

Challenges in Understanding Islamic Related Course by some Muslim Students: A Study of Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

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Abstract: Despite the obligatory of Islamic knowledge upon Muslim believers, some Muslim students are facing challenges in understanding Islamic related course at university level due to respective reasons. Such challenges even caused some of the students to have less commitment in the study area, and thus developed having them as graduates of Islamic Related Course without focus, being incapacitated to deliver the expected services. Some of the respective challenges were found as a result of some factors either related specifically to students, or the learning process. Using both primary and secondary data, this paper gives a historical background of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and further identified some of the challenges facing some Muslim students in understanding Islamic Related Course with specific consideration to the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, as a study area. The paper also identified some factors considered behind the challenges, and finally gives conclusion and recommendations as solutions to the identified challenges for consideration, adoption, and implementation accordingly.

Keywords: Challenges, Understanding, Islamic-Related-Course, Muslim, Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

All kind of study requires meaningful understanding and acquisition to enable fruitful implementation and dissemination. Such process of learning is an essential ingredient for human development, social justice, equity and religious harmony. Islam as a religion, enjoins its adherents to seek for useful knowledge from cradle to grave. Islamic knowledge therefore trains the sensibility of students in such a manner that their attitudes to life, approach to all kinds of learning and decisions are all regulated by the values of Islam.¹

It is therefore, uncalled-for a Muslim student to have unusual difficulty in understanding Islamic related course which is being derived from the sources of his/her religion.

However, learning process comprises mastering principles, understanding proofs, remembering factual information, acquiring methods, techniques and approaches, appropriate to specific situations² Such important portions and stages need meaningful exertions and contributions to be ensured for accomplishment.

It is the objective of this study to:

- i. identify the challenges some Muslim students are facing in understanding Islamic Related Course within the study area.

¹ Busari J. M. *Problems and Prospects of Teaching and Learning Islamic Studies*, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, (2018) V8, p230

² Heather Fry, et al *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice* Third edition, (2003) Routledge, New York p8

- ii. identify factors behind the challenges, and
- iii. proffer solutions to the challenges

1.2. Definition of Key Terms

- i. **Challenge:** is the situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully.³ It connotes the problems and or difficulties encountering in a particular process.
- ii. **Understanding:** knowledge about a subject matter, situation, etc. or about how something works.⁴
- iii. **IS:** (Islamic Studies), **IRC:** (Islamic-Related-Course) **FAIS** (Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies) **UDUS** (Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto)

1.3. Historical Background of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (formally University of Sokoto) is one of the four Universities established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in September, 1975. The development of the University started on a temporary site (now called City Campus), situated along Sultan Abubakar road, Sokoto. Classes started on 20th October, 1977 with an initial enrolment of ninety-three undergraduate students for degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Art/Science Education, and Bachelor of Sciences. Bachelor of Art (Islamic Studies) and Bachelor of Art (Arabic Language) that are considered as the Islamic related course in this research were part of the courses with which the University commenced.⁵

2. CHALLENGES OF UNDERSTANDING IRC BY SOME MUSLIM STUDENTS

The learning of Islamic knowledge is essential for every Muslim, because it is the gateway to be more acquainted with Islam, its teachings, practice, and further dissemination.⁶

In spite of the significance of Islamic knowledge, there are challenges some Muslim students faced in understanding IS and other IRC at different levels of education. Some of the challenges include:

- i. Inability to comprehend the contents and context of Islamic course due to their inadequate background of Islamic knowledge, inattentiveness, inadequate learning materials, or insufficient facilitation from parents or sponsor other than the parents.
- ii. Inability to express knowledge acquired due to insufficient Arabic or English language vocabularies, as Islamic related course requires knowledge of both languages for better understanding, expression, and dissemination especially in an English/Arabic spoken institution like UDUS

The above are considered as part of the challenges some of the contemporary Muslim students are facing in understanding IRC, and thus, affect their accurate perceptive of the respective course of study. However, there are factors that resulted the aforementioned challenges.

3. FACTORS BEHIND THE CHALLENGES OF UNDERSTANDING IRC BY SOME MUSLIM STUDENTS

i. Interest and motivation

In learning process, interest serves as the motivational factor that influences performance of an individual.⁷ Therefore, interest makes a student contented with his/her desired topic or subject of study. Student's interest in IRC corroborates his/her understanding, makes him/her to feel engaged and committed to achieve the predetermined goal of the IRC. With interest, all attention required for proper learning could be rendered, and challenges be affordable.

