need to theorize about the meaning of limitations and scale derives from considering human activity systems as occurring within a global ecological network. This is the foundation of sustainable development, based on the ecological boundaries described by Meadows' controversial report. Their main concern was a series of global macro-problems based on overpopulation in a world with finite resources; failing to resolve these issues, they claim, will result in a

"rather sudden and unmanageable drop in both population and industrial capacity."52 While "Limits to Growth" forecasts did not come to pass largely because the models failed to take account of complex feedback loops.53 Therefore, sustainable development literacy must address the production of useful knowledge.54

Sustainable development education encourages students to define problems from a variety of angles, including interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary criticisms and views. Moreover, Rassool emphasizes the necessity of "multi-literacies" and adequate communication skills to support successful democratic participation.55 These multiliteracies advocate for our civic societies to become conscious and literate in transdisciplinary problems. An important component of sustainable development literacy is the ability to implement solution sets. Sustainable development is a practical aim, not a theoretical one.

The target is to achieve literacy, which is derived from education for sustainable development. Although many proclamations for increased sustainability in higher education have been made since the 1970s, the first declaration for sustainable development education was the Copernicus Act in 1993. The purpose of the decade of education for sustainable development is to help people learn how to make smart decisions for themselves and others. The United Nations started a decade of education for sustainable development (2005–2014) in 2002.56 In the context of education for sustainable development, four terms are used interchangeably: (i) Education for Sustainability [EfS], (ii) Sustainability Education [SE], (iii) Education for Sustainable Development [ESD], and (iv) Education for Sustainable Comprehensible Development [ESCD]. However, ESD is a term that is frequently used on worldwide platforms.

Moreover, there is a distinction between education about sustainable development and education for sustainable development.57 The main distinction is that the first refers to awareness lessons and theoretical discussions using educational resources and methodologies, while the second refers to education as a tool for attaining sustainable development. It actually varies depending on the language and cultural approaches used. The UN uses this term as the fourth goal of its SDGs. Besides others, people are concerned

52 Ibid.
about education in order to achieve the SDGs. Although the relationship between education and sustainable development is complex, basic education is key to a nation's ability to progress and achieve sustainability targets. This ESD toolkit also describes that education can enhance environmental protection, improve agricultural productivity, reduce population growth rates, enhance woman's status, and raise living standards.

Education builds knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in people, which can contribute to future development. ESD is a multidisciplinary area of knowledge. Education directly affects sustainability plans in the following three areas: (i) implementation of ideas and thoughts, (ii) decision making in any situation and (iii) quality of life. It is critical to have standard education and awareness for sustainable development in every location and in all regional and societal perspectives. It is recognized worldwide that existing economic development trends are not sustainable, but public awareness, education, and training are crucial in changing society toward sustainable development. ESD is about empowering people to continue their work and build more sustainable and elastic societies and awaking global challenges for the present and future.

UNESCO hosted an international conference on education for sustainable development in 2014, which coincided with the release of the Aichi-Nagoya declaration on education for sustainable development and the roadmap for implementing the global action program on education for sustainable development. The education for sustainable development formula for each country was subsequently adopted by the UN. Some steps and rules have been outlined in SDG 4, ensuring everyone has a good education and making it possible for everyone to learn for their whole lives. The targets of SDG 4 are as follows:

i. By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, fair primary and secondary education, which leads to relevant and efficient learning results.

ii. By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education to be able to attend primary education.

58 Ibid.
iii. By 2030, ensure equitable access to affordable technical, professional, and tertiary education, including university education, for men and women.

iv. By 2030, significantly increase the number of young people and adults with necessary skills, such as technical and vocational skills, for employment, good jobs, and entrepreneurship.

v. By 2030, eradicate gender inequities in education and guarantee equitable access to all levels of education for individuals with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in circumstances of vulnerability.

vi. By 2030, ensuring literacy and numeracy for all youth and a significant number of adults, both men, and women.

vii. By 2030, ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of cultural diversity and how culture can help with sustainable development, among other things.

