

Development of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) For Islamic Schools in Kenya: What Islamic Universities Can Do

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Abstract: This paper attempts to reveal how the Islamic schools in Kenya are beset by absence of relevant teaching and learning materials and the role Islamic universities can play to provide these materials. Madrasa in Kenya have played a pivotal role in producing *ulama* and teachers of religion for more than a century before the advent of Western education on the shores of East Africa. Islamic Integrated schools on the other hand are a recent phenomenon that arose to mitigate the challenges posed by Western style education that leaves learners with no time to learn basic Islamic sciences. They combine both the national secular curriculum and Islamic studies. While the national curriculum subjects have adequate teaching and learning materials developed by the Ministry of Education, the Islamic studies section of the schools faces a serious shortage of relevant textbooks that are aligned with the target curriculum. Different schools use different textbooks including some that were developed in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen and Sudan. This paper argues that the absence of sufficient, curriculum specific teaching and learning resources in Islamic studies is constraining learning thus contributing to poor performance of students in the subjects. The study utilized the qualitative approach to gather views from participants involved in Islamic schools and madrasa. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) revealed some constrains and challenges facing Islamic schools including absence of unified curriculum, unavailability of TLM, inappropriate textbook, and teachers having no adequate training. Finally, it is recommended that Islamic universities can play effective role in bridging the gap in the

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development of TLM and enhancing the quality and availability of relevant curriculum support materials.

Key Words: Islamic education, Curriculum, teaching, learning, Integrated Curriculum, *Fiqh*, Hadith, *Tawhid*, *Seerah*

Introduction

Teaching and learning materials are so critical in learning that the intended curriculum cannot be easily implemented without them. Over the past four decades, the importance of adequate Learning and Teaching Materials provision (including textbooks, teachers' guides and supplementary materials) to support educational development and quality upgrading, has been recognized by governments throughout the developing world and by most development partners. There is now substantial research evidence which shows that textbooks are one of the most important inputs that have a demonstrable impact on student learning" (The World Bank, *A Chance to Learn*, 2001).

International research evidence from the mid-1970s to the present confirms the central role of an adequate supply of good quality textbooks in improving student performance. The research evidence also confirms that the two ^[1]_{SEP} most consistent characteristics in improving student performance are the availability of (a) textbooks and supplementary TLM, and (b) well trained, prepared, supervised and motivated teachers. Again research evidence also confirms that textbook provision is the most cost effective input affecting student performance (Hedkvist, 1996).

In Kenya, as in many African countries, Islamic integrated schools and Madrasa's face many challenges including the type of curriculum to follow, and the non-availability of curriculum specific and local context teaching materials and trained teachers. Matters have been exacerbated by the wide and often 'dual curriculum' these institutions are forced to implement due to absence of institutional support and rigorous supervision. The following section shows the context and history of Islamic schools in Kenya, and the development of textbooks and TLM in Kenya.

Islamic Schools in Kenya: The Context

Muslim children in Kenya attend several educational institutions including Qur'anic schools, Madrasa and public secular schools. There are those who attend all the three tracks usually beginning their lessons in Qur'anic schools and moving on to the public secular schools, from where they again move on to Madrasa classes. There are also those who attend only Qur'anic schools and secular public schools. The third category only attends secular public schools. Many of the children who attend all the three tracks, have ended up dropping out of either Madrasa or public secular schools due to the distances between these institutions and the curriculum overload involved. This state of affairs has meant that Muslim children were missing out either on Islamic education or on the free public secular education (Sheikh, 2013).

In the last two decades, Kenya has witnessed a new type of institution that combines Islamic religious subjects and the public secular education curriculum. Though these schools are purely private initiatives requiring some form of fee payment, Muslims in Kenya have fully embraced them. This paper argues that the Islamic integrated schools can be an alternative avenue of education for Muslim children since they combine the best of both the Islamic and Secular public systems.

The success of this type of schooling is attested to by the government's adoption of integration in its 2012 Education Act, as one of the strategies for increasing access to education for Muslims and other minority groups. The Kenya government is a signatory to several international declarations, protocols and conventions, including the World Conference on Education held at Jomtien in Thailand in 1990. That conference, whose major goal was the attainment of Education For All (EFA) by 2015, resolved that the basic learning needs for diverse cultures must be met through a variety of delivery mechanisms. The Conference also emphasized the need to embrace formal and non-formal systems of education by recognizing the various religious and community groups.

