

An Investigation into the Constraints on the Input Factors in Islamic Teacher Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study gives a brief history of Muslim teachers in the past and present, highlights the goals in Islamic Teacher Education in juxtaposition with teacher educational goals in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria. It also examines the input factors affecting Islamic Teacher Education programmes in Nigeria universities by discussing its apparent defects through a consideration of a number of quality-related input measures. Specifically, the input variables which constitute the essential components of Islamic Teacher Education as established in the study include, among others, admission criteria, course-work, student teaching, voluntary service, organisational climate and evaluation of student teachers. All these are critically discussed in the study. Finally, suggestions and recommendations are made on how to remove the impediments for effective realization of the laudable goals of the Islamic Teacher Education programme in Nigeria.

Key words: Input factors in education • Islamic teacher education • Teacher education in Nigeria
• Examination of challenges

INTRODUCTION

The relevance, adequacy and effectiveness or otherwise of Teacher Education in general and Islamic Teacher Education in Nigeria, in particular, has generated a lot of debate among all groups; educators and the general populace inclusive. The argument over the decades has been that of gross degeneration in standard at all levels of the Nigeria education system as well as policy somersault. A good example is the change from 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-4 system of education. Hence, there are defects in teacher preparation in the country. Interestingly enough, these defects are not limited to humanities based subjects alone but also included the sciences. For instance, Black [1] has called attention to improving research on teacher quality in Science and Mathematics. The needed research according to him includes, among others, studies of Subject-Matter-Knowledge of Science and Mathematics that focus on how to teach higher order skills and integrate “doing science” into preparation for teaching. In a similar vein, writing on the “Declining fortune of Humanities Education”, Lawal [2] established that the main thrust of humanistic education is the moral development of man. However, recent developments in education policies are now affecting enrolment in humanistic scholarship.

In Nigeria, the rationalisation of academic programmes in favour of science and technology based courses has led to a reduction in the time and resources devoted to humanities education. The same trend of events has affected teacher quality in humanities education of which Islamic Studies forms no exemption.

The Problem: It is an indubitable fact that the aim of any given Teacher Education programme is mainly to produce good teachers. Considering the aims of Teacher Education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) which include among others, training of efficient, inquiry and creative minded teachers, can we then say that the actual implementation of the various Teacher Education programmes in the country are actually responding to the aims and objectives of Teacher Education? This question is particularly applicable to Islamic Teacher Education programme which is almost completely purged of its substance.

According to Balogun [3] a good and effective teacher needs both technical and personal competence. Technical competence refers to mastery of content, while personal competence relates to the teachers' professional attitudes, ingenuity, conviction and commitment. Critics are of the opinion that Teacher Education programme in Nigeria dwell more on pedagogic Knowledge at the expense of content and moral attributes [4,5]. This accusation is particularly true of the Teacher Education programmes which attach little or no importance to candidates' background faith, moral qualities and religious commitment at the initial stage of Teacher selection. Thus, the questions that logically follow are:

In what ways and to what extent do the existing Islamic Education programmes in Nigerian universities satisfy the requirements of a true Islamic Teacher Education System?

What are the constraints on the input curriculum factors in Islamic Teacher preparation in the country?

Islamic Teacher Education Goals: The main purpose of Teacher Education is mainly to produce effective and efficient teachers. According to Baloch [6] in his article on "Reconstruction Of Teacher Education" in Curriculum and Teacher Education, a good teacher in a given Islamic educational system succeeds in educating a pupil, so that, according to the level of his maturity, the pupil:

- develops faith in the Supreme Creator of all;
- acquires the kind of knowledge and understanding which enables him to think and develop a spirit of inquiry in order to develop the laws of the Supreme Creator operating in the universe; and
- is motivated to use his knowledge, skills and understanding to improve himself and society.

