# Improving Islamic Education System in Nigeria Through A Three-Tier Model

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## Abstract

*Education in the Islamic perception is a social process of knowledge and skills by an individual for optimal living. The purpose of education is to make the individual to know his Creator and worship Him. Islamic education is a holistic socializing process that makes the individual to have knowledge of the relationship between himself and his Creator, how to live with his fellow human beings as well as other creatures in his environment. This paper seeks to highlight a three-tier model as a proposal to address the problem of Islamic education system in Nigeria. The traditional manner in which most Muslim children received education makes them unable to cope with the present challenges. Islam is a religion for all times. It is religion that accepts innovation brought about by societal challenges which do not contradict Islamic principles and law. Because modern (western) education was introduced to Muslim communities in Nigeria by Missionaries whose major initial motive was to get people for Christ through education, Muslims rejected this form of education and became suspicious about almost everything brought through that process. This skepticism or suspicions has persisted up till now especially in Northern Nigeria. This attitude has brought unnecessary educational and economic backwardness to Muslim communities, infusing/integrating the two system gradually could improve the Muslim ability to understand and control their environment better, manage their lives better and progress with less difficulties.*

 **Keywords:** *Model, Education, Tsangaya, Tier Model*

## Introduction

The meaning of education in its totality in the context of Islam is fundamentally in the combination of the terms Tarbiyyah, Ta'lim and Ta'dib. Literally, Tarbiyyah means 'educate', Ta'lim means 'knowledgeable' and Ta'dib derived from the word 'adaba' means 'moral'. These terms comprehensively are concerning the multilateral relationship of human and their society; human and environment; society and environment; and in relation to Allah. These cross-sectional relation are all together represent the scope of education in Islam of both 'formal' and 'non-formal', comprising the Fardhu Ain and Fardhu Kifayah.. This is a great versatility that the Qur'an and the Prophet S.A.W. mention repeatedly the paramount importance of education and the supremacy. It is stated in the Qur'an, "Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. Allah is informed of what he ye do."(Al- Mujadalah:11). In this verse Allah grants high ranks to those who obtain knowledge and if a human being wants to rise, he should attain knowledge. Intuitively, the Prophet S.A.W has clearly told that those who walk in path seeking knowledge, Allah will thereby make easy to them the path of paradise (Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah). It had been proved in history that the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. were truthful,

honest, sincere, generous, brave, willing to sacrifice their lives for Allah's cause, *jihad fisabilillah.* They love Allah and His Messenger much more than they love their own selves.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of Islamic education, there are several challenges that hinder its effectiveness and hinder students' access to quality Islamic education. These challenges include:

Inadequate Integration: Islamic education is often isolated from the mainstream educational system, leading to a fragmented approach where students may not see the relevance of Islamic teachings to their overall education.

Lack of Qualified Teachers: There is a shortage of well-trained and qualified Islamic educators who have both a deep understanding of Islamic principles and effective teaching skills. This shortage affects the quality of instruction and hinders students' ability to receive comprehensive Islamic education.

Limited Curriculum Scope: Islamic education often focuses primarily on basic teachings and fails to provide opportunities for students to explore advanced topics and develop a deeper understanding of complex Islamic concepts.

Insufficient Professional Development: Teachers and administrators in Islamic educational institutions often lack access to ongoing professional development opportunities, limiting their ability to enhance their teaching methods, keep up with the latest research, and effectively lead their institutions.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources: Many Islamic educational institutions face challenges in terms of facilities, resources, and technology, limiting their ability to provide a conducive learning environment and access to diverse learning materials.

Lack of Standardization: There is a lack of standardized curriculum, assessment methods, and quality assurance mechanisms across different Islamic educational institutions, leading to variations in the quality and content of education provided.

Addressing these challenges and improving Islamic education through a three-tier model can help overcome these limitations and create a more comprehensive and accessible educational system that meets the needs of students, teachers, and the broader Muslim community.

