

Informal Islamic Education in Lagos State: From Pedagogy of the Oppressed to the Oppressed Pedagogy

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Abstract

Informal Islamic education is grounded in Muslim normative value. It was introduced to the people of Lagos in the precolonial period. However, this form of education was dispensed and accessed at that period secretly by the underclass and the oppressed in the society. It became widely accepted after Islam was granted official approval by Oba Adele Ajosun in 1775. This led to the open acceptance of Islam by members of royal courts and prominent indigenes. Islamic education became popular and accessed by different classes of people in Lagos society. Unlike the early period, when Islamic education was with the oppressed, it is now being oppressed, as little attention is paid to uplift its status. Literature has been oblivious of this development. This research, therefore, examined the transformation of informal Islamic education from the pedagogy of the oppressed to the oppressed pedagogy in Lagos State. The study utilised social action theory, while exploratory research design was used. Qualitative data were purposely generated from: Lagos Island, Epe, Ikorodu, Agege, Surulere and Ikotun due to the preponderance of informal Islamic schools in these communities, six oral histories were held with elderly Muslims, while 18 key informant interviews: proprietors of (IIS) (6) and opinion leaders (12); 36 in-depth interviews: parents of students (12), community leaders (12) and adult graduates of IIS (12), were conducted. Seven focus group sessions were held with graduates of IIS while five case studies of IIS and Islamic associations were conducted. Data were content analysed.

Keywords: Informal Islamic education, Oppressed pedagogy, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Lagos State Nigeria

Words count: 245

Introduction

Despite the ubiquitous nature and dominance of Western education in South Western Nigeria, Islamic education remains popular and relevant, particularly to the adherents of Islamic faith (Reichmuth, 2000; Bang, 2007; Adetona, 2011). The advent of Islamic education is associated with the introduction of Islamic religion to the pre-colonial South Western region of Nigeria about early 18th century (Oloyede, 2010; Gazali, 2014). The diffusion of Islamic civilisation from Mecca to other parts of Asia, Europe, Africa and America expanded the frontiers of Islamic education (Alamdari, 2004; Olurode, 2008).

Islamic education is a prerequisite to the practice of the Islamic faith; the religion and its education are mutually exclusive. They both go hand in hand. Islamic education is a prerequisite to understanding Islam as a religion. Religious education is capable of shaping the worldviews of adherents about what the world should be, what it is now, and what to do to create social progress. It also enhances solidarity, morals and nationalism (Ryan, 1995; Turner, 2013).

Historically, Islam was introduced to pre-colonial Nigeria through Mali by Arabs and North Africans (Yusuf, 2007). It was introduced to the Kanem Bornu Empire in the eleventh century (Abdul, 1982; Yusuf, 2007; Gazali, 2014). The Jihad of 1804 led by Shehu Uthman dan Fodio, apart from creating Sokoto as the caliphate, was also central to the spread and revival of Islam and Islamic education among Hausa States (Boyd and Shagari, 2005). In the like manner, the activities of Kano Kolanut caravan traders in the precolonial Nigeria cannot be overemphasized in the spread of Islam and its education (Lovejoy, 1980). Muslim communities had been established in Yorubaland before 1840 (Awolalu 1979; Matory, 1994).

Islamic education is an agent of socialisation and normative denominator of social relations especially among Muslims. It is a structure of specialised social processes, social relations and embedded social arrangements and networks through which Islamic pedagogy is configured and relayed (Kazmi, 2006; Pohl, 2006; Asik, 2012). On the one hand, as an institution in itself, Islamic education impacts social relations and social behaviour, but on the other hand, the immediate social environment also impacts Islamic education leading to social and tactile changes in its form and structure (Talbani, 1996; Umar, 2001; Luken – Bull, 2001; Nelson 2009). Hence, the structure of Islamic education must have experienced dynamic changes through the unique social experiences in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. The focus of this study,

therefore, is to uncover the structure¹ and dynamics² of informal Islamic education³ (popularly called *ile – keu* in local parlance) in Lagos during the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial epochs. By all accounts, Lagos is the most cosmopolitan State in South Western Nigeria. For this reason, the study explored the possible impact of modernity on Islamic education in Lagos State.

