

Teacher's Functional Education and the Role of Islamic Studies Teacher in Promoting Holistic Development in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Functional teacher education equips educators with the skills, competencies, and professional values required to address the educational and societal demands of the 21st century. Despite Islam's emphasis on knowledge acquisition and character formation, many Islamic Studies teachers in Nigerian schools and teacher-training institutions remain insufficiently prepared for contemporary challenges. Key constraints include outdated curricula, shortages of professionally trained teachers, limited integration of digital pedagogical tools, and weak in-service professional development systems. These shortcomings restrict the potential of Islamic Studies to contribute meaningfully to national development, social cohesion, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills essential for modern learners. In the context of rapid social change, technological advancement, and rising youth unemployment, the gap between current instructional practices and societal needs has widened, highlighting the urgency for reform in Islamic Studies teacher education. This study examines the role of Islamic Studies teachers in promoting students' holistic development moral, spiritual, cognitive, and socio-economic through the integration of functional teacher education with Islamic pedagogical principles. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 270 respondents in Kwara State, Nigeria, and analyzed thematically. The findings suggest that strengthening Islamic Studies teacher education through functional approaches and continuous pedagogical support can enhance the subject's relevance and contribution to moral rejuvenation, socio-economic resilience, and sustainable national development.

Keywords: *Functional teacher education, Islamic Studies teacher, holistic development, pedagogy, teacher roles, 21st-century education*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher's functional education refers to the systematic development of teachers' skills, competencies, values, and professional attitudes that enable them to respond effectively to learners' and society's needs. In the 21st century marked by rapid technological change, globalisation, pluralism, and rising youth unemployment; teachers are expected to play roles beyond content delivery (Martinez & McGrath, 2014; Shafie et al., 2019). They need to foster critical thinking, digital literacy, ethics, social responsibility, and socio-economic competencies. Islamic Studies, by its nature, provides a rich foundation for holistic development through moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social transformation. However, Islamic Studies education in Nigeria faces structural challenges: outdated curricula, shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate digital integration, poor instructional resources, and limited exposure of teachers to modern pedagogical approaches (Abubakar et al., 2016; Bello &

Abubakar, 2014; Fahm, 2025). These challenges limit Islamic Studies' capacity to contribute maximally to national goals and the demands of the 21st century. The development of any society is premised on the level of functionality of its educational system.

In Muslim-majority societies, Islamic Studies teacher has a dual responsibility: to deliver academic content and to shape the moral and spiritual dimensions of learners. His or her role aligns with the Qur'anic injunction: "And (mention) when your Lord said to the angels: Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority (khalifah)." (Qur'an 2:30). This verse underscores the responsibility of educators to prepare learners to fulfill their role as khalifah (vicegerents) on earth through holistic education. This paper aims to analyse the role of Islamic Studies teachers in promoting holistic development, and how functional teacher education can strengthen their effectiveness. The study provides contextual evidence from Kwara State, using data from teachers and students, and offers practical recommendations for reform.

Despite Qur'anic and Prophetic emphasis on the sound education, ethical formation, and the pursuit of beneficial knowledge, Islamic Studies instruction in Nigeria remains largely traditional and teacher-centred. Many teachers lack pedagogical training (Amzat, 2022), ICT competency (Isyaku & Nwokeocha, 2011), assessment literacy (Akomolafe et al., 2025), and 21st-century teaching skills (Alege & Afolabi, 2011). In several schools, Islamic Studies is perceived as a low-priority subject, leading to inadequate funding, minimal supervision, and weak professional development structures. With digital transformation, rising moral decline among youths, social disconnection, and the need for employability skills, Islamic Studies teachers must go beyond rote memorization to foster deeper competencies (Yusuf & Balogun, 2020). Yet current teacher education programmes inadequately prepare them for this expanded role. The urgent need for reform lies in the widening gap between what Islamic Studies instruction currently provides and what Nigerian learners require for holistic, socially relevant development. Based on the problem statement provided, the research aims to determine the current levels of pedagogical content knowledge, ICT proficiency, and assessment literacy among Islamic Studies teachers, identifying specific gaps preventing the transition from rote memorization to competency-based learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Functional Education