## Aims and Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study to improve Islamic education through a three-tier model are as follows:

a) Enhance Integration: The study aims to promote the integration of Islamic education into the mainstream educational system, ensuring that it is seen as an integral and relevant part of students' overall education.

b) Develop Qualified Teachers: The study aims to address the shortage of qualified Islamic educators by developing comprehensive training programs that equip teachers with both deep knowledge of Islamic principles and effective teaching methodologies.

c) Broaden Curriculum Scope: The study aims to expand the scope of the Islamic education curriculum, offering advanced topics and opportunities for students to explore complex Islamic concepts, encouraging critical thinking and a deeper understanding.

d) Provide Professional Development Opportunities: The study seeks to establish ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators in Islamic educational institutions. This includes workshops, seminars, and access to resources that promote continuous learning, innovation, and improvement in teaching methods.

e) Improve Infrastructure and Resources: The study aims to identify and address infrastructure and resource gaps in Islamic educational institutions, ensuring that students have access to a conducive learning environment, modern technology, and diverse learning materials.

f) Standardize Curriculum and Quality Assurance: The study seeks to establish standards for curriculum development, assessment methods, and quality assurance mechanisms across different Islamic educational institutions, ensuring consistent and high-quality education.

g) Enhance Accessibility: The study aims to improve access to Islamic education for all students, irrespective of their geographic location or socioeconomic background. This includes leveraging technology to provide distance learning options and creating inclusive learning environments.

h) Foster a Positive Learning Environment: The study aims to cultivate a positive and inclusive learning environment within Islamic educational institutions, promoting values such as respect, tolerance, and ethical behavior.

By achieving these objectives, the overall improvement of Islamic education will be ensured and that will go a long way in making it more comprehensive, accessible, and relevant in the modern context.

The structure of the early Islamic Education was built on the hierarchical structure of the Islamic faith. The first and the only reference and rallying point is Allah, the Creator and the Sustainers. So, the starting point is to learn how to recite Al-Qur'an. The early Islamic Schools are always called Quranic Schools in Nigeria. After the completion of Quranic recitation, a student would then begin to study further under an erudite Mallam (Teacher) who may not necessarily be the only teacher to handle the student till he himself becomes highly knowledgeable in the field.

Education in the Islamic perception is a social process of knowledge and skills by an individual for optimal living. The purpose of education in Islam is to make the individual to know his creator and worship Him. Islamic Education is a holistic socializing process that makes the individual to knowledge of the relationship between himself and his creator, how to live with his fellow human beings are well as other creatures in his environment.

The philosophy of Islam Education is based on the nature of man and his culture i.e. Man has been created with a purpose. His life therefore should fulfill the purpose of his creation. Since man lives in a social environment, his education should also take in to consideration how to harmonize his life with the environment in which he lives, so that his life conforms with the primary purpose for his creation. Education enables man to develop a culture that would make him be at peace with his creator as well as with his fellow beings. Islamic Education according to Murad (1985) therefore is not limited to reading and writing, it is *'Tarbiyya'* i.e. caring, nurturing and acquisition of the cultural heritage of the society.

**The Three-Tier Model**

The three-tier model is a three phase strategy for improving the current (Sangaya) system of Islamic Education in Nigeria viz:

1. Orientation/Advocacy at the grassroots i.e. Mallams, ward, village and District Heads.
2. Organizing the "Makarantan Allo/Almajiranci" based on formal (Western) school system. School session divided into three i.e. Moring (Qur'anic), Midday (skills training) and Evening (core Subjects: English, Maths, Primary Science and Social Studies).

Qur'anic recitation shall be the first part of the phase of the model. It will consist of teaching and learning the recitation of the verses of the Qur'an as normally done by the Mallams. Every Mallam shall adopt his preferred mode or approach. The period shall start from 7:00 am and by end by 10:00am.

The second part or tier shall focus on vocational training. Each "Sangaya" shall have its areas of choice of skills to acquire, one skills development centre in each ward could be opened by the government and draw-up training schedule for each ward which should start from 11:00am and end by 1:00 pm. Knowledge to be practical/functional knowledge line with current societal demand such as masonry, tailoring, welding, carpentry, painting, plumbing etc. instructors do not have to be those who possess certificates from formal schools, but where possible those who have formal school certificates would be preferred.

The third part of tier is the teaching of formal school (core) subjects English, Mathematics, Primary Science and Social Studies. The period should start from 4:00 pm and end by 6:00 pm or as may be schedule by each ward according to its desire.

