

An Assessment Of The Concept, Content And Methodologies For Teaching Islamic Studies In Ogun State, Nigeria Between (1995 – 2013).

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ABSTRACT: Islamic Studies witnesses some drawbacks in recent years. This affects students enrolment in the subject across all levels. This has translated into very few Islamic Studies Graduates being turned out yearly. For instance, only one student graduated in Islamic Studies at the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago – Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria in 2009. One could imagine the number of lecturers who had taught only one candidate in a four year programme. More so, the state government is talking of course viability in the educational institutions, there is no doubt that training only one candidate for a four year programme is not economically viable. The situation is not different at the Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun which graduated below five candidates in recent years and Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu not having any. Based on documents review, the study established the fact that the concept, curriculum taught and methodologies used over eighteen years ago are still in use today. This calls for a review of the prevalent situation to enhance the enrolment, teaching and learning standard to make Islamic Studies contribute its quota to the state and national development.

Keywords: Assessment, Concept, Content, Methodologies, Islamic Studies.

I. INTRODUCTION.

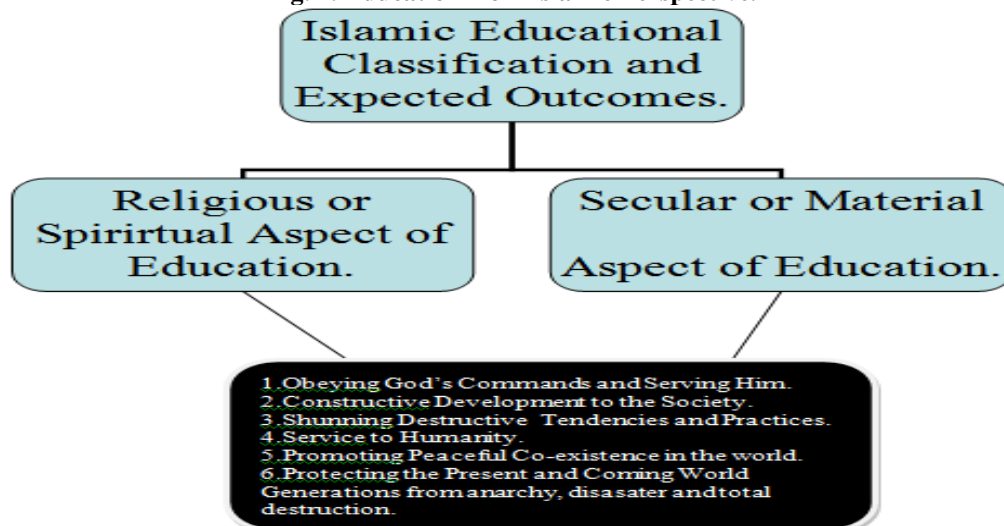
Education means different things to different people. Historically, education deals with the knowledge, skills and experiences that one acquires from birth to death.

Philosophically, it is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experiences, norms and values of a society in which one lives. A harmonized definition of education from various schools of thoughts is the acquisition of learning experiences, skills, norms and values of a society to enable one contribute significantly to the development of the society. In essence, any form of education which is destructive or which does not bring about progress and development to the society by any individual cannot be considered as education. (1)

1. Concept of Education in Islam.

Education from the Islamic point of view is divided into two namely, the spiritual or religious aspect of education and the material or secular aspect of education (Bidmos 1981). (2)

Fig. 1. Education from Islamic Perspective.



The spiritual aspects of education will regulate the relationship of man to his Creator, other creatures of Allah and to himself. This will teach man the consciousness of Allah, the purpose of his creation which is not accidental but to serve God, to obey His commands, be good to others and to prepare for the life after death.

