

Teachers' Perceptions on the Concept of *Murabbi* in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar

Faki Ali Malengo¹, Hazizan Md. Noon²

¹PhD candidate, ²Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Sociology and Anthropology Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia

Abstract: This study sought to understand the meaning and application of the concept of *Murabbi* in teaching and learning process among the teachers in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar. Three male and three female teachers from these schools were selected as respondents. Semi-structured in-depth interview was employed for primary data collection while secondary data were solicited from relevant documents such as journal articles, textbooks, official reports and proceedings. The findings of this study showed that all respondents were of the opinion that teachers' responsibility should go beyond normal teaching duties to embrace the task of looking after and taking care of the students as practically is reflected in their actual works that covered also the non-typical teaching tasks. The study thus recommended that further investigation be conducted to further explore the understanding and application of the concept of *murabbi* among teachers of all Integrated Islamic Schools in Zanzibar especially through quantitative-based research.

Keywords: Islam, Islamic Education, *Murabbi*, Islamic Integrated Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of *murabbi* is historical in its orientation. It was well implemented in the beginning of Islamic history but has been gradually losing its visibility in the Muslim societies until today (Kazmi, 1999). Since most of the available works on *murabbi* refer to Kazmi's work entitled *The Notion of Murabbi in Islam: An Islamic Critique on Trends in Contemporary Education*, the writers have decided to use his work as the main reference in this paper.

The term *murabbi* is an Arabic word “مربي” which literally means “a Muslim boy name”, “patron”, “superior”, “guardian” (TheNameGenerators, 2016)¹. Technically, *murabbi* can be defined as the one who is not only knowledgeable and wise, but also pious, kind and considerate. In other words, a *murabbi* is a person who combines a life of learning with a life of virtue, and hence an ideal person to learn from (Kazmi, 1999: 209). In explicating this concept of *murabbi*, Kazmi (1999) identifies some of the attributes that should be possessed and the roles that should be played by a *murabbi*.

First, a *murabbi* does what parents do, but much more explicitly and at a higher level of sophistication because a teacher is more focused on teaching. Second, *murabbi* is the one who can show what difference the truth of the theoretical knowledge would make to someone who accepts it. Third, he is the one who has high ability of asking further questions, interpreting, understanding and judging both routines and ordinary experiences in the light of the truth of knowledge².

¹ <http://thenamegenerators.com/name-meaning/96957/the-name-murabbi-means>

² In this and other appropriate contexts, when the term ‘he’ is used, it also includes ‘she’ unless it is stated otherwise. The same principle applies to ‘his’.

Fourth, he is a living proof of why one should accept a body of knowledge, why and how truth of that knowledge matters. The last, every *murabbi* tries to bridge the gap between knowing and acting.

Murabbi plays a significant role in teaching. He does not only teach the impersonal theoretical body of knowledge that he has mastered and accepted its truth based on the objective principle of verification, but also teaches knowledge that he has lived and having lived found it to be true or false. In addition, a *murabbi* constructs or tries to construct the personal knowledge that can only be communicated through personal interaction with the students. The personal knowledge is important because it can guide his judgements regarding matters and experiences of everyday life. And this is what education is all about. In conclusion, Kazmi mentions the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the best example of the person who embodies all the qualities of a *murabbi* and an excellent role model for Muslims.

As far as the Islamic integrated schools in Zanzibar are concerned, their establishment can be traced back to the early 2000's. They are all privately owned. According to Zanzibar Association of Private Schools (2016), there were a total of 149 Islamic integrated schools in the country by the end of 2016, where 23 were secondary schools and 126 included both pre-primary and primary schools. Zanzibar has been exposed to the western education system for many years, although 99% of its population are Muslims (Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 1999). Therefore, the main education that the people of Zanzibar received was mainly western-oriented in nature.

This study, therefore, intends to investigate the experiences of the teachers in Islamic integrated schools in Zanzibar with a particular focus on the concept of *murabbi* in the context of this western-dominated educational milieu and system. This is necessary due to the fact that the previous studies scantily focused on how the teachers in Islamic integrated schools perceive the concept of *murabbi* in teaching and learning process, particularly in Zanzibar context.

