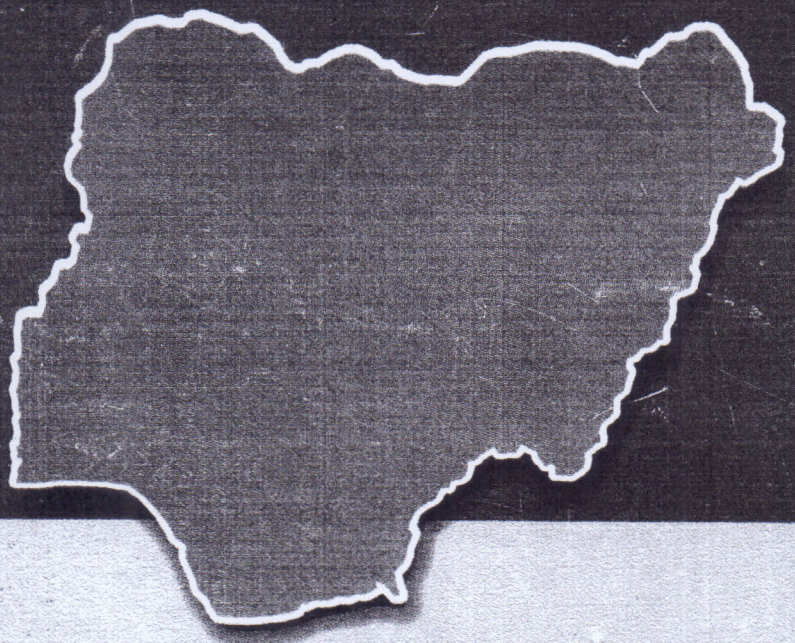
ARABIC/ISLAMIC STUDIES AND THE CHALLENGE OF QUALITY CONTROL IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



Editor-In-Chief

MUSA A. ABDU-RAHEEM (Ph.D.)

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PREFACE

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. His blessings on us as individuals and an Association are too numerous to count. Despite the seemingly insurmountable daunting challenges, the Nigeria Association of Teachers in Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) has been holding national conferences and publishing conference proceedings as well as Journals regularly. This is in addition to other occasional publications particularly in honour of notable members who have passed on. For this grace, we owe Allah, *subhānahu wa taᶜālā*, all the praise. May He continue to shower peace, mercy and grace on Prophet Muḥammad, members of his household, Companions and those who take advantage of his guidance till the end of time.

The 29th National Conference of the Association took place in Katsina from February 28 to March 4, 2011. It was initially scheduled to hold in Nigeria Arabic Language Village, Ngala, Borno State, in December 2010. The security challenges at the time compelled the Association to change the venue. It is our fervent prayer that Allah will make peace reign supreme in all the States experiencing the challenges at present and Nigeria as a whole.

Members from all over the country attended the Conference. Its theme which is the title of this publication is **Arabic/Islamic Studies and the Challenge of Quality Control in the Nigerian Educational System.** The papers presented numbered more than one hundred and twenty. Each paper was discussed at the plenary sessions. Rapporteurs took note of the criticisms of each paper and observations made by members to guide each presenter in effecting necessary corrections. The papers were then sent to experts in the various areas for assessment. At least, two of the three assessors for each paper should give favourable reports before it could be processed further. The presenter will them rework it before being accepted for publication. It took much time to take all these steps, a situation which resulted in the last-minute rush.

May I use this medium, to express profound gratitude and appreciation to Kasina State Government, Emir, Chiefs and the people of Katsina for their general hospitality throughout the duration of the Conference. All participants were accommodated and fed at the expense of the State Government. There were also generous donations especially by dignitaries during the public presentation of the Association publications. May Allah reward them amply and reckon with their kind gestures as acts of *ᶜIbādah* to qualify them for admission into *Al-Jannah*.

