

# The Contribution Of Islamic Studies In Theological Seminaries Towards Christian - Muslim Relations In South-West And Littoral Regions: Cameroon

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to examine the contribution of Islamic studies to Christian-Muslim relations. The study employed Descriptive-survey and phenomenology designs which required a mixed method approach. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed. The study was carried out in the South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon. Bartlett (2001) and Krejcie & Morgan sample size determination formulas were employed with questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis as instruments for data collection. The triangulation method of data collection and the embedded method of data analysis were employed. The study was grounded on Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory which explains how teaching and learning processes can affect learner's behaviour. The findings established that: (1) Contents of Islamic studies in Seminaries in the South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon are very superficial as studies are merely informative with little or no measures to enhance proper understanding of Islam. (2) The new discipline curriculum approach employed by the seminaries has not significantly enhanced Christian-Muslim relations. The study recommends (1) a review of the course content. (2) Seminaries should employ both the new discipline and project curriculum implementation approaches. (3) Each seminary should have at least one qualified Christian Islamic lecturer (4) A course on Christian-Muslim relations be introduced alongside the Islamic course in all theological seminaries.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Studies, Theological Seminaries, Christian-Muslim Relations*

## I. INTRODUCTION

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM are the two main and major religions embraced by majority of the world's population, thereby significantly representing the global population and the global environment. Despite a common Abrahamic heritage, relationship between Christianity and Islam has been marked mostly by misunderstandings and conflicts than understanding and peaceful co-existence. In the contemporary world, Christian-Muslim relations have been increasingly polarized despite the Quranic and Biblical teachings on common humanity. The Christian mandate to love; "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22:39) and the Islamic concept of human dignity and equality in Quran *Sūrat l- Isrā* "And indeed We have honoured the

Children of Adam, and we have carried them on Land and sea, and have provided them with good things and preferred them above many whom We have created with marked preference"(Q 17:70), have not been given due consideration in Christian-Muslim relations (Yunus, 2016).

Although there are divergent views on how to approach religious plurality, the stand point of theological education remains outstanding. There is a need for intensive Islamic studies in American universities, to prepare students to engage the Muslims (IIIT, 2009). In addition to that, the WCC global survey report on the future of theological education, sampled the opinions of theological instructors and church leaders from every Christian tradition in every part of the world. Among the main findings, interfaith dialogue is a subject to be included or requires strengthening in theological education. The need for

interfaith dialogue studies in theological education is a global concern, but considered higher than Biblical studies in Africa (WCC, 2013).

In spite of this remarkable shift in theological education in Africa in reference to emerging questions, theological education still faces the challenge of equipping the churches to respond to religious plurality (Amanze, 2009). This view finds credence in the opinion of other scholars. Edusa-Eyison (2010) is disposed to the view that, religious plurality is a theological imperative for African theological education. This requires serious consideration of Islamic studies in theological education. Asamoah-Gyadu (2010) lays emphasis on the neglect of Islamic studies when he affirms that, “The widespread association of Islam with terrorism...calls for a more thorough response to the Islamic challenge than theological education have done in Africa...” (p. 7).

In a symposium on theological education organised by the faculty of protestant theology in Yaoundé Cameroon in 1998, participants called for theological education in Cameroon to consider contextual issues (Gatwa, 2003). Lang (2014) writes that albeit the efforts by the Cameroon government to establish a religious pluralistic tradition, the mainstream Christian churches have impeded this project. Ondo (1995) further argues that, the reluctance of Christian religious leaders to engage in Christian-Muslim relations in Cameroon is because of ignorance about Islam and the importance of Christian-Muslim relations.

Looking at the historical overview of the quests for Islamic studies in theological education, and the challenges of religious plurality and Islam, suggest an urgent solution to these problems. A Christian response to these problems require the sensitivity and confidence of church leaders, which can best be attained by a good study and understanding of Islam.

#### A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The role of theological seminaries in the life of people cannot be underestimated because they are the source of theological, moral and spiritual formation of many church ministers and people of God. Despite this recognition, Islamic studies in theological Seminaries have made an insignificant contribution to the understanding of Islam which is the basis for Christian-Muslim relations. In spite of the fact that theological seminaries in Cameroon teach Islam, the Islamic studies seems to be insufficient or better still, limited for students to understand Islam and engage in Christian-Muslim relations. The consequence of this deficiency is evident since Christian and Muslim religious leaders are reluctant to engage in Christian-Muslim relations. In addition to that, conflicts have escalated between Christian religious leaders and Muslims faithful, because of misunderstandings about each other.

