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## Historical Perception of Education for the Muslims Community before the Colonial Era in Nigeria

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### Abstract:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man spirit, intellect his rational self, feeling and bodily senses. Islamic education aims at establishing the fundamental purpose for human creation on this earth and the hereafter. This paper intends to present "Historical perception of education for the Muslims community before the colonial era in Nigeria" The paper employed analytical and historical research method. The paper is significance because it encompassed the vital areas for this research. It also highlights and discusses the Qur'anic school and the method of instruction in reading skills, learning environment, organizing resource and graduation ceremony. The research finding recommends the implementation of the objectives of Islamic education in the Nigerian school system.

**Keywords:** Qura'nic school, education, learning methods

### 1. Introduction

One of the elements of the success of every educational system is the extent to which its schools relate with the community and it people purported to serve. However, looking at the history and philosophy of western schools in Muslim societies, one find that they were everywhere compulsorily introduced by alien colonial masters whose aims Economic Exploitation, Political Domination, Cultural Adulteration, and Imposition of Racial Superiority Over the Natives in Every Colony, thus the schools they established for the training of Muslim natives look completely alien in the structure of their buildings, their location, curricular content and general orientations.

A Qura'nic school is usually in or outside the Mosque itself. Indeed, the oldest Muslim University, Al-Azhar in Cairo, was established in a Mosque. Today thousands of these schools are to be found in Northern and southern Nigeria, located either in Mosque, private house, or premises specially build for this purpose. In a typical Qur'anic school the teacher (Mu'allim) from which the word (Mallam) is derived, sits under a tree, or in his parlour, verandah, or porch, surrounded by volumes of the Qur'an and other Islamic books. A little further off, but near enough to be within reach of his long cane, squat some ten to forty pupils in a semi-circle, with most their bodies shielded by the broad wooden 'slate' they hold proudly before them they chant different verses of the Qur'an. In some cases, the teacher is assisted by one of the pupils who is considered the brightest or the oldest or both.

### 2. Islamic Education and the Qur'anic School System

Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed along and rich intellectual tradition. Knowledge (*'Ilm*) occupies a significant position within Islam, as evidenced by so many verses in the Islamic revealed Book, (the Holy Quran). The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran with frequent injunctions, such as:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ اسْكُرُوا فَاسْكُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ تَرْتَبُوا وَاللَّهُ يَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ.

O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, (spread out and) make room: (ample) room will Allah provide for you. And when ye are told to rise up, rise up Allah will rise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do. Q: 58, Vs, 11,

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُبَيِّنَ لَكَ وَحْيَهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge." Q: 20, Vs, 114,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقْوُدْهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ كَاتِبَاتٌ لِيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ أُمَّرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded. Q: 6, Vs, 66,

In the above mentioned verses, Allah, the Almighty, commands believers to properly educate themselves and their families. So that there would be virtuous and families which constitute the Islamic society. Naturally believers had responded and continue to respond and profoundly influenced by that call. It is narrated that when this verse was revealed, one of the believers sat weeping and said, 'I was unable to cope with myself, and now I have been burdened with my family.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) replied: "Command your family by whatever commands you and withhold from your family whatever you withhold from yourselves." Al-Balagh, F. (p.27).

It is narrated that Ali Ibn Abi thalib (R. A) When explaining the meaning of this verse, said: "teach yourselves and your families' virtue and good conduct." Al-Balagh, F. (p.27).

Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning. Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice largely because of the all-encompassing influence of the Quran. The Quran serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. The advent of the Quran in the seventh century was quite revolutionary for the predominantly illiterate Arabian society. Arab society had enjoyed a rich oral tradition, but the Quran was considered the word of God and needed to be organically interacted with by means of reading and reciting its words. Hence, reading and writing for the purpose of accessing the full blessings of the Quran was an aspiration for most Muslims. Thus, Islam unequivocally derived from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction. Tibawi, A. (2013).

### 3. The Quran Primary School

As early as the third year of life, Muslim children are expected to start the first stage of education. At this stage the pupils learn the shorter chapters through repetition and by rote. The only pleasure they can derive from the system at this stage lies in the choral recitations which often follows a sing song pattern. The pupils seem to enjoy reciting these verses to themselves in their homes and at plays.

#### 3.1. Method of Instruction in Reading Skills

The teacher recites to his pupils the verses to learnt and they repeat it after him. He does this several times until he satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation. The pupil (or group) is left on his own to continue repeating the verse until he has thoroughly memorized it. The verses is then linked with the previously memorized verses and in this way the pupil gradually learns by heart the whole chapter of the Quran. A chapter at a time is written on his wooden board (slate) which has been scrubbed with the aid of some coarse leaves and then painted with white clay- like substance. The tawada (ink) which the teacher uses to write the chapter on the wooden board (slate) is extracted from certain leaves which are boiled until they give off their dye. Fafunwa, (p. 54,).