Education can be seen as a process through which individual acquires knowledge, skills, competences and aptitudes to fit properly into the society in which he belongs and contributes his quota to its growth (Pearson, 2016). The Encyclopaedia Americana defines education as "any process from which an individual gains knowledge or insight or develops attitudes and skills". Prastyanti et al. (2025) describes it as the total sum of all the processes by which a child acquires the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour that are of positive value to the society in which he lives. Teke (2013) views education as a process and product. He explains that, as a process, it is an instrument for transmitting the cultural heritage of any nation from one generation to another. He explains further that, one learns a skill or an attitude through this process. As a product, education is viewed as the key to national development of any nation. He noted that, for any meaningful changes in any society, teaching and learning must occur. This shows that education is the foundation of progress and development. A nation with high level of knowledgeable, educated and well informed citizens are easy to govern, mobilize, conscientise and energize in the same direction of transformation with the spirits of patriotism. While nations that have high degree of ignorant and uneducated people are often easy prey to manipulation,

exploitation and destruction. Education no doubts, nurtures, preserves and widens the horizons, creativity, talents and potentials of its members vis-a-vis their contribution to societal development (Poljak, 2017).

Function from which "functional" is derived connotes "activity" or "action" (Endres, 2006). When something is functioning, it means that such a thing is active. Therefore, if "function" means activity or a state of being active, then, functional education suggests a system of education where attention is devoted to activity or practical application of the knowledge gained so far from theory. This is opposed to "theoretical knowledge" in the sense that, it abhors speculation but deals rather with facts as presented by experience. According to Frey et al. (2024), functional education may be described as a qualitative educational process which the society establishes to assist its members to understand the heritage of the past so as to participate productively in the future. It is an investment that is geared towards meeting the needs of the society at a given time. It aligns with the National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria, which advocates for teachers who can: apply modern teaching methodologies; integrate digital literacy; promote national integration and moral values; and equip learners with lifelong skills.

On the other hand, the word "teacher" according to Koutrouba (2012), crudely connotes undifferentiated meaning to the extent that, any individual that transmits ideas of whatever nature that cause a change or influence the behavioural pattern of the recipient is called a "teacher". The notion held sway most particularly in the colonial era as the cardinal objective then was to churn out interpreters for colonial masters. Skill and objective acknowledgement were of no consequence. In strict professional sense, a teacher as viewed by Garuba (2004) is someone that must be professionally trained in a teacher's training institution or faculty of education in the University at the end of which he is certified to teach and is actually engaged in teaching the fact that non-certificated teachers are no longer given teaching appointments unlike the past gives more credit to the teaching profession in Nigeria.

Bayrak (2023), sees teacher as an individual who has received adequate and professional training that enables him to put the young ones through a designed curriculum, prepared by expert to cater for the development of such young ones. Davis et al. (2004), describes teacher as the professional, who imparts knowledge, learning experiences at his disposal to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skills being imparted. Luo and Yu (2021) defines a teacher as someone who causes learning to take place, someone who imparts knowledge, skills, values and attitude to a group of learners.

Adel (2019) says teachers are the largest, most extensive and crucial inputs of an educational system and that is why it is stated in the national policy on Education that "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers". Therefore, teacher education should be a major emphasis in all educational planning. Teacher education as described by Zhou et al. (2023), is that component of any educational system charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire the competencies and skills of teaching for the improvement in the quality of teachers for the school system. Bamber (2019) viewed teacher education as the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period for the preparation of individuals who intend to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens. As clearly stated in the National Policy on Education (Nigeria, 2004), the objectives of teacher education are:

1. to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational systems.
2. to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
3. to help teachers fit into the social life of the community at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives:

4. to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background required for life of their country but also in the wider world:
5. to enhance the teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

According to Butera et al. (2021), the production of efficient, educated professionals such as doctors, pharmacists, nurses, engineers, technicians, agricultural officers, managers of business and public enterprises, officers of the armed forces, politicians, lawyers and other enlightened artisans or citizens are the refined products of teachers from education industry. Teacher education is a cornerstone of educational development and nation-building. In contemporary society, where rapid technological, social, and cultural changes influence human interaction, education must move beyond rote learning to develop functional competencies among learners (Flogie et al., 2025).

