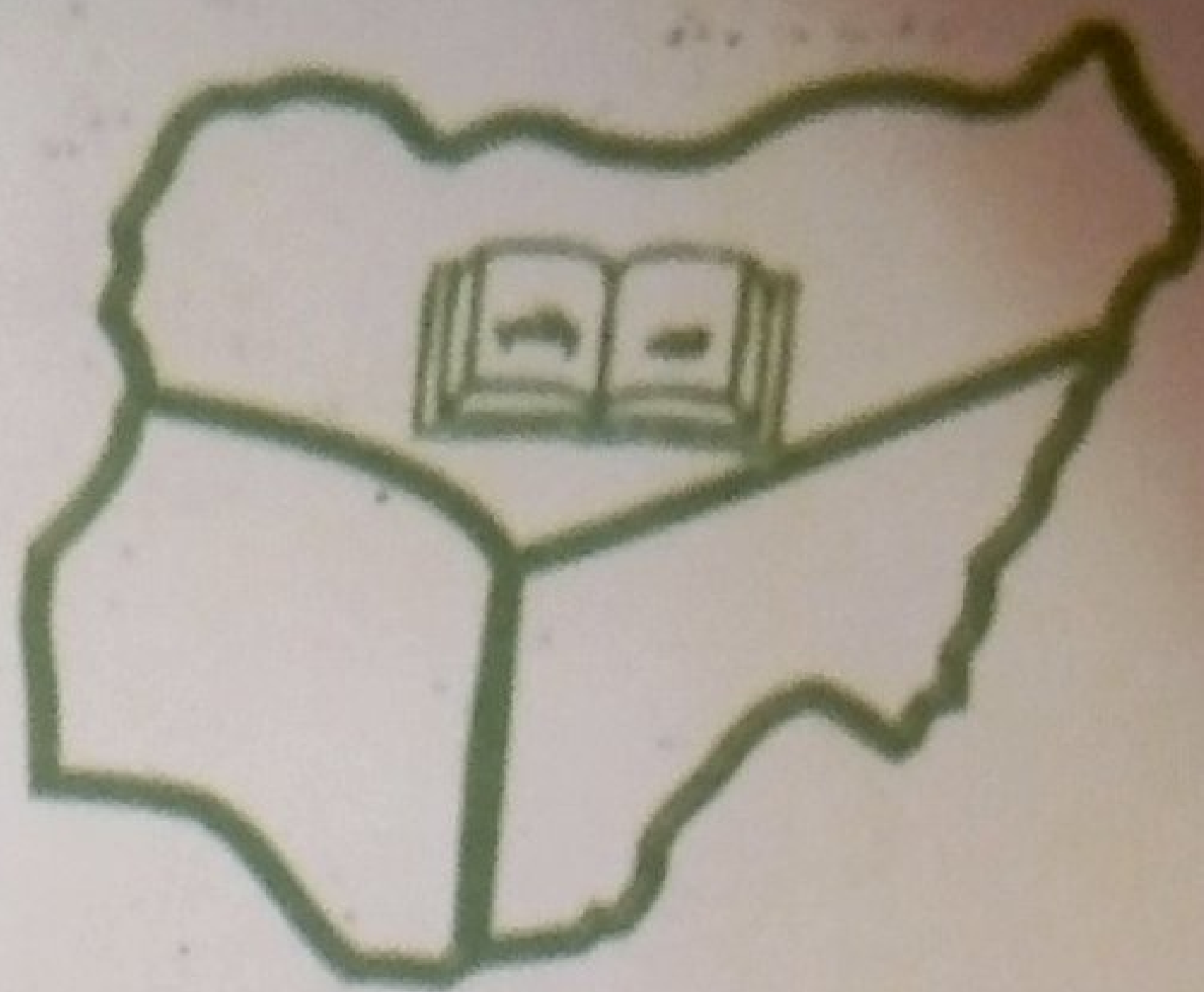


THE NIGERIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF
ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES (NATAIS)



ARABIC AND ISLAMIC LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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CONFERENCE
OF NIGERIA TEACHERS OF ARABIC
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(NATAIS) IN IBADAN

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE REVISED ISLAMIC STUDIES' CURRICULUM FOR THE UPPER BASIC EDUCATION (JS1-3) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Islamic studies was one of the independent subjects of teaching in the primary and secondary school until 2012 when the 9-Years Universal Basic Education Curriculum was reviewed and the subject became a theme among other three themes that form Religion and National Values. The content of the old curriculum is adopted with some modifications to suit the objective of the revision. This work investigated the perception of teachers in the concerned schools regarding the new development. Teachers were randomly sampled from selected secondary schools in Ilorin and the Federal Capital territory, Abuja. The collected data was analysed and findings revealed that even though the reduction of subjects to a manageable size is a welcome idea, Islamic studies is at disadvantage because the objective of teaching the subject is jeopardised.

