



## **Historical Background on the Development of Qur'anic Education and its Sciences in Nigeria: An Overview**

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### **Abstract**

*Qur'anic education has played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic culture and society in Nigeria. This article explores the historical development of Qur'anic education in Nigeria, highlighting key periods, challenges, and reforms. This article provides a historical background on the development of Qur'anic education and its sciences in Nigeria. The study examines the evolution of Qur'anic education from the pre-colonial era to the present day, highlighting key periods, challenges, and reforms. The article discusses the traditional Qur'anic education system, the impact of colonialism, and post-independence reforms aimed at integrating Qur'anic education into the national curriculum. The study also explores the modernization of Qur'anic schools, incorporating modern subjects and teaching methods, and the challenges facing Qur'anic education in Nigeria, including funding, infrastructure, and standardization. The article concludes that Qur'anic education has played a significant role in shaping Islamic culture and society in Nigeria, and efforts to modernize and reform the system will ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** Qur'anic education, Qur'anic Sciences, Traditional Qur'anic Education, Colonialism, Post-independence.

### **Introduction**

In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Most Merciful. May peace and blessings be upon the Noblest Prophet Muhammad (S. A. W.), his family, Companions and all those who follow their guidance till the end of time.

Qur'anic education refers to the teaching and study of the Qur'an, along with the Islamic teachings and practices. It is an essential aspect of religious education in many schools. Qur'anic education was introduced to Nigeria in the 14th century, spreading rapidly through Hausaland and other regions. This article examines the evolution of Qur'anic education, focusing on traditional and modern approaches.

The tradition of Qur'anic education has deep roots that can be traced back to the time of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), who emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge and understanding the teachings of the Qur'an. This emphasis on education laid the foundation for the development of Qur'anic Sciences and the establishment of educational institutions across the Muslim world, including Nigeria. Qur'anic education has been an integral part of Nigerian society for centuries, playing a vital role in shaping Islamic culture, values, and traditions. The history of Qur'anic education in Nigeria dates back to the 14th century, when Islam was first introduced to the region. Over time, Qur'anic education evolved into a sophisticated system, producing renowned scholars, theologians, and leaders who contributed significantly to Islamic scholarship and civilization. This article aims to provide a historical background on the development of Qur'anic education and its sciences in Nigeria, highlighting key periods, challenges, and reforms that have shaped the system. The study will examine the traditional Qur'anic education system, the impact of colonialism, and post-

independence reforms aimed at integrating Qur'anic education into the national curriculum. In Nigeria, the subject of Qur'anic sciences has been a cornerstone of the educational system for centuries, with Qur'anic Islamiyyah schools playing a central role in imparting knowledge of the Qur'an and Islamic sciences to generations of students. These schools have served as both centres of learning and community hubs, fostering a strong sense of religious identity and cultural heritage among the people of Nigeria.

### **Historical Background on the Development of Qur'anic Sciences**

Islamic education started with the first revelation of the Glorious Qur'an which came with the commandment "read" which made learning compulsory and continuous. The Glorious Qur'an as fountainhead and inexhaustible source of knowledge established the astounding superiority of knowledge and encouraged Muslims to pursue it with vigour through all available means, languages and teachers for the sake of attaining well-being and prosperity.

Since Islam laid greater emphasis on learning through the earlier revelation, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) preached and practise the quest for it. He therefore started his duties by teaching his family and other people who accepted Islam. As early as 613 C.E, he had students whom he taught the message of the Glorious Qur'an and his Sunnah. The house of Arqam bin Abi Arqam (R.A) in Makkah served as the first centre where Muslims were taught. This was sustained and expanded in Prophetic Masjid at Madina after the Hijrah. Prophet (S.A.W.) stood conspicuously in disseminating knowledge among Muslims and he directed on the need of learning, writing and reading and he talked on the methods and principles of teaching in a number Ahadith.