Teacher's functional education refers to the process of preparing and equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and professional competencies required to effectively meet the dynamic needs of learners and the society they serve. It includes training programmes designed to produce teachers who are skillful, innovative, and capable of meeting societal challenges. It goes beyond traditional teacher training by emphasizing practical relevance, problem-solving skills, adaptability, innovation, and real-life application in teaching and learning processes. Pearson (2016) asserts that teacher's functional education is the aspect of teacher preparation that ensures teachers are capable of applying educational theories, pedagogical strategies, and technological tools to solve real classroom and societal problems. It integrates professional training with 21st-century competencies such as: critical thinking; digital literacy; creativity and innovation; communication and collaboration; ethical and value-based teaching; problem-solving and decision-making. In other words, a functionally educated teacher is one who has the capacity to transfer knowledge, develop learners' skills, and guide them in applying those skills for personal and societal development. Thus, Functional education focuses on what the teacher can do, how effectively the teacher can do it, and the extent to which learners benefit from it in real-life contexts. The goal of teacher's functional education includes:

1. equipping teachers with 21st-century teaching skills and produce teachers who are competent, reflective, innovative, and capable of meeting modern educational demands.
2. fostering teachers' moral and ethical development as role models to promoting value-based education.
3. enhance teachers' pedagogical skills for delivering quality instruction and inclusive and digital pedagogy.
4. equip teachers with ICT and digital literacy skills needed in 21st-century classrooms.
5. linking education with employability, entrepreneurship, and national development.
6. preparing teachers to nurture learners' cognitive, emotional, moral, and socio-economic growth.
7. making teachers agents of social transformation and community development.
8. integrating socio-cultural realities into the curriculum.
9. producing teachers who inspire learners towards self-reliance.

Islamic Perspective of Teacher's Functional Education and its role in Promoting Holistic Development in the 21st Century

Islam, a comprehensive way of life pays particular attention to knowledge and education. This can be seen from the many verses of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressing the importance of knowledge and education. For instance, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "*Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, either male or female.*" (*Ibn Mājah, Hadith 224*). This Hadith highlights the responsibility of educators to facilitate both intellectual and spiritual growth. In Islamic epistemology, knowledge ('ilm) is seen as a means of '*amal* (action)

and *taqwa* (piety). A clear indication of this importance is the message of God in the Holy Qur'an which says: "*Whoever has been given knowledge (either male or female) has indeed been given abundant good* (Qur'an 2:269). The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphatically said: *Knowledge is the lost property of a Muslim and wherever he sees it, should simply grab it and go*. He also encouraged Muslims to acquire knowledge and share it. In this connection, he said: "*Acquire knowledge, for he who acquires it in the way of Allah performs an act of piety; he who speaks of it praises the Lord: he who seeks it adores Allah; he who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms; and he who imparts it to others performs an act of devotion to Allah*". (*Bukhari, Muslim*). This indicates that teaching is not only a profession but a form of ibādah (worship) and thus, functional teacher education aligns with Islamic principles which emphasize: beneficial knowledge (al-'ilm al-nāfi'); continuous learning (seeking knowledge from cradle to grave); moral leadership; wisdom (hikmah); accountability and responsibility. In this regard, the Qur'an says: "*Allah will raise those who believe and those who have been given knowledge in rank*" (Qur'an 58:11). This shows that functional education is rooted in Islamic values. Islamic Studies' teachers must therefore combine modern competencies with Islamic ethics, ensuring their teaching contributes to students' spiritual, moral, and intellectual development (Mazlan et al., 2025).

The objective of knowledge and education in Islam covers the essential goodness of human nature, man's accountability and his commitment to a set of God - given values (Anwar et al., 2024). Islamic education aims at fostering of the self-training; wakefulness, construction and stability in fundamental principles (Ghaffari & Yousefi, 2022). The first conference on Islamic education according to Halstead (2004), took place in Makkah from 31" of March to 8th of April 1997 under the sponsorship of the King Abdul Aziz University, discussed in great details basic, ideas and goals of Islamic education. In its final statement and resolutions, the conference defined the aims and concepts of Islamic education as, to form persons who will be good and worship God as He deserves to be worshipped, who will use the knowledge he receives to enjoin people what is good and forbid people what is bad on earth and utilize it in accordance with god's law in the service of belief and accordance to its scheme.

