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***Educational Quality in Islamic Schools  
Report No. 1: Nigeria***



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***EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS  
REPORT NO. 1: NIGERIA***



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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study aimed to assess (a) the basic characteristics of, and nature of predominant instructional practices in, Islamic schools in Nigeria; (b) school personnel perceptions of educational quality; (c) the participant schools' approach to addressing religious and secular curricula; and (d) parents' involvement with the life of Islamic schools. Participants were 57 classroom teachers and 15 Head Teachers from schools in Kano, Lagos, and Nasarawa that had participated in the USAID-funded Literacy Enhancement Assistance Project (LEAP). Classroom observations were used to collect data on the participant teachers' instructional practices and classroom interactions. The teachers and Head Teachers responded to questionnaires and selected members of the former group participated in individual interviews. Additionally, the participant schools were surveyed for infrastructural elements and the availability of teaching and learning resources.

The participant schools were generally crowded. While the average number of students per classroom was not alarmingly high by African schooling standards, the available space for students was meager and impeded the enactment of active and student-centered and other innovative instructional pedagogies that require flexibility in terms of student movement and classroom arrangements. The schools were resource lean. Despite the availability of the very basic infrastructural elements and resources for teaching and learning, some crucial resources needed for the effective implementation of innovative teaching strategies were unavailable. Chief among these latter resources were classroom-dedicated radios, which often serve as the sole or main instrument for bringing innovation to classroom teaching in Nigeria.

The majority of the participant teachers were rated "average" or "above average" in terms of implementing instructional practices that were aligned with active and student-centered teaching. This is somewhat impressive in a country like Nigeria where traditional instructional methods prevail (despite the fact that traditional Islamic education once employed some favorable teaching pedagogies including individual coaching and learning circles). Indeed, in addition to a focus on the availability of resources, most teachers and Head Teachers cited the use of innovative instructional approaches as a major component of educational quality. However, the relatively poor cognitive and affective interactions of teachers with their students indicate that while teachers have bought into innovative pedagogies, they seem to have mastered the form but not the "spirit" of these pedagogies. Continued professional development efforts are needed to help teachers internalize the philosophical and practical principles of active and student-centered instruction.

The participant schools seem to strike a balance in addressing both religious and secular curricula. In addition to targeting most of the curricular subjects addressed in public Nigerian schools, personnel in Islamic schools emphasize the need for secular education to help students engage with a variety of civic contexts and pursue education beyond the context of Islamic schools. This latter emphasis is consistent with Islamic views on education. Finally, the involvement of parents in the surveyed schools was high albeit limited to what parents can actually offer given their backgrounds and financial resources.

It is concluded that Islamic schools in Nigeria, which are institutions rooted in their local communities and responsive to their needs, and highly regarded and supported by parents in these communities, could serve as a major conduit for the improvement of educational quality in this

country. This is especially the case since traditional Islamic education once supported some pedagogies that could be considered student-centered in nature, and that Islamic education is sympathetic to secular education that emphasizes helping students to navigate a variety of civic contexts and challenges. Any investment in supporting Islamic schools is thus believed to be a worthwhile endeavor.

## **II. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

The Educational Quality Improvement Program 1—Classrooms, Schools, Communities (EQUIP1) Leader Award (Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00006-00) is carrying out a series of small studies on perceptions and practices associated with educational quality in a variety of countries. EQUIP1 is a USAID-funded leader with associate award mechanism to support improvements in educational quality at the classroom, school, and community levels. The goal of this series of studies is to provide information to USAID and the wider international development education community that will assist them in designing relevant strategies and technical assistance packages vis-à-vis the improvement of educational quality. This report presents the findings from one of these studies.

The present report presents the results of the EQUIP1 study on educational quality in Nigerian Islamic (or Qur’anic) schools. The following sections present: (1) the overall purpose and significance of the study, (2) background information on Islamic schooling and Islamiya schools in Nigeria, (3) the methodology used to conduct the study, (4) the results of the study, in particular the analyses of data derived from the five instruments used in the study, and (5) general conclusions.

### **A. Purpose**

This study aimed to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and practices associated with educational quality in the distinctive context of Islamic schools in Nigeria. Islamic schools world wide, despite the variation one finds from one country to another and even within countries, constitute a particular form of schooling, one with a long and distinguished history, a particular set of beliefs about education and learning, and distinctive pedagogical methods. As more and more parents in Nigeria and elsewhere are availing themselves of a private Islamic school education for their children and as Islamic schools often constitute the only form of education available to very poor families, understanding the basic characteristics of these schools and what quality means to stakeholders in this context is critical if development assistance is going to reach these schools and their attendant student populations.

Seventeen schools participated in this study, carried out across the Nigerian states of Kano, Lagos, and Nasarawa. The schools participating in this study had received support from USAID’s Literacy Enhancement Assistance Project (LEAP), a three year effort (2001–2004) to improve education, particularly the attainment of English language literacy and numeracy, in public and Islamiya schools in Nigeria.

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the predominant instructional practices in Islamic schools in Nigeria?
2. What are some of the basic characteristics of Nigerian Islamiya schools, in terms of class size and the availability of resources?

3. What are teachers' and Head Teachers' perceptions of educational quality in the participant schools?
4. Are teachers utilizing the instructional strategies introduced through the USAID-supported LEAP program?
5. How do these schools accommodate both religious and secular curricula?
6. Are PTAs and community members active in the educational improvement process even in the absence of direct assistance from USAID projects?
7. How do parents perceive and evaluate educational quality?

## **B. Significance of the Study**

Parents in Muslim countries are increasingly looking to Islamic schools as a source of education for their children. Indeed, with the mandate of Education for All, and the millions of children who attend Qur'anic or other forms of Islamic schools, many governments have begun to consider how to define acceptable minimum standards for Islamic schools, such that their pupils may be counted among the children enrolled in "school" (e.g., public and other recognized schools) and receiving a quality basic education. This is certainly the case in Nigeria, where the private Islamic school sector is growing and not just in the Muslim north of the country.

Early, but limited, evidence (mainly from USAID funded programs in Nigeria and Ethiopia and from work done by other NGOs like UNICEF or UNESCO in various countries) suggests that Islamic schools are open to receiving assistance from donor agencies. These schools are promising sites for donor assisted programs because they already embody many of the tenets of sustainable development. Islamic schools are community initiated, community supported, resource lean institutions that are sustainable in their current contexts. Parents want their children to attend Islamic schools to memorize the Qur'an. Therefore, parents already trust the institution as a source of instruction for their children. Islamic schools are well positioned to make the most from small donor investments, as institutions with little bureaucracy, that are rooted in the fabric of their communities, and that are open to strategies to expand and improve the education provided to children, as long as this does not interfere with the principal mission of Qur'anic transmission.

However, one barrier to working with Islamic institutions is the fact that there is a relative paucity of research on these institutions by country and no real history of collaboration between these types of schools and donor agencies. Indeed, despite their breadth, contemporary Islamic schools are "perhaps the most important example of indigenous education in today's world" (Wagner, 1989, p. 5-6). As USAID is interested in expanding its assistance to Muslim countries, and is evincing stronger interest in the work of traditional Islamic schools (i.e. in Pakistan, Indonesia, Morocco as well as East and West Africa), it is imperative to learn more about those schools and the populations they serve in order to best design and target relevant and appropriate assistance packages for them. This study will contribute to that knowledge base.

## **III. BACKGROUND ON ISLAMIC EDUCATION**

Islamic schools that facilitate memorization of the Qur'an—the Islamic holy book—have existed in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia for centuries. These schools share a set of historical roots that can be traced back to 7th century Arabia and the educational practices of the Prophet Mohammed. These practices continued and expanded after his death, as Arab armies and then traders spread Islam west and south to Africa, east to Asia and north into Europe (Bin Omar,

1993). As Islam spread, so did the schools which taught the Qur'an. Like the religion they promulgated, these schools intermixed with local institutions and took on the distinctive cultural characteristics of the localities in which they were planted (Wagner, 1989, 1998). Indeed, these schools were the bedrock of a system of Islamic education that flourished in many Muslim countries in pre-colonial times. Islamic schools flourished in Nigeria as Nigerians journeyed to the Middle East—to Egypt's Al Azhar University and to Saudi Arabia—during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and returned home to open schools and institutions of higher learning in their local communities. In particular, the Nigerian city of Ilorin, home of Al-Hikmah University, became a center of Islamic learning in West Africa and is still known as such.

