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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN IREPO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

Abdur-Rafiu, Jamiu Ph.D.

Abstract

Broadly speaking, three different educational systems exist in Nigeria, these are indigenous, Islamic and Western education systems. Each of the three systems contributes immensely to individual upbringing in particular and nation building in general. In this paper, attempt was made to explain the conceptual meaning of traditional and modern Arabic and Islamic education, its emergence and development in Irepo Local Government, its features and how it has impacted in promoting scholarship among the people. Finally, recommendations are suggested for its future development.

Keywords: Arabic, Building, Islamic, Nation, Private, School

Introduction

Education is the process whereby some adult members of a community usually older, more experience help the younger ones to learn. Islamic education is geared towards the maintenance of stability, conformity, characterized by raising people who are versed in the tenets and practices of the religion (Abdur-Rafiu, 2014). Arabic as a language exists with Islam. It is popular with Nigerians because it is an indigenous language of Suwar Arabs has Arabic of Northern Nigeria (Oladosu, 2002). Both Arabic and Islam have substantially contributed to world civilization and culture (Abdur-Rafiu, 2005). Perhaps, the indelible impacts made by both Arabic and Islamic education on the world civilization has prompted its scholarship.

Irepo Local Government Area is one of the pioneer local district councils of Oyo State, Nigeria. It is located at the extreme North of Oyo State with Kisi metropolis as its headquarter. Initially, the people of Irepo local government area were predominantly pagans but today, Islam has been embraced in all nooks and crannies of the area. Islam preceded Christianity in the area and at present, Muslims are a significant percentage of the overall population in the area (Abdur-Rafiu, 2002). This might have been a circumstance that gave Arabic and Islamic education an opportunity to flourish in the area. Considering the impacts of Arabic and Islamic education in the area, one sees the pertinence of elucidating the hitherto unknown features, strengths and

relevance of Arabic and Islamic education in promoting education and cultural heritages generally in Nigeria and particularly in Irepo local government. It is against this background that this study was carried out.

Advent of Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo Local Government

The advent of Arabic and Islamic education throughout the Islamic world of which Nigeria is not an exemption has been the history of the spread of Islam. Islam arrived in Nigeria with both Arabic and Islamic education (Amaele, 2005). Thus, the advent of Arabic and Islamic education in Kisi, the headquarter of Irepo Local Government Area of Oyo State can be traced back to the advent of Islam in the area in 1868 AD. It is noted that the introduction of Islam in Irepo local government brought about the establishment of Qur'anic schools (Abdur-Rafiu, 2009). Islam was said to have been introduced to the area through Oloyoyo family followed by Teeffa family. The then Alfas (Scholars) used Arabic and Islamic education as a tool for the propagation of Islam in the area. There was an Ibadan based Islamic scholar of the 19th century called Sheikh Salih whose group undertook a pilgrimage to Makkah. The pilgrimage from the south took the route from Ibadan to Oyo, Iseyin, Shaki, Kisi, Ibariba etc. They established a mosque and a Qur'anic training centre in each town they passed through (Fafunwa, 1974). The fact that Kisi town is one of the towns the aforementioned scholar and entourage passed through, stayed for a while and established a Qur'anic training centre there, is a proof that the emergence of Arabic and Islamic education was not only thorough Oloyoyo and Teeffa families but also through the efforts of other migrant scholars.

Traditional Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo Local Government

A traditional Arabic and Islamic school is a small place of learning which encompassed a number of pupils headed by a teacher or teachers (Al-Ilori, 1980). It could be a parlour in teacher's house, a veranda, passage of a house or mosque where a child goes to as from tender ages. In most cases, with the use of canes, a single mallam takes care of a class or a group of learners (Ojibara, 1999). Arabic and Islamic education has Qur'anic school as its bedrock. Most of the Qur'anic schools where Arabic and Islamic education takes place are run according to the discretion of their individual proprietors, who are invariably Qur'anic school teachers themselves (Fafunwa, 1974). As a result, instruction differs from school to school and there is no uniform curriculum, or prescribed qualification for teacher (Fafunwa, 1974). In addition, there is no stipulated period for schooling and no appropriate instructional media. These characteristics however, informed our description of Arabic and Islamic education under this situation as 'traditional'. The organisation of the traditional Qur'anic school is neither formal and nor

informal. Rather, it is non-formal because it encompasses elements of both formal and informal systems of education (Amaele, 2005).

Nacomyo (1998), Kilani (1999) and Abdur-Rafiu (2002) have all noted that the establishment of the first Qur'anic school took place in Irepo local government towards the end of 19th century during the reign of king Abubakar Folawiyo Ariwajoye I and the first Qur'anic centre was that of Oloyoyo compound in Isale Imale district. The second Qur'anic school was that of Teefa compound in Agede district. These two Qur'anic schools were said to be the only training centres for traditional Arabic and Islamic education for quite a long time.