The secular aspect of education is the education a man acquires to fend for himself and cater for his sustenance in this world but in the process through lawful means and doing well to others. In support of this, Quran says, "Do not forget your portion in the world, but do good to others as Allah has done good unto you" (Quran 28:77). (3) In support of this Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed (2007), expresses opinion that the purpose of education in the Western World is to provide for the economic prosperity of a nation and that secular education at the personal level is to acquire academic and professional skills that will enable one to earn a respectable living in riches and fame and to also have a luxurious and comfortable life. (4)

References abound in the Quran, and Hadith to show that Islam gives positive approval to the acquisition of any form of education be it spiritual or secular. Quran 58, verses 11, says "Allah will exalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge to high ranks". (5) Also, a tradition says, "Seeking for knowledge is obligatory on every muslim male or female". (6)

Abdul – Rahman Saed (2003) in response to a question asked as to whether women could be a teacher or a lawyer answered in the affirmative. (7) Tembo Mercy (2008) also supports women education and practical contribution to nation's development. (8) Another tradition says, "He who leaves home in search of knowledge walks in the path of Allah till he returns". (9)

Further to this, the Prophet was reported to have said, "He who has knowledge has everything in life and he who loses knowledge loses everything in life". (10) In another dimension, he was reported to have instructed his followers to seek for knowledge as far as China when China was not a muslim state.

Martyr Muhammad Jawad Bahonar (nd) expresses the view that muslims were the first to teach sciences like Physics and Chemistry to other people who later made expansions in the field. He quoted the Prophet as saying "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave", and "Seek knowledge even (if it is to be found in a place as distant as) China". (11)

Equally, he made the prisoners who were no muslims teach the muslim children how to read and write to gain their freedom. These are enough evidences to show that a muslim could acquire any form of education be it religious or material; what is important is to observe the professional ethics because no profession teaches immorality, corruption, or any bad thing.

II. GLOBAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ISLAMIC STUDIES

Islamic Studies is very essential in the pre-and post primary education because it teaches the Islamic fundamentals which is a source of guidance, security and motivation for the child. Ramadan (2004) points out that people have wrong impression of Islamic education as mainly confining it to technical memorization of Quranic verses, Prophetic traditions and rules of spirituality. (12)

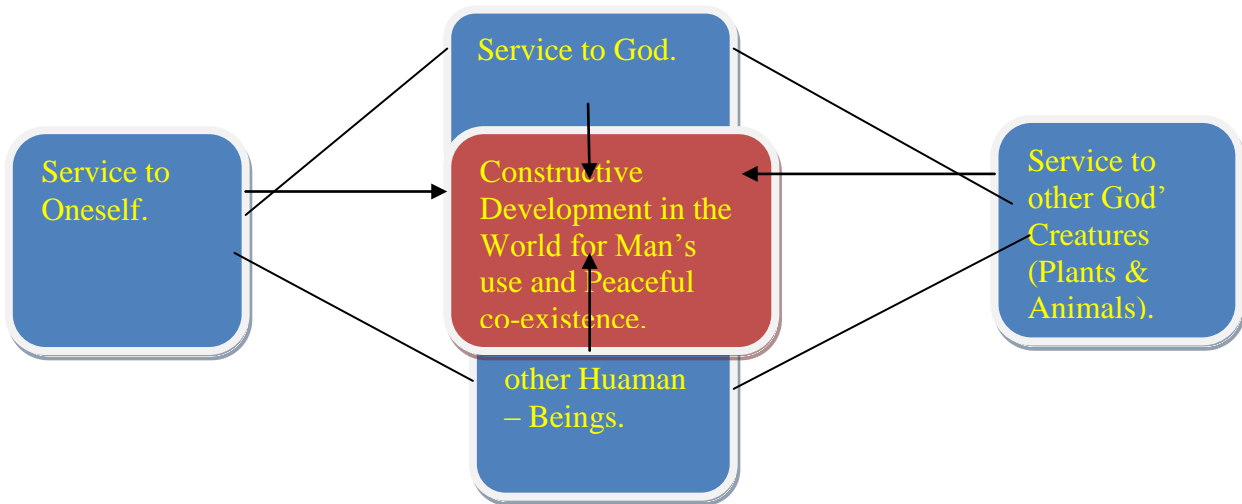
A muslim child who believes in Allah as his creator, Guide and Judge and believes in the guidance of Islam as to right and wrong has a sense of inner security which helps him to overcome many difficulties throughout his schooldays and adult life. It assists in solving the social and personal problems of the muslims in an Islamic context. Abdul Rahman Saed (2003). (13)

