

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF COVID 19 IN MICHAEL OTEDOLA COLLEGE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION, NOFORIJA-EPE, LAGOS STATE.

BY

Agbabiaka- Mustapha, Muinat A.
Islamic Studies Department
Michael Otedola College of Primary Education,
Noforija – Epe Lagos State.
07063227925
Mustafamuinat@gmail.com

Abstract

There are 152 Colleges of Education in Nigeria, consisting of 21 Federal, 82 Private and 49 state Colleges of Education. Michael Otedola College of Primary Education was established in December, 1994 during the administration of Sir Michael Agbolade Otedola as Lagos State Governor. One of the main objectives of establishing the college was to provide well qualified (non-graduates) primary school teachers in accordance with the requirements of both federal and states ministries of education. The College has been achieving this objective from inception till date by training and certifying teachers in various fields of studies including Islamic Studies which is the focus of this paper. In recognition of the fact that religion plays a significant role in history and society, study of religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world and the development of and purification of the human soul. This study examines the challenges of COVID 19 on the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies in MOCPED and proposed that suitable learning materials in a good learning environment should be provided by the government and the college authority to enhance effective teaching and learning of Islamic Studies amidst and beyond COVID 19 pandemic. Using descriptive method/qualitative research approach, focus group discussion was used to collect data. Hence, the study arose out of the fear and concern for the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies if there is another lockdown necessitated by the second phase of COVID 19.

Keywords: Islamic Education, COVID 19, challenges.

Introduction

Education has become one of the most powerful weapons known for reducing poverty and inequality in modern societies. Education is the major form of empowerment. Social, political and economic empowerment can be accessed through education. It is also used for laying the foundation for a sustainable growth and development of any nation. The reason is that education today is targeted at one end result of which is providing good jobs to citizens to enable them to earn a living and make significant and meaningful contributions to the society. The Nigerian and world education structure and curriculum contents are tailored towards achieving this end that students would acquire educational skills that would make them self-reliant after graduation (Nordin 2012 & World Bank 2008)

In recognition of this fact and the new trends, Lagos State Government allocated 133.5 billion naira (One Hundred and Thirty Three Billion, Five Million Naira) to the Ministry of Education in the year 2020 approved budget. This represented a growth of 137% increase year on year

towards engendering quality education that will be at par with the 21st century standard of learning (Mark: 2020)

The Colleges of Education are established to train and equip teachers for their esteemed functions. The Colleges of Education award the National Certificate in Education (NCE). This is generally a three year course of study in chosen discipline. In addition to classroom work, students are required to do a mandatory four months teaching practice in an assigned school to certify and qualify them to teach at the Basic level of education. Thus, NCE is the minimum teaching qualification in basic education (Akinbote 1999). In line with the new National policy on education which stipulates the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as the basic qualification for teaching in Nigerian school by the year 2000, coupled with the need to provide functional and qualitative education that is predicated upon well trained and sound professional manpower to the citizenry of the state, the Lagos State Government in December 1994 established Lagos State College of Primary Education (LACOPED) now Michael Otedola College of Primary Education (MOCPE) for pre-service training and certification of graduates for the primary school system (MOCPE Diary).

The college is established with the following objectives:

- To provide courses of instruction leading to the award of diploma, certificates and other distinctions in primary education and such related studies.
- To provide special training courses in education and all related subjects whether leading to college distinctions or not, for such persons as may be prescribed taking into account at all times the requirement of both the Federal and State Ministries of Education.
- To provide well – qualified (non-graduates) primary school teachers in accordance with the requirements of both the Federal and State Ministries of Education.
- To arrange conferences, seminars, tours, study-groups and like activities for the purpose of improving instructions and learning in Lagos state school system.
- Research into problems of education and apply the result of such research in the school education system and inculcate in its students the ethics of the profession.

In addition to the objectives mentioned above, the vision of the College is to be a great and dynamic institution of higher learning for capacity building in Primary and Basic Education. All these are in accordance with the Nigeria Philosophy of Education (NPE, 2017) as stipulated in the National Policy on Education.

