

The Prospects of Islamic Education Curriculum: The Case of University of Abuja

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Abstract

The education Islamic studies play an important role of moulding and training the young and future leaders in their capacities as trained teachers. In order for them to discharge this role efficiently they need to be fully equipped with all the requisite knowledge of Islam throughout their educational career without any exception. However, the curriculum of Islamic education in Nigerian universities including University of Abuja is in dire need of improvement and modification because it has been observed that, Islamic education students offer limited courses of Islamic studies. Also the contents of most Universities curriculum are static; they are not reviewed periodically to meet the yearning needs of our changing society. This makes learning old fashion and irrelevant. The implication of this is that such students may not have the efficiency to teach their students as expected. The study recommends the review of the curriculum to make Islamic studies more robust in scope and contents to the students. This is necessary as it exposes the students to more knowledge of Islam than the current curriculum. The methodology consists of both library materials and field work. The paper recommends that the Islamic studies curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate relevant educational contents capable of equipping learners with the skills, competencies and orientations that could make them perform excellently.

Keywords: Islamic education, curriculum, prospects, Nigeria

Abstrak

Studi pendidikan Islam memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk dan melatih para pemimpin muda dan masa depan dalam kapasitas mereka sebagai guru yang terlatih. Mereka perlu dilengkapi dengan semua pengetahuan yang diperlukan tentang Islam sepanjang karir pendidikan mereka tanpa pengecualian. Namun, kurikulum pendidikan Islam di universitas-universitas Nigeria termasuk Universitas Abuja perlu perbaikan dan modifikasi. Juga isi sebagian besar kurikulum Universitas bersifat statis; Kurikulum tidak ditinjau secara berkala untuk memenuhi kebutuhan masyarakat kita yang terus berubah. Hal ini membuat proses pembelajaran menggunakan fashion lama dan tidak relevan. Implikasinya adalah mahasiswa mungkin tidak memiliki kemampuan seperti yang diharapkan. Studi ini merekomendasikan kurikulum untuk membuat studi Islam lebih kuat dalam cakupannya. Hal ini diperlukan agar mahasiswa lebih mengenal Islam yang metodologinya mencakup materi perpustakaan dan pekerjaan lapangan. Makalah ini merekomendasikan agar kurikulum studi Islam harus ditinjau untuk mengakomodasi isi pendidikan yang relevan dan melengkapi peserta didik dengan keterampilan, kompetensi dan orientasi yang membuat mereka tampil dengan baik.

Kata kunci: pendidikan Islam, kurikulum, prospek, Nigeria

Introduction

Teachers conduct lessons in the class through a designed process. This designed document gives guide of what is expected to be taught to the learners; methods to be used, what should be the end product of the lesson (objective) and how to evaluate or measure students' performance. This planned and designed document is what is called "Curriculum" (Babaji, 1998, p. 28). Curriculum is a term with varied definitions as well as several meanings, however scholars agree that curriculum has four components or elements. These are goals and objective; subject matter or content; learning experiences and evaluation. It is believed that any definition of curriculum that has these elements could be regarded as valid (Oroge 1998). The word "Curriculum" is derived from a Latin word *Currere* which means a running course, race or a career. Although there is no precise definition of curriculum, some educators define it as a book of instructions to teachers. Also, curriculum is what happens to learners in school as a result of what teachers do including all the experiences of the students for which the school should accept responsibility. Thus, curriculum is the total experience with which the school deals with in educating people both young and old. It is deliberate, systematic and planned (Babaji, 1998). In other words, curriculum must be characterized by having definite and dynamic objectives, must be flexible and must have been built into it a process of constant evaluation. These will help in determining the extent to which the educational process is meeting the stated goals.

