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## CURRICULUM INTEGRATION AND ISLAMIC STUDIES IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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### **Abstract**

*In Islam, knowledge is conceived to be universal and not limited to any area as the noble Qur'ān touches all aspects of human life. It is an indispensable tool for the growth and development of an individual in the society. This is why Islamic Studies is noted to be a discipline that embraces within itself all other disciplines. However, the curriculum of this subject is inadequate. Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the curriculum of Islamic Studies at the Tertiary Institution of education in the country. Grounded in phenomenological and content analytical framework, this paper examines the challenges facing the curriculum of Islamic Studies in the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. It is discovered that the subject is becoming secondary for the students to pursue as a career. With a view to having all-encompassing curriculum for the production of all-in-one Islamic Studies graduates and graduates of other courses well-grounded in Islamic perspectives relating to their field, the paper suggests curriculum integration as an alternative therapy to the challenges facing the subject and its graduates in Nigerian Society.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, curriculum integration, Islamic Studies, Nigeria, Challenges and Prospects

Education in Islam is the basis of life as well as development for both individual and the society (Maigari, 2010). This is why seeking for knowledge is made obligatory on every Muslim to cater for both spiritual and material life of the individual. Thus, Islam through its education, which is embedded in Islamic Studies, prepares men of faith and knowledge, bring and guide them to a happy, prosperous, useful and productive life in both worlds (Liman, 2012). By this, Islamic studies is very fundamental as it deals with the overall development of an individual who is to be

submissive to the wills and orders of Allah. For Islamic Studies to achieve its primary goals, the curriculum needs to be well planned so as to meet the societal needs.

However, it has been discovered, after a critical study, that the curriculum of Islamic studies is inadequate and cannot withstand the contemporary societal needs as well as the world market. The modernization of Islamic schools under the so-called “Western Education” has really affected the planning of its curriculum to the extent that it is regarded as ‘very low’ compare to the standard of Islamic studies being taught in the Arabic schools (Abdullahi, 2014). In this educational dualism of the modern secular system and the traditional Islamic religious system, the contemporary Islamic schools are falling short of the Islamic modus-operandi in educating individual to become an ideal personality in both Islamic and western world. This is because of the inability to merge the two educational systems together to achieve both goals.

Based on the above, it means the dualistic system of education that is in use by the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria is creating problem and thus needs an urgent solution to overcome it. There is no system that will succumb to another as the two are highly needed to survive in this contemporary world. This means that both should be unified and integrated so as to have an Integrated Islamic Curriculum which is in practice in other Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia etc. Hence this paper is proposing Islamic Curriculum integration as alternative solution in solving the problem of educational dualism in the Muslim schools most especially the tertiary institution which is to produce working class youths for the country.

To accomplish this the paper is divided into sections; the abstract, introduction, conceptual analysis, objectives and scope of Islamic studies, challenges facing Islamic studies curriculum in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions, the need for curriculum integration in Islamic studies, the implication of curriculum integration of Islamic studies in the contemporary Muslim institution and the conclusion.

### **Conceptual Analysis**

In order to have proper understanding of the concepts that are connected with this study, it is pertinent to briefly explain the following concepts: Education, Curriculum, Islamic Studies Curriculum integration and Integrated Islamic Curriculum.

**Education:** The word ‘education’ was derived from a latin word ‘*educare*, *educere*, *educio* and education (Wikipedia, 2015). With regard to ‘*educare*’ it means ‘to rear or bring up’ while ‘*educere*’ means ‘to lead out and train’ and ‘*educio*’ means to educate or draw out or train and ‘*educatio*’ means breeding, bringing up or rearing. From these etymological analyses, it means education has to do with child rearing or upbringing. It has however been viewed by various scholars in different ways because of their different perspectives. According to World Bank Encyclopedia (1992), it is the ways in which people learn skill, gain knowledge and understanding about the world and themselves. It can also be viewed, according to Fafunwa (1974 as quoted in NTI)

as the aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to society.