Literature Review

The role of religious education cannot be overemphasized. Religious education is capable of shaping attitudes towards modern developmental concerns like poverty (Marshall and Keough, 2004; Davis and Robinson, 2006). Islamic education is described as the process of learning both the revealed and the acquired knowledge. The formal is the knowledge of the Qur'an while the latter is the sayings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed (Panda, 2010). Anzar (2003) describes the revealed knowledge as the form of knowledge that comes from God while the acquired one is to be discovered by human beings. These are sciences and other secular knowledge that could make human beings to live comfortably on earth. Alatas (2006) describes the concept of Islamic education not as mere acquisition of information or the capacity for explanation and analysis but also connected these processes to the nature of God, reality and human ethic of responsibility. He went further to say that only what is revealed or what is apparently compatible with revelation is true knowledge. Muslims believe that all knowledge originates from God and such knowledge arrives to humans by various channels. Panda (2010) traces the origin of Islamic education to the Qur'an where Allah says 'Read, your Lord is the most generous who has taught by writing in pen. Ul – Islam (2003) describes Islamic education as the totality of education that brings about human progress in all endeavors that are derived from Islamic perspectives.

The history of science, technology and education would be incomplete without the acknowledgement of the contributions of Islam (Habib, 2008). Muslim scholars and scientists made great discoveries in the golden age of medieval Islam between 750 and 1050 AD, building on previous civilization. Arabs at this period were essentially long distance traders. Practical things like navigational aids for travelers, geographical maps, medical knowledge, ways of measuring and calculating time and tools for agriculture were developed. Astronomy was important for religious reasons. It was important to determine an accurate lunar calendar, prayer time and the

¹ This refers to modes of organisation of informal Islamic schools

² These are observable changes in Features of IIE between precolonial and post colonial Lagos

³ This refers to unofficial mode of acquiring Islamic knowledge

direction of Mecca; where Muslims face during prayer from any part of the World. Accurate calendar was also necessary to determine the beginning and the end of Ramadan fasting period. Books that were written on this subject were translated into Latin influenced European astronomer such as Copernicus and Galileo (Habib, 2008). Chemistry was not practiced as a separate science in the Medieval Islam but formed an important part of other industries such as metal work, ceramic manufacture, pharmacy, and dyeing. Methods of distillations and new approaches of experimentation were developed. Alchemy, a science of both the soul and the cosmos was widely practiced. The focus of alchemy was the transmutation of metals. Alchemy was the meeting point of spirituality and science. Spiritual meanings were given to scientific discoveries (Iqbal, 2002).

Muslim mathematicians developed the work of earlier Greek, Indian, Persian and Chinese and made important advances (Panjiwani, 2004). They were interested in number systems. They used letters of Arabic alphabets and the Hindu – Arabic numerals including zero, which is now used in the West. They replaced the awkward Roman numerals system. Islamic theory of numbers was influenced by the Greek mathematician, Pythagoras and viewed mathematics as having sacred significance, symbolizing the inner reality of all things created by God. Number was also important for the calculation of money in trade. Algebra became a separate field of mathematics in Islam. The word “algebra” came from the Arabic word “al- jabr” meaning restoring balances in equations (Panjiwani, 2004). There were also researches in the areas of medicine and surgery by the Muslims in the medieval period. The Greek concept of the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water were related to the four humours, and diseases were supposed to be caused by an imbalance in the humours. Some of the first medical schools and hospitals that later served as models to Western hospitals, were established by the Muslims. Although, dissection of human anatomy is forbidden in Islamic jurisprudence, Surgery was a last resort, but cauterizations of wounds were developed by Muslim physicians. Dissection of human anatomy was seen as unislamic by some scholars and hence this scientific discovery became controversial (Al – Akkad, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

This research was guided by Social Action theory. The theory was propounded by Max Weber. In this theory, he focused on the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their actions in their mutual orientations within specific socio – historical context. Weber used this

theory to explain the rationality behind action of individuals and larger social structures and institutions (Ritzer, 2008).

In the light of this postulation, Lagos Muslims overtime utilized Islamic education as the means of preserving Islam as a religion and heritage, consequently, preserve their religious identity and its sanctity. The determination, zeal, commitment, resilience and resoluteness of Lagos state Muslims to sustain informal Islamic education and watched it metamorphose into enduring institution, despite the overwhelming influence, attractive prospects of Western education and cosmopolitan nature of Lagos state paid off. They have been able to endure, survive and sustain Islamic education unmindful of all odds. This can be explained through the Weberian approach of attaching meanings to actions. Lagos Muslims must have attached subjective meanings to their commitments and passion for sustaining Islamic education within context of value rationalit

Methodology

The research design was exploratory. This design was adopted in order to gain familiarity and new insights on the structure and dynamics of informal Islamic education in Lagos State overtime. This design allows empirical insight into the subject matter, which hitherto had received little research attention. Exploratory research provides in-depth contextual reality. Informal Islamic education in Lagos State is highly under researched and largely misconstrued and neglected by the authorities and the public (Adetona, 2007).

