

# An Appraisal of Objectives of Teaching Islamic Studies in Secondary Schools in Lagos State

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## **Abstract**

*The primary objectives of including Islamic Studies into the Secondary School Curriculum are to save the Muslim children against possible conversion and prepare them for the practice of Islam. To this end, the curriculum was designed in such a way that at the end of the day the students will have adequate knowledge that would enable them practice Islam to the level of recognising their purpose of existence as vicegerent of Allah. However, the government policy, the attitudes and calibre of teachers and the school environment are great determinants that can make or mar the achievement of the primary objectives. The purpose of this study therefore, is to examine the impact of these factors on the achievement of the objectives. Survey research method was adopted. Teachers' and students' questionnaires and interview were used as tool for data gathering. The population of the study comprises 20 Islamic Studies Teachers and 168 Students. The findings of the study revealed among other things that the government policy has negative impact on the attainment of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives. One of the recommendations made was that the status of Islamic Studies should be changed from elective to compulsory and be offered by all the classes. The study concludes that a concerted effort should be marshalled towards overcoming the challenges militating against the attainment of the primary objectives of Islamic Studies so that Islamic Studies will not be seen as a subject to be passed in examination only.*

**Keywords:** *Appraisal, Islamic Studies, Objectives, Secondary School*

## **Introduction**

Islamic Studies is one of the subjects taught at all levels of educational system in Nigeria. The primary objective of Islamic Studies is to preserve and promote Islam among the Muslims. In order to achieve this objective, the curriculum, the teachers that will implement it, the government policy and the school environment are very crucial. Islamic Studies curriculum started in form of syllabus before its transformation to what is now known as curriculum (Bidmos, 2020). The Curriculum has been reviewed as many times as possible in order to comply with changing system of Nigerian education. The major challenge that faces the implementation of Islamic Studies Curriculum is the acute shortage of teachers. It must be emphasized that the supply of Islamic Studies teachers is grossly inadequate since it has been introduced as school subject up to this moment. The contributory factor to this is that only a few candidates apply to study Islamic Studies at tertiary institutions. On the other hand, the graduates of Arabic schools who are qualified to apply are handicapped by deficiency in English. Experience has shown that the adverse effect of inadequate supply of Islamic Studies teachers in secondary schools makes some Muslim students to offer Christian Religious Knowledge in lieu of Islamic Studies.

The government policy is a great determinant to the implementation of Islamic Studies curriculum. For instance, Islamic Studies ought to be compulsory from primary to secondary school level because of its importance. However, the government policy fails to recognize this

fact and thereby makes Islamic Studies elective either at junior or senior secondary school levels. Furthermore, classification of subject to Arts, Commercial and Science which excludes

science and commercial students from offering Islamic Studies is just like adding salt into injury.

Traditionally, curriculum is implemented in the school environment. Therefore it is a great factor that must be considered for the successful implementation of any curriculum. Teacher-student ratio, availability of relevant instructional materials just to mention but a few is *sine qua non* for the successful implementation of the curriculum. The purpose of this study therefore, is to examine how these factors have been impacting on the attainment of primary objective of Islamic Studies at secondary schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The primary objective of including Islamic Studies into the secondary school curriculum is to prepare the students for the proper practice of Islam. This becomes necessary because it was discovered that the western education is used as a tool of converting Muslim children to Christianity. In order to achieve this objective, the curriculum was designed in such a way that at the end of the day the students will have adequate knowledge that would enable them practise Islam to the level of recognizing the purpose of their existence as vicegerent of Allah. However, the government policy, attitudes and calibre of Islamic Studies teachers and the school environment are great determinants that can negatively or positively affect the achievement of this primary objective. In view of this, this study is conducted to investigate this assertion.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study intends to;

- i. Examine the effect of government policy on the achievement of teaching Islamic Studies in secondary schools.
- ii. Assess the calibre of Islamic Studies teachers on the achievement of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives.
- iii. Appraise the effect of school environment on the implementation of Islamic Studies curriculum at secondary school level.
- iv. Ascertain the comprehensiveness and adequacy or otherwise of Islamic Studies curriculum towards the achievement of its objectives.
- v. Identify the challenges encountered by Islamic Studies teachers in the implementation of the Islamic Studies curriculum

