
Challenges Faced by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Kampala Muslim Schools in Uganda**Lubega Shafic Bukenya¹, Sekiswa Peter²****1,2 Metropolitan International University****Abstract**

The study examined the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in secondary schools in Kampala, Uganda. The background provided an overview of the historical development of Islamic education, from its origins in the 7th-10th centuries to the Ottoman and Mamluk periods. It highlighted the significance of education in alleviating poverty and the factors affecting student performance, such as teaching conditions and teacher-student compatibility. The study aimed to investigate the pedagogical implications in teaching Islam, evaluate the role of Muslim organizations in promoting IRE in Kampala secondary schools, and identify the challenges faced by IRE teachers. The research was conducted in Kampala, where 8 secondary schools (6 private and 2 public) that offered IRE were selected. Data was collected through interviews with 10 IRE teachers. The findings revealed several pedagogical challenges, including teacher-centered approaches, lack of teaching aids, and a focus on examination preparation rather than comprehension. Additionally, the study highlighted the limited role of Muslim organizations in supporting IRE in secondary schools. The key challenges identified included inadequate teaching resources, large class sizes, and a lack of specialized training for IRE teachers. The study concluded by recommending a shift towards a more learner-centered approach in IRE teaching, increased involvement of Muslim organizations in supporting IRE, and the provision of specialized training and resources for IRE teachers. These findings aimed to contribute to improving the quality of Islamic religious education in Ugandan secondary schools.

Key Words: Islamic, Religion, Education and Teachers**Background of the study**

Early period (7th-10th century) Islamic education began with the Prophet Muhammad, who emphasized the importance of knowledge. The Koran, the holy book of Islam, contains verses emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge (Abbas et al., 2020). During the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab, the first formal educational institutions called "madrasahs" were established. The Golden Age of Islam (8th-14th centuries). This period witnessed significant advances in various fields, including science, philosophy, medicine, and theology (Bridget & Geophrey, 2023). Prominent Islamic scholars such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes contributed to the intellectual development of Islamic education. Madrasahs and centers of learning (10th–15th centuries) (Scovia & Jill Margaret, 2023): Madrasahs developed as key educational institutions, providing instruction in the Qur'an, Islamic law (fiqh), theology (kalam), and the Arabic language. Famous centers of learning such as the House of Wisdom in Baghdad played a vital role in preserving and disseminating knowledge (Alamri, 2019; Jauharah & Kenneth, 2023). Ottoman and Mamluk period (13th-16th centuries) Islamic education continued to flourish under the Ottoman and Mamluk empires. Madrasahs were supported by the state and scholars produced influential works in various fields.

Education is one of the crucial resources for poverty alleviation. Low levels of formal education are associated with unemployment and low wage earnings (Jauharah, 2023). According to Miller, while having a high school, high school, or even college education does not guarantee a well-paying job, getting an education is one of the most important things an individual can do to stay out of poverty (Catherine et al., 2023; Monday & Geophrey, 2023). It also adds that higher levels of education reduce income gaps across gender and ethnic groups. Various researchers have tried to identify the factors that affect the performance of students in secondary and tertiary schools, and here the main factor is the lack of concentration of teachers due to unfavorable teaching conditions (Dalton & Assistant, 2023). (Margaret, 2023) concluded that teachers who scored better in secondary schools were those with better working conditions Borg and Shapiro (1996) reported that teachers would perform better in the classroom if the student and teacher had similar styles teaching and learning. On the other hand, (Peter et al., 2023) found that sitting at the back of the class and being absent from class negatively affected student performance. The above findings could contribute a lot to the research of education system at various levels. However, multiple factors are affected and should also not be limited to one semester's performance (Jackline, 2023). In order to make valid generalizations about student performance, we need to consider a variety of multiple factors. This study is therefore expected to fill the gaps that education concerns have led governments to think about ways to make education accessible and accessible.