Thus, Islamic Studies as a subject is offered at all levels of education in Nigeria (from the primary level of education to the tertiary level of education), Lagos State is no exception. Islamic studies is offered in Michael Otedola College of Primary Education like any other course in the school of Arts and Social sciences in line with the objectives for establishing the College in 1999 till date (NCCE, 2012).

Brief History Of Islamic Education In Nigeria

One of the modern objectives of the Islamic education in Nigeria is to develop the Muslim side of education which has been existing before the arrival of the missionaries who brought western/conventional education along with their missionary activities. With the spread of Islam beyond Arabia Peninsula, Islamic Education has been established in Nigeria around fourteenth century in the pre-colonial period. Quranic schools were established in many parts of Nigeria particularly in the Northern part for the purpose of teaching and learning the Quran, the primary source of knowledge in Islam till date (Fafunwa, 2004: 58), Osokoya, 2003.

Bidmus (2003) buttressed the fact that the fortune of Islamic education in Nigeria is better measured by its positive impact on various facets of life of West Africans in general because for the first time in the life of Nigerians, Islam introduced a formal, organized, programmed and certificated education which provided job opportunities as its products were equipped with skills needed in the management of various affairs of man.

However, he lamented that with the advent of colonial rulers in the 19th century, the fortune of Islamic education changed and was obstructed by western education as elitism was thence forth determined by proficiency in English.

Moreover, the so called secular education is a miniature of Islamic education as inherited by the Europeans who peeped into the institutions of learning developed by Muslims in the medieval period. The uniqueness of magnificent institutions and glorious scholars paraded by Muslims in the medieval period according to Babs Fafunwa 1991: 59 cited by Bidmus (2017), charmed the Europeans who were hitherto neck deep in superstitions believes and thereafter admired and copied the Muslims intellectual feat which the Europeans acknowledged as represented in the tributes that the London Times Educational paid to Al-Azhar University when it celebrated its thousandth anniversary in 1969. The paper wrote in part:

'Al-Azhar 1,000 years older than Cambridge, more influential in its heyday than the sorbone, more revered even now by its students than any western university, Al-Azhar this year celebrated its thousand anniversary. It is fitting that tribute should be paid by the west to this centre of Islamic learning in Cairo. Without Al-Azhar's steadfast devotion to scholarship through good times and bad, the torch of the ancient learning, guarded by the Muslims while Europe was in darkness might have survived to spark off the renaissance.

However, Babarinde Adeyinka (2011) opined that the form of Islamic education practiced in Nigeria had been criticized for not measuring up to the standard of Islamic education known in the centres of Islamic civilization such as Damascus in Syria, Baghdad, Kufah, Cairo, Turkey, Makkah and Madinah and a host of others where emphasis was placed on philosophy, calligraphy, astronomy, mathematics and other sciences including medicine and technology and had produced great scholars.

Teaching And Learning Of Islamic Education Amidst Covid 19 In (MOCPED)

Before the outbreak of COVID 19 in 2020 which disrupted in-person academic activities in Islamic studies department, where Islamic education is taught, the department has been conducting teaching and learning activities with various relevant teaching methods and minimal challenges such as: poor learning environment, lack of instructional materials relevant to the age of information and communication technology and the 21st century classroom and insufficient lecturers among others.

With the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic, teachers and students continue to face unprecedented challenges due to the COVID 19 global pandemic. Many teachers have been forced to prepare to teach in several formats, from fully face-to-face to hybrid/hyflex/blended to fully online.

According to UNESCO monitoring, over 100 countries have implemented nationwide closure imparting over half of world student population (UNESCO, 2020). Academic sessions have been disrupted and all levels of education in Nigeria without in-person learning (AbuBakr, 2020). In

compliance with the Federal Government directives, Lagos State Government ordered the closure of all educational institutions in the state (public and private) from Monday 23rd March, 2020 (www.bbc.com, 2020).

Michael Otedola College of Primary Education where the Islamic studies Department is domiciled in the School of Arts and Social Sciences also replaced in-person teaching and learning with the on-line under the supervision of the College Directorate of Quality assurance headed by Dr. O.O. Oshodi.