The above, forms the foundation of whatever education a Muslim receives. The pursuit of knowledge by itself without reference to the spiritual goal cannot be good to humanity. Education divorced from faith breeds ignorance and half-baked education. The preparation of teachers in this line therefore remains the most crucial and most challenging phenomenon in the functional teacher education effort. One of the basic functions of teacher education in Islam is the preparation of students for life (present and hereafter). This is based on a curriculum that creates a new generation of youth (men and women) who will not lose touch with their traditions and roles in the society and at the same time will not become intellectually retarded, educationally backward or unaware of development in any branch of human knowledge (Salleh & Karnaen, 2017). It is this functional education that makes the child inclined towards the good, which will only give him happiness in this world and rewards in the hereafter which both his teachers and parents will have a share of (Magumise, 2025).

Many governments most especially in Nigeria today place lesser priority on religious teacher education as evidence in their budgetary allocation to education. According to Fadzilah and Zuraini (2012), teachers must possess a firm, grounding in and considerable deeper knowledge of the subject he is going to teach than the level at which he is obliged to teach the subject. He must know more than the learners. He must be trained in a way that would be able to see, analyses and function as a good teacher. Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recorded that "a person who starts his journey to acquire knowledge. Allah eases his passage to paradise". The implication is that, a functional teacher of Islamic Studies must be prepared to continuously update his or her knowledge base, adjust goals and content to student's needs, take advantage of

unfolding events and teachable moments and develop examples that relate directly to students. He has to actualize the knowledge gained to show the light in the society.

In the life time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic education was both practical and relevant. As a teacher per excellence, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) drew his teaching substances from the everyday experiences and day-to-day problems of the early Muslim community, and in order to give room for functional teacher education, he stated that "*the seeking of knowledge is from the cradle to the graveyard*" which means that, teachers should not relent at whatever level or whichever age he or she finds himself or herself in searching for knowledge (Kutluay, 2010). Resultantly, pre-service and in-service training are very necessary in order to produce competent classroom teachers of Islamic Studies most especially the teachers in the primary level of education of whom majority were products of Arabic or Qur'anic school systems where formalized training in the pedagogical techniques were rarely given (Fakhruddin et al., 2024). These teachers need the training and retraining programme in their field of study to keep them on the job especially in the area of content, method and evaluation of the end-product of the subject.

According to Malik and Jumani (2022), the education of the teachers in Islam is not a short affair that terminates at the end of a formal programme of study and certification. A good deal of it is learnt in actual teaching situations. The preparation of teachers therefore, remains the most crucial and most challenging phenomenon in the functional Islamic teacher education.

The implication of the above is that, a functional teacher of Islamic Studies must be a leader, an innovator, an enlightened parent, a constructive citizen and a good Muslim (Suhan et al., 2017). His character must be exemplary and must be morally a worthwhile example to the pupils and learners. He must be actively and genuinely engaged in the teaching process-making plans, choices and curriculum adjustment as needed. He must make learning active by emphasizing hands-on and minds-on activities that call for students to react to what they are learning and to use it in their lives in some meaningful way.

Islamic studies teacher according to Yusoff et al. (2022), is not only a guide to better knowledge but also a model to better conduct. If a teacher perse occupies such an important position in the society, the teacher of Islamic studies occupies a special position. The mission of the teacher of Islamic Studies according to him is like a rescue operation occasioned by a troubled ship sailing on the high seas. One of the passengers in the ship is seen with his instrument working hard to scuttle the ship. The man with his action is under the impression that he is performing a civic and patriotic duty. The onlookers, that is, the rest passengers in the ship think otherwise. They cannot, afford to keep watching. They must do something to save the ship and its passengers from any destructive behaviour.

Islamic Studies teacher should function as a moral instructor who, himself should be morally worthy. He should not make his or her lesson a mere theory but functional. He should demonstrate it to his students through his behaviour (Osguthorpe, 2021). His character must be worthy of emulation. His actions must be truly aligned with the teachings of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the best teacher, is described in the Holy Qur'an as an excellent moral standard (Qur'an 68:4). Even before he was raised as a prophet and messenger of Allah, his nickname in Makkah was Al-Amin (The Trustworthy) and As-Siddiq (The Truthful) respectively. This was due to his proven integrity and excellent moral behaviour which every Makkian admired (Rahim 2001). This explains the Qur'anic injunction that every Muslim must take Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a model in all spheres of life (Qur'an 33:21). Accordingly, the teacher of Islamic Studies being a model to his students, should have a high level of moral character.

