

BOOK REVIEW

An Assessment of the Relevance of Religious Curriculum: A Case Study of a Private School in Ibadan, South-Western Part of Nigeria, Ibrahim Alli Adelani, Publisher: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG and Licensor, 2011, ISBN-978-3-8465-1228-9, pages 144, (inc. Bibliography and Appendices).

Islamic Education: Theory & Practice by Zafar Alam, Pataudi House, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002, 2003, ISBN 81-7435-344-5, Adam Publishing & Distributions, pages 221 (inc. Bibliography).

Islamic Education, Mohd Sharif Khan, 1986, ISBN: 81-7024-024-7, (New Delhi: India, Ashish Publishing House, pages 85 (inc. Bibliography).

In this review, three books on a wide range of issues on Islamic education have been discussed. The methodology used in the review is critical analysis through which the strengths and weaknesses of the essential ideas in these books are explicitly elaborated. The author of the first book, Mr. Ibrahim Alli Adelani has assessed the religious curriculum of a private school in the South-Western Nigeria. The author's traditional experience in *madrasah* system in his country, Nigeria coupled with his experience at Al-Azhar University, Cairo as well as his experience of postgraduate Islamic education programme at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) contributed to his insightful ideas in meticulously examining the challenges of the *madrasah* system in South-Western Nigeria. The book has used mixed methods of research, both quantitative and qualitative. Undoubtedly, the book has contributed to the existing body of knowledge on Islamic education in the context of South-Western Nigeria.

The second book under review is also relevant because of its important contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the area of Islamic theory and practice. The book has six parts with various subsections. The introductory part of the book explains that the concept of Islamic education relates to "choice and action" which must be cultivated alongside "Divine virtues". The author of the book, Dr Zafar Alam is an intellectual whose profundity is reflected in his creative ideas and writing skills.

The third book aptly covers various initiatives to improve upon Islamic education at all levels. The experts, teachers, students and researchers in Islamic education will find the book resourceful. Its rich content has been useful to the students of Islamic education all over the world and particularly to both undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Institute of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia. This book is part of the author's PhD earned at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) where he later became a professor of education.

In what follows, each of the books under review will be discussed separately.

An Assessment of the Relevance of Religious Curriculum: A Case Study of a Private School in Ibadan, South-Western Part of Nigeria. There are five chapters in the book. Chapter one is the "Introduction" with six subdivisions (pp. 7-21). Chapter two elaborates on the "Literature Review" with twelve subsections which explore the interrelatedness of various previous studies (pp. 22-62). Chapter three elucidates the "Research Methodology" which covers seven subdivisions (pp. 63-69). In Chapter four, the author presents the "Analysis of data and discussion" (pp. 70-94). The final chapter (Chapter five) deals with "Summary, recommendations and conclusion" (pp. 95-102). The author refers to seventy-five relevant sources in the book (pp. 103-108). Additionally, there are six appendices (pp. 108-136).

In Chapter one, the author introduces "the background of the study" which establishes that Islamic school has been in existence in Nigeria prior to the arrival and rule of the British colonial masters in the country which is traceable to the period 1885 to 1960. It is also asserted that the prime mission of the early Islamic school was to provide an education for Muslims (p. 7). Nonetheless, the author argues that colonization profusely contributed to the marginalization of the existing Islamic schools in South-Western Nigeria. Despite the strength in the argument of the author regarding the objectives of Islamic schools and their marginalization as a result of colonization, there are certain ambiguities and misinformation in the way the author presents his argument.

For instance, the author exaggerated the marginalization of Islamic education and Islamic schools during colonization while saying that: "At that time, most of the Islamic schools were converted to Western Oriented Schools and they were subjected to the control of the regional and federal governments" (pp. 7-8). The portrayal of Islamic schools as being converted to "Western Oriented Schools" did never happen in the country as a whole and South-Western Nigeria in particular. However, it is not disputable that some Muslim students had to convert to Christianity as a prerequisite to gain admission into western secular schools especially in the western part of Nigeria. Evidently, many of the Islamic schools established by the parents or Muslim communities were registered and taken over and financed by the government.