Today, despite the exploding demand for modern public schooling that developed over the last 40 to 50 years and the inclusion of instruction in the history, rites, and beliefs of Islam in public schools in many countries, traditional Islamic schools have not been subsumed or eliminated as a separate and distinct form of education. In Morocco, for example, approximately 80% of all children still attend some form of Islamic school for a portion of their school years (Wagner, 1989, 1998). UNICEF estimates that 40% of students in Senegal attend Islamic schools. Islamic education has seen a steady resurgence in Nigeria (Reichmuth, 1993), where many Islamic schools, especially in the north, now compete with public schools because they offer a full range of subjects in addition to the standard religious instruction.

The archetype of traditional Islamic education across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia was a one-room school, with a male teacher and several assistants (graduates of his school, or advanced, older students) who taught children to memorize the Qur'an through a combination of recitation and copying activities. Through memorization of the Qur'an children learned to write and read in the Arabic language. The typical school consisted of students of varying ages, mostly males from about 7 to 20. The students and the teacher sat on straw mats or sheepskins on the floor. The Qur'an was usually the only printed text in evidence, if indeed the school was fortunate enough to have one. Students wrote with an inky mixture on a wooden slate called a luh. Schools were generally sparse, resource-lean environments. This was in part because support for the school came largely from the community in which it was situated. The community, and occasionally wealthy benefactors, supplied the school with space, provided housing and food for the teacher, and made decisions on the hiring of teachers and on the provision and kind of school resources necessary.

Teachers at the Islamic schools employed moderately effective instructional techniques. The teacher taught by one-on-one coaching of individual students or by working with small groups of students who were at the same place in their studies but not necessarily of the same age. Students also worked in groups (learning circles) and worked independently. Learning was self-paced. As a student completed one verse or chapter of the Qur'an, the teacher assigned him/her a new verse. There were no formal tests, only the demonstration of mastery, which was characterized by correctly reciting and writing verses from the Qur'an. Students often came and went, depending on their family's need for help with work around the home; no stigma was attached to dropping out of school. Talented students memorized the entire Qur'an and studied other subjects—interpretation, translation, or Arabic poetry—before perhaps moving on to higher Islamic institutions (Eickelman, 1985; Houtsonen, 1994; Pollak, 1982; Wagner & Lotfi, 1980).

These schools had their negative sides as well. Corporal punishment was widely used both to remedy misbehavior and to punish a student for not memorizing or reciting well. Truly gifted

students had opportunities for advancement, as did students whose parents could afford to allow them to remain in school. The majority of students studied for a few years and then had to move out of school and into work. Opportunities for girls to avail themselves of an education were more restricted, more so for cultural reasons than religious ones. Indeed the Qur'an specifically exhorts men and women to seek knowledge and learn, but prohibitions against the mixing of the sexes usually led to fewer formal educational opportunities for females.

This archetypal model is increasingly rare as public schools have proliferated. Islamic schools have adapted to the competition by becoming preschools, "after school" schools, summer schools or full service private schools. In Nigeria, there are still many traditional Qur'anic schools like the model described above. However, a significant number of Qur'anic schools in Nigeria have transformed themselves into "Islamiya schools" by upgrading their curriculum and expanding it to teach a wider range of subjects. Many have jettisoned their old pedagogical techniques in favor of age grouped classes, whole group instruction and examinations used in the public schools. In Nigeria, these types of schools, which are still generally community financed and run, have flourished and are proving to be a popular alternative to the public schools for Muslim parents. Islamic educational institutions—Islamiya schools—in Nigeria have carved out new educational territory, filling their traditional niche as purveyors of religious instruction. At the same time, these schools have offered, in some cases, certified, public school educated teachers, and a slate of secular or public school subjects. As such, the Islamic school sector in Nigeria has managed to expand its role and continue to be an educational force in the daily lives of millions of children and communities.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

The EQUIP1 team collected data for this study in February and March of 2005, visiting schools on Lagos Island and in Kosofe in Lagos state; in Doma, Keffi and Akwanga in Nasarawa state; and in Kano Municipality and Tsanyawa in Kano state. The team visited 17 Islamiya schools in the same three states in which LEAP worked. EQUIP1 chose schools from which LEAP collected data in order to allow comparison of the findings with LEAP data, with respect to the evolution of instructional practices in the classroom.

Six instruments, including questionnaires and interviews, were used to collect data for the present study. All interview and questionnaire instruments were administered orally by members of the research team. The instruments included:

1. The Classroom Observation Form, a 25 5-point Likert-type item instrument that targets a set of teacher instructional behaviors related to lesson preparation, classroom management and organization, active and student-centered teaching, gender equity, instructional materials and aids, and student evaluation;
2. The Classroom Interaction Recorder, which documents the nature of both cognitive (memorizing, recalling, and figuring out/explaining) and affective (positive, neutral, and critical) interactions in the classroom, as well as the distribution of these interactions among boys and girls and across different areas in the classroom (front, middle, and back);
3. A Teacher Questionnaire that inquired about teachers' background and experiences, use of and participation in LEAP radio programs and Bi-monthly Training Workshops, as well as the make-up of the class and school day and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA);

4. A Teacher Interview that asked more in-depth, open-ended questions about quality and relevance of education, the difference between government and Islamic schools, etc.;
5. A Head Teacher Questionnaire that inquired about the make-up of the school in terms of students and teachers, quality of education in the school, involvement of the Head Teacher and school teachers with LEAP, educational quality in Qur'anic schools, school curriculum, nature of student engagement with teaching and learning, and parent and community involvement with school life; and
6. A School Resource Checklist, which documents the physical structure of and resources available in the school.

A team of international EQUIP1 staff members and former LEAP staff members; all well versed in the teaching methods being observed, conducted classroom observations and administered questionnaires. The data collectors participated in refresher trainings. However, one limitation of the study is that separate data collection teams were used in each state and it was impossible to ensure 100% inter-rater reliability between the research teams across the states. Additionally, the sample for this study is very small. The study was designed to be largely qualitative in nature and time, personnel and budgetary constraints, as well as the population of Islamiya schools that worked with LEAP (78 schools), limited our ability to select a larger sample. While 17 schools out of the 78 Islamiya schools served by the LEAP project is a very acceptable sample size, it is not one that allows generalizations about all Islamiya schools in Nigeria. However, given the diversity of the research sites, it is fair to say that insights drawn from this study can credibly influence and shape approaches to Islamiya schools in similar parts of Nigeria and even within the three states included in this study.

## **V. RESULTS**

### **A. Classroom Observation Form**

A total of 49 teachers (34.6% female) were observed using this form: 16 in Kano, 14 in Lagos, and 19 in Nasarawa. The majority of teachers (59.5%) taught grades 4 or 5, while about 15% and 13% taught grades 3 and 6 respectively. The overwhelming majority of these participants (85%) taught mathematics and English.

Table 1 (see Appendix) presents the overall as well as state averages (and standard deviations) for the 25 individual Classroom Observation Form items. These items, it should be noted, were rated on a 5-point scale as follows: 1 = “seriously below average,” 2 = “below average,” 3 = “average,” 4 = “good,” and 5 = “excellent” (all items are stated in the positive). For ease of reference, the data in Table 1 are represented visually in Figures 1.1 to 1.4 (see Appendix). The items in these latter figures are grouped by the value of the overall means and show the corresponding means for the three participant states. Thus, Figure 1.1 shows the classroom observation items with overall means that are greater than 3.50 (on the 5-point scale); Figure 1.2 items with overall means ranging from 3.31 to 3.50; Figure 1.3 items with overall means ranging between 3.00 and 3.30; and Figure 1.4 shows items with overall means that are less than 3.00 (that is, less than “average”). Each item is labeled by its number and one or a few words. Table 1 presents the items as fully stated in the Classroom Observation Form. The grouping of items in Figures 1.1 to 1.4, it should be noted, was only meant to provide a sense of the spread of overall and state teachers’ scores as derived from classroom observation data.