**Implementation Strategy**

The model is proposed to be implemented at ward/village level with government and private support. A skills development centre should be established in each ward/village equipped with basic training equipment. Instructors/technicians to be recruited need not to possess formal training/certificates if they can demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the profession they claimed. A ward/village committee which should include the proprietors/Heads of 'Sangayas' in the ward/village should be formed to manage the vocational centre. The second and the third part of tier shall be conducted at the vocational centre; a schedule of study could take the form bellow:

1. **Basic Literacy Class:**
   i.   Qur'anic Recitation: Daily -  7:00 am – 10:00 am.
   ii.  Vocational Training: Twice weekly – 11: 00 am- 12:00 noon
   iii. Core Subjects: Daily – 4:0 pm – 6:00 pm
2. **Post basic Literacy Class:**
   i.   Qur'anic Studies Daily- 7:00 am – 12: 00 pm
   ii.  Vocational Training: Thrice Weekly – 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
   iii. Core Subjects: Daily – 4:00pm – 6:00pm

**Rationale**

The three-tier model is proposed to address the problem of Islamic Education system in Nigeria. The traditional manner of which most Muslim children received education makes them unable to cope with the present challenges. Islam is a religion for all times. It is a religion that accepts innovation brought about by societal challenges which do not contradict Islamic principles and law. Because modern (Western) education was introduced to Muslim communities in Nigeria by Missionaries whose major initial motive was to get people for

Christ through education, Muslims rejected this form of education and became suspicious about almost everything brought by Christians/Europeans. This Sckeptism or suspicious has persisted up till now especially in Northern Nigeria. This attitude has brought unnecessary educational and economic backwardness to Muslim communities, infusing/integrating the two systems gradually could improve the Muslim ability to understand and control their environment better, manage their lives better and progress with less difficulties. The second and third tiers in this Model are intended as first step towards addressing the problems of Muslims in Nigeria which good education can solve.

## Factors Inhibiting the Development of Islamic Education in Nigeria

The factors are multifarious but, they are all artificial and not therefore, insurmountable. They could be grouped as rating to government, the proprietors, parents, the society and the media.

## Government

A paper of this nature cannot adequately do justice to the inhibitive roles successive governments have played on Islamic Education in Nigeria. On funding, the government not only fund the western education, it has also taken over its full control. So, what started as mere grand-in-aid soon graduated into full take-over. This along has a negative consequence on the development of Islamic Education in Nigeria. It could be said, at this juncture, that no right thinking person would literally condemn the content of western Education because, after all, it is the English version of all that had already been known to the Muslims years back, the point however, is that its incursion into this country with strong connection with Christianity has led to dislocation of the older Islamic order in traditional Muslim societies.

It has been repeatedly solid that Muslims constitute a large percentage of Nigerians. In order to be fair and just to this large Muslim population, Islamic Education should be accorded a more dignified attention than it is presently being given. Even, if only for spiritual and moral development, which the National Policy on education (1981) advocates for, government should be more interested in Islamic Education.

## Proprietors

The problems being created by the proprietors of *Islamiyah* schools for Islamic educational system can be likened to a proverbial kola nut the problem of which is the parasitic insect in it. The problem is multi-dimensional. Dishonest proprietors go to some Arab countries' governments or philanthropists, cap-in-hand, to seek financial assistance only to come back home to divert such assistance to personal use. Some also go to the ridiculous level of selling the valuable Islamic textbooks given them for the propagation of Islam and the development of Islamic Education. The worse category is the absentee-proprietors who do not have 1/10 of the students and facilities they claim to have and would do one launching after the other in the name of development of their institutions. More worrisome is lack of unity among the proprietors even within the same locality. This made it impossible for them to have a forum to articulate their views on how to move the system forward.

## Parents

Muslim parents of students in *Islamiyah* Schools have their own part of the problem. The disdainful manner in which students attending Islamic schools are treated does more harm than any other. An average Nigerian Muslim parent does spend heavily on Western Education for their children. Some take Islamic Education as Secondary; while some send to Islamic Schools, the children who, in their opinion and conclusion, cannot mentally cope with Western Education who have one form of disability or the other.

**The Society**

What is happening in the society is a reflection of what happens in the family. The Nigerian society does not see anything beneficial in the Islamic system of education other than the religious knowledge. There is an impression that anybody undertaking Islamic Education can only function either as a full time *Mallam* (Teacher) with teaching being a profession that is already looked down upon. Not only this, in some religiously hostile communities, Islamic Education is devisively regarded as education for the *Al-Majiris* (corrupt form of *Al-Muhajirin*), which originally means the immigrants but misconstrued to be beggars. The unfortunate thing is that some Muslims have upgraded begging to an art and a profession. Unfortunately, too numerous uniformed Muslims have been persuaded by this anti-Islamic posture. In Yoruba land, there is what people derogatorily called *'ole ntelafa'* meaning, it is an indolent that follows a *Mallam*. And as if to lend credence to the saying, it is a common thing to see pupils that are put under the care of some *Mallams* for Islamic upbringing, going about begging. It is high time we turn things around for Islamic Education. It is our collective responsibility to enlighten the populace that Islamic Education is a utilitarian education (Ajidagba, 1991).