Any academic work done under the circumstances mentioned above cannot but have one thing or the other to correct even though members of the Editorial Board spared no effort to ensure high quality. It will be appreciated if any shortcoming discovered is brought to the notice of the Editor-in-Chief for correction in subsequent editions. Allah alone is Perfect. Of course, all the contributors are personally responsible for the facts, views and opinions in their respective papers.

In conclusion, praise and thanks be to Allah for granting all the wherewithal to make this humble effort. May He continue to sustain the Association and bless all the members and Nigeria as a whole.

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TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Introduction

There is an urgent need for the widening of the educational curricula and syllabi of Islamic Studies in the pre-primary, primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Since no adequate training can take place without relevant and societally-related educational programme in a teaching-learning process of the subject in the learning environment, Government should ensure that adequate provisions are made to boost effective teaching. Due to this development, educational curricula and syllabi of Islamic Studies at all levels in Nigeria should be formulated to touch every phase of national development in the areas of social, economic and political activities.[1] In other words, Islamic Studies as a subject in the Nigerian Educational system in the twenty-first century should be geared towards a meaningful and sustainable development in the educational policy in Nigeria.

Apart from being one of the subjects that fall under religious-moral education in the curriculum, Islamic Studies in Nigerian schools is designed to equip the students in the character and mental capacities for the purpose of leading the best way of life in Nigeria and outside. This study acknowledges the fact that the recent educational reform programme embarked upon by the Federal Ministry of Education has made progress to redesign teacher education. The need for this re-designing is because of the fact that the teacher education is a foundation of quality in the educational system which serves as the key that unlocks all aspects of meaningful and sustainable development in any human society.[2] This is the main reason why the National Policy of Education of Nigeria analyses the objective of teacher education in the country thus:[3]

i. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient Classroom Teachers for all levels of our educational system.
ii. To further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
iii. To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.

iv. To provide teachers, with the intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
v. To change teacher commitment to the teaching profession.

This study examines the status of Islamic Studies in the Nigerian Educational System with a view to gearing it towards meaningful sustainable development in the country. The purpose is to examine the danger posed by the present status of Islamic Studies in the Nigerian educational system to sustainable development in the country. The historical account of the development of Islamic Studies both in Southern and Northern Nigeria from the period of pre-colonial days to this century is highlighted. The study concludes with findings and recommendations.

Aims and Objectives of Islamic Studies in Nigerian Schools

The National Policy of Education published in 2004 spells out the four aims and objectives of education in Nigeria which go as follows:

(i) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
(ii) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
(iii) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
(iv) the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competence, both mental and physical as equipments for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

As a result of this development, the aims and objectives of Islamic studies were derived from the blue print of this National Policy of Education of 1984. From it, the following aims and objectives of the Islamic Studies are arrived at namely, to:

(i) develop spiritually both body and soul of students;
(ii) create an awareness about the existence of Allah in students;
(iii) acquaint the students with the outlines of Islam;
(iv) prepare the students to understand Islam as a culture and civilization;
(v) instill in the students the spirit of God consciousness;
(vi) appreciate and uphold the values of and teachings of Islam, and to live by it;
(vii) give the students adequate intellectual exposure that will enable them pursue further education in Islamic Studies in tertiary institution within or outside the country;

(viii) enable the students know their responsibilities and duties towards Allah, other human beings and themselves, and carry those responsibilities and duties as expected of them;

(ix) give moral and religious training to the student so that he would be useful not only to himself but also to his community at large;

(x) introduce the students to the role of Arabic language as an official language of Islam as well as language of scholarship in Islam.

Lemu[5] stated the aims of teaching Islamic studies in the primary school as follows:

(i) to awaken in the child a consciousness of Allah as the foundation of his intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth and to provide a sound Islamic basis for rational and reflective understanding of the world around him;

(ii) to teach the child to be conscious of his responsibility to Allah, serving Him with all the talents and resources He has given him;

(iii) to enable the child to know how to worship Allah in the manner He has prescribed;

(iv) to train the child's personality towards the best moral and social conduct, healthy attitudes and self-discipline, in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and to encourage him through this training to grow up as a good and law abiding citizens, who will contribute to the well being of society and of humanity in general.