An examination of the overall means (Table 1, column 1) indicates that teachers' performance was above average on the overwhelming majority of the items on the Classroom Observation Form, with 19 of the 25 averages ranging from 3.04 to 3.92. Teachers performed *slightly* below average on helping students use instructional materials effectively ( $M_{21} = 2.95$ ), using student-centered teaching strategies ( $M_{16} = 2.91$ ), ensuring the visibility of instructional materials around the classroom ( $M_7 = 2.88$ ), and using pair or group work ( $M_{13} = 2.83$ ). Participant teachers performed substantially "below average" only on two items: Using an attendance book and evaluation record ( $M_6 = 2.47$ ) and using games in teaching ( $M_{11} = 2.04$ ). These results are generally impressive. The standard deviations associated with most of the overall means, however, were somewhat large (ranging from 0.75 to 1.30) indicating a relatively wide spread in terms of participants' instructional behaviors.

The overall percent rating distributions for the classroom observation items indicate that in the case of 19 of the 25 items, the percentage of teachers achieving a rating of "good" was always larger than those achieving an "average" rating. In other words, the largest percentage of teachers (ranging from 36 to 73%) in the case of each of these 19 items achieved a rating of "good." In comparison, a minority of teachers—generally less than 5%—achieved a rating of "excellent" on these items. The two notable exceptions were item 22 (effective use of the blackboard) and item 23 (checking for student understanding) where about 10% of the teachers achieved an "excellent" rating.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were used to assess whether the state mean scores for each of the 25 items on the Classroom Observation Form were significantly different. The significance level was set at the more conservative .01 level to avoid false positives due to the accumulation of error given that a relatively large number of tests were conducted (25 tests). Analyses indicated that the mean scores for participant teachers in Kano, Lagos, and Nasarawa were *not* significantly different in the case of 24 of the 25 classroom observation measures ( $0.038 < F < 4.014$ ;  $p > .01$ ). The one exception was item 11, which focuses on the use of games in teaching ( $F_{2,45,47} = 6.054$ ;  $p = .005$ ). In this latter case, the mean for teachers in Nasarawa ( $M_{11} = 2.56$ ) was significantly higher than that for Lagos ( $M_{11} = 1.71$ ) and Kano ( $M_{11} = 1.75$ ).

A qualitative examination of Table 1 (columns 3, 5, and 7) reveals that some of the patterns evident in the case of the overall mean scores outlined above hold in the case of the three participant states. For instance, teachers in all three states achieved substantially "below average" ratings on items 6 (record keeping) and 11 (using games in teaching). Both Kano and Nasarawa did somewhat better than Lagos, with 21 and 20 of the 25 classroom observation mean scores being above the 3 or "average" mark in the former states respectively. In comparison, teachers in Lagos achieved means that were above the "average" mark on 17 items of the Classroom Observation Form.

In summary, the classroom observation data indicate that while there is definitely ample room for improvement, teachers' performance on most of the instructional practices targeted by the Classroom Observation Form were either "average" or "good." In particular, it is noteworthy that almost all teacher mean scores in all three states related to gender equity (item 18) and encouraging girls' participation in the learning process (item 19) were above the 3.50 mark (i.e., between "average" and "good") (see Figure 1.1). Equally impressive is the fact that teachers' practices related to ensuring classroom Interactivity (item 12), involving all students through questioning (item 17), checking for student understanding (item 23), and providing ample

feedback to students (item 24) in all three states were above the “average” mark (see Figure 1.2). In comparison, teachers in all three states need support to help them consistently use an attendance book, evaluation records, and games in their teaching. What is more, professional development activities are needed to improve teachers’ performance in relation to helping students effectively use instructional materials, using student-centered teaching strategies, ensuring the visibility of instructional materials around the classroom, and using pair or group work (see Figure 1.4). Finally, it is clear that more efforts need to be undertaken in terms of teacher professional development in the case of Lagos as compared to the other two states.

### **B. Classroom Interactions**

Classroom interaction scans were completed in 53 classrooms: 17 in Kano, 16 in Lagos, and 20 in Nasarawa. A large majority of the observed teachers (71% male) taught mathematics (43%) or English (39%). Using a classroom interaction recorder, researchers noted whether each teacher-directed interaction during an observation period focused on the memorization/repetition, recall, or explanation of content or information. Of the 53 participant teachers, 22 (41.5%) had no interactions that focused on asking students to explain or figure out content or information. Another six teachers (11.3%) dedicated less than 10% of their interactions with students to the explanation of information. Thus, more than half of the teachers (52.8%) provided their students with no or very minimal opportunities to engage with explanation. In these teachers’ classrooms, students were solely asked to memorize, repeat, or recall information. These latter types of interactions were predominant in the classes of another 13 teachers (24.5%) who dedicated less than 25% of their interactions with students to more challenging cognitive tasks. Only about 12 teachers (23.5%) dedicated at least a third of their classroom interactions with students toward figuring out or explaining the target content; such interactions were predominant in the case of five (9.4% of all participant teachers) of these 12 teachers.

The data indicate that the majority of interactions with students for most of the teachers were dedicated to the memorization or recall of information. It is noteworthy that while only 35% of the teachers in Nasarawa had at least one cognitive interaction at the explanation level, 75% and 71% of the teachers in Lagos and Kano, respectively, had these kinds of interactions. In the case of these latter teachers, on average, about 23% of their interactions in Lagos and 38% in Kano were dedicated to the explanation of information. Thus, it could be concluded that lower level cognitive interactions that ask students to memorize, repeat, or recall information or content are predominant in the greater majority of the observed classrooms.

During the observed sessions, the researchers also recorded whether teachers used praise or criticism or whether their interactions with students were neutral. More than half of the teachers (28 teachers, 53%) never used praise. In comparison, about 76% of the teachers were critical of students during their classroom interactions. What is more, for the vast majority (84%) of teachers who did use praise, such positive interactions accounted for less than 25% of their total affective interactions with students. In comparison, most of the teachers (65%) who used criticism did so for the majority (50–100%) of their affective interactions with students.

Substantially more teachers (about 65%) in Kano used—at least during one of their interactions with students—praise than in Lagos (about 44%) and Nasarawa (35%). Those teachers who used praise did so in 16 to 37% of their interactions with students. In comparison, about 70% of teachers in Kano and Lagos and 80% in Nasarawa were critical of their students. Substantially

more of the interactions of these latter teachers in Nasarawa (86% of interactions) were critical as compared to Lagos (47% of interactions) and Kano (46% of interactions).

In general, it could be concluded that the affective conditions in the majority of the observed classrooms were stressful or, at least, not favorable from the perspective of students. About half of the teachers did not use praise at all, and those who used praise, did so less often than their own use of criticism. The situation was not favorable in all three states, but was particularly worrisome in the case of Nasarawa, where criticism prevails and praise is a rare occasion during instruction. Such affective interactions are not commensurate with learning environments that aim to motivate and engage students as active participants in their own learning.

As unfavorable as most of the aforementioned cognitive and affective interactions were, it is worthwhile to have a sense of how these interactions were distributed among boys and girls and across different areas in the observed classrooms. The data indicate that interactions were slightly in favor of boys over girls, and of those sitting in the front or middle of the classroom as compared to those sitting in the back. Further, those students sitting to the left of the teacher were engaged in more interactions than students sitting in the middle or to the right of the teacher. This latter pattern was evident for the front, middle, and back of the classroom. However, in general, the data show that interactions were somewhat fairly distributed among boys and girls and across the front, middle, and back of the classrooms.

### **C. Teacher Questionnaire and Teacher Interview**

Fifty-seven teachers completed the Teacher Questionnaire: 18 in Kano, 21 in Lagos, and 18 in Nasarawa. Overall, class size as reported by teachers averages around 42 students (48% female), with the average number of boys ( $M = 22.1$ ) slightly higher than that for girls ( $M = 20.1$ ). However, average class size was significantly lower ( $\chi^2 = 97.733$ ;  $p = .007$ ) in Lagos ( $M = 20.2$  students per class) when compared to Nasarawa ( $M = 49.6$  students per class) and Kano ( $M = 62.2$  students per class). On average, 62 students are enrolled in each classroom in Kano, where the mean and mode were both 50 students per classroom. As far as the gender distribution of students is concerned, the percentage of females in Kano (55% female) was significantly higher ( $\chi^2 = 75.792$ ;  $p = .006$ ) than the corresponding percentages in Lagos (47% female) Nasarawa (40% female).

