



ILORIN AS A BEACON OF LEARNING AND CULTURE IN WEST AFRICA

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إلورن: منارة العلم والثقافة في غرب أفريقيا

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Y. O. Imam, A. D. Shittu and J. K. AbdulRafi'u

Introduction

Daru'l Kitab wa Sunnah (DKS) is a private Islamic and Arabic institution of learning founded by an Islamic scholar, Dr AbdulQadir Jum'ah Solagberu in 1995 in Gaa-Akanbi area of Ilorin in Kwara State with the aim of spreading Islamic and Arabic literacy and developing manpower within and outside Ilorin. The general objectives of the institution are

- 1 dissemination of Arabic and Islamic education to anybody who desires it free of charge
- 2 propagation of Islamic culture
- 3 training of individuals for Qur'anic memorisation
- 4 production of individuals that would be self-reliant and those that will possess such qualification that will enable them proceed for their degree programme here in Nigeria and abroad (Solagberu, 1995)

The institution runs a programme in Junior and Senior Arabic and Islamic Secondary Education (*I^cdadiy* and *Thanawiy*). This programme runs for a period of seven years after which students sit for an internal certificate examination and get a certificate equivalent to a secondary school certificate with which they get admission into any of the universities in the Arab world such as Al-Azhar University, Cairo and the Islamic University, Madina in Saudi Arabia to which the school is affiliated. Graduates of the secondary school programme who wish to further their education in Nigeria can equally proceed to the diploma programme of the school. The diploma programme is run for two years after which a student will graduate with a Diploma certificate in Arabic Education or Islamic Studies Education. Students of this programme are equally given the opportunity of sitting for the Senior Islamic School Certificate Examination (SISCE). Students with good result in the diploma certificate

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examination and the SISS examination will be qualified for admission into 200 level of the Faculty of Education of the Ahmadu Bello University of Zaria (Ibrahim,2010)

In pursuance of the objectives of the diploma programme of the institution, only teachers with higher degree certificates from recognised universities in Nigeria and abroad are appointed to teach. The programme is an evening course with a maximum of five periods per each day of the five working days of the week.

Concept of Curriculum

Educationists differ in their definition of the term 'curriculum'. Omoniyi (2000) considered it as a combination of curricula and co-curricular experiences of learners under the administration of the school. Salawu (2006) viewed it as a package of educational experiences with particular reference to desired knowledge, skills and values which equip the learner to function as an effective citizen. Daramola (2004) however, observed that curriculum is that part of the school academic programme specifically designed to provide planned and guided learning experiences. In view of differences in content and context of the different definitions, Abdur-Rafiu,(2009) submits that what needs to be understood from various definitions is that curriculum should be designed in a way that it will restore basic values, truths and commensurate behaviour that will portray the learners as nurtured individuals that will be contributive in the societal development. This submission implies that every educational programme or system must be guided by a curriculum, which is designed in such a way that its goals will suit the national aims of education. The content and resources of the curriculum should be capable of meeting up with both the individual and societal needs.

Based on the differing definitions on the concept, some educationists conclude that curriculum has four interrelated components which are embodied in the following fundamental questions: What is the product of instructional objectives? What is being studied (the content or subject matter of instruction)? How are the study and teaching being done (process)? How are the results of teaching being assessed (evaluation)? Others argued that the components of curriculum are; objectives, content, methodology and evaluation. Whichever of the view is adopted, scholars of curriculum, in their effort to examine the validity of a

curriculum, preponderated activities like evaluation, assessment and appraisal as necessary tools (Sadiq, 2004) and whenever a curriculum is examined, evaluated, assessed or appraised, the focus is usually on the credibility and originality of the aforementioned components because in any feasible curriculum, it is pertinent to have clearly stated goals indicating the desired learning outcomes that are observable and achievable. The learning experiences and content should fulfil the criteria of validity, comprehensiveness, variety, suitability, relevance, significance, utility, learnability and durability. The organisation of the learning experiences and content should follow sequence, continuity and integration (Abdur-Rafiu, 2009).

An Examination of the Diploma Programme of *Daru'l Kitab wa Sunnah*

The DKS runs a diploma programme in Arabic Education and in Islamic Studies Education as stated earlier. Courses are offered in three different fields; Arabic language, Islamic Studies and Education. The curriculum of these three fields will be examined in this section.