The author mentions the names of various Islamic schools whose contributions led to intellectual and moral development of Muslim students in Ibadan, South-Western Nigeria. He stresses the need to review the curriculum of the Islamic schools. Also, the author further mentions five vital principles of curriculum for Islamic education, however, he failed to acknowledge and refer to Syed Ali Ashraf as a Muslim scholar who explicitly propounded the five mentioned principles (pp. 8-9). The objectives and research questions are clearly highlighted (pp. 16-17). The "Significance of the study" and "Limitation of the study" are elaborately explained which is said to be useful for various classes in the society such as stakeholders, administrators, students, researchers and others. (pp. 17-18). Under "Definition of terms" the author identifies and explains five terms, namely: "Islamic Religious Studies Curriculum", "Education", "Islamic Studies", "*madrasah*" and "Traditional Islamic education" (pp. 19-21). However, the operationalization of the term "*madrasah*" and traditional Islamic education as used in the book is somehow confusing because there is no clear distinction between the former and the latter as the book portrays it (pp. 20-21).

In the “Overview of Nigeria” (p. 22) as a country, the author has elaborately explained the amalgamation of Southern and Northern parts of the country in 1914 (p. 22). It is also stated that there are various ethnic groups in the country. Undoubtedly, it is commonly known among Nigerian citizens and even among some foreigners that there are three major languages namely: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. But unfortunately, the author has wrongly included the minority ethnic groups such as Ibibio and Fulani, into the category of the majority (p. 22).

The book highlights that “majority of Hausa-Fulani in the northern Nigeria are Muslims while Igbo in the South-Eastern part of the country are either Christians or infidels” (p. 23). Actually, Muslims constitute the majority which is followed by Christians; however, the small number of traditional worshippers should be acknowledged.

It is noted that the book refers to the opinion of UNESCO regarding the predicament of northern Muslims in the country as a result of poverty and *al-majiri* system without mentioning the year when the study was conducted. The author has failed to make a distinction between the usage of Islamic schools and *madrasah* system. For instance, he refers to the challenges of colonialism which resulted in the establishment of Islamic schools in the country. He says: “These phenomena gave rise to the establishment of many private Islamic schools for Muslim children in the South-West. It is noted that the medium of instruction of the Islamic schools is Arabic language” (p. 27). This is incorrect, as Islamic schools use English as the dominant language for teaching and learning while *madrasahs* use Arabic as the language of instruction with an inclusion of English in some *madrasahs*.

The author has misrepresented the contemporary western secular schools when he says, “...Government secondary schools... focus only on the Western education” (p. 28). In reality, the students are allowed to do Arabic language in the two examinations i.e. West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Board of Arabic and Islamic studies.

Furthermore, the book has explicitly elaborated on the development of Islamic education and establishment of *madrasah* system in South-Western Nigeria which was traceable to Mali (p. 33). The book clearly states that Islam arrived into Yorubaland in the sixteenth century (p. 33), while various historical accounts show that it could be either in the late fifteenth century or in the sixteenth century.

The book has explained the “curriculum”, the “structure” and the “mission” of some selected *madrasahs* in South-Western Nigeria (pp. 36-47). For instance, five *madrasahs* that are privately established are mentioned along with the subjects taught in those *madrasahs* (pp. 38-44). More importantly, the book explicitly elucidated the vision, roles and contributions of the “Association of Model Islamic Schools (AMIS) in Nigeria” (p. 47); but the actual year of establishment, which would have enabled the readers to follow the trend of development since independence, is not mentioned.

The author exaggerated the establishment of Islamic Preaching School as the “foremost private *madrasah* educational institution which trains students in Islamic studies” (p. 49). It is noted that the author tends to exaggerate some ideas embodied in the book, for example, the curriculum of Islamic Preaching School is presented as if it is a uniform curriculum in all the *madrasahs* of South-Western Nigeria (p. 56). It is mistakenly reported that the *madrasah* curriculum lacks the teaching of Arabic when the author asserts thus: “It was found that, the existing curriculum is totally devoid of the teaching of Arabic” (p. 57).

As part of challenges facing *madrasahs* in South-Western Nigeria, the following five factors have been mentioned: governments, the proprietors, parents, the society and the media. These are not properly linked with the previous studies (pp. 59-62). The factors one and two are repeated as shown on pp. 60-61.