According to Baloch, this claim can only be appreciated through a consideration of the goals of Islamic Teacher Education which are enumerated below:

- promotion of the acquisition of more and more new knowledge, insights, skills and understanding and the motivation of research to discover the unknown, thereby, recognising Allah as the Supreme Creator of all whose eternal laws operate through the entire creation;
- to motivate and encourage the righteous and judicious use of the knowledge acquired by the teacher for exemplary development of an individual's conduct and character;
- to produce a good teacher whose experience is measured in terms of his/her faith and beliefs, personal qualities of conduct, character and professional competence;
- to produce teachers who have acquired a balanced education and who are ready to impart it to others not mainly for monetary gain but for the good and welfare of the society and also merely for the pleasure of Allah;
- to develop in teachers, the skills to guide each student in developing natural talents and personal skills which he has been endowed with by Allah and which he owes as a trust from Him and for which he is accountable to Him; and
- to develop in them pedagogical skills, making full use of each subject of research method and of modern teaching devices;

From the enumeration of the goals and objectives of Islamic Teacher Education stated above, it is evident that the system is in perfect accord with the goals of Teacher Education as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) which include, among others,

- the training of efficient, inquiry and creative minded teachers; and
- the provision of intellectual and professional background, adequate for their assignment, enabling them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country but in the wider world (NPE,; 25).

A critical examination of the Islamic Teacher Education goals and those of Teacher Education System in Nigeria reveal that the former is more comprehensive, relevant, balanced, functional and development-oriented than the latter. Without any atom of exaggeration, it is more likely to bring about sustainable scientific and technological development which the nation aspires to achieve. Furthermore, it seeks to develop a teacher who is not only academically sound but morally and religiously upright thereby ensuring his total personality development.

In an ideal Islamic situation, teachers of other subjects too, must be men and women with moral beliefs for their function to impart what they teach in a religiously healthy way which promotes growth, knowledge and development of the mind. This is because, the moral attitude of the teacher, has undoubtedly, a far-reaching effect upon the mind of his young learners.

Muslim Teachers in the Past and Present: The history of Islamic Teacher Education dates back to the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), who himself was the first teacher. However, its influence has fluctuated through periods of posterity and decline. In the early days of Islam, teachers contributed tremendously to the spread of the message of Islam. They demonstrated a high sense of responsibility and the ability to fulfil it under any circumstance. Muslims entered upon the stage of human history and civilization, left their permanent imprint on “the making of world history” and directed world history in the service of the ideals of Islam. Through this, the awareness of the need to spread the message of Islam was generated in the Muslims and they were, of course, ready to fulfil their mission in life through the acquisition of knowledge and teaching it. Teachers during that period were brave soldiers, merchants, Bedouins and craftsmen who had never attended any Teachers’ college to study the methodology of teaching. Despite all odds, they were able to spread Islam effectively within a very short period of time [7].

Teachers usually taught in mosques, *Madrasah* (school), libraries and *Ulama*’s houses. But after the first century of *Hijrah*, education began to be organised in special places called *Kuttab*s (institutes for primary and religious education). Around the fourth century of *Hijrah*, higher schools in the conventional sense were established. Their curricula consisted mainly of the Qur’an, hadith, religious sciences, languages, History, Geography, Geology, Literature and Arithmetic. The study of Chemistry evolved during the Umayyad period, while other sciences like Pharmacology, Astronomy, Mathematics and Medicine were developed for higher education during the Abbasid period at the turn of ninth century [8].

Competent students were authorised to teach and the teachers continued their training in accordance with the concept of life-long education in Islam. The literacy and scientific progress was however short lived. Islamic history was struck by fluctuations in periods of posterity and decline. The latter is being caused by the weakening of spiritual values, political instability, weakening of social and economic structures and the disintegration of the Islamic *Ummah* in most Muslim countries. The effect of this was stagnation in knowledge acquisition and creativity. The original and profound thoughts of the Muslims became rare. Other factors as enumerated by Kinnany [7] include; failure to foster scientific knowledge and enquiry, failure to promote women education and colonization which came with the rise of industrial power in the west and which led to the subjugation of the Muslim world and other countries in Africa and America. The disastrous effect of colonization was that it deprived the Muslim world of free development and independent life as required by Islam. The colonizer was anti-religious and did all he could to distort religion. The effect of colonization is still manifest in all our systems including the Teacher Education programmes, whereby, teachers receive an education that is alien in content, values, objectives and organisation to Islam.