A. Clarity of Aims/goals/ objectives: at the preliminary pages of both Arabic and Islamic courses of the DKS Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies Education curricula, the objectives are stated while no objective is stated for teaching the selected learning experiences and content under Education courses. This could be an oversight or it was assumed that since the objectives of the key terms of the programme (Arabic and Islamic Studies) are stated in their respective curricula, it may not be necessary to still adduce goals or objectives for teaching Education courses. If this is the assumption, it is in our view not appropriate. Any subject or course that is to be exposed to the learners in any educational programme must have its goals and objectives clearly stated more so, the education courses are the professional courses designed to develop professional competency in students. The objectives of the Arabic and Islamic courses of DKS Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies Education are stated as follow:

(i) Objectives of Arabic courses

1. To learn and teach Arabic for communication

2. Provide beneficiaries enough knowledge on teaching Arabic in secondary schools
3. Develop standard for teaching Arabic in secondary schools
4. Prepare beneficiaries for admission into university
5. Prepare beneficiaries for absorption into the labour market
6. Provide mechanism for translation

(ii) Objectives of Islamic Studies courses

1. To enable the students master the branches of Islamic Studies
2. To enable the students understand fully the sources of Islamic legal system
3. To enable the students properly understand the principles and fundamentals of their religion
4. To develop standard for teaching Islamic Studies in secondary school
5. To prepare the beneficiaries for admission into university
6. Prepare beneficiaries for absorption into the labour market

Of the six objectives of Arabic courses, two objectives may be difficult to attain. The objective no 1 is clearly stated and can be observed and achieved when the learning experiences and content are successfully implemented. More so, there appears to be over ambition in the second and third objectives. The word 'enough knowledge' in the objective no 2 made the statement look clumsy. Likewise, the word 'develop the standard for teaching Arabic' in the objective no 3 is cumbersome. This is because, in Nigeria, ordinary diploma programme in education of whatever institution is only recognised as a teaching qualification by some states ministry of education and in most cases, bearers are absorbed to teach in primary schools. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) that is recognised nationally as a minimum teaching qualification, qualifies its holders to teach at basic levels of the Nigeria's Educational system i.e. primary and junior secondary schools. The word 'adequate knowledge' would be more appropriate than 'enough knowledge' bearing in mind that there are set standards in the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Nigeria Education Research Development Council (NERDC). There is no ambiguity in the fourth, fifth and sixth objectives. They are clearly stated and can be achieved if the curriculum is successfully implemented.

On the objectives of Islamic Studies Education curriculum, the first, second and third objectives are vague. The words; enable students 'to master' 'to understand' and 'understand properly' in the first, second and third

statements of objectives respectively are too cumbersome. Mastering a discipline implies professionalism and specialism. A programme that is meant to equip students with requisites for serious and tremendous studies cannot enable them to become masters of such discipline. Equally, the word 'understand' is unethical in educational statement because it can neither be observed nor measured. Objective no 4 is similar to objective no 3 of the Arabic programme while objectives no 5 and 6 are in line with objectives no 4 and 5 of Arabic programme.

In summary, the statement contained in the curriculum is not supposed to be tagged 'objectives' because educational purposes at the level of curriculum development are referred to as 'goals' which are expected to emanate from the nation educational 'aims' while objectives are at proximate level which is the classroom situation (Ajidagba, 2005).

B. Selection and Organisation of Content and Learning Experiences

For a successful educational planning, the scope of what shall be learnt and the organisation of learning units and experiences must be adequately planned (Daramola, 2004). Thus, the learning experiences targeted to bring about the desired goals of DKS Diploma programme are well stated in the curriculum. The curriculum has the content spread across Arabic Grammar, Arabic Composition, Arabic Literature, Arabic Morphology, Arabic Rhetoric, Prosody, Translation, French, Use of Library, Qur'anic Sciences, Science of Hadith, Islamic Law, Islamic Civilization, Islamic History, Islamic Economic System and Practical Teaching. It also includes Historical Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, Educational Management and Ethics, Sociology of Education, Citizenship Education, Introduction to Measurement and Evaluation, Instructional Technology, Methodology of Teaching and English and Communication Skills.

As regards the validity, comprehensiveness, suitability, relevance, significance, utility, learnability and durability of the learning experiences and contents, the selected learning experiences and content are good enough to fulfill the above criteria stated above. The courses, themes and topics are valid, suitable, and learnable and they are capable of bringing about the desired goals of the programme. The selected learning experiences and contents are valid enough to equip a student with requisites of admission into the university and to an extent; it can prepare

the student for absorption into the labour market. The aspects of Islamic civilization, Islamic Economic system and even French that are included in the learning experiences and content are also worthwhile. If successfully imparted on the students, they would boost their chance of being relevant in the society and enhance their productivity in the labour market.