In line with this commitment, the Kenyan government in 2003 embarked on reforms geared towards attaining the education related MDG and EFA goals. The Sessional Paper that followed the recommendations of the 2003 National Conference on Education and Training led to major reforms in the

education sector. Among the initiatives the Government undertook is the provision of ECDE, which involves households, community and Government efforts in the integrated development of children from the time of conception (MoEST, 2005). It is from these recommendations that the relevance of Islamic Integrated Education becomes apparent. As much as Islamic Integrated schools are private initiatives geared towards the provision of religious education together with the secular national curriculum, such initiatives need to be evaluated within the scope of Education for All (EFA) goals.

Despite these schools improving the overall enrolment rates for Muslim children in Kenya and providing an education compatible with their social and spiritual values, they continue to face a myriad of challenges ranging from an imported curriculum that does not take into consideration the physical and spiritual environment of the learners, unavailability of essential teaching and learning materials and, where available, non-conformity with the existing curriculum.

Islamic Education In Kenya: The History

Islamic traditional learning has existed along the East African coast since the end of the eighth century A.D. Based on archaeological excavations, Mark Horton (1996) has suggested the presence of a Muslim community at Shanga near Lamu from as early as 760 A.D. Later in the 14th century, the famous Muslim traveller and historian Muhammad b. Abdalla Ibn Battutah (d.1377) visited Mogadishu, Mombasa and Kilwa and gave an account of Muslim settlements along the East African coast. In the period preceding British colonial rule in Kenya, Islamic traditional education was conducted in mosques and scholars' residences. These historical accounts of the influence of Islam along the East African coast demonstrate the presence of Muslim settlements in the region and by extension the existence of Islamic traditional learning long before the coming of European powers to the Kenya coast towards the end of the nineteenth century A.D.

In the period preceding British colonial rule in Kenya, Islamic traditional education was conducted in mosques and scholars' residences which represented traditional centers of Islamic learning along the East African coast. Teaching was in the form of *darsa* (lesson) conducted in *halaqa* (study circle) either in the residence of the teacher or in the courtyards of the Mosques.

Madrassa and Qur'anic schools have been a feature of Islamic education in Kenya long before the advent of British colonial rule in the region. When the British established a protectorate along the coastal strip in 1895, making efforts to consolidate its power, they paid little attention to Islamic religious education.

Among the challenges Islamic education in Kenya faced during the British colonial era was that schools established by the colonial government did not cater for Islamic religious education due to the fact that most of the schools were sponsored by Christian missionaries. The British colonial government gave support to formal schools established by Christian missionaries, which created a negative attitude to Muslims towards Western style education and forced some Muslim parents to abstain from sending their children to government schools (KNA, 1987). Muslims in Kenya therefore, perceived that the British colonial authorities, in partnership with different Christian churches, used the education system as a tool for evangelization where the government grants were channeled to schools established by churches (SUPKEM, n.d).

Marginalization of Islamic education was further enhanced by educational policies implemented by the British colonial administration, which focused on separating Islamic religious education from government schools. For instance, in 1909, the British colonial government in Kenya established the Fraser Education Commission, which recommended the separation of education systems based on racial and ethnic lines.

The first initiative to integrate public secular curriculum in the Madrasa and Qur'anic schools in Kenya was pioneered by Madrasat al-Ghazali al-Islamiyya, established by Shaykh Muhammad Abdalla Ghazali in 1933 in Mombasa. Shaykh Ghazali saw that Muslim children learning in Qur'anic schools were isolated from the mainstream education system provided in the government schools and therefore introduced subjects taught in government schools into the curriculum of his *madrassa*. Subjects introduced in *Madrasat al-Ghazali* included history, geography and mathematics which were taught in Arabic language in addition to other Islamic religious subjects.