A. Significance of the Study:

Since the focus of this study is to explore the teaching experiences of the teachers in Zanzibar context, the study filled the knowledge gap left by the existing works on *murabbi* as indicated earlier and that they only focused on the aspects that are different from that of this study. Furthermore, the study was able to identify areas for further studies to be undertaken by other researchers, especially in the context of Islamization of experiences in these schools. This is proposed in the light of Kazmi's view that "And if today, Islamization of knowledge is on the agenda of most Muslim thinkers then we need to Islamize our experiences before we can think of Islamizing our concepts. Personalized knowledge allows us to accomplish just that" (p. 223). Moreover, the research laid a foundation to serve as a reference on how the teachers perceive the concept of *murabbi* in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in the identified aspects.

B. Research Questions:

Based on the above articulation, this study tried to answer the following two main questions: 1) What meaning do the teachers in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar have about the concept of *Murabbi*? 2) How was the concept of *murabbi* translated into practice by the teachers in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar?

II. STUDIES ON MURABBI IN ZANZIBAR

There are very few studies on *murabbi* in Zanzibar which have been conducted. Mohammed's (2013) qualitative study was concerned with the methods used by Islamic education teachers to inculcate moral values at Lumumba Secondary School in Zanzibar. The study examined how the moral values can be integrated into the methods of teaching Islamic education and the impacts of these values on the students. The study also emphasised the practical application of moral values in view of both theoretical and practical knowledge in the Islamic education system. The relevant documents along with interviews and classroom observation were used by this work for soliciting the data. The study suggested that the task of a teacher is not confined only to imparting knowledge and skills to learners but also to enhance the students' moral conduct through inculcation of Islamic values, ethics, and manners. Celone, et al. (2016) explored the involvement of *madrasah* teachers for behaviour change interventions in a randomised operational research trial designed to investigate the impact of multiple approaches to eliminate urogenital schistosomiasis transmission in Zanzibar. Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection. The results revealed that *madrasah* teachers are influential and important agents of change within the community-level behavioural intervention.

There are also some studies on *murabbi* concept that have been undertaken in different places in the world including Zanzibar. Some studies are not related to the need of understanding the meaning of the concept *murabbi* that the teachers have and the way they implement it in teaching. However, a few of them are somehow related in terms of focus (Jaafar et al., 2014; Kazmi, 1999; Sa-u et al., 2011; Paramboor and Ibrahim, 2013; Inayatullah and Milojević, 2014; Suhid et al., 2014), approach used which is qualitative based on library research and fieldwork (Celone, et al., 2016; Mohammed, 2013; Sabdan et al., n.d; Hassan, 2009), use of in-depth interviews for empirical data collection (Mohammed, 2013; Hassan, 2009), and methods employed for data analysis which are content analysis techniques and interview schedule, thematic analysis and verbatim quotations (Mohammed, 2013; Hassan, 2009). This study, therefore, considered exploring the teachers' perceptions of the *murabbi* concept and its application in Islamic integrated schools in Zanzibar context.

Apart from establishing the research gap, the review has benefited the researchers in several ways including getting new insights and ideas, knowing the diverse arguments among the researchers in terms of research methods, approaches, designs and others. All these inputs have provided useful ideas for the researchers to explore and understand the *murrabi* concept and the way it is practised by the teachers in Islamic integrated schools. For example, these insights and ideas were used to support the researchers in making comparisons between the meanings of a *murabbi*, his distinctive features and his roles as provided by the literature and that of the respondents. In addition, the researchers were also able to refine the introductory part of their study based on the ideas of Kazmi (1999) as the most prominent figure in the field and thus serves as its main reference.

A. Conceptual Framework:

Figure 1 below concisely presents a conceptual framework of this study.