Nigerian Education Research Council[6] highlighted the aims of teaching Islamic Studies in Junior Secondary School as follows:

(i) recognition of Allah as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe and the sole source of values;

(ii) cultivation of the sense of gratitude to Allah and submission to his guidance and moral law, both in our worship of Him and in our behaviour towards our fellowman;

(iii) awakening of the faculty of intellect and reasoning in accordance with the Qur'ānic injunctions which say

"Will you not use your reason"
"Will you not ponder and reflect"

(iv) encouragement of the pursuit of useful knowledge and the application of such knowledge for the benefit of humanity in the fields of science, technology, medicine. etc.

(v) attainment of balanced development of individuals and community by giving due weight to the physical, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual needs of man;

(vi) realization of human rights, equality and brotherhood, with emphasis on practical means of achieving social solidarity and ethnic harmony in place of greed and selfishness;

(vii) awakening in the heart, the consciousness of the presence of Allah in thought and in behaviour, as a witness to all our actions, thoughts and behaviour, acting as a restraint on wrongdoing, whether public or private and as an incentive to good behaviour;

(viii) to produce a cultured, well-behaved, considerate, reasonable and God-fearing man or woman;

(ix) to teach one to be conscious of his responsibility to Allah and to his fellow being.

Historical Account of Islamic Studies in Northern Nigeria

Islamic Studies in Nigeria began as soon as the religion of Islam was introduced to the Nigerian environ of Kanem-Borno empire in the later part of the eleventh century of the Christian era through the efforts of North African Berber merchants who came to Northern Nigeria for commercial purposes.[7] Therefore, it is not a gainsaying that Islamic Studies was introduced into Nigeria long before the advent of missionary cum western education which was introduced in Nigeria in the middle part of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, 1842 to be precise.[8] Islamic Studies had already developed well-formulated curriculum and methodology as far back as seventh century of the Christian era. By the seventeenth century of the Christian era, the teaching of Islamic Studies in Nigeria flourished and matured into a remarkable standard under individual and private management.[9]

Centres of Islamic Studies popularly known as Qur'ānic or *Islamiyyah* schools used to take place in semi-organized structures similar to non-formal education. Three different places were used for teaching-learning process of Islamic Studies at the initial stages. Those places are as follows:[10]

(i) *Mu'alim* or *Alfa's* Residential home.
(ii) Community Mosques
(iii) Under the shades of trees in an open space in the community

The *Mu^{c}allim* (Teacher) operates freer curricula in terms of the subject matter, time table, class size and duration of the studies. According to Osokoya[11] there are four stages of learning Islamic Studies in the *Islamiyyah* schools. The

primary level popularly known as Qur'ānic stage starts as early as three years of age. Emphasis is laid on rote-learning and choral recitation of chapters from the Qur'ān. Curriculum at this stage is choral recitation of the Qur'ān so as to sharpen the memory and sense of the pupils. The second stage starts immediately after the first stage; its curriculum covers reading and writing of the Arabic alphabets and the formation of Arabic syllables.

The third stage can be referred to as secondary level. Here, curriculum would now become wider as it includes Arabic language, Qur'ān commentary, Syntax, Logic, Arithmetic, Ḥadīth, Algebra, Poetry and Medicine. This is known as Senior Islamic School (S.I.S.) in Northern Nigeria. Its examination is running twice for Internal and External students just like Ordinary Level Seertificate (WASC). Its certificate can be used to get admission into any Northern Nigerian Universities. The fourth stage is the post secondary stage which leads the graduands to tertiary institutions in Arab and Islamic nations.