Overall, teachers were somewhat equally split by gender (47% female) as was the case in Lagos (50% female) and Kano (47% female). Substantially more male teachers were reported in Nasarawa (64% male). However, this latter difference was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = .770$ ;  $p = .68$ ). The majority of all teachers (69%) had served in primary schools between 1 and 5 years (48.3%) and 6 to 10 years (20.7%). This distribution was similar to that found in Kano and Nasarawa. In comparison, 62% of the teachers in Lagos had only served between 1 and 5 years in primary schools. The majority of these latter teachers (around 70%) had served in their current school between 1 and 5 years. The overwhelming majority of all teachers (about 88%) taught one or two classes; a pattern that was also evident in the case of all three states. However, while most teachers in Kano taught one or two subject areas, the overwhelming majority in Lagos (about 81%) taught three or more subjects, while around 40% of teachers in Nasarawa taught three or more subjects. This latter figure was close to that reported for all teachers.

Regarding experiences with the LEAP program, 65% of all teachers reported having previously used LEAP radio programs. This percentage was substantially higher in Lagos (86%) and

Nasarawa (72%) as compared to Kano, where only 33% of the teachers reported having used LEAP radio programs in their teaching. Overall, about 40% of the participant teachers reported using LEAP radio programs at the time of the study. With the exception of Nasarawa, where more than half of the teachers (53%, about 74% of teachers in Nasarawa who reported having used the programs in the past) are still using LEAP radio programs, about 40% of teachers in Lagos (47% of the original users) and 25% of teachers in Kano (76% of the original users) reported such use at the time of the data collection (see Figure 2).

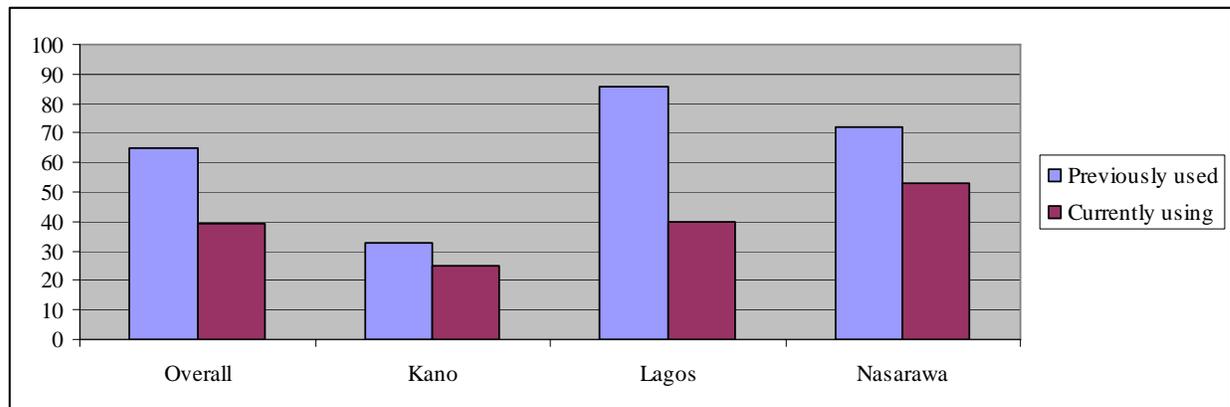


Figure 2. Previous and current use of the LEAP program by teachers in the participant states

Participant teachers were asked to explain not using, having used, or continuing to use LEAP radio programs in their teaching. About 88% of all participant teachers provided such explanations. (It should be noted that the Teacher Questionnaire data do not allow segregating the responses of teachers who used and/or continue to use, as well as those who did not use and/or discontinued use of the LEAP programs. Participants provided a single response to this item on the questionnaire.) A variety of reasons was reported by respondents (50% of all participants) who did not use or discontinued use of the LEAP program. These reasons included the unavailability of the broadcast (14.2% of those respondents) or a functional radio (10.7%); lack of fit between the broadcast and school or teaching schedules (10.7%); perception that programs were suitable for one or another grade level only (14.2%); not being required to use such programs or being new to the school (10.7%); lack of relevant classes such as Qur'anic studies or Arabic versus a sole focus on English and mathematics (28.8%); and perceptions about the fact that the radio program production and/or broadcast had stopped or are "in doubt" (10.7%). In contrast, the reasons provided by respondents who indicated having used or continuing to use the LEAP radio programs (38% of all respondents) included: LEAP programs being easy to use (18.2% of those respondents) and encourage active and collaborative learning (9.1%), as well as providing other engaging instructional methods (13.6%). Teachers also noted that they use LEAP programs because students enjoy and respond well to the broadcasts (27.3%), which facilitate their learning and make lessons more relevant to their lives (31.8%).

The overwhelming majority of all teachers in the three states (at least 90%) had participated in LEAP Bi-monthly Training Workshops or trainings delivered by Master Trainers. Teachers noted that such trainings focused on cooperative learning, motivating students, producing simple instructional materials and aids, and developing content knowledge or skills in a number of subject areas and domains. Equally high percentages of teachers in all states reported some form

of involvement with in-service professional development activities provided by a wide range of agencies and programs ranging from LEAP, to the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

As far as curricular content and emphases are concerned, almost all teachers reported having English, mathematics, and science in their curriculum. The exception was Kano, where only 11% of the teachers reported science as a curricular subject. All teachers in Lagos and around 85% in Kano and Nasarawa reported having social studies or history as part of their curriculum. Languages were missing in the case of most classrooms in Nasarawa (77%), while at least 80% of teachers in the other two states reported that language was a curricular emphasis. Similarly, 61% of teachers in Nasarawa reported not having “reading” in their curriculum as compared to only 5% in Lagos and 17% in Kano. Arabic as a second language was taught in two thirds of the participant schools in Nasarawa as compared to all schools in Lagos and 94% of schools in Kano. Only half of the schools in Kano taught physical education and a mere 22% included art or music in their curriculum. In comparison, 80% or more of the schools in Lagos and Nasarawa included physical education and art or music in the curriculum. Thus, it could be seen that almost all schools in Lagos and the overwhelming majority in Nasarawa covered all of the basic (secular) subjects in their curricula. The exceptions are the cases of languages and reading in Nasarawa (“reading” was differentiated from “languages” on the Teacher Questionnaire). In comparison, very few schools in Kano emphasized science, physical education, and music or art in their curricula.

The overwhelming majority of schools (at least 90%) in all three states included Islamic studies and Qur’anic recitation in their curricula. However, substantial differences were evident between the states when it came to other areas of Islamic studies. While almost all schools in Nasarawa (89%) included Hadith (sayings of the prophet) in their curricula, only 40% in Lagos and 17% in Kano did so. This situation was almost reversed in the case of Tajweed (the study of intonational style in Qur’anic recitation) and Fiqh (jurisprudence), where almost all schools in Kano emphasized these two areas as compared to a third or less of schools in Lagos. Tajweed and Fiqh were included in the case of 55% and 83% of the Nasarawa schools respectively. A substantial number of the schools in Kano and Nasarawa and only a few in Lagos included Tafseer (Qur’anic interpretation) in their curricula. Finally, with the exception of a small minority (about 10%) of schools in Kano and Lagos, philosophy was not included as part of the school curricula according to the surveyed teachers.

When asked about the relative importance of secular and religious subjects to the school curriculum, 72% of teachers in Nasarawa, 67% in Lagos, and 59% in Kano answered that these were equally important. These teachers believed that placing equal emphasis on secular and Islamic subjects provides for a more balanced education that targets both intellectual and moral dimensions of student development. Such a balance, these teachers thought, is important for leading a productive life in a modern society where students will be faced with a variety of challenges that require a breadth of preparation and open-mindedness. Relatively more teachers in Kano (35%) than in Nasarawa (22%) and Lagos (10%) thought that Islamic studies were more important than secular subjects. These latter teachers supported their preference by noting that their schools are Islamic schools to start with, and that Islamic studies contribute to the moral development of students.

