

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ISLAMIYYAH SCHOOLS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Gambari Muhammad Aliyu

and

Abdullahi Abdul Ganiy

1.0 Introduction

Islam as a divine systemic order, rather than being conceptualized within a religious confine plays enormous roles on the life of the people of Nigeria. It indeed brought great transformation to the political, social and even economic setting of its adherents to a considerable extent. While the northern part of Nigeria set historical record of establishment of Islamic system of government of Sokoto caliphacy and Kanem-Borno Empire in pre-colonial days, the south-western part similarly witnessed the wave of Islamic expansion through zealous activities of itinerant Muslim preachers.

However, it is quit observable that the success of Islamic development in Nigeria is not without positive impact of Islamic education. This is because Islam is that very way of life, which holds the value of education in high premium on every aspect of human endeavour. This accounts to the reason of educational propagation of Islamic precepts, doctrines and principles in any locality where Islam is firmly established.

Mosque as a religious cum educational centre serves the mission of educational institution since early days of Islam in history. Later, established centres for Islamic education were founded in almost every parts of Muslim countries. In other words, Islamic education creates an enhancement of cultural values of Islam

and paves smooth way for the spread and development of Islam in every quarters. It is therefore pertinent to have a cursory glance at historical account of Islamic education in Nigeria.

2.0 Historical Watershed of Islamic Education in Nigeria

The evolution of Islamic education in Nigeria cannot be divorced from advent of Islam into the country. This is based on the fact that the spread of Islam prompted the adherents to study the religion and eventually gave them ample opportunity to acquire Islamic education. For this reason, Islamic education emerges wherever Islam is adopted. AbdulFatah expresses that the intellectual and literary posture of Islam is one of the factors acknowledged by historians as aids to the spread of Islam

With the emergence of Islam in Nigeria, there was a developed interest in the teaching and learning of Arabic and Islamic education. The Muslims made it incumbent on themselves to learn Arabic and Islamic education for the mere fact that Quran, the glorious scripture is in the medium of Arabic and the day rituals acts of worship are rendered with Arabic language. This accounts for the establishment of elementary Arabic schools known as Qur'anic schools or *Makaranta Allo* (Tablet - School) and *Makaranta "Ilmi* (Higher School). The former is for the beginners while the latter covers all aspect of Islamic Studies. These two types of Islamic schools were developed in the northern part of Nigeria. Abdulkareem explains that Islamic education was noted with rapid growth in the northern part of Nigeria prior to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in Nigeria."

Similarly, Islamic education developed in the southern part of Nigeria particularly in Yoruba land as early as the spread of Islam to the area. Qur'anic as well as Islamic education in numerous places of Yoruba and is received in the mosques. Doi gives observes that every village mostly has its mosque in combination with Qur'anic

school. If the learning of the Qur' ān does not take place within the mosque premise, the verandahs of the mosques are used where benches are quickly arranged during the school time, and are removed and piled up in one of the corners of the verandahs as soon as the school time ends. Does further explains that separate Qur'anic schools are built in large towns rather than using the mosque building. He equally states that such schools are noticed in northern and southern parts of Nigeria, while few ones are located in the East, such as Anohia Islamic Centre in Afikpo Local Government Area of Abia State.

From the foregone explanation, it is quite event that Islamic education in Nigeria commenced with the advent of Islam. Also, the mosques play vital role in imparting Islamic education on the Muslim adherents. However, despite a marked progress of Islamic development in Nigeria through the effort of the Islamic education Sifawa states that the Qur'anic schools were characterized with conservatism, featuring on rote learning. In addition to the fact that corporal punishment is indiscriminately applied, the Qur' ānic schools were not in full-fledged formal status." It is against this back drop that efforts were made to formalize the Islamic educational system, which eventually resulted to emergence of *Islamiyyah* schools in almost every part of Nigeria.

3.0 Some Prominent Islamiyyah Schools in Nigeria

According to Opeloye, the emergence of western civilization in Nigeria made an adverse effect on the traditional Qur'anic education. Hence, there was emergence of reformed "*Ilmiyyah* School fashioned in the pattern of western-type schools. Al Ilori mentions that, modern Arabic school was established in Kano in 1934 by the Emir of Kano Abdullah Bayero. The primary aim and objective of its establishment is to train and produce resourceful Muslim legal luminaries in the field of Shariah law and judicial system. Opeloye considers the establishment of school of Arabic Studies

at Kano in 1934 as a developmental factor which contributes to the rapid growth of Islamic education in Nigeria.

Similarly, Arikewuyo states that late Shaykh Kamaldeen Al-Adabiyy introduced formal system of education into his Arabic school know as AZ-Zumuratul Adabiyyah in 1947. Despite that the founder met vehement opposition from some traditional "Ulama, he later became vindicated in his clamour for the reformation of Islamic education system because his approach was emulated few years later by other scholars. The same proprietor established *al-Ma' had al Adabi*, known as *al Ma'had al Azhari* in 1964 with the aims and objectives to promote scholarship in Arabic and Islamic Studies, introduce modernity into the teaching of Arabic and Islamic Studies contrary to the crude way of Qur' ānic schools, to train the Arabic and Islamic teachers, preachers as well as Imams, to inculcate Islamic values in the students among others.

Jumu'ah expresses that Markaz Ta'lim was established by late Shaykh Adām Abdullah al-Ilori at a rented apartment in Abeokuta in 1952 with the support of Ansaru-deen society of Nigeria. The centre remained there three years before it was later relocated to Agege, Lagos in 1955." Opeloye establishes that *Markaz Ta lim* is the first modern standard Arabic school to be instituted in the southern part of Nigeria. Later, *Ma'had al- Arabī* was founded in 1957 in Ibadan by Shaykh Murtada Abdusalam in collaboration with an Islamic organization known as *Shababul-Islam*." It is also opposite to mention the establishment of Darul "Ulum in 1963 through the concerted effort of three *Aimmah*, the Imam Fulani, Imam Male and Imam Gambari and other prominent scholars of Ilorin, such as Shaykh Adam Al Ilorī among others.

