

Review Article

The Problems Militating Against the Realization of the Objectives of Islamic Studies in Nigerian Post Primary Schools

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Abstract: To satisfy the educational and moral requirements of the students is one of the primary objectives of both the National Policy on Education and the objectives of Islamic education in the Nigerian post primary schools. This is because the National policy on Education on the one hand is designed to produce 'God- conscious and responsible citizens for Nigeria. Islamic education on the other hand, also aims at producing students who are morally conscious, disciplined, and sincere. Trustworthy and tolerant'. However, many problems tend to militate against the implementation and achievements of these objectives. These problems include students' unrest; inadequacy of the National Policy on Education towards Religious and Arabic Studies; teachers' inability to play their roles adequately; parents' nonchalant attitude towards moral and educational upbringing of their children; lack of enough school funds and repeated changes in the education system. This paper therefore intends to discuss on how the problems militating against the realization of the policy of Islamic studies in Nigerian post primary schools can be solved.

Keywords: National Policy, Islamic education, 'God- conscious.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been described in our National Policy on Education [1] as "an instrument par excellence for national development". This is probably because education is a potent instrument for achieving change in any society. Some of the goals of secondary education according to the National policy [1] include:

- i. Foster National Unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- ii. Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect of the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens.

Unfortunately, we realize that even the culture of peace, according to Sunday: 2004 [2] is lost to the school system just as it is lost to the Nigerian socio-polity. Intra-societal violence that is sometimes religious based is prevalent in the society and the schools are no exempts from the repercussions. Drug abuse and cultism prevail, and young people kill themselves as they quarrel over illegally acquired money. Gender hostility is practiced as a norm. Sexual harassment; strikes and examination malpractices are common phenomena in our educational institutions.

It is also unfortunate to state that the National Policy on Education with regard to Arabic and Islamic studies is inadequate. This is because according to B. Razaq [3], the choice of Arabic and Religious Studies are optional as they are categorized in elective courses. And the choice of certain electives like vocational and sciences often bars one from taking religious courses automatically.

Another area of concern is the teacher, who plays the major roles of realizing the educational objectives. In addition to being learned, an Islamic religious teacher supposed to be a man whose character and behaviour in and outside his classroom

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should reflect or represent Islamic belief. He should be a man of virtue and piety and also recognize that his most important duty is to mould the character of his students so as to make them responsible, reliable and reasonable members of their nation.

The teacher should always exhibit exemplary habits to his students. One of such habits is that he must be practicing Muslim in words and deeds. He should not teach students something only to contradict it himself. In other words, he must be the first to obey religious instructions and law so that his students will copy from him. Similarly, he should be the first to avoid committing all that is forbidden or reprehensible in Islam. His students will copy him and avoid the same. In a situation however, where the attitude, behaviour and character of the Islamic religious teacher are against the teachings of Islam, the desired objectives of Islamic studies cannot be successfully realized.

Parents also play a major role in achieving the aim of the educational objectives of their children. In Islam, it is obligatory for the parents to take the responsibility of educating their children. Allah says:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ) [التحریم: 6]

O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allâh, but do that which they are commanded. (Qur'an 66:6)

Islam also requires parents to train their children in having good character because if a person has education but lacks good manners, his education is of very little value. The Qur'an in the following verses explains how Luqman (AS) trained his little son how to avoid bad manners and become a responsible person:

(وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ. وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ) [لقمان: 18، 19]

And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, Allâh likes not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of the asses." (Luqman, 31:18-19)

This training is worthy of emulation by every parent. When parents play their part, teachers at school find it easier to impart knowledge to children who possess good morals. But the question here is, how many parents adhere to these divine injunctions today?

Repeated changes in the Education system are also other areas of concern. A number of changes have taken place in the education sector. This has its own effect towards students' learning. In addition, although the various levels of government (Federal, State and Local) always propagate that education is their top priority in their budgets, there is still much to be done to adequately support and finance all branches of education.

All these problems retard the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. The intention of this paper therefore, is to examine some of these problems with a view to providing possible solutions.

Problems Retarding the Realization of Educational Objectives of Islamic Studies in Post Primary Schools

The problems retarding the implementation of educational policies are many. Some of them have been identified in our introduction. We are however going to give a more detailed explanation of the major problems here. These include:

1. Inadequacy of the "National Policy on Education towards Religious and Arabic Studies: This paper is of the view that the inadequacy of the National Policy on Education towards Religious and Arabic Studies should be addressed. This is because as mentioned earlier by B. Razaq [3], the Islamic and Arabic Education has not been given their rightful considerations in the National curriculum generally. According to the National Policy, every student of the junior secondary shall offer 13 subjects. Of the minimum 10 subjects, the Muslim children have to offer at this level, the compulsory 8 and the pre - vocational electives, include neither Arabic nor Islamic religious knowledge. From the non-pre - vocational electives, the student has the opportunity of choosing a minimum of one and a maximum of two subjects. At this time of cry for sports development in the country, most of the principals would recommend physical and health education, which also falls in the same group with Arabic and Islamic studies. The last option would perhaps be religious knowledge. The policy has carefully relegated Arabic to the background. It has in addition put Islamic religious knowledge on a tentative list [3]. The need for review of the National Policy on Education in respect of both Arabic and Islamic studies in post primary schools is therefore imperative. This will help in no small measure in solving many problems retarding the realization of Islamic studies objectives in Nigeria. This is because the Islamic studies in addition to the training of child's personality towards the best moral and social conduct, contains topics that deal with all kinds of corruption and vices, like wine drinking, adultery and fornication, theft and armed robbery, banditry, cultism, fraud, cheating in marketing and devouring of people's wealth without their consent, etc.