The teaching of Islamic Studies motivates the child to work hard and places greater importance on seeking knowledge. It teaches the belief in the unity and oneness of Allah, the Most Supreme Being Al-Attas (1979) (14) and Ramadan, (2004). (15) A person's beliefs influence his moral conduct. In other school subjects, pupils gain the knowledge of how to read, write, how to add and subtract, and how to speak other languages etc. this knowledge may be put to either good or bad use, he may use his knowledge to help or cheat others. It is his beliefs and moral standards that will determine which way he uses his knowledge and the subject that can guide and direct this usage is Islamic Studies.

One other objective of including Islamic Studies education in the school syllabus is to remove the fear of Christian evangelization of children from muslim parents. (16) It is equally to awaken in the child the consciousness of Allah as the foundation of his intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth and to provide a sound Islamic base for rational and reflective understanding of the world around him.

To make the child conscious of his responsibility to Allah, serving Him with all the talents and resources, he has given him. To train the child's personality towards the best moral and social conduct, healthy attitude and self discipline in accordance with the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah. In the words of Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed (2007, p 1), "The aim of Islamic education is character building. Growth and development of Islamic personality should be the final goal of any Islamic school. As Muslims, our educational aim is to develop the personalities of our children to the end that they will be conscious of their responsibility to God (the creator) and to fellow humans". (17)

Fig. 2. Ultimate Aim of Education in Islam.

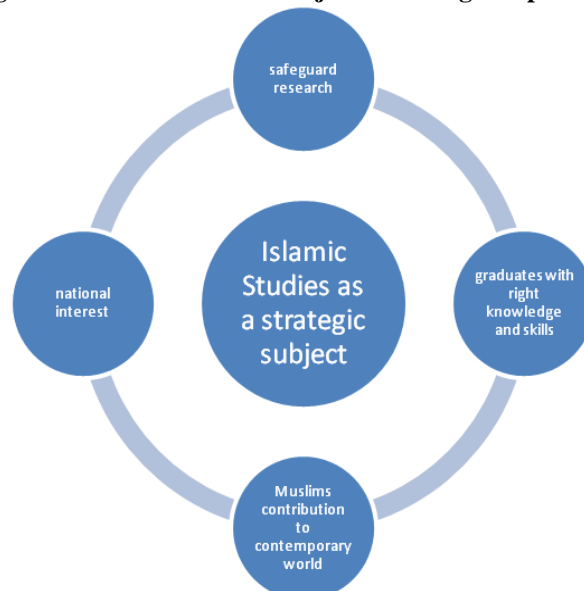


The above chart shows the role of every member of a society first to his Creator, to obey and serve Him, because in Islam, the purpose of creation is to serve Allah. Then to serve himself by protecting his bodily cells from destruction through careless usages such as taking alcohol and other harmful things. This is because, if one destroys these body cells through careless and reckless usages, one is not in any position to replace them or manufacture other new cells to replace the damaged ones. Next is service to other human beings who should enjoy peaceful co-existence with one in the society. Then to protect other creatures of God like plants and animals which have been created for the use of mankind. This is by avoiding anything that may lead to mass destruction of these creatures, because, if this happens, man will be one to suffer for them at the end. Their mass destruction may lead to famine, displacements, epidemics, diseases and even deaths which may be catastrophic to man.