Before 1933, Islamic religious education was confined to the recitation and memorization of the Quran in addition to few Islamic subjects and Arabic language. Other Madrasa also embarked on integrating modern subjects into the

Madrassa curriculum, including Madrasat al-Falah al-Islamiyya established by Shaykh Abdalla Husny in Mombasa and Madrasat al-Najah in Lamu in 1938 and 1945 respectively. Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) is an example of an effort to introduce a pre-madrassa early childhood programme, which was implemented in Mombasa in 1986 and then expanded to Zanzibar and Uganda in 1990 and 1993 respectively. MRC initiative was geared towards facilitating the development of quality and culturally appropriate and sustainable early childhood centers among the low-income communities. The curriculum of MRC integrates Islamic religious and secular education, which enables the children to learn both Islamic religious and secular education within the same premises (AKF, 2000).

Education as an Ideological Instrument

Islamic schools were established to provide Muslim children with an education that is aligned with their beliefs and practices while partaking of the national secular education that guarantees its graduates a recognized certificate that allows the bearer to gain entry into tertiary education upon fulfilling the entry requirements and thereafter get a job in the public or private sector.

Education in Kenya has been in the hands of missionaries and colonial authorities for a long time, who have used it as an ideological instrument to gain control over others. Based on Althusser's theory, ideological instruments make nations accept the power of the ruling class and produce people who are willing to be dominated. Education, religion and media are some of these ideological instruments, which have a great influence on the lives of the people. (Loomba, 1998).

According to the definition offered by Curren (2007), the term education refers primarily to the systematic guiding and controlling of human activities to improve their methods of learning. Education involves the transmission of culture (p.3). Harris (1979) stated that education is primarily about 'the transmission of Knowledge'. To him, the educational system provides a special kind of knowledge, which gives its audience a certain viewpoint about the world. Thus education is not a neutral but rather, it provides a prearranged outlook for people (p.2).

The textbooks that represent the contents of the education system may sometimes be used to pass messages that portray certain groups negatively or show positive aspects of a *haram* activity. Peled-Elhanan (2012) examined 17 Israeli school textbooks on history, geography and civic studies. Her conclusions indicated that Israel perfected a system of indoctrination and cultivation of anti-Arab racism in students from an early age.

Based on the ideas of Curren and Harris therefore, as education system represents a set of information, which is disguised as neutral, but in fact it is designed to make people alienated from their values and absorbed to those of the provider. Through studying in this system one gradually loses one's own beliefs and values and starts cherishing those of his master.

The contention of this paper is that Islamic universities must take the challenge of producing textbooks that mirror the values and social realities of Muslims then becomes tenable when education is viewed as an arena, where facts are not just facts and neutral but ideological instruments designed to alienate the learner from his cherished values and beliefs. More so, the Islamic subjects such as *Fiqh*, Hadith, *Seerah*, and Arabic language are either taught using textbooks designed for learners whose first language is Arabic, thereby straining students for whom Arabic is a second language. Moreover, many of these imported textbooks are not age or level specific.

Development of Textbooks and Teaching-Learning Materials

Textbooks are most commonly an essential part of a curriculum and normally support the learner and the teacher in understanding the contents and objectives of the curriculum. The development of textbooks by the Islamic universities for Islamic schools can be cost effective and useful since there is not enough commercial market for sparking private interest in the textbook business that caters for Islamic studies.

Publishing is normally a business venture and private publishers are usually more concerned with profit margin than provision of teaching and learning materials for subjects with a small candidature that may not give adequate returns to the shareholders. The Islamic Universities can be publishers of last resort for Islamic schools while taking advantage of the liberalized

publishing industry in the country and develop materials for the private Islamic education market.

Islamic schools that implement the national curriculum and Islamic studies track face a dual problem of having to contend with textbooks produced by mainstream publishers for subjects such as History and Social studies that promote sex education, the free mixing of sexes both within the class and outside as well as content and illustrations showing boy/girl relationships. In the Islamic studies track, there are virtually no textbooks. The few teaching and learning materials developed in Arab countries do not conform to the curriculum as well as local context of the Kenyan Muslims.

The Present Study

The purpose of the paper is to explore the challenges of development of TLM in Islamic schools and to show how Islamic Universities can play a significant role in the development of relevant curriculum and curriculum support materials that are context specific for Madrasa's and Islamic Integrated Schools in Kenya.