The Study Area

The study area was Lagos State. Five study locations were purposively selected for the preponderance of informal Islamic schools and long years of established Islamic practice among a perceived relatively significant portion of the population. Lagos Island, Epe, Ikorodu, Agege, Ikotun and Surulere. These areas were selected because of the preponderance of informal Islamic schools and their rich Islamic history.

Study population

The study population was drawn from male and female Muslim residents in Lagos State who are of at least eighteen years old with good knowledge of organisation of informal Islamic education in the State.

Methods of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. The secondary sources included non-confidential materials and records sourced from Islamic scholars and schools, minutes of meetings, periodicals and other relevant materials. Primary data was collected through Archival research, Oral history, Observation, in - depth Interviews (IDI), Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Case Study (CS).

Archival data was collected from the National Archives, Ibadan, Lagos State Archives and extant archives of Islamic schools and scholars of different Islamic sects. Six oral histories were collected to gather information from some elders who did not have written or documented information but possessed good judgment of history of Islamic education. Observational method was used to legitimately espy and discern pedagogic processes, social relations as well as symbolic representation in Islamic learning centres. Three key informants were purposely selected in each of the six study locations. The key informant's interviews were conducted with one experienced Muslim clerics / leader/proprietors who had lived in the area for at least ten years and had contributed to the development of Islamic education over time. Also, one male and one female Muslim opinion leaders and education officers at the Lagos State Ministry of education were interviewed as key informants. In all, a total of eighteen KIIs were conducted. There were in – depth interviews in each location for one male parent and one female parent whose children or wards had either attended Islamic schools (*ile – keu*) or currently in the system as at the time of this work, two Muslim community leaders, and two adults (at least 18 years) who had successfully graduated from the system were subjected to in - depth interview. A total of thirty six IDIs were conducted. Seven Focus Group Discussions sessions were held with specially selected homogenous groups of graduates of informal Islamic schools. Specifically, one male and one female FGDs were conducted with:

1. Male and female graduates who received Islamic education only.
2. Graduates who combined Islamic education with Western education (one male, one female).
3. Graduates who had been integrated into the system as tutors (one male)
4. Graduates who had migrated out of the locations where they received Islamic education to other urban areas of Lagos state (one male, one female).

A total of seven FGDs were conducted.

Five case studies were carried out. Ansar – ud – Deen society of Nigeria and Ahmadiyya Movement of Nigeria were purposely selected to reflect the relationship between the colonial government and informal Islamic education and what prompted the organisations to run both formal and informal Islamic schools simultaneously. The Centre for Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Markaz, Agege, was examined to give account of trends in informal Islamic education. Likewise, National Union of Arabic and Islamic Teachers (NUAIT) served to give insight into networking among informal Islamic schools. The Sufis group, *Ijo aanu*, was studied to understand the ideological underpinnings in Islamic educational pedagogy and to shed light on the organisation of Islamic education in the precolonial Lagos.

Method of Data Analysis

Primary and secondary data were collected and analysed using descriptive and content analysis. The Focus Group Discussions, Key Informants interviews and In – Depth interviews were translated and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in Yoruba, Pidgin English and English languages for the purpose of ease of communication and convenience. The transcription was done in English for the purpose of wider readership and to carry along those who may not understand Yoruba language.

Findings and Discussions

Islamic education in precolonial Lagos

Islam and Islamic education have been entrenched in Lagos community for close to three hundred years (Akintola, 1995; Noah, 2000). Gbadamosi, (1978) asserted that Islam was introduced to Lagos around 1774 while Gazali (2011) claimed that Islam was brought to Lagos in 1775. In the same vein, Oyeweso (2004) argued that as at 1775, Islam had become entrenched in Eko (Lagos) and a Mosque had been built at Idoluwo by a handful of Muslims. Gbadamosi (1978) argued that Islam made its entry to Lagos during the reign of Oba Adele Ajosun (1775 – 1780). At that time, calls to prayers were made secretly with the use of gourds (*Akeregebe*). Contrary to these claims, Adams (2004) and Paramole (2004) affirmed that the first Mosque, Idumagbo Mosque, was built in 1773.

Yoruba wars of the precolonial era was facilitated the movement of slaves from various places to Lagos. Slaves were brought from the present day northern Nigeria to be sold in Lagos

(Danmole, 1981). Lagos served the interest of local market, which was the location for the sale of slaves to Lagos slave traders and royal families. It also served the interest of Trans – Atlantic slave trade (Ajayi and Austen, 1972). Some of these slaves had received Islamic education and practicing Islamic religion. While in slavery, they began to spread Islamic education to other slaves secretly until Islamic practice was permitted by the *Oba*, king of Lagos. This amounted to freedom of worship for the Muslims. With this development, more Muslims who had hitherto worshipped secretly started coming out to profess their religion openly (Idoluwo Mosque programme booklet, 1966). This development also brought about the teaching of Islamic education openly. Providing insight into this, an interviewee with who is knowledgeable of the history of Islam in Lagos revealed:

The freedom of worship granted the Muslims made a number of people to embrace Islam because they needed naked spiritual power, charms that the Muslims were known for then in order to confront or to protect themselves from the oppressive and traditional worshippers and authorities, who indulged in human sacrificial rituals. Some also embraced Islam out of curiosity.

