

A STUDY OF YORUBA MUSLIMS' ATTITUDES TO QUR'ĀNIC EDUCATION IN OGUN STATE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Qur'ānic education (*at-Taribiyyah Al-Qur'āniyyah* in Arabic terminology), is a functional education which features practicality, universality, historicity, and comprehensiveness as part of its unique nature. It is a divine knowledge that encompasses all aspects of human existence on earth and in the hereafter. This importance of Qur'ānic education is responsible for the proliferation of Qur'ānic education centres across Southwestern Nigeria and most importantly, Ogun State. However, one seeks to understand the reason(s) why, despite the proliferation of Qur'ānic schools in the State, many Muslims have not really shown much interest in Qur'ānic education as there is paucity of students in the discipline in many of the schools. This study, therefore, evaluates the attitudes of Yoruba Muslims in the State to Qur'ānic education. Other objectives of the study include examining the perceptions of Yoruba Muslims in the State on Qur'ānic education, their attitudes to it, the challenges and their implications for the development of Islam. The study also offers practicable recommendations for repositioning the attitudes of Yoruba Muslims to Qur'ānic education in the State, in particular, and Nigeria at large. The study adopts analytical research method. A self-developed interview guide is used for data collection. The data generated from the field were qualitatively analysed.

Keywords: Yoruba Muslims, Attitudes, Qur'ānic Education, Implications, Islamic Development

Introduction

There is no gainsaying that history of Islamic or Qur'ānic education in any society, particularly in the non-Arab world is the same as narrating the history of penetration of Islam in that place.¹ The history of Qur'ānic education could be traced to the era of the Prophet Muhammad who the Glorious Qur'ān was revealed to transform, not only the *Jahiliyyah* Arabs but the entire human society. The first five verses of Qur'ānic revelation which were revealed to the Prophet emphasise importance of knowledge acquisition as Allah, commanded the Prophet to read despite the fact that he was unlettered (Qur'ān 96:1-5). Also, Allah assures the believers, most importantly the knowledgeable ones, the position of eminence in this world and hereafter. He says: "Allah will exalt in degree, those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with what you do" (Qur'ān 58 :11). Therefore, from the outset, Islam has been a religion that sensitises its adherents on knowledge acquisition.

In addition to the various Qur'ānic verses on the importance of knowledge, there are numerous prophetic sayings. Among such sayings is an Hadīth narrated by Abdullahi bin Mas'ūd who said that the Prophet said: "Do not wish to be like anyone except in two cases, the first is a person whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously (according to what Allah has ordered in a just and right way). The second is the one whom Allah has given *Al-Hikmah* (wisdom i.e. the knowledge of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet and he acts according to it and teaches it to others."² Also, the Prophet was said to have instructed his companions thus: "So it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey it (this information) to those who are absent."³ Similarly, the Prophet is quoted to have said: "May Allah gladden a man who hears a hadīth from us, so he memorises it until he conveys it to someone else..."⁴

Going by the contents of the above cited *Ahādīth* (Apostolic Traditions), it is clear that the Prophet did not only encourage knowledge acquisition but also emphasised its dissemination. Considering the importance of dissemination of Qur'ānic education, eternal punishment is awaiting one who conceals knowledge. This message comes from the mouth of the Prophet when he said: "Whoever is asked about some knowledge that he knows, and then he conceals it, he will be bridled with the bridle of fire."⁵ It is the above prophetic precepts and the like that motivated the early Muslims (the *Sahābah*

and generations after them) to devote most of their lives studying the messages of Allah (*Al-Qur'ān*), and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Wherever they travelled to, they established Qur'ānic schools and taught people the teachings of Islam.