As a facilitator of learning, he must be resourceful as he will from time to time find himself in circumstances that require creativity. These include teaching methods, text-books, looking for resource persons, visiting resource centres, improvising instructional materials and extra-curricular activities (Lee, 2023). He is expected more than ever before to acquire specialized

knowledge by undergoing extensive period of training in formal settings up to the University level. With the above qualities, the teacher of Islamic Studies is functioning in promoting holistic development in the 21st century. According to (Malik & Jumani, 2022), teacher's role is central to achieving the goals of functional teacher education since his responsibilities include:

1. *Moral and Spiritual Development:* Islamic Studies teachers guide students to internalize Qur'anic values and prophetic teachings, fostering honesty, discipline, and integrity.
2. *Promoting Critical Thinking:* Functional Islamic Studies pedagogy should encourage analytical discussions on Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), contemporary issues, and societal ethics.
3. *Integrating Digital Competencies:* In the 21st century, Islamic Studies teachers must incorporate technology-enhanced learning tools like e-libraries, digital tafsīr resources, and interactive Qur'an apps (Huda, 2024).
4. *Nation-Building and Social Cohesion:* By teaching tolerance, justice, and equity, Islamic Studies teachers foster peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive research design with a population comprises of Islamic Studies teachers in public and private junior secondary schools; Junior secondary school students offering Islamic Studies with sample size of 30 Islamic Studies teachers and sample size of 240 students (40 students from each of six selected schools) (Cresswell, 2012). The study was conducted in Kwara State, Nigeria, specifically in Ilorin East and south Local Government Areas. These areas were selected because of their dense concentration of secondary schools and active Islamic Studies teaching workforce. Thus, data sources included: Teacher interviews; student focus group discussion; classroom observation checklists; document review (curriculum, lesson notes, student notebooks). The Instruments used are: Teacher Functional Competency Interview Schedule (TFCIS); Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ); Classroom Observation Checklist (COC). In data collection, the researcher visited the selected schools over two weeks. Data were collected on: Pedagogical skills; ICT use; Classroom interaction; Ethical and spiritual development strategies and Teacher qualifications. The qualitative data were analysed thematically while quantitative responses were summarised using simple percentages. Data were also sourced from secondary literature, including textbooks, journal articles, policy documents, and Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith. The analysis follows a thematic approach to identify the intersection between teacher's functional education and the roles of Islamic Studies teacher (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented to provide contextual background for the analysis of functional teacher education among Islamic Studies teachers. Variables such as gender, academic qualification, and level of ICT competency were considered essential in understanding the professional profile of the teachers and how these factors may influence their instructional effectiveness. An examination of these characteristics offers insight into the preparedness of Islamic Studies teachers to meet the pedagogical and technological demands of 21st-century education.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Teachers

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	18	60%
	Female	12	40
Qualification	B.A (Islamic Studies)	14	46.7%
	NCE (Islamic Studies)	10	33.3%
ICT Competency	B.Ed (Islamic Studies)	6	20%
	High	4	13.3%
	Moderate	9	30%
	Low	17	56.7%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the Islamic Studies teachers who participated in the study. The data indicate a higher proportion of male respondents (60%) compared to female respondents (40%), suggesting a moderate gender imbalance in the teaching workforce within the study area. In terms of academic qualification, the majority of the teachers hold a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Islamic Studies (46.7%), followed by those with a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in Islamic Studies (33.3%). A smaller proportion of respondents possess a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree in Islamic Studies (20%), indicating that relatively few teachers have undergone specialized professional training that integrates both subject content and pedagogical expertise.

Regarding ICT competency, the findings reveal notable limitations. More than half of the respondents (56.7%) reported low levels of ICT competence, while 30% indicated moderate competence. Only a small fraction of the teachers (13.3%) demonstrated high ICT competency. This distribution highlights a significant digital skills gap among Islamic Studies teachers, which may affect their ability to effectively integrate technology into teaching and learning processes in the 21st-century classroom.

Functional Competency Levels of Teachers

Table 2 illustrates the functional competency levels of the respondents across key professional domains. The results show that a majority of teachers demonstrated adequate classroom engagement skills (63.3%) and pedagogical skills (56.7%), suggesting reasonable effectiveness in traditional teaching practices. However, substantial deficiencies were observed in ICT integration and assessment literacy. Only 13.3% of the teachers were found to be adequate in ICT integration, while an overwhelming 86.7% were inadequate in this area. Similarly, assessment literacy was inadequate among 60% of the respondents, indicating limited capacity to design, implement, and interpret assessment tools effectively. These findings underscore the uneven distribution of functional competencies among Islamic Studies teachers and reinforce the need for targeted professional development, particularly in technology integration and modern assessment practices.