Oral History/ Lagos Island/ 2014

This development paved way for mass conversion to Islam and formation of “Islamic spheres” (Launay and Soares, 1999; Launay, 2010). Quranic education became not just a means of forming but also transforming persons, of marking the passage, if not converts, at least, their children into this new Islamic sphere.

This revealed the ready acceptance of Islam by both Eko royal courts and the subjects due to avowed spiritual claims of Muslim clerics. This is supported by Avoleh and Falola (1995) who noted that Muslims and traditional rulers had a symbiotic relationship. Traditional rulers needed the Muslim clerics to make charms for their personal protection, peace and progress of their domains and preservation of their kingship thrones. At the same time, Muslims also needed recognition and freedom to practise their religion. Burns (1968) also argued that another reason why Islam was accepted by the Yoruba people was that it adapted to the traditional African life. For instance, Islam permits a man to marry up to four wives. Food was one of the great attractions of the people to Islam. Some subjective meanings were attached to the use of food in Islamic religious practices. There were regular feasts of fried corn, (*masa*) and pap (*ogi*) at Qur’anic schools and Mosques every Friday morning. This attracted a lot of children to Qur’anic schools (Reichmuth, 1996). To have the knowledge of Islamic education became fashionable and a symbol

status. Islamic education brought *olaju*, (modernity) to Lagos communities, as they made the first literate elites of that time (Paramole, 2004).

On emergence, Islam was practised by the lowly placed people, the underclass, in the society such as peasants, slaves, small hold traders and the underdogs. This made Islamic education “**pedagogy of the oppressed.**” Most Muslims of that period were “owned”. They lacked the freedom to act according to their conscience, rather according to their owners wills, except things covertly done. Due to the subjective meanings attached both to their religion and its education, in the face of those in political authorities, actions had to be taken through resilience and strong will to grow and survive Islamic education lest it withered into extinction.

In the view of a parent participant in the study, He believed that there are other objectives of enrolling children in Qur’anic schools beyond the earlier mentioned reasons. In his words:

It was generally believed at a time that the Qur’anic schools and the *Alfas* had magical powers to transform delinquent children. A lot of parents, who were not even Muslims believed in this power. No parent wanted bad children and so they key into Islamic education. This eventually transformed them into Muslims or they became *Alfas*. Look at this situation, it is different from what other people have said. One thing here as at that point in time in Lagos was that people did not care about the religion you practice. Muslims and Christians alike do a lot of things in common. There was no discrimination and that is why in Lagos now, you see some family with Christian members while some are Muslims. They do things together, they attend the same family meetings and there is no quarrels. During Sallah and Christian festivals they come together as one because we believe that we are all the same. Untill lately, both Muslims and Christians participated in *Eyo* masquerade festivals. Some Islamic scholars are beginning to condemn the involvement of Muslims in local religious festivals.

KII/Opinion leader/Epe/ 2014

Available literature focused more on the spiritual and identity determination as major objectives of acquisition of Islamic education, but findings in this research revealed other factors as discussed earlier. Informal Islamic schools were at a time perceived as a kind of reformatory centre where delinquent children could be reformed. It is, however, pertinent to know more about the administration of this facility. An interviewee described the administration of Islamic education in the pre – colonial period thus:

In the pre – colonial period and to a large extent, part of colonial Lagos, it was very tough to dispense and access Islamic education. Islamic educationists were very few; classes were not regular; to the extent that a student may have as many as three to four teachers in succession. Islamic education then was also associated with some African rituals, such that as students progressed in their study they had to make some rites of passages as they got to some chapters of the Holy Qur'an. They would be asked to make feast in foods and in certain kind of goats. The materials for learning were essentially locally made. They are materials such as *walaa* (wooden slate), *tadaa* (local ink) and *kalamu*, (writing stick). It was very difficult to access advance Islamic education at that time. There were scholars with fame and everyone wanted to undergo the tutelage under popular scholars. Unfortunately, they were few. Because of the zeal and passion for Islamic education, some of early Muslims in Lagos may travel far from home in order to fulfil this noble ambition. A student may travel as far as Timbuktu in Mali to learn what was not more than a page or two. The curriculum was largely unwritten and discretionarily determined by the scholars that you approached. The joy of the whole exercise and stress was that then it was glorious and fulfilling to be taught by the famous and celebrated scholars. This was determined by the kind of *Ijaza* (certificate to teach) awarded to you. *Ijaza* was a symbolic chain of scholars. It reflects your names, the tutor under whom you graduated, your tutor's tutors, it is generational. The chain may be as long as covering those who were taught by the Caliphs of Prophet Muhammad.

