

## QUR'ANIC SCHOOLS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Qur'anic schools that facilitate memorization of the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, share a set of historical roots that can be traced back to Arabia and the educational practices of the Prophet Mohammed (SAW). These schools inter mixed with local institutions and took on the distinctive cultural characteristics of the localities in which they were situated. This study examines challenges and prospects facing Qur'anic Schools. Primary and Secondary methods of data collection were used. Findings revealed that: Qur'anic Schools have been confronting the challenges of uncared attitude of the government; lack of resources and lack of enlightenment. The study recommended Standardization of the Mainstream Qur'anic Schools by government, and availability of resources should be given attention and that there should be vigorous enlightenment campaign showing the merits of Qur'anic education and fruits of its success if implemented.

**Keywords:** *Islam; Traditional Qur'anic Schools (TQS); Islamic Education (IE); Qur'anic Education (QE); Arabic Language; Education; Nigeria.*

### Introduction

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses, such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality. In Islamic theology, knowledge is gained in order to actualize and perfect all the dimensions of the human. The paradigm of perfection is the Prophet (Peace be upon him), and thus the goal of Islamic education is for

Muslims to live as he (Peace be upon him) lived and to imitate him<sup>1</sup>. Education is an important factor in the development of any society. The level of development of any nation is usually determined by its level of education. At the same time the nature of education available to any community, will depict how the affected community would look like. It is this context that makes it paramount for Muslims to look inwardly into the situation we find

ourselves today politically, socially, economically, and spiritually<sup>2</sup>.

Qur'anic Schools have been confronting the challenges and factors militating against their developments, but they are not natural and therefore there must be a solution to them. The challenges may include the non supportive attitude from the government; Attitude of some proprietors; Attitude of some parents; Problems of enlightenment and last but not the least is the mis-use of electronic media.

The objectives of the study is to examine the challenges and the factors that are militating against the development of Qur'anic Schools in other to give clear and unambiguous prospects that if followed may lead to the rapid developments of Qur'anic Schools and people will associate with Qur'anic Schools such as students, teachers, parents etc. and the generality of Nigerian.

The issues on the concept of Qur'anic Schools include the emergence of Qur'anic Schools, its features, contributions of Qur'anic Schools and its development. In Nigerian educational system, it is clearly stated in the review of literature. The question of the challenges and factors that are militating against the development of Qur'anic Schools that has to do with the attitude of human being as result of the passage of time remain unresolved. This humble attempt is intended to find a recommendation to these problems.

### **Concept of Qur'anic Schools**

By definition, Qur'anic schools are the schools in which Muslims learn

their religion and normally found out of the mosque, private houses or premises set for that purpose. Qur'anic schools were established by Arabs to offer religious instructions to Muslim children and promote the Islamic religious culture in general. The Islamic education was/is provided through Qur'anic schools for individuals to master the basic tenets of Islam and it was done by sheer memorization and mastering the Arabic script<sup>3</sup>

The history of Islamic education in Nigeria is the same as the history of the religion of Islam itself. This is because Islam goes to any place or community along with its own form of education<sup>3</sup>. Islam, which predates Christianity in Nigeria, is said to have come to the country in the 11th century. It is on record that when Kanem Ummi Jilmi of the old Borno accepted Islam, he established the first Qur'anic School in his palace. It is not a matter of coincidence or accident that Islamic religion and Islamic education go together. The fact is that, without the latter the former cannot be said to have been firmly entrenched and understood. The Holy prophet was reported to have said that, "If Allah wants to do good to a person, He makes him to understand the religion"<sup>4</sup>.

### **Emergence of Qur'anic Schools and Islamic Scholarship in Nigeria**

If anything is to be written on Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria, few lines must be written on the scholars who brought it to Nigeria and where it came from. Islam was brought to Hausa land in the early fourteenth century by traders and scholars from

Mali and other places of West Africa. During the reign of Yaqub (1452 C.E.-1463 C.E.), some Fulani scholars migrated to Kano, bringing with them books on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. It was during this period that Muslim scholars from Timbuktu came to Kano to teach and preach Islam. Al-Maghili, a famous scholar, later went to Katsina which had also become a Centre of Arabic and Islamic learning during the fifteenth century. Many scholars emerged from this Centre. They organised themselves into a sort of guild, and a master would grant a recognized certificate (*ijazah*) to those students who satisfactorily passed the prescribed courses under him. This system continued until the coming of the British to Nigeria. It was this Arabic and Islamic education which gave cultural prestige to Islam.<sup>5</sup>