The quantitative analyses are adequate and clearly presented which cover demographic information of the teachers and students, implementation of Islamic studies curriculum and students' perception of the curriculum (pp. 70-85). This is followed by the qualitative analysis of the study (pp. 85-94).

Three hundred students were regarded as sample selected from two thousand students in the quantitative part while '*ulamā*', parents, teachers as well as students were chosen for the interview (p. 64). The questionnaire was used for the quantitative part while the interview was used for the qualitative part. The data collection procedure (p. 69) is supposed to precede the data analysis (p. 66); however, the opposite is the case as presented by the author.

There are some typographical mistakes in the book. For instance, it is stated that: "it later coursed some Muslim family to comprise their religion under the pretext of ensuring future better life for their children" (p. 26) instead of "it later caused some Muslim families to compromise their religion under the pretext of ensuring better future life for their children".

Islamic Education Theory & Practice. In part one of this book, epistemological beliefs and postulates of Islam in relation to the nature of Truth and nature of knowledge are elaborated (pp. 1-7). Revelation has been considered as the source of the Truth which is undoubtedly related to the true sense of justice (pp. 4-5). The author has elucidated the nature of knowledge which is related to *Sūrah al-'Alaq*: 1-5 (p. 7). The author refers to the argument of Abul A'lā Mawdūdī in *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* that, "Some scholars are of the opinion that these must have been revealed in written form because when the angel commanded the Prophet to "Read" he said that he did not know how to read." (p. 7).

However, the author does not question the stance of Mawdūdī on the explanation of these verses as being revealed in a written form, but it could be reasonably argued that, if such verses were revealed in written form, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and some prominent companions such as Ibn 'Abbās, Ubay bin Ka'b and Alī (R. A.) would have offered classical explanations to this effect. In addition, the author has referred to the viewpoint of Shalaby: "In the field of education egalitarianism was fully recognized by the Muslims and poverty was never a hindrance in the way of acquisition of knowledge" (p. 12). However, Zafar Alam did not challenge the above submission of Shalaby in the light of contemporary educational challenges where poverty hinders the acquisition of sound and useful knowledge.

The author mentions such sources of knowledge as natural phenomena and revelation, and comprehensively elaborates on the correct etiquette of a learner (p. 20). The author succinctly posits that positive values or traits such as "external neatness and internal purity" (p. 38) must be imbibed by the learners while negative traits such as anger, posing unnecessary questions, etc. must be avoided (p. 38).

In part two "Aims and objectives of education in Islam" are expatiated (p. 40). The author tries to make a distinction between Islamic and western aims and

objectives of education whereby he links the focus of western education with happiness in this life while Islamic education is linked with the happiness of *ākhirah* (hereafter); however, it does not mean that life of this world is neglected (p. 41). The author explains the individual and social aims education as well as the Islamic concept of truth and knowledge and inculcation of Islamic values.

In part three the position of “A teacher in the Islamic system of education” is explicitly elaborated (p. 64). The Prophet (pbuh) is regarded as a “Teacher per excellence” who “taught his followers the importance of the acquisition of literacy, teaching and learning” (pp. 64-65). The position, qualities, roles and duties of teachers are also discussed (pp. 69-105).

In part four the “Islamic concept of curriculum” is presented. The *Qur’ān* and Sunnah are considered as curriculum subjects while fundamentals of different types of acquired knowledge such as medicine, astrology, astronomy etc. are also included in the curriculum (pp. 107-108). Also, five principles of Islamic curriculum are mentioned (pp. 117-136).

In part five the book divides the content of Islamic education as “perennial knowledge” and “acquired knowledge” (pp. 136-162). In section five, the “method of teaching in the Islamic system of education” is extensively discussed along with learners’ motivation to learn (pp. 164-170). Various techniques of teaching such as repetition, questioning, discussion and note-taking are elucidated (pp. 192-210). The book emphatically explains the importance of discipline, and internal and external factors of discipline are identified. The positive approach to discipline is to mould the attitude of the learners towards praiseworthy traits (pp. 201-216). The final part (part six) contains the bibliography which lists fifty one references (pp. 217-221).