Prospects Of Online Teaching And Learning

Yusuf (2020) Prinyanka Gautam (2020) hinged the advantages of online learning on:

- * Enhancement of knowledge integration.
- * Accessibility of time and place.
- * Self directed learning approach.
- * Remote learning.
- * Easy administration.
- * Comfort.
- * Asynchronous learning.
- * Enhancement of active learning.
- * Improvement on the use of ICT by teachers and learners.
- * Efficiency.
- * Improved students' attendance.
- * Suit a variety of learning styles.
- * Self-paced learning.

Problems Of On-Line Teaching And Learning In MOCPED

Shittu (2020) and Hashim 2020 in a study carried out in Ibadan, many students preferred face to face teaching to online learning despite the advantages embedded in online teaching and learning due to several challenges facing students such as:

- Lack of technology devices like computers, desktops, laptops, I-phones and gadgets.
- Problem of internet connectivity.
- Lack of fund for data subscription.
- Lack of the knowledge of ICT
- Inability to focus on screens/ distraction by social media or other sites.
- Sense of isolation.
- Poor power supply.
- Lack of awareness among the parents of the effectiveness of e-learning

Statement Of The Problem

The teaching and learning of Islamic Studies in Michael Otedola College of Primary Education, Noforija-Epe, Lagos has been contributory to the development of Islamic education in Lagos State and beyond. Though, before the emergence of COVID 19, the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies in the institution has been challenged by low student's enrolment, lack of instructional materials, poor learning environment and lack of ICT devices among others which the institution has been sustaining. With the emergence of COVID 19, the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies online is threatened by extinction as a result of non-availability of computers,

laptops, phones, and internet and data subscription among others to conduct the teaching and learning of the subject in the College via online as directed by the Lagos State Government. Hence, the study arose out of the fear and concern for the teaching and learning of Islamic studies if there is another lockdown necessitated by the second phase of COVID 19.

Research Questions

1. How familiar are staff and students with the online program?
2. What are the challenges of online learning?
3. Which one is preferred, in-person learning to on-line learning?

Data Collection

The study aligned with the focus group discussion research because it was based on an issue of concern to a particular group in the community. The data for the study was collected through semi-structured interview including demographic questions that were later coded and analyzed.

Selection Of Participants

The six participants were students of the Islamic – Studies department drawn from 200 and 300 level. There was no other condition associated with the selection of the participant for the study. The conversational, semi-structured interviews encouraged participants to talk about their perceived notion. The interview (face to face) lasting approximately between 45 and 60 minutes was conducted at the Islamic Studies Resource Room (MOCPED) in compliance with the COVID – 19 directives by the State Government.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	12	60%
Female	8	40%
Total	20	100%

Table 1 showed that 12 (60%) male and 8 (40%) female participated in the discussion.

Table 2: Distribution of the participants by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 25	15	75%
25 - 30	5	25%
Total	20	100%

Table 2 showed that 15 (75%) of the participants are aged 20 – 25 years while 5 (25%) is aged 25 – 30 years.

Table 3: Distribution of the participants by level

Level	Frequency	Percentage
200	15	75%
300	5	25%
Total	20	100%

Table 3 showed that 15 (75%) participants are in 200 level while 5 (25%) 300 level participated in the discussion as well.

Data Analysis And Findings

The data collected were analyzed to understand the perception of Islamic Studies students towards on-line learning due to COVID 19 pandemic. The semi-structured interview was digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis through a process of coding and reducing the data to a theme and finally representing the data in a discussion. The descriptive analysis used for the data were based on the responses elicited from the participants. Using the work of Stephen & Sulay (2020) and Nyumba & Tobias (2018), the key issues that emerged from the analyzed interview data are presented below:

Research Question 1:

How familiar are staff and students with on-line program?

Four of the six focus group members are familiar with on-line program with the remaining two members not providing any response. The researcher found the above submission interesting because majority of computer age students are familiar with the internet and the use of Android phone in most cases for non-academic activities like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, Cyber crime and digital games among others.

Research Question 2:

What are the challenges of on-line learning?