KII/ Islamic tutor/ Lagos Island/ 2014

This is one of the changes that has affected the development of informal Islamic education in Lagos State. Graduation from the Qur'anic schools is usually associated with pageantry and funfair. To a lot of people, it is an avenue or opportunity to meet old family and friends that have not been seen for a long time. Connections are made and new friendship established through this celebration. It is also the avenue to reciprocate the similar gesture by the celebrating family. It is more of social gathering. Islamic learning was once associated with some mystics. The belief among early Islamic scholars was that in order to have good retentive memory and acquire dexterity for recitation, students must make feast for completing certain stages or chapters of the Qur'an. Subjective meanings were attached to these chapters as they were considered to be sacred or sensitive to making further progress. *Walimot Sugiro* (small celebration), used to punctuate different stages of completion of Qur'anic learning but with exposure to organisation of Islamic learning in other places and the financial burden placed on parents, this practice was phased out and paved way for a one time elaborate graduation ceremony (*walimot'Qur'an*) upon completion of the Qur'an (Gbadamosi, 1978).

Some itinerant scholars were moving from one community to the other spreading and teaching Islam. Some of them were “white Arabs”. One of such people was Shekh Ali bn Muhammed al – al Mekkawi, from Morocco who was in Lagos around 1860 (Burton, 1863). There were also Ilorin and Hausa tutors. They used to leave at least one of their students behind to continue teaching in places they had established Islamic schools. Burton (1863) also observed that many Arabs came to trade in kolanuts, onions and textiles. They moved from town to town and market to market in order to trade and spread Islam. He also identified one Muhammad ibn Muhammad from Damascus in 1870, who traded between Kano and Lagos. Timbuktu in Mali was the nucleus of Islamic knowledge of high concentration where it diffused to other parts of the present day West Africa. It was a great centre of learning and the melting pot of Islamic scholarship. It was a great reputation and pride to be educated in Timbuktu at that time. This was also borne out of the subjective meanings attached to Islamic education. However, Timbuktu has been recognised as a World heritage site by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) because of the large Islamic materials found at the archives located there.

With the wide acceptance of Islam and its education, some African practices were retained and observed because they were in conformity with Islamic practices. The use of charms and divination and some other syncretic practices made Islam to blend with the social environment of Lagos (Awoleh and Falola, 1995). Accommodation and syncretism made Islam to adapt to the natives and made the process of assimilation gradual (Trimighan, 1962). Islam possessed a body of regulations affecting every sphere of life which were expected to conflict with local customs, yet many Islamic elements fell within the framework of African traditional practices. Polygyny was also a factor. Islam did not criticize men marrying more than one wife, it only put a seal that the number should not exceed four wives at any point in time. The institution of bride price that was hitherto a practice in accordance with Yoruba culture was encouraged, with little or no modifications. Among Lagos people, a man is not yet properly married and respected until he paid the bride price. The Islamic practice also frowned at a man who cannot afford (*sadaaki*) bride price. Premarital sex is frowned at as it was considered illicit or socially repulsive act in the local tradition. Children from this form of association were considered bastards or fatherless, even when the father was not denying the paternity. If the father died and the bride price was not paid, such children would not have rights of inheritance. Premarital virginity was also a sign of good

parenting and great honour to the parents of the bride. This is in conformity with Islamic rule of marriage (Trimighan, 1962).

Blyden (1978) noted that the local institutions were not destroyed by Arab influence. They only assumed new forms and adapted themselves to the new teachings. According to him, in all thriving Mohammedan communities in West and Central Africa, the Arab or Islamic superstructure has been superimposed on a permanent indigenous substructure, so that what really took place when the Arab met the Negro in his own home, was a healthy amalgamation and not absorption or an undue repression. One of the primary reasons for Islam's progress was that it had become an "African religion" whereby agents were Africans. It was assimilated gradually without causing too great a disruption in communal life (Trimighan, 1962). The flexible nature with which Islam responded to the traditional religions partly accounted for massive success and large population accepting it. When Islam was confronted with well integrated indigenous societies, it accommodated itself to the realities of the cultural reciprocity (Babalola, 1982). He buttressed this with the observation that figurative rituals in the Islamic context were not seen as signs of apostasy but as reflections of the pragmatic results of the confrontation of Islam and traditional cultures.