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are raised in order to proffer solution to the stated problem:

- i. What is the effect of government policy on the achievement of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives?
- ii. In what ways can the calibre of Islamic Studies teachers affect the achievement of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives?
- iii. How can the school environment affect the implementation of Islamic Studies Curriculum at secondary school level?
- iv. To what extent is the Islamic Studies Curriculum comprehensive and adequate towards the achievement of secondary school Islamic Studies Objectives?
- v. What are the challenges encountered by the Islamic Studies Teachers in the implementation of the Islamic Studies Curriculum?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in the sense that it will create awareness in the mind of students on the objectives set to be achieved by teaching and learning of Islamic Studies in secondary schools.

This will make them see Islamic Studies beyond a school subject that must be passed in the examination. Secondly, the data gathered on the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of Islamic Studies curriculum in secondary schools will stimulate further studies. Thirdly, Islamic Studies teachers will be sensitized on the significance of achieving the objectives no matter the hurdles confronting them. Fourthly, it will help in drawing the attention of the government to realise the need to make Islamic Studies a compulsory subject at junior and senior secondary school levels without excluding any class. Lastly, the results of the study will help in preparing the appropriate and implementable scheme of work.

## **Literature Review**

### **The History of Islamic Education and its Influence in Nigeria**

Islamic Studies at all levels of education in Nigeria is not accidental. Historically, Islam predated Christianity in Nigeria because its existence is dated to the eleventh century when Bornu had welcomed some Umayyad Muslim refugees (Gbadamosi, 1978:4). However, in the southwestern Nigeria, Islam had been established in Ardra Badagry, Igboho, Ijana, Ikoyi, Iseyin, Ketu, Lagos and Oyo. The history had it that the King Adele I permitted the practice of Islam in his court in 1780. Islam spread to these various towns through the activities of soldiers, settlers, and traders. For instance, during the heyday of Oyo Empire, Alafin Ajagbo welcomed Afaa Yigi of Arab descent who introduced Islam to the people of Oyo. (Gbadamosi, 1978).

The existence of Islam in Nigeria greatly influenced the Muslims both in the north and the southwest. Administratively, the Caliphate system was run on Islamic precepts which made the rulers to surround themselves with Muslim clerics who served as advisers and counsellors. For instance, Mai Idris Alooma (1571-1603) relied on the Ahmad Ibn Fartuwa's account in running his political and military affairs. Similarly, Abdul-Karim Al-Maghili, a famous Algerian scholar, wrote a treatise for King Muhammad Rumfa (1463-1499) of Kano on the request of the latter when the former visited Kano. The treatise was titled "The Crown of Religion concerning the Obligation of the Princes (Gbadamosi and Junaid, 2015).

Naturally, Islam is accompanied by Arabic wherever it goes. This implies that anywhere Islam is found Arabic will have its place because it is the liturgical language of Islam. Oladosu (2018) affirmed that "whenever Islam found footing during the pre-modern period, its educational programmes were quickly established". Similarly, Hunwick, (1964) cited in Abdulrahmon (2018) explained that "the journey of Arabic language in Nigeria started with the advent of Islam in the Kanem Bornu Empire in the early 19th century".

Before the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate, Arabic had been known in some Hausa land/ states including Bornu through the influx of scholars from Timbuktu. However, with the emergence of Sokoto Caliphate, Arabic became the official language used for policy documentation (Umar, 2008, and Al-Imam, 2008). Similarly, Abubakar (2018) from his research established how Islam and Arabic education had influenced majority of monarchs in Yoruba land. What can be deduced from his assertion is that one of the impacts of Islam in any Yoruba land is the building of central mosque very close to the palaces. It is also a tradition up to this moment that the Friday's sermon is not commenced until the arrival of the king. Furthermore, the appointment of imam is subject to the ratification of the monarchs. Gbadamosi and Junaid (2015) and Amuni (2009) pointed out that some Arabic loaned words are commonly found in Hausa and Yoruba languages such as *riba*, which means interest in Arabic language and many more