Therefore, ESD can be said to aid in the provision of high-quality education in a variety of ways when the curriculum incorporates sustainability information that is contextualized locally, socially, economically, and environmentally. Sustainable development literacy is the ability that enables people to seek out knowledge, conduct in-depth explorations of issues, and develop a more nuanced view of the world around them. Literacy is thus only one step toward education, which refers to a person's total development in terms of knowledge, intellect, behavior, and sensitivity. So, all other learning is impossible without literacy.

3.0 SDG 4.6 FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

A quality education system helps people become literate. SDG 4.6: "achieving literacy and numeracy" under SDG 4 is in line with the Islamic worldview on education. As the previous section discussed, literacy is part and parcel of quality education. Literacy is the ability to read and write, and the Qurʾān also emphasizes on reading and writing. Therefore, to conceptualize literacy from an Islamic perspective, this section first describes the concept of Islamic education and the significance of literacy in Islam. It also talks about education for everyone in Islam, because SDG 4.6 says that all young people and a significant number of adults, both men and women, should be literate.

3.1 The Concept of Islamic Education for Sustainable Development

Education is the harmonious development of body, soul and mind. It has been defined by many. According to the Oxford dictionary (7th Edition, 2005), education means “the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.” Islamic Education has a wide meaning from various points of view. According to Al-Attas Islamic education is defined as “recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence.”

Salleh states that “the meaning of education in its totality in the context of Islam is fundamentally in the combination of the terms tarbiyah (educate), ta‘līm (knowledgeable) and ta‘dīb (moral).” The term "tarbiyah" is derived from the "rabā’, which means to raise, rear, and grow, to spiritually support, which expounds a state of spiritual support in developing the possibilities of the personal and moving the young to the condition of the whole experience. The term "ta‘līm" is derived from the Arabic word "ʿilm", which means "knowledge" implying knowing something. It appears more than 700 times in the Qur’an in various forms, which ranks third in the Holy Qur’an after the words "Allāh" and "rabb". Finally, the term "ta‘dīb" is derived from the Arabic word "aduba", which means "clarified, disciplined, cultured, and decent behavior," and it refers to the social aspects of a human being as well as the well-social manner and method of character development.

In short, it can be stated that Islamic education is a tawḥīd-based education system that confirms Islamic teachings in a true sense and influences people to be pious; Allah fearing in their practical life. The first revelation of the Qur’an confirms that Islamic education should be based on tawḥīd as it says: “Read, In the name of your Lord Who created you”.

The Divine Oneness (tawḥīd) is the foundation of Islamic education. It means that the education system, whether in terms of course outlines and materials or

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teaching methods, would not contradict the philosophy of comprehending the Oneness of Allah. Its importance is clearly stated in the Qur’an, “Allah grants wisdom to whoever He wills. And whoever is granted wisdom is certainly blessed with a great privilege.”\(^7^4\) So, the belief in the oneness of Allah is very substantial in education. According to Ashraf, the foundation of Islamic education is a steadfast commitment to the study of the Qur’an. The study of God's word may deepen the basis of faith, allowing the student to explore the world without fear of spiritual loss.\(^7^5\) Moreover, it would confirm two important issues: knowledge is a blessing from Allah, and it is only for seeking His pleasure through the welfare of men and other creatures.

Education is a kind of social interaction. Education is a systematic method of fostering human potential, including intellect, morality, spirituality, and life skills. Theoretically, education entails nourishing one's soul to achieve spiritual contentment. Education is a means for people to improve their ability to manage their lives and achieve their objectives more effectively and efficiently. Education entails not only the transmission of information and competence but also the transformation of values and the construction of consciousness and personality in students. The greatest strategic endeavor to raise human dignity as the finest beings is education.\(^7^6\)