**Curriculum:** This word stems from a latin word ‘*Currere*’ meaning ‘to run or to proceed’. According to Online Etymology Dictionary (2001), the word curriculum as a noun is also a latin word which means ‘a running, course, career’. In the context of education, it will be appropriate to view it as course of learning or a plan for learning. According to Offorma (2006), it is an instrument by means of which school seek to translate the hopes of the society in which they function into concrete reality. In the opinion of Taba (1962), it is a planned learning activity for students, ran and monitored by schools in order to achieve its educational goals. Thus, it can be said that curriculum is not only covering learning plan but also all forms of knowledge and activities to be experienced by the students in the school system either formally or informally according to the level of the learners.

**Islamic Studies:** This is a subject through which everything about the religion of Islam can be learnt and taught. According to Oloyede (2012), Islamic studies is viewed as a terminology that is used to describe an aspect of theological sciences which seeks to influence natural, human and social science in their service to God and humanity from the prison of Islamic Credo. It is also viewed, according to Wikipedia (2015) as the umbrella for the Islamic Sciences (*‘Ulūm al-dīn*), originally researched and as defined by the Islamization of knowledge. It includes all the traditional forms of religious thought such as *kalam* (Islamic Theology) and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and also incorporates field generally considered secular in the West such as Islamic Sciences and Islamic economics. It is also referred, according to Usman Andi (n.d), generally to the historical study of Islam which includes Islamic civilization, Islamic history and historiography, Islamic law, Islamic theology and Islamic philosophy.

Therefore, Islamic studies is an interdisciplinary program that focuses on the diverse range of experiences.

**Curriculum integration:** Integration is a process of combining or accumulating two or more things so as to work together (Hornby, 2000). Therefore, curriculum integration is a process of combining two or more curriculum together to achieve better goals. It is also viewed as a pedagogical approach to help students build a small set of powerful, broadly applicable skills and abilities instead of a large set of weak and narrow abilities and skills. In addition, it is a teaching approach that helps students builds connection across disciplines (Brazee, 1995).

**Integrated Islamic Curriculum:** Islamic curriculum is an instrument or plan that aims at giving the students a clear, thorough understanding of Islamic teachings, moral behavior and Islamic etiquette. It focuses on the development of an integrated personality that will fit into every aspect of life. This means that Islamic education is

universal and relevant to all aspect of human life. That is, there is no separation between religious and secular knowledge.

Therefore, Integrated Islamic Curriculum is a curriculum that covers all forms of knowledge derived from divine revelation and acquired knowledge. It bridges the gap between revealed knowledge and humanly acquired knowledge. It affords the students with the ability to question and analyze the source of any information and application from Islamic point of view.

### **Objectives of Islamic Studies**

Islam, as a religion, is very dynamic and practical as it deals with the life of man in general. It wants a very active and dynamic person in the social order. The objectives of Islamic studies vary form primary level to higher institution level. However, the basic and general aims are:

- a. To enable a Muslim have basic information in order to live an honorable life
- b. To enable a Muslim sound mentally, physically and spiritually so as to live a healthy life.
- c. To develop in a Muslim the spirit of brotherhood and tolerance so as to live harmonious life in the society.
- d. To fully inform a Muslim about the socio-political and economic affairs of his contemporary world or society so as to play his/her roles in the societal development.
- e. To imbibe in a Muslim and the society a simple life style
- f. According to Ibn Khaldun as quoted by Abdul-Fatouh (1967), to plant in a Muslim a firm religious belief and a good moral by way of religion which come to purify soul, improve moral and propagate it.

However, as the paper is addressing Islamic studies curriculum in tertiary institution, it hereby gives the following aims and objectives according to the Nigeria University Commission (NUC) Benchmark for Islamic studies (2014):

- i. To acquaint the student with the broad outline of Islam as a religion and as a way of life
- ii. To prepare the student to understand Islam as culture and civilization
- iii. To present Islam to the student as it is in its original sources of the Prophets particularly the Qur'ān and Sunnah
- iv. To sustain rigorous academic research into all issues affecting contemporary Muslim communities with focus on Nigeria.
- v. To place Islam in the context of other world religious traditions, especially those relevant to Nigeria.
- vi. To prepare the student who will progress to postgraduate level with intellectual capabilities and imaginative thoughts.

vii. To produce graduates that would adequately fit into establishments of administration, Islamic legal departments, teaching at various levels, and the foreign service

### **Scope of Islamic Studies**

Islamic studies, as said earlier is an all-encompassing subject that is so comprehensive to the extent that it leaves nothing untouched. It is regarded as the mother of all subjects. Therefore, its contents are divided into five (5) different parts, according to Sidek (2000), as follows