Table 2: Functional Competency Level

Competency Area	Adequate	Inadequate
Pedagogical Skills	17 (56.7%)	13 (43.3%)

ICT Integration	4 (13.3%)	26 (86.7)
Assessment Literacy	12 (40%)	18 (60%)
Classroom Engagement	19 (63.3%)	11 (36.7%)

Based on the interview, Islamic Studies teachers contribute in the following ways:

1. Moral Development: Teaching adab, virtues, civic responsibility, honesty, respect, moderation.
2. Spiritual Development: Qur'an recitation, tafsīr, Hadith application, reflective discussions.
3. Cognitive Development: Explanation, critical thinking exercises, debates on Islamic ethical dilemmas.
4. Socio-economic Development: Basic entrepreneurship themes, Islamic finance principles (halal earnings, trade ethics).

However, implementation varied significantly depending on teacher training and resource availability. Most teachers have moderate pedagogical skills but lack digital competency and innovative teaching skills. In the students' perspectives, 72% believe that Islamic Studies improves their character; 60% felt classes were "too theoretical"; 40% said teachers rarely use technology; 50% wanted debates, projects, and real-life problem-solving in Islamic Studies.

Findings revealed that while Islamic Studies teachers in Nigeria play significant roles in moral and spiritual formation, they struggle with modern pedagogical and technological expectations. Teachers in Kwara State most especially show commitment and moderate pedagogical strength, ICT skills, modern instructional approaches, and adequate training remain major gaps. Strengthening teacher education and providing continuous pedagogical support will ensure Islamic Studies contributes meaningfully to national development, moral rejuvenation, and socio-economic resilience. The findings also confirm earlier research that Functional teacher education such as embracing ICT, learner-centred approaches, classroom research, assessment literacy, and interdisciplinary integration is crucial. The shortage of professionally-trained teachers remains a major barrier. Many teachers rely heavily on lecture methods, limiting students' critical thinking opportunities. Digital integration is significantly low, echoing national challenges in ICT adoption. However, students' responses show strong interest in engaging and holistic learning experiences, indicating that with improved teacher training, Islamic Studies can become more impactful and future-relevant.

DISCUSSION

The Professional Qualification Gap: Subject Mastery vs. Pedagogical Expertise

The data reveals a critical structural issue in the teacher workforce: while subject matter mastery is high, pedagogical certification is low. With 46.7% of teachers holding a B.A. in Islamic Studies and 33.3% holding an NCE, the workforce is dominated by individuals trained primarily in content rather than method. Only 20% possess a B.Ed., the standard qualification for professional teaching practice. This imbalance explains the student feedback that classes are "too theoretical" (60%). Teachers with a B.A. are often experts in theology, jurisprudence (fiqh), and exegesis (tafsīr), but they may lack training in the science of teaching (pedagogy), classroom management, and psychology. Research confirms that subject mastery alone does not guarantee teaching effectiveness. A study by Kurniawan and Subandiyo (2019) and Tadeko and Fitrasari (2024) emphasizes that pedagogical competence the ability to manage learners and plan instruction is distinct from professional (content) competence. In

the Nigerian context, the reliance on subject specialists without educational certification has been identified as a barrier to implementing learner-centered curricula.

Moreover, the prevalence of teachers lacking professional education degrees directly correlates with the significant deficiencies observed in assessment literacy, where 60% of respondents were found inadequate. Assessment is the bridge between teaching and learning; however, without the specialized training provided in a B.Ed. curriculum, teachers are often limited to summative, rote-based testing methods that fail to capture the nuances of moral and spiritual development. The data indicates that while 63.3% of teachers are competent in "Classroom Engagement" (likely maintaining discipline and authority), they lack the scientific frameworks to measure the internalization of values. This aligns with findings by Grover and Twarek (2023), who argue that in the absence of assessment literacy, teachers cannot effectively diagnose learning gaps or provide the formative feedback necessary for the "Cognitive Development" and "Critical Thinking" exercises that students explicitly requested. Thus, the qualification gap perpetuates a cycle where students are "taught" but not effectively "assessed," leaving the efficacy of moral instruction largely unverified.