## **The Christian Missionaries and the Beginning of Western Education in Nigeria**

The patronage enjoyed by Islam and Arabic language among Nigerian Muslims began to face rivalry with the advent of Christian Missionaries starting from 1842. The first Christian Missionaries to arrive in Badagry were Christian Missionary Society (CMS) and Methodists. Although the Christian Missionaries came to Nigeria with the objective of spreading Christianity, also it was part of their objectives to abolish slavery. Making Badagry as their first point of call was intentional because Badagry was one of the centres for exporting slaves to the Western world. The phrase “The Bible and the Plough” indicates the eradication of slave trade and fostering the spread of Christianity. One of the stratagems adopted by Christian Missionaries in order to spread Christianity was the establishment of the formal education which would enable the converts to read the Bible and translate it to various indigenous languages. (Olukoju, 2015).

This agendum made the Muslims especially in Lagos to oppose the Christian-sponsored Western education. However, the colonial government expressed dismay over the low attendance because of its educational development plan. In July 1889, a committee was set up to investigate the main cause for the low attendance of Muslim children in the school. It was found out that Muslims stayed away from Mission schools for the fear of conversion. The recommendations of the committee included that a conversation should be initiated to enlighten the elder Muslims on the importance of Western education. Secondly, the government decided to give grant to Christian schools so that Arabic could be included in their curriculum for the purpose of attracting Muslims, decision that the Mission schools jettisoned. Thirdly, the Muslims were encouraged to incorporate Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3Rs) and English in their Qur’anic schools. This suggestion was also difficult to implement. Although the recommendations were not immediately implemented nevertheless it formed the basis of government policy on the Muslim education in Nigeria (Gbadamosi, 1978).

The first Governor to make an attempt towards implementing the policy was Sir C.A. Moloney followed by Sir G.T. Carter. This was part of effort made by the government to make sure that Muslims accept Western Education. After a lot of persuasion from the government side, Lagos Muslim Community sought an advice from ‘Abd al-Hamid II, the Sultan of Turkey, who in 1894 wrote them a letter urging them to accept Western education. Lagos Muslim community finally responded to the government persuasion when Mr. Abdallah Quillam came to Lagos as representative of the Sultan of Turkey on the occasion of opening Shitta Bey Mosque in 1894 making a declaration that Muslims should accept Western education. He advised further that Western education should not be seen as a means of Christianisation as there were Muslims elsewhere who acquired it and still remained Muslims. Mr. Abdallah Quillam, a lawyer by profession, was also a convert who had worked for propagation of Islam in England (Gbadamosi, 1978).

Acceptance of Western Education by the Muslims gained momentum when Dr. E.W. Blyden was appointed by Governor Carter in October 1895 as Agent of Native Affairs. One of his main assignments was to persuade the Muslims to accept Western education. Dr. Blyden was qualified for the work because of his experience in this regard. He had spent four years in Sierra Leone where he organized Western Education for the Muslims in Sierra Leone. After a series of consultations with Muslims, agreement was reached to place one of the Muslim schools at Bankole under the government control because it was regarded as the best of them all (Gbadamosi, 1978).

The school was officially opened on 15 June 1896 as Government Muslim School. With this, the teachers’ salaries were to be paid by the government while the Muslims were to be paying

the rent for the building. Both teachers and students were Muslims. The school operated between Saturday and Wednesday while Thursday and Friday were used for break so as to enable the Muslims prepare for Jum'ah prayer. Mr. Idris Animashaun was the pioneer headmaster of the school. Arabic and Islamic Studies were taught along with 3Rs and English (Gbadamosi, 1978). This is the origin of teaching Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Nigerian schools.

### **2.3 Implementation of Islamic Studies Curriculum in Secondary Schools**

The current Islamic Studies Curriculum metamorphosed from West African Examination Council (WAEC)'s syllabus. Then it was used to be referred to as Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and later referred to as Islamic Religious Studies. In 1982, the title of the Curriculum was changed to Islamic Studies, the title that was considered more appropriate because the curriculum is more comprehensive than the previous syllabus being used by WAEC. The government provided genuine atmosphere for the realization of the Curriculum through the instrumentality of erstwhile Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC) now known as Nigerian Education Research Development Council (NERDC). More importantly, the Curriculum was designed in line with 6-3-3-4 system of Nigerian education (Bidmos, 2010). Over the years the curriculum has been reviewed until when the nomenclature was changed to Religion and National Value Curriculum especially at basic 7-9. (National Policy on Education, 2014;13).