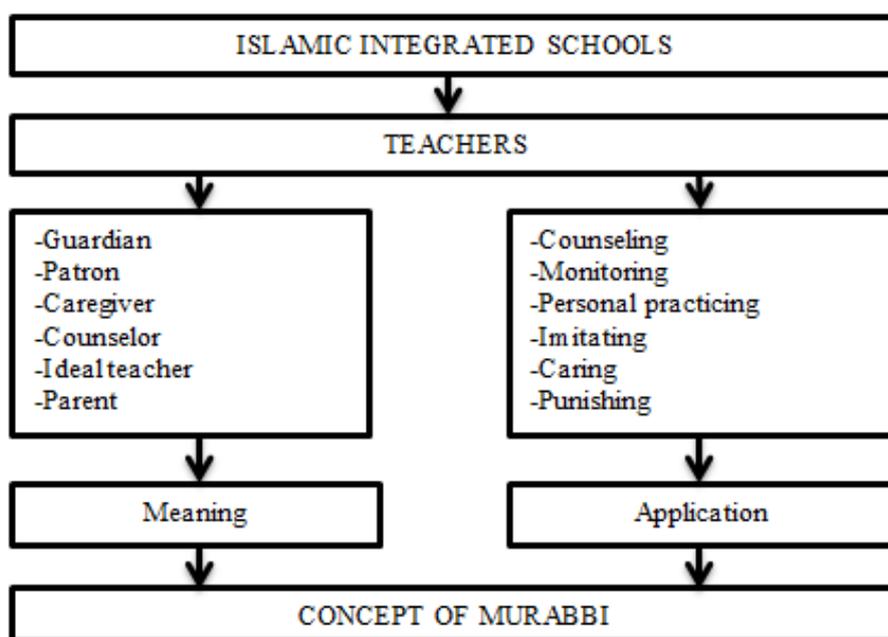


FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The above Figure shows the derivation of the concept of *murabbi*, with its two dimensions namely meaning and application from the teachers' experiences. These teachers had their own views of the meaning and the application of the in the teaching process. The predicted meanings of *murabbi* include the guardian, patron, caregiver, counsellor, ideal teacher, and the parent. In terms of application, the predicted ways include counselling, monitoring, personal practising, imitation, caring and punishing.

III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research was based on case study design. In this study, three male and three female teachers from three Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar with an experience of not less than four years were purposely selected as respondents. One teacher had a teaching experience of 19 years while others had it between 5 to 8 years. The study

involved collection of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interview while secondary data were generated from relevant documents including written materials related to the topic, such as journal articles, textbooks, official reports and proceedings. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. They were then transcribed, coded, and analysed. The content analysis technique was used for analysing the documents.

TABLE 1: THE PROFILE OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

Name	Age	Sex	Education Level	Years of T/Experience
Baraka	35	M	UG ³	19
Bashir	35	M	UG	6
Bakar	35	M	UG	5
Bahati	31	F	UG	5
Batuli	32	F	Certificate	7
Barke	29	F	A-level	8

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study that answer the two research questions mentioned earlier. In this regard, two major themes and their respective sub-themes have emerged from the data. Table 2 below summarizes the findings of the study.

TABLE 2: MEANING AND APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF *MURABBI*

Research Question	Meaning	Application
Themes	Guardian	Imitation
	Caregiver	Counselling
		Monitoring

A. Meaning:

The first objective of the study was to understand the meaning of *murabbi* as perceived by the teachers in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar. The findings of the research revealed that the meanings of *murabbi* refers to the responsibilities that go beyond that of an ordinary teacher. This theme gave rise to two other closely related sub-themes namely the guardian and the caregiver.

Guardian:

The 'guardian' is one of the dominant meanings of *murabbi* given by the respondents. For instance, Baraka (35) stated that:

"My understanding of the concept of *murabbi* is that the teacher's role is not only to impart the content knowledge to a student, but also to play the role of the guardian so as to ensure that a student goes to the right path ... a teacher can get into the class and spend three to five minutes talking only about upbringing".