Historically, Qur'ānic education spread to West Africa sub-continent in the 8th century and by the 13th century, it became widely accepted in various West African kingdoms such as the Kanem- Borno and others.⁶ Many factors paved way for the spread of Islam and its education to the savannah region of West Africa. These include the commercial links that were established between Muslims of the North and West Africa.⁷ This link paved way for the intellectual development which naturally followed the introduction of literacy and for which some parts of Sudan were to become famous in the later centuries.⁸ Consequently, Sankore University of Timbuktu became a great centre of Islamic learning and repository of wisdom and learning where pious learned scholars lived and taught.⁹ In the 15th century, the cities of Timbuktu and Jenne became the religious, scientific and literary centres of Western Sudan.¹⁰

Although, there are confusion and controversies with regard to the exact period that Yorubaland came in contact with Islam, Fafunwa cited Al-Ilory to have submitted that Islam penetrated into Yorubaland around 13th century during the tenure of Mansa Musa of Mali.¹¹ Therefore, it is believed that the nomenclature “Imale” given to Islam in the southwestern Nigeria gives the impression that the religion came from Mali.¹² Contrarily, Johnson argued that Islam came to the Yorubaland towards the close of 18th century, long before the Jihād of Sheikh 'Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804.¹³

However, while historians differ on the date of penetration of Islam into Yorubaland, many of them including Danmole shared the view that Islam made its appearance in Yorubaland through the Malian axis as he submitted that he met some Muslims in Oke-Imale, Ilorin who claimed their ancestors migrated from Mali to settle in the town.¹⁴ Alaro cited Adebayo to have traced the emergence of Qur'ānic education in Yorubaland to the period when converts began questing about their new faith and its devotion. It became quite impossible to carry out some religious rituals without making use of Arabic.¹⁵ Expediently therefore, the clerics were charged to start teaching the religion to the new converts by teaching them Qur'ānic-Arabic. This led to the establishment of Qur'ānic schools in southern Nigeria.¹⁶

Opeloye and Jimoh also argued that Qur'ānic education in Yorubaland had been well established in Yorubaland before the colonial era in major cities of southwestern states of Nigeria like Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode as well as Lagos which housed scholars from far and wide with established traditional study circle and *Madāris*.¹⁷ It is the importance attached to Qur'ānic education that is responsible for the proliferation of Qur'ānic education centres across Southwestern Nigeria and most importantly, Ogun State. However, one seeks to understand the reason why, despite the proliferation of Qur'ānic schools in the State, many Muslims have not really shown much interest in its teaching-learning process as there is paucity of students in the discipline in many of the schools.

This study adopts analytical research method. Its target population is Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State which comprises Qur'ānic teachers, Muslim parents and children. The study uses self-developed interview guide to elicit information from Muslim parents and Qur'ānic teachers at selected *Jumu'ah* Mosques, *Asalatu* Centres and Qur'ānic Schools/ Institutions across the zones (Remo, Ijebu, Yewa and Egba) in the State. The data generated from the field were qualitatively analysed.

The Non-Formal Qur'ānic Education System among Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State

The Yoruba people occupy the Southwestern Nigeria which comprises of Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Lagos States. It also includes Southern part of the Republic of Benin (i.e. former Dahomey).¹⁸ Geographically, Ogun State is located in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. It is bordered with the Republic of Benin in the West and Ondo State in the East. In the North of the State is Oyo State while it shares border with Lagos and the Atlantic Ocean in the South.¹⁹

It is an indubitable fact that the structure of traditional Qur'ānic education in Ogun State is not in any way different from what it is in other states of southwestern Nigeria. Traditionally, Qur'ānic education in Nigeria consisted of mainly two categories. These are *Makaranta Allo* (Tablet-School) and the *Makaranta Illmi* (Higher school).²⁰ Under *Makaranta Allo* system (which is also referred to as elementary Qur'ānic class), the teacher (*muallim*) wrote the lessons (usually Arabic Alphabet) in a wooden slate for pupils to read by rote. In this system of education, there was no age limit among the pupils and there was no school uniform; there was no classroom as

pupils were either being gathered under tree shades in the frontage of *Muallim*'s house or in his verandah. Sometimes, classes were held inside mosques.²¹ There were no writing and teaching materials such as chalk board, pen, paper etc. The teachers were not paid salaries as teaching people the knowledge of *Al-Qur'ān* was regarded a meritorious deed which attracts Allah's reward in the hereafter.²²

