



Riphah Journal of Islamic Thought & Civilization
Published by: Department of Islamic Studies,
Riphah International University, Islamabad
Email: editor.rjic@riphah.edu.pk
Website: <https://journals.riphah.edu.pk/index.php/jitc>
ISSN (E): 2791-187X



Teaching Methodologies for Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities: Strategies, Evaluation and Way Forward

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Abstract

Islamic Studies as a discipline in Nigerian Universities was introduced to provide training and the dissemination and promotion of Knowledge of Islam in particular and Islamic culture in general. The discipline is designed to pursue the development of Muslims through inculcation of Islamic values, norms and principles, without which the goal of ideological, moral, intellectual and economic development of any Muslim Nation may not be achieved. The programme seeks to make students appreciate the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W) as the two fountain heads on which Islam is based. The curriculum is structured to produce qualified intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating the articles of faith (Iman), qualities of knowledge, (Ilm) and good character (Akhlaq) to serve as agents of comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development. It focuses on developing practical solutions through research on contemporary problems of Nigerian Muslim society in particular and the Muslim world in general. This paper is going to discuss on the teaching methodologies for Islamic studies in the Nigerian Universities. A suitable teaching method is very important in helping to achieve desired objectives and behavioral outcome expected on the learners. The research Methodology to be adopted in conducting this research is analytical methods by studying facts and information on research methodologies used for teaching Islamic studies in Nigerian Universities and analyses them to make a critical evaluation.

Keywords: *Islamic studies, Universities, Methodology, Evaluation and Nigeria.*

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Introduction:

The discipline of Islamic Studies has been studied in Nigeria for more than two hundred years. The present formal system of Islamic studies in our schools owes its origin, like its counterparts in the humanities and sciences, to Western system of education adopted by the Muslims in our Muslim secondary schools in the late 1950s. In 1961 the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies was established in the University of Ibadan to offer B.A. (Arabic) and B.A. (Islamic Studies). Following the examples of the University of Ibadan, many Universities in the country particularly those in the Muslim populated areas have Islamic Studies as part of their academic programmes.¹ Today, we have about 29 Universities that offer Islamic studies as a course in Nigeria. Thousands of students are turned out every year by these universities. The philosophy of the programme is designed to:

Pursue the development of human beings through the inculcation of Islamic values, norms and principles, without which the goal of ideological, moral, intellectual and economic development may not be achieved. The programme seeks to make students see the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as the two fountain heads on which Islam is based. The curriculum is structured to produce qualified intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating the articles of faith (Iman), qualities of knowledge, (Ilm) and good character (Akhlaq) to serve as agents of comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development. It focuses on developing practical solution through research on contemporary problems of Nigerian society in particular and the Muslim world in general.²

In a country where Islam is a way of life for a large proportion of its people, Islamic Studies is very vital and its study as an academic discipline becomes significant. Islamic primary sources are in Arabic language, this explain why proficiency in the language is crucial to the proper understanding and competence in Islamic Studies discipline. Students should be able to read and digest the primary sources of Islamic Studies. Also, proficiency in English is crucial for the purpose of studying Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities as it is the language of instruction after Arabic. The existing curriculum for Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities is the harmonized one provided by the National Universities Commission for the teaching of Islamic Studies at undergraduate level known as B-Mass. It is the approved minimum standard requirement enforced by the Commission. The common sets of courses forming the curricula and syllabi include: Qur'anic Studies, Hadith Studies, Textual Studies of the Qur'an Hadith, *Ilm al-Tawhid*, *Ibadat* (Rituals), Islamic Law (*Shari'ah* and *Usul al-Figh*), The Sources and Development of Islamic Law, Islamic Law of *Mu'amalat*, Islamic Family Law, Advanced Studies of Islamic Theology (*al-Tawhid*), Islamic Law of Inheritance, Laws of *Wasiyyah* and *Waqf*, The Advanced Studies of Islamic Principles of Jurisprudence (*Usul al-fiqh*), Islamic Thought and Philosophy, *Ilm al-Kalam* and the development of Muslim *Firaq*, Islamic Political Thought and Movements, comparative study of Religions, Islamic Art and Architecture, Moral Philosophy in Islam, Advanced Studies of the Creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah*, Islamic History

including the Development of Islam in Asia and Africa, The contributions of West African Scholars to Islam and the *Sirah* and *Maghazi* Literature.³