Similarly, Barke (29) asserted that: "*Murabbi* is the one who guides a child or a student to the way which is acceptable to the society... in order to be a teacher; you should accept and practice the guardianship, For instance, a teacher's task "... is not only holding a chalk and write on the board, but also to ensure that a student is clean and that he writes the given assignments, observes discipline, attends classes, and so on. So, a teacher is for everything". These findings are in agreement with Kazmi (1999) who says that "The function of *murabbi* is not to teach the impersonal theoretical body of knowledge that he has mastered and accepted its truth based on the objective principle of verification, but rather teaches knowledge that he has lived and having lived found it to be true or false" (p. 218). These findings suggest that a *murabbi*

³ UG – Undergraduate degree

is a teacher who does not confine his task to teach his prepared lesson only, but also shares his experiences that are helpful and beneficial for the total education of a student.

This observation implies that a *murabbi* is necessarily a teacher, but not all teachers are *murabbi*. In order for a teacher to be a *murabbi* he must have additional and good attributes such as being kind and voluntary, willing to guide and work for the betterment and interest of others. Emphasizing this, Shuriye (2003) says that “*murabbi's* core mission is to guide the students; he is directed and motivated by the need to comprehend a variety of complex aspects of students' life” (p. 163). In summary, these results point out that a *murabbi* should be a pious and qualified teacher who has broad knowledge of what he teaches in the classroom and in addition performs other tasks of those mentioned earlier such as guardian and counsellor.

Caregiver :

This is another crucial subtheme that emerged under ‘meaning’. Some respondents’ definitions focused more on giving care to the children or students as the real meaning of *murabbi*. Bahati (31) explained that:

“The concept of *murabbi* means a teacher is a caregiver. And this is the main role of a teacher. For example, the parents bring their children to school from morning to afternoon. There are many things which happen within this duration, and we take care of them. In doing this, we play the role as caregivers. A student can suffer from certain problems and a teacher is the first one to notice even prior to his parent”.

In the same direction Bakar (35) shared his opinion that, “A teacher as the caregiver is supposed to know the conditions of his students, including the backgrounds that they come from, the environment that they are living in and to communicate with the student’s parents and informs all that happens to their child”. Additionally, Bashir (35) expressed that:

“It is obvious that a teacher is *murabbi*. Because *murabbi* is the one who always expects his child to perform well. A teacher, like a parent, regards a student as his child who needs the right guidance so as to succeed. By knowing this, a teacher always strives to find out any means of assisting a student to succeed”.

These findings match with that of Abidin Ibn Rusd as cited in Jaafar et al. (2012) saying that teachers should act as second parents to the pupils in the school. Azram (n.d) adds that “the teaching profession is noble and given high status in the society because the nature of the job is next to that of parents” (p. 181).

These results advocate that, in contrast to the normal teacher, a *murabbi* plays the role of a parent to his child. This means that *murabbi* has the responsibilities of making sure that students are healthy and safe and of equipping them with necessary skills and resources to develop as successful adults particularly through transmitting good cultural and moral values into them. A *murabbi* offers his students love and guidance as well as being appreciative and receptive to their ideas and views. He also creates conducive environment for the nurturing and protection of students to develop their personalities and identities. Therefore, these findings indicate that indeed a *murabbi* is distinguished from an ordinary teacher in terms of perspective, role and responsibility.

B. Application:

How the concept of *murabbi* is translated into practice by the teachers in Islamic Integrated Schools in Zanzibar was the second and the last objective of this study. Generally, the results demonstrated that this concept was realized in three ways as indicated by the above Table namely imitation, counselling and monitoring.

Imitation:

Imitation is one of the approaches used by the teachers to implement the *murabbi* concept. Baraka (35) narrated that:

“... A teacher himself is supposed to be a role model... For instance, if a male teacher prohibits male students from mixing with female ones, he himself should exemplify this by practising such act. Or, if a female teacher forbids female students from makeup when they come to school, she herself should not do the same”.

Similarly, the following quote explains the experience of Bashir (35) that “(This is) the way I practice the concept of *murabbi* in teaching: first, is to develop myself as a good teacher, because a student or a child learns within his prevailing

environment and becomes affected by those who interact with them (including the teachers). So, the first step is to take care of our behaviours, movements, dressing, and so on so as not to affect the students negatively". These results are consistent with the findings on the functions of *murabbi* by Kazmi (1999) whereby "a *murabbi* is not simply a teacher, as we understand this world today, but rather as an exemplary human being, an ideal Muslim" (p. 223).