Finally, almost all or the overwhelming majority of teachers reported that PTAs were both present and involved in the lives of their schools in all three states. The teachers reported that

parents help with school construction and renovation activities, provide building or instructional materials, pay for medicines and contribute to school funds, and supervise students and help with teaching some lessons.

A smaller number of teachers (22 teachers, 38.6% of all participants) responded to individual interviews, which featured more in-depth, open-ended questions regarding the quality of education and teaching. When asked to describe a quality primary education, many teachers cited multiple components, resulting in 48 total responses. Of these responses, 31% were related to educational outcomes (e.g., test scores, child preparation for future schooling), 19% to educational content or curriculum, 19% to the school environment or availability of resources, 17% to other outcomes or skills (e.g., moral character, health, social skills), and 15% were related to the quality of instruction. However, the single most frequently mentioned component of a quality education was teacher quality (13%), followed by the preparation of the child for future schooling (10%).

When measuring quality instruction, both this study and the LEAP program based the notion on international theories emphasizing interactive, student-centered teaching which engages all students in various levels of thinking. A student-centered teacher goes beyond presenting information and asking children to repeat or memorize it, providing structured opportunities for student-teacher and student-student interaction in order to deepen students' understanding of the material and develop skills such as observation, comparison, analysis, and working with others. Factors also included gender inclusiveness, the establishment of a positive learning environment via the use of more praise than criticism, and the use of continuous assessment and feedback.

The interviewed teachers were asked to provide their own definition of a quality teacher and responded with 71 distinct items. Of these responses, 37% were related to a teacher's personal qualities and/or the nature of the teacher's relationship with students, 31% to the nature of the teacher's instructional practices, 17% to careful planning and preparation, and 6% to the effective use of instructional materials and resources. The most frequently cited component was the preparation of good lesson plans (13% of all responses). Other components that accounted each for 4% of all responses included: assigning homework, establishing friendships with students, being patient with and understanding of students, and using a variety of instructional aids.

It could be safely inferred that participants' views regarding what constitutes quality teaching were impacted by the LEAP program. This inference is based on the fact that many of the central components of good teaching as explicated by the interviewees were central themes emphasized by the LEAP training workshops and radio programs. For example, using student-centered teaching and encouraging student participation in class were each cited twice as hallmarks of a good teacher; and using group work, using interactive teaching, checking for student understanding, and/or following the 3 Ps (presentation, practice, and performance) were cited, at least once, by the interviewees.

#### **D. Head Teacher Interview**

A total of 15 Head Teachers, five from each participant state, were interviewed. Overall, Head Teachers reported an average of 14 teachers per school, equally split between males and females; and an average of 311 students per school (about 58% female). While the average number of teachers was about 14 in all three states, the average number of students per school was highest in Nasarawa (453; 46% female) and lowest in Lagos (172; 59% female). Thus, Nasarawa had the

highest ratio of students per teacher. All the schools in Lagos and Kano and 80% of the schools in Nasarawa were mixed by student gender.

In response to a yes or no question on whether their beliefs about educational quality have changed over time or not, all Head Teachers responded in the positive. Similarly, all Head Teachers indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of teaching in their schools. They attributed such satisfaction to a number of reasons, including student performance (27%), the experience and quality of teachers (20%), the use of “good” teaching methods (20%), and the continuous supervision and training of teachers (13%). When asked how they measured teacher quality, participant Head Teachers referred to a number of indicators, chief among them being the assessment of instructional delivery through classroom observation (53%), the assessment of knowledge of subject matter (13.3%), and student response to teachers (6.7%).

All 15 Head Teachers reported that LEAP radio programs were *previously* used in their schools and that the teachers in these schools had participated in LEAP trainings. The seeming contradiction of this reported figure with the percentage of teachers who reported having used LEAP materials in their classrooms (see Figure 2) could be attributed either to the use of the programs by some teachers in a school (which would prompt a positive response from the Head Teacher to a question about school-level use) and not others (prompting a negative response from some teachers), to misperceptions of the Head Teachers or to their attempt to show themselves in good light given their awareness that researchers in this study were associated with the LEAP program. On average, slightly more than half (53%) noted that LEAP radio programs and LEAP materials are *currently* being used in teaching and teacher training in their schools. More schools in Nasarawa and Lagos (60%) are still using LEAP radio programs and teacher training materials than in Kano (40%). Still, all Head Teachers in the three states believed that LEAP activities contributed to the improvement of the quality of teaching in their schools.

More significant was the finding that Head Teachers believed that LEAP radio programs facilitated teaching and learning in the classroom (42%), improved student listening abilities (14.3%), and enriched programs in the school (14.3%). The participants reported that LEAP radio programs were currently not being used in some schools because they believed the programs were not being broadcast (57%) or were discontinued (29%), or due to a stolen or broken radio (29%). Head Teachers noted that LEAP training materials were used when new teachers were hired (12.5%), thought that the materials were useful for training purposes (27.5%), and believed that the materials improved teachers’ knowledge and teaching skills (25%). Such training materials were currently not being used in some schools because Head Teachers thought the LEAP program was concluded (29%) and because of the absence of any calls for participation in trainings (57%). The reported dates for the last LEAP teacher trainings ranged from August 2003 to February 2005, while the dates for the next scheduled LEAP trainings were either being planned or practically unknown.

All Head Teachers expressed a preference for the active involvement of parents and the community in school life, and all of those in Lagos and Nasarawa and 80% of those in Kano reported that parents and the community were indeed actively involved with the schools. Forms of parent involvement with schools included financial support and fund raising; monitoring and participation in decision making; provision of materials, supplies, and equipment; and school visit and assistance with discipline. In this regard, all Head Teachers believed that parents were satisfied with the quality of education in their schools. Such assurance, the Head Teachers noted,

was based on a number of indicators, including explicit remarks and comments by parents (50%), school visits (21%), and transferring students to the school or recommending the school to another parent.

All of the Head Teachers in Kano and Lagos and 60% of those in Nasarawa reported that their schools followed the governmental curriculum and that their students sat for governmental exams. A majority of Head Teachers believed that teaching methods were not different in Qur'anic and public schools, and an overwhelming majority in all three states (90% or more) believed that what their students learned was either "very relevant" or "relevant" to their lives while in school or immediately after leaving the school. In this regard, all Head Teachers in Lagos, 80% in Kano, and 50% in Nasarawa believed that what students learned in Qur'anic schools was more relevant to their lives than what students in public schools usually learn.

Head Teachers also commented on the indicators of educational quality, changes in ways educational quality is conceived, recommendations for improving educational quality, and the activities they are undertaking to improve educational quality in their schools. In general, Head Teachers believed that innovative teaching strategies (e.g., student-centered teaching, cooperative learning), teacher training, quality of lesson planning, and quality of instructional materials and resources, in addition to student engagement with learning were chief indicators of educational quality. They believed that such indicators have changed over the years with a current shift toward student-centered teaching and learning, gender equity, and use of innovative media, such as radio programming, and other instructional materials. The Head Teachers recommended training teachers on innovative teaching methods, the procurement of instructional materials and resources, and a focus on student learning as ways to improve the quality of education in their schools.

### **E. School and Instructional Resources**

A significant dimension related to the assessment of instructional practices and interactions in classrooms has to do with the resources, including both school facilities and instructional resources, which are available to students and teachers. To shed light on this dimension, the physical attributes of and instructional resources available in 17 schools—4 in Kano, 7 in Lagos, and 6 in Nasarawa, were assessed.

The data indicate that all of the schools have a roof, with the exception of Kano, where 1 of the 4 schools surveyed (25%) had no roof. Classrooms in the overwhelming majority of the schools are separated by walls rather than classroom dividers. However, beyond these very basic infrastructural elements (having classroom dividers or walls and roofs), the schools are poorly equipped. For instance, sanitation should be a major concern, with about half of the schools lacking teacher and student toilets. While about a third of the schools in Nasarawa lacked teacher toilets and a half lacked student toilets, 75% of the schools in Kano lacked such facilities. The situation gets even worse with having toilets that are dedicated for girls, with about two-thirds of the schools lacking such toilets.