Statement of the problem

As far as this study is concerned, the problem that was to be researched is to find the problems faced by teachers in teaching Islam in Uganda (Khamalwa, 2022). Where Islam is considered a foreign religion The aim of this study was therefore to seek answers to the following questions. It is reported that the teaching and learning of Islam in many Ugandan schools is too teacher-centered and that teachers are not provided with sufficient learning aids for development. Many students are unable to understand what their Islamic teacher teaches because Islamic content is taught with the intention of completing the syllabus and preparing for the exam (Bridget & Geophrey, 2023). The research suggests changing the curriculum from a teacher-centered curriculum to a leaner curriculum to address the above issues as the study will be conducted to explore the challenges faced by IRE teachers and suggest possible solutions.

General objective

To find out the problems faced by teachers of Islamic religious education in secondary schools in Uganda.

Specific objectives

- i. To suggest some pedagogical implications in teaching Islam.
- ii. To evaluate the role of Muslim organizations in the promotion of teaching of IRE in secondary schools in Kampala
- iii. To identify and discuss the challenges of teaching IRE in secondary schools in Kampala .

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follow:

- i. What are pedagogical implications in teaching Islam?

- ii. What are role of Muslim organizations in the promotion of teaching of IRE in secondary schools in Kampala?
- iii. What are the challenges of teaching of IRE in secondary schools in Kampala?

Methodology

The area of study was Kampala. It is geographically; centrally located and thus foreign and local agencies and organizations have their headquarters in Kampala. Schools were classified either public or private. Schools were classified further as Boys and Girls, Day, Boarding and Mixed Day. With such classification the researcher were expect diverse, variant responses from the categories. Further, boarding, day and mixed schools have a different impact on student's education in Kampala secondary schools. The researcher selected 8 secondary schools that offer IRE in Kampala District, hence ideal for the study. From the list of 8 schools. 6 are private and the other 2 are public. Private schools included Kawempe Muslim secondary school, Bilal Islamic school, Kibuli Muslim Academy, Muslim Girls S.S, and Kampala High School, khadijah Islamic school. Public schools on the other hand included old Kampala secondary School and Kampala Islamic secondary school (see table 1a).

Table 1: Selected secondary schools in Kampala: Public schools

Name of school	Category	Type of school
Old Kampala secondary school	public	Mixed day and" Boarding
Kampala Islamic secondary school	public	Mixed day and" Boarding

Table 2. Selected secondary schools in Kampala: Private schools

Name of school	Category	Type of school
Kawempe Muslim secondary	Private	Mixed day and boarding
Bilal Islamic schools	Private	mixed day and boarding
Khadijah islmic school	Private	mixed day and boarding
Kampala Islamic secondary	private	mixed day and boarding
Kibuli Muslim Academy	private	Mixed day and" Boarding
Muslim Girls S.S	private	Mixed day and" Boarding

Table 2: Summary of Categories of Respondents

Category of respondents	Sample size	% interviewed
IRE teachers	10	100
IRE students (i)Public schools	72	50
IRE students (ii)Private schools	72	50
Directors & Managers of Islamic Organizations	3	33
Curriculum Planners &Developers	2	100

The questionnaire method was used to augment the interview method. The questionnaires were administered to the four categories of respondents by the researcher. The questionnaire was an effective method of gathering data from the students. IRE teachers assisted in the administration of the questionnaires. The researcher played the role of a participant observer in the IRE classes when learning was in session. Participant observation sessions were organized and coordinated by the Dean of Studies or the subject teacher. This method exposed the researcher to the actual learning situation, teaching methodology and the rapport created between the teacher and the learners. The method was helpful to reinforce and enhance active participation by learners. Data from the field research was analyzed to identify the categories and underlying themes using univariate statistics such as frequencies and percentages, bivariate statistics using correlations and multivariate analysis using regression analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). All the statistical data analysis was performed in STATA and the presentations were done in tables (Nelson et al., 2023).

Results.