The structure of these reformed *Islamiyyah* schools system consists of three sections, which are the preparatory section, referred to as *Ibtida'I*, the lower

secondary (*Idādi*) and the senior secondary (*Thānawi or Tawjihi*). The number of years spent in the school are between the ranges of seven to nine, depending on whether or not one has a background in Arabic before enrolment. The curriculum subjects are; *Nahw* (Syntax) *Sarf* (Morphology), *Inshau* (Composition) *Balagh* (Retic) and *Mantiq* (Logic). Others are; *Tafsirul Qur'ān* (Qur'anic exegesis), *fiqh* (Jurisprudence), *Hadith* (Prophetic Tradition) and *Tu'rikh* (Islamic history+y).

The formal system introduced ensures that instruction is not individualized. The curricular are graded in accordance and in range within the student's ability and age. The duration of the course is also defined while teaching is based on recommended textbook which are most system imported. Examinations are conducted to assess the progress of the students and the academic programmes are executed with plans. The schools in most cases, are run by their founders while the daily administration is entrusted to an appointed principal students fees and aids from foreign Islamic governments serve as sources of finance for the school management.

In the light of this development, the Islamiyyah schools have undoubtedly made enormous contribution to the development of Islamic education among Muslims adherents and to national development in general.

4.0 Contribution of *Islamiyyah* School to Educational Development in Nigeria

The contribution of *Islamiyyah* schools to educational and national development cannot be over-emphasized. AI Ilori explains that the graduates of Kano school of Arabic studies who are its first products are among the high intellectuals that serve as top governmental functionaries in Nigeria. Among the products are Justice Aremu and Justice AbdulKadir Orire, the former grand Kadi of Kwara State besides, many top government functionaries in Nigeria embodiment of Arabic and English

civilization in northern are the products of the School. This is a clear indication that *Islamiyyah* school made remarkable contribution to educational development in Nigeria.

Another aspect of contribution of *Islamiyyah* School lies on the fact that those who acquire Islamic education through them are observed to show more commitment to the propagation of Islam. This is understood in the light of their commitments to defend the cause of Islam when finding themselves in positions of authority. Such graduates, according to Opeloye are ever ready to evolve and support policy measures intended for the promotion of Islamic interest, without allowing any form of injustice.

Furthermore, the *Islamiyyah* schools have played important roles to produce cultured and well-mannered Muslim individuals. The moral and spiritual development of Muslims are very crucial. The *Islamiyyah* School in this respect illuminate the mind of Muslim children with the divine guidance of Qur'anic revelation and the exemplary model of prophetic way of life including the lives of righteous predecessors.

In addition, the *Islamiyyah* schools have helped to preserve the cultural and civilizational heritage of Islam. This is because the *Islamiyyah* schools were not hindered by the proliferation of secular schools in the country. Rather, the multiplication of *Islamiyyah* schools facilitates the expansion of Islamic education in the country in spite of their non-governmental recognition.

Despite the contributions made by *Islamiyyah* schools, there are some challenges which they confront. However, the challenges are not insurmountable if diligent efforts are made to improve the status quo of *Islamiyyah* schools.

5.0 Challenges facing *Islamiyyah* Schools

/There are numerous challenges facing the *Islamiyyah* schools as formal Islamic education institutions. The first among the challenges is difficulty of their product to be absorbed into employment outside the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies while the ready alternative job to teaching is *jalb*. Eeven, the teaching of Arabic and Islamic Studies could be considered only when the candidate meet the requirement of the government on employment procedure. This lapses is as a result of limitation of their curriculum only to the areas of Arabic and religious sciences whereby courses in social and nature science like Economic, Biology, Chemistry etc. are not offered.

Secondary, course that could familiarize the students with their local environment are not offered, such as geography or history of Nigeria or even social studies. Closely related to this is the absence of English language in their curriculum. This is because English language is an official language in Nigeria, and through it access to government employment is facilitated and it will also enable them to interact with their counterparts in the secular schools.

More importantly, vocational subjects such as typing, carpentry, tailoring, weaving etc. are not included. This could helped in solving the problem of unemployment facing their graduates after spending several years in the school, thereby making them economically independent.

6.0 Suggestions/ Recommendations

It is our suggestions and recommendations that the structure of *Islamiyyah* schools is Nigeria need to be properly reshaped to accommodate in their curricular conventional courses which can make their certificates receive recognition for employment. The National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies needs to concentrate

on setting and maintenance of the standard for award of nationally acceptable certificates of the *Islamiyyah* schools.

Also, the government have to play their part, we recommend that they devise an educational policy that would enable the products of the *Islamiyyah* school relevant to socio-economic development of Nigeria as a nation. It is an undeniable fact that Islamic education is part and parcel of the national legacy historically, and therefore, the government should not be hypocritical in their attitude towards Islamic education.

7.0 Conclusion

It is crystal clear that *Islamiyyah* schools have made a lot of contributions to educational development of Muslims and the nation as a whole. This paper has examined the significance of Islamic education from historical perspective. It has discussed the roles played by *Islamiyyah* schools to preserve the cultural value of Islam and the positive impacts it has made on educational progress of Nigeria.

Also, we have tried in this paper to examine numerous challenges facing the establishment of *Islamiyyah* schools while plausible suggestions and recommendations to solve those challenges are given. It is our belief that *Islamiyyah* schools could still make more contributions to development of education in Nigeria if concerted efforts from government and individuals are made to improve their standard.

Endnotes

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