The situation is similar in the case of instructional resources: Blackboards and chalk are available in either all or the overwhelming majority of schools. Still, about 25% of the schools in Kano and Lagos did not have chalk available and 14% of the schools in Lagos lacked blackboards. The situation deteriorates quickly when other instructional resources are considered. For example, all the schools surveyed in Kano and about 60% of the schools surveyed in Lagos did not have a

school radio available to receive instructional broadcasts, such as the LEAP radio programs<sup>1</sup>. Things are slightly better in Nasarawa, but with nearly one-third of the schools not having a school radio. This situation could be partially explained by the fact that a large number of schools (83% in Nasarawa and 25% in Kano) did not have secure storage cabinets or facilities. The data also paint a picture of impoverished learning environments, where all of the schools in Kano and Lagos and 83% of the schools in Nasarawa did not have bulletin boards. Similarly, large majorities of the schools in the three states did not have educational or student posters displayed on their walls.

All schools in Kano and Nasarawa had desks, but 14% in Lagos did not have this basic need addressed. Even where available, desks were not necessarily arranged (probably because of classroom size) to give students adequate space to engage with learning activities. Indeed, about half the students in Kano and Lagos did not have adequate desk space, and, overall, about one-third of all students did not have adequate desk space. About 60% of schools in Nasarawa and Lagos and none in Kano had secure storage space. More disconcerting was the fact that none of the classrooms in Kano and Lagos and only a mere 17% in Nasarawa had a dedicated classroom radio available (as compared to a radio available to the whole school). This is detrimental in a country where radio serves, in many cases, as the sole link of rural and distant communities with the rest of the nation and where radio broadcasts of instructional programs often serve as a major (or even the sole) medium for disseminating innovative curricula and reformed instructional methodologies.

Overall, textbooks were not available for a third of the schools. In Kano, this was the case for 3 of the 4 schools surveyed. Similarly, instructional aids were not available in 60% or more of the surveyed schools. While a large majority of students had notebooks and writing implements, more than one-half did not have additional paper for writing. What is more, anywhere between 14 and 29% of the students did not have notebooks and/or writing implements available to them.

Thus, the image that emerges from the School Resource Checklist is one where the very basic needs of a functional classroom learning environment (blackboards, desks, adequate space, chalk, textbooks, notebooks, writing implements, and, toilets) are not available to all students. Additional modest instructional resources, such as a radio, secure storage space, bulletin boards, educational posters, instructional aids, and writing paper are not available to a majority of the students in Kano and Nasarawa, and to many students in Lagos. It could be argued that the very basic needs are indeed available in all or a large majority of the surveyed schools. But one should be reminded that these are the basic needs and would not support, if not impede, efforts to help teachers and students engage with more innovative and interactive learning environments. To the extent that the surveyed schools are representative of all schools in the participant states, these infrastructure and instructional resource deficiencies need to be attended to with the utmost urgency.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this percentage is consistent in the case of Lagos, where only 40% of the teachers reported using LEAP radio programs *at the time* of the study (see Figure 2). The inconsistency in the case of the reported percentage for Kano, where 25% of the teachers had previously reported current use of the LEAP radio programs (see Figure 2), could have been a consequence of the self-report nature of the data or the lack of accurate information by those responding to the School Resource Checklist.

## **IV. SYNTHESIS, PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this section, we synthesize the overall study results in light of the research questions.

### **1. What are the predominant instructional practices in Islamic schools in Nigeria?**

While data derived from the Classroom Observation Form might offer some reasons to be optimistic about the quality of teaching in Islamiya schools in Nigeria, the Classroom Interaction Recorder does not. The classroom observation data indicated that teachers' performance stands at "average" or "above average" in terms of classroom management, instructional practice (i.e., use of student-centered instructional techniques), ensuring gender equity in the classroom, pupil evaluation, and use of instructional materials. Indeed, the teachers observed, many of whom had participated in the USAID-funded LEAP initiative, did display many elements of the form of student centered instruction. However, the classroom interaction data indicated that the quality of teacher-student interactions did not generally meet the "spirit" of student centered instructional practices in that students were most frequently engaged in activities that involved the memorization or recall of information.

Islamic schools have traditionally had a heavy focus on memorization, but mainly in relation to religious texts, the Qur'an in particular. While Islamic schools historically taught a wide variety of subjects at higher cognitive levels, which were not based on memorization, the decline of the Arab empire also brought a decline in education and a diminution of the spirit of inquiry. Hence, the role of memorization as a learning method expanded beyond its traditional purview of the religious subjects. The interaction data bear out the notion that while teachers are able to vary their classroom practice in positive ways, they have not truly mastered the spirit of what they are being asked to do vis-à-vis student centered instruction, since the goal of much of their instructional time continues to be the memorization and recall of material.

As traditional Islamic schools have modernized, they have tended to import pedagogical features from the public schools (e.g., age segregated classes, lecture style teaching, and examinations). Traditional Islamic school instructional practices of peer coaching, age-mixed classes, and group work, for example, have fallen by the wayside. Even as the pedagogy has changed, the memorization of material continues to be emphasized for all subjects. Reemphasizing the traditional Islamic pedagogical practices (minus the corporal punishment) could be a strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning in Islamiya schools in Nigeria.

### **2. What are some of the basic characteristics of Nigerian Islamiya schools, in terms of class size and the availability of resources?**

Classes are generally crowded but not to the degree that one hears about in some countries (e.g., Uganda, where there are reports of over 100 children per classroom). Still, the student-to-teacher ratio is high. This combined with the limitations of physical space in many of the schools means that children are severely crowded in a classroom at times, limiting the teacher's ability to engage them in active learning, since grouping students, moving tables, etc., is almost impossible.

Islamiya schools in Nigeria tend to be resource lean institutions. The greatest lack seemed to be in the area of student learning materials. Traditional Islamic schools tended not to rely heavily on the availability of texts or paper. Students copied the Qur'an onto wooden slates that could then be washed clean at the end of the day. A first step in getting more learning resources into the Islamiya schools could occur by emphasizing to parents, Head Teachers and teachers the

importance of learning aids that students can work with and helping Head Teachers to coordinate with local government authorities to obtain the needed materials.

### **3. What are teacher and Head Teacher perceptions of educational quality?**

Head Teachers and, in particular, teachers, identified a wide variety of indicators of educational quality, showing that perceptions among those surveyed are far from uniform. Generally, though, teachers' and Head Teachers' perceptions of quality reflected a belief that the utilization of new or modern teaching methods would help students learn and a belief that plentiful resources enhanced educational quality. Further, teachers were able to describe those new or modern teaching methods and often cited them as indications of good teaching. In the classroom, they report that teachers are making attempts to use student-centered methods.

It was encouraging that teachers and Head Teachers seemed to be won over to the notion that student-centered teaching methods are more effective to help students learn. However, as evident from the classroom interaction data, teachers have not truly mastered the utilization of these pedagogies. Moreover, Head Teachers do not seem to be fully able to distinguish whether teachers' classroom practice demonstrates mastery of the form of student centered instruction only or whether it reflects a deeper grasp of the "spirit" (i.e., philosophy and principals) of student-centered instruction.

### **4. Are teachers utilizing the instructional strategies introduced through the USAID-supported LEAP program?**

Even though some reported having not used or discontinued to use the LEAP radio programs, the overwhelming perception among the surveyed teachers and Head Teachers was that they liked the LEAP project and saw the training as making a positive contribution to their work. In the absence of a project structure (as USAID's follow-up initiative, COMPASS, which was still in its initial phase while the EQUIP1 data was being collected), teachers and Head Teachers seemed to have less information about the broadcast schedule for the Interactive Radio Instruction programs, for example, as compared to when LEAP-funded communication structures and systems were still in place.

Teachers and Head Teachers did recognize, however, the value of the instructional strategies introduced through the USAID-supported program. The Classroom Observation Form and the Classroom Interaction Recorder indicate that teachers are attempting to utilize the more innovative active and student-centered teaching strategies but often having limited success. Further support could be beneficial in this area. As LEAP was popular and well received in the Islamiya schools, the COMPASS project and USAID have the opportunity to extend their technical assistance work in these schools.