Islamic Education. This book covers various aspects of Islamic education and it is divided into ten chapters. In chapter one, “place of education in Islam”, *Qur’ānic* verses and prophetic sayings relating to the importance of acquisition of knowledge are extensively discussed. In chapter two, “Elementary education in the early history of Islam” focuses on the development, curriculum, payment of salary to teachers, relationship between teachers and students and implications of corporal punishments in an educational setting.

In Chapter three, the author sheds light on “Old schools of Islamic education”. This chapter discusses the individual and social concepts in relation to Islamic education, and the *Qur’ān* as the core subject. The structures and shortcomings of traditional Islamic institutions are explicitly elaborated. Chapter four explains the essential features of classical Islamic learning. Chapter five comprehensively elucidates the aims and objectives of Islamic education. Chapter six shows the vitality of the Islamic education curriculum. The focus of chapter seven is on modernization of Islamic education. Chapters eight, nine and ten address higher education, Islamic approach to education and philosophy of education according to the stance of Imām Al-Ghazālī.

Going through the pages of the book, it is found that the strengths of the book overwhelmingly outweigh its weaknesses. The strength could be seen from the fact that the author stresses that Islam integrates religion with mundane life (p. 75). He presents the Islamic philosophy that the Holy *Qur’ān* and *Ḥadīth* are regarded as the true sources of knowledge (p. 78). In other words, the author has argued that there is

no replacement for the Qur'ān and the Hadīth in the curriculum of Islamic education even in the future, and both must occupy the core of the curriculum of Islamic education (p. 27).

Despite the strength, however, the weakness could be seen from generalized title of the book, "Islamic Education" as the author primarily aims to address Islamic education in India. Nonetheless, the coverage of the issues relates to Islamic education beyond the Indian context. There is a derogative statement made by the author when he refers to Indian Muslims thus: "They do not have any love for education and do not provide education to their children..." (p. 1). However, if at all that is the case of Indian Muslims, he fails to highlight the impact of the internal and external factors which contributed to the attitude of Indian Muslims towards Islamic education in the contemporary world. There are several scholarly works such as *Survey of Muslim Education in India* by S. M. Wazeh Rashid al-Nadvi and Syed Ghulam Muhiuddin, 1984 that has responded to the above shortcomings, and acknowledges the contributions of Indian scholars to perennial, philosophical and discursive knowledge.

Apart from the foregoing, it contains some underestimated and generalized statements. For instance, when the author discusses the deficiency of traditional Islamic institutions, he states, "The absence of teaching of science in those schools was responsible for not producing any Muslim scientists and investors" (p. 30). This almost suggests that there is no single Muslim scientist in the Muslim world. When explaining the scientific attitude of Muslims, the author says, "No other religion has emphasized so much modern learning" (p. 62). This portrays Islam as if its fundamental objective is "modern learning". When the author says, "It is generally understood that Islam is against science which is completely wrong and based upon ignorance" (p. 75), he does not clarify whether this view is prevalent among Muslims or non-Muslims, or indeed, what percentage of Muslims entertain such a view.

The author has quoted eleven Qur'ānic verses (pp. 2-5) and sixty prophetic narrations (sing. *Ḥadīth*; pl. *Aḥādīth*) to show the paramount importance of knowledge. The author offers commentary on each verse which is preceded by, "A learned commentator on Holy Qur'ān writes that..." (p. 3) or "A learned scholar in his commentary on Holy Qur'ān writes that..." (p. 4). He does not provide evidence (i.e. reference) in support of such commentaries. Moreover, for the sixty *Aḥādīth* quoted by the author (pp. 5-17), he does not provide full references. His commentaries on the *Aḥādīth* strictly follow traditional pattern and there are no comprehensive explanations of educational issues embodied in the *Aḥādīth*.

While explaining elementary education, the author directly jumps into subjects that should be taught instead of giving the definition of curriculum in the first instance (pp. 21-22). He further traces the use of corporal punishment at the elementary level to the era of *Khalīfah* when he says, "The teachers of the young sons of *Khalīfah* did not spare the rod nor did the fathers disapprove" (p. 25) without giving the name of the *Khalīfah* to whom this statement relates. Also, the author was supposed to have explained the measures that must have been taken to educate the child before resorting to corporal punishment which have been an important aspect of al-Ghazālī's and Ibn Miskawaih's psychology of learning.