- a. *Tawhid* (Theology): This part is concerned with the Islamic creed which entails the study of the attributes of Allah and the relationship of the Creator with the creatures especially mankind as well as the belief in the Prophets, Books, Qadar and eschatology.
- b. *Fiqh* (worship and jurisprudence): This part focuses on the way Allah is to be worship and those things He has made lawful and unlawful. This also includes the five (5) pillars of Islam.
- c. *Sīrah* (Life History of the Prophet): The historical life of Prophet Muhammad as well as his conduct. This also includes the life history of the four rightly guided Caliphs and other Muslim scholars.
- d. *Tahdhīb* (Moral and Social Teaching): This part deals with the study of moral and social teachings of Islam as contained in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.
- e. *Qur'ān*: The revelation and compilation of the Qur'ān as well as its explanation (*Tafsīr*) and reasons for its revelation.

Based on the above analysis, it can be deduced that Hadith or Sunnah has been incorporated into *Sīrah* instead of standing independently. This is because the history of the Prophet entails everything in his life time including his sayings and actions. Similarly, hadith entails the life history of the Prophets.

### **Problems Facing Islamic Studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institution**

The curriculum of Islamic studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institution is facing series of problems and challenges which are hindering it from achieving its set aims and objectives. These problems range from the attitude of the school management, poor Arabic background of the lecturers and the students, lack of adequate material, inferiority complex among others.

- a. *Attitude of the School Management and the Government*: In most cases, the reactions of both the government and school management are not encouraging. There is no motivation for the students in terms of scholarship as it is done for students in other courses except private or organizational scholarship. Also, the subject or course is placed under religious studies in most of the universities and does not stand independently, thereby preventing the achievement of its aims and objectives, meanwhile, some universities do not offer it as a special course except as a mixed

course with other religious studies. The lecturers are not also motivated like their counterparts in sciences and other areas.

b. *Attitude of the Students:* Islamic studies as a course is not initial choice of most students studying it as a field of study. They found themselves in the field because they had no other choice, are tired of seeking for yearly admission and its cheaper than other courses in the privately owned higher institutions. Some students were even forced by their parents to study it. Thus, there is no willingness in studying the course by the students. By this, they have little or no interest in it and do not count all the teachings, syllabus and philosophy of the course as important and serious. They may not even attend classes and if they do, they pay little or no attention to the lecturers.

c. *Syllabus:* The content of the curriculum itself is not adequate and sufficient enough to achieve the goals of Islamic education. The elementary nature of the curriculum makes students feel other courses are complex and difficult than Islamic studies even though it is not. Some of the topics treated at the tertiary levels are already being introduced at the secondary school level. At the tertiary stage, it is expected that the curriculum should be the continuation of what has been introduced in the secondary stage and not repetition which will make the student feel he/she has been taught. In such cases of repetition, students decide not to attend lectures or read on time which later leads to mass failure of such students.

d. *Poor Arabic Background:* Many lecturers are deficient in the language of sourcing for information in Islamic studies, which is Arabic language. This has been hindering the effective implementation of the curriculum and thus making it difficult to achieve the set objectives. The original and primary sources of Islamic studies are written in Arabic language and have not been translated except few. The students themselves find it difficult to do further research as the books are written in Arabic.

e. *Lack of Adequate Materials:* The inadequacy of instructional materials has posed a great challenge to the curriculum of Islamic studies in tertiary institutions. Most students have no textbooks for further reading and even the books cited for further reading are not at the disposal of the students. It should be noted here that the library section of Islamic studies is not filled with both Arabic and English books. The few ones supplied are not sufficient and even out-dated, hence, hindering the student from the full understanding of the content of Islamic studies curriculum.

The above discussed issues are some of the problems facing the curriculum of Islamic studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institution.

### **The Need for Curriculum Integration in Islamic Studies**

According to the Second World Conference on Muslim Education held in Islamabad, Pakistan in 1980 (Zaim, 1987), knowledge in Islam has been divided into two categories: Revealed and Acquired knowledge. This means that there is no compartmentalization of knowledge into religious and secular knowledge. However, this point has not been fully used in designing the curriculum of Islamic studies at the

higher level. This is not saying that the Nigerian Islamic Studies Curriculum is not well organized, but it's important to improve on it in order to meet the contemporary challenges in the country and the world at large.