The number of Muslims increased in Madina, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) therefore, appointed some of his Companions to assist in the task of imparting Islamic Knowledge. These Companions were known as "the four principal teachers". They included: Salim Mawla Abi Huzaifa, Abdullahi bin Mas'ud, Mu'adh bin Jabal and Ubayb bin Ka'ab. From these Companions the methodology of Qur'anic recitation came to us. This highlights the increase in the number of Muslims in Madina during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), led to the need for assistance in imparting Islamic knowledge. To address this, the Prophet (S.A.W.) appointed four of his Companions as principal teachers to fulfil this important task. Among their significant contributions was the establishment of the methodology of Qur'anic recitation, which has been passed down to us through the generations. This underscores the pivotal role these Companions played in preserving and spreading Islamic knowledge, particularly the recitation of the Qur'an, which remains a fundamental aspect of Islamic practice and scholarship.

The year following the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him), Abubakr al-Siddiq (R.A), on the recommendation of Umar (R.A), who had observed that the Qur'anic memorisers were becoming extinct, ordered that the scattered portions of the Glorious Qur'an be collected. Zayd bin Thabit (R.A.) formerly Prophet Muhammad's secretary, (Peace and Blessings be upon him) was entrusted with the task. Fragments from 'ribs of palm-leaves and tablets of white stone and from the breasts of men' were brought together and a text was constructed. In the Caliphate of Uthman (R.A) (644-56C.E) various readings in the current copies arose, due mainly to defective nature of Kufic script; Uthman (R.A) accordingly appointed in 651 the same Zayd (R.A) as chairman of the committee on revision. Abubakr al-Siddiq's copy, then in the custody of Hafsa, daughter of Umar and one of Prophet Muhammad's wives (R. A) was used as a basis. The original codex of the fresh version was kept in Madina; three copies of this text were made and forwarded to the three major Muslim centres in Damascus, Basrah and Kufah, and all others were destroyed. The discrepancy in Qur'anic recitation as a result of massive and rapid conquest of many nations into the fold of Islam and the continued acceptance of Islam by non-Arabs. Caliph Uthman (R. A.) made efforts of standardizing the Glorious Qur'an on the basis of different readings/ linguistic variants of the Glorious Qur'an which were earlier on approved by the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).

Qur'anic studies witnessed further development under Ummayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. These were the periods during which the Tabi'un and Tabi' u- Tabi'un lived. The Tabi'un received their training directly from the Companions (R.A.). The centres of learning founded by the Companions continued to be manned by those who studied from them among the Tabi'un after their death. Great centres of learning which were already established in places like Madina, Makkah, Kufah, Basra, Iraq, Syria and Yaman remained the leading centres.

*Ulum al-Qur'an* is a multifaceted and diverse area of study. Its broad scope includes various sub- disciplines examining the Qur'an's history (compilation and canonization), nature of its miraculous revelation and its underlying theology, circumstances and occasions of its descension, precise articulation of its verbal utterances, aspects of its inimitability, as well as its linguistic styles, devices, and literary theories, names of its chapters and order of its verses, virtues and etiquettes of recitation, rules of Tafsir and the qualifications of the one exercising it, and others.

*Ulum al-Qur'an* is an umbrella term for various disciplines and areas of studies related to the Qur'an's meaning, oral and written history, and rendition. One of the most famous disciplines among Muslims, Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir), is generally considered part, and one of the goals of, of *Ulum al-Qur'an*. Tafsir is by far the most exhaustive intellectual Enterprise given its critical object of uncovering the intended meanings behind Allah's words. It relies on exegetical

principles; lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical explanations; Prophetic Ahadith; circumstances and settings of revelation; variant readings; and abrogation. The field of *Ulum al-Qur'an* is a prerequisite for undertaking a wider textual and contextual study of the meanings of the Qur'an while alerting us to the integrity and inimitability of the text

"*Ulum al-Qur'an*" refers to the diverse range of disciplines and fields of study that focus on different aspects of the Qur'an, such as its interpretation, history (both oral and written), and recitation. Among these disciplines, Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir) stands out as one of the most renowned and significant areas of study for Muslims. Tafsir plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning and context of the Qur'an's verses, helping believers to derive guidance and wisdom from the sacred text. Overall, *Ulum al-Qur'an* serves as an umbrella term that encompasses the scholarly efforts and methods aimed at deepening one's knowledge and appreciation of the Qur'an's teachings and message.