In spite of the validity and suitability of the learning experiences and contents of the curriculum, the curriculum is deficient of courses like Curriculum Studies, Teacher Education and Research Methods. Non-inclusion of the identified courses with relevant themes in any teacher-training programme will be a big minus to the standard of the curriculum. Equally absent in the curriculum are courses on Computer Studies and Entrepreneurship Education which are relevant courses in preparing students for absorption in the labour market. The language of teaching courses of Arabic and Islamic studies is Arabic, This is commendable as it would assist in achieving one of the goals which is 'to enable students communicate in Arabic'. Except that it could have its deficiency of hindering the proficiency of students in the official language of the nation and may subsequently narrow their chance of getting admission into other universities of the nation apart from the university to which the school is affiliated

On the arrangement of the learning experiences and contents, it could be said to have fulfilled the criteria of sequence and cumulation, continuity and integration. There are orderliness, relevance and relationship among the various courses, themes and topics. Themes of the contents are also arranged in such a way that the preceding experience agrees with the subsequent experience. This also shows the integration in the arrangement of courses of Arabic and Islamic Studies Education Diploma programme.

C. Teaching Methods and Instructional Resources

The curriculum is found wanting completely in this crucial component of a feasible curriculum. No teaching method is recommended and no single instructional resource or media is suggested as a means of facilitating the teaching and learning of the curriculum content. No recommended textbooks are included in the curriculum. In a standard curriculum, when the course contents are sequentially mentioned, relevant methods for

imparting the knowledge or disseminating the educational instructions need to be explicitly mentioned. Subsequently, relevant instructional materials that will facilitate the classroom activities equally need to be suggested alongside with recommended books.

Evaluation

This is the last component of a feasible curriculum. Evaluation in curriculum is a stage where the degree of attainment of the expected learning outcome is ascertained (Omoniyi, 2000). Although the curriculum of DKS Diploma programme includes practical teaching which is a good means of demonstrating the skills acquired through theoretical studies, it does not include ways through which the expected outcomes could be evaluated. Continuous assessment of students which is one of the modern ways of evaluating students' assimilation of course content is not contained in the curriculum. Even though it was gathered from an oral interview conducted with the Provost of the Diploma Programme that at the mid of each semester, C.A test is conducted and at the end of the semester, students are subjected to a written examination, it is necessary for the curriculum to spell out how it would go about the examination.

Suggestions and recommendations

Having examined the curriculum of the Diploma Programme of DKS, the following suggestions are made:

- a) There is a dire need for a review of the curriculum to make it more productive and relevant especially in these days when education is considered useful only when it assists in man power development. The goal of the programme needs to be reviewed and be tailored towards agreeing with the goal of the nationally approved policy on education. Doing this will make it acquire uniformity with curriculum of allied institutions of teachers' education
- b) It is vital that courses like Curriculum Studies, Teachers' Education and Research Methods be included in the curriculum. These courses have direct impact on the professionalism of the recipients in teaching. Curriculum Studies will expose students to the input-output-process sequence of teaching profession. Teachers' Education will give them perspective into their profession and

Research Methods will make them to be creative and innovative in their field.

- c) The inclusion of teaching methods, learning strategies and instructional resources in the school curriculum would enhance teaching-learning processes and will assist in actualizing the stated objectives of the curriculum.
- d) As good as the use of Arabic as a medium of communication in the teaching of both Arabic and Islamic studies is, there is the fear that products of this institution may not find it easy to work in public schools where the English language is adopted as the official language of communication. It is our candid opinion that the use of the English language in addition to Arabic, in the teaching of Islamic courses will be more relevant and hence, we so recommend.

Conclusion

This paper has assessed the curriculum of DKS Diploma programme. The authors' candid opinion is that though the curriculum generally conforms to the criteria that qualify a curriculum to be worthwhile, DKS Diploma programme curriculum is lagging behind in terms of ambiguity of some statements of objectives, lack of incorporation of courses like computer studies and entrepreneurship education, lack of stipulated teaching methods and instructional media. It is our strong view that if the observed flaws of the curriculum are corrected and successfully implemented, it would make the future of the DKS Diploma programme bright and also brighten the job prospects of its products.

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