According to Oroge (1998), for our education to become more relevant and functional, it must seek to give training to the individual:

For a better appreciation of his/her own cultural tradition and equip him/her with the ability to absorb new ideas, new information, new data etc. for resolving the constantly changing issues of life; To relate to and interact meaningfully with other individuals in the society; To develop the creative ability in all aspects of life including cultural and technological; To foster those values which make for good citizenship such as selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work as well as personal integrity; To promote the cultural of productivity and apply it to the improvement of the existing skills and techniques; To create awareness and consciousness of the important nature and relevance of emerging issues to everyday living. (p. 25)

Functionality of the education received would be evident in the ability of the Individuals to apply the knowledge, skills, values etc. gained to practical living. Education would then be a continuous process of improving the quality of the people. It is worthy of note, however, that one of the goals of higher education as stated in the National Policy on Education (1981) is the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community. There is no doubt that the dynamic nature of education dictates that a curriculum which is limited in terms of courses offered may no longer be adequate in the face of prevailing global situations. Our curriculum offering therefore must be made more relevant so as to improve the teaching of Islamic studies and other studies as well in our tertiary Institutions. This paper, therefore, is an over view of Islamic studies curriculum in University of Abuja. Special attention is given to the need to redesign the curriculum so that it will have focus on the fundamental aspect of Islamic studies and to equip the students of what it entails to be an Islamic studies teacher.

Literature Review

Islamic studies as a course

Islamic studies could be conceived as a process by which the knowledge of Islamic religious sciences is transmitted to learners using professionally approved method of teaching. In this contact, the transmission of the knowledge of Islam is presumably carried out by professionally trained teachers who are guided by the principles and practices of instructions. Thus, the study of Islam as a separate discipline, like other disciplines in the modern University takes place in many Nigerian Universities including the University of Abuja. This brings us to an overview of the Islamic Studies Education Curriculum in University of Abuja and related issues presented in the next section. The programme is designed to cover aspects of Islam such as belief, worship legal system, culture and social system as well as its relationship with other cultures, societies and civilizations.

Philosophy of the programme

Islam is one of the important religions in Nigeria, and Islamic Studies one of the subjects taught in primary and post primary schools as well as tertiary institutions. In addition, there are thousands of Qur'anic, Islamiyya, Nazamiyya and ilm schools that produce graduates with little or no knowledge of the modern ways and means of successful living and civic responsibilities as citizens. The programme is designed to train products of those in the modern educational methods as well as the general knowledge required for their own integration in the national mainstream and for them to go out and teach in the primary and post-primary schools for the ultimate integration and unification of the Islamic schools in the mainstream of the Nigerian education system. The programme is also meant to produce graduates who are open-minded, tolerant and socially responsible citizens who can also train the young and subsequent generations of Muslims to be well aware of their civic responsibilities and to live in a peaceful, conflict-free and progressive society.

Objectives of the programme

The programme is designed to prepare candidates for careers in teaching by equipping them with an in-depth knowledge in Education to meet the requirements for professionalization in teaching. The programme aims at giving the students a thorough grounding in the major areas of Islamic studies as well as the culture and institution of Islamic. Emphasis is given the study of Islam from its original sources. The candidates for this programme must also have knowledge of Arabic.

The objectives of the programme are (1) to provide graduates with adequate background and knowledge of Islamic studies and basic with professional competence to successfully teach Islamic studies at the basic and childhood education level as well as higher institutions; (2) to produce graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide proper guidance and orientation to Nigerian Muslims to know their civic responsibilities such as tolerance, open-mindedness and peaceful co-existence in a multi-faceted society; (3) to produce graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide professional advice to the appropriate authorities on all Islamic religious matters; and (4) to produce graduates who would be consultants, managers, inspectors, etc, of Islamic Religious education. The courses not offered for BA (Ed) Islamic studies students and which are of paramount importance are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Courses not offered by the education Islamic studies students in the second year (200 level)

The first semester			
Course Code	Course Title	Credit Unit	Status
ISL 209	Ad-Da'wah wa'l-Irshad	2	C
ARA 201	Arabic Grammar II	3	C
	Total	5	
Second semester			
ISL 210	Tajweed And Hifz	3	C
	Total	3	

Table 2. Courses not offered by the education Islamic studies students in the third year (300 level)

First Semester			
Course Code	Course Title	Credit Unit	Status
ISL 309	Advanced Study of Islamic Theology	2	C
ISL 311	<i>Ayaat Al-Ahkam Al-Qur'an</i>	2	C
ISL 315	Islamic Economic System	3	E
ARA 301	Arabic Grammar	3	C
	Total	10	
Second Semester			
ISL 312	Studies on <i>Hadith</i> Interactive	2	C
ISL 314	Moral Philosophy in Islam	3	E
ARA 306	Arabic Reader	3	C
	Total	8	