One of the features of Islamic teaching is that all kinds of knowledge required for worldly life should stem from an Islamic point of view. According to Imamuddin et al., education must take place through institutions and a curricular structure governed by the sharī’ah to be geared toward Islamic teaching-based progress.\(^7^7\) Allah not only created everything for greater purposes but His rules and regulations also have underlying objectives and goals. If people are unable to comprehend the purposes of Allah's laws, they will be uninterested in obeying them. As a result, sharī’ah's higher purposes would be ignored. Therefore, the Islamic education system will make the higher purposes of sharī’ah clear to knowledge seekers and other stakeholders. Allah described the main objective of sharī’ah in the Holy Qur’an: “We have sent you ‘O Prophet’ only as a mercy for the whole world.”\(^7^8\) In explaining this verse, Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawziyyah said that the sharī’ah protects the people's interests and keeps them secure in this world and the hereafter. He goes on to

\(^7^4\) Al-Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:269.
\(^7^7\) Ibid., 70-83.
\(^7^8\) Al-Qur’an, Al-Anbiya, 21:107.
say that the Qurʾān's value as a revelation and guidance will diminish if its injunctions do not help people.\textsuperscript{79}

Islam is the complete code of life;\textsuperscript{80} hence, the education system it advocates encompasses all aspects of life. Therefore, whatever humanity's needs are, Islam provides guidance on how to meet them. If they face any difficulty, Islam will provide the appropriate solutions. According to Salleh, Islamic education is based on a complete Islamic worldview. All Muslim scholars understood that knowledge is Sacred and Divine. \textit{Ṣūrah al-ʿAlaq} indicates that knowledge must be gained in Allah's name and for His sake.\textsuperscript{81}

People who are raising their voices towards ESD place the most emphasis on quality education. However, education without moral and religious teachings is not considered a high-quality education. In this regard, a popular saying is, "If you educate your children the three 'R's (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) but leave out the fourth 'R' (Religion), you will get a fifth 'R' (Rascality)."\textsuperscript{82} Education for worldly objectives has no value and so cannot be sustained in any way. Religious teachings, especially Islamic teachings, are guided by God. His prescriptions are always for the good of His creations, including humanity. However, the standard approach to educational philosophy produces a body empty of soul. It means that educated and highly educated people are involved in corruption, vandalism, selfishness, damaging property, wealth, and nature, and are careless about the next generation. For example, according to UNESCO Statistical Yearbook and World Education Report, "in the United States, more than 80% of the population has some post-secondary education, and approximately 25% of the population has a four-year degree from a university. Statistics also reveal that the United States has the greatest per capita energy use and waste output rates in the world. More education has not led to sustainability in the United States. Educating citizens to higher levels is not enough to create sustainable societies."\textsuperscript{83}

To promote sustainable development, an integrated education is also required. In general, many forms of education expose people to a wide range of ideologies, beliefs, and ideas. Therefore, a one-way education system integrating general and Islamic education is emerging.


\textsuperscript{80} Al-Qur’an, Ali ‘Imran, 3:19.


\textsuperscript{82} Granville Stanley Hall (February 1, 1846 – April 24, 1924).

3.2 The Significance of Literacy in Islam

In Islam, literacy is highly emphasized. The first verse of the Qurʾān revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, highlights the significance of education in Islam; the verse started with the word "iqrāʾ," which is an Arabic command that means "read" and implies the notions of "learning," "exploring," and "seeking enlightenment."84 This indicates that reading (vis-à-vis pursuing knowledge) is the best method to approach the Creator of all that exists. At the same time, teaching through the pen has been mentioned as a great grace of Allah. The instruction to read in the first revelation and the teaching with the help of a pen, as well as the mention of creation, it is as if Allah had made it necessary for the servant to acquire the knowledge of writing and reading to know the identity of the creator and creation, and the Qurʾān is a preserved written book.