This paper focusing on the Christian contribution to Christian-Muslim relations, seeks to examine the extent to which the curriculum of Islamic studies enhances the understanding of Islam, and build the capacity of learners to engage in Christian-Muslim relations in theological seminaries in South-West and Littoral Regions, Cameroon. The areas of the curriculum examined are the content and curriculum

implementation approach. The study also seeks to test the hypothesis mentioned below.

#### B. HYPOTHESIS

Ho. There exists no significant relationship between Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim relations in theological seminaries in South-West and Littoral Regions, Cameroon.

H1. There is a significant relationship between Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim relations in theological seminaries in South-West and Littoral Regions, Cameroon.

#### C. CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

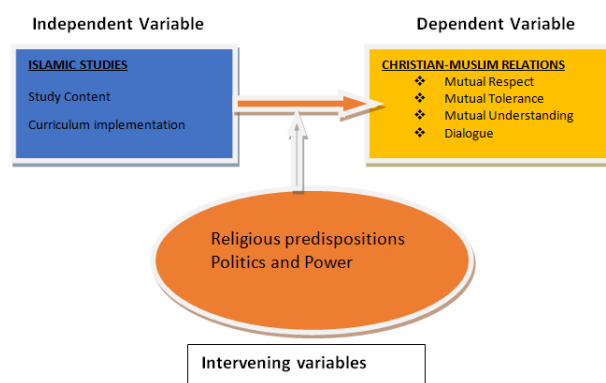


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work

These different elements within the independent variable are affecting the dependent variable either positively or negatively. Improvement in understanding, tolerance, respect and dialogue because of Islamic studies, will indicate a contribution of Islamic studies to Christian-Muslim relations. If the church denomination of a student rejects Islam totally, Islamic studies will remain an academic issue void of any relational aspect. Paradoxically, if the church denomination of the student accepts relating with Islam; this will tailor the connection of the student's Islamic studies and engagement in Christian-Muslim relations.

#### D. THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY OF ALBERT BANDURA (1977)

This study is guided by the social learning theory of Albert Bandura. He argues that when learners are exposed to observe certain practices, they will acquire skills that will guide their performances and might influence their behaviours. In this regard, Bandura (1977) developed four cognitive and behavioural processes as conditions for effective modelling: Attention, Retention, Reproduction and Reinforcement. This theory has guided the study to explore how the teaching and learning processes of Islamic studies have provided knowledge of Islam and a change of behaviour towards Islam.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. CONTENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND ENHANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM

The centre for Islamic and Public policy (2007) study report on the state of Islamic studies in American universities established that, Islam has become a major topic of discussion in the United States since September 11, 2001. The current state of relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world, as well as the recent debates about Islamic education has influenced universities in America to focus on modern Islamic developments. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to establish an understanding of the origin and growth of Islamic studies. The study targeted scholars, students, and alumni of Islamic studies in focus groups discussions, and dialogue. A survey of 105 introductory courses in Islam (Islam 101) was conducted. The findings state that, a general agreement seems to be emerging among teachers as to what should be included in an introductory course on Islam. Recommendations among others; institutions should develop a focus for introductory level courses (Islam 101) on Islamic text, and employ qualified Muslim scholars to teach specialized and advanced courses on Islam and Islamic civilization.

Grafton (2015) argues that Islamic studies give Christians a good knowledge of Islam. According to him, a study conducted in Virginia theological seminary investigating the engagement of Christians and church clergy with Muslims showed that, those who had engagement with Muslims had previous opportunity of studying Islam. Studying Islam therefore provides an opportunity for Christians to engage Muslims. It also prepares Christians to reinterpret the gospel message for Muslims.

Chapman (1993) underscores that studying Islam is very important for Christians in a study he carried out in Birmingham University. According to him, the objective of Islamic studies is to overcome fear of Islam, understand Islam, and understand Christian mission better. It is importance to study Islam as it will not only satisfy Christian curiosity of knowing the Muslims, but it will heal the problem of fear, as Christians will get to know more about Islam.

Mvumbi (2013) in his introduction to Islam presents a proposed content for the study of Islam. He suggests that the course should include the people's opinion about Islam and the reality of Islam. The history, the life of Muhammad and Islamic doctrines should be part of the course content for students who are undertaking a bachelor degree. He argues that, a change of attitude towards Islam; away from viewing Islam as a strange religion and Muslims as being violent is an expected outcome of Islamic studies.