Islamic education was handled non-formally in the residence of the Mallam. It should be pointed out here that there had not been either any form of government assistance or foreign aid to Islamic education as at that time. In spite of this attitude of the government, Islamic education continued to grow along with the increasing population of Muslims in the country.<sup>6</sup>

### **Features of Qur'anic Schools and Islamic Education in Nigeria**

The structure of Islamic education or Qur'anic education is not pegged to age, as an individual Muslim has an access to education at any time in his or her life. Muslims are able to join with Qur'anic schools at any time regardless their age. This allows them to get Islamic education at any age,

children, youth, adults or sometimes even old man can join Qur'anic schools to get religious knowledge. Another feature of Islamic education or Qur'anic education is that, it is not competitive in nature. The idea of entrance examination which an aspiring student must pass before he enters a given level of education and final examination which confers qualification in western education system is not important to Islamic tradition.<sup>7</sup>

This means that, all Muslims who want to join Islamic education or Qur'anic education can join it, no entrance examination is given to those who want to join it. Access to Islamic education does not depend upon ability of an individual to pay fees. This means that, unlike mission schools or other privately owned schools where students are asked to pay a specified or fixed tuition fees in Qur'anic schools there is no fixed tuition fees.<sup>8</sup>

The attendance of the class in Qur'anic schools or Islamic education is flexible. The time that the Islamic school begins varies according to the interest of the teacher. A teacher decides the time to start and end the program. The teachers of the Qur'anic schools are the one who decide whether to start the session in the morning, afternoon or in the evening depending on his timetable and are usually five days in a week, that is, from Saturday to Wednesday.<sup>9</sup>

## Contribution of Qur'anic Schools to the Development of Education in Nigeria

Islam and Qur'anic schools had some contributions to the development of education in Nigeria. These impacts are as follows:

- Qur'anic schools greatly contributed to the understanding and reconstruction of Nigerian history and civilization in Nigeria.
- Islam and Qur'anic schools facilitated the development of education sector in Nigeria. Islamic education or Qur'anic schools introduced several new subjects or disciplines such as religion, science, humanities, Islamic philosophy and grammar (Nahawu), History (Sirah).<sup>10</sup>
- In addition, Islam and Islamic education through Qur'anic schools had greatly contributed to art and architecture as reflected in the construction of mosques, palaces.
- Also Islam and Qur'anic schools opened several schools to provide education to the people who lived in Nigeria. In those schools, students were taught how to read Arabic scripts from the holy Quran and how to write those Arabic scripts. This means that, Qur'anic schools had led to the introduction and development of writing skills and reading skills to Nigerians.
- Promotion of discipline to the people of Nigeria is one of the contributions or impacts of Qur'anic schools in Nigeria. Islamic education trains learners to be good citizens through the instructions to the Muslims children by observing the Islamic

laws and rules. These Islamic laws and rules prepare the youth and children to be good citizens and people who behave positively before other people in the given society.<sup>11</sup> This manifested in Nigerian University certificate, a person is certified in character and learning after graduation.

- The knowledge on how to write and read, learn in the Qur'anic Schools contributes in preserving records and information that facilitated the development of technology than it was before when information was stored in the head and caused even some of the information to be forgotten.<sup>12</sup>

## The Development of Qur'anic Schools and Education in Nigeria

The Traditional Qur'anic Schools (TQS), their characterization as 'traditional' is not to suggest that they are indigenous to communities in Nigeria but is used to describe their retention of many of their prototype features since being introduced in Northern Nigeria in the 14th century (i.e. in another version of history). The primary function of Qur'anic schools is to contribute to the early upbringing of Muslim children by training them in the reading and memorization of the Qur'an. In performing these functions, Qur'anic schools laid the foundation for the emergence of an Islamic system of education long before the advent of western education in Northern Nigeria<sup>13</sup>. Known in Hausa as *Makarantan Allo*, Qur'anic school is the first of the two phases that Islamic education typically consists of; the other being *Makarantan Ilmi* or school for advanced learning. While