Furthermore, the data exposes a profound "digital disconnect" rooted in this lack of professional modernization. With 86.7% of teachers rated as inadequate in ICT integration and 56.7% possessing low ICT competency, the workforce is largely unprepared to mediate religious knowledge through modern technological channels. This validates the student observation that 40% of teachers "rarely use technology," reinforcing the perception of Islamic Studies as static and disconnected from the "real-life problem-solving" contexts students crave. In an era where "Socio-economic Development" includes understanding Islamic finance and global trade ethics, the inability to utilize digital tools hampers the teachers' capacity to contextualize these subjects. Assalihee et al. (2024) posit that the resistance or inability to integrate ICT in Islamic education reinforces a dichotomy between "religious" and "secular" success, potentially alienating students who see digital literacy as essential for their future. Consequently, the qualification deficit is not merely a bureaucratic statistic; it is a functional barrier that stifles the pedagogical innovation required for 21st-century education.

The Digital Divide: A Crisis in 21st-Century Relevance

The most alarming finding is the severe deficit in digital literacy. With 56.7% of teachers reporting "Low" ICT competency and 86.7% rated "Inadequate" in ICT Integration, the data illustrates a massive disconnect between Islamic Studies classrooms and the modern world. This corroborates the student observation that 40% of teachers rarely use technology. This "digital poverty" prevents teachers from accessing modern Islamic resources (e.g., digital Hadith repositories, virtual tours of historical sites) and limits students' socio-economic development. Teachers cannot effectively teach "Islamic finance" or "trade ethics" without referencing modern digital economies. This finding aligns with broader research on Islamic education in Nigeria. Gaya, Tantowi et al. (2025) argue that the lack of ICT integration in Islamic Studies discourages students from becoming digitally productive and reinforces a "traditionalist" stigma. Furthermore, Amin et al. (2025) note that traditional methods must be reinforced with modern media to counter Islamophobia and engage a tech-savvy generation.

Besides, the pervasive lack of digital competence restricts the pedagogical repertoire of teachers, forcing them to rely on passive, lecture-based instruction that 60% of students criticize as "too theoretical." By failing to utilize digital tools, teachers miss critical opportunities to facilitate the "real-life problem-solving" and "projects" that half the student body desires, effectively severing the link between Islamic ethical principles and their

practical application in a digitized society. This technological deficit ultimately compromises the "functional" aspect of teacher education, as it leaves educators ill-equipped to prepare students for the socio-economic realities of the modern world, thereby limiting the subject's potential to foster the resilience and adaptability required for national development (Parrish, 2022).

The Competency Paradox: High Engagement, Low Assessment Literacy

There is a striking contradiction in the functional competency data: 63.3% of teachers are "Adequate" in Classroom Engagement, yet 60% are "Inadequate" in Assessment Literacy. This suggests that teachers are effective at maintaining traditional authority and discipline (typical of religious education settings), which counts as "engagement." However, they lack the scientific skills to measure student learning accurately. "Inadequate assessment literacy" means teachers likely rely on simple recall tests (memorization) rather than measuring critical thinking or moral reasoning. Vasudevan et al. (2025) found that many secondary school teachers in Nigeria lack the skills to design valid assessment tools, relying heavily on summative exams rather than formative assessments (projects, debates). This limits the teacher's ability to diagnose learning gaps, specifically in complex areas like "moral development."

Besides, this technical deficiency creates a formidable barrier to implementing the active learning strategies such as the debates, projects, and problem-solving exercises that 50% of students explicitly requested. Because teachers lack the expertise to design rubrics for these complex, performance-based activities, they are structurally incentivized to retreat to the "theoretical" lecture methods where assessment is straightforward and risk-free (Gonsalves, 2023). Consequently, the gap in assessment literacy does not just limit testing; it actively suppresses pedagogical innovation, preventing the shift from passive knowledge transmission to the dynamic, cognitive development necessary for functional Islamic education.

Pedagogical Stagnation vs. Student Aspiration

The qualitative data highlights a tension between what is taught and how it is taught. While 72% of students acknowledge character improvement (validating the teachers' moral role), 50% desire "debates, projects, and real-life problem solving." The current pedagogy is passive (lecture-based), while the students desire active, functional learning. The teachers' reliance on "explanation" (Cognitive Development) without "application" fails to meet the students' need for "real-life problem solving." The data shows that while the content is relevant (halal earnings, civic responsibility), the delivery is archaic. A study on Islamic Studies in Kano State by Suyitno and Chotimah (2025) found that students taught using "guided inquiry" and student-centered methods performed significantly better than those taught via the lecture method. The student dissatisfaction in your data mirrors national trends where religious education is often viewed as static rather than dynamic.