The curriculum was divided into six sections namely; the Qur'an, Hadith, Tawhīd, Fiqh, Sirah and Tahdhib as being operated at JSS level but these sections were broadened at SSS level. A critical examination at the curriculum gives an impression that the curriculum is very adequate and comprehensive. Bidmos (2020) avers that "every segment of the curriculum has a part to play in the actualization of the objective". He expresses optimism that the learners who are exposed to the curriculum will at the end of the day come out to be cultured, polished and upright. Therefore, if it is adequately implemented, its objectives could be achieved.

The adequate implementation of the curriculum is attached with government policy and the quality and quantity of Islamic Studies teachers. Undoubtedly, government policy can make or mar the smooth implementation of the curriculum. Abdul-Raheem and Adegoke (2014) opined that the provision of school facilities, adequate supply of teachers and regular organization of in-service training for teachers is the government responsibility. Once the government fails to stand by this responsibility, the implementation of the curriculum will be adversely affected. Experience shows that the supply of teachers across all the subjects at all level of educational sectors in Nigeria is grossly inadequate because when teachers retire there is no immediate replacement. Islamic Studies as subject is the most affected especially in Lagos State.

According to the National Policy on Education both third and fourth editions, Islamic Studies was classified under non-prevocational electives at Junior Secondary School level. This implies that the students are at liberty to offer Islamic Studies. According to the National Policy on Education 6th Edition, Religious Studies was merged with Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education and this necessitated the changing of nomenclature to Religion and National Value Education. This policy makes the status of Islamic to be worse because the contents of the curriculum were reduced so that the students will not be overburdened. Bidmos (2020) vehemently criticized the curriculum and opined that it was a deliberate attempt to remove Religious Studies from the secondary schools. He justified his assertion by making reference to similar scenario in the past when moral instruction was introduced as school subject. However, at senior secondary school level the National Policy on Education divides Secondary Education into the following categories;

1. Science and Mathematics
2. Technology
3. Humanities
4. Business Studies

Islamic Studies along with Christian Religious Studies fall under humanities which means only students who are in Art class can offer it while science and commercial students are exempted. However, the same policy makes Civic Education compulsory for all students. Bidmos (2020) criticized this policy on the ground that the purpose of teaching religion is to link the students with their Creator and to inculcate good conduct in them. Hence, it will be illogical to exclude the students in commercial and science classes from offering Islamic Studies. More importantly, Nigeria as a state is multi-religious, by this nomenclature, religious studies ought to be given the status of compulsory. Farrant (1964) cited in Abdul-Raheem and Adegoke (2014) asserts that “Any education which attempts to train children while excluding religious aspect is in a crippled state”.

Teachers are the forces to be reckoned with as far as implementation of curriculum is concerned. The quality they are made of determines the successful implementation of the curriculum. The crucial role of teachers can be understood and appreciated by considering the assertion made in the National Policy of Education that “No education can rise above the quality of its teachers... (p.6)” In view of this, Islamic Studies teachers are saddled with more responsibility than any other teachers. Bidmos (2010) regards every Islamic Studies teacher as somebody who is on the rescue mission. “He is expected to save the Muslim children from any destructive indoctrination or possible conversion to Christianity”. In addition, to disabuse the mind of secularists about what Islamic Studies stands for. According to him, this mission cannot be achieved until every Islamic Studies teacher exhibits certain qualities which include; patience, creativity, grasp of content, understanding of the Qur’an, knowledge of Arabic, religious observance, moral probity, and versatility. Sulaiman (2014) advocated that Islamic Studies teachers should be more committed and dedicated to their job.

A practical experience that this researcher had while administering the questionnaire for his undergraduate project was unbelievable. He encountered two Islamic Studies teachers who were Christians. Definitely these two teachers were bankrupt of the aforementioned qualities.

