

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUR'ANIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Qur'anic education is the root of Islamic education. This is because Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic knowledge. It is the book of guidance to the Muslims, their way of life and their code of conduct. Though an ancient education, Qur'anic education is dynamic and so, moves with the changing world. The system of learning remains unchanged in some aspects as a natural divine revelation. The originality of Islamic education also remains unchanged in its basis, principles and objectives throughout ages. But this is not disallowing some modifications in the methodology of learning and teaching where necessary. This paper discusses the Historical background of Islamic education in Nigeria: implication for the development of Qur'anic education in Nigeria. Before doing so, there is need to have a rejuvenation of the past, analysis of the present situation and forecast of the future. Tangible suggestions and conclusion will come at the end. It is hoped that the presentation will be useful to anybody that may likely come across it.

## **Introduction**

Qur'an is the book of Allah (Q, 3:23, 35:29), revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) for the guidance of mankind and as a way of life. It is meant for constant reading and recitation that is why it is called with the name. It is the only book that is learnt by heart through memorization even by unlettered person (Q,62:2). The first thing one learns, as a Muslim is the Qur'an. The reason for that is obvious. The first revelation to the Prophet (s.a.w) was to read. (Q, 96:1), it marked the beginning of the acquisition of knowledge in Islam. As earlier mentioned, the paper is on the Historical background of Islamic education in Nigeria: implication for the development of Qur'anic education in Nigeria. It will *insha* Allah discuss the general historical development of Qur'anic education and stream down to Nigeria; the contemporary reforms in Qur'anic education; use of electronic teaching aids and information technology and conclusion at the end.

## **Historical Development of Qur'anic Education**

The holy Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w) piece meal. Whenever a portion of the Qur'an was revealed, it was the tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w) to call those Companions around him and recite to them what has been revealed. They listened and instantly tried to memorize it. Arabs were known for retentive and sharp memory. They learnt Qur'an by heart. But still the Prophet (s.a.w) commanded some of them to write it down (Bilal Philips, 1997:148-149). An excellent methodology of teaching and learning was devised by the Prophet (s.a.w) through "he who is present should teach the absent" (Reported by Bukhari, ND). With this methodology therefore, the whole Muslim community were able to have a share of Qur'anic knowledge. Everybody was at that time, either a teacher or a student regardless of age, gender, ethnic or racial discrimination. The learning of the Qur'an went along with the practical action (Bilal Philips, 1997). This was the situation at the time of the Prophet (s.a.w). After his demise, Abubakar (R.A) became the Caliph. He (under the advice of Umar bn al- Khattab) ordered for the compilation of the Qur'an into a book form. This is because with time and events, memorizers of the Qur'an were reducing in number (Bilal, 1997:151). On the other hand, memory of people was also reducing. The *Tabi'un* (successors of the Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w) were not as sharp as the Sahabah in memory; I likewise the *Tabi' al- Tabi 'un* (those who succeeded the successors of the Prophet s.a.w) were not up to the *Tabi'un* in retentive memory. But that notwithstanding, recitation of the Qur'an was on in mosques, in houses, in circles and any given Muslim gathering. Not only at gatherings but even at individual level the Qur'an was read. For the methodology of teaching and learning the Qur'an, learners gather around a Teacher regardless of age and age group. Everybody will be taking the portion of the Qur'an according to his Intelligent-Quota. That is the main reason why there was no classification of Pupil in Qur'anic Education. This was the trend of event

throughout the Muslim generations.