Salaudeen (2002) and Abdur-Rafiu (2002) noted that during the early periods of the twentieth century, many traditional Arabic and Islamic scholars abounded in Kisi, Irepo local government. These scholars established traditional Qur'anic schools in their various communities and villages. Prominent among them included Late Imam Aliy (founder of Isale Ajagba district Qur'anic school), late Shaykh Shuayb Kewujina (Founder of Agede district Qur'anic school) and late Shaykh Salahudin Atensise (founder of Ehinke District Qur'anic School) (Abdur-Rafiu, 2002). Moreover, between 1976-2000, some group of scholars called "mankondoro" emerged in Kisi town and established traditional Qur'anic schools. Pioneers among them were Sheikh Jamiu Asiso Loriro, Sheikh Hamzah Imalere, Sheykh AbdulGaniy Ojisenla, Sheykh AbdulGaniy Ahmed, Sheykh Abdul Latif Sakaloro and others. Some of the earliest Qur'anic schools have been replaced and managed by contemporary traditionalists (Abdur-Rafiu, 2002).

Modern Arabic and Islamic Education in Irepo Local Government

Modern Arabic and Islamic schools are well organized educational institutions established by voluntary Muslim organizations or interested individual proprietors. Students pass through three distinctive levels at the schools. These are ibtida'iyyah, I'dadiyyah and Thanawiyya levels (Oladosu, 2008). The system and method adopted here are absolutely formal. These however informed our description of the Arabic and Islamic education received therein as modern.

Modern Arabic and Islamic education came into being in Irepo Local Government with the emergence of modern Islamiyyah schools. Modern Islamiyyah schools came into being in Irepo Local Government in 1971 with the entire Muslim community in Kisiland (headquarter of Irepo Local Government) collectively founding a formal Arabic and Islamic school recognized by the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Abdur-

Rafiu, 2002). Late 1980s could be regarded as a golden period of Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo local Government. The period witnessed the establishment of more formal institutes of Arabic and Islamic education. Some of the pioneering schools are:

1. Ihlaul Islam (Progressive Arabic and Islamic College)
2. Daru Ta'alimil Ulum College
3. Ridwanullahi College
4. Nurudinil Islam College
5. Akhbarudin College etc.

Today, the proliferation of the modern and Islamic schools in Irepo local government has taken a significant and wider dimension. As directly discovered by the present researcher through direct observation, there are more than 50 Arabic and Islamic schools in Irepo local government as at present. Some of these schools include:

1. Ma'hdul Islamiy (Islamic Institute), Agede Area Kisi
2. I'laul 'Ulumul 'Islamiyyah, Ojukoto, Kisi
3. 'Iqrah Foundation Arabic and and Islamic school, Adasobo Estate, Kisi
4. Kashafatul 'Ulum, Ajana Area, Kisi
5. Madrasatu Daru Dawatil 'Islamiyyah, Owode Area, Kisi
6. Umar Bn Khattab, Koso Area, Kisi
7. Madrasatu Jam'iyyatu Youmbas, Oju Koto Area, Kisi
8. Ansarul Islam, Koso Area, Kisi
9. Ibn Rasheed School for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Koso Area, Kisi
10. Albayan Islamic College

Features of traditional and modern Arabic and Islamic Schools in Irepo Local Government

To objectively reveal the situation of Arabic and Islamic schools in Irepo local government, data were collected through interview, questionnaire, personal observation, primary and secondary sources. Below is the summary of the information obtained:

Table 1: Summary of Features of Arabic and Islamic Schools in Irepo Local Government

	Traditional school	Modern school
Facilities	- Open places mostly, under the shade of tree, mallam's parlour, passage and veranda are used for lessons and	- Mostly situated in buildings suitable to accommodate students. - Students are grouped into classes and levels

	lectures. - Conducive environment is not an issue of consideration - All students sit down on the mat stretched down on the floor	conducive for learning - Some have got permanent sites while some are still in rented apartments. - Facilities like staff offices, halls, playing grounds, assembly grounds etc are also available.
Curriculum and Methods	- No organized curriculum or syllabus - No specific classification or grouping of students into classes and levels - Rote learning, recitation, imitation, lecture and translation methods are employed - Academic programme is majorly religious studies education	- Organized curriculum for each school - Specific grouping into classes and levels - Lecture, demonstration, rote learning, discovery, field trip, drama methods etc. are employed. Quiz and essay competitions are also employed - Academic programme is classified into religious studies, linguistics, education principles and practice and general studies
Administration of the schools	The proprietor is the teacher, the administrator of his school. No monitoring, or supervising agents	The proprietor who is an individual or organization controls and oversees the affairs. An organized administrative structure is on ground. -parents and stakeholders forum make their inputs
Staffing	The proprietor is the sole controller and the chief lecturer of his school. In some cases, senior students assist the proprietor in teaching the junior ones. - No well defined certificate is	- The certificated people are employed . - The minimum qualification for a mallam (teacher) is Thanawiyyah certificate