Unfortunately however, many Muslim countries, up till today still being entangled by the rope of Western domination; they produce teachers for secular schools where religion is taught like a history subject. As observed rightly by Shami [9], the Teacher Education programme will not be effective unless a complete system for Teacher Education, which incorporated all the important elements, is designed and properly implemented. According to him, a holistic approach is necessary. Taking parts alone and dealing with them in isolation may result in waste of effort and even in frustration.

The historical background given above is considered important because to achieve a meaningful and effective Islamic Teacher Education System in our universities, a thorough understanding of the role of the early Muslim teachers (in the past) is indispensable. This can be juxtaposed with the current practice so as to borrow a leaf from their noble lives of selflessness, hard work, dedication and commitment. Through this, projections can be made into the future for necessary improvements.

The Constraints on the Input Factors into the Islamic Teacher Education Programmes in Nigeria.

Admission Criteria: One of the major constraints on the quality related input into the Islamic Teacher Education programmes in the seven universities covered by the study was the relatively low entry requirements. Except for Ahmadu Bello University and Bayero University, who take particular interest in ensuring that the candidate for the Islamic Teacher Education programme is a practising Muslim, (who exhibits a good character and possesses the required qualifications)

other institutions did not consider Islamic religion and moral probity as essential criteria for admission. Their admission requirements into the course were related primarily to intellectual abilities. In fact, as Akinbote [10] has asserted, one important aspect of the early missionary teacher education programme was the quality of entrants into the Teacher Training Colleges. The entrants were the best products of the school system then and were selected for the teaching profession through some vigorous selection procedures. This no doubt accounted for why the products of the teachers' colleges in those days were able to prove their worth in whatever role they were assigned to in the society. This perhaps equally explained why teachers were respected in the society at that time.

However, in view of peculiar role of the prospective Islamic studies teachers, who will be responsible for development not only the cognitive potentialities of students but also the affective (i.e. moral and spiritual qualities), the criteria for admission into Islamic teacher education programme, must in addition, provide for moral and spiritual qualities, such as devotion to Islam, firm faith, human sympathy, sense of qualities, justice and moral integrity. These traits should be discerned in an individual who chooses to be an Islamic teacher.

Course Work: Research has shown that except Ahmadu Bello University's arrangement, all other institutions covered by the study did not have a department or faculty of Islamic Teacher Education. In other words, content and methodology are divorced; Islamic studies content is obtainable at the Faculty of Arts, while methodology courses are offered in Education Faculty. The resultant effect of this arrangement is that there is little or no harmonious blend of courses rooted in Islamic tradition and courses followed in some modern system of education. For instance, Islamic studies students are exposed to courses in educational psychology and philosophy; whereas some of the theories propounded by modern educational psychologist and philosophers are not without some loopholes, if analyzed from Islamic angle. Consequently, a careless and uniformed student may sip in the whole information as the absolute truth, whereas it cannot be said to be free from criticism in Islamic circles. For example, the Islamic teacher cannot adopt the attitude of Rousseau, quoted in Abdullah [11], who said while discussing education in early childhood that: '.... the first education should be purely negative. It consists not in teaching virtue and truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and the mind from error'. The view expressed above contradicts the Islamic theory of character building. According to the glorious Qur'an, man is born with a good *fitra* (nature/disposition). This believe in the goodness of the *fitra* will have practical implications for the methods the teacher will adopt. Therefore, Rousseau's view cannot be entirely useful to the Islamic teacher.

The course work for Islamic teacher education can be formulated by a harmonious blend of courses rooted in Islamic tradition and courses followed in some modern system of education. While courses in history and philosophy of education or in methodology for student teachers can be developed on the basis of the Islamic tradition. As for the characteristics of a Muslim teacher, Bidmos [12] summarises the qualities of an Islamic studies teacher to include among others, the following: Grasp of the content, knowledge of the glorious Qur'an, fair knowledge of Arabic language, practical demonstration of what is taught, moral probity and versatility. Further questions on how these characteristics can be developed. What special methodologies are needed to develop the students spiritually should be answered seeking guidance from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and practical experiences.

