

**Bidmos, M.A. (2004) Islamic Education in  
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### INTRODUCTION

Muritala Aderemi Bidmos, Chief Imam and professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Lagos has published a work seeking to discuss various topics in Islamic education. However, the absence of interconnections among the topics and the un-sequential nature of the arrangement of the papers exposes the work as a product of a casual and not a scholarly or systematic effort. And despite the impression created by the title *Islamic Education in Nigeria*, is not really a trained educationist's contribution to the Islamic scholarship of teaching. A careful look at the book reveals the authors probable desperation at putting together a random collection of articles regardless of whether they directly or remotely relate to the title of the book.

Whenever scholars choose to publish collections of articles on unrelated topics, such articles are normally reprints of some of their previous works published as either journal articles, chapters in books or conference proceedings. However, it is interesting to note that none of Bidmos' articles in the book under review has been so scholarly produced to have earned it an acceptance in a peer review process of any reputable journal, edited book or academic conference. Consequently, Bidmos' articles in the volume under review lack thematic and methodological coherence and impressive scholarly standard. Yet the author must be commended for this wander-lust for contribution to Islamic teaching scholarship notwithstanding his lack of professional training thereof.

In Chapter One, "Islam: A Definition", the author offers a meaningful analysis on Islam especially with regard to the challenges of secularism. His analysis in this chapter is refreshing:

Islam by its very nature is like a product or meal prepared by a third party for a consumer. The meal axiomatically provides the consumer with the much needed nutrition which is not a luxury to the consumer. What, then, is the interest of the third party who has taken the trouble to prepare the meal for the consumer? And what is the relationship between the consumer and the meal provider? The bone of contention in this scenario is the issue of relationship between the third party who prepared meal that Islam is and the prospective consumer of the meal that man is (p. 1).

The author thereafter struggles to make us believe that the analogy offered by him is meaningful enough to show that Islam is the meal while Allah is its Provider whereas man is its consumer. However, the author fails abysmally to identify the first and the second parties to whom Allah is the third party. If, for instance, it is taken that the meal provider and consumer are two parties, can Islam itself represent a party that makes them three! The author's illustration in this regard lacks both merit and substance.

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Subsequently, the author tries frantically to deflate the theory of evolution which, according to him, is grossly contradictory. Rejection of alternative views, generalization, recognition of the maker of machine and non-recognition of the maker of man and lack of proof are some of the pitfalls that Bidmos identifies in the evolution theory (pp. 2-10). The author also articulates the Qur'anic notion of creation by addressing such questions as who is God?; what is the secret of creation? and what is the purpose of creation? (p.19). In concluding the chapter, Bidmos insists that any other alternative to the meal prepared for man by his creator will be rejected by the man's anatomy and physiology namely the human system! And "the rejection will manifest in man's incoherent, inconsistent behaviour and anti-peace activities" (p.19). This is a strange interpretation that is inconsonant with the Qur'anic view which neither claims ignorance of other heavenly religions nor discredits them as harmful, destructive or inimical to the well-being of man but rather describes Islam as the only religion acceptable to Allah. Most surprising is the author's failure to provide any credible definition of Islam which, according to him, is the purpose of the chapter. The closest he came to that is where he writes, "Islam by definition is to fashion one's entire life based on the divine guidelines" (p.19). How successful or otherwise Bidmos is in this definition is a matter of taste.

Chapter Two, "Philosophy of Islamic Education" seeks to give a clear picture of the Islamic educational thought. The author defines the concept of education meaningfully and argues that in the Islamic tradition, "the rationale for education of man revolves around the purpose of creation which means the assignment divinely decided for man" (p.22). The author further argues that the assignment for man is to serve God "and that if the major assignment for man is to serve God, his preparation i.e. education must take cognizance of both the service and the one to be served God" (p.22). There is no gainsaying that Bidmos did an impressive job in this regard. However, the chapter suffers a major defect in the form of the author's handling of his sources and references. For instance, he identifies the goals of education in Islam without identifying his source (p.24). He also identifies a list of Islamic educational objectives without attributing anything to any source (p.24). Similarly, he identifies the characteristics of Islamic education without naming any source (p.24). As regards the references cited by him, it is unfortunate that none of them is correctly cited. From pages 27 to 39, instances of incorrect citations or referencing by Bidmos abound thereby exposing his lack of mastery of the guidelines of academic referencing.