Research methodology

The study basically followed a qualitative approach where explanations, views and contextual meanings were used to understand the nature of the teaching and learning materials environment in Madrasa and Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa County. Saunder (2007) indicates that qualitative data is in the form of words rather than numbers and those words are often grouped into categories. Data were collected using Focused Group Discussion (FGD) attended by Madrasa and Islamic Integrated school students, teachers, head teachers and Ministry of Education officials

Results and Discussion

Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, ultimately yielding the following themes: absence of a unified national curriculum, availability of teaching learning materials, conformity of available materials to the curriculum, challenges of subject teachers and untrained teachers.

Absence of a unified national curriculum

Absence of a unified curriculum is most severe problem for the Madrasa. Usually they implement varied curricula from such diverse countries as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen and Egypt. Furthermore, Islamic Integrated schools combine the government approved curriculum and Madrasa curriculum borrowed from other Muslim countries.

These institutions, due to the differences in curricula, end up using different textbooks to cover different content where such textbooks are available. It is possible to visit two schools within a radius of five hundred metres and find them teaching different curricula and hence using different textbooks. This leads to students studying different contents designed for different contexts. For example, in a Geography lesson, it's possible for a student to be exposed to the geography of Saudi Arabia while another student is studying the Geography of Sudan, both of them being completely ignorant of the geography of their country or even home town.

Availability of Teaching/Learning Materials

Participants from different Madrasa and schools complained that teaching and Learning materials were completely inadequate. None of the four Madrasa and six Islamic Integrated schools had adequate and curriculum specific textbooks. The schools were entirely dependent on a few old books developed in Saudi Arabia. Most schools had very poor supplies of essential textbooks and other learning materials and often the only available subject textbook was a copy held by the teacher. Schools generally try to invest at least in teachers' copies of key textbooks. Most of the Heads of the schools considered that the lack of textbooks was a serious constraint to quality and performance. It was also noted that there was an acute shortage of equipment such as desks, chairs, tables, cupboards etc. There was no evidence of computers in use in the schools visited.

It is noted that most of the textbooks were inappropriate to the curriculum. The researcher would recommend the introduction of textbooks written and priced specially for local Madrasa's and Islamic Integrated schools in Kenya. It was also noted that none of the Madrasa and Integrated schools had libraries.

The best and most prestigious Madrasa was seriously short of basic teaching and learning materials even in the core subjects of Arabic, Quran and Hadith. Where textbook sets were available they were typically old (frequently between 6 and 20 years of use) and although they were usually looked after with a remarkable degree of care and devotion, they were often in very poor condition. The most significant sources of subject information for students came from: (a) notes copied from the blackboard or dictated by teachers or (b) from cheaply produced pamphlets written by teachers based on their own lecture notes extracted from standard textbooks.

Conformity of Available Textbooks to the Curriculum

The development of curriculum specific teaching and learning materials is an important part of any curriculum development process. The Islamic studies section of the curriculum of Islamic Integrated schools did not have teaching materials that are specific to it. All the subject teachers interviewed indicated that there are no textbooks that conform to the curriculum. To get content to teach, teachers have to use several textbooks.

In the Madrasa's sampled all were implementing different syllabi's which calls for use of different textbooks, espousing different content and contexts where available. In most Madrasa there were only teachers' copies, which meant that students were forced to rely on notes given by the teachers.

Challenges faced by subject teachers

The participants mentioned some challenges faced by subject teachers when they teach without curriculum specific textbooks in the class. They stated that there is a scarcity of textbooks in all the schools. They are usually compelled to write almost everything on the blackboard and students copy these notes with no fall back on curricular resources. Such a situation has a negative impact on the motivation of students to learn and on the possible linkage between school and home activities. Most Madrasa and Islamic Integrated schools lack library facilities and even the ones with libraries are rarely equipped. The available textbooks are irrelevant to the target curriculum with some containing only one topic from the syllabus. Lack of balance and consistency between curriculum and the end of year examination was also noted as a problem. Whereas the examination is expected to test the target curriculum, schools generally use

particular textbooks for setting examinations, thereby disadvantaging many students. It's also noted that examiners generally rely on a narrow area of the syllabus to set the questions rather than testing the whole curriculum.