Abdul-Raheem and Adegoke (2014) asserted that there are two categories of Islamic Studies teachers in secondary schools, those with high level of Arabic competency and those with little or without Arabic competency. The factor responsible for this parity started from the university. Usually there are some students who could not meet up with cutoff mark of the course of their choice. However, university in its magnanimity offers them Islamic Studies because their Senior Secondary Certificate (SSCE) shows that they passed Islamic Studies. Eventually if they found themselves in schools as Islamic Studies teachers, teaching the Qur’an or Hadith will become nightmare for them. The reason is that the level of Arabic they were exposed to at university might not be enough to enable them perform the task. More importantly, the required qualities expected of Islamic Studies teacher might be lacking due to the fact that they studied Islamic Studies as a last option.

Teaching the Qur’an and Hadith has been the most difficult section of Islamic Studies curriculum for teachers who are deficient in Arabic literacy as well as students who are in the same shoe with this category of teachers. Several empirical researches had been carried out on the challenges that this section of the curriculum poses to the teachers and students (Musa and Ajidagba, 2011 and Ajidagba and Abdur-Rafiu, 2015).

## **Research Methods and Procedure for Data Collection**

The survey research method is adopted because the study is based on the collection of data from certain groups of respondents through the use of questionnaire with the aim of generalizing the results. There are six education districts in Lagos State, out of which four were selected. These included education districts I, II, IV and VI.

Purposive sampling was used to select 20 secondary schools from these four education districts due to the fact that not every secondary school has Islamic Studies teachers. The total number of 168 students and 20 Islamic Studies Teachers were used as respondents. Out of 20 teachers, four of them were females. Six of the teachers had Master Degree while the rest had First Degree. The minimum working experience of teachers that participated in the study was 1-5 years while maximum was 15 years above. Students from Basic 9 and SSIII were not included because they were not in the school as at the time when the study was conducted. The structured interview was conducted via the phone call.

Teachers' Appraisal Questionnaire (TAQ) and Students' Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ) were used as tools for data collection. The data were collected through the means of 4-likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Teachers' Questionnaire consists of 14 items designed to answer five raised research questions while Students' Questionnaire consists of 17 items. The administration of questionnaire was done by the research assistants and it lasted for three weeks. The data were analysed using **SPSS 26.0**.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The results of analysis show that the government policy that accorded Islamic Studies the status of elective subject at junior secondary school level which also excludes the commercial and science classes from offering Islamic Studies at the senior secondary school level has negative impact on the achievement of primary objective of Islamic Studies. It was gathered that some students didn't take the subject seriously because of the belief that it is elective. Moreover, they would not offer it at senior secondary school level especially those who want to be either in commercial class or science and thus they regarded it as less important. In view of this, the policy has made the students to see Islamic Studies as one of the school subjects that must be passed in examination which is its immediate objective while the remote objective is to make them a practising Muslim.

Secondly, overpopulation of students in the class was one of the major challenges hindering the proper implementation of the Islamic Studies curriculum. For instance, in Ikorodu Junior Grammar school, JSS I have 10 arms and each arm has the total number of 155 students. In a situation like this it will be very difficult for teachers to be effective. This is in contradiction to the recommendation according to the National Policy on Education that "For effective teaching and learning at the Junior Secondary Education level, teacher-student ratio shall be 1:35" (National Policy on Education, 2014:13). However, in Ajigbada Girls Junior Secondary school, the students' population was normal like 35 students in a class with just three arms and this is very few.

It was also gathered that in some schools, the students are allowed to observe salat Zuhr even Asr and on Friday salat Jum'ah is conducted. This indicates that to some extent the school environment is conducive for practical implementation of the curriculum which as a result is a contributory factor towards the realization of primary objective of Islamic Studies.

Thirdly, the scheme of work used in Lagos State is another factor that also contributed to the poor implementation of the curriculum. For example, one week is allocated to a topic that needs to be taught in two weeks or more. The situation became worse by the failure of most parents to buy the recommended Islamic Studies textbook for their children. The effect of this is that

the teachers were handicapped to give assignment that will help to cover the topics that might not be taught in the class due to lack of time. It was discovered that there were serious complaints from the teachers that students didn't do the assignments given to them.