Also, the objectives of teaching Islamic Studies in schools is to encourage the pursuit of useful knowledge in accordance with the sayings of Muhammad that “The search for knowledge is incumbent on every muslim male or female” and the application of such knowledge for the benefit of humanity in the fields of Arts, sciences, medicine and technology. (18)

Bill Rammel (2007), describes the study of Islamic Studies as a subject of strategic importance in the sense that its teaching should focus on training of graduates who would be equipped with right knowledge, attitudes and skills. It is to be taught in the national interest and to safeguard research. It is also to project the role of Muslims in the contemporary world. (19)

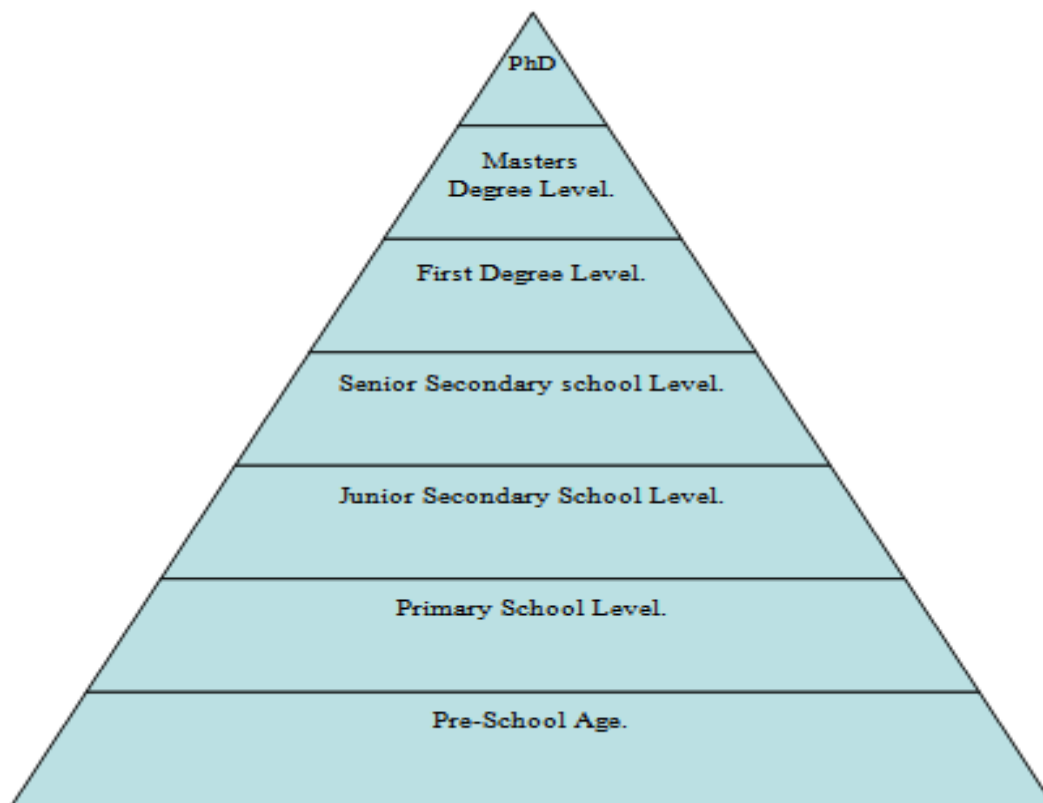
Fig. 3. Islamic Studies as a subject of strategic importance.



Similarly, it is to show the positive relationship between Islam, Science and Technology. Abdul- Rahman Saed (2003). (20)

The inclusion of Islamic Studies as a school subject is to create avenues for pupils to be able to study the subject up to the highest level of education. Boyle Hellen (2004) uses the term Islamic education to refer to the entire system of traditional schooling from pre-school through University level. (21)

Fig. 4. Levels of Educational System in Ogun State, Nigeria.



Seven levels to be crossed to get to the peak in the acquisition of Islamic Studies in Ogun State, Nigeria as expressed in the pyramid above are pre-school age, primary school level, junior secondary school level, senior secondary school level, first degree, masters degree and PhD or doctoral degree levels.