Katsina College of Arabic and Islamic Education was one of early educational institutions in Northern Nigeria. In this college, Islamic Studies was given a prominent place in the curriculum and its scope was broadened to cover sciences and modern subjects. Another tertiary institution is Kano Law School where Islamic Studies is deeply studied. It was established in 1943 and later changed to School of Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1947.[12] In 1963, Islamic Studies was also introduced by Abdallah Bayero College in Kano (then a college under Ahmadu Bello University) before it later became an autonomous university by the name "Bayero University, Kano" in 1975. This was followed by other Northern Nigerian universities such as Universities of Ilorin, Jos, Maiduguri, Abuja, Sokoto (now Usmanu Danfodiyyo University), Ahmadu Bello University, Kogi State University, Anyigba and newly established Kaduna State University, Kwara State University, and several Colleges of Education, Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Centres for Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies scattered in some towns in Northern Nigeria.[13]

The curriculum of Islamic Studies in Nigeria was not only adequate but viable as it transformed many Nigerians to became literate in Arabic language. It should be noted that, prior to the advent of Latin script in Nigeria, Nigerians could write their indigenous languages with Arabic letters. It should be rightly mentioned at this juncture that all of the four stages of Islamic Studies in Northern Nigeria are given fully moral and financial support by the local and the state governments in Northern Nigeria. Almost all the Arabic and Islamic Schools *(Madāris)* in Northern Nigeria are receiving financial aids and grants from the local, state and federal governments as well as Arab and Islamic nations.[14]

Historical Account of Islamic Studies in Southern Nigeria

Southern Nigeria would be geographically divided into both South-Western and Southern-Eastern Nigeria. It is on this line that the prospect of Islamic Studies in this area is going to be discussed. The Qur'ānic or *Islamiyyah* schools started in the South-Western part of Nigeria (Yoruba land) in the early seventeenth Century of the Christian era and it was pioneered by the products of the Northern Nigeria Qur'ānic or *Islamiyyah* schools who came to Yoruba land for the expansion of Islam. These teachers were itinerant scholars who were moving from one town to another in order to spread Islam and its knowledge. They tutored and trained some Yoruba students who in turn established their own Qur'ān ic schools in the Yoruba environs. Some of these Yoruba students went out to Ilorin and some towns in Northern Nigeria to acquire more knowledge in Islamic Studies. They came back to Yoruba towns to establish formal Arabic schools on the prototype of the one running in Muslim nations popularly called *Madrasah* (school), *Markaz* (Centre of Learning) and *Maᶜhad* (Institute).[15]

Their curriculum consists of various foreign sciences of Arabic and Islamic studies so as to enable the products to further their studies in any university within or outside the country. The only problem here is that some institutions in Southern Nigeria do not accept the Arabic School Certificate as an entry qualification for their programmes except they merge it with Ordinary Level Certificate of SSCE or NECO.

The teaching of Islamic Studies got into the South-Western schools in 1922 when various non-governmental Islamic organizations started their own private primary and post-primary schools in Lagos. Such non-governmental Islamic organizations include Ahmadiyyah, Ansar-ud-Deen, Nawairud-Deen, Isabatudeen, Zumuratul-Hujjaj, Anwarul-Islam, Ansarul-Islam, Islamic Missionary Society, etc. Both Ahmadiyyah and Ansar-ud-Deen started their schools in 1922 and 1929 respectively, and within three decades, other Islamic organizations mentioned above followed the same suit.[17]

Islamic Studies emerged in South-Western Nigerian Universities when the University of Ibadan established the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1961. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife was established in 1963. Other universities in the zone are Ogun State University, Ago Iwoye (now Olabisi Onabanjo University), Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti (formerly Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1983, Lagos State University in 1984 and Ondo State University (now Adekunle Ajasin University) in 1997. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife offered it as a course unit under the Department of Religions Studies. Other tertiary institutions of learning such as Diploma awarding institutions and Teachers' Colleges also followed suit by running certificate courses in Arabic and Islamic Studies with well formulated curricula. By this, it became a reality for the students of Islamic Studies to obtain a Diploma and