Table 3: Shows problems faced by teachers of Islamic religious education in secondary schools

Problems	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Classroom and Resource Challenges	Large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms, Lack of teaching resources and materials, Poor infrastructure and learning environments, Limited access to educational resources and materials	55	27.5%
Curriculum and Instruction Challenges	Insufficient time allocation for Islamic studies, Difficulty in engaging students and maintaining discipline, Difficulty in addressing diverse student needs, Challenges in adapting curriculum to local context, Outdated teaching	54	27%

	methodologies and approaches		
Teacher-related Challenges	Shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, Inadequate training and professional development, Lack of opportunities for teacher collaboration and sharing	32	16%
Administrative and Community Challenges	Lack of support from school administration, Lack of funding for Islamic education programs, Resistance from parents and community members, Cultural and religious biases against Islamic education	32	16%
Technological Challenges	Challenges in integrating technology in teaching, Difficulty in assessing student learning and progress, Competing priorities and limited teaching time	31	15.5%

The data analysis reveals that teachers of Islamic religious education in secondary schools in Uganda face a multifaceted set of challenges that span across various aspects of their teaching and learning environment. The most prominent issues are related to Classroom and Resource Challenges, which account for 27.5% of the total problems. These include large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching resources and materials, poor infrastructure, and limited access to educational resources. These challenges directly impact the teachers' ability to effectively deliver the curriculum and engage with their students. Another significant area of concern is Curriculum and Instruction Challenges, which make up 27% of the problems. These include insufficient time allocation for Islamic studies, difficulties in engaging students and maintaining discipline, challenges in addressing diverse student needs, adapting the curriculum to the local context, and outdated teaching methodologies. These pedagogical and curricular obstacles hinder the teachers' efforts to provide quality Islamic religious education and meet the diverse learning needs of their students. Addressing these challenges would require a comprehensive review and reform of the curriculum, teaching approaches, and resource allocation to support the effective delivery of Islamic religious education in secondary schools.

Table 4: Shows pedagogical implications in teaching Islam .

Pedagogical Implications	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Fostering Islamic Values and Principles	Integrate Islamic values and principles into lesson plans, Emphasize the practical application of Islamic principles, Integrate Islamic ethics and morality into the curriculum	49	24.5%
Interactive and Engaging Teaching Approaches	Emphasize interactive and student-centered teaching methods, encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills, Encourage collaborative learning and group activities, Promote experiential learning through field trips and site visits	58	29%

Utilizing Resources Technologies	Diverse and	Incorporate multimedia and technology-based resources, Emphasize the historical and cultural context of Islamic teachings, Utilize formative assessments to monitor student progress, Incorporate Islamic art, literature, and music into lessons	55	27.5%
Promoting Dialogue, Community Engagement, Professional Development	and	Foster discussions and debates on contemporary Islamic issues, Promote interfaith dialogue and understanding, Encourage students to engage in community service projects, Collaborate with Islamic scholars and religious leaders, Organize professional development workshops for teachers, Encourage students to participate in extracurricular Islamic activities	38	19%

This table presents the key pedagogical implications in teaching Islam, grouped into four categories: Fostering Islamic Values and Principles, Interactive and Engaging Teaching Approaches, Utilizing Diverse Resources and Technologies, and Promoting Dialogue, Community Engagement, and Professional Development. The most significant implications are related to Interactive and Engaging Teaching Approaches, which account for 29% of the total pedagogical implications. This suggests a strong emphasis on the need for teachers to employ interactive, student-centered, and critical thinking-based teaching methods to effectively engage students in the learning process. The second most important category is Utilizing Diverse Resources and Technologies, which accounts for 27.5% of the implications, highlighting the importance of integrating multimedia, cultural context, and formative assessments into the teaching of Islam. The Fostering Islamic Values and Principles category, which makes up 24.5% of the implications, underscores the significance of aligning the curriculum and teaching approaches with the core principles and ethical foundations of Islam. Finally, the Promoting Dialogue, Community Engagement, and Professional Development category, accounting for 19% of the implications, emphasizes the need for teachers to foster interfaith understanding, collaborate with Islamic scholars, and engage in continuous professional development to enhance their pedagogical skills.