	required of the proprietor and the teacher	
Finance	No fixed school fees. So the proprietor finances his school through money generated either during Islamic festivities e.g. walimat or through the parents of pupils or philanthropists.	Mainly depend on the school fees collected from the students and the donations from international bodies.
Products	- Most are teachers (traditional scholars) who also establish traditional Arabic Islamic schools - Some local preachers - Some local medical practitioners - Some farmers and traders	- Some employed as teachers in modern Arabic and Islamic schools and public schools - Some further their studies at Colleges of Education and Universities to read Arabic and Islamic Studies, education with Arabic medium - Some joined politics - Some are preachers - Some traders and farmers - Among the products of

From the foregoing data gathered on the traditional and modern Arabic and Islamic Schools, it is clear that in the traditional Arabic and Islamic schools, a school was monitored and controlled by a single person who serves as the proprietor, the principal and teacher of his students. Here the conservative structure of traditional Arabic and Islamic schools is manifest. It is a situation whereby a student is attached to a single person who serves as his master that imparts all expected cognitive experiences to him, no specific duration of course, no fixed remuneration for teacher, no organized classification of students, no well-organised curriculum and no clearly stated educational objectives as well as adoption of the sciences or techniques of teachings. These characteristics show the traditionalism and conservatism in traditional Arabic and Islamic education.

In the modern Arabic and Islamic schools, the features that characterise the system adopted as modern are obvious. These include giving a school a

befitting name e.g. I'laul Islam Arabic College. This is contrary to the traditional schools which has no proper name except being called 'Arabic School' i.e. (Ile Keu). Others include, setting up of school administrative unit, teaching staffers, fixed remuneration, fixing of school fees, scheduling a curriculum etc. Another feature of modern Arabic and Islamic schools is the fact that most of the teachers there are certificated, they are products of Nigerian higher institutions while those teaching in traditional schools are also traditionalists.

Conclusion

In Nigeria generally, and in Irepo Local Government specifically, Arabic and Islamic education takes place under both traditional and modern systems. With the data collected through interview, questionnaire, personal observation, primary and secondary sources, the traditional Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo Local Government is viewed as an effective tool for religious propagation. Although, it is faulted as not meeting present social, cultural and academic challenges, the traditional Arabic and Islamic education helps in eradicating illiteracy, assists in fighting immoralities and promoting cognitive development. Other weaknesses of the traditional Arabic and Islamic education are in the areas of informalities of teaching methods, teaching aid, administration and control of the schools.

Modern Arabic and Islamic education appears to be more effective, reliable and more relevant in the present time than the traditional system. In spite of the fact that modern Arabic and Islamic education is better, it is still lagging behind when compared to Nigerian formal education system. Therefore, the principals, proprietors, administrators, teachers and all concerned stakeholder need to grapple with and respond to the challenges ahead. It is hoped that if the recommendations herein are adopted, the future of Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo Local Government in particular and in Nigeria as a whole will be better.

Recommendations

For sustainable development and advancement of Arabic and Islamic education in Irepo Local Government, it is suggested that:

1. Arabic and Islamic schools should be fully modernized and formalised: Based on the fact that dynamism is among the principles and features of a good and realistic educational system, if the modern system of education should be incorporated into the process of teaching and learning of Arabic and Islamic studies, it will enhance Arabic and Islamic education and will also colour its status.

2. Arabic and Islamic schools should be registered with the government: In Nigeria, federal and state ministries of education and local education authorities determine education policy, administration and control of schools. Most Arabic and Islamic schools are independent of these authorities, and for full recognition, there is the need for registration of Arabic and Islamic schools with the government.
3. Qualified and trained teachers need to be recruited: With Arabic and Islamic studies being offered in tertiary institutions of Nigeria (Universities and Colleges), the products of the Nigerian schools should be recruited to teach in Arabic and Islamic schools so as to incorporate their experiences in the system.
4. Attractive salaries and wages should be given to staffers of the school: The principle of no fixed salary for the teachers of Arabic and Islamic schools and less payment should be replaced with attractive wages and remuneration.
5. There should be uniformity in curricula: It was found that most Arabic and Islamic schools established by voluntary Muslim organization operate different curricula. In view of this, Arabic and Islamic schools need to work out a uniform curriculum so as to enable the products partake in nationally recognized final examinations. This would also accord students the opportunity of furthering their studies in Nigerian higher institutions
6. The traditional Arabic and Islamic schools have to be modified and modern educational system needs to be incorporated in the schools.
7. Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria has to be tailored towards achieving the national educational goal so that it will be relevant for the nation's growth and development.
8. Arabic and Islamic scholars and teachers ought to be dutiful and dedicated to their work irrespective of social hindrances.

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