This curriculum integration according to Yunusa (2014) is a complex task as it requires concerted efforts in bringing together specialists in various courses to design. He then said:

A curriculum is dynamic as it changes with changing educational needs.

The contemporary need of the country to have experts in various fields should not exclude the Muslims so as to contribute to the development of Nigeria in line with Islamic paradigm. Thus, there is the need to produce all-in-one Islamic studies graduate. This cannot be achieved without the process of curriculum integration. In the world of developing Islamic Banking System, Islamic Medical Services, Islamic Economic System, Islamic Industrial Services among others, there is need for integrating other courses into Islamic Studies curriculum and Islamic studies into other courses curriculum.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the need for curriculum integration and Islamic studies can only be achieved in two phases;

#### **Phase One: Integration of Other Courses into Islamic Studies Curriculum**

In this phase, the curriculum can be designed in a way that, in each semester, there will be a borrowed course from other departments either related to Islamic studies or that the content will give an insight into the field of the study. Such as Economics, Political Science, History and International Relation, Mass Communication, English, Arabic, Computer Science, Biochemistry among others. This will develop every aspect of human potential in students and produce a well-balanced being like the early scholars of Islam who were not only good and expert in Islamic knowledge but also sciences, languages, management, administration and politics.

The above presented phase will be useful in Federal and State-Owned Universities, as well as Privately-Owned Universities. Also, it can be designed in form of a double-major course where Islamic studies as a revealed knowledge will be combined with other courses which are acquired knowledge. For instance, there can be Islamic Studies/Economics, Islamic Studies/Computer Science, Islamic Studies/Agricultural Science, Islamic Studies/ Political Science, Islamic Studies/International Relation etc. this will be better achieved in a Muslim Privately-Owned University and Islamic Universities by creating and establishing a college or faculty that will house the new integrated Islamic curriculum. This can be named in a way that will suit the content of the curriculum. For example, in International Islamic University Malaysia, as mentioned by Adebayo (2013), there is a faculty called 'Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and the Human Sciences. Also, in Crescent University, Abeokuta, there is the Department of General and Islamic Religious Studies to award the degree of B.Sc. Islamic Studies with Banking and Finance etc.

According to Adebayo (2013), this is possible to be practiced by the Islamic Universities in Nigeria by redesigning and re-planning their aims and objectives and tailoring it towards the objectives of Islamic education. They should re-plan their curriculum and present it for approval before the National Universities Commission (NUC).

### **Phase Two: Integration of Islamic Studies in the Curriculum of Other Courses**

This phase is only for the Muslims or Islamic Private Universities in Nigeria. This will afford each of the students to have a taste of related Islamic studies to his/her course of studies. It can also be by spreading all the scope of Islamic studies over the years of studies in the university. Before graduating, a student will have had substantive part of Islamic knowledge with his/her original course and thus present him/her as an Islamic scholar in his/her field of study.

For instance, Adebayo (2013) presents that there are series of textbooks on Islamic studies for specific branches of Science at Yasri University in Indonesia, such textbooks include: ISS for Economics, ISS for Education, ISS for Psychology, ISS for Biology, etc. Likewise, some topics related to each departments from Islamic perspective can be incorporated into each course of the university for the students to learn

### **Conclusion**

The trends of development in the contemporary world have put a difficult task on the shoulders of experts in Islamic studies to produce an all-in-one Islamic Studies Graduate that will be able to face the contemporary challenges. This has called for a new dawn in the curriculum of Islamic Studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions termed as Integrated Islamic Curriculum. This study has discussed the challenges facing Islamic Studies Curriculum in Nigeria among which are attitude of the government, lecturers and students towards Islamic studies as a course, poor background in Arabic language by lecturers and students, inadequate instructional material among others.

In the light of the above, the paper strongly recommend that the Islamic Private Universities should take the bull by its horns by setting in measures to avail the Muslim Ummah of the contemporary challenge of producing an all-in-one Islamic Studies Graduates from an inadequate curriculum that was designed with a limited approach to Islamic views of knowledge. The Islamicists in the country should come together to adjust the inadequacy of the current curriculum and think forward to how integrated Islamic curriculum can become a reality.

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