These data denote that a *murabbi* is a role model for students. Emphasizing this, Shuriye (2003) states that "The engineer-*murabbi* obviously plays a major role in shaping students' attitudes as he serves as a role model and influence student perceptions and behaviour" (p. 168). Thus, these findings suggest that in order for a teacher to be *murabbi*, he must be trusted and accepted by the respective society in terms of knowledge and character.

Counselling:

This is another sub-theme emerged under the theme application. Some of the respondents observed the *murabbi* quality through giving advice to the students. Bakar (35) revealed that:

"Often, during teaching, I used to counsel the students. I spend five minutes either before or after the lesson. By doing this, students get to realise that I am also playing the role of what a parent does at home".

Likewise, Bashir (35) reported to the researchers how he practiced the concept of *murabbi* in his career. He said, "... when I find a student who is behaving wrongly, I used to call and secretly advise him in order to put him on the right path". These results are in line with Azman's (2012) opinion saying that "if one is really *murabbi* (patron), he can enlighten the student with Islamic reference along with subjective speciality" (p. 183). The findings are further supported by Shuriye (2003) who argues that "... an engineer-*murabbi* may choose to serve as an informal counsellor to students, lending a sympathetic ear and helping them solve social and academic problems" (p. 74).

These findings imply that giving advice and guidance to students at any level based on Islamic principles is important because it can help in instilling moral values and shaping their behaviours which in turn would leave a positive impact on learning and respective academic institutions. As Azman (2012) opines that the international students who are advised and guided will be future ambassadors for the University. Building from this understanding, therefore, *murabbi* is differentiated from an ordinary teacher due to his divine task of giving advice and guidance which are beneficial for the students' worldly and other-worldly lives.

Monitoring:

Monitoring is another strategy used by the teachers in realizing their responsibility as a *murabbi*. Batuli (32) stated that:

"Whether I am the class teacher or not, before start teaching, I used to get into the classes and observe the conditions of the students, how they are. Normally, I find students in different situations and ask myself. For instance, why that student is crying? Why is that student sleeping? Though I don't spend much time, I get to know the reasons that, this child is sick today, this one is hungry, and this one is suffering from family problems. So, that is what I used to do, whether inside or outside the class".

By the same token, Barke (29) uttered that, "Normally, we take care of the students while they are in the assembly and in the classrooms. In short, all the time that we are at school we get involved in looking after the students in one way or another".

These results are consistent with the findings by Shuriye (2003) who found that "...an engineer-*murabbi* has a special role in teaching and in technology assessment. With respect to risk, it is important to identify risks associated with technological changes in the laboratories and to educate the public about these risks" (p.164). These findings imply that supervision of student activities in the learning process is vital and can be done through assessment and follow up. This way ensures that students fully achieve the knowledge that they are supposed to achieve in an easier way. In this context, the role of *murabbi* is not only presenting lectures on the topic before the students, but also monitoring their movements while at school.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The concept of *murabbi* is one of the important concepts in an integrated Islamic education philosophy. The findings of this study have demonstrated that the teachers in Islamic integrated schools in Zanzibar to a large extent were aware and well-versed with the meaning and application of the *murabbi* concept in the schools. To the researchers, this is an important development towards instilling more Islamic inputs and practices in teaching profession and this is in line with the Islamization of education and knowledge effort. In this respect, it is tenable to recommend that more efforts are initiated towards making the idea of Islamization of education and knowledge more dominant particularly in the actual educational experiences of the teachers in other types of school in Zanzibar in particular and in other Muslim countries in general. This strategy is hoped to be able to bring about the *Ummah* which is currently under its sorry state into unity, solidarity and progress. Since the study was confined to *murabbi* in terms of its meaning and application by the teachers, there is a need for others to attempt other studies which can cover larger scope and bigger number of respondents particularly through the use of quantitative research strategies.