College Certificates and Degrees in the Nigerian Western-oriented tertiary institutions.[18]

The schools established by the non-governmental Islamic organizations were taken over by the Federal and State governments in 1975. The teaching of Islamic Studies was not phased out of the government schools. This paved way for the designing of a standard curriculum for the effective and proper teaching of Islamic Studies in primary and post-primary schools in Nigeria in 1985.[19]

In South-Eastern Nigeria, Islamic Studies started late in the twentieth century of the Christian era and was pioneered by some Northern scholars who settled for commercial activities in some major towns such as Aba, Onitsha, Awka, Asaba, Onitsha, Owerri, Benin, Warri, Auchi, Calabar, Port-Harcourt etc. These scholars privately organized the Qur'ānic schools and Islamic centres in the few mosques in the south-eastern Nigeria. Apart from Auchi, Warri and Benin, the teaching of Islamic studies in the government primary and post-primary schools is not given support probably because of the lesser number of the Muslim students in those schools. The teaching of Islamic studies is only given full support by few primary and post-primary schools which are privately-owned by the Muslims in the South-Eastern Nigeria.[20] In the tertiary institutions, Islamic Studies is running as a unit course in the Universities of Benin, Uyo and Port-Harcourt and Ambrose Ali University under the Department of Religion and Cultural Management Studies.[21]

Viability of Islamic Studies in the Nigerian Educational System

In the *National Policy on Education* of 2004, out of eight levels of formal and non-formal education stated, Islamic Studies features in six of them. These are pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary, teacher and adult education. It is only technical and special education where Islamic Studies does not feature. This is as a result of the fact that the current secularist approach to the formulation of educational policies does not see the relevance of Islamic Studies in such institutions of learning.[22]

Despite this Islamization of Knowledge embarked upon by some of the Departments of Islamic Studies and Religious Studies in Nigerian Universities, Islamic Studies is categorised among the elective and optional subjects in the primary and post-primary educational curricula as in the *National Policy of Education* of 2004. By this development, students could either offer Islamic Studies or opt out for Christian Religious Studies or any other alternative arts subjects in the school. Science and commercial oriented students are also not allowed to offer the subject in the newly formulated policy. It should be rightly mentioned at this juncture that Government places more emphasis on the science and technical based subjects or courses in Nigerian schools. As a result of this, Nigerian society maintains poor attitude against the teaching-learning exercise of

Islamic Studies in primary and post-primary schools in the country as they view Islamic Studies as a non-viable subject that has no better and brighter future for the students and the general society. Consequently, parents discourage their children from offering Islamic Studies by looking down upon the students and the subject. They see the subject as irrelevant to modern day Nigerian society that cherishes scientific and technological development.[23] This is a misconception as the subject is not strictly restricted to the teaching profession only. Islamic Studies graduates can go into some professions such as journalism, banking, public administration, civil service and international relation etc.

In the tertiary institutions such as colleges and universities, the number of students offering Islamic Studies is very minimal, compared with the students offering other Arts courses. As minimal in number as they are some of them who manage to be admitted for the course in tertiary institutions drop either at undergraduates or at the postgraduate level in order to cross over to other courses.[24] Instead of threatening to rationalise the Islamic Studies academic staff, Nigerian government should have woken up from their slumber to arrest this situation by making the subject more viable through the sustainable educational reform.