### **5. How do Islamic schools accommodate both religious and secular curricula?**

In general, the participant schools do a good job of balancing religious and secular education. To start with, the larger majority of schools in all three states address almost all curricular subjects about which the researchers inquired and use assessments (e.g., examinations) characteristic of public school education in Nigeria. What is more, being Islamic schools, religious education is taken to heart by school personnel, while the larger majority of school personnel realize the importance of schooling that prepares students to engage in a variety of civic life contexts, and that allows students to pursue further studies beyond the context of Islamic schools. Indeed, in Islamic educational traditions, religious and secular education are linked in that it is thought that

knowledge of the physical world and human society helps one to know God and that knowledge of the Qur'an helps one to interpret and understand the physical world and human society. Thus, teachers and Head Teachers ensure that a focus on secular education is both present and healthy in Islamic schools. It should be noted, though, that most teachers teach more than one subject, so the extent to which all teachers are well prepared to teach the different subjects is unclear.

During the LEAP project, a small study was conducted to ascertain the attitudes of parents who chose to send their children to Islamiya schools. Interestingly enough, parents had very strong “secular” aspirations for their children. Most wanted their children to pursue further education—especially high school education—and many cited lofty career aspirations for their children. What was evident was that parents placed a good deal of faith in the Islamiya schools to produce children who would be ready to pursue high school or college studies. This finding, in turn, pointed to the fact that while parents were familiar with some of the discourse around student centered instruction and active learning, most had a limited sense of what it really entailed and hence were at a disadvantage in assessing teachers or teaching in the schools they were supporting.

**6. Are PTAs and community members active in the educational improvement process even in the absence of direct assistance from USAID projects?**

The general consensus was that parents are quite active in the Islamiya schools. This makes perfect sense as traditional Islamic schools have generally been institutions that are rooted in their communities. However, teachers and Head Teachers reported that financial support was the best way in which parents could make a contribution to the schools.

**7. How do parents perceive and evaluate educational quality?**

Based on data collected by a previous study conducted during the LEAP program, parents perceive educational quality in much the same way teachers do—the availability of resources being a key item cited. Parents also measure educational quality by whether their children pursue further schooling. Learning to become a good Muslim, a moral person and a contributor to society were also highly ranked indicators for parents of whether one was receiving a quality education.

In conclusion, traditional Islamic educational methods and structures provide an avenue through which appropriate assistance can be offered to Islamiya schools in Nigeria. Islamiya school personnel indicated their appreciation of the LEAP project, for example, and consistently expressed a desire for more training and more instructional resources. These findings may be applicable in other countries as well, as the experience gained from USAID programs in Ethiopia and the work of UNICEF and UNESCO in other countries indicates that Islamic schools elsewhere are also open to receiving aid from outside donors. The findings of this study suggest the following implications for providing donor support to Islamic schools.

Finding	Possible Programming Implications
1. Though traditional Islamic instructional practices have much in common with modern notions of quality student-centered teaching, the use of memorization is now more common. After approximately one and a half years of professional development, teachers in the study practiced	Teacher professional development which reemphasizes the traditional Islamic pedagogical practices (minus the corporal punishment) could be a strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning in Islamic schools and can convince teachers to push against their own comfort zones

elements of the form of student-centered teaching, but there was still room for improvement.	and move beyond a focus on memorization to a focus on understanding and problem solving. Schools are likely to welcome this kind of support and teachers are likely to try to incorporate the ideas into their practice, particularly in subject matter other than religious studies.
2. The Islamic schools in the study were generally very resource lean, particularly with regard to basic learning materials. Classrooms were crowded and student-teacher ratios high.	Coordination among donor-funded programs, educators, communities and governments is needed to meet the needs. Some combination of teacher training in the development and use of low-cost, locally available learning materials; parent and community organizing to provide materials; and government-Islamic school cooperation to provide learning materials available in government schools could have a significant impact.
3. Perceptions of educational quality among head teachers and teachers surveyed are far from uniform. Generally, though, they reflected a belief that the utilization of new or modern teaching methods would help students learn and a belief that plentiful resources enhanced educational quality.	This finding is further evidence that the two strategies described above would be appropriate and welcomed and that donor investment can have an impact on perceptions of quality.
4. Teachers and Head Teachers recognized the value of the instructional strategies introduced through the USAID-supported program. Teachers are <i>attempting</i> to use active and student-centered teaching strategies but often having limited success.	Given the widespread emphasis on memorization currently found in Islamic schools, sustained post-training support may be even more important than in other schools. Institutionalized monitoring and mentoring, Interactive Radio Instruction, cluster organizations, or other sustainable methods for reinforcing lessons learned in training are essential. Long-term programs are recommended over short-term ones, as establishing the habit of effectively using new teaching methods takes time.
5. Islamiya schools balance religious and secular subjects and emphasize both very strongly, as Islam encourages learning in both areas.	As long as interventions are not perceived as interfering with schools' religious mission, there is ample opportunity for supporting improved teaching and learning in secular subjects. Care must be taken to ensure that any outside materials provided are culturally appropriate. Communities' religious authorities should be partners in developing interventions and may be a significant source of support.
6. Parents are quite active in Islamiya schools, most frequently by contributing financially.	Methods for rallying community support may leverage donor investment. Small grant programs, PTA training, community mobilization, and joint stakeholder planning and management are some methods for tapping into the resources—human as well as financial—available to Islamic schools, which are typically community-based.

<p>7. Parents, in a previous study, cited many indicators of a quality education, including the availability of resources, readiness to pursue further schooling, and learning to be a good Muslim and a contributor to society.</p>	<p>These notions reinforce the recommendations above. As it was not cited frequently, the quality of instruction may be an area in which to educate parents so that they are better able to support the teaching and learning taking place in their children's schools.</p>
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As Islamic schools are growing in popularity in Nigeria among Muslim populations and as many of them are poor schools serving poor communities, and as evidence suggests that the same is true in some other developing countries, it is important to ensure that these schools are meeting certain educational standards with regard to secular subjects. Further assistance could make a huge difference in improving educational quality in these schools in order to achieve that goal.

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## APPENDIX A. TABLE 1

Table 1. *Overall and State Mean Scores (and Standard Deviations) for the Classroom Observation Form Items*

Item	All states		Nasarawa		Lagos		Kano	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Learning objectives clearly stated in lesson plan	3.35	0.87	3.44	0.62	3.08	1.38	3.46	0.52
2. Learning activities clearly stated and support learning objectives	3.19	0.79	3.22	0.43	2.75	1.22	3.54	0.52
3. Materials mentioned in lesson plan are ready for use	3.12	0.98	3.17	0.71	2.50	1.17	3.62	0.87
4. Teacher calls on all or almost all the pupils individually during the lesson	3.09	0.93	2.94	0.75	3.14	1.17	3.19	0.91
5. Teacher both practices and encourages appropriate behavior in the classroom	3.67	0.60	3.47	0.51	3.92	0.64	3.69	0.60
6. Teacher uses an Attendance Book and a Pupil Evaluation Record	2.47	1.03	2.67	0.65	2.40	1.17	2.36	1.22
7. Institutional aids are visible in the classroom	2.88	1.30	3.06	1.06	2.93	1.64	2.63	1.26
8. Teacher arranges the classroom effectively for the activity	3.23	0.79	3.47	0.80	3.14	0.77	3.06	0.77
9. Teacher clearly models or explains new material during the presentation phase	3.46	0.87	3.33	0.84	3.43	1.09	3.63	0.72
10. At least 40% of the lesson allows pupils the opportunity to practice what they learned	3.35	0.97	3.26	0.87	3.36	1.22	3.44	0.89
11. The use of games in teaching	2.04	0.87	2.56	0.70	1.71	0.99	1.75	0.68
12. Interactivity occurs between pupils & teacher	3.41	0.86	3.47	0.77	3.64	0.63	3.13	1.09
13. Teacher uses pair work and/or group work	2.83	1.21	3.18	0.81	2.09	1.22	3.00	1.41
14. The use of encouragement rather than criticism	3.52	0.77	3.50	0.51	3.29	1.07	3.75	0.68
15. Teacher uses thinking questions and does not just ask pupils to recall and/or repeat info	3.24	0.88	3.35	0.79	3.15	1.07	3.20	0.86
16. Student centered teaching strategies are used throughout in support of the objectives	2.91	1.01	3.29	0.85	2.46	1.05	2.88	1.02
17. Teacher poses questions of equal difficulty to boys and girls	3.35	0.90	3.11	0.66	3.43	1.22	3.56	0.81
18. Teacher provides equal opportunities for both boys and girls to answer questions and gives equal attention to their responses	3.55	0.74	3.37	0.60	3.64	1.01	3.69	0.60
19. Classroom provides a positive environment for girls and encourages their participation and leadership	3.64	0.74	3.61	0.50	3.43	1.16	3.87	0.35
20. Teacher's use of textbook or instructional materials (including Resource Kit) supports lesson objectives & engages student interest	3.04	1.00	2.88	1.05	3.07	0.83	3.19	1.11
21. Teacher helps the pupils to use a textbook or instructional material effectively	2.95	1.08	2.94	0.97	2.75	1.22	3.13	1.13
22. Teacher makes use of the blackboard in an effective and useful way	3.92	0.58	3.68	0.58	3.93	0.47	4.20	0.56