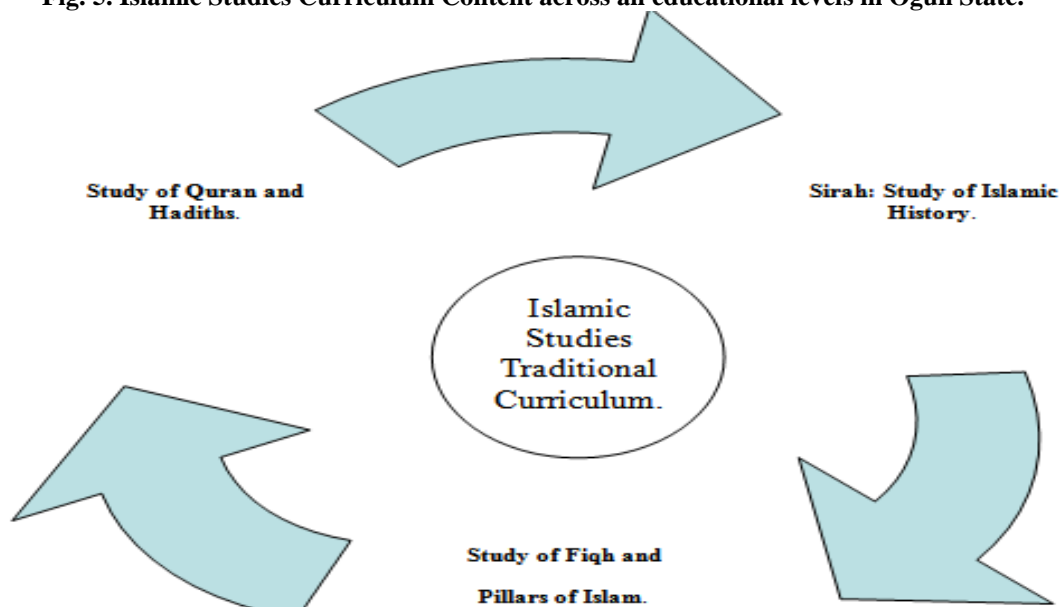
III. CONTENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Boyle Hellen (2004) expresses the terms Islamic education and Islamic schooling in broader way than Quranic schooling. According to him, the former are seen to encompass any level of traditional muslim education while the latter is seen as an institution that focuses exclusively on facilitating memorization of the Quran or some Quranic verses. (22)

The primary contents of Islamic education include the study of the Quran, traditions, ahadith, the life of the Prophet (sirah), law and Jurisprudence, Arabic etc. Ramadan (2004), is of the opinion that in-depth knowledge of the environment, mastery of the language, familiarity with the history of the country, knowledge of the institutions, study of culture, social dynamics, and the political landscapes are all to be added to the content of Islamic education to create a total personality. (23)

The present curriculum content of Islamic Studies in Ogun State does not conform with Ramadan's description, it aligns more to the traditional Islamic curriculum which centres on Islamic beliefs, aqeedah and the likes. This has somehow affected the number of students studying the subject because the students do not see any difference in what was learnt about 18 years ago compared to what is learnt today. More so, the same method used 18 years ago for teaching the subject is the same method employed in its teaching today. This somewhat presents the subject like an irrelevant subject to the yearnings and aspirations of the needs of our present day society.

Fig. 5. Islamic Studies Curriculum Content across all educational levels in Ogun State.



The question is where lies the problem, if the curriculum taught about eighteen years ago is still the same curriculum which is being taught now in the year 2013. Does the problem lie with the subject, the teachers, students, the government or policy guiding the educational system?