The first specialized work on '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' recorded in the index of authors, *Fihrist Ibn Nadeem*, is the 10th century work, *al-Hadi fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, by AbuBakr Muhammad ibn Khalaf (d. 309 AH). It was written in 47 volumes, however, no copies have reached us. The next oldest is *al-Burhaan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* by 'Ali ibn Ibraahim ibn Sa'id, better known as al-Hufi (d. 330 AH). The original text was in 30 volumes, of which 15 are available in manuscript. The text is not a systematic compilation of the sciences of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*', but follows the Tafsir format in which the author introduces the various branches of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' where relevant. In the 12th century, Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH) wrote two books in the field called *Funun al-Afnan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* and *al-Mujtabaa fi Ulum Tata'allaq bil-Qur'an*. The first has been printed. The second remains in manuscript at Dar al-Kutub al-misriyah in Egypt. The 13th century witnessed two more works, *Jamal al-Qurra'* by 'Alamud-Din as-Sakhawi (d. 641 AH), and *al-Murshid al-Wajiz fi ma Yata'allaq bil-Qur'an al-'Aziz*, by Abu Shamah 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Isma'il al-Maqdasi (d. 775 AH). Badrud-Din az-Zarkashi (d. 794 AH) wrote his classic, entitled *al-Burhaan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, in the 14th century. It has been published. He was followed in the 15th century by Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Kafiji (d. 873 AH) and Jalalud-Din al-Bulqini, who identified fifty different types of Qur'anic sciences in his book, *Mawaqi' al-'Ulum min Mawaqi' an-Nujum*. In the same century, Jalalud-Din as-Suyuti (d. 911 AH) wrote two books in the field of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*'. He entitled the first, finished in 872 AH, *at-Tahbir fi 'Ulum at-Tafsir*. It consists of one slim volume, but touches on 102 different fields of Qur'anic sciences. He later combined and condensed the fields to 80, which he then elaborated upon in his work, *Kitab al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. The latter text became the standard source book in the study of 'ulum al-Qur'aan for later generations of scholars.

For the next three centuries the field of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' saw little development. However, in the 20th century, a new flurry of writing began with Shaykh Tahir al-Jaza'i's 300-page work entitled, *at-Tibyan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. In the mid twentieth century, a number of professors at al-Azhar University wrote concise texts on the subject of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' for their respective colleges. Some of these were later published. Among the more notable is *Minhaj al-Furqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* written for students in the College of Da'wah wal-Irshad by Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Salamah. *Manahil al-'Irfan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, a two volume work of over 1000 pages was written by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abdul-'Azim az-Zarqani, former lecturer of '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' and '*ulum al-Hadith*' in the College of Islamic Disciplines (usul ad-Din). In the latter part of the 20th century, a number of excellent works have been written in the field by university professors like *Mabahith fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* by Subhi as-Salih, *Mabahith fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* by Manna' al-Qattan, *Madkhal ila al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Muhammad 'Abdullah Daraz, *al-Madkhal li Dirasah al-Qur'an*, by Muhammad Abu Shahbah, and *Lamahat fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* by Dr. Muhammad ibn Lutfi as-Sabbaagh.