Qur'anic schools provide the equivalent of modern pre-primary and primary education, *Makarantan ilmi* is a long educational experience designed to provide students of Qur'anic schools with an understanding of the meaning of the Quran and exposure to other specialized branches of Islamic learning.<sup>14</sup>

In the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1983), it is allowed to study Arabic and Islamic at all levels of education which was not so before. The condition of the twin subjects has changed today. It explains that the revision of the National Policy on Education in 2004 in tune with the Universal Basic Education witnessed the emergence of the new Primary School Curriculum suggested a minimum of three periods per week for both subjects for effective teaching. It was not only difficult to determine the level of attainment of the scholars, but also to fix salaries for them. These problems were removed with the establishment of the School for Arabic Studies in 1947 when program for training Arabic and Qur'anic teachers for primary schools started. Later, similar programs for post-primary Qur'anic and Arabic teachers were established.<sup>15</sup>

The madrasa curriculum, on the other hand, offers exposure to a classical Arabic and Islamic education and provides only limited space for a secular content and the use of English as an instructional or communicative medium. In the analysis of the curricula content of these schools, notes that out of the 12 subjects on the

curriculum, 9 focused on the study of Islamic theology, jurisprudence and Arabic. The 4 remaining subjects, apart from carrying less weight on the curricula, are the only subjects taught in English. English is not only the instructional medium in Nigerian schools from the fourth year of primary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN 2004) but is also the lingua franca for a diverse population with over 250 languages. As far as linkages with public education are concerned, the use of Arabic as an instructional medium in madrasahs restricts contact with the broad curricula on offer by Nigeria's higher institutions of learning. While madrasahs provide their students with formal qualifications that allow access to higher education, their presence is largely felt in Arabic, Islamic legal studies, and Islamic studies courses.<sup>16</sup>

The latest addition to this list is the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) Arabic Medium programme that has been designed to enable products of madrasahs to obtain nationally approved professional teacher training for the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies. The NCE Arabic Medium programme substitutes English with Arabic as an instructional medium for the teaching of core professional teacher education courses that form part of the NCE programme run in Colleges of Education (COEs) in Nigeria. This is in addition to their study of Arabic and Islamic studies as teaching subjects using the same medium of instruction. General Studies and General English (collectively called GSE courses) are the only components of the NCE Arabic-

medium programme that are taught in English.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, although madrassas may be said to have modernized the contents and delivery practices of the old Islamic schools from the pre-colonial era, they have only limited engagement with the national curricula or instructional medium, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary school levels. This limitation also reflects in the overall integration of madrassa students in the national discourse and action in the political, economic or social spheres. However, the graduates of *Makarantan Ilimi* (higher level) become teachers, Imams and Judges. The Muslim clerics are very influential and important in the community. They are the officials responsible for naming ceremony, marriage contract and funeral prayer.<sup>18</sup>

Today, Universities are known for the programs in offering degrees of Islamic and Arabic Studies at various levels such as Bachelor of Arts (B. A.), Bachelor of Arts Education (B. A. Ed), PhD. in Islamic and Arabic Studies. Likewise in most Colleges of Education, Arabic and Islamic educations are studied with qualified lecturers employed by the Government. Some others private Islamic colleges got licenses from National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and others got affiliation from other universities in Nigeria.<sup>19</sup>

Although many of the Islamic schools described above had humble beginnings as Qur'anic schools, the

expansion they have witnessed has been concentrated at the advanced level of Islamic learning. In other words, the lower level of Qur'anic schooling has not witnessed the same degree of modernization and reform as the advanced level.

### **Goals of Qur'anic Schools and Education in Nigeria**

Qur'anic schools try to ensure that they articulate the knowledge contain in Qur'an towards the production of a balanced and righteous community of humanity on earth, a community that will deploy its acquired experience, skills and knowledge to the realization of the better life on earth and assist its members attain eternal success. In other words, as far as QE is concerned, the utilitarian purpose of education is only a means towards a higher purpose: the establishment of a sustainable harmony between humans - Khalifatullah -Vicegerent of Allah and other entities in the cosmos<sup>20</sup>.