REFERENCES

- [1] Azram, M. (n.d). Teacher's Qualities, Responsibilities and Role. *The Dialogue*, XI (2), 178-187. Celone, M. et al. (2016). Increasing The Reach: Involving Local Muslim Religious Teachers in A behavioural Intervention to Eliminate Urogenital Schistosomiasis in Zanzibar. *Acta Tropica*, 163, 142-148.
- [2] Hassan, N. (2009). Islamizing Formal Education: Integrated Islamic Schools and a New Trend in Formal Education Institution in Indonesia. Working Paper, No. 172. Retrieved May 29, 2017. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/rsis-pubs/WP172.pdf>
- [3] Huda, M. et al. (2017). Understanding Divine Pedagogy in Teacher Education: Insights from Al- Zalnurji's Ta'alim Al-Muta' Allim. *The Social Sciences*, 2 (4), 674-679.
- [4] Hussien, S. (n.d). Chapter 6: Towards the Development of a Murabbi. Retrieved May 27, 2017. <http://irep.iium.edu.my/7026/1/UPMteachersLEARNING%5B06%5D.pdf>
- [5] Inayatullah, S., & Milojević, I. (2014). Augmented reality, the Murabbi and the democratisation of higher education: alternative futures of higher education in Malaysia. *On the Horizon*, 22 (2), 110126. Retrieved May 28, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/OTH-08-2013-0029>.
- [6] Jaafar, N. et al. (2014). Quran Education for Special Children: Teacher as Murabbi. *Creative Education*, (5) 435-444. Retrieved May 26, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2014.57053>.
- [7] Kazmi, Y. (1999). The Notion of Murabbi in Islam: An Islamic Critiques on Trends in Contemporary Education. *Islamic Studies*. 38 (2), 209-233.
- [8] Mohammed, H. A. N. (2013). Methods Used By Islamic Education Teachers to Inculcate Moral Values in Islamic Studies: A Case Study at Lumumba Secondary School in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Unpublished Master thesis. International Islamic University Malaysia.
- [9] Mohdshahril, et al. (2015). Exploratory Study on Islamic Manners (*Adab*), Islamic Ethics and Religious Behaviours in Business Education. Paper presented at The IRES 13th International Conference, 25th October 2015 (pp. 10-13). Seoul: South Korea. ISBN: 978-93-85832-20-8.
- [10] Nawawi, N. M. et al. (2014). The Journey of Murabbis in Architectural Pedagogy: the Case of Studio Teaching as Laboratory of Passion and Duty to Future Khalifas of the Built Environment. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 30 (Innovation Challenges in Multidisciplinary Research & Practice): 148-166.
- [11] Paramboor, J. & Ibrahim, M. B. (2013). Philosophical Aspects of 'Murabbi': A Contextual Analysis with Special Reference to Globalization of Education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4 (26), 151-156.
- [12] Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar. (1999). Prospective, Stock-taking Review of Education in Africa: The Zanzibar Case Study. Zanzibar: Ministry of Education. Retrieved May 3, 2017. http://www.adeanet.org/adeaPortal/documents_pdf/pstr99_tanzania2.pdf

- [13] Sabdan, M. S. et al. (n.d). The Usability Evaluation of Fasih Method Based on Technology for Students with Hearing Difficulties: The User's Retrospective. *The Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2 (2), 45-52.
- [14] Sa-u, S. et al. (2011). Islamic Behaviours among Muslim Teachers in the Public Primary Schools in the Southern Thailand. Paper presented at The 3rd International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences, held at Prince of Songkla University, 1-2 April 2011 (pp. 1-15). Faculty of Liberal Arts.
- [15] Shuriye, A. O. (2003). The Spheral Spectrum of Educational Role and Responsibilities of Engineers-Murabbis. *Jurnal Usuluddin*, 18, 161-174.
- [16] Sof, T. Y. T. et al. (2014). Murabbi Development Program: An Experience in Pusat Pendidikan Al-Amin. Paper presented at Oasis International Conference on Islamic Education (OICIE 2014), 5th November 2014. PWTC, Kuala Lumpur.
- [17] Suhid, A. et al. (2014). Private Islamic Primary School Teachers' Commitment to Human Capital Development in Malaysia. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (27) 766-773.
- [18] Zanzibar Association of Private Schools (2016). Statistics on Private Schools in Zanzibar. Unpublished Data. Collected on December 28, 2016.