Recent Sustainable Development of Islamic Studies in some Nigerian Universities

Bayero University, Kano and Usmanu Danfodiyyo University, Sokoto, deserve commendation for their Islamization of Knowledge programme which they borrowed from the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT).[25] Through this, Bayero University, Kano, and Usmanu Danfodiyyo University, Sokoto, introduced some contemporary Islamic courses such as Islamic Art and Architecture, Islam and Non-Muslim World and some other Islamic related courses which are run in different departments in Law, Education, Social Sciences and Management. For instance, Department of Economics in the two above-mentioned Northern universities run Introduction to Islamic Economics, Economics of Production and Consumption in Islam, Islamic Economic Analysis, Economics of Zakat, Advanced Islamic Economics Analysis, Economic of Islamic Welfarism, Economic Development under Islamic Framework, Contemporary Issues in Islamic Economics, *Fiqh* for Economics, Islamic Finance and Banking, Sociology of Islamic Society, Islamic Business Ethics, Advanced Islamic Economic Analysis and Interest Free Banking. In the Department of Sociology, the following Islamic-related courses are run: Sociology of Islamic Society, Islamic Order and Institutions, Islamic Social Thought, Islam as a Social Factor in Nigeria and Islam and Social Change. Similarly in the Department of Political Science, the following Islamic-related courses are also run: Islamic Political Thought, Islamic Political Institutions and the Concept of State and

Society in Islam. In the Faculty of Education, the Islamic-related courses such as Education in Islam, Islamic Education, Introduction to Islamic Psychology and Ideas and Institution of Islamic Education are offered.[26] University of Lagos, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo and Lagos State University are also making frantic efforts to embark on the same programme and professional postgraduate diploma in Islamic Studies so as to boost their number of incoming candidates into the Department.

Conclusion

The study examines the prospect and problem of Islamic Studies in Nigeria. Among its findings is that there is need for the enhancement of Islamic Studies in Nigeria in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives as enun ciated in the *National Policy on Education*. On this line, the study discovers that:

(i) Islamic Studies would survive and successfully complete with other Arts, Science and Social Sciences subjects in Northern Nigerian schools if the people give societal acceptance and governmental support (from local, national and international levels) to the subject.

(ii) Islamic Studies started in Nigeria earlier than Western Teacher Education. The former started in the eleventh century while the latter started in the nineteenth century.

(iii) Islamic Studies produced literate elites in Nigeria who can write and read their indigenous languages with Arabic letters long before the advent of European colonialists with their Latin and Roman letters in the Nigerian environs.

(iv) Some of universities in the Northern and South-Western Nigeria have embarked on Islamisation of knowledge programme in Islamic Studies in order to sustain the subject and make it relevant to contemporary Nigerian society.

Based on these findings, the study therefore, recommends that:

(i) government should intensify her effort in upgrading the status of Islamic Studies in the Educational reform. All educational ministries and boards in Nigeria should also assist in monitoring educational reform of Islamic Studies and keep the momentum alive.

(ii) government should gear themselves up on the upliftment of Islamic Studies in the country during this time of educational reform through assisting Islamic Studies morally and financially appointment of more Islamic teachers in the primary, post-primary and tertiary schools in the country, providing more Islamic instructional materials to the

schools, organizing and sponsoring Islamic educational seminars, conferences and workshops for Islamic educators and providing current Islamic textbooks to the schools.

(iii) Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education should make the two religious studies (CRS and ISS) compulsory for the children of the respective religion as a means of enhancing moral and ethical education among the students in Nigerian schools.

(iv) Some tertiary institutions which have not embarked on Islamisation of Knowledge programme in the Islamic Studies and Religious Studies departments should also do so in order to boost the admission intake of the students.

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24. *Ibid.*
25. IIIT has its international headquarters in Herdon, Virginia, in United States of America while the Nigeria headquarter office is situated at the university campus of Bayero University, Kano. See: C.U. Aliyu, 'The Experience of Usmanu Danfodiyo University in Muslim Educational Reform', in B.A. Umar *et. al* (eds.), *Muslim Educational Reform activities in Nigeria,* (Kano, Benchmark Publishers Limited, 2005), pp. 144-145.
26. R.I. Adebayo, 'The Influence of the World Conferences on Muslim Education on Islamic Education in Nigeria', in L.M. Adetona (ed.), *Islamic Studies in Contemporary Nigeria: Problems and Prospects,* (Nigeria: Alamsek General Concept Enterprises, 2005) pp.19-23.