### **History of Islamic (Qur'anic) Education in Nigeria**

Islamic education and Qur'anic education are synonymous because Islam is the *Din* while Qur'an is the book of Islam. In fact, whoever is acquiring Islamic education must primarily acquire it with the Qur'anic education as a convert or a young Muslim. So, the history of Islamic education is going along with Qur'anic education. Islam came to Nigeria through the North African traders. (Fafunwa, 1999:53) Therefore, as Fafunwa asserted, from the advent of Islam in Nigeria in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Islamic (Qur'anic) educational development reached its peak in the 15<sup>th</sup> 16th century. The keen interest of Mai Dunama (AH Ghazi) of Ngazargamu in Islamic education; the Mai Idris Aloma's carry forward; the Yakubu's and Muhammad Rumfa's effort in Kano and the activities of Muhammad. Danmasani and Muhammad Danmarina under the influence of Al- Maghili in Katsina were living evidence of this assertion... (Alkali, 1967). In Nigeria, a hundred percent of the Islamic education is. firstly in the Qur'anic studies. As Fafunwa (1991:60-61) described..."the Muslim child at his earlier life begins to learn the shorter chapters of the Qur'an for the performance of five daily prayers. He learns the chapters by heart through repetition and by rote as the first stage of the education. The next, stage is learning the Arabic alphabets, which involve knowing, pronouncing and the formation of syllables with vowels. After this stage, one may be able to read the Qur'an off-hand. As one can read through the pages without difficulties, that is not the end. One needs to know the meaning of the chapters, their exegesis and the sciences of recitation (*Tajwid*) and so it goes.

The above description of the Qur'anic education system of learning can be regarded as conventional. Visiting other Muslim school in other countries will reveal the same thing. So it is happening in Sudan, Malaysia and so on. Even in European countries like America, Britain and the rest, Qur'anic education follows the same evolution. In Britain for example, (Sarwar, 1994:28), as new Muslim communities began to form, the need to educate children according to their religious tradition, Qur'anic *Madrasahs* were established in many British mosques. As a result, *Madrasahs* have been an established institution in British mosques for almost half a century. *Madrasahs* in the British Muslim context usually act as part-time schools offering evening and weekend classes, are normally located within the mosque, and are attended by children to learn the recitation of the Qur'an. Woodward (1996:149-154), also asserted... Children often attend *madrasahs* for several years, often completing the recitation of whole Qur'an a number of times. Attendance of *madrasahs* on a regular basis has a nurturing effect on the children, familiarizing them with their religious identity, connecting them to their religious center, the mosque.

### **The Contemporary Reforms in Qur'anic Education**

With the current technological advancement and information technology; and Islam as a dynamic *Din* moving with ages and generations, Islamic/Qur'anic educational reforms are always on. The present Shariah implementing States in Nigeria are doing their best in keeping in touch with the

latest possible means to move with the information technology. We can bear witness with the efforts of what Shekarau's administration is making towards this goal. *Madaris al- Tahfiz* (schools for Qur'anic memorization) are numerous to mention in Kano state and are all effectively vigilant in recitation and memorization of the Qur'an. They are mostly the prizewinners of Qur'anic competitions at local government., state, national and even international levels. An Adviser on Qur'anic and Islamiyyah education is appointed to advise the government on how best to reform Islamic education. A committee was set which went round the Islamic world to find facts on how Qur'anic education is reformed and run in various countries. The committee came back with a wonderful tangible report which the government is now working upon and implementing gradually. *Tsangaya* (Institutes) system is a typical example of such reforms. It is a system whereby the Qur'anic education pupils are settled for an atmosphere that is conducive for learning. In Sokoto State, Bafarawa built a gigantic institute for Qur'anic studies. It is currently producing a great output of Qur'anic recitation competitors. Katsina state is not left behind. It has done it all by building an Islamic University! At international level, in Britain, the Qur'anic educational reform made a wonderful impact on the intellectual battles between the Muslims and non-Muslims children in schools. Ansari (2004:3), asserted that, Although many mosques run religious instruction classes, in addition to traditional Qur'an teaching Muslim faith schools are becoming a common feature in the. British Muslim community. Apart from that, the number of Islamic schools in Britain is in the increase. To this effect,

Hewitt (1996:5), made the following findings:

There are currently around 136 Muslim schools in Britain, and five have been awarded a government grant-aided status, the first being the *Islamia* Primary School in Brent in 1998, which was established by the prominent British Muslim convert Yusuf Islam. While academic achievement" among Muslim pupils in state schools is the lowest, the results of the grant-aided Muslim schools are above the national average. In addition to the increasing number of Muslim faith schools in the United Kingdom, there are also five Muslim-run higher education institutions at both the graduate and post-graduate degree-awarding levels. The institutions are the Muslim College in London (which offers bachelors and masters degrees), the Oxford Academy in Oxford (master's and doctorate), the Hijaz College in Nuneaton (bachelors of law), the Islamic College for Advanced Studies in London (bachelors), and the Mark field Institute of Higher Education in Leicestershire (postgraduate diploma, master's, and doctorate).

The Mark field Institute for Higher Education, for example, was launched by the Islamic Foundation in 2000 and its impressive purpose-built faculty building was officially inaugurated by Prince Charles in 2004. MIHE attempts to revive the golden-age heritage of Muslims in academic studies and scholarship in the West. In collaboration with the University of Lough borough, it offers postgraduate courses in a whole range of Islamic disciplines, combining the high standards of Islamic scholarship with the best of Western research techniques, academic rigor, and critical inquiry. The MIHE faculty comprises Muslim scholars and students from many different countries and backgrounds, and enjoys an environment that keeps with Islamic values and traditions. Prince Charles commented on the future of such Muslim-led initiatives as important milestones for Islam in Britain, stating, "I believe that this whole complex here at Mark Field, including the excellent library, has the potential to develop into one of Europe's leading centers for the postgraduate study of Islam and the Muslim world. Seddon (2006), concluded the issue as follows:

The British Muslim community has made valiant and remarkable strides towards the development of Islamic education at all levels, from the *madrasahs* and *dar at-utums* to Muslim faith schools and institutes of higher education. These achievements should, of course, be applauded, but perhaps the biggest challenge for the British Muslim community in

developing a holistic Islamic education is not just their striving towards excellence to produce centers of learning, but to also produce academies that not only compete with existing alternative or secular educational establishments, but actually exceed them.

### **Qur'anic Education, Electronic Teaching Aids and Information Technology**

As earlier stated, Islam moves with modern age, today, Qur'anic recitations are not only found in Audio and Video cassettes; it is now found on CD's Digitalized Mechanism USB Flash and other electronic devices. Initially, teachers and students of Qur'anic education used audio cassettes for effective teaching - learning process. But with the information technology, there are numerous Islamic websites in the internet rich in Islamic materials. (Aliyu Yunus, 2006), gave the following webs:

Useful Islamic websites will be mentioned here to acquaint researchers in different fields of Islamic education and all those who are interested in knowing more about Islam could visit them. They include:

\* <http://www.altafsir.com/> — A researcher can visit this website for information on Qur'anic interpretation {*Tafseer*} from all *Tafseer* Schools, Qur'anic Translations, Qur'anic Recitations, Qur'anic Syntax, *Asbab Nuzool* (Reasons of revelation) and other Qur'anic Sciences.

<http://www.al-furqaan.com/> — Features Arabic texts, Transliteration, Chapter Introductions by Maududi, Contexts of revelations of all the verses a digest from the best of translations, Commentary on the moral and socio-political implications of the Qur'an in the 21st century and complete transcripts of translations by eminent Muslim scholars such as Shakir, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhsin Khan and Marmaduke Pickthal given as footnotes.

\* <http://www.quranreading.co.in/> - teaches you Qur'an at your home. Expert tutors with extensive related education and experience teach Qur'an using Internet and computer worldwide. Students get the audio and document online using computer.