## **Qur'anic Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, Qur'anic education began in Kanem Borno invariably with the introduction of Islam in the empire in the 11th century. The Qur'anic education started in the palace of Mai (title for the ruler of Borno) and it was introduced by Muhammad ibn Mani who stayed long in the empire to spread Islam and teach Islamic Sciences. He taught five rulers of Kanem Borno empire, the Qur'an and Risala of ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (d.996). By the end of twelfth century, the traditional system of Qur'anic Education had produced competent scholars who were not only famous in Borno but were known to the outside world. Kanem Borno was privileged to be connected to the universities of Qayrawan (est.670CE), Zaytuna (est. 750CE), and al-Azhar (est. 970CE). These Institutions has greatly influenced the development of Qur'anic education in Kanem Borno in particular and Nigeria in general. These institutions played a significant role in shaping the development of Qur'anic education in Kanem Borno specifically, and their influence extended to Nigeria as a whole. The exchange of knowledge and ideas between these educational centres and Borno contributed to the enrichment and advancement of Qur'anic studies in the region, fostering a legacy of scholarship and learning that left a lasting impact on the local and national educational landscape.

Mai Dunama Dabalemi (1221-1259) built a student hostel in al-Azhar known as Riwaq al-Barnawi (Borno students hostel). Money for the scholarship of the students, for the upkeep of the hostel and stipends for the teachers were annually sent. The authorities of Kanem Borno were responsible for the construction, maintenance, payment of stipends to the staff and students allowances up to the end of the first world war. For this support, by the beginning of the 15th century, those who studied in the universities of Qayrawan, Zaytuna and al-Azhar returned to Kanem in great numbers

and started disseminating the knowledge they acquired. This era witnessed active encouragement, patriotic patronage and support for Qur'anic education. For this type of education and the quality and standard of students and teachers it produced, Birnin Ngarazangamu the new capital of Kanem Borno became a celebrated centre of Qur'anic education in the central Biladul-Sudan.

### Traditional Qur'anic Education (14th-19th centuries)

Tsangaya System: According to Abdulrahman and Canham: 1978: 54, It is an informal setting, often held in mosques or homes with focus on Qur'anic memorization (*hifz*) and basic Islamic studies. It is taught by mallams (scholars) or imams, and students (*almajiris*) would travel to seek knowledge. The curriculum is centred on Qur'an memorization and recitation (*tajwid*); Basic Islamic studies (*fiqh*, hadith, etc.) as well as Arabic language and grammar.

### Colonial Era (1900-1960)

Western-style education: Introduced by British colonizers, threatening traditional Qur'anic education (Umar, 2001:128) It has a long lasting effects as it undermined traditional Qur'anic education system and introduced Western values and culture (Tibenderana, 2003: 13). It Created a dual education system (Western and Islamic). This generated Resistance from Islamic scholars and communities as well as efforts to modernize and reform Qur'anic education (Umar, 2001:129) The situation also led to the creation of Modernized Qur'anic schools, incorporating secular subjects. (Umar, 2009:129)

### Post-Independence (1960-present)

Islamic education reforms: During this period, efforts to integrate Qur'anic education into national curriculum. This paved way for reforms that included; Establishment of the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Education (1979), Introduction of Islamic studies into national curriculum (1982). This saw the increased government recognition of Qur'anic education (Khalid, 1997: 152). The modernization effort led to introduction of modern subjects (mathematics, science, English) and adoption of modern teaching methods (lectures, discussions) as well as use of technology (computers, internet) in Qur'anic schools. (Khalid, 1997: 153). This has no doubt improved quality of Qur'anic education, increased access to modern education for Muslim students and enhanced competitiveness of Qur'anic school graduates.

## Conclusion

Qur'anic education has significantly contributed to Nigeria's Islamic heritage. Addressing challenges and embracing modernization will ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Qur'anic education has played a significant role in shaping Islamic culture and society in Nigeria. Efforts to modernize and reform the system will ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. The paper therefore recommends: Government support for Qur'anic schools, Standardized curriculum and accreditation as well as Teacher training and capacity building.

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