

# The Reformation of Islamic Education and the Methodology of Qur'ānic School System in Nigeria From (1934)

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**Abstract:** - Islamic education aims at training the learners in such a manner that in their attitudes, actions, decisions to life and approach to all kinds of knowledge to be completely governed by the spiritual and the ethical values of Islam. This paper seeks to highlight the reform process of Islamic education through the examples of some Muslims intellectuals. The paper explains how the objectives and philosophy of education differ from materialistic and self-centered based western system of education. The paper draws on the most important stages of the early Qur'ānic school system which contains various steps that includes reading skills, features and characters of the Qur'an. The approach of the paper is significance because it analyzed how a Qur'ānic secondary stage has a much broader and deeper curriculum. The paper recommends authority of tertiary institutions should liaise with stakeholders and Islamic educators and religious leaders to demand government legislation regarding Islamic education in Nigeria

**Keywords:** Education, Islam, Methodology, Reformation and Qur'ānic school system.

## I. INTRODUCTION

From the very earliest days of Islam, the issue of education has been at the forefront at the minds of the Muslims. The very first word of the Qur'an that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was, in fact, "Read". The Qur'an says: "Recite in the name of your Lord who Created1. Created man from a clot of congealed blood 2 Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous, 3. who taught by the pen,4 taught man what he did not know.5"<sup>1</sup>

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) once stated that "Seeking knowledge is mandatory for all Muslims."<sup>2</sup>With such a direct command to go out and seek knowledge, Muslims have placed huge emphasis on the educational system in order to fulfill this obligation placed on them by the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Throughout Islamic history; education was a point of pride and a field Muslims have always excelled in. Muslims built great libraries and learning centers in places such as Baghdad, Cordoba and Cairo. They established the first primary schools for children and universities for continuing education. They advanced sciences by incredible leaps and

bounds through such institutions, leading up to today's modern world. In an effort to reform Islamic education in Nigeria Abdullahi Bayero, Emir of Kano introduced Northern Province Law School in 1934.<sup>3</sup>

A Qur'ānic school is usually in or outside the Mosque itself. Indeed the oldest Muslim University, Al-Azhar in Cairo, was established in a Mosque. Today thousands of these schools are to be found in Northern and southern Nigeria, located either in Mosque, private house or premises.<sup>4</sup>

## II. ISLAMIC SCHOLARS VIEWS ON IMPACTING CHILDREN EDUCATION

Today, education of children is not limited to the information and facts they are expected to learn. Rather, educators take into account the emotional, social, and physical well-being of the student in addition to the information they must master. Medieval Islamic education was no different. The 12th century Syrian physician al-Shayzari wrote extensively about the treatment of students. He noted that they should not be treated harshly, nor made to do busy work that doesn't benefit them at all.<sup>5</sup>The great Islamic scholar al-Ghazālī also noted that: "Prevention of the child from playing games and constant insistence on learning deadens his heart, blunts his sharpness of wit and burdens his life. Thus, he looks for a ruse to escape his studies altogether."<sup>6</sup>Instead, he believed that educating students should be mixed with fun activities such as Puppet Theater, sports, and playing with toy animals.

Ibn Khaldūn states in his Muqaddimah:

*It should be known that instructing children in the Qur'an is a symbol of Islam. Muslims have, and practice, such instruction in all their cities, because it imbues hearts with a firm belief (in Islam) and its*

<sup>1</sup>Qur'an, (96:1-5)

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Jami'Al-UlumWal-Hikam, A Collection of Knowledge & Wisdom*, Ummal Al-Qura, Al-mansura, (Egypt: publishing & Distribution: 2002), 130.

<sup>3</sup>Fafunwa, A. B. *History of Education in Nigeria*, Trust House, (Babangida Way Ibadan, Nigeria. 2004), p.29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Al- Shayzari, *Education in Islamic history-Egypt Today Staff*. <https://www.egypttoday.com>. Article(2017).

<sup>6</sup>Syedpheerisdaody, M. Al-Ghazālī's philosophy of Education. <http://www.academic.edu>. (2015).