## B. THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Ramarajan and Runell (2007) study on Islamic studies curriculum approaches of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious understanding USA notes that, the curricula have neglected religious pluralism and has not address the Islamophobia phenomena (fear of Islam) in the USA. As a result, The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious understanding came up with an integrated education programme in which students learnt about Islam through other disciplines. The goal of the project was to create a positive foundation for mutual

respect, to enhance knowledge about Islam in order to reduce prejudice and stereotyping.

Schumacheer (2007) notes that creating a new discipline could be the best way of measuring the knowledge intended for Islamic studies. In this model, the teacher controls most of the content and does not allow much participation from the students. In the case of Islamic studies, there will be clear goals of the content and the nature of teaching. The challenge with this model is that it requires experts in Islamic studies to teach within such a department.

Holland (2016) reports on a project model practiced by the Jewish Christian Muslim Association (JCMA) established in 2003. JCMA has the following principles: respect for one's partners in the process of dialogue, ability to suspend judgment, and focusing on the local contexts (socio-political) rather than the one oversees. He also notes the importance of care, because a bad pedagogy can lead to a greater divide in society. This means interfaith dialogue when done as praxis, must be process centred and not product oriented. In this process, participants should construct knowledge and the leaders act only as facilitators.

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study has employed both descriptive survey and phenomenology designs with a mix method approach. The study was carried out in the South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon. The seminaries selected were: Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS), in Kumba, the Cameroon Baptist Seminary (CBSK) in Kumba, the Apostolic Bilingual Seminary in (ABSK) in Kumba, Faculte de Theologie Protestante et des Sciences des Religions de Ndoungue (FTPSRN), and Grand Seminaire theologique (Paul VI) de Douala. The study targeted students, graduates, lecturers, Islamic lecturers, Curriculum developers, and Christians and Muslims faithful. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques (Peter, 1994) and Cochran's 1977 formula outlined by Bartlett et al (2001), Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table were employed in determining sample size. The triangulation method of data collection and the embedding model of data analysis were used.

## IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### C. CONTENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

The first research objective sought to examine the content of Islamic studies and the extent to which it enhances the understanding of Islam in seminaries in South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon. As Wells (2002) rightly observes that understanding can only be measured in specific situations, this study aimed at identifying whether the study content designed for Islamic studies is adequate in enabling the students to understand the concept of Islam and experience it by engaging in Christian-Muslim relations. This section contained 08 questions, all of which were set in closed ended form with mixed response patterns. 01 was sub divided into

other questions containing Yes or No options, 03 had alternative responses with equal ratings and 04 question with likert scale ranking.

		What form were the studies undertaken?			Total
Have you studied Islam in the seminary?		Regular course	Seminar	Workshops	
Students	Yes	176	11	0	187
	No	0	3	1	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>176</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>191</b>
Lecturers	Yes	47	2	0	49
	No	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>49</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 1: Cross Tabulation on whether respondents have studied Islam in the Seminary and the Forms in which the Studies were undertaken

As seen on Table 1 above, out of the 191 students sampled for the study, 187 of them accepted that they have studied Islam in the seminary against 04 who refused that they have not. Going by these statistics, it is evident that almost an insignificant number of respondents have not studied Islam in the seminary while a substantial number of them have undertaken courses in Islam. Among respondents who indicated that they have not done Islamic Studies in school, an examination of the various forms in which students undertook Islamic studies revealed that these students have studied Islam in other settings different from classroom. 03 of them indicated that they had gathered knowledge on Islam in seminars while 01 of them had attended workshops. This implies that, most of the responses were not assumptions but reflections of what students had done in their seminaries.

In relation to lecturers, the results showed that all the lecturers 49(100%) accepted that they had studied Islam in the seminary. This implied that all lecturers in the seminaries sampled in the South-West and Littoral regions had studied Islam. An identification of the various forms in which they undertook their studies revealed that majority of them (47) studied Islam in classroom settings through regular courses while 02 of them undertook their studies in the form of seminary.