The integrated curriculum of Islamic education proposed by the author is difficult to understand because it does not clearly distinguish the lower levels from the upper levels according to the illustration given (pp. 44-46). While discussing the

issue of modernization, the author has traced it to Western Europe and North America. He further argued that the Muslims consider modernization as synonymous with Christianization (p. 56). However, the author fails to look at the role of Christian evangelization and colonization as mechanisms for promoting modernization. Likewise, western education is a vehicle used to promote modernization, and during the colonial rule in many Muslim countries, becoming a Christian was a prerequisite to be admitted into secular schools. The author does not take this into consideration as the main factor of Muslims' resistance to modernization. The author when suggesting the ways of modernizing traditional Islamic institutions also portrays secular education as if its main objective is character enhancement (p. 63).

In explaining al-Ghazālī's philosophy, the author has done justice to many issues such as the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as the sources of knowledge, categories of knowledge, aims and objectives of education, curriculum, methods and techniques of teaching, relationship between teachers and students, education of women, physical and health education, and psychology of teaching and learning (pp. 78-85). However, there is a need to stress al-Ghazālī's divisions of knowledge into dogmatic and non-dogmatic knowledge (p. 79). The former refers to religious sciences while the latter to non-religious sciences. The term "dogmatic knowledge" might be criticized because its Arabic equivalent, *'ilm taqlīdī*, might mean that religious knowledge does not allow exercise of rationality or intellect, which is not the intent of al-Ghazālī's divisions of knowledge (pp. 79-81). Hence, this might be misconstrued by those antagonistic to Islamic religious education.

This book does not use proper transliteration for Arabic words, which could at times change the original spellings and even the meanings of the words. Some examples are: *Al-Rehman* (p. 5) instead of *Al-Raḥmān*; *Quran* (p. 5) instead of *Qur'ān*; *Al-Momin* (p. 4) instead of *Al-Mu'min*; *Ibnul Jozi* (p. 16) instead of *Ibn al-Jawzī*, *Salatul Juma'ah* (p. 49) instead of *Ṣalātul Jum'ah*, *Qadah* (p. 49) instead of *Qaḍā'*, *Surah* instead of *Sūrah* (p. 48), etc. The names of prominent Muslim scholars are also not properly transliterated. In this book Arabic plurals are formed by following the rules of English grammar. Thus the plural of *madrasah* becomes *madrasahs* instead of the correct Arabic form, *madāris*. This may be acceptable as the word *madrasah* (or *madrasa*) is now part of English vocabulary (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 8th edition). However, there are some strange mistakes whereby the author has used the plural of *Ḥadīth* (i.e. *Aḥādīth*) but he added 's' at the end that signifies plural in English grammar such as *Aḥādīths*.

It is a normal practice to italicise foreign words in a piece of English writing, but this book has departed from this practice (see pp. 48-49). There are many references in the text which are related to the books of *Ḥadīth* but are missing completely in the bibliography. For example: *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, *Bayhaqī*, *Tirmidhī*, *Ad-Dārimī*, *Ibn Mājah*, *Al-Hākim*, and *Ibn 'Abdul Bārr* (pp. 5-17). The author also referred to quotations of M. A. Zaki Badawi (p. 29) and D. D. Eisenhower (p. 34) but the sources are not found in the bibliography. It is regrettable that there is no consistent pattern of referencing style used throughout the book.

In conclusion, the first book by Ibrahim Adelani, despite some weaknesses, has immensely contributed to the field of Islamic education in the Nigerian context. He has made substantial references to the relevant Islamic literature. Dr. Zafar Alam's

book has made a commendable contribution by succinctly presenting the theory and practice of Islamic education. Finally, the scholarly work of Mohd Sharif Khan has contributed to the existing body of knowledge in the field of Islamic education and it contains a lot of beneficial knowledge for researchers, scholars, teachers and students of Islamic education. His work has proven to be resourceful to many students of Islamic education especially at the Institute of Education (INSTED), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

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