Divination was also a convergence point between Muslims and traditional religious people of Lagos. Food played significant roles in the acceptance of Islam by the people. Quite a number of Islamic practices were associated with the use of food. As students of Islamic schools were making progress in their studies, they were made to make feast of foods such as cooked beans, female goats and staple food. Similarly, in the practice of traditional religion, spiritual health seekers were asked to place foods and money at the road junctions, especially road intersections, with the belief that some unseen spiritual forces would feed on them, take the money and the patients would be healed. However, Islamic clerics would ask health seekers to prepare foods, money and distribute it among Islamic school pupils or the less privileged in the society. Worshippers in the Mosques were served hot pap, *ogi*, baked beans, *akara*, and fried corn *masa* every Friday mornings. Naming and burial rites were also associated with the use of foods. While the traditional religious people called it "sacrifice", (*ebo*), Muslims called it gifts, *saraa*. This created avenues for a lot of people to eat free food and received free money. These attracted a lot of converts to Islam.

This study was informed that virtually all the materials used for Islamic education in its early stages of development were locally produced and there was no lack or shortage of materials. In his opinion:

When western education started, a lot of new writing and reading materials were brought to us in forms of books, pencils, erasers, black board, slates and so on. We have never seen those things before. They were new. Earlier, when Islamic education became popular, all the things they were using were sourced from the environment. For instance, *walaa*, slates were from planks. It may take a long process to make it. *Kalamu* or pen was from different types of trees including palm tree, you only needed to sharpen it and adapt it to what would suit you. *Tadaa* or local ink was made from the extract of bark of trees or melted sugar and some other things like that. What was furniture at that point in time was animal skin. Usually goat or ram skin.

KII/ Islamic school proprietor/ 2014

Writing materials were made locally and largely deployed as materials of learning in Islamic schools. A *walaa* or slate is a rectangular wooden plank that parts of Qur'anic texts are written, usually by the teachers for the student's consumption. The students learn the Arabic alphabets, making of words and combining words to make sentences. Learning was through repetition or rote. Students learn recitation and memorisation with the aid of *walaa*. Launay (2016) observed that writing boards or slates are a concrete token of the direct and personal link between master and pupil. Only the tutor, his delegate, when he is not around to take his pupil and the pupil himself could write on the slate. The pupil would have to master the text by reciting aloud, correctly and melodically. The proper recitation of the Qur'an is a fundamental Islamic discipline (Nelson, 1985). The board would not be washed off until the pupil had learned and mastered the content, after which another text would be written on it, showing progress in learning. Progress of the pupils was at individual pace, depending on how fast the individual pupil could grasp the knowledge.

Launay (2016) observed that in a normal class, a lot of students recite different passages of the Qur'an simultaneously. It was not competitive and none was trying to outsmart the other. The slate was personalised. It belongs to the students, he or she could relate with it and it made more meaning to all the parties involved. In contrast, the later invention, blackboard, a nineteenth century invention that marked the expansion of mass education in Europe and America, exemplified impersonalisation of the education process. They belong to neither the student nor the teacher but to the school or the institution. The purpose was not to convey a text but a lesson. The lesson was not aimed at a particular student but the whole class. Until the students copy the lesson on the blackboards into their notes, there would be no sense of personalisation of the lesson, it is through the notebook that students learn their lessons and not the blackboards.

Learning from the individual notebooks, like the slate experience may take place at the pupils' leisure or convenient time Launay (2016). *Kalamu* is a piece of stick that is usually sharpened in a pencil – like form at the edge. It is used to draw ink from the small ink pot or bottle in order to write on the slate. The materials for making it are locally gotten from a number of trees such as palm trees and other trees with such feature. *Tadaa* is the local ink. It is made from extract of a number of leaves usually available in the neighbourhood gardens. Alternatively, it could also be made from melted sugar. The system was not completely strange to the local population and also made the institution environment friendly. The missionaries and the tutors spreading the teaching and learning of Islamic education were Africans themselves. This made it very easy for the converts to relate with. Sentimental values were attached to the certificate awarded by prominent scholars. The certificate of teaching (*Ijaza*) awarded was not issued in the name of institutions like the modern day certificate, but on a long chain of “genealogy” of tutors. The certificate had universal appeal, respected and accepted in the Muslim World (Musa, 2011).

Mosques played significant roles in the development of Islamic education in Lagos. They were not just worship centres but also served as meeting points for Muslims. Beyond this, they also served as training facilities. Islamic schools, also called Madrasaa constitute significant parts of Mosque architecture. In the contemporary Lagos, provisions are made for *Madrasas*, in terms of finances, admission of students, recruitment of tutors and general administration. Islamic education started with the creation of explanatory circles by Prophet Muhammad who used to give instructions and explanations at Mosque (Hilgendoff, 2003; Naskoteen, 1964). Mosques in the early period of Islamic religion were used for both learning and worshipping but with the development and spread of the religion, there began a separation between the worship and learning centres. This is to protect the sanctity of the Mosque as a sacred place of worship. Kadi (2006) observed that the place of writing was separated from the Mosque in the first century of Islam. Unlike the dynamics in the use of Mosques among Arabs, the design of Mosques in Lagos makes provision for informal Islamic education.