The researcher adopted the documents review approach to answer the questions raised on the topic. One of such was Dr. Ibrahim B. Syed (2007), who identifies curriculum content as one of the problems. To him, this content should be all encompassing aimed at bringing about holistic training and development called “integrated education”. (24)

In corroboration with above view, an initial research conducted in Ogun State, Nigeria in 1995, Salako (1995) and was later reconducted in 2005 (Salako 2005) when the set of students involved in the secondary school had moved to university on the topic, “Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of Islamic Studies in Ogun State schools”, confirmed that those problems identified eighteen years ago were still there ten years after and are still prominent even today. (25) They are:

IV. OBSTACLES CONFRONTING THE TEACHING OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

These are some obstacles militating against the successful teaching and learning of Islamic Studies education in Ogun State schools over the years:

5.1. Shortage of qualified teachers in Schools.

Previous researches have shown that many schools did not have Islamic Studies teachers in this part of the country i.e. South West of Nigeria where a large population of the Muslims exist. Many schools did not offer the subject not because there were no children to offer the subject but because there were no teachers at all to teach the subject Salako, (1988) and Dr. Ibrahim B Syed, (2007). The situation today is more pathetic to what it was in 1988 and 1995 and 2005. (26)

This is because today, the number of children who enrol for this subject has reduced drastically. So, if students do not enrol for it at the Senior Certificate Examinations, there is no way by which they will study it in the university because it is a necessary requirement to possess credit in any proposed course of study. And if students do not study it at the university, it would be difficult to get teachers to teach this subject at the secondary schools. The curriculum content seems not to be attractive to students who prefer to choose other subjects which they think will fetch them jobs easily and make them more relevant to the present needs of their environment.

A way of correcting this is to review the content of the curriculum to accommodate courses which will be practically useful to students and make them more viable after completing their studies. More candidates need to enroll for the subject at the higher levels to bridge the gap. One way to achieve this is to make the curriculum viable.

5.2. Lack of Relevant Textbooks. Textbooks is an educative material through which the teacher and the learner have to update their knowledge and have to collect facts and correct information on any field of study, it is disappointing however that relevant textbooks are not in circulation as regards the new topics added on Islamic Studies syllabus as shown from the previous study. Bidmos, (2003). (27)

The old books written a long time ago have become obsolete in the sense that they do not include the new topics enlisted on the syllabus, they are not even in circulation and where they exist at all, they have become too costly and are not within the reach of many children to buy. If this is so, there is no doubt that teachers who have graduated a long time will have difficulties in updating their knowledge to be able to meet up with the new challenges of Islamic Studies education.

This problem however can be easily overcome today through the use of internet. The only task is for the institutions to provide good internet facility and to subscribe to online and e-libraries across the globe. This will put to rest the problem of lack of relevant textbooks and it will go along way in bridging the gap which the lack of relevant textbooks has created.

5.3. Content of Islamic Studies Syllabus. A critical appraisal of Islamic studies syllabus indicate that many topics have been compressed into the syllabus. Topics that cannot be offered in a 4 year degree programme have been compounded into Junior Secondary 1 to 3 levels Lemu (2002). (28) The effect is that some of the topics are left untaught or taught with much brevity leaving the children with half – baked knowledge on the subject thereby putting them in a confused state which is worse than the ignorant state.

Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies should prevail on the government to review the syllabus to a more reasonable and manageable size. As experts in the field, they should prepare a draft which is worthwhile and rich for the subject taking note of the prevalent circumstances without jeopardizing the Islamic faith.

5.4. Government Policy on Islamic Studies. The National Policy on education which represents the Government Policy reflects Islamic Studies as a core subject at the Primary and Junior Secondary levels of education; it however reflects it as an elective at the senior and higher levels of education (NPE 2004). (29) This has negative effects on the teaching of the subject, on the teachers and the children. Teachers see themselves as not relevant in the stream of education, this affects their morales and inputs and their attitude to work. Pupils on the other hand see the subject as not relevant to their educational careers; many of them drop it when they get to the senior secondary level.

Godlessness is the final products of what our students turn to after leaving school because the Islamic fundamentals which could have been taught and made them godly if the subject were to be given a core position had been avoided by students when they were in school. And what do we expect from somebody who is ungodly. There is no atrocity such a person cannot perform to achieve his selfish aim at the expense of others. The government should review this position to make Islamic studies a core subject at our senior secondary level and a prerequisite at all the higher institution levels of education for our muslim students.