Options	Yes		No	
	Frequenc y	Percenta ge (%)	Frequenc y	Percentage (%)
<b>Courses</b>	<b>Students</b>			
Pre-Islamic Arabia	55	28.8	136	71.2
The call of Muhammad	142	74.3	49	25.7
The five Pillars of Islam	60	31.4	131	68.6
Sources of Islam	114	59.7	77	40.3
Islam in Africa	38	19.9	153	80.1
Islam in Cameroon	18	9.4	173	90.6
All of the above and more	33	17.3	158	82.7
<b>Courses</b>	<b>Lecturers</b>			
Pre-Islamic Arabia	12	24.5	37	75.5

The call of Muhammad	47	95.9	2	4.1
The five Pillars of Islam	41	83.7	81	6.3
Sources of Islam	3	6.1	46	93.9
Islam in Africa	2	4.1	47	95.9
Islam in Cameroon	1	2.0	48	98.0
All of the above and more	2	4.1	46	95.9

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the different topics studied under Introduction to Islam

These units were classified under Introduction to Islam and Islamic Theology as presented on Table 2 above. Students' responses pertaining to the topics they studied under the unit; Introduction to Islam revealed a variety of topics. A discrete analysis showed that only topics like the Call to Muhammad and the Sources of Islam were studied by most of the students as revealed by the percentages 142(73.3%) and 114(59.7%) respectively. The other topics like the Five Pillars of Islam, Pre-Islamic Arabia, Islam in Africa and Islam in Cameroon recorded low percentages such as 60(31.4%), 55(28.8), 38(19.9%) and 18(9.4%) successively. Judging by these percentages, it is an indication that most of the students did not study the later topics. This was later confirmed by the syllabus from the seminary, where Islam in Africa and Islam in Cameroon were totally absent from the course content (PTS, 2016-2017, Course content for Islam (Islam 103), P.TS library).

The lecturers on their part acknowledged to have only studied the call of Muhammad and the five Pillars of Islam, 47(95.9%) and 41(83.7%). Other topics like Pre-Islamic Arabia, Sources of Islam, Islam in Africa and Islam in Cameroon were identified with by only 12(24.5%), 3(6.1%), 2(4.1%) and 1(2.2(4.1%) of the lecturers respectively. Almost an insignificant proportion, 02 (4.1%) of the respondents accepted that they offered all these topics in the seminary. This also reveals that similar to students' experiences, most lecturers confirmed that much negligence is given to topics like Sources of Islam, Islam in Africa and Islam in Cameroon.

This implied that the course is shallow and not harmonized. This confirmed the findings of the Council of Science and Humanities (2010) that only approximately 20% of the instructional content in the subjects of Islamic studies actually deal with Islam as a religion. This is contrary to the publication of the Center for Islamic and Public Policy (2007), that themes such as Islamic history, Islamic sources, Islamic beliefs and practices, intellectual currents and Islam in the modern world were found the most widely used course content in the introductory classes in American universities.

On the contrary, less attention is given to topics that relate to Islam in Africa and Cameroon respectively. Leading to the suggestion that though these seminaries are in Cameroon, students are not opportune to learn about Islam in the Cameroonian context and Africa in general. This observation is confirmed by Mugambi (2013) who noted that, the curriculum of theological education in Africa is overcrowded with elements of western culture, making it difficult for theological education to meet the social needs of the African people.

Apart from the unit introduction to Islam, student respondents were also requested to identify the topics they studied in the seminary under the unit; Islamic theology. 83(43.5%) of the students indicated that they had study Islamic doctrines, 45(23.6%) said they had studied Monotheism, 48(25.1%) acknowledged to have studied prophet-hood, 33(17.3%) said they studied last judgment and 52(27.2%) of them said they have studied Islamic teachings on Christianity. This showed that not only the unit; introduction to Islam was offered but some seminaries advance in their studies with another unit; Islamic theology with topics such as: Islamic doctrines, Prophet-hood, last judgment, Monotheism and Islamic teachings on Christianity. This as well enhanced their knowledge on Islam specifically on Christian approaches and relations to Islam.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	6	3.1	0	0.0
Small degree	104	54.5	41	83.7
Moderate	60	31.4	8	16.3
High degree	18	9.4	0	0.0
Very High Degree	3	1.6	0	0.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 3: Respondents' responses on the extent to which they understood Islam

Respondents were requested to identify the extent to which they mastered the Islamic studies using 5 ranked response options as seen on Table 3 above. In order to reduce ambiguity and ease understanding, the results were further collapsed from 5 response options of Not at all, Small degree, Moderate, High degree and Very High Degree and merged to 3 options comprising small degree, moderate and high degree.

With respect to students' responses, majority of them 110(57.6%) did not have a good understanding of Islamic studies given that they understood only to a small extent. This was opposed to a minority of them 21(11%), who indicated that they understood these studies to some great extent while about 60(31.4%) of the respondents claimed they had a moderate understanding of Islamic Studies. According to the percentage distribution, it was apparent that most students did not actually understand Islamic Studies in the seminary. This could possibly be accounted for by the shallow nature of the syllabus, as one of the Seminary Graduates (SG 1) noted in the interview, "I studied Islam during my years in the seminary although the