This practice was based on the importance which Islam attaches to teaching and learning of *Al-Qur'ān* as evident in various Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions earlier cited. The pupils' proficiency in reading and their ability to identify Arabic Alphabet qualified them to proceed to the next lesson which is recitation of Qur'ānic verses or chapters which were also inscribed on wooden slates.²³ Good mastery of Qur'ānic recitation qualified a pupil to move to the second category of Qur'ānic education which is *makaranta illmi*. At this stage, students were introduced to studying different Arabic texts on Islamic sciences and Arabic language. Such subjects included *Tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Hadīth* (prophetic Sayings) *'Adab* (Arabic Literature), *Mantiq* (Logic), *Nahw* (Arabic Grammar), *Sarf* (Arabic Morphology) etc.²⁴

Attitude of Muslims in the State to Qur'ānic Education

Going through the responses of the interviewees to the research questions, one would want to comment that only minority of the Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State have better understanding of what Qur'ānic education entails. They perceive it to be education through which Muslims become well informed about Islam, how it should be practised, the dos' and don'ts of Allah, how Muslims should relate with their Creator Allah, their relationship with their fellow Muslims, the non-Muslims and other creatures. They understood Qur'ānic education to be a comprehensive knowledge which encompasses all fields of learning.²⁵ This submission is quite in agreement with what Almighty Allah revealed about the Qur'ān as He says: "Nothing have we omitted from the Book"(Qur'an 6:38). Oloyede, Adebayo and Oladosu, while commenting on this Qur'ānic verse submit thus:

From this we can deduce that Qur'ānic Education, when properly thought of, comprises other sciences such as Medicine, Engineering, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology etc. because they are also Qur'ānic sciences. They all derived

their points of references, existence and destiny from the Almighty, the creator of the heavens and the earth.²⁶

However, while some Muslims have better understanding of Qur'ānic education as stated above, many other Muslims in Ogun State do not perceive it that way. They thought it to be education that is meant for people who aspire to become Muslim clerics, Islamic Scholars, *Alfas* or *Mu'allimūn*. This notion is one of the factors responsible for the nonchalant attitude of many Yoruba Muslims to Qur'ānic education as they thought its learning is the prerogative of Muslim clerics only.²⁷

Furthermore, the responses of the interviewees to the question on Ogun State Yoruba Muslims' attitudes to Qur'ānic education revealed that the interviewees have both positive and negative attitudes to Qur'ānic education. Some (minority) of the interviewees showed interest in acquiring Qur'ānic education for the benefits inherent in it which include having better understanding about Islam, knowing more about worshipping Allah, having one's children becoming morally upright and academically sound, benefitting from the power of healings in the Qur'ān (in terms of its recitation for spiritual purposes, for healing the sick ones and casting demons out of those who are possessed etc.).²⁸

Contrarily, the attitude of many other Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State to Qur'ānic education is quite negative for they do not see the need to acquire it neither do they deem it important to enroll their children or wards in Qur'ānic school. Though they claim to be Muslims, their notion is that, in as much they can recite few verses or chapters of the Qur'ān offhand in prayers, they are not under any obligation to go deeper in studying the Qur'ān in the language it was revealed (Arabic) neither is it necessary to learn other Islamic sciences. This category of Muslims, aside from the fact that they themselves do not have interest in Qur'ānic education, also do not see any benefit in sending their children to study the Qur'ān.²⁹

This attitude is a major contributory factor to the paucity of students in many of the Qur'ānic schools in Ogun State. These categories of Muslims also do not see any prospect in their children studying Islamic sciences for they perceived graduates of Arabic and Islamic Studies to be unemployable and are, therefore, liabilities in the society. They are unaware of the fact that Qur'ānic education entails subjects/courses in other fields of learning and that a child who does well in it will excel in other chosen careers. This notion

hangs on the ancient Yoruba belief that, it is the lazy ones that chose to become *Alfa* (Muslim cleric). This, they say, in Yoruba *Ole n te le Aafaa*.