The Qurʾān is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. Allah says, "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge."85 This verse implies that everything we know is limited and that we must continue to ask Allah to increase our knowledge. Therefore, a Muslim should always be seeking more knowledge (ʿilm). The Qurʾān considers knowledge as a method of attaining ʿīmān (faith) for all Muslims, whether male or female, to become true believers. This is demonstrated in the following verses:

“Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit.”86 “Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable ‘of His might’ are ‘truly’ in awe of Him. Allah is indeed Almighty, All-Forgiving.”87

According to Ibn Kathīr, this verse indicates the knowledge about the Qurʾān and Sunnah and the responsibilities of humankind. Ibn Kathīr also mentions that: Only those who possess knowledge genuinely fear Him in the manner in which He should be feared, because the more they learn about the Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Knowing Who has the most perfect characteristics and is characterized in the most beautiful Names, the more they will fear Him.88 The significance and importance of knowledge in the Qurʾān are clearly expressed in a verse stating that: “Are those who know equal to those who do not know? It is those who are endowed with understanding that receive admonition.”89 According to Tafsīr Mazhari, the verse describes that literate and illiterate people cannot ever be equal.

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85 Al-Qur’an, Taha, 20:114.
86 Al-Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:269.
87 Al-Qur’an, Fatir, 35:28.
89 Al-Qur’an, Az-Zumar, 39:9.
Equality between the two parties is denied, which shows that one party is better than the other.90

The Qurʾān has been revealed so that people can lead their lives according to the guidance of Allah. That is, the Qurʾān was revealed as a complete system of life. Despite this, after the Prophet, the responsibility of propagating his teachings fall on his ummah. Literacy is also essential for acquiring and propagating the teachings of Islam. Because writing is a necessary medium for disseminating knowledge. Moreover, the Companions also used to preserve the teachings of The Prophet, peace be upon him, during his lifetime by writing them down. Abū Hurairah said: “There is none among the companions of the Prophet who has narrated more ḥadīths than I except ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ who used to write them and I never did the same.”91

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, attached great importance to literacy. According to a ḥadīth, a woman was hired to teach writing to Ḥafṣah, the wife of The Prophet, peace be upon him, Al-Shifā', bint ʿAbdullāh said: “The Messenger of Allah entered when I was with Ḥafṣah and he said to me: Why do you not teach this one the spell for skin eruptions as you taught her writing.”92 Thus, literacy is closely linked with the teachings of Islam and Islamic law. The Prophet ﷺ emphasised the value of knowledge. As the following ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah notes:

"When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (the deceased).”93

Imām al-Nawawī in commenting on this ḥadīth says that according to scholars, the meaning of this ḥadīth is that except for these three things, a person's deeds cease after his death, and any new rewards are cut off from him.94 So, we can comprehend that knowledge which individuals pass on to others via teaching or writing will continue to benefit them even after their deaths. Therefore, the value of education is explicit in the Qurʾān and ḥadīth; Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.”95 In another ḥadīth he said: "Whoever takes a path upon which to obtain knowledge, Allah makes the path to Paradise easy for him.”96 In Islam, seeking knowledge is mandatory, and e is considered as the way to greater closeness to Allah.

91 Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 113, 1:34.
92 Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith 3887, 4:11.
93 Sahih Muslim: Hadith no. 1631, 3:1255.
94 al-Minhaj: 85/11
95 Sunan Ibn Majah, Ḥadīth 224, 1:81.
96 Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Ḥadīth 2646, 5:28.
3.3 Education for All in Islam

Every Muslim is obligated in Islam to seek knowledge and learn. Islam affirms the right of all people to an education, regardless of gender. For example, a verse states that those who know and those who do not know are not on the same footing,97 the Qur'an addresses all individuals and states that people will be judged by their knowledge and comprehension.