Item	All states		Nasarawa		Lagos		Kano	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
23. Teacher checks to see that students have understood the material presented	3.39	1.13	3.33	0.91	3.43	1.40	3.43	1.16
24. Teacher provides feedback that is specific and assists pupils in finding and/or understanding the correct answer	3.43	0.85	3.47	0.84	3.23	1.09	3.53	0.64
25. Performance Phase of the lesson is student centered	3.30	0.91	3.53	0.77	3.00	1.08	3.27	0.88

## APPENDIX B. FIGURES 1.1 TO 1.4

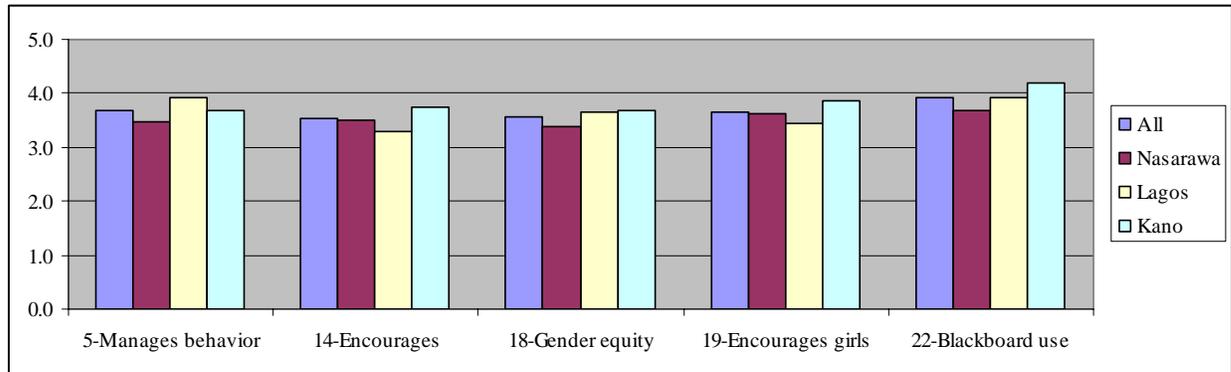


Figure 1.1. Classroom observation items with overall means greater than 3.50 (on the 5-point scale)

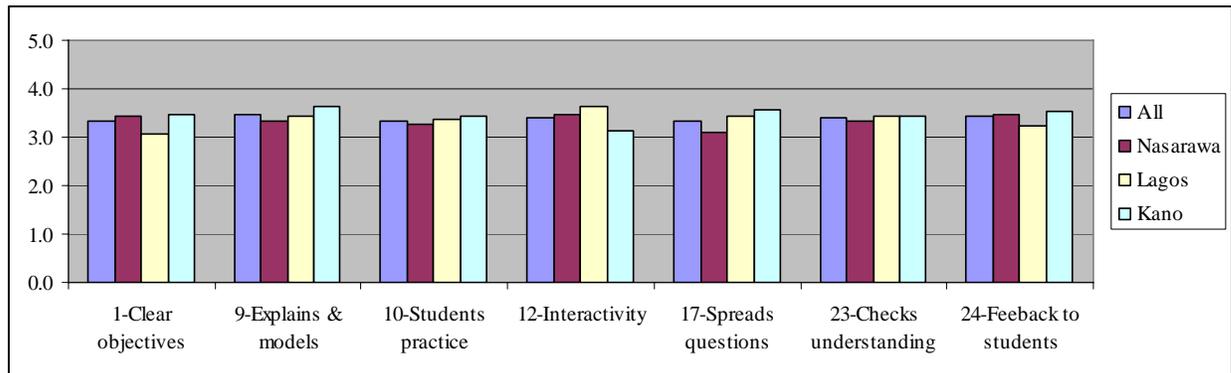


Figure 1.2. Classroom observation items with overall means between 3.31 and 3.50 (on the 5-point scale)

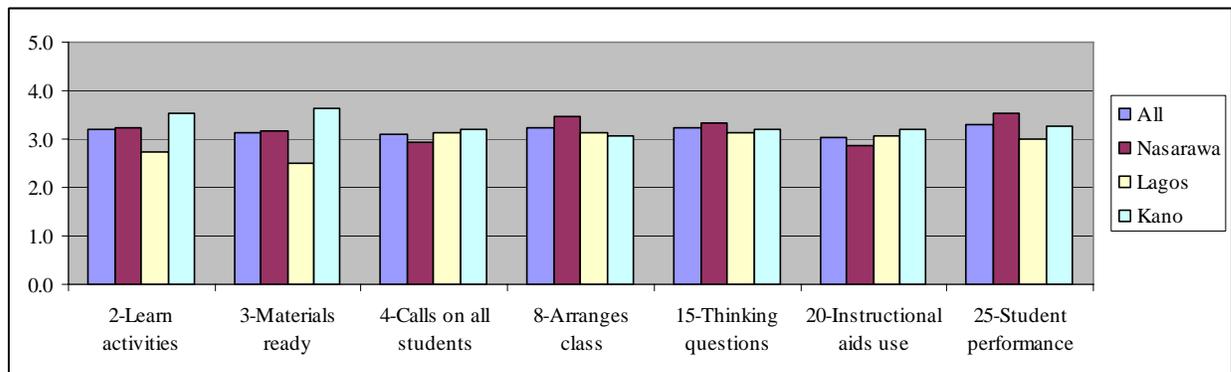


Figure 1.3. Classroom observation items with overall means between 3.00 and 3.30 (on the 5-point scale)

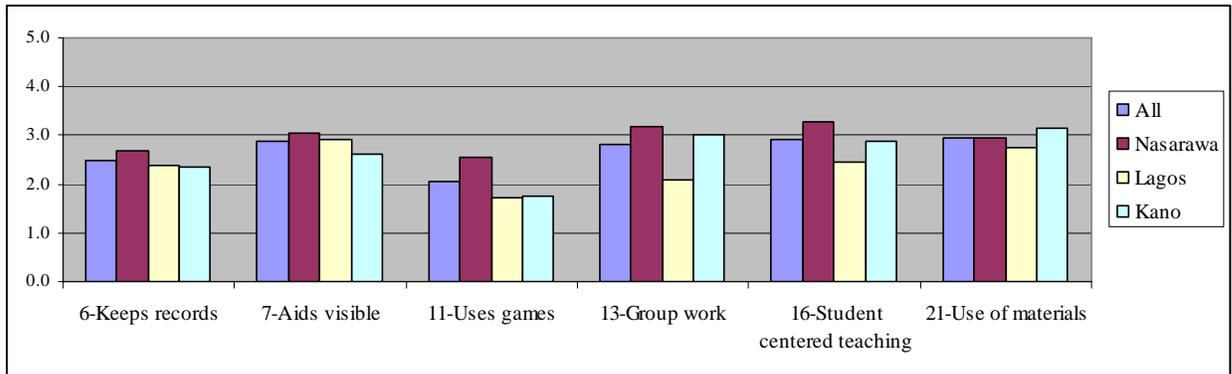


Figure 1.4. Classroom observation items with overall means less than 3.00 (on the 5-point scale)