Title: The challenges of teaching Islamic religious education on spiritual and academic formation of secondary schools students in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract: This study sought to investigate the challenges of teaching IRE on spiritual and academic formation of secondary school students in Nairobi, Kenya. The study shows that the foundation of education in Islam is guided by the principles of Quran and Hadith (the saying and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) (PBUH). Indeed, the first revelation of the Quran (Q.96; 1-5) forms the cornerstone of education in Islam. The study further shows that from the Islamic point of view, education is classified into two categories that is, the knowledge of religious obligations- fardh 'ain. Revealed knowledge or religious sciences fall under this category. The second category is knowledge of the world or universe- fardh kifayah which is communal obligation. This means that it is a duty for all members of the community. Every Muslim should strive to develop himself or herself by earning a living. Acquired knowledge fall under this category. It is noted that IRE's primary goal is moral refinement and spiritual formation. IRE is inclined towards noble character building. As an academic subject, IRE has been very instrumental in developing the natural and personal skills of students. The content of IRE helps students to develop spiritually and academically leading to moral refinement and character building. The framework of the study was derived from the holy Quran and Hadith and various perspectives were used. The study adopted both systematic and purposive sampling procedures to select 12 secondary schools out of 37 that offer IRE in Nairobi. Four categories of respondents were selected. These include IRE teachers and students, directors and managers of Islamic organizations such as Islamic Foundation, Ummah Foundation, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) among others and curriculum planners and developers. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires and was analyzed with the help of tables of frequency distribution and percentages. It was then synthesized and interpreted accordingly. The study shows that the major challenges facing the teaching of IRE in secondary schools in Nairobi is shortage of trained IRE teachers. Other challenges include inadequate teaching and learning resources and lack of capacity building and staff development programmes. Few students enrol for IRE because of the negative attitude by both the parents and the students towards the subject. It is also shown that parents encourage their sons and daughters to pursue courses which would be useful in the labor market in terms of getting formal employment. This involves taking subjects which are science oriented as opposed to Art based subjects such as IRE. The study is concluded by noting that Islamic organizations have played a big role in assisting the needy secondary school students in Nairobi. These organizations pay school fees for the needy students through bursary schemes. Other contributions made by these organizations include provision of teaching and learning materials for IRE, sponsorship of Muslim students to teacher training colleges for PI, Diploma and University to study IRE and finally establishment of colleges to train IRE teachers.