TEACHING AND LEARNING PROBLEMS IN THE TRADITIONAL QUR'ANIC SCHOOLS: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract: The traditional Qur’anic school system has been in existence since the early 11th century, and it served as the moral fiber of educational development and socialization process in northern Nigeria. Prior to the British conquest, the northern Nigerian communities were literate, hence they can read and write Qur’an, and communicate in Arabic language, and their local vernacular. Presently, the pupils of the traditional Qur’anic schools study in the state of hunger and malnutrition, indecent shelter and absence of health care facilities. The teachers derives no wages from the government or non-governmental organizations, their services are generally free. The parents pay no school fees to the institutions, while the children experience difficult life on the streets. This paper shall seek to uncover the challenges of teaching and learning in the traditional Qur’anic institutions, and proffer possible solutions.

Keywords: Traditional Qur’anic School, Alms, Street Begging, Support.

INTRODUCTION

Early Qura’nic education has been an essential part of the socialization process of every Muslim child. Parents enroll their children with a community based Qura’nic School, whereby at graduation, a child is expected to master the ability to recite the Holly Qur’an, read and write Arabic scripts. Prior to the British conquest, the northern Nigerian communities were literate, hence they can read and write Qur’an, and communicate in Arabic language, and their local vernacular. During the pre-colonial period, Islamic faith was more famous in the political and collective life of Muslims, and Qura’nic literacy has been more significant (Muhammad, 2013; Odumusu, 2013; NCWD 2001). Maigari (2017) is of the view that the British colonizers met a well-planned educational structure in the traditional Qur’anic institution that begin from the play school to stage up to university level. At the beginning of the colonial domination, the system only required a little support in order to develop so that it would come to grips with modernity. The colonial government consciously turns its back against the system for the reason that it dreads any type of opposite civilization to exist with it side by side.

In 1904, the British took over the administration of the northern Muslim dominated states, and control the state treasury, which has been the source of income for the Tsangaya schools. They abolished funding to the Qura’nic schools, on the premise that they were religious schools, while their administration was a secular in nature (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2014). However, 57 years (1960-2017) after handing over to the native administrators, the plight of the itinerant traditional scholars and their institution remained a disturbing phenomenon. The indigenous Muslim leaders failed to reinstate the prestige Tsangaya schools used to have, through taking the full financial responsibilities of the school and its teachers. In the words of Goodluck and Juliana (2012), the practice of the Traditional school system exposed the pupils to the hard labor at the tender age, which constitutes child abuse, and they subsequently fall victims of acute poverty and its attendant difficulties.
LEARNING SYSTEM OF THE TRADITIONAL QUR’ANIC SCHOOLS

Although not documented, the traditional Qur’anic School has an unwritten curriculum, which encompasses junior and advanced stages of studies. Consequently, there are five stages collectively. The basic stage was designed for learning the alphabets, recitation, and writing, while the higher level is the step for the Memorization of the Qur’an, as well as the capacity to inscribe it from the heart (Odumusu et al., 2013). Babajo, (2008) reported that five stages are involved in the Tsangaya Qur’anic Scheme which includes;

i.  Babbaqu: this is the first stage where Qur’anic alphabets and vowels are introduced to the learner (4/5 years old). The children are taught the recitation and memorization of the shorter chapters of the Quran, as well as the diacritical symbols for the ability to conjure up letters and read.

ii.  Farfaru: This is the level where dictation is introduced to the pupils, to prepare them to master the inscription from the recitation of the teacher. Emphasis is given in the detection and identification of the differences between the comparable words that are difficult to make a distinction.

iii. Zube: In this step the learners are allowed to copy and recite the entire Qur’an in fraction, usually from the lower chapter to the upper ones without memorization. The objective here is to convert the recitation of the Holy Qur’an into softer, create an easy flow and to upgrade the writing ability of the pupils.

iv.  Haddatu: Typically, not all the pupils get to this level. Only the boarding apprentice or exceptional pupils that reach and maintain this higher level. On this spot, the learners memorize the Glorious Qur’an by heart. To arrive at the aforementioned stage, two steps are involved, first the learner begin with copying on the slate, memorization of some segments, and presents it before the teacher for observations and corrections. When an error is revealed, the learner would withdraw the presentation and represents it again over and over until the inscription and the recitation is perfected, before attending the next segment. The teacher has the autonomy to reject voluminous writing when it is too large for the pupil’s ability. After finishing this stage, the learner could budge to the chronological memorization until the whole Qur’an is memorized.