Any academic discipline within the school curriculum must have its aims and objectives. The aims and objectives of teaching Islamic studies in Nigerian Universities as outlined in the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved minimum academic standards are:

- a- acquaint students with broad knowledge of Islam as a religion
- b- prepare students to understand Islam as a culture and civilization
- c- prepare students to analyze and proffer solution to the problems of contemporary Muslim communities with particular reference to Nigeria
- d- make students understand the place of Islam in the context of other world religious traditions especially those that relate to Nigeria
- e- train students that would adequately serve the staffing needs of schools, judiciary and other relevant establishments
- f- prepare students for higher Islamic studies and related disciplines.⁴

Research Methodology

Analytical methods was adopted for this research by studying qualitative data, facts and information on secondary sources such as books, journal articles and other internet sources and providing critical analysis based on several findings from the literature on Teaching

Methodology for Islamic Studies. Techniques for data collection and analysis are very important for any given research in helping to understand how the information is gathered and processed. Analyses to make a critical evaluation of the data obtained help in shaping this research and unbiased findings were clearly stated.

Teaching Methodologies for Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities

The influence of teaching methods comes from the fact that the content of any curriculum cannot be learned efficiently unless it is presented in a specific way. Inadequacy of methods may affect learning outcomes and cause undue wastage of time, while application of modern and adequate methods enhances and influences Students' academic performance.⁵ It is therefore necessary that a teacher be conversant with different methods of teaching to be able to make teaching interesting.⁶

Lecture Method.

In Nigerian Universities the most common teaching methodology used in teaching Islamic Studies is the lecture method. According to Abimbade, lecture method is an organized verbal presentation of the course content by the teacher to his students and is one of the oldest methods and most widely used in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The lecturer dominates most of the time allocated for the course and at times with or without the students' involvement.⁷ This method could also be traced back to the period of revelation when Angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet SAW and teach him the Qur'an. In a Hadith the Prophet SAW said:

Occasionally the angel appears before me in the form of a man and speaks to me, and I grasp all that he says.⁸

The revelation of the Qur'an further indicates that the Qur'an is divided into segments and at intervals; this is in order not to burden the students (Prophet's companions). Allah SWT Says:

(It is) a Qur'an which we have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightiest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages. Qur'an (17:106).

In another place, he was cautioned not to intervene or be in haste with the Qur'an:

Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely on us (devolves) the collecting of it and reciting of it. Therefore when We have recited it, follow its recitation. Again on Us (devolves) the explaining of it. Qur'an (75:16-19).

From the above verses we can also deduce that dictation Method was used during the period of revelation. It is a method widely used in the Muslim World for teaching the Qur'an recitation from the early period of Islam to contemporary time. Islamic studies teachers can therefore use this method to teach different types of Qur'anic recitations effectively.

Role model Method.

Another method used in teaching Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities is teaching through examples. An Islamic studies teacher should be of exemplary character worthy of emulation in order to discharge his duties effectively. Nigerian Universities awards their degrees to qualified students in both learning and character; therefore, teachers of Islamic studies are to serve as role model by demonstrating Islamic moral character and ethics for

all round moral development. They are regarded as the inspirers of positive behavioural change of their students. The Prophet SAW as the first teacher of the Muslim Ummah demonstrated this method through his exemplary character. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT states:

You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent model for those of you who put their hope in Allah and the last day and remember Allah often. Qur'an (33:21).

Consequently, an Islamic Studies teacher should endeavor to have good morals and shun bad manners and copy the exemplary life of Prophet SAW as a teacher, so that his students may also emulate him.