Table 3. Courses not offered by the education Islamic studies students in the fourth year (400 level)

First Semester			
Course Code	Course Title	Credit Unit	Status
ISL 401	Islam in Nigeria	3	C
ISL 405	.Advanced Studies of Islamic Principles and Jurisprudence	2	C
ISL 409	.Islam and Orientalism	3	C

ISL 411	.Islamic Political Thought	3	C
ISL 413	.Heretical Movements According to Islam	3	E
ISL 415	.Public Finance in Islam	3	E
	Total	17	
Second Semester			
ISL 402	<i>Al-Mirath</i> (Inheritance)	2	C
ISL 404	Advanced Studies on the Qur'an	2	C
ISL 406	Islamic Historiography	2	C
ISL 410	Islamic Civilization in the Medieval period	2	C
ISL 412	<i>Ahadith Al-Ahkam</i>	2	C
ISL 414	Status of Women in Islam	3	E
	Total	13	

Findings and Discussions

As earlier on indicated, a trained teacher of Islamic studies is expected to be fully equipped in all the branches of Islamic studies e.g. *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, (Jurisprudence), *Tawhid* (unity of God), moral education etc. This is necessary because of his role as a teacher and a mentor. Also, their exposure to variety of courses will help in enhancing their skills and therefore provide effective services. The courses offered currently by the education Islamic studies students may not afford them the opportunity to effectively deliver their services as expected.

A critical study of the Education Islamic Studies Students Curriculum depicts that at the 100 level, the courses taken by B.A Islamic studies students are equally offered by the B.A (ED) Islamic studies students, (see Appendix section). However, the 200 and 300 level courses as shown above and in the curriculum of Education Islamic studies students, (see Appendix) indicate the absence of some relevant courses such as *Tajweed* and *Hifz*, *Ad-Da'wah wa'l-Irshad*, *Ayaat al-Ahkam al Qur'an*, Arabic Grammar, Advanced Study of Islamic Theology, Islamic Economic System and moral philosophy when compared with the B.A. Islamic studies Curriculum (see Appendix). This implies that such courses no matter their relevance cannot be offered by the Education Islamic studies students. Furthermore, the 400 level Curriculum of the Education students (Islamic studies) depicts that only one Islamic studies course (Sokoto Caliphate Literature) can be offered by the students in the First Semester and only two courses i.e. Islam in Kanem-Borno and Islamic law of *Wasiyyah* and *Waqf* are studied by the students during the Second Semester of the final year (see Appendix).

From the above analysis, the omission of these relevant courses may prevent the Education Islamic studies students from having a thorough understanding of Islamic knowledge and therefore teach it successfully to the younger ones. We all know the relevance of the Qur'an to Muslims. The Qur'an is the Book that has been granted to Muslims from Allah. It contains the words of Allah, which are the teachings of Islam. Qur'an reading and Qur'an learning is very necessary for the Muslims in order to follow the right path. Qur'an was revealed to Prophet

(S.A.W) by Allah. The teachings of Qur'an are the guidelines for the Muslims to lead a blessed life. Qur'anic education is an obligation to every Muslim. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to help new generation in Qur'anic learning to become true Muslim and better human being. Qur'anic learning started with learning Tajweed, which means learning how to pronounce and recite latter correctly. Tajweed can only be learned with a qualified Qur'anic teacher. Noh, Tamuri et al stated in their paper "The Study of Qur'anic Teaching and Learning: United Kingdom Experience" that Abdullah Al-Qari (1988) asserts that the al-Qur'an must be learned from teachers' Without any proper lessons with the experts, a person will be able to read the Qur'an properly and smoothly. They further mentioned al-Ghazali's (1993) view that, a teacher who can recite the Qur'an with fluency and smoothly, and articulating every letter from its articulation point and giving the letter its rights and dues of characteristics will be considered as a model teacher who is expert in al-Qur'an recitation. According to them, this is also consistent with al-Abrasyi (1969), which suggests that a person who wishes to become a teacher of the Qur'an should know the consequences of reading the Qur'an and knowing the rules of reciting the Qur'an accurately. He should have sufficient capacity of knowledge to be taught to the students.