Fourthly, it was noted that the current National Islamic Studies curriculum is very adequate and comprehensive to give the students the required knowledge needed to practise Islam. This fact has been corroborated by Bidmos (2020). However, the only noticed deficiency in the curriculum is the lack of Arabic literacy section. Ideally, the Arabic literacy section is supposed to be integral part of the curriculum because of the inclusion of the Qur'an and Hadith section. Using the transliteration method to teach the Qur'an and Hadith, it is as a result of absence of Arabic literacy section in the curriculum. Transliteration method is not adequate for teaching the Qur'an and Hadith. This has been justified by empirical research carried out by Abdul-Raheem (2018) and he recommended that a section on the Arabic literacy be included in the Islamic Studies curriculum.

Lastly, it was discovered that Islamic Studies Teachers especially who participated in the study have the required qualifications to teach the subject. Majority of respondents affirmed that their teachers taught them with passion and commitment. Similarly, some teachers explained that apart from the subject matter they also did admonish their students on the adherence to the Islamic precepts. However, some teachers and students complained about the Qur'an and Hadith because of the requirement of Arabic literacy. This confirmed the assertion made by Abdul-Raheem and Adegoke (2014) that some Islamic Studies Teachers were deficient in Arabic literacy.

In summary, the study revealed that the majority of students were not aware of primary objective of Islamic Studies in secondary schools. This is blamed on the policy of government that makes it an elective. However, it was discovered that the curriculum was very comprehensive but not adequate because there is need to include a section for Arabic literacy that will facilitate the reading of Arabic text of both the Qur'an and Hadith. Although there was inadequate supply of Islamic Studies teachers, those who participated in the study were found qualified and they had the required qualities of a good Islamic Studies teacher. Overpopulation of students in many secondary schools, lack of adequate time to cover some topics and the attitude of students towards the assignments were identified as main challenges that hindered the effective implementation of the curriculum and as a result this may have a negative implication on the achievement of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives.

### **Recommendations**

To overcome some challenges identified as negating the attainment and sustainability of secondary school Islamic Studies objectives, the following steps ought to be taken;

1. The status of Islamic Studies should be changed from elective to compulsory at junior and senior secondary school levels and to be offered by all classes.
2. More schools need to be established in addition to the existing ones so that the overpopulation of students can be drastically reduced.
3. Recruitment of more teachers in all the subject areas needs to be given necessary attention because retirement of teachers is a yearly affair. The failure to do the needful will result to acute shortage of teachers and Islamic Studies will be the most affected.
4. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting should be held regularly where the parents would be updated on the progress of their children and thereby get sensitized about their responsibilities as parents.

5. Islamic Studies teachers must register and participate in conferences been organized by Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies, NATAIS for the purpose of interacting with Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions so that they can keep abreast with problems and solutions of teaching and learning of the subject.
6. Inclusion of Arabic literacy section into the Islamic Studies curriculum is necessary because it will improve and enhance the teaching of Qur'an and Hadith and thereby put a stop to the use of transliteration as alternative for Arabic literacy.

It is a fact that Islam predated Christianity in Nigeria and this is responsible for the population of Muslims in Nigeria. However, the arrival of Christian Missionaries and their activities by spreading western education challenged the popularity that Islam had enjoyed over the years. The teaching and learning of Islamic Studies started in the public school right from the colonial period in order to prevent the conversion of Muslim children to Christianity in the process of acquiring western education. The Islamic Studies curriculum began in form of syllabus and it had been reviewed over the years in order to be relevant with changes in the Nigerian system of education. The curriculum was judged adequate because of its comprehensiveness but there is room for improvement to accommodate Arabic literacy section. Some Islamic Studies Teachers relied on transliteration method to teach the Qur'an and Hadith because of their incompetency in Arabic literacy. The findings revealed that there were some challenges militating against the achievement of Islamic Studies objectives in secondary schools. Therefore, the study concluded that concerted effort should be marshalled towards addressing the factor militating against the realization of Islamic Studies objectives in order to safeguarding the subject from going into extinction.

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