The data collected on the research question about the difficulties experienced by the students via online learning during the lockdown period. The view of one of the participant summarized the position of other participants idea of the challenges associated with the on-line class:

.....Every MOCPEDE students not only our department alone faced one challenge or the other during the on-line class. In my own case, I have android phone and data subscription but I lived in a rural area where the internet service is very poor..... (Participant 2)

.....On this issue of on-line learning, my parent cannot afford the data subscription though I have functioning android phone where there is good internet service but the lockdown affected my daddy's business who is the provider for the family..... (Participant 4)

..... In my own case, I don't have android phone, computer or laptop to attend the on-line class because my guardian cannot afford it. I do domestic work for people to finance myself..... (Participant 6)

The reflections of p2, p4 and p6 clarified and buttressed the fact that students were confronted with one problem or the other during the on-line class.

Research Question 3:

Do you prefer in-person learning to online learning?

The view of three of the participants who preferred in-person learning to on-line is presented as follows:

.....As for me, I want to see my teacher face to face in the classroom environment so that I can feel her presence and concentrate.....participant P1, P4 and P6

The view of other participants who prefer on-line learning to in-person is presented below:

.....Online learning is the best for us in Nigeria because it reduces the stress of going to classroom and struggling for accommodation (Participant 2)

.....Online learning is good if the college can provide laptop and data subscription for us as it is done in some parts of the world (participant 3)

..... I prefer on-line learning because it gives exposition to ICT, Digital world, networking and opportunity to download materials instead of spending on textbooks (Participants 5)

The above data captured the general perception of the students on the merits and demerits of on-line and in-person learning. The responses were insightful and deepened understanding of three research questions in this study.

Discussion

The overarching understanding from the analyzed data was that learning of Islamic Studies in Michael Otedola College of Primary Education posted series of challenges to the student and the lecturers as well. The College management makes necessary arrangement for the teaching and learning via the College portal in compliance with the Lagos State Government directives.

The new normal approach to teaching and learning of Islamic studies did not yield significant result as a result of the problems confronted by the students such as lack of laptop, computer, android phones, data subscription and power supply among others. Though, the new normal gives exposition to modern technology in teaching and learning but lack enough information and communication technology facilities that are relevant to the 21st century classroom.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the challenges facing Islamic education in Michael Otedola College of Primary Education (MOCPED), Noforija, Epe, Lagos with the emergence of the COVID 19 global pandemic. It x-rayed the reasons behind the establishment of the College along with the objectives and vision of the college.

Islamic education which existed in Nigeria before Western Education had positive impacts on the various facets of life of West African in general and Nigeria in particular. It was the first to introduce a formal, organized, programmed and certificated education which provided job opportunities for its products.

The paper gave exposition to the financial commitment of the Lagos State Government on education. The challenges/disruption brought about by the emergence of COVID 19 global pandemic and its effect on the teaching and learning of Islamic studies in (MOCPED) is analyzed with emphasis on the innovation/benefits of on-line teaching and learning as a result of the closure of schools. The challenges of the on-line teachings such as lack of technology devices like computers, desktops, laptops, I-phones, problem of internet connectivity among others are worthy of mention.

Recommendations

Considering the fact that religion plays a significant role in the society, it is recommended that the teaching of Islamic studies amidst COVID 19 pandemic and beyond be enhanced by providing suitable learning materials in a suitable environment through the intervention of the government, non-governmental organization and Muslim philanthropist such as:

- Production of research outputs of relevance to environmental sustainability.
- From teaching and research to community service and social responsibility.
- Teachers should make effective teaching and learning on e of their core values.
- The department, in addition to teaching should offer quality consultancy services like sharing of inheritance and distribution of Zakat.
- The College should provide conducive learning environment for the teaching and learning of Islamic studies.

- Ministry of education should order schools and universities to organize many visual pieces of training for the lecturers, administrators and IT personnel to enhance the technological skills of learning institutions nationwide.
- Students should be supported with sufficient data to study online with students' restriction software to help them focus on their studies.
- The government should make internet connectivity a priority for higher education to be able to leverage on the promises and opportunities ICTs present.
- Make smart use of technology.
- Solar power devices preloaded with offline academic resources should also be provided to students in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.
- Teachers' recruitment should be based on meritocracy relevance to the information and communication world.
- There should be consistency training for teachers on how to combine online and offline teaching.
- Suitable learning materials in a good learning environment should be provided.
- Government should censor internet provider to improve on their services and reduce the cost of data plan for students and teachers by subsidizing.

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