Chapter Three is entitled "Sociological Foundations of Islamic Education" and actually starts well on a sociological note. The author discusses the social role of education and society. He analyses the issue of norms in Islamic education and opines that that is traceable "to the social function which Adam, the first man, was to perform on earth" (p.40). He further articulates that through education, Islam seeks to perpetuate the social functions of Adam down the ladder among his progenies and the social function of Adam is discernible in his designation as the vicegerent of God" (pp. 40-41). The author's analysis on Adam is superb although he fails to articulate the sociological dimension of the education of Adam. He claims to have discussed the case of Adam in page 8 and therefore refers the reader there to, whereas what is contained in page 8 is not about Adam but about Darwin! Similarly, the author makes reference to psychology of learning and attempts unsuccessfully to discuss this in relation with the sociological foundations of Islamic education. He refers to Pavlov, Piaget, Sigmund Freud and unfortunately situates their works or theories in the area of sociological foundations of education whereas psychological foundations of education is where they belong. To aggravate the case, the author discusses the Freudian Psychoanalysis and therapy as part of sociological foundations of education and such a misconception is unpardonable for a professor of Islamic education.

In Chapter Four, "Secular Education", the author discusses the concept of secularism which, according to him, "is a state of indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion or religious considerations (p.63). He articulates the purpose of secular education as represented by western education. Accordingly, he quotes Dewey (1944), Tyler (1949) and McCormick ((1988) with a view to establishing that what they say of western education applies automatically to secular education. The impression created by the author here is that western education cannot but be secular. This unfortunately is a careless

generalization. He thereafter discusses the National Policy on Education and attempts to highlight the secular nature of the Nigeria system of education. He also highlights the features of secular education as well as the hazard of secular education. He seems to be at his best in this chapter where he contrasted the views of secularists against divine revelation. Yet the highest point of his analysis in the chapter is his view of plagiarism where he asserts that “an academician who got promotions by forged papers and plagiarism will be hunted for life by his immoral acts and cannot enjoy the dividends of promotion” (p.74). The author must be speaking from experience in this context.

Chapter Five, “sexuality Education in Nigeria” addresses the growing status of sexuality education in Nigeria school curriculum. The author believes that the alarming rate at which sexuality education is being promoted with an aggressive influence” calls for caution (p.81). He articulates the interrelatedness of such concepts as population education, family planning, reproductive health and sexuality education in connection with population explosion in Nigeria (p.82). He underscores the role of generous foreign aids in the promotion of sexuality education in Nigeria. He also highlights the role of “adaptation syndrome” as well as that of “local interest” in the matter. Bidmos attempts to support his analysis with findings from a survey on population related issues which was conducted on a sample of five hundred and fifty respondents which comprises two hundred and fifty academic and non-academic staff of a university and three hundred undergraduates. Consequently, the author’s statistical analysis of the data collected is replete with mathematical inexactitude. One wonders why this error of simple calculation proves problematic to Bidmos.

Chapter Six, “The Islamic Approach”, seems the worst of all the chapters contained in Bidmos’ book. The chapter lacks focus and only portrays the author as wandering and meandering. The chapter discusses sexuality education alongside Hollywood films, poverty alleviation, population explosion sexual harassment, among others (pp.105-109).

The author then provides exegetic analyses of various verses of the Qur’an that are not interconnected (pp. 109-113). He thereafter talks about biology as a subject, moral probity, goodness to parents and Islamic mode of dressing (pp. 115-117). He then concludes the chapter with the following remarks:

...the mere fact that the sexuality educators are indifferent to the effects of the mass media especially the radio and television in terms of the corruptive programmes beamed out to the youths at their impressionable age makes the sexuality education ineffective. Islam gives the lion’s share of the responsibility to guide the youths in sexual matters to the parents and the society at large and to the school just an aspect...(p.118).