Introduction

Islamic studies started with the appearance of Angel Jibril to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) at the cave of Hira. The first revelation gave him a clue to what shall be the tools of his mission when Allah commanded him: "Read in the name of your Lord who created". Mosques were then used as learning centres at the time of the Prophet (S.A.W) and Companions were dispatched to various provinces for teaching and preaching¹. The establishment of *katatib* for training of pupils as elementary Islamic education took off. The *katatib* was replaced with *Madaris* system of schooling which was more organised and systematic than the *katatib*². The *Madaris* has syllabus and other facilities relevant for the enhancement of learning.

With modernisation in educational system, Muslims started pursuing their education beyond the *Madaris* system which provide for secondary education status, to Institutions of higher learning firstly, in countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and later, in their mother country (Nigeria).

Consequent upon the coming of the Christian missionaries in Nigeria, Islamic Studies had undergone some reforms which include the introduction of some secular subjects into the Arabic and Islamic Schools (*madaris*) and with success in this method; more Arabic and Islamic Schools were not only established but equally recognised by the government. Sequel to this, Nigeria rose to bridge the dichotomy between product of private Schools and those of public Schools. In so doing, Islamic Studies is offered as subject in GCE/WAEC, NECO and Certificate/Diploma courses are offered in Arabic and Islamic Studies in some Universities of the Nation and the discipline later became a degree course in Nigerian Universities.

At around 1984, Nigeria adopted the 6-3-3-4 education system and a syllabus for Islamic studies was designed thus;

1. **Hidayah (Guidance):** issues under this are :The Qur'an, The Hadith and Tahdhib (Moral Education)
2. **Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence):** issues discussed under this are; Tawhid (Belief), Ibadah (Worship) and Mu'amalat (Human Transactions) This includes Shariah, Marriage, Divorce, Custody of Children, Inheritance etc.
3. **Tarikh (Historical Development of Islam).** This include ; Sirah (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) plus the leadership of the four (4) Righteous Caliphs, The Spread of Islam to Western Africa and Contributions of Muslims to World Civilization³

The 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) (September 2008- August 2014)

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), in accordance with the decision of the Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in September 1988 re-structured all extant primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) curricula into 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum for implementation in Nigerian schools with effect from September, 2008. This Curriculum emphasizes value re-orientation, poverty eradication and employment generation capabilities in learners.⁴ The curriculum aims at ensuring that students, after the 3 years of junior secondary school education, must have acquired;

- basic numeracy, literacy and lifelong skill
- acquired the basic skill in science technology
- developed the foundation for technical, vocational and entrepreneurship culture

imbibed high moral values and positive ethical standards.

The 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum was particularly developed for the attainment of the Education for All (EFA) goals, the critical targets of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was developed in response to Nigeria's need for relevant, dynamic and globally competitive education that would ensure that learners at the Basic Education level are capable to compete favourably anywhere in the world in terms of knowledge, skills, techniques, values and aptitude. Thus the 9-Year BEC addressed among other things, the issue of value re-orientation, poverty eradication, critical thinking, entrepreneurship and life skills. Implementation of the 9-Year BEC commenced nationwide, in Primary 1 and JSS 1 classes in September, 2008, while the old curriculum (the 6-3-3-4 Curriculum) was systematically being phased out. The first batch of JSS students graduated in June, 2011 after writing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).⁵ But just three years after the curriculum for the Universal Basic Education was designed, the curriculum was revised to reduce the number of subjects offered by the students as practiced globally⁶

The Revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (September, 2014 – Date)

Consequent upon the feedback on the implementation of the 9-Year BEC received and the contemporary global and national concerns, the Nigerian government revised the 9- Year BEC in 2012.⁷ The curriculum was revised from twenty (20) subjects to a minimum of ten (10) subjects in view of the observation that the curriculum in use is overloaded with subjects. Religion and national values happens to be one of the ten subjects and it has imbedded in it, the following subjects (themes)

- 1 Christian Religious Studies/ Islamic Studies
- 2 Civic Education
- 3 Social Studies
- 4 Security Education⁸

Structure of the Revised Curriculum

The Upper Basic Education curriculum as revised in 2012 has some of the subjects compressed among which Islamic studies forms one of the five themes under Religion and National Values. Others are Christians Religious

Studies, Civic Education, Social Studies and Security Education. Below is the table of the Upper Basic Education Curriculum

Upper Basic Education Curriculum (Junior Secondary 1-3)