Allah says:

Those to whom we have sent down the Book study it as it should be studied: They are the ones that believe there in. (Q 2:21).

Equally Hadith of the Prophet are full of encouragement to read the Qur'an. The Prophet (S.A.W) was reported to have said:

The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it (Bukhari Vol. 6. No. 545 n.d).

Therefore, studying Qur'an as a course in the first two years as shown in the curriculum may not give the students of Islamic studies education of University of Abuja ample opportunity to learn and teach other students after his/her graduation.

Another observation is the study of Arabic which has also terminated in the 2nd year of the Education Islamic studies students Curriculum of Abuja. It is a known fact that the Arabic language, which is the one and only language of Islam is indispensable to the learning and teaching of Islamic studies. Arabic is the official language of Islam and Islamic knowledge. This is because the main source of Islam and Islamic studies, the Qur'an, is preserved in this particular language. . In fact, Arabic has acquired the status of the official language of Islam. Hitti has this to say:

The classical form is not only the literary form used by all the Arabic writing peoples but also the religious language of all Muslims, no matter what their native tongue may be. *To Muslims, Arabic is the only appropriate language of approach to Allah.* (Hitti, 1976:112) (Emphasis mine).

It is against this background that Muslims generally remain committed to the course of Arabic and Islamic studies. In addition, these students after completion are expected to teach *Qur'an* and *Hadith* in Arabic. Furthermore, the knowledge of the language (Arabic) will assist the Islamic studies teachers to give effective instruction. This will in turn help the pupils in digesting the instruction without difficulty. Thus, an in-depth knowledge in Arabic will aid the students after

completion in teaching all the branches of Islamic studies in both primary and post primary schools. These particular language and knowledge are like two identical twin brothers. Invariably, giving the Arabic language its proper place as a means of instruction, will help and go a long way in comprehending Islamic studies by both learners and teachers. So for anybody to know much of the Qur'an or Hadith, the knowledge becomes absolutely necessary. Allah (SWT) says:

We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that ye may learn wisdom (Q 12:2).

It should be noted, however, that one of the objectives of the programme as outlined in the University of Abuja Curriculum of the Faculty of Education, is to produce graduates who would be consultants, managers, inspectors etc. of Islamic Religious Education. Such graduates who did not undergo rigorous learning in such courses as Advanced Studies of Islamic Jurisprudence which deals with the laws of Islam as well as the day today affairs of the Muslim may lack sufficient knowledge of his/her subject matter.

It has been observed that, the National University Commission Bench mark Minimum Academic Standards For Undergraduates Programmes in Nigerian Universities (education) April 2007 included studies on the Qur'an and Studies of *Hadith* as among courses to be undertaken by year 3 Education Islamic studies students. These are not reflected in the University of Abuja, Faculty of Education Curriculum. This, by implication, means that Education Islamic studies students of the University may not offer these important courses and this may result in deficiency in *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, while they are expected to teach the subjects to pupils and students of primary and secondary schools respectively.

Another observation is where the Bench Mark recommends 5 years programme for BA (ED) Islamic Studies, the BA (Ed) Islamic Studies students of the University of Abuja terminates at 4 years only. This may account for removal of some courses of which may have some negative implication on the student's career as teachers counselors etc. Additionally, the moral Philosophy in Islam (*Ta'dhibu'l-Akhlak*) is a course undertaken in the third year of the B.A Islamic Studies Students. The course, according to the designers of the programme, will among other things expose the students to the moral qualities in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S.A.W): mode of dressing, respect for parents, elders and equality, chastity, dignity of labour, kindness, harmonious coexistence at home and in public, students and teachers relationship, indiscipline, examination misconduct, drug abuse, cultism etc.