Other teaching techniques we can learn from the Prophet SAW include fluent expression and repeating important points while giving lectures. This requires the teachers to explain things clearly in a simple manner and speak in a clear and loud voice. Narrated Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her):

The Prophet used to talk so clearly that if somebody wanted to count the number of his words, he could do so.⁹

Also in another *Hadith*, Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) explained that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never talked quickly and vaguely,¹⁰ and he encouraged people to give good tidings, make things easy and not burden people unnecessary to make them run away from the religion of Islam.¹¹

Wisdom and Adequate Knowledge

In teaching Islamic studies a teacher is expected to demonstrate wisdom and possess considerable knowledge of the subject matter. He should facilitate easy understanding of his students, avoid difficult expressions and diversify his method of addressing his subject to conform to different individual differences of his students. He must not let his personal interest overtook the prerequisites of wisdom. Personal criticism or humiliation of his students should be avoided.

A teacher should also be adequately possessed of knowledge about his subject matter. He must have sufficient knowledge of Islamic Studies to be able to lecture his students. Poor in articulation is not fit to convey the Message of Islam to the people. According to Badawi, a teacher must have sufficient knowledge to be able to teach others.¹² In a *Hadith* Muawiyah said that he heard Allah's Apostle saying,

If Allah wants to do good to a person, He makes him comprehend the religion. I am just a distributor, but the grant is from Allah...¹³

An Islamic Studies teacher, is therefore, expected to be fully aware of the various methods of various fields of Islamic sciences. For example, a teacher of Hadith studies should be familiar with the methodology developed by Hadith scholars such as the basic method of criticism employed by *hadith* scholars, the method of comparison and authenticity to demonstrate the reliability or other wise of reports. The same thing goes with the teacher of *Usul al-Fiqh* who should also know the methodology of *Fuqaha'* (Jusrists) in deducing laws from the sources, discussing *al-Ahkam al-Shar'iyah* (legal laws), methods of dealing

with *al-Ayat al-Ahkam* (Quran legal studies), *al-Ahadith Ahkam* (Hadith legal Studies) and so on.

This method of teaching Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities is maintained by recruiting teachers possessed of Knowledge of various areas of Islamic sciences. The minimum qualification of teaching in Nigerian Universities according to National Universities Commission is PhD. Teachers with undergraduate and Masters' Degrees are only employed and sent for further studies. Areas of specialization are also maintained in the promotion of staff to various ranks and are spread according to disciplines.¹⁴

The use of Information Communication Technology in teaching Islamic Studies

Information Communication Technology are terms Juxtaposed together to refer to 'the use of computers and telecommunications for the processing and distribution of information in digital, audio, video, and other forms'.¹⁵ According to Curtain, ICT is a set of activities that facilitate the capturing, storage, processing, transmission and display of information by electronic means.¹⁶ Chafe,¹⁷ further posits that, ICT uses the power of computer and other computing devices to capture, store, process and produce knowledge at speeds never dreamt of before. Communication technology using devices such as telephones, satellites and radio frequencies ensures the transmission of knowledge to any part of the world within a fraction of a second. Lecturers need to make some adjustments on how Islamic Studies should be taught especially in the period of corona virus pandemic (covid-19 pandemic).

The use of Zoom application and other similar platforms could be helpful in delivering lectures to students who can listen at fixed places like homes and offices, with the help of desktop, laptop computers, internet and smart phones. This will boost the teaching process. The Utilization of Electronic Resources on Islamic Studies such as Maktabah al-Shamilah, Maktabah al-Waqfiyyah, Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah and other online print media libraries and journal websites is also essential to both teachers and students of Islamic Studies.

Conclusion

The position of a teacher is one of the most important aspects in the teaching and dissemination of information about Islam, if the succeeds in his methodology, Islamic studies will be an interesting subject and its learning outcomes will be achieved. Suitable teaching method is therefore very important in realizing set goals of behavioral change expected in the learners.

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