The Quran is divided in to sixty parts (Izu), each of which contains a number of chapters (although very long chapter forms certain Izus). Pupils at what we may call the primary of the system are expected to memorize one or two of these sixty Izus, often beginning with the short chapters. Those chapters are usually those he would most require for his daily prayers.

From here the pupils moves on to the next stage at which he learns the alphabet of the Arabic language. The Arabic alphabet is compose of some (28) letters, all of which are consonants some teachers divide these letters into three, often in the ratio 5; 5; 3, and teach the pupil to recognize the letter by writing some of them on his slate (allo) and making repeat the sound several times over. This stage lasts between six and thirty six weeks, depending on the rate at which the pupil learns to recognize the individual letters. The Arabic alphabet is given below.

When the teacher is satisfied that the pupil has attained the standard required for reading Arabic characters, he introduces him to the formation of syllables with "vowels". There are only four vowels otherwise known as, fataha, kasrah, dummah, sukun, written above or below a consonant to indicate what vowel sound should go with it. When he is able to do this competently, the pupil then employs his newly acquired skills in the reading of the first two part of the Qur'an all over again. Variation in the pupil's pattern of articulation could be due to the teacher's accent. This stage last for six to eighteen months, depending again, on the capabilities of individual pupil. This spelling pattern once correctly grasped, enables the pupil to read off-hand any texts written in the Arabic language. This is usually the final stage in the acquisition of reading skills. Fafunwa, (pp. 54-5).

The teaching of writing starts at different times in different schools. Some pupils start learning how to write Arabic characters as early as the first stage of the system. Others do not start until later. Many people think that Qura'nic education end here, but this is only the end of what we may be regarded as primary level of the system.

#### 3.2. The Qur'an Secondary School

What we may regard as the secondary level of the system has a much broader and deeper curriculum. The pupil begins by learning the meaning of the verses he has committed to memory. The teacher does his best to explain the Arabic texts. But this is usually far too difficult for the young minds and, in many cases, for the teacher as well. Besides knowing the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an, the pupil is also introduced to other writings, such as the Hadith (the traditions of the prophet). The translation method is largely used and reputation is still fully exploited.

Hausa land is a testimony to the wide spread nature of Qur'anic schools which provide the foundation for advance Islamic knowledge. The system of teaching children how to read and write the holy Qur'an is laborious no doubt highly effective and sound.

#### 4. Summary of the Stages of Secondary School

- Babbaku ..... Identifying alphabets of the Qur'an
- Farfaru ..... vowelizing of alphabets
- Hadda ..... Memorization
- Zuku ..... writing a specified portion of the Qur'an every day except Thursdays and Fridays until one can write the whole Qur'an.
- Satu ..... Copying from the Qur'an
- Tilawa/ Tishe ..... Revision
- Sauka ..... Graduation.

This system of teaching the Qur'an can admitted improved upon but there is in essence noting fundamentally wrong with it. It may appear to an unwary critic that is narrow and inadequate but that so only if one detaches from the next stage of learning, the Ilm schools where students are taught Jurisprudence, Hadith, Tafsir, etc. M. Dahiru Suleiman, (p. 92).

##### 4.1. The Courses of Study at This Level Include

- As-Sarf (grammatical inflexions); annahawu (syntax);
- Al- Fiqh (jurisprudence),
- Tauhid (theology),
- Tafsir (commentary on the Qur'an),
- Usul Fiqh (principles and rules of interpretation of the laws of Islam),
- Musdalahul Hadith (science of hadith), etc.

This are regarded as different branches of learning and it is not often that a teacher attains perfection in all of them. A scholar who is good at al-fiqh may be relatively weak at al-hisab, that is why at this stage the student of Qur'anic school is often instructed by more than one teacher (Mallam).

It is also at this stage that the student decides in what area he wishes to specialize. This mark the beginning of the university level, having chosen his specialist subject, he proceeds to a university, by this time the student has acquired some proficiency in the Arabic language and is able to read, understand, and interpret many of the work of earlier scholars in his field. At the end of his studies he receives a 'license' empowering him to practice either as a teacher, an Imam, or an al-Kali, depending on his area of specialization.

##### 4.2. The Qur'anic School Learning Environment:

###### 4.2.1. Leadership, Discipline, and Counseling

In Qur'anic schools unlike in formal schools, there are no rigidly codified rules, but there are a few conventional ways of behaviors which guide the teachers. Although the periods for the classes are vaguely pupils fixed, the teacher does not treat tardiness as a serious offence he is ready to pardon a latecomer if he is convinced that his lateness was caused by some engagement at home. The teacher himself is able to declare a holyday if some religious obligation (such as burial or naming ceremony) take him away from home.