Subjects	Explanatory Notes
1. English Studies	• Official National Language • Medium of Instruction in schools • The subject predisposes itself for the infusion of the following Road Safety Education, Disaster Risk Reduction Education, Consumer Education • Subject include Literature-in-English
2. Mathematics	• Fundamental discipline for science and technology development • Important of everyday life
3. Nigerian Languages (One Nigerian Language)	• Schools are free to select such Nigerian language to be taught
4. Basic Science and Technology (BST) • Basic science • Basic Technology • Physical and Health Education • Information Technology (IT)	• Each of the listed components will serve as themes for the Basic Science and Technology Curriculum • Climate change is part of the Basic Science theme • Disaster Risk Reduction Education and Consumer Education are infused into Basic Science and Technology Curriculum • Create enabling environment for the subject in all schools by making computer available in schools.
5. Pre-Vocational Studies • Home Economics • Agriculture • Entrepreneurship	• Each of the listed components will serve as themes for the Pre-Vocational Studies • Consumer Education is infused into Pre-Vocational Studies • Create enabling environment for the teaching of pre-vocational studies in schools
6. Religion and National Values (RNV) • Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies • Social studies • Civic Education • Security Education	• Listed components will serve as themes in the Religion and National Values Curriculum • Contents are planned for all children to take Social Studies, Civic education and Security Education themes • Separate classes should be run for CRS theme and IS theme • Consumer Education, Disaster Risk Education and Peace and Conflict Resolution curricula are infused into the Civic Education, Social Studies and Security Education themes • Create enabling environment for the subject in all schools
7. Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)	• Important for preservation of our cultural heritage and fostering creativity • Tourism is a theme in Cultural and Creative Arts Curriculum
8. Business Studies	• It is desirable for every child to have some idea of business enterprise • Enterprise is treated in Business Studies • Consumer Education is infused into Business Studies Curriculum
9. French Language	• Nigeria's second official language • Nigeria is surrounded by Francophone countries • The study of French Language will make our children more competitive at the global level
10. Arabic Language	Optional
Note: • Minimum of 9 subjects; Maximum of 10 subjects • Emphasis should be on basic concepts and their explanations • Teaching and learning activities must be creative, innovative, and practical. • Avoid content repetitions across themes and subjects • Admits only basic contents from old curriculum	

Source: NERDC, 2013.

General Structure of the Upper Basic Education Islamic Studies Curriculum (JS 1-3)

The Islamic studies curriculum for the Upper Basic Education has three segments: Qur'an and Hadith, *Tawhid* and *Fiqh* and *Sirah* and *Tahdhib*

Qur'an and Hadith

This aspect in the revised edition of the curriculum specifies that students in the upper basic education are to be taught the recitation, memorisation and meaning of Suratu 'n-Nabai (Qur'an 78) with forty (40) verses in JS 1, Suratul Jinn (Qur'an 72) with twenty (28) verses in JS 2 and Suratul Mulk (Qur'an 67) with thirty (30) verses in JS 3.

Under Hadith, students are introduced to only the meaning of Hadith in their first year and this comes up in the second week of the first term in the first year. In the second and third year, selected Hadith from Al-Nawawi's collection are discussed and they include Hadith two, three, six, seven and eight

Tawhid and Fiqh

This aspect takes care of the theological aspect of worship such as the attributes of Allah and the qualities and functions of the Angels and the Messengers. Equally covered under this section are issues of Islamic Jurisprudence which starts with pillars of Islam and extents to Salat. Except for week four of second term JSS 2 where we have an introduction to Sawm (Fasting in Islam), Fasting, Zakat and Hajj are left out in the Upper Basic Curriculum for Islamic Studies.

Sirah and Tahdhib

Under *Sirah* (Islamic history) effort is made to present a brief but comprehensive biography of Prophet Muhammad from birth to death in the first two years while in their third year, they are taught brief history of some Nigerian scholars such as Shaykh Uthman bin Fodio, Shaikh Abdullah Fodio and Shaikh Adam al-Ilori. In the aspect of *tahdhib* (Moral teaching), issues to be discussed include relationship between Muslims and non Muslims, environmental sanitation

Teachers' Perception of Theme's Evaluation

With the revised curriculum, students will be assessed on religion and national value with its four themes. The evaluation standard for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) has Continuous assessments and examination at 60% and 40% respectively. Islamic studies which is one of the themes of R and NV will carry ten marks for examination and fifteen marks for continuous assessment. It was observed that with the new system, there is likely to be a

shallow evaluation of students on Islamic studies⁹. The fact that the mark is insignificant, a student may avoid questions on Islamic studies and still pass the subject, a situation that will make students underscore the relevance of the subject to their life as Muslims.¹⁰