However, the realities in the contemporary times have debunked that insinuation, as there are many Islamic scholars of the present time who are professors, medical and academic doctors, engineers, economic experts, university vice chancellors, registrars of examination boards, successful business men and women etc. Despite this reality, many Muslims in Ogun State still do not allow their children to acquire Islamic education and this affects students' enrolment in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Qur'ānic Schools, *Madāris* and *Mahā'id* (Arabic and Islamic Institutes) and other tertiary institutions that offer courses in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Ogun State.

Similarly, the interviewees' responses to the question on the challenges facing Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State with regard to Qur'ānic education revealed different opinions. These include poor teaching methodology and improper class management, all of which make knowledge impartation on the students difficult. Inconducive learning environment is another result of which some parents (particularly the Muslim elites) did not enroll their children into Qur'ānic schools as they prefer employing private Qur'ānic teachers for them at home.³⁰

In fact, the modern and traditional Islamic scholars (i.e. *Mu'allimūn*, proprietors of Qur'ānic schools) in Ogun State that were interviewed narrated almost the same experience on the attitudes of Yoruba Muslim in Ogun State to Qur'ānic education. These include uncooperative attitude of many Muslim parents with the teachers. This is evident in the fact that parents withdraw their children from Qur'ānic schools after *walīmatu-l-Qur'ān* as they believe they have known everything about Islam. Many Muslim children in the State (most importantly children of the elites) are not willing to learn the Qur'ān, as their parents give priority to western schools over Qur'ānic schools. Similarly, many Yoruba Muslims in the State believe the graduates of Qur'ānic schools are not employable therefore they do not see much value in their children acquiring Qur'ānic education.³¹

It is sad to note that in this contemporary society, parents are still not willing to pay tuitions for Qur'ānic education as teaching of Qur'ān is regarded as part of religious duty of the *Mu'allimūn*. (Qur'ānic teachers). However, the same parents pay exorbitant tuitions in western schools and also

employ private lesson teachers for their children at home. In addition to that is poor remuneration of *Mu'allimūn* teaching in Qur'ānic schools attached to mosques, Islamic organisations or individuals.

At this juncture, it is necessary to discuss the nonchalant attitudes of many Yoruba Muslims in the State to Qur'ānic education with tables illustrating students' enrolment in some of the Qur'ānic schools, Arabic and Islamic institutes, and tertiary institutions offering Arabic and Islamic Studies in the State.

Table 1: Students' Enrolment in Selected *Madāris* and *Mahāid* in Ogun State

S/N	Name of <i>Madrasah</i> and Location	Name of Proprietor	Enrolment
1.	<i>Kamaaludeen Al-Adabiy</i> School of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Abeokuta, Ogun State.	Prof. Kamaldeen Balogun	300 students
2.	<i>Darul- Bayyan</i> Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.	Prof. Kamaldeen Balogun	120 students
3.	Ansaru-ud-Deen Adedotun Adult Arabic Class, Abeokuta	Ansaru-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, (Mua'llim Sulaimon Okuwolu, A.)	20 students
4.	<i>Daaru Sallam Wal Bayyan Li Ta'leem Li-Qur'an</i> , Ita Oshin, Abeokuta.	Sulaimon Sholanke	30 students
5.	<i>Mu'asasatu Ta'leemil Islam wa Irshad</i> , Oshifodunrin Street, Ayegbami Ago-Iwoye.	Ustadh AbdulRasaq AbdulSalam	131Students
6.	<i>Ar-Rushdu</i> School of Arabic and Islamic Studies, No 10, Odobalogun Street, Oke-Sopen, Ijebu -Igbo	Alhaji Abdur Rasheed Saani	95Students
7.	<i>Modrasatus-Sunnah</i> Institute	Imam Dr.	80 Students