The roles of Qur'anic school will not be completed without identifying its basic effort made to explain the root meaning of the word Islam. The word Islam is from silm which is to enter into peace. Islam therefor, means entering into peace. In this sense, a Muslim is one who makes peace with Allah and man. Peace with Allah implies complete submission to His will and peace with man is not only to refrain from evil or injury to another but also to do well to him.<sup>21</sup>

However, two efforts have taken place in the Muslim World in recent decades- 1977 to 1996 to reform education and speak to this. It says, in part, as follows: Education should aim

at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational feelings and bodily senses. Education in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific and linguistic, both individually and collectively, motivates all the aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Qur'anic Schools serve as a means of preservation of knowledge, and as a means for meaningful transformation and development. This manifested by the actions of colonial government when they protected the Muslim Religion from Christian penetration.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Qur'anic Education (QE) is not a rarefied body of knowledge which disapproves of the so-called secular sciences. Rather it encompasses all sciences, either secular or religious. The Qur'an says. "Nothing have we omitted from the Book".<sup>24</sup> From this we can deduce that QE, when properly thought of, comprises other sciences such as Medicine, Engineering, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology etc., because they are also Qu'anic sciences. They all derive their points of reference, existence and destiny from the Almighty, the creator of the heavens and the earth. Thus it can safely be proposed that QE is a functional one. This functionality derives, in part from some of its features all of which make it unique and holistic. It is our proposition that the features of QE include practicality, universality, historicity and comprehensiveness. To say QE is practical, is to underscore its relevance to the contrarities of human status and circumstance across

ages and climes; to cloak education in Islam with the robe of universality is to retrieve the Prophetic axiom-look for knowledge even if it be in China; to foreground knowledge acquisition in line with the Qur'anic injunctions in the historical is to establish the strong link that binds the whole of Muslim education in the contemporary times, notwithstanding its negative trajectories, with its medieval and classical roots. Now when reference is made to the feature of comprehensiveness in Qur'anic philosophy of education, it is to the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary of its disciplines.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, when Allah, in the very first revelation of the Qur'an enjoins His prophet and by extension, humanity, to read –"Read in the name of your Lord who creates".<sup>26</sup> There appears to be a decisive lack of referent to the thing to be read. But exegetes would argue that the referent is actually embedded in the Quran: that by commanding the Prophet to read, he is actually being enjoined to read the whole of creation, to read and derive meaning from the universe in its cadence and symphony, in its order and disorder. Thus to believe in the injunction that humans should read, is to call attention to all fields of learning from the soft to the hard, from the "wet" to the "dry", from the humanities to the sciences. Thus, "The Qur'an becomes transparent only to those who have studied the sciences, which are extracted from it".<sup>27</sup> For example, the verse of the Quran which reads ". . . who, when I am sick, gives me health" would be appreciated and understood better by those with the knowledge of medicine.<sup>28</sup>

## Challenges and Factors Militating Against the Development of Qur'anic Schools and Education in Nigeria

The factors and challenges militating against the developments of Qur'anic Schools are multifarious but are artificial and can be solve. Some of them are:

- **Government:** A study of this nature cannot adequately do justice to the inhibitive roles successive (i.e. Colonial government) governments have played on Islamic education in Nigeria. On funding, the government not only funds Western education, it has also taken over its full control. So, what started as mere grant-in aid soon graduated into full take-over.<sup>29</sup> This alone has a negative consequence, in order to be fair and just to this large Muslim population, Qur'anic Schools should be accorded a more dignified attention than it is presently being given.
- **Proprietors:** The problems being created by the proprietors of Islamiyyah schools for Islamic educational system can be likened to a proverbial kolanut having a problem of the parasitic insect living in it. More worrisome is lack of unity among the proprietors even within the same locality. This made it impossible for them to have a forum to articulate their views on how to move the system forward.<sup>30</sup> The worst category is the absentee-proprietors; who do not have substantial number of the students and facilities they claim to have and would do one launching after

the other in the name of development of their institutions. And those proprietors who are also after worldly gain to achieve self-centered interest not the goal of Islamic Education.