In addition to the Qur'an's focus on knowledge for all Muslims, several of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, highlight women's education. He encouraged the education of people of the most oppressed populations, particularly female slaves. The Prophet, peace be upon him, stated:

"He who has a slave-girl and teaches her good manners and improves her education and then manumits and marries her, will get a double reward,"98

This approach was used to abolish slavery in the early days of Islam, but it also demonstrates the Prophet's views on the importance of female education. The wellbeing of orphans is also emphasized in Islam. In commenting on this hadith, Maqsood describes that working child in many third-world countries are denied an education and a right to their youth.99 Muslims are encouraged to provide for the physical, social, and psychological needs of orphans, including their education, as part of providing them with the means to make a living. The Qur'an states:

"They ask you, (O Muhammad), what they shall spend. Say: that which you spend for good (must go) to parents and near kindred and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatsoever good you do, lo! Allah is Aware of it."100

Muqātil bin Hayyān said that this verse was revealed concerning voluntary charity, and once Maymun bin Mihrān recited this verse, he commented, "These are the regions of expenditure."101 Moreover, the standards of charity in Islam offer a way through which Muslims can promote educational programs that will empower the most vulnerable members of society. Apart from zakāt102 and sadaqah103, one method that Muslims engage in ongoing charity is through waqf. Waqf can be in the form of paying for or declaring a

97 Al-Qur'an, Az-Zumar, 39:9.
100 Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqarah, 2:215.
102 Zakāt is the third pillar in Islam; it is an obligatory form of charity to the poor. Zakāt should be used for specific categories of people and for Muslims only. The purpose of zakāt is to promote equality by redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor and needy as well as discouraging greed and selfishness.
103 Sadaqa is a voluntary form of charity as opposed to zakāt, and it can be used to help Muslims and non-Muslims. Sadaqa may include financial assistance, public service, or even a smile to someone who needs it. Sadaqa is what is given voluntarily for the sake of Allah to obtain the recompense from Allah.
building or land as a communal space, with schools and training centres falling within this category.

There is an important principle of Islamic education that it provides equal learning opportunities. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: “seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.”\(^{104}\) This ḥadīth implies that Islam provides equal opportunity and duty in education for all of its adherents, regardless of gender. And it is about understanding the component of the dīn that will rescue someone from the fire. Allah SWT says in the Qurʾān:

“O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may ‘get to’ know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.”\(^{105}\)

In the explanation of this verse, there is a ḥadīth of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, which says: “O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favor of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness.”\(^{106}\) According to Muhammad Khamim, there is no difference between men and women as servants of Allah.\(^{107}\) Both have the potential to be perfect servants and protect them from the fire. This verse makes it clear that the whole human race was being talked to in order to get rid of the huge amount of evil that has always caused chaos all over the world. So, Islamic education is important for people because it promotes equality and justice, which helps people become more literate.

Islam sees education and knowledge as fundamental to human development. Islam promotes knowledge acquisition and its application for the benefit of mankind. Moreover, in Islam, the ideals of justice, equality, and fairness are crucial, as are learning knowledge, wisdom, and skills to do one's duty. While knowledge is required to fulfil religious and spiritual obligations, it is also vital for social and economic progress, communal well-being, social peace, freedom, and human rights. Therefore, all Muslims must be educated in order to fulfil their responsibilities and commitment to Allah and mankind. Ensuring equitable access to education for everyone in society is a major Islamic concern.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This research paper concludes that quality education is the key to achieving the SDGs, and it is in line with the first revelation of the Qurʾān, which indicates that reading, or the pursuit of knowledge, is the best method to approach the Creator of universe. At the same time, teaching through the pen has been mentioned as a great grace of Allah SWT, whereas literacy is the skill of reading and writing. This research demonstrates that the first step in

\(^{104}\) Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, Ḥadīth 224, 1:81.
\(^{105}\) Al-Qur’an, Al-Hujurat, 49:13.
\(^{106}\) Musnad Aḥmad, hadīth 23489, 38:474.
\(^{107}\) Khamim, Muhammad. "Woman And Gender in Islamic Education." Education Studies,18: 43.
attaining sustainable literacy is to develop literacy education through substantial human capital investment. And the future, values, systems, and strategic thinking must all be addressed in literacy instruction in order to assure long-term progress in ensuring quality education. Moreover, Islam considers education and knowledge as fundamental to human development. Acquiring knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, and providing equitable access to education for all members of society is a central priority of Islam.

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