The selection of courses from modern educational system should be mainly from such areas as educational psychology, methods of teaching, measurement and evaluation. But the content of each course will have to be selected with reference to their established value and utility. Also, we shall need both ingenuity and competence if we are to blend these contents successfully with those of Islamic tradition and relate them to our community needs and environment.

Teaching Practice Supervision: It has been observed that in most cases, the teaching practice supervision of Islamic studies teachers was being handled by non-Islamic studies specialists. In fact, any lecturer in the education faculty could be assigned to an Islamic student teacher irrespective of whether he was an Islamic educationist or not. This practice was rampant in the universities of Ilorin, Jos, Ogun and Lagos. Suffice it to say that it will be practically difficult for a non-Islamic studies educationist to supervise an Islamic studies student teacher effectively. This is because of the technicalities involved in the subject especially in the aspect of textual study of the Qur'an and Hadith. Ideally, an Islamic student teacher should be expected to go beyond the teaching of the subject. He should be equally concerned with the improvement of students' behaviour. To achieve this, he should himself manifest the behaviour expected of a good Muslim, including scholarship, initiative, participation in acts of *ibadah* (worship), respect for others' rights, modesty, courtesy and so on. These characteristics are as important as the ability to teach well. We must evolve a model for teaching which will

completely meet such requirements. Therefore, the experienced teacher working with a student-teacher must evaluate him/her on his/her teaching skills and, more importantly, on his/her effectiveness as a model of Muslim personality. This is only possible if the supervisor himself/herself is well versed in the knowledge of Islam.

Voluntary Service: For effective development of Islamic teachers, Shami [9] emphasized the need to inculcate the habit of voluntary service in them. Islamic teachers' preparation institutions should therefore persuade their student teachers to select and organise any voluntary service they would be willing to undertake. For instance, they may tutor poor students, organize youth activities for *tabligh of din*. To be able to persuade their students to do these, teacher preparation institutions must themselves be involved in voluntary services. They must be models for their students. Contrary to this proposition, however, voluntary services were not an integral part of institutions covered by the study. Students participated in one form of religious or voluntary activity or the other at will. Neither were they persuaded to do this nor were they evaluated in this regard. Even membership of the Muslim students' society (M.S.S.) is at best voluntary

Organizational Climate: The most important quality of an Islamic studies teacher is not what he/she knows, but what he/she is. It is what people become that is important and the organizational climate has a bearing on this. Therefore, the organizational climate for preparing Muslim teachers must be truly Islamic in character.

It was quite a pleasant discovery that each of the institution covered by the study has a Mosque in which Muslim students and other members of the Muslim community perform five daily obligatory *Salat*, *Jum'ah* services, hold *Tafsir* lectures and conduct marriage ceremonies, among others. It should however be stressed that this alone does not guarantee a high and conducive organizational climate for Islamic Teacher preparation. In addition to this climate, people should help one another to avoid reprehensible actions and encourage the performance of desirable ones. Performance of *Ibadah* (worship) should be guaranteed through provision of suitable facilities for such purpose. Time must be allocated for *Salat* (prayer) and the teacher trainers themselves must manifest strict adherence to the rules of the religion both in word and practice within and outside the institution.

Evaluation of Student Teachers: A review of the evaluation techniques adopted in the various institutions covered by the study revealed that only the cognitive ability of the students was examined for promotion purposes. No effort is geared towards the assessment of the students' affective achievement. Whereas, the latter form of evaluation is considered as more important in a discipline like Islamic studies education which is concerned with improvement of students' moral and spiritual attitude along with other areas.

It is an undisputable fact that it is easier to evaluate what a person knows than what he is. Hence, the need to develop a model for this type of evaluation as a technique for measuring effectiveness of Islamic studies teaching. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that the evaluation of student-teachers should be continuous to help them improve both academically and behaviourally.

CONCLUSION

The study has identified Islamic *teachers'* education as an instrument per excellence with potential for the overall development of the nation. This is in view of the fact that teachers are catalyst to national development and therefore, the need for their correct training and re-training cannot be over-emphasized. However, the laudable goals and objectives of Islamic teacher education programme may remain an illusion if the various defects identifiable within the system are not corrected. The major finding of the study therefore, suggests the need to review the existing Islamic teacher education programme in Nigeria as to give room for maximum output.

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