Other Websites on Qur'anic studies include:

\* <http://www.kitabullah.com/>

\* <http://www.quran.org.uk/>

- \* <http://www.searchquran.org/>
- \* <http://www.readandthink.com/>
- \* <http://www.abouttajweed.com/>

Websites that give information on Hadith studies {Prophetic Traditions} include:

- \* <http://www.ihsanetwork.org/> -The IHSAN Network - The International Hadith Study Association Network is a complete resource for Hadith Scholars and researchers around the world including the Hadith encyclopedia database, Hadith manuscripts archive, bibliographical archive online, Hadith marginalia, Hadith forum and journal.
- \* <http://www.ahad.org/> -AHAD is an automated electronic mailing list that sends out an authenticated Hadith (in English) everyday. AHAD stands for A Hadith A Day
- \* <http://www.aahlulhadith.com/>
- \* <http://www.hadith.net/>

Websites dealing with Islamic History include:

- \* <http://www.anwary-islam.com/> - The first private, complete and most comprehensive Islamic web site of the world on holy Prophet's life, Prophet's companions, Muslim women, Prophet and battle fields.
- \* <http://www.nebras.net/> - This website is especially dedicated to the respected Companions {*Sahabah Radhi Allahu Anhwn*} of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.
- \* <http://www.seerah.net/> Seerah.Net - The Life of the Final Messenger of Allah, Inspiring stories of those who struggled for the sake of Allah.
- \* <http://www.muslimheritage.com/> - Discover 1000 Years of Missing History. Schools, Colleges and Universities can benefit from textbooks, quality history content and knowledge that show Muslims as natural pioneers of human civilization.
- \* <http://manuscripts.idsc.gov.eg/> The Arabian Manuscripts network. The Egyptian Cabinet's

Information & Decision Support Center introduces the Arabian Manuscripts.

- \* <http://www.enclo.net/> - Islam's greatest people encyclopedia, where you can find biography of some greatest Muslims in different period in Islamic history. The 'beginning of Islam, the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), history of Omawiyah and Abbasid States, Andalusia Memluks, etc, are all available on this website.

Websites that deal with Muslim Women affairs include:

- \* <http://www.modernmuslima.com/> - is a website where the modern Muslim woman strives to show her devotion to her Creator through the study of His religion. She honors the scholars as inheritors of the Prophets, and struggles to discipline herself.
- \* <http://www.jannah.org/> - Provides Islamic information, women in Islam articles, and resources for Muslims and those seekers of the way of life that is called Islam, peace and submission to God.
- \* <http://hijabsahih.tripod.com/> - This site is to assist and support Muslim sisters around the world.' This Web Page is designed to help remove some of the misconceptions and prejudices about proper Muslim women dressing *hijaab* and proper *hijaabis*. It is a place where it is hoped that proper *hijaabis* will feel free to exchange views and experiences, and to talk to one another freely.
- \* <http://www.mysisterskeeper.com/> - is a website where Muslim women and young girls can learn about themselves and their religion.
- \* <http://www.islamicwritersalliance.net/> - The Islamic Writers Alliance is a group of Muslim women dedicated to writing about, presenting and promoting positive Islamic fiction and nonfiction reading, materials
- \* <http://www.sistersunited.org/> - Sisters United In Human Service, Inc. is a human service organization of Muslim women working in the spirit of sisterhood to promote, support, uplift and service human concerns {intoislam.comrnd}.

There are other dozens of informative websites that provide information on Islamic knowledge of which Islamic studies teachers and their students will gain a lot of benefit from when they visit them.

## **Conclusion**

Qur'an as a true divine revelation sent by Allah (S.W.T) to the Prophet (s.a.w), is miraculous. It is dynamic, it moves with changes of the time without changing. All the efforts to distort it by means of writing, use of electronic or any other retrieval systems prove abortive. Even the latest FALSE "TRUE FORQAN" in the name of "Modern Qur'an" published by America, was detected debunked and sensitized to the Muslim world in the Internets. This is the living evidence that Qur'an is the true divine revelation protected and guarded by Allah - its Owner, Wassalam.

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