v.  Satu: This is the concluding stage and the highest grade in the Tsangaya institution. At this end honesty of the learner is a very significant feature, because it is at this stage where the scholar writes portions of the Holy Qur’an from his memory without looking the written text of the Qur’an. The scholar reads out aloud to the audible range of his teacher and other invited experts for orthography inscription and recitation. When the inscription and recitations are found immaculate, the scholar is allowed to write the full Qur’an from the heart on the manuscript, and that serves as the final dissertation project.

The five stages above also explain the class level and the provable ages of the pupils. The first group of the pupil is called “Kolo” it consisted children between 4 and 11 years old. The second group is called “Titibiri” consist of teenagers who are habitually between 12 to 16 years old. “Gardi” is the third group it encompasses pupils from 17 years and above. The fourth group is referred to as “Alaramma”, which might consist pupils from 18 years and above. The fifth and the last group is called “Dangaran” It consists scholars from 20 years and above (Odumusu et al., 2013; NCWD, 2001). Below depicts the structure of the traditional Qur’anic institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babbaku</td>
<td>Kolo</td>
<td>4-11</td>
<td>Arabic alphabets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farfaru</td>
<td>Titibiri</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>Joining the alphabets to make a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zube</td>
<td>Gardi</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>Ability to read the Qur’an texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddatu</td>
<td>Alaramma</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Memorization of the Glorious Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satu</td>
<td>Dangaran</td>
<td>20-above</td>
<td>Memorization and ability to write the whole Qur’anic chapters and verses from heart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Odumosu et al., (2013)
TEACHING AND LEARNING PROBLEMS IN THE TRADITIONAL QURA’NIC SCHOOLS

The mundane system of Traditional Qur’anic School has raised a lot of questions against its suitability in this 21st century. Qur’anic studies is taught all over the World in all the Muslim nations in Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States of America. It is only in some Western African states that learning the Qur’anic knowledge was made to be a difficult task, through sending some under aged children to face the wrath of life all by themselves, under the name of searching for the Qur’anic studies. Countries like Nigeria, Niger Republic, Ghana, Chad, and Senegal practice the Traditional Qur’ an educational system, where the Children and the teacher depending on their immediate environment for survival (NCWD, 2001; Odumusu, et al., 2013). Some of the crucial problems of teaching and learning in the traditional Qur’anic institution includes:

Absence of Government Financial Support

The Tsangaya schools are informal institutions that are established by individual scholars in the communities. They are run by the proprietors without government approval or intervention. Therefore, they do not enjoy government supports in any perspective. The pupils of the Tsangaya schools are schooling under deplorable physical and social difficulties. There are no classrooms or hostels built for the running of Tsangaya studies. Jungudo and Ani (2014) observed that after the colonial powers seized the mantle of leadership from the traditional rulers in the north, traditional Qur’a nic school loses the monetary support and power to stand on its own, which force the teachers to send the pupils to beg on the street and get food as well as some money to pay their weekly fees. Whereas the public schools enjoys full support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Formal Schools</th>
<th>Traditional Qur’anic Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students Accommodations</td>
<td>Established structures with classrooms and facilities</td>
<td>Lessons are run in a small room, under a tree, open space and uncompleted buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects taken</td>
<td>English, Math, Computer, primary science, IRK, Arabic, Social Studies, Physical and Health Education, civic education</td>
<td>Qura’nic Recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages and Salaries</td>
<td>Government Responsibilities</td>
<td>Donations, Charity, Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Educational Qualification</td>
<td>Minimum Qualification of National Certificate in Education (NCE).</td>
<td>No restrictions on paper qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Guideline</td>
<td>Curriculum, Scheme of work, teacher’s lesson plans</td>
<td>Categorization of Qur’anic chapters into units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fees</td>
<td>Officially free, but recurrent expenses for learning materials and uniforms are paid by parents.</td>
<td>Completely free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Study</td>
<td>Six years</td>
<td>No specific time for graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCWD, (2001)
Deficient Schooling Environment