- **Parents:** Muslim parents of students in Islamiyyah schools have their own share of the problem, the manners in which student attending Islamic schools does more harm than good. In a place of study, an average Muslim parent does spend heavily on Western education for their children. Some take Islamic education as secondary; while some send to Islamic schools, the children who, in their opinion and conclusion, cannot mentally cope with Western education or who have one form of disability or the other.<sup>31</sup>
- **The Society:** What is happening in the society is a reflection of what happens in the families. Some members of society do not see anything beneficial in the Islamic system of education other than the religious knowledge. There is an impression that anybody undertaking Islamic education can only function either as a full time Mallam (a teacher) with teaching being a profession that is already looked down upon. Not only this, in some religiously hostile communities, Islamic education is disrespectful regarded as education for the Al-majiris (corrupt form of AI-Muhajirin), which originally means the immigrants but misconstrued to be beggars. No thanks to some Muslims who have upgraded



begging to an art and a profession.<sup>32</sup>

- **Electronic Media:** The popularization and misuse of the electronic media tends to divert the attention of most of the students of Qur'anic Schools. This causes major sets back in the routine memorization of Qur'an in the mind of the students as they spend most of their fruitfut time for watching, charting, and face booking etc.<sup>33</sup>
- **Government Patronage:** The chance of patronage from government is low.
- Government will not allow any individual or group of individuals to use her school for such a programmed under the guise of secularity and national character. However, no certification in the Traditional Qur'anic schools for their students. No remuneration for their teachers since they are not employees of governments.<sup>34</sup>
- **Inadequacy of Qualified Teachers and Material Resources:** Basic elementary knowledge of linguistics ought to be a prerequisite for anyone who wishes to specialize in the teaching of a language. Arabic specifically requires this and something more. To teach or learn a language outside its native environment requires motivation and devotion. There is a dearth of qualified teachers in quantity vis-à-vis primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in many parts of the country. Besides, a great number of the few available ones lack linguistic background. Still with regard to challenges of materials resources we cannot

hope for achieving anything tangible except books are written by learned and committed Muslim intellectuals.<sup>35</sup>

- **Enlightenment:** Another problem is enlightenment. Men are enemies of what they are ignorant about. The concept of Islamic education is alien to some people even if it would benefit them at the end they show antagonism to it at initial stage.
- Some would interpret it to mean introduction of Shari'ah. One should not be surprised if one discovers that the first antagonists are Muslims, the unenlightened ones. Their reaction to the idea would add impetus to that of the non-Muslims.<sup>36</sup>
- **Attitude of Some Muslims Parents:** Negative attitude of some Muslim parents to the Qur'an. Apparently driven away by the typhoon of modernity, a great number of Muslim parents, particularly the elite, have lost touch with their religious heritage. Consequently, learning of the Quran now occupies a peripheral position in their scales of value. Children of such Muslims now relate to the Qur'an the same way Christians relate to the Bible- a book which is useful only Fridays.<sup>37</sup> And I don't care attitudes towards makings effort in child upbringing as the responsibility of parents as enshrine in Islam.
- **Lackadaisical Attitudes of the Students:** Some students of Qur'anic Schools tend to become frustrated as soon as they are confronted by some difficulties. Their response is either dropping

out, which is common, or to display a lukewarm response.<sup>38</sup>

### Conclusion

Islamic education embraces the teaching of Islamic doctrines through effective education to ensure that the outputs from this system can be worthwhile and beneficial to the society and Qur'anic schools and education serve as agents of preservation of knowledge and as a means of transformation for meaningful development. Islam is said to have come to the country in the 11th century. Therefore, this study concluded that Qur'anic Schools and education has been confronted with the challenges of uncared attitude from government, human and material resources and enlightenment among nominal Muslims and non-Muslims among others.

### Recommendations

The following are the recommendations provided for the study:

1. Standardization of Mainstream Islamic Education: Our traditional Qur'anic schools should be standardized and reinvigorated so as to meet the current demand particularly lower level (TQS). This may involve recognition, certification and cared attitudes from Government towards Qur'anic schools
2. Human and Material Resources: Efforts should be made in training manpower for the teachers of Qur'anic Schools. And School(s) should be established specifically for this purpose because without manpower Qur'anic Schools are doomed to fail.

3. Enlightenment Campaign: We should embark on vigorous enlightenment campaign showing the merits of Qur'anic Schools and education and fruits of its success.
4. Parents and stakeholders should build their families and communities respectively by portraying positive attitudes towards the Qur'anic schools and education
5. The remedy of non-motivated attitudes of students can come from the teachers, if the teachers are motivated and devoted, they would employ various tactics to excite and regenerate the interest of the students. They should combine the pedagogical method in Arabic-Islamic tradition with that of Western epistemology.

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