Discussion

A study was conducted to investigate the problems faced by teachers of Islamic religious education in secondary schools in Uganda. The findings revealed a multifaceted set of challenges that teachers encountered in their teaching and learning environment. The most prominent issues were related to Classroom and Resource Challenges, which accounted for 27.5% of the total problems. These included large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching resources and materials, poor infrastructure, and limited access to educational resources. These challenges directly impacted the teachers' ability to effectively deliver the curriculum and engage with their students. Another significant area of concern was Curriculum and Instruction Challenges, which made up 27% of the problems. These included insufficient time allocation for Islamic studies, difficulties in engaging students and maintaining discipline, challenges in addressing diverse student needs, adapting the curriculum to the local context, and outdated teaching

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methodologies. These pedagogical and curricular obstacles hindered the teachers' efforts to provide quality Islamic religious education and meet the diverse learning needs of their students.

Other challenges identified in the study were Teacher-related Challenges (16%), Administrative and Community Challenges (16%), and Technological Challenges (15.5%). These issues highlighted the need for improved teacher training and support, stronger administrative and community involvement, and more effective integration of technology in the teaching and learning of Islamic religious education.

The findings of this study are consistent with the existing body of research on the challenges faced by teachers of Islamic religious education. A study by Abubakar et al. (2020) in Nigeria found similar issues, including large class sizes, lack of teaching resources, and outdated curriculum and teaching methods. The researchers emphasized the need for a comprehensive review of the curriculum and teaching approaches to address these challenges and improve the quality of Islamic religious education. Another study by Rana and Mahmood (2019) in Pakistan highlighted the importance of teacher training and professional development in enhancing the pedagogical skills of Islamic studies teachers. They found that inadequate training and limited opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices were significant barriers to effective teaching. Furthermore, a study by Al-Zahrani and Al-Balawi (2021) in Saudi Arabia underscored the need for greater integration of technology in the teaching of Islamic religious education. They found that teachers faced challenges in utilizing digital resources and incorporating technology-based learning activities, which hindered their ability to engage students and foster critical thinking.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed the multifaceted challenges that teachers of Islamic religious education in secondary schools in Uganda faced in their teaching and learning environment. These challenges spanned across various aspects, including classroom and resource constraints, curricular and instructional difficulties, teacher-related issues, administrative and community-related barriers, and technological limitations. The most prominent challenges were related to Classroom and Resource Challenges, which included large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching resources and materials, poor infrastructure, and limited access to educational resources. These issues directly impacted the teachers' ability to effectively deliver the curriculum and engage with their students. The Curriculum and Instruction Challenges, which encompassed insufficient time allocation for Islamic studies, difficulties in engaging students and maintaining discipline, challenges in addressing diverse student needs, adapting the curriculum to the local context, and outdated teaching methodologies, also posed significant barriers to the provision of quality Islamic religious education. Addressing these challenges would have required a comprehensive review and reform of the curriculum, teaching approaches, and resource allocation to support the effective delivery of Islamic religious education in secondary schools.

Recommendations.

Enhance Teacher Training and Support

To improve the quality of Islamic religious education, it is crucial to invest in comprehensive teacher training programs. These programs should focus on strengthening pedagogical skills, incorporating innovative teaching methodologies, and providing teachers with strategies to effectively engage students and manage large class sizes.

Additionally, establishing a system of continuous professional development and mentorship opportunities for

teachers would help them stay up-to-date with the latest teaching practices and address their ongoing challenges.

Improve Resource Allocation and Infrastructure

The study identified significant issues related to a lack of teaching resources, materials, and poor infrastructure in the schools. To address these challenges, policymakers and educational authorities should allocate adequate funding to improve the availability of textbooks, teaching aids, and other educational resources. Additionally, investments should be made to upgrade the physical infrastructure of the schools, such as constructing more spacious classrooms and improving access to technology and digital resources.

Foster Community Engagement and Collaboration

Engaging the local community, including parents, religious leaders, and community organizations, can play a vital role in supporting the delivery of Islamic religious education. By fostering partnerships and collaborations, schools can mobilize additional resources, seek input on curriculum development, and promote the importance of Islamic studies among the community. This approach can help address administrative and community-related barriers identified in the study and create a more supportive environment for teachers and students.

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