Traditional Qura’nic schools lack appropriate building planning and location. There is no particular structure built for the purpose of academic activities. However, few Tsangaya schools situated on the outskirts of the town are built with thatches and sticks. Lessons are taken in uncompleted buildings, a temporary shed built outside the teacher's compound, spaces along the streets and outer spaces of people's compounds (Hoechner, 2013). There are no toilet facilities in the Tsangaya schools. The absence of conveniences prompts a lot of health hazards. Tsangaya schools also lack hostel facilities, pupils’ sleep in an overcrowded room, or in an open-air space (Zakir et al., 2014).

Mass Enrolment

Traditional Qura’nic schools are peculiar with mass number of pupils. A teacher sometimes handle hundred and above students at a time, and every child recites different portion of the Quran aloud. In the opinion of Onosaye (2010) and Yusha’u, Tsafe, Babangida and Lawal (2013) enrollment of the pupils into Tsangaya schools is not documented and it is done without any protocols, parents eccentriically hand over their children to the teacher, face to face. The teacher would then keep on supervising the educational progress of the child. Yusha’u et al., (2013) further revealed that it is amazing the number of pupils Tsangaya schools, recruits at a time, (100-200 pupils) with no government intervention, parents or the community. There is no provision for foodstuff, accommodation or medical facilities. Invariably, the only choice left is to move to the streets. Tsangaya education has been downgraded and ill-treated, to the point that pupils wander along the street eating remnants of unhygienic leftover groceries from the refuse (Yusha’u et al., 2013).

THE WAY FORWARD

Repositioning the Traditional Qur’an school system will not be a Herculean task, hence the schools were doing so well at a certain time before the advent of the colonial government. The Federal government of Nigeria and northern states should erect modern Qur’anic school structure equivalent to the ones in other Muslim nations. Scholars like Isiaka (2015) stressed the importance of government’s intervention in the traditional Qura’nic school structure, with a view to improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of the pupils and their parents. The Nigerian government needed to revisit and reconstruct its already existing program ‘Almajiris Integrated Tsangaya Scheme’ which was politicized and bedeviled with improper arrangements and lack of funds. The Tsangaya Integrated Almajiris Scheme was a federal government program aimed at blending the Traditional Qura’nic schools with the formal education system.

The Governments and stakeholders should come up with a new salary scale structure in favor of the traditional Qur’anic school teachers, because they are presently run on charity. The teachers are not in the government’s payroll, It is imperative for the government and people of the society to help these Traditional Qura’nic teachers because they have no other source of income apart from the weekly meager token from the pupils. Parents should commence payment of meaningful school fees that can help in training of their children. All the traditional Qur’anic schools should be registered in the local government area they are located, and be captured in the local government’s monthly payroll, because they are also servicing the community. The training of skills acquisition to the teachers and pupils of the traditional Qur’anic schools should be a priority, because salary option is not the best solution to lack of income.

Government should revert the status of traditional Qur’anic schools, as in prior to the coming of the colonial masters to Nigeria. The teachers should register their schools and adopt the modern curriculum and engage in the training programs. Zakat endowment fund should also be used to facilitate the Traditional Qura’nic schools. Monthly contributions from the three tiers
of government to assist the Qura’nic teachers. Soliciting for help from the general public and other International donor agencies.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of this paper was to expose the teaching and learning problems in the traditional Qur’anic Schools, with the aim of suggesting some possible roadmaps to overcome them. Therefore, it can be concluded that the traditional Qur’anic schools faces multiple problems with regards to teaching and learning process. Skills and technical education will not only help the pupils and their teachers to be independent, but will facilitate economic growth within the localities, and eventually they will contribute in the regional and national development. Skills and technical education, like building, carpentry, electrical engineering, painting, shoes making, tailoring, welding, leather work, aluminum work, agro business, poultry, fisheries, basic computer literacy, juice making, knitting, embroidery and any other relevant skills should be taught to the pupils and their teachers in order to save them from hunger, rejection from the general public and over dependence on the society.
REFERENCES