Similar to this is the argument that the curriculum content is wide and if students will be assessed at the end of the term on the content just for a score of 10% out of 40%, there could be difficulty in sharing the scores more especially when the four themes that constitute the subjects are offered within a narrow period of time.¹¹ The fact that Islamic studies is one of the four themes to be assessed under a single subject, it is difficult for the question to cover a reasonable percentage of what is taught in the class and by implication, students would probably be assessed on an aspect of the theme while the other themes would suffer assessment¹²

Teachers' Perception of the Curriculum Content

The curriculum content was criticised by most teachers of Junior Secondary Schools. Abdul-Malik Muhammad Maruf is of the view that in his own school, the revised curriculum is not adopted for use because it is not realistic.¹³ He argued that for students without Arabic background and which abounds most of the secondary schools, teaching them the recitation and memorisation of Suratul Nabai, Jinn and Mulk would amount to a share waste of time because the chapters are not commonly used and as a result, it would be difficult for the student to commit them to memory. Adding credence to the argument of Muhammad Maruf, Muhammad Jamiu submitted that even among the Islamic studies teachers of the Junior Secondary Schools, there are those that cannot recite the Qur'an perfectly. Such teachers, according to him, are trained on the recitation of short chapters contained in the previous curriculum, he argued that those short chapters are relevant because they are constantly used on prayers and students are likely to get a better grasps of such chapters than the longer ones that are seldom referred to¹⁴

Alhaj Muhibudden AbdurRahman showed his concern for the shortcoming in the revised curriculum. He argued that the previous curriculum is more focused. His argument was about the reading and memorisation of the chapters of the Qur'an without any emphasis on lessons derived from those verses.¹⁵ He further argued that students should better be exposed to all the five pillars of Islam at the Upper Basic Education even if it will not be discussed in details. He concluded that his school had not adopted the revised curriculum because of the lapses noticed in it. He made a submission that the revised curriculum that removed the teaching of Arabic language at Basic 4-6

is not sincere in its preparation of the students for the learning of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Zakariyyah, adding to what others have said regarding chapters to be taught at this level, observed that the curriculum is cumbersome. He argued that some of the topics expected to be covered in a week cannot be covered. He gave the example of the ninth week of the first term in JS 3 when students are to be taught the reading, explanation and lessons of Hadith 13 and 14 of an Nawawi. He said that only two periods are slated for the teaching of Islamic studies in a week and if justice is to be done to these hadiths, the two periods can only be sufficient for the reading and probably explanation of the hadiths¹⁶

Teachers Perception of Teaching Materials

With respect to teaching materials, most of the teachers are of the view that there is no enough materials that discuss the content of the new curriculum. Muhibuddin categorically mentioned that the more reason why he has not adopted the revised curriculum for use in his school is the fact that there are no materials on ground that discuss the content of the curriculum directly. He mentioned that the book titled Islamic studies for junior secondary schools (Book 1,2 and 3) authored by A,R.I Doi and others which has been in use since the inception of UBE simplifies the teaching of the subject than any other book.¹⁷

Conclusion

Islamic studies curriculum has undergone different stages of review and reform and, if not for the recent review which seems to put the subject into bondage, developments that surround it revealed that cognisance is given to the teaching of Islamic studies as a study that is practical oriented. The new curriculum certainly holds many challenges to its implementation among which is the unavailability of standard textbooks for the revised/combined subjects and selection of relevant contents from bulk of content in the now old contents. The problem of having specialized teachers that could handle the newly introduced topics is another issue and lastly, the students poor Arabic background is a militating factor against the smooth implementation of the new curriculum. It would not be an over statement to say that the committee that drafted the curriculum are over ambitious. This is confirmed from their introduction of lengthy *surahs* for reading and memorisation with little or no emphasis on the study of lessons derived from them.

Recommendation

The interview conducted reveals that most of the teachers of Islamic studies in the junior secondary schools are not favourably disposed to the innovation in the revised curriculum not only because the content is assumed to be more complex for the students but because it has no substance to achieve the desired objective of the subject. In view of this, the authors wish to recommend the following:

- There is the need for the government to make Islamic studies an independent subject. The content of Islamic studies cannot be compared to that of social studies or civic education
- There should be a return back to the teaching of short chapters of the Qur'an because they are easier for students to memorise and study
- Emphasis on lessons derived from chapters of the Qur'an and tradition of the Prophet should be placed over memorisation of texts
- Arabic language should be returned to Basic 4-6 because the language is a requisite to the study of texts of the Qur'an
- Scholars should be encouraged to produce text books that are relevant to a more productive curriculum

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