5.5. Arabic Language Palaver. The use of Arabic constitutes a constraint to the teaching of Islamic fundamentals and other topics in the sense that there are some topics which need to be taught with this language e.g. teaching of Quranic chapters and Hadiths which are compulsory aspects of the subject. It becomes a problem when we discover that some teachers that teach the subject are deficient in the language and there is no way by which such teachers can function well in the teaching of the subject. This has further aggravated the problem in the sense that teachers who cannot function well because of Arabic language have chosen other subjects. Students too for the fear of Arabic language courses in the course at the university level abandon Islamic Studies and run to other humanities courses like Social Studies, History, Civic Education and the likes. Individual teachers who are deficient in this area should make effort to brush up their knowledge of Arabic language through formal or informal process.

V. CHALLENGES FACING CONTEMPORARY TEACHERS OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

Mastery of the Islamic Fundamentals and other areas of Islamic studies is a task for Islamic studies teachers. They should seek for more knowledge through private studies, and discussions with others on topics that also exercise the intellect. Galadanci Bashir (2006). (30)

They should not only keep their teaching techniques constantly under review but also keep abreast of the new developments in Islamic learning by reading books, journals, magazines, attending seminars, symposia and conferences.

They should use instructional materials in teaching because these aid learning and make pupils learn faster and better. Walford Geoffrey, (2004). (31) They should organize Islamic learning activities in a systematic manner whereby there would be unity and continuity in what pupils learn.

To teach Islamic Studies, one will require the use of Arabic, it is clear that an Islamic Studies teacher cannot function effectively unless he understands little Arabic. Hence, teachers of Islamic studies are to enhance their knowledge of Arabic language to be effective.

Islamic teachers should not restrict their studies to Islamic fundamentals alone, they should also seek for knowledge in other areas of Islamic and secular studies and should be able to contribute intelligently in those areas when discussions come up on them. The world is moving towards synergizing transdisciplinary and

multidisciplinary knowledge. And this should be the focus of any discipline today. Islamic studies curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate modern Islamic financial courses, computer knowledge and so on.

VI. MODERN TECHNIQUES SUITABLE FOR THE TEACHING OF ISLAMIC STUDIES EDUCATION

Among the techniques, methods, devices, or approaches suitable for teaching of Islamic Studies are:

7.1. Activity Method. This is the method whereby the teacher directs the students learning through activities. It involves students' participation. Activity method is about the pragmatic method which John Dewey an American Philosopher in Psychology propounded. "It is learning by doing". It is very useful in teaching topics like "A complete Rakat", "Ablution", "Marriage" "Zakat", Quranic Recitation and Hadiths, etc.

7.2. Project Method. It is a device designed to put the responsibility on the individual or group of students to carry out their learning activities with the teacher as an adviser. This is good for topics like "Blessings of Ramadan", "Contributions of Abu Bakr to the Development of Islam" "The Conversion of Umar to Islam", "The Recipients of zakat", and concept of Tawhid" and a host of others.

7.3. Discussion Method. This involves approaches by which the teacher directs members of a class or group to share their knowledge, ideas and experiences freely with other members of the class. Pupils do this in a play way and less tensed atmosphere and thereby gain a lot in the process. Secondly, recollection will likely be easy because they participated fully in the discussion. This method is suitable for topics like "Polygamy in Islam", "Causes of Divorce and forms of Divorce", Conditions governing zakat, Saom etc.

7.4. Audio – Visual Instructions. It involves using audio – visual materials to aid instruction e.g. Radio, Television set, films, projectors, computer and internet facility. etc. It could be used to teach Hajj, A complete Rakat. Eyerdam, Pamela (2003). (32)

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper traced the concept of education from the Islamic point view. It assessed the problems confronting the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies within the past 18 years in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study however pointed out the need to review the curriculum in use to make the subject relevant to the present society in order to make Islamic Studies graduates marketable and to also contribute significantly to the development of their environment.

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