An Essay Cannot Be More Incoherent!: In Chapter Eight, “Research Methods in Islamic Education”, Bidmos discusses the concept of research and the factors influencing selection of research methods. He then writes the history of Islam from the days of Prophet Muhammad to the Abbasid Period (pp.122-125) without articulating the implications of his historical narration to the concept of research methods. The author also discusses the Qur’an and the challenge of reasoning, the relationship between Islam and other races and the place of physics and metaphysics in Islam. Bidmos’ discussion of objects of research, methods and schooling and instruction is full of misconceptions and errors of facts which exposes the author as lacking mastery of basic research concepts (pp.129-133). The worst experience is recorded where Bidmos offers what he calls “Model Research Topic” and states as “Instructional Strategies of Teaching Islamic Studies in Primary Schools”. (p.134). Bidmos goofs in this regard. This certainly cannot be a research topic in the estimation of an author who erroneously believes that a research method cannot but be empirical and incorrectly writes that “the method suitable in the circumstance cannot but be empirical” (p.130).

To make his research topic considerable in the race course of empirical researchers, Bidmos should have formulated it, for instance, as, “An evaluation of instructional strategies for the teaching of Islamic studies in (Nigerian, Southwestern Nigerian, Oyo state or Ayete Ibarapa), primary schools”, or “An analysis...” or even “A survey ...” thereof. Similarly, Bidmos goofs in his formulation of research questions for his model topic where he writes as follows (p.135).

“The research questions emerging from the above are:

- Are there professionally qualified IRS teachers in primary schools in Lagos State?
- What has been the effect of the caliber of IRS teachers available on the teaching/learning of Islamic studies in Lagos State?
- Is the right teaching method used in the IRS class?
- Are the teachers capable of motivating the pupils in the IRS class?
- What is the situation in the pupils cognitive, psychomotor and effective domains?

It should be pointed out that Bidmos, again goofs in all but only two of his research questions. Research Questions A, C and D are wrongly formulated while B and E are considerable after corrections. For instance, RQ A seeks to elicit a monosyllabic answer through “are there ...” which requires either a “yes” or “no” answer which is not acceptable in research. A correct way of formulating this is “How professionally qualified are IRS teachers in Lagos state Primary schools” or “How adequate are the professional qualifications of IRS teachers in Lagos state primary schools? In his RQ B, the author states, “what has been the effect of the caliber of IRS teachers available on the teaching/learning of Islamic studies in Lagos state? whereas this may be better formulated as “what is the effect of the quality of IRS teachers on the teaching and learning of the subject in Lagos state?” Again, Bidmos goofs in RQ C by writing incorrectly. “Is the right teaching method used in the IRS class?” A correct way of stating this is “How appropriate are the teaching methods used in the Lagos State Primary School IRS Class?” Similarly the RQ D, as stated by Bidmos, requires a monosyllabic answer “Are the teachers capable of motivating the pupils in the IRS Class?” This, although totally irrelevant to the research topic which does not concern motivation, may be reframed as “How do Lagos State primary school IRS teachers motivate their pupils in the classroom?” However, the worst of the research questions stated by Bidmos is “what is the situation in the pupils’ cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains?” which would have been correctly stated as “What are the cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes of learning for Lagos State pupils of IRK?” The author unfortunately exposes his lack of mastery of research methods by adding “it is obvious from the topic that the researcher is set to conduct an empirical research” (p.134) whereas the reverse is the case as it is rather obvious from the topic that it is meant for a long essay, position paper, opinion paper or a casual presentation. Evidence of the author’s gaffery in this regard lies in the absence of expected variables from his topic which renders his concept grossly immeasurable. There is no gain saying that inaccuracies and technical pitfalls abound in the chapter.