Unfortunately the BA (Ed) Islamic studies students do not undertake this course because it is not included in the curriculum. Although, the course is an elective course, but that notwithstanding, the course if included in the curriculum of Islamic studies education will go a long way in curbing extremism, violence and encourage peaceful co-existence among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, thereby achieving the above objective of the programme. This is in line with the philosophy and objectives of the programme which was stated earlier, that is, to produce graduates who are socially responsible citizens and are capable of training the young generations of Muslims to be well aware of their civil responsibilities and to live in a peaceful conflict-free and progressive society. The effects of moral decadence in the Nigerian society could be felt in every facet of the nation today. In addition, a good number of our political leaders today are self-centered. They engage the youths as election thugs, riot promoters, character and human assassins as well as violence dispensers just to satisfy their personal interests. A good number of

Nigerian youths have died while serving the ill-will of their political masters, some remain perpetual hooligans. Furthermore, indiscipline, cultism, sorting, sexual harassment and promiscuity have become the order of the day. Some Nigerian youths have resorted to different kinds of social crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and prostitution and so on just to make ends meet. Hence the inclusion of moral Philosophy in the Islamic studies education curriculum of Nigerian Universities in general and of University of Abuja in particular and making a compulsory rather than an elective course is indispensable.

Islam as a religion has contributed in moulding the character of Muslims whereby it instills a sense of discipline in them as well as a sense of responsibility. There is no doubt that any Muslim who practices his religions assiduously reflects a high degree of discipline in his daily life. Islam has also succeeded in inculcating a high sense of moral values in Nigerian Muslims. This has made the average Muslim very conscious of the presence of Allah wherever he may be Quadri (1992, p. 118).

Allah says:

Dost thou not see that Allah know all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth? There is no secret counsel of three, but He is the fourth, nor of five, but He is their sixth, nor of less than that, nor or more, but He is with them wheresoever, they may be. Then on the Day of Resurrection He will inform them of what they did. Surely Allah knows all things full well. (Qur'an 58:7)

The above verse shows the Omnipresence of Allah, which makes every Muslim to be conscious of Allah so much so that He is filled with fear whenever he errs in law. He likewise feels satisfied and happy when he does the right things. The building of the Muslim's conscience is significant and highly relevant in modern day Nigeria where there are many morally bankrupt people. In addition, they (students of education Islamic studies) are expected to be role models to the students in thinking worship and conduct, hence the need for them to be properly trained.

Interview conducted with the 2014 Education Islamic studies students Fatimah Abbah Tamim and Maryam Jamiu revealed that some teachers of Islamic studies usually face challenges in the teaching of their subject matter. They are of the view that all the courses of Islamic studies should be included in the curriculum to enable education Islamic studies students have all the necessary knowledge of Islam. In furtherance of the discussion on the multiplicity of courses as a result of including all the Islamic studies subjects, they opined that, the duration of the course can be extended to five years programme as stipulated in the National University Commission Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for Undergraduate Programmes in Nigerian Universities. This will go a long way in ensuring professionalization in both education and the teaching subject.

In a similar interview with Muiz Ishola Kareem and Shehu Uba Muhammad final year (2017) education Islamic studies students University of Abuja, they argued that the same teaching methodology is taught to all students from different subjects' background. However, the paradigm of teaching for the transfer of content knowledge of Islamic studies needs a specific approach and effective methodology. Hence the teaching methodology as observed needs to be reviewed for it to achieve its said objectives.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the concept of curriculum as well as its relevance. The work also gives a highlight on Education Islamic studies as a course studied in the tertiary institution. The

concept of Islamic education was also discussed. The relevant and functionality of educational curricular was advanced. The study finds out that relevant courses such as *Qur'an*, *Fiqh*, Arabic etc, are omitted in the higher level (300 and 400) of the curriculum of the University of Abuja. The implications of non-offering of such courses on the part of Islamic students education students were analyzed finally, the paper is of the view that there is need to re-work the curriculum contents of Education Islamic Studies of the University of Abuja so as to make it more relevant for the challenges of the 21st Century. The Islamic Studies curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate relevant educational contents capable of equipping learners with the skills, competencies and orientations that could make them perform excellently. A special teaching method should be developed by the school where the Islamic Studies students can learn the rudiment of their subject matter, which is Islamic Studies. It is our candid view that all the courses in Islamic Studies as outlined by the National Universities Commission Bench Mark should be taught to the Islamic Studies Education students. Finally, the duration of the programme should be reviewed upward to five years as indicated in National Universities Commission Bench Mark.

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