Informal Islamic education in the colonial Lagos

The colonial government did not hide what it described as schools. It made it clear in the education ordinance of 1926 that:

“a school was any assembly or institution that does not include where the instruction is solely of a religious character; Institutions and classes solely

for the training of priests, ministers and catechists, Sunday schools, classes for Catechumens, classes for church members and Koranic schools’
(CSO 26/2, 19524)

. A participant stressed that:

The Colonial government was silent on Islamic education, it was like a cold war. The government bureaucracy would not allow job opportunities to those with Islamic education both in government and the formal industries such as UAC (United African Company). The fortune of Arabic language that was popular at that time started to dwindle. Ability to speak English language became fashionable, even to work in government alone was a big social status. Some Muslims actually took the advantage of Western education to work in government.

IDI/ Male community leader/Epe

Launay (2010) noted that it is striking that in most sub – Sahara African colonies and nowadays, most independent African nations, the ability to read and write Arabic language is not considered literacy in formal circles. Apart from the official neglect of Islamic education, products of Islamic schools were not given job opportunities in the colonial civil service, rather those who had Western education were offered placements in government service

Islamic education in post-colonial Lagos

The postcolonial era in Nigeria was characterised with changes in attitudes of Lagos Muslims to Western education (Nasiru, 1977). The rate of acceptance of Western education by Muslims since the latter part of colonisation was steadily on the increase to the extent that Lagos Muslims have shifted the concept of *olaju* or a civilised person from those who had only Islamic education to those who combine both Western and Islamic education. This period also witnessed the improvement in informal Islamic education, especially in education administration. A number of modern Islamic schools, patterned after Western schools were springing up across Lagos. Participants agreed that:

Informal Islamic education was highly influenced by Western education in postcolonial Lagos. A core area of influence was educational administration. A lot of reforms took place. Modern learning materials such as biro, books, and blackboards were introduced. Unlike before, benches and chairs were introduced and the use of school uniform was introduced. The learning period that used to take between ten and fifteen years is now reduced. One can now learn the whole Qur’an within one year or even less, depending on the seriousness attached to it by both the teacher and the learner.

FGD/ Male graduates/ 2015

Part of the reforms in informal Islamic learning is the reduction in the period of learning. While it used to take more than ten years in the past, learners are beginning to have Qur'anic proficiency within four months in the contemporary time, depending on level of commitment and zeal attached to studies. An interviewee pointed out that:

Informal Islamic education has come of age. All those things that were the exclusive preserves of Western education are now being used in Madrasas. Some of them use and teach the use of computers with Arabic characters. Apart from computer compliance, internet is also used to search for materials and reach out to scholars from different parts of the world. As we speak, black board has given way to marker board in a number of informal Islamic schools. Some advance schools such as Markaz and Daru'l Islam at Isolo have boarding house facilities that are well run. In schools where the population is thick, they use public address system. Things are really changing for better.

KII/ Proprietor/ 2015

The impact of modern technology cannot be overemphasized in the process of teaching and learning. Unlike what was obtainable in the past, informal Islamic schools are now deploying various means of technology in dispensing knowledge. Informal Islamic schools are catching up with the application of information and communication technology (ICT). It was observed that the use of traditional slates, writing stick and local ink have extincted, paving ways to black board, marker boards, chalk, books and pens in modern informal Islamic schools across Lagos State. A discussant interjected thus:

Another area that I have observed change is the area of curriculum. In the past, for those who came for Qur'anic study, all they taught them was just the Qur'an but now they have expanded the scope. They teach Qur'an, Hadiths and published works of reputable scholars. The graduation ceremonies that used to be in bits or small graduation for completing different stages of the Qur'an has also been modified to just one- time graduation.

FGD/ Male graduates/ 2015

Western education has actually influenced the administration of informal Islamic education in Lagos and things are really changing. The ubiquitous nature of western education has caught up with informal Islamic education (Reichmuth, 2000; Bang, 2007). This development is also making informal Islamic education attractive. Perhaps, the changes are inevitable in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos.