³ Cambridge Online Dictionary (retrieved on 7/8/2018 8:02am)

⁴ Ibid (retrieved on 7/8/2018 8:02am)

⁵ Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto 2014/2015 Revised Students' Hand Book, ISBN: 978-978-931-522-2, Sokoto, Nigeria, P4

⁶ Busari J. M. *Problems and Prospects of Teaching and Learning Islamic Studies*, International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, (2018) V8, p231

⁷ S. Hidi and K. A. Renninger "The four-phase model of interest development. *Educational Psychologist*" 41:111-127. doi: 10.1207/s15326985e p4102_4.2006.

A graduate of the Department of Islamic Studies who had obtained B Ed degree in education, and subsequently applied to study B.A in IS, expressed his deep interest in IS that motivated him to undergo the programme, he stated that due to his interest to IS, he studied hard and successfully had the highest grade point (CGPA) among his graduating mate in 2012/2013 academic session.⁸

A source from the department of Islamic Studies, disclosed that, IS was not his first and neither his second choice of study. He had no option other than to study IS or to reapply for admission the following year which he thought he could not score more than what he had scored.⁹

This however, shows that students' interest determined his/her level of understanding of a subject matter. It also determined the type of approach to learning students would apply, as approaches to learning were classified as deep and surface approaches.¹⁰

Another source disclosed to the researcher that beside his study of IS, he was currently undergoing Higher National Diploma (HND) elsewhere. When asked about the challenges and difficulties in running two programme at a time, he expressed that he was not having enough commitment to concentrate better for IS degree programme, and that, he was just targeting to graduate a programme he has started (IS) with what so ever grade. But HND on the other hand, he stated that he is anticipating a good class of result due the sleepless nights he encountered while preparing for examinations.¹¹

ii. Parental Influence

It is from parents that child received first education in life. The role of the mother as an educator represents a crucial resource to the development of the individual identity. The father on the other hand makes a powerful difference in defining expectation and challenging children to do their best.¹²

Another sources expressed that a Muslim man approached him with request for admission on behalf of his daughter, the man requested for any course if not house or mosque, to him house refers to Hausa (the native language) while mosque refers to Islamic Studies (which they thought it is limited to only prayer and fasting).¹³

This shows that some parents did not know the wisdom behind IRC. Some sources expressed that, Islamic studies can be given to any Muslim applicant who applied for admission and could not have the requirement of the course applied for, and have the requirement to study Islamic studies. In such case, the applicant may decide either to accept, decline, or to defer the admission, while Arabic Language mostly is offered to those that only applied to study Arabic Language as a course.

iii. Arabic language understanding

Arabic is the language through which the religion of Islam was revealed, and it is being fully understood via Arabic text. Though, many books originally written in Arabic were translated with even commentaries and glossaries in English Hausa, French, and other languages. Islam as a religion is divinely built on Arabic language.

Arabic Language helps Muslims to understand the Islamic Legal Provisions in Qur'an and *Hadith* which are in Arabic and informed by Arabs, thus, to understand these sciences it is a must to learn Arabic to discern the meanings and benefits of Islamic Texts and Provisions.¹⁴

A source who was graduate of Bachelor of Art in Islamic Studies expressed that he wanted to obtained masters degree but for different field of study other than IS or IRC due to his inadequate Arabic knowledge. And thus disclosed that it is part of what contributed to his low grade at first degree.¹⁵

⁸ Dayyab Alkali (37 years) a graduate from the Department of Islamic Studies, UDUS, 2012/2013. 7/10/2018 4:30pm

⁹ Nura Zauro Abdulla, (34years) Graduating student, Department of Islamic Studies, 2017/2018, 8/10/2018 6pm

¹⁰ F. Heather, et al, "A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice" Third edition, Routledge, New York, p8, 2003

¹¹ A student from the Department of Islamic Studies who wants his name to be undisclosed, 8/10/2018, 6:30pm

¹² C. Ardita and M. Rabije, "The Role of Parents in the Education of Children" Journal of Education and Practice, ISSN 2222-288X (Online) p 62, 2006

¹³ Mal. Muhammad Sani Umar (Staff Training and Development Officer, UDUS) 5/10/2018 12:30pm

¹⁴ A. K. A. Nahla, "The Influence of Arabic Language Learning on Understanding of Islamic Legal Sciences—A Study in the Sultan Idris Education University", International Education Studies; Vol. 11, No. 2; ISSN 1913-9020 E-ISSN 1913-9039, Canadian Center of Science and Education, Canada, p55, 2018

¹⁵ Nasuru Abubakar, (35years) 8/10/2018 a graduate of Department of Islamic Studies 2012/2013 session.