	of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Oridan Street, Ijebu- Igbo	Tawaadu`u Adeoye Oriowo	
8.	<i>Markazul Kitab Was-Sunnah</i> , opposite Old NEPA Office, Apebi Street, Ijebu-Ode	Sheikh Miftah Sadiq	83 students
9.	<i>Nurul-Huda</i> Arabic and Islamic Studies, Unity Estate, via Imosan, Ijebu Ode.	Ustadh Saheed Aliyu Omotayo	60 students
10.	<i>Morkaz Roodotul Uluumil Islamiyyah</i> , Idagba, Ayetoro Yewa North	Khalifa Kamooludeen Aarolawa	70 students
11.	<i>Morkaz Diraasatil Arobiyyah wal-Islamiyyah</i> , opposite Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro Yewa South,	Imam Mustapha Adewunmi	120 students
12.	<i>Jamiat-ul-Mubashireen</i> Nigeria (Ahmadiyyah Missionary Training College), 58 Owodw-Ilaro Road, Ilaro	Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jama'at of Nigeria	126 students
13.	Daarul Hikmah lil Arabiyyah wal-Islamiyyah, 6 Sode Street, Aiyegbami, Sagamu	Alhaji Tajudeen Ikirun	40 students
14.	Raodatul Islamiyyah, Agura Street Sabo, Sagamu	Sheikh Wadud	50 students

The table 1 above illustrates students' enrolment in selected Qur'ānic/Arabic schools in Ogun State. It shows that apart from Kamaaludeen Al-Adabiy School which had 300 students in her enrolment list, all other schools had less than 150 students at primary and secondary levels of Qur'ānic/Arabic education (i.e. 'Ibtidā'iyyah primary, 'Idādiyyah junior secondary and *Ath-Thānawiyyah* secondary). When compared with students' enrolment in western oriented schools be it public or private in which there is students' population explosion, one would agree with the submission that Muslim parents in Ogun State give priority to their children acquiring western education than Islamic education, the result of which is the paucity of students in many of the Qur'ānic schools in the State. Response from an interviewee reveals that majority of the students in the Qu'ānic/Arabic schools illustrated

are mostly students that came from the neighbouring states such as Oyo, Osun and Lagos States to study in Ogun State.³²

Table Two: Students Enrolment in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Tertiary Institutions in Ogun State

S/N	Name of Institution	Department/ Unit	Students Enrolment
1.	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. ³³	Religious Studies, Islamic Studies Unit	2019/2020 Academic Session
			100Level- 07
			200Level- 08
			300Level- 08
2.	Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. ³⁴	Religious Studies, Islamic Studies Unit	2019/2020 Academic Session
			100Level- 42 students
			200Level- 37 students
			300Level- 38 students
3.	Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu Ijebu, Ogun State. ³⁵	Religious Studies, Islamic Studies Unit	2018/2019 Academic Session
			100Level- 16 students
			200Level- 9 students
			300Level- 15 students
4.		Arabic Language	2018/2019 Academic

	Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu Ijebu, Ogun State. ³⁶		Session
			100Level-3 students
			200Level-3 students
			300Level-3students
5.	Federal College of Education Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State. ³⁷	Islamic Studies	2018/2019 Academic Session
			100Level-16 students
			200Level-27 students
			300Level-9 students
6.	Federal College of Education Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State. ³⁸	Arabic Language	100Level-51students
			200Level-77students
			300Level-39students

The table 2 above illustrates students' enrolment in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the tertiary institutions in Ogun State. It buttresses the fact that there is paucity of students in all the departments/ units of the institutions which offer Arabic and Islamic Studies courses when compared with enrolment of students in other disciplines at those institutions.

Admittedly, the Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State constitute significant population of people in the State but this population has not really influenced positively the Islamic practices by the Muslims in the State. While there is proliferation of Qur'ānic School, Arabic and Islamic Institutes, Department of Islamic Studies in some of the tertiary institutions in the State (e.g. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun Ijebu Ode, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu Ijebu, Federal College of Education, Osiele Abeokuta) to mention but a few, the paucity of students in

those schools and institutions attests to the facts that many Muslim parents do not encourage their children and wards to acquire Islamic education while the State is known for excellence when it comes to Western education.