*articles of faith, which are (derived) from the verses of the and certain Prophetic traditions<sup>1</sup>*

### III. REFORMING ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

When the British colonizers came to Nigeria with their counterparts missionaries paid much attention to educational programs, they open schools. Their program to teaching was largely based on English models. Those who successfully received such training could easily secure jobs under the colonial government while the graduates under Ilm schools and the Qur'anic schools had no future of securing job. They were neglected by the colonial and neo-colonial governments. No respect is given to them; this is because to the colonialists by acquiring the Islamic education, you are just as even not educated. This made the situation worse. Therefore, some Muslims intellectuals began to propose reform in the then system of Arabic and Islamic education. It should be remember that people like late Malam Aminu Kano, Tafawa Balewa and Malam Sa'adu Zungur, came up with the idea of establishing Islamiyyah schools so that the graduates can be incorporated in government sector in the future. This help the Islamic education graduates and also in boosting the Islamic education system.

When Abdullahi Bayero, Emir of Kano returned from his pilgrimage to Makkah in 1934 brought with him new ideas based on what he had been in Saudi Arabia and in some Arabian countries in the middle East. He set up a school at Kano city which was to be maintained jointly by all northern Qādīs "Alkalis". The school was named Northern Province Law School. In this way the Shariah system which in earlier times had been prevalent in the North once again regain its strength. Moreover, in 1947 the law school was changed to School for Arabic Studies Kano (S.A.S). It came under the control of the colonial government and the main talk of this school then, was to train Qādīs and also subjects like elementary English and Arithmetic, were inclusive, later Grade Two teacher-training program was introduced from the English section of the school. The graduates of Islamic education are trained to accept knowledge as a means of helping others and the knowledge they received serve as a Key to peace of mind, social stability, knowledge of the Qur'an, Tauhīd, jurisprudence and tarbiyyah. All these subjects instill in the graduates strong belief in Allah as the Controller and Owner of everything and to be fair and just in all their undertakings as teachers and Qādīs.<sup>2</sup>

### IV. THE OBJECTIVES AND PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Islamic education is aimed at the total development of man physical, mental, spiritual, social, intellectual, moral, economical, psychological and emotional disciplined and upright trained with highly skilled and responsible personality

who knows his rights and fulfill his obligation as well as his responsibilities in the interest of the Muslim community. Basically the aims and objectives of Islamic Education differ from those of the materialistic and self-centered based western system of education. Whereas Islamic education fundamentally aimed at establishing faith in Allah and stabilizing the spiritual relationship between man and his Creator; the Western secular, materialist egocentric and paper qualification system of education tends to erode faith in Allah or at least teaches indifference to Allah's existence and discourages belief in direct responsibility to God (Almighty).<sup>3</sup>

True education should, therefore, cater for the growth of man in all its aspects of his spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physically, scientific, linguistic, moral, social aspects of this worldly life and the next world, it motivates us to do good and makes us complete human beings. The ultimate aims and objectives of Islamic education in a nutshell are as follows:

1. To enable Muslims to know the fundamental purpose of their creation is to worship Allah the Creator alone;
2. It inculcates, true belief and attitudes in the mind of Muslim youth such as belief in the existence of Allah, the faith in the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and all prophets of Allah;
3. To teach the students the distinction between the lawful (ḥalāl) and the unlawful (ḥarām);
4. To create good and righteous man;
5. To produce men and women who have unshakable faith as well as knowledge and to put the knowledge into practice;
6. The learner must be reared towards the understanding of Allah, His Attributes and Essence;
7. To inculcate in the mind of the individual knowledge, faith and pity without which societies run into astray;<sup>4</sup>

### V. EARLY QUR'ĀNIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: THE STAGES OF ACQUIRING SKILLS

As early as the third year of life, Muslim children are expected to start the first stage of education:

*First Stage:* At this stage the pupils learn the shorter chapters through repetition and by rote. The only pleasure they can derive from the system at this stage lies in the choral recitations which often follows a sing song pattern. The pupils seem to enjoy reciting these verses to themselves in their homes and at plays.