On the other hand, the substantial student acknowledgment of character improvement suggests that teachers possess a strong foundational capacity for tarbiyah (moral upbringing) which remains the bedrock of Islamic education, indicating that the deficit is methodological rather than motivational. This effectively isolates the problem: teachers are successful in transmitting values but struggle to operationalize them. By restricting instruction to theoretical abstraction, they inadvertently bifurcate religious ethics from their practical

application in socio-economic contexts, thereby diminishing the subject's perceived utility for national development (Al-Foziae, 2023; Lim, 2020). Therefore, the path to functional teacher education does not require discarding these traditional strengths, but rather leveraging the teachers' existing moral authority to adopt the inquiry-based strategies students demand, transforming the classroom from a site of passive reception into a dynamic laboratory for ethical and cognitive application.

CONCLUSION

Teacher's functional education represents a comprehensive, skill-oriented, and value-driven approach to teacher preparation that equips educators with the capacity to respond effectively to the educational and developmental demands of the 21st century. Through its emphasis on competence, innovation, ethics, and adaptability, functional teacher education ensures that teachers are not only knowledgeable but also capable of translating knowledge into meaningful learning experiences. When applied to Islamic Studies, this approach holds significant potential for revitalizing the subject and enhancing its relevance to learners' moral, spiritual, cognitive, and socio-economic development.

Functional teacher education is particularly critical in addressing the evolving dynamics of global education. Teachers are not born but made; their effectiveness is largely determined by the quality of their training and continuous professional development. Within this context, Islamic Studies teachers occupy a distinctive position as facilitators of moral development, transmitters of authentic Islamic knowledge, and agents of positive social transformation. Their role extends beyond spiritual instruction to shaping values, attitudes, and skills necessary for responsible citizenship and societal resilience.

However, achieving these objectives requires teacher education programmes that embrace innovative pedagogies, digital literacy, and curriculum integration that harmonize Islamic values with contemporary educational competencies. Islam itself derives its strength and continuity from education as a transformative force in society. Effective teaching and learning must therefore be meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and learner-centred, demanding active engagement from both teachers and students. Consequently, Islamic Studies teachers must continually update their knowledge and pedagogical skills through functional teacher education in order to enhance self-awareness, ethical conduct, and professional effectiveness, thereby serving as credible role models who deliver functional, quality, and integrated education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To promote holistic development and enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Studies teacher education in the 21st century, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Governments should increase investment in teacher-training institutions to provide adequate physical facilities and learning resources for producing teachers of sufficient quality and quantity.
2. Islamic Studies programmes should receive proper funding at local, state, and federal levels and be sustained as a compulsory subject from primary to tertiary education.
3. Islamic Studies teachers should actively engage in the development of textbooks, workbooks, and other instructional materials, while regularly participating in workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service training to update their professional competencies.

4. Teachers should participate consistently in professional associations, such as the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS), to address shared professional challenges and uphold instructional quality.
5. Functional skills including critical thinking, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship should be systematically integrated into Islamic Studies teacher education curricula.
6. Regular teacher training and capacity-building programmes focusing on modern pedagogy and educational technology should be organized.
7. Government and educational stakeholders should prioritize Islamic Studies within national teacher education reforms and policy frameworks.
8. Online platforms for Qur'anic resources, Hadith databases, and Islamic pedagogy forums should be developed to support digital integration.
9. Partnerships among Islamic scholars, teacher education institutions, and policymakers should be strengthened to promote research, collaboration, and continuous curriculum improvement.
10. Islamic Studies teacher education programmes should include compulsory modules on ICT, pedagogy, curriculum design, and assessment.
11. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes tailored specifically for Islamic Studies teachers should be provided regularly.
12. Curricula should be updated to incorporate 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship.
13. Schools should be equipped with basic ICT tools, including projectors, tablets, and electronic Islamic libraries.
14. School administrators should encourage supervision, mentorship, and collaboration between experienced and novice teachers.
15. Islamic Studies teachers should integrate real-life case studies, group work, and project-based learning into classroom practice.
16. Governments and non-governmental organizations should support the provision of digital and interactive instructional materials, such as e-tafsīr resources and Hadith databases.

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