In Chapter Eight, “Islamization of Knowledge”, the author sets out by identifying one of the objectives of the chapter as “Clarifying the difference in case there is any between Islamic education and Islamization of Knowledge” (p. 141). In other words, the author intends to distinguish between Islamization of Knowledge and Islamization of education. He provides a meaningful definition of the concept of islamization and good discussion on the problem that led to the concept. He then makes an insightful critique of Islamization of Knowledge. He argues that knowledge is originally Islamic and was only secularized by the west which is why the restoration of the religions content cannot be rightly called Islamicization. Articulating this view, the author argues that:

Islamization of knowledge suggest that the secularized education is an exclusive preserve of the west which the west single-handedly created. Whereas, knowledge is an open heritage. It is a gift from God to which every human being has equal access. To Islamize knowledge is to call it a western outfit or legacy which we want to acquire through islamization (p.146).

The authors’ line of argument is impressive but unfortunately gives him out as unfamiliar with the justification made for Islamization by the originators or pioneer contributors on the subject. They are Seyd Muhammad Naquib al-Attas of Malaysia, Fazl Rahman of Pakistan and Oxford, Seyed Hossein Nasr of Iran and Late Ismail Raji al- Faruqi of Palestine.

None of the contributions of these fron liners in Islamization features in Bidmos' references or anywhere in his book and one wonders how he could have written on a subject without referring to its originators which is why he gets many things wrong. This indeed is a major lacuna in his book. Another lacuna is his failure to distinguish between Islamization of Knowledge and Islamization of Education, as promised by him in his introductory paragraph. Yet another lacuna lies in the fact that Bidmos' book which was published in 2004 gives the impression that there had only been four world conferences on Muslim education (p.141) whereas there had been six!

In Chapter Nine, "Trends in Islamic Education in Nigeria", the author examines the developmental stages of the discipline in the country. He observes that the fortune of Islamic education is consistent in the north and only fluctuates in the south. He attributes the "buoyancy" of Islamic education in the north to the Kanem Bornu Empire and Sokoto Caliphate both of which adopted Arabic as the official language and administered all state affairs in consonance with Islamic teachings and principles. He articulates how Islamic education dominated the educational scene in Nigeria as the first system ever known in the county, how Islamic education improved the quality of life of Nigerians, how it provided scholars with Arabic works on African History and how it enriched such African languages as Hausa, Swahili, Yoruba and others (pp.157-159). Bidmos discusses the challenges faced by the discipline in its development especially with regard to the status of IRK. In the estimation of the West African Examination Council (p.162) and Nigeria Educational Research Council (NERC) now Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (p.163). He also discusses the place of IRK in a number of affiliate colleges in the south as well as the mission of a Muslim private university which, according to him, "is to mount a new philosophy of education in which economic empowerment of man is not over valued" (p.167).

While emphasizing the need for an all Muslim academic staff for any private Muslim university, Bidmos argues that "a Christian teacher... could not possibly equip the Muslim children informally with customs such as *salam alaykum* as a common mode of greeting, *Al-hamdu lillah* as an expression of appreciation, *Allahu akbar* as an exclamation and applaud, *Ma'Salam* as a farewell greeting etc." (p.166). Bidmos again gets it wrong here. *Ma'Salam* is incorrect as a Arabic form of farewell greeting. To state it corrected, Bidmos, a Ph. D Arabic, ought to have written *Ma'as-Salamah!*.

The author concludes his book with what he tags "Recapitulation – Restoration of Orderliness." This runs in nine pages and contains everything that came to the author's minds while writing his essay. He refers to prophet Muhammad, violence in Nigeria, HIV/AIDS, the universality of Islam, the justification for Islamic education, the capitalist west, the new world order, moral instruction curriculum in Nigeria, among others (pp.171-179).