Untrained Teachers

Though the study was basically on the availability of curriculum specific teaching and learning resources, the ability of teachers to deliver the content to the learners was found to be very low. Although a few of the teachers who graduated from universities in were Sudan trained and qualified to be teachers, the majority were found to be high school graduates, whose level of mastery of content as well as methodology was highly suspect. Teachers were found to face challenges in communicating in Arabic language, which is a medium of instruction in the Islamic studies track of the schools.

What Islamic Universities Can Do

Above challenges and constraints can be overcome by the active participation of graduates and professors of Islamic Universities because they have to ability and skill to modify curriculum of any nation. The following therefore are the tasks that can be done by the Islamic universities in the development of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM):

- i. Compatibility with the curriculum: The textbook should be aligned with the target curriculum. Textbooks for Islamic studies are unavailable and where available do not conform to the target curriculum
- ii. Layout and design: The textbook should have an appealing layout and be well structured to aid leaning.
- iii. Illustrations: The illustrations (pictures, photographs, graphics, diagrams, tables, boxes with short introductions or captions) should be relevant and complement the content.

- iv. Quality in regard to content and subject matter, relevance: The content in the text must of relevant, adequate and cover the objectives of the respective topics in the subject syllabus.
- v. Age-appropriateness: The textbook should be age-appropriate in terms of content as well as its layout and design.
- vi. Didactic approaches: The textbook should feature a well thought-out didactic concept. It should provide up-to-date didactic core principles like learner autonomy, cooperative learning and in- depth learning. Materials and tasks provided should be on different levels and for different learner types.
- vii. Questions and task instructions: The questions, task instructions, suggestions etc. should be integrated into the textbook. Wherever possible the task instructions should be phrased openly and should support learner creativity. It should assist the learner to take an active role in the learning process and strengthen learner autonomy and independence.
- viii. Linguistic aspects: The language of the texts is impeccable and equates the norms of the written language. The language is adjusted to the age and linguistic competency of the target group in lexical and syntactic regards. The task instructions and problems in particular are phrased very simply and comprehensibly and therefore support independent learning. The textbook should additionally provide for activities on linguistically different levels for the same topic, wherever possible, in order to enhance all students' learning. Especially the textbooks at the lower primary level should take the linguistic situation in Islamic schools in Kenya into consideration, for example where English, Kiswahili and Arabic are taught as opposed to public schools where only English and Kiswahili are taught.
- ix. Relation to gender: The textbook should contribute to dismantling of discrimination and stereotyping due to gender. In particular textbooks such as (primers, ethics, history and social sciences textbooks) this can

be achieved explicitly by the choice of respective, age-appropriate texts, tasks and questions. This standard has to be implicitly implemented in all textbooks by the choice of gender neutral/balanced forms (male and female forms) and by an evenly distributed and non-stereotyped representation of girls and boys, respectively men and women in the texts, illustrations and tasks.

- X. Commentary/assistance for teachers; manageability: There should be a teacher commentary for the textbook containing 1.) Aims, structure, main focus of the textbook, which is explained briefly and comprehensively and 2.) Lean, practice related notes for working with the particular texts, chapters or exercises. This commentary supports the teachers and contributes to the manageability and proper use in lessons.
- Xi. Additional materials for the textbook: The textbook should contain tasks, suggestions and/or additional materials, which encourages students to practice and apply the subject matter. The additional materials can consist of integrated materials (e.g. in the form of tasks and exercises in the textbook itself) or of separate materials (e.g. in the form of a workbook for the textbook or on a CD, which can be copied by the teacher and possibly adapted according to the needs of the class, or in the form of electronic learning programs).

Conclusion

This paper revealed that there is a dire shortage of curriculum and context specific teaching/learning materials at Islamic schools and Madrasa's in Kenya. The study also found that the Islamic schools that implement the national curriculum and an Islamic studies track are often forced to contend with textbooks that contain content and illustrations that go against Islamic ethos and teachings, basically negating the objective for which the schools have been established. The study therefore recommended that, Islamic Universities, in line with the aims for which they were established, establish publishing houses to cater for the growing demand of curriculum specific teaching and learning materials for Islamic Schools and Madrasa. It finally offers some suggestions

on how to select Instructional materials for a better teaching/learning of Islamic Studies in Kenyan Islamic Schools.

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