The implication of this for development of Islam in the State is that most of the Muslim Youths who are supposed to become future leaders and vanguards of Islam are either not informed about Islam or are half-baked Muslims. Many of this set of Muslims indulge in a lot of atrocities such as hooliganism, vandalism, kidnapping, drug abuse, raping, adultery and fornication, alcoholism, cyber fraud, robbery etc. due to their lack of Islamic morals and fear of Allah.³⁹

Recommendations

Having established that majority of Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State have negative attitudes to Qur'ānic education, it is imperative that the study offers some specific recommendations on changing the mind-set of Yoruba Muslims in the State towards achieving positive attitude to Qur'ānic education. Therefore, the study recommends as follows:

- i. Muslim clerics and Islamic organisations in Ogun State should expedite action by enlightening Muslim parents in the State on the importance of children and wards acquiring Qur'ānic education. This can be achieved through constant reference to Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions that lay emphasis on the virtues of Qur'ānic education in their lectures and sermons. This will boost the interest of Muslims and enhance students' enrollment in Qur'ānic education.
- ii. While one would commend many proprietors(i.e. individual Alfas and Islamic organisations) of Qur'ānic schools in Ogun State for keeping Qur'ānic education alive but for their efforts, Qur'ānic education in Ogun State would have gone into extinction, one would also advise that, they make the school environments learner-friendly by providing necessary infrastructural facilities in terms of befitting classrooms, modern tables and chairs, instructional materials, Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, toilet facilities, recreational facilities etc. These will ignite the interest of Yoruba Muslims in the State in Qur'ānic education and will also arouse the morale of the learners in it.
- iii. The use of different curricula in many Qur'ānic schools in Ogun State is one of the reasons why many Muslims in the State do not show

much interest in Qur'ānic education. This attitude would change if, uniform curriculum is designed to spell out its educational goals, aims and objectives by adding to it some western subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Economics etc. This will go a long way in giving students balanced education as both western and Islamic education will be offered by the students simultaneously and the hours being spent by the students at their various western schools after school hours under the guise of school lessons will reduce. If this is achieved, it will facilitate many Yoruba Muslims in the State having positive attitude towards Qur'ānic education and enroll their children in Qur'ānic schools.

- iv. Muslim parents in Ogun State should change the attitude of leaving Qur'ānic schools to be financed only by the proprietors of such schools (many of whom are living on charity *Sadaqah* from some parents of the pupils to feed themselves). Therefore, it is imperative that Muslims in the State should prioritize Qur'ānic education as they do for Western education by paying tuition so that Management Board of such schools will have funds to run the schools and provide infrastructural facilities that will enhance teaching and learning activities.
- v. The elective status given to religious education (i.e. Islamic and Christian Religious Studies) in National Policy on Education in Nigeria is seriously undermining the importance of the Qur'ānic education in Nigeria. This contributes to uncared attitudes of many Muslim parents in the State about Qur'ānic education as they conceive the notion that, graduates of Islamic Studies are unemployable in labour market. Therefore, a clarion call should be made to Government at all levels to make Islamic education compulsory for Muslim students at secondary schools and tertiary institutions for this will ginger the interest of Muslims in it, enhance students' enrolments for the course and also boost their moral capacity.

Conclusion

From the discussions so far, one would want to conclude that many Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State lack better understanding of the importance of Qur'ānic education. In fact, their dispositions to it have justified this. The reasons for this include inconducive learning environment in many Qur'ānic

schools, government's negative attitudes to religious education generally, and Islamic education in particular, to mention but a few. However, if the aforementioned recommendations in this study are properly implemented, it will clear misconceptions which many Muslims in the State have about it and enhance repositioning of Qur'anic education. It will also influence positively the development of Islam in the State in particular, and in the nation at large.

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