**Mass Media**

The most destructive and vociferous attack on Islamic is always Championed by the mass media in Nigeria. A keen watcher of events may not be too astonished about this situation because, the Nigerian press can aptly be described as a Christian press; for the simple reason that Christian own or control over 90% of the media outfits (print or electronics) in the country. The comparative edge the western educational system has over its Islamic counterpart can be credited to the ceaseless propaganda of the press. Even when Muslims have been the president or Heads of the State, there has been overt government backing of the press. Whereas, the mass media is a *strong* agent of education and mobilization, as far as Islam, education is concerned, it is a combative agent of mis-education and demobilization. To arrest the trend, the gifted Muslims should be encouraged to establish media outfits that will assist in this direction Education in Nigeria; the way forward if it is agreed that the Western system of education has come to stay in Nigeria and has even, to say the least, westernized our ways of life, there is the urgent need to find ways of moving Islamic Education forward in order to guarantee its future. One area that must be explored, and very urgently too is integrating western education with that of the Islamic system. The integration, which should be in the area of learning experiences. Must be done with a view to producing "double-baked" citizens. That is, students who would be versatile in both Islamic and Western education without any jeopardy to the former. Giving the present scenario in the country this, to my mind, remains the only viable approach to re-launch Islamic Education back to prominence. Some subject should be introduced into the Islamic schools and taught in English language (such as Mathematics, Economics, Integrated Science, Geography and English Language itself). In the light of the foregoing, it is strongly suggested that a curriculum conference be summoned to assemble the representatives of all stakeholders in Islamic education. The conference would fashion out curricular for the different levels of *Islamiyya* Schools. To have a rewarding conference, mass enlightenment should be mounted to educate especially the proprietors of such a gathering another area that needs attention is staff training and retraining the appalling situation whereby teachers in our *Madaris* (Schools) and *Macahid* (Learning centres) are not exposed to modern trends in pedagogy should be redressed some of these teachers just pick up the chalk in most cases, after graduating from the same school where they are teaching. There should be a way of giving teachers in our *Islamiyya* schools basic education courses in the interim induction/refresher courses, workshop and seminar, could be organized to take care of this important aspect of

the system, government should be involved in certification. This will put to an end derogatory valuation of certificates from *Islamiyyah* schools. It is saddening that, in some states, holders of certificates from *Islamiyya* institutions are placed one derisive salary grade levels as low as 02 or 03. All ministry of education should take over the certification as a follow-up to the harmonization of the curricula. Co-curricular activities such as club and society meetings should be encouraged in the *Islamiyyah* schools. There should be football team as well as other sporting activities. These activities help in no small measure to develop a child cognitively, effectively and in psychomotor. Besides, they also give him the Islamic alternatives to what he is exposed to outside the school environment

**Conclusion**

 In conclusion, improving Islamic education through a three-tier model offers a comprehensive and progressive approach to enhance the quality and accessibility of Islamic education. By addressing challenges such as inadequate integration, lack of qualified teachers, limited curriculum scope, insufficient professional development, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and lack of standardization, the three-tier model aims to overcome limitations and create a more effective educational system.

The implementation of this model incorporates foundational Islamic education as an integral part of the regular curriculum, advanced specialization in specific areas of Islamic studies for interested students, and professional development programs for teachers and leaders. By doing so, the three-tier model promotes a holistic understanding of Islam, fosters critical thinking skills, and provides avenues for deepening knowledge and expertise.

The theoretical frameworks of constructivism, experiential learning, social constructivism, and andragogy, among others, provide a solid foundation for the design and implementation of the three-tier model. These frameworks emphasize active learning, practical experiences, collaborative learning, cognitive progression, and personal transformation, which are key elements for an effective Islamic education system.

However, it is important to note that the successful implementation of the three-tier model requires collaboration among stakeholders, adequate resources, ongoing support for professional development, and a commitment to quality assurance and standardization. By addressing these factors, the three-tier model can contribute to the overall improvement of Islamic education, providing students with a comprehensive and accessible education that nurtures their spiritual, intellectual, and moral development.

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