For the time spent putting the nine articles in this book together Bidmos deserves some plaudit. However, the book which is replete with inaccuracies is a disservice to scholarship and also exposes the substandard nature of some of the holders or occupants of full professorships in some of our universities. In fact, the circulation of such a sub-standard book among scholars and students is portentous of the death of true scholarship in Nigeria. The large number of spelling and linguistic mistakes is unpardonable and puts to question the scholarship of both the author and his editor(s). These include "bands" (p.xvi) instead of "binds", "mossad" (p.18) instead of "MOSSAD", "stimuli-responses" (p.49) instead of "stimulus response", "pure-water" (p.77), instead of "pure water", "the fact remained that" (p.166) instead of "...remains ...", "moral normal and descent: (p.167) instead of "decent", "selable" (p.153) instead of "salable" and "Lester" (p.168) instead of "Leicester".

Linguistic errors are innumerable in the book. For instance, Bidmos writes "presidential inaugural speech" (p.xiii) instead of "inaugural presidential speech"; "man cannot unaided perceive the end of existence" (p. 75) instead of "man cannot perceive the end of existence unaided"; "an experiment which if it succeeded, other Arab nations would join" (p.152) instead of "an experiment whose success would have attracted the participation of other Arab nations"; "man's education has a lot of norms to be derived from Adam's social function on earth" (p.41) instead of "...has a lot of inspiration to derive..."; "raising an alarm" (p.17) instead of "raising the alarm"; and "cloning a replica of a human being"(p.11) instead of "cloning a man" or "human cloning". The author's horrifying abuse of punctuation marks, particularly his misuse of colons for semi-colons and vice versa, is highly vexing.

It is inconceivable that Bidmos often contradicts himself while narrating a story in the book. For instance, he tells the story of “a widely reported criminal case in Nigeria in April, 2002 in which three mobile police men mounted a road block... sighted a huge amount of money in a minibus, carried out the money and set the bus including its driver and other (here lies another grammatical blunder for the word “other” is uncalled for!) two passengers ablaze in a bid to steal the money” (p.16). This contradicts the account of the same case as given by him on page 73 where he claims that was reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2001. It is curious that the author unknowingly leaves an interval of 14 months between his two narrations thereby exposing his account to suspicion of fabricating either or both of the two dates. Other instances of inconsistent dates by him include the story of “some Nigerian girls who were displayed in an NTA channel 10 news bulletin at 9:00pm on 6-12-99 who were reportedly sent abroad by their parents to trade with their bodies and send home the proceeds for their parents to live on” (pp.97-98). This again contradicts his account on page 73 where he attributes the story to *Nigerian Tribune* of 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 2002. The interval between the two dates covers almost three years and that, again, is curious.

It is incredible that Bidmos does not know that “Notes” are either footnoted or end noted and therefore numbered consecutively. His case looks like an attempt to bring together his favorite books regardless of whether they have been cited in the body of his work or not. That explains why many books cited by him are missing in his list of references and many works that are not cited by him feature in the list. Such is the case of Haykal (1984) in Chapter Two. Most interesting is the fact that the book under review has exposed its author as the only professor in the world that includes ISBNs of books and other unnecessary details in his references. A cursory glance through page 103, 119 and others may further expose this defect.

*Islamic Education in Nigeria* has its strengths and deficiencies some of which have been highlighted. Students of Islamic studies will need to be guided in reading the book as a precaution against misinformation or miseducation. Notwithstanding that this is not a well written book with a clear direction, Bidmos deserves some applause for attempting to put something together probably for some of his undergraduate students. It is obvious that the book has a good and useful index which is where really lies its strength. However, the absence of an entry on Islam, which is central to the book, makes its indexing a worthless effort. Yet, the book is not without some potential. In order to attain such potential, however, Bidmos will be expected to improve his grammar, writing style and mechanics and acquaint himself with standard citation or referencing style as there is hardly a correctly cited source anywhere in the book. Although all these and other shortcomings have marred his effort in this regard, it is not impossible that another edition of the book will redeem the poor rating of his scholarship. Yet, Bidmos should be congratulated for contributing his own quota to Islam and Islamic Studies. Nothing less is expected of an imam and trained Arabic scholar! Congratulations, Professor Bidmos!