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Islamic Education in West Africa: Context, Themes and Future Prospects

Much of the global research on Islamic education, particularly in English, centres on the Middle Eastern and South Asian intellectual traditions and historic trajectories, and their legacies in Islamic education today. Conversations on Islamic education, both in the Muslim majority world and the West, often neglect the fast growing and exciting field of Islam in West Africa. As with the debates on Islamic education models in other parts of the Muslim world, some themes are consistent; these include: changing knowledge hierarchies and (ir)relevance to the labour market, modernization of syllabi, pedagogical critique/appraisal, gender in/exclusion, and Islamic Education as a cause of, or bulwark against, extremism, among others. However, there are some themes and questions unique to the context of Islamic West Africa, much of which is now being uncovered by historians, social scientists and educationalists in this field. Key contributions over the last 15 years have significantly shaped and extended our knowledge of the Islamic scholarly and education tradition of West Africa, and this moment in the research discourse has yet to make its full impact on wider inquiries in Islamic education and Islamic Studies more widely. This paper explores some major milestones in recent research in the area, reflects upon the context of this field, engages with its key concerns and debates, and signposts some examples of good practice of the future, both locally and Ummah-tically.



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Dr Alyaa Ebbiary is Postdoctoral Research Associate in Durham University. She is currently an Officer of the British Association of Islamic Studies (BRAIS), and was formerly the Book Reviews Editor for the *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies (JEMS)*. She completed her PhD in Social Anthropology and Islamic Studies at SOAS (University of London), examining Islamic higher education in the UK, with particular attention to pedagogy, Imamship/authority and female scholarship. Alyaa has worked in research and teaching at a number of universities, including: Lancaster, University of East London, Institute of Education at UCL, SOAS and Kings College London. Apart from academia, she also worked in formal and informal education, as a schoolteacher, community organiser and interfaith facilitator. Her research interests lie in the interface of religion, culture, education and citizenship; particularly in the Muslim minority - and majority - worlds.



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Dr Hadiza Kere Abdulrahman is a Senior Lecturer in Special and Inclusive Education at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln in the UK. She researches around issues of Education, Knowledge and Identity and the classical *Almajiranci* system of Qur'anic education in Northern Nigeria. Her general interest is in the ways that coloniality/colonialism shapes the narratives regarding knowledge and education in postcolonial societies such as Nigeria; and especially how it affects who we are as people and how we come to 'know' the things we know.

She continues to be an advocate for, and co-constructs knowledge with the practitioners of *Almajiranci*; and co-owns a nursery/primary school in her hometown in northern Nigeria.