In acknowledgement of this development, a parent and member of *alasalatu* prayer group at Epe, who was also a graduate of informal Islamic school and a retired primary school teacher simply captured the relevance of both forms of education in a song:

Keu da iwe da, keu da iwe da
Eto ni ka mo mejeji,
keu da iwe da

Meaning:

Both Islamic and Western education are good
It is a right to acquire the two types
Both Islamic and Western education are good

Western education is popular among Lagos Muslims in contemporary time. The appreciation of western education became so in the face of the structure of the Nigerian society where only western system of education is recognised as the official mode of education in order to function effectively in government posts. The post – colonial government sustained the colonial education policy and there was no recognition or regulation of Islamic education. Launay (2016) noted that the decolonisation of Africa was certainly not accompanied by the decolonisation of the educational system. Independent African nations took over the administration of the former colonial schools, occasionally accompanied by a token of Africanisation of the curriculum. Discussants in an FGD agreed that:

There was no difference between the colonial government and the indigenous ones except the government of Alhaji Lateef Jakande. All the governments in Lagos since the colonial era till now do not have any policy on Islamic education, except Jakande's administration who employed products from Islamic schools to teach Islamic education in public primary schools, unfortunately, the policy collapsed because a large number of the Alfas that were employed were not fit and competent as they could not communicate in English language, except Yoruba and Arabic. This is Lagos, a cosmopolitan city, not just a Yoruba community but a multi ethnic and multinational community. English language is the official language here.

FGD/ Females with Western and Islamic education/ 2014

The popular assumption by Lagos Muslims that Muslims were not given job opportunities during the colonial period played back in postcolonial Lagos. Government service is run by bureaucracy, where sentiments are not encouraged. Bureaucracy is based on the principle of meritocracy. Those that are qualified and competent with required skilled would definitely secure the jobs. Despite the fact that Governor Lateef Jakande bent bureaucratic principles to fulfill

campaign promises, it still did not work. Bureaucracy is insensitive to religion, race or other sentiments. Colonialists refused to offer jobs to those Muslims that did not have Western education because they would not be able to function effectively and may not be able to discharge their responsibilities. They were not employed not because they were Muslims but because they did not have the basic requirements for the job as it was the case of the teachers employed by Jakande in the second republic, who could not communicate in English language in a cosmopolitan Lagos of 21st Century. However, the level of involvement of post colonial Lagos State government was investigated by this work. The education officer at The Lagos State Ministry of education asserted that:

As far as Islamic education is concerned, the best we have in the official policy is the teaching and drawing the curriculum of Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and making available teachers that would prepare the students for the public examinations, both at primary and secondary levels.
KII / Education Officer/ Lagos/ 2014

Another officer retorted thus:

What Jakande did in the 1970s was not a policy as such, he only tried to fulfill the campaign promises because a lot of Muslims voted for him and he just wanted to satisfy the electorates. Today there is nothing like that, the Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) and (Islamic Religious Knowledge) are treated equally. There is no appropriation for any informal religious education.

KII/ Education Officer/ Lagos/ 2014

This testimonies have suggested that so much importance and subjective meanings were attached to Islamic religion and it is so important and significant in power relations to the extent that Muslims in Lagos had to negotiate the employment of graduates of informal Islamic schools into Lagos State public schools as a condition for giving their votes to former governor Lateef Jakande. This may also be a pointer to the significance in the population of the Muslims at that point in time. At best what successive governments in Lagos have done was to integrate the curriculum of both Islamic and Christian education into the education policy of the state. In the process, they have made them to be studied as Islamic Religious knowledge and Christian Religious Knowledge, though there has been change of name to Islamic Studies and Christian Religious Studies.

Consequently, the events during colonial and post-colonial epochs led to the emergence of a new group of Muslim elites called *keu – kewe* (people with Islamic and western education). This

group consisted of professionals who had acquired both Islamic and western education. They constituted the Muslim professional in various areas of human endeavours such as academics, Law, Medicine, Industry and government. They dissipate their knowledge, wealth and influence to promote Islamic education. However, the introduction of “Pentecostal Islam” as exemplified by the upwardly mobile, jeans – wearing and hip – pop loving westernised Muslim youth, is to checkmate “fun - loving” Muslim youth from “cross – carpeting” to Pentecostal Christianity. The association itself is another social capital that promotes the general interest of Muslims and Islamic education.

Conclusion

Informal Islamic education passed through three different phases in Lagos since 1770. It started as the “**pedagogy of the oppressed**”. It was in the hands of the underclass, the poor and the lowly placed in the society. The silence of the colonial education authorities was also considered oppressive. However, acquisition of western education placed Lagos Muslims in strategic positions of government positions in the postcolonial era. Despite this, no official attention is placed on informal Islamic education, hence it became “**the oppressed pedagogy**”. Survival of informal Islamic education largely depends on the zeal, resilience and subjective meanings attached to it by Lagos Muslim community.

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