The teacher regards himself as the custodian of his pupils, his duty being primarily to train to be good citizens. Whenever he uses the cane, he does so with fatherly levity and caution. When a pupil is sick, the teacher usually visits him and sometimes applies some treatment. The relationship between teacher and pupil is generally intimate and personal.

The school week starts on Saturday and ends on Wednesday. There is no bell to summon the pupils to school; nor is there a fixed dress. The exact time of the beginning of classes vary from area to area, and from teacher to teacher. In many part of Nigeria, there are three sessions a day:

(1) Morning (2) Afternoon (3) Evening

- The morning session generally begins about 8:00am and ends about 10:00am.
- The afternoon session lasts from about 2:00pm to about 4:00pm.
- There may be a third session which lasts from about 7:30pm (directly after the evening prayers) to about 9:00pm. When the child is old enough to go out and learn a trade, the hours of schooling are reduced and then afternoon session is cancelled.

###### 4.2.2. Organizing Resources for Qur'anic School

Fees are paid in cash and kind. There is no fixed amount, as this varies from teacher to teacher. The teacher collects the fees from his pupils. These do not usually amount to more than a few pennies. The teacher may also receive gifts, such as grain, meat, cooked foodstuffs, pieces of cloth, or a prayer mat, (almost invariably a ram's or goat's skin), particularly during Muslims festivals. Helping with onerous chores is considered part of pupil's duties to his teacher. During the month of Ramadan, the older pupils accompany their teacher to his preaching ground usually a busy and conspicuous part of the street. There it is their duty to get the place lit and the chair arranged and treated the audience to melodious songs and poem in praise of the prophet (saw).

On ceremonial occasions such as the Eid-el Fitr, Eid-el Kabir, Mauludun Nabiyyi (the prophet birth day) and the anticipated Lailatul Qadar (the Night of Greatness, a Night in the month of Ramadan when the Quran is believed to have first revealed to the prophet saw).

### 5. Graduation Ceremony

The greatest day in the life of the Muslim scholar is the day he performs the Walimah initially intended as a modest graduating ceremony, in many communities it had become an elaborate affair. But it still retains its religious overtones. The walimah can take place once the Muslim has gone through the primary level. The grandaunt takes his slate (allo) to his teacher who writes a chapter of the Qur'an on one side and on the other side draws a Rectangular figures (Zaiyana) filled with a number of geometrical patterns.

On the scheduled day, the grandaunt holds his decorated slate in his hand, tours the houses of his teacher, his in-laws and his own parent and relatives with an entourage of friends. At each station he reads the chapter written on the side of the slate as though to convince his hearers that he has truly completed the Qur'an. At the end of the recitation he is given presents. On his occasion a ram or cow bought by the grandaunt is usually slaughtered at the teacher's house. The teacher may keep as much as half of the slaughtered animal for himself. In addition to this, the teacher is given millet, some money, a turban and a flamboyant and lavishly embroidered article or a native dress (commonly called Babbanriga), in Hausa. Fafunwa, (pp. 57-9).

### 6. Teacher and Teaching in Qur'anic School

The qualification of Qur'anic school teachers differ from place to place. Sometimes they are highly learned scholars (Ulama) well versed in Islamic studies, but this is very rare. Then there are those whose only qualification is that they can recite the Qur'an and write Arabic characters. Such people usually start class with their own children, and neighbors are encouraged to send their children along. Some Qur'anic school proprietors do not insist on a set fee to be paid by the pupil. But recently some Arabic schools have introduced various fees for admission, award of certificates, and monthly or annually tuition fees.

Most of the Qur'anic schools run according to the discretion of their individual proprietors, who are invariably Qur'anic school teachers themselves. As a result, instruction differs from school to school, and there is no uniform curriculum or prescribed qualification for teachers. In most schools former pupils are appointed as teachers at extremely low wages. Since the Qur'anic school is usually a one man affair, the proprietor is in the position to appoint or dismiss any teacher with or without any reason. Fafunwa, (p. 59).

### 7. Recommendation

The truly system of education should therefore, cater for the growth of man in all his spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, moral and social aspects of this worldly life and the next world. This is the ultimate aim and objectives of Islamic education, which equally encourage teaching the students the distinction between the lawful (Halal) and unlawful (Haram), also to inculcate in the mind of the individual knowledge and piety without which societies run into astray. In the same vein to create in the mind of the individual simplicity, humbleness and God fearing in controlling his daily activities within the Nigerian nation.

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