The Educational objectives of the above- mentioned topics cannot be achieved unless if the National Policy on education is reviewed in such a way that Islamic Religious studies will be made compulsory upon all Muslim students at all levels irrespective of their area of specialization.

Repeated Changes in the Educational System

It is on record [5] that Nigeria has witnessed a number of changes in the education sector since after independence. In the past, a pupil needed to spend 8 years in the secondary school, 2 years in the higher school, and 3 years in the University (8-5-2-3). Later, the 6 years of primary, 5 years of secondary, 2 years of higher school, and 3 years of University system (6-5-2-3) was recommended and adopted. Another system of 6-3-3-4 which does not include three years at any College of Education or Polytechnic was also used. Currently there is another change of the system (i.e. 9-3-4).

In spite of the fact that change is part of life and sometimes it can bring about positive result, yet these repeated changes in the education system are capable of disrupting the academic planning of students, their vocational needs and plans.

Inability of the teachers to play their roles adequately

Islamic studies like any other discipline is studied for a purpose whereas the remaining disciplines are confined to the worldly needs, Islamic studies arc for both this world and the hereafter. For this reason, Islamic studies teacher must know the objective of teaching the subject. This objective as earlier mentioned is to produce students who are God-conscious, law abiding and responsible citizens for their country. This objective however cannot be achieved unless if the teacher possesses certain qualities that will enable him to carry his duties effectively. In other words, Educational objectives cannot be achieved without these qualities from the teachers. Some of these qualities are:

a. Sincerity

Sincerity means *IKHLAS* i.e. doing whatever one is supposed to do for the sake of Allah. A sincere teacher is he who is always mindful to his duties without caring much about the material remuneration he receives from his employer. He rather, considers his duty as an execution of Allah's command (Qur'an 51:55) and that of His Prophet. Sincerity of the teacher provides opportunity for the success of the teacher and the students.

b. Being a Good Model

Children are known to be imitators. They copy whatever they see their teacher doing. An Islamic studies teacher supposed to be a good model to his students. To be a good model here means to be a guide in the spiritual sense and in social habit formation of his students. He must be the first to obey religious instructions and law so that his students will copy from him. Similarly, he must be the first to avoid committing all that is forbidden or reprehensible in Islam. His students will copy him and avoid the same. If he wants to change a bad habit in his student, he must also change the same in himself. The aim therefore shall always be to serve as a model and guide to his students and a good example to the society in general. Unfortunately however, only few teachers today possess this quality. This is a serious problem affecting the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

c. Knowledge and Experience

A good teacher is the teacher who knows what he is supposed to teach. In other words, mastery of the subject matter and the model of delivery is a quality supposed to be found in a teacher. In addition to the mastery of his discipline, a good teacher should endeavor to know as much other subjects as possible. This would enable him to give the suitable and most befitting guidance to his students. Student stand to gain tremendously from a teacher who is well grounded in his area of specialization and has also acquired experience. The problem we have today is that many teachers are not professionals. A lot of others are weak and inexperienced in their discipline. This makes the implementation of educational objectives difficult.

d. Self-Respect

Self-respect is also an expected quality of a good teacher because; it perfects his character and quality. He should understand that his student interprets whatever he does and the society to justify their own actions. This is because he is considered as a learned person and a character molder. Students pay more attention to teachers who respect themselves.

e. Personal Responsibility

A good teacher should realize that a great responsibility is vested upon him by the society. This is because his students are entrusted to him. He is supposed to satisfy the intellectual and spiritual needs of his students. He should be misconceived by saying; 'my behavior is my own concern, and your behavior is your own concern' (Qur'an, 10:41)[6]. In other words, teacher's role includes indoctrinating the students about what is right or wrong, not only in academia but also in society at large.

Surely, if the teacher adheres to the above-mentioned qualities, he would be able to achieve his aim of imparting the most needed knowledge to his students. He would be able to train the students' personalities towards the best moral and social conduct, healthy attitudes and self-discipline so that they grow up as good and law-abiding citizens, who will contribute to the well-being of the society and of humanity in general.

f. Inability of the parents to carry out their responsibilities

Islam is strongly sensitive to the crucial dependence of the child on the parents. Right from birth, the child has the right to the preservation of his life and equal life chances. Another set of rights comes under socialization, up-bringing and general care. It is charity of a higher order to attend to their spiritual welfare, educational needs and general well-being [4]. Interest in and responsibility for the child's welfare and education are questions of first priority. If parents are alive to their children's spiritual, social and educational well-being at home, teacher at school as earlier mentioned will find it easier to impart knowledge to them. This will make the educational objectives to be implemented without many problems. However, few parents only are mindful with the moral and educational upbringing of their children.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

From the above, this paper tried to identify and explain some of the problems of implementing the educational objectives of Islamic Education in post primary schools. To address these problems: there is an urgent need for the review of the National curriculum in respect to Arabic and Islamic studies. They should be made compulsory to all Muslim students. Changes in the education system should only be made when necessary as it affects the student's learning. Recruitment of teachers should be made on merit. Teachers should possess the qualities mentioned above before they are allowed to teach. Parents should endeavor to train their children in such a way that when they are taken to school, the teacher will find it easier to impart knowledge to them. Finally, Government should provide all the necessary facilities that will facilitate learning in the schools.

It is my belief that if all these suggestions given are adhered to, most of the problems of implementation of educational objectives in Nigeria will be solved.

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