For achievement of educational goals and purpose in better manner, there must be language understanding in the process of transferring information.¹⁶

The very first thing which a person must turn to in order to understand the language of the Qur'ān is the Qur'ān itself. It declared itself to be a miracle of language and literature and that of lucidity and eloquence and dared the *Quraysh* (Arabs of Makka) to produce a *sūrah* (chapter) like it, and they could not.¹⁷ IRS in an English/Arabic spoken institution like UDUS are being though in both the two languages, and thus to properly understand the messages therein, one need to have the communication skills of both. For every Islamic course there must be verses and traditions (*Hadith*) which were originally sourced in Arabic whether if were later translated. The original concept of these sources is fully understood if the mother language (Arabic) is mastered.

iv. Curriculum Factor

In addition to providing academic skills, the curriculum is designed to provide the importance of responsibility, and hard work.¹⁸

Academic efficiency is therefore, determined by the type of curriculum adopted in a particular institution. Being the totality of the learning experience in an institution and a systematic and planned attempt undertaken by the institution to modify or change the behaviors of learners, Curriculum is the *modus operandi* through which academic excellence is achieved.¹⁹

However, most of the curriculum designed for tertiary education on IRC mainly targets only students with background of Islamic knowledge, whereas some of the students studying IS or any other IRC need to have long-term programme and at a beginning level of learning to enable them understand the content and context of the course, especially by undergoing some Arabic language courses.

A source conveyed the significance of Basic Arabic course that comprises learning recitation of Qur'an among others, help many students that have interest in studying IS to forced themselves and learned the recitation, and thus, became able to recite Qur'an without mistakes. Though the course is given limited time, and designed for only those that could not have pass grade in Arabic Language at o'level.²⁰ A curriculum designed determines the total outcome of an institution, for it provides the study areas and period.²¹

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lack of expected basic knowledge of Islam, and improper guidance, resulted challenge to some Muslim students, and thus caused weakness in understanding IRC This ignorance developed less interest in undergoing IRC due to wrong perception in limiting the course to only knowledge of ritual observance. The researcher therefore submits the following recommendations;

- i. Basic Arabic as a course in the Department of IS designed for only students that have no basic Arabic knowledge by scoring less than 'C' at their o'level exams should be redesigned to accommodate all students of IS, and across all levels (1-4). It would enable the students have more knowledge of the course, and understand IS better, and soundly practicalized and disseminate efficiently.
- ii. Interest as a motivational factor that influences performance of an individual should be considered before admitting or registering students to undergo IRC. Thus, candidate that applied for any other course not IRC should not be given admission to study it unless in a case where the candidate consciously without being controlled decided to change his/her previous decision, and further developed interest to study IRC.

¹⁶ M. Z. Ashraf, *et al*, "The role of language in education: Arabic as case study", *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70, Elsevier Ltd.70 p1003, 2012 (www.sciencedirect.com retrieved 7/10/18 1:35am)

¹⁷ J. G. Ahmad , "Principles of Understanding Islam" Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences 51-K Model Town Lahore, Pakistan p 6 (ND)

¹⁸ CLASSROOM (<https://classroom.synonym.com/importance-curriculum-teaching-6189570.html>) retrieved on 8/10/2018 10:50PM

¹⁹ J. M. Busari "Problems and Prospects of Teaching and Learning Islamic Studies", *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, V8, p231 2018

²⁰ Ibrahim Muhammad, (33 years) A graduate from the Department of Islamic Studies UDUS, 10/10/208 11:30am

²¹ F. S. Sayyed *et al* "Quality and Features of Education in the Muslim World" *Horizon Research*, Pakistan, p5 2015

- iii. Islamic knowledge is the most important acquaintance in human life, any other knowledge if not Islamized is for betterment of only little life of the present world. While the fruitful of IRC covers not only this world, but also the betterment of hereafter if properly utilized. This important knowledge can only be acquired formally from learned and important personnel they should therefore be respected.
- iv. Before a candidate be admitted to study the prestigious IRC should have reasonable entry score (JAMB score) not the minimum score of the university.
- v. Muslim parents should take it as an Islamic responsibility upon them to equip their children with adequate and better background of Islamic knowledge, have the Islamic feeling, as well as courage to be perpetually pursuing Islamic knowledge either formal or informal. This will corroborate a responsible Muslim Ummah, and enhance achievement of social, cultural, political, and economical goals of the nation.
- vi. For the unity of nation, accountability of resources, accurate and timely decision making in management, and proper understanding of IRC are required. The government should therefore provide adequate reading materials, manpower, and sufficient scholarship to the student of IRC, and special adequate remuneration to the teachers of IRC for it provide knowledge of unity and accountability.
- vii. People are perpetually looking for livelihood for self, family, and societal betterment. It therefore became necessary for one to search for what and how to be self sufficient and have contentment. Government should provide special opportunities for Graduate of IRC due to the fact that contemporary curriculum of IRC comprises not only Islamic religious knowledge but also comprises political, social, cultural and economic matters.

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