The teacher recites to his pupils the verses to learn and they repeat it after him. He does this several times until he satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation. The pupil (or group) is left on his own to continue repeating the verse until he has thoroughly memorized it. The verses is then

<sup>1</sup> Rosenthal Franz, Encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ibnkhaldūm>. (2008).

<sup>2</sup>Fafunwa, *op.cit.*,p.55.

<sup>3</sup>Yusuf. A. Ali, *Text, Translation and Commentary, United Kingdom, Lomdom Road, U.K. Leicester (1975)*.

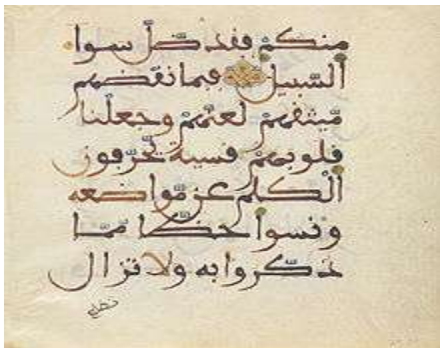
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

linked with the previously memorized verses and in this way the pupil gradually learns by heart the whole chapter of the Qur'an. A chapter at a time is written on his wooden board (slate) which has been scrubbed with the aid of some coarse leaves and then painted with white clay- like substance. The Tawada (ink) which the teacher uses to write the chapter on the wooden board (slate) is extracted from certain leaves which are boiled until they give off their dye.<sup>1</sup>

*Second Stage: Divisions, Features and Characters of the*

The Qur'an is divided in to sixty parts (hizbs) each of which contains a number of chapters (although very long chapters form certain hizbs). Pupils at what we may call the primary of the system are expected to memorize one or two of these sixty hizbs, often beginning with the short chapters. Those chapters are usually those he would most require for his daily prayers. From here the pupils moves on to the next stage at which he learns the alphabet of the Arabic language. The Arabic alphabet is compose of some (28) letters, all of which are consonants some teachers divide these letters into three, often in the ratio 5; 5; 3, and teach the pupil to recognize the letter by writing some of them on his slate (allo) and making repeat the sound several times over. This stage lasts between six and thirty six weeks, depending on the rate at which the pupil learns to recognize the individual letters.<sup>2</sup>

Below in Fig. 1, are different fonts of Arabic scripts of the Qur'an:



Maghrebi script from 13th-century north and West African Qur'an<sup>3</sup>



11th-century North African Qur'an<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fafunwa, *Op. cit.*, Pp.27-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid,

<sup>3</sup>Maghrib Script, 13<sup>th</sup> Century North and West Africa, *Islamic Art, Qur'an Karim Islam Calligraphy*. <https://www.pinterest.com/pm>

On the process of learning when the teacher is satisfied that the pupil has attained the standard required for reading Arabic characters, he introduces him to the formation of syllables with “vowels”. There are only four vowels otherwise known as, fatḥa, kasra, ḍammah, sukun, written above or below a consonant to indicate what vowel sound should go with it. When he is able to do this competently, the pupil then employs his newly acquired skills in the reading of the first two part of the Qur'an all over again. Variation in the pupil's pattern of articulation could be due to the teacher's accent. This stage last for six to eighteen months, depending again, on the capabilities of individual pupil. This spelling pattern once correctly grasped, enables the pupil to read off-hand any texts written in the Arabic language. This is usually the final stage in the acquisition of reading skills.<sup>5</sup>

The teaching of writing starts at different times in different schools. Some pupils start learning how to write Arabic characters as early as the first stage of the system. Others do not start until later. Many people think that Qur'anic education end here, but this is only the end of what we may be regarded as primary level of the system.<sup>6</sup>

VI. QUR'ĀNIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

What we may regard as the secondary level of the system has a much broader and deeper curriculum. The pupil begins by learning the meaning of the verses he has committed to memory. The teacher does his best to explain the Arabic texts. But this is usually far too difficult for the young minds and, in many cases, for the teacher as well. Besides knowing the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an , the pupil is also introduced to other writings, such as the Ḥadīth (the traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The translation method is largely used and reputation is still fully exploited.

Hausa land is a testimony to the wide spread nature of Qur'anic schools which provide the foundation for advance Islamic knowledge. The system of teaching children how to read and write the holy Qur'an is laborious no doubt highly effective and sound. A summary of the stages are as follows:

- a) Babbaku ----- Identifying alphabets of the Qur'an
- b) Farfaru----- vowelling of alphabets
- c) Hadda----- Memorization
- d) Zuku----- writing a specified portion of the Qur'anevery day except Thursdays and Fridays until one can write the whole Qur'an.
- e) Satu ----- Copying from the Qur'an

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup>Garba, M.M. *Phd. Thesis, The Impact of Western Education and the Secularism on the Muslims of Northern Nigeria, University of BuktAl-ruda Deanship of Post Graduate Studies andScientific Research Faculty of Arts EduwemSudan.*(2015).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,

f) Tilawa/ Tishe----- Revision(g) Sauka -----  
Graduation.

This system of teaching the Qur'ān can admitted improved upon but there is in essence noting fundamentally wrong with it. It may appear to an unwary critic that is narrow and inadequate but that is so only if one detaches from the next stage of learning, the Ilm schools where students are taught Jurisprudence, Hadīth, Tafsir, etc.<sup>1</sup>

*The Courses of Study at the Ilm School Level Includes:*

- 1) Al-Sarf (grammatical inflexions), al-Naḥwu (syntax);
- 2) Al- Fiqh (jurisprudence),
- 3) Tauhīd (theology),
- 4) Tafsīr (commentary on the Qur'ān ),
- 5) UsūlFiqh (principles and rules of interpretation of the laws of Islam),
- 6) Mustalaḥ al- Ḥadīth (science of Ḥadīth), etc.

This are regarded as different branches of learning and it is not often that a teacher attains perfection in all of them. A scholar who is good at al-fiqh may be relatively weak at al-ḥiṣāb that is why at this stage the student of Qur'ānic school is often instructed by more than one teacher (Mallam). It is also at this stage that the student decides in what area he wishes to specialize. This mark the beginning of the university level, having chosen his specialist subject, he proceeds to a university, by this time the student has acquired some proficiency in the Arabic language and is able to read, understand, and interpret many of the work of earlier scholars in his field. At the end of his studies he receives a 'license' empowering him to practice either as a teacher, an Imam, or an al-Kali, depending on his area of specialization<sup>2</sup>

#### VI. THE QUR'ĀNIC SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: LEADERSHIP, DISCIPLINE, AND COUNSELING

In Qur'ānic schools unlike in formal schools, there are no rigidly codified rules, but there are a few conventional ways of behaviors which guide the teachers. Although the periods for the classes are vaguely pupils fixed, the teacher does not treat tardiness as a serious offence he is ready to pardon a latecomer if he is convinced that his lateness was caused by some engagement at home. The teacher himself is able to declare a holyday if some religious obligation (such as burial or naming ceremony) take him away from home.

The teacher regards himself as the custodian of his pupils, his duty being primarily to train to be good citizens. Whenever he uses the cane, he does so with fatherly levity and caution. When a pupil is sick, the teacher usually visits him and sometimes applies some treatment. The relationship

between teacher and pupil is generally intimate and personal. The school week starts on Saturday and ends on Wednesday. There is no bell to summon the pupils to school; nor is there a fixed dress. The exact time of the beginning of classes vary from area to area, and from teacher to teacher.

In many part of Nigeria, there are three sessions a day:

- (1) Morning (2) Afternoon (3) Evening

1. The morning session generally begins about 8:00am and ends about 10:00am.
2. The afternoon session lasts from about 2:00pm to about 4:00pm.
3. There may be a third session which lasts from about 7:30pm (directly after the evening prayers) to about 9:00pm. When the child is old enough to go out and learn a trade, the hours of schooling are reduced and then afternoon session are cancelled.<sup>3</sup>

#### VII. ORGANIZING RESOURCES FOR THE QUR'ĀNIC SCHOOL

Fees are paid in cash and kind. There is no fixed amount, as this varies from teacher to teacher. The teacher collects the fees from his pupils. These do not usually amount to more than a few pennies. The teacher may also receive gifts, such as grain, meat, cooked foodstuffs, pieces of cloth, or a prayer mat, (almost invariably a ram's or goat's skin), particularly during Muslims festivals. Helping with onerous chores is considered part of pupil's duties to his teacher. During the month of Ramadhān, the older pupils accompany their teacher to his preaching ground usually a busy and conspicuous part of the street. There it is their duty to get the place lit and the chair arranged and treated the audience to melodious songs and poem in praise of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). On ceremonial occasions such as the Eid-el Fitr, Eid-el Kabīr, Maulūdan-Nabīyī (the Prophet birth day) and the anticipated LailatulQadar (the Night of Greatness, a Night in the month of Ramadhān when the Qur'ān is believed to have first revealed to the Prophet (p.b.u.h)).<sup>4</sup>

#### *Graduation Ceremony*

The greatest day in the life of the Muslim scholar is the day he performs the Walīmah initially intended as a modest graduating ceremony, in many communities it had become an elaborate affairs. But it steel retains it religious overtones. The *walīmah* can take place once the Muslim has gone through the primary level. The grandaunt takes his slate (allo) to his teacher who writes a chapter of the on one side and on the other side draws a Rectangular figures (Zaiyana) filled with a number of geometrical patterns.

On the scheduled day, the grandaunt hold his decorated slate in his hand, tours the houses of his teacher, his in-lows and his own parent and relatives with an entourage of

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad D. S. (1992), *The Conception and Implementation of a Social policy, Bayaro University Kano, Nigeria.* (1992)

<sup>2</sup>Fafunwa, *Op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.57

<sup>4</sup>Garba., *Op.cit.*, p.78.



friends. At each station he reads the chapter written on the side of the slate as though to convince his hearers that he has truly completed the Qur'ān. At the end of the recitation he is given presents. On his occasion a ram or cow bought by the grandaunt is usually slaughtered at the teacher's house. The teacher may keep as much as half of the slaughtered animal for himself. In addition to this, the teacher is given millet, some money, a turban and a flamboyant and lavishly embroidered article or a natives dress (commonly called Babbanriga), in Hausa.<sup>1</sup>

#### VIII. TEACHER AND TEACHING IN THE QUR'ĀNIC SCHOOL

The qualification of Qur'ānic school teachers differ from place to place. Sometimes they are highly learned scholars (Ulamā) well versed in Islamic studies, but this is very rare. Then there are those whose only qualification is that they can recite the Qur'ān and write Arabic characters. Such people usually start class with their own children, and neighbors are encouraged to send their children along. Some Qur'ānic school proprietors do not insist on a set fee to be paid by the pupil. But recently some Arabic schools have introduced various fee for admission, award of certificates, and monthly or annually tuition fees.

Most of the Qur'ānic schools run according to the discretion of their individual proprietors, who are invariably Qur'ānic school teachers themselves. As a result, instruction differs from school to school, and there is no uniform curriculum or prescribed qualification for teachers. In most Schools former pupils are appointed as teachers at extremely low wages. Since the Qur'ānic school is usually a one man affair, the proprietor is in the position to appoint or dismiss any teacher with or without any reason.<sup>2</sup>

#### IX. RECOMMENDATION

The paper suggests that, the earlier effort made by our intellectual scholars and leaders should reintroduce, this means the stakeholders and the government and the Muslims educators should come up with the new ideas to incorporate the government in a different dimension. This effort will help and boosts the graduates of Islamic education, by so doing the graduates of Islamic education are trained to accept knowledge as a means of helping others and the knowledge they received serve as a Key totarbīyyah, peace and tranquility. All these subjects instill in the graduates strong belief in Allah as the Controller and Owner of everything and to be fair and just in all their undertakings as teachers, Qādīs and other specialization for worldly appears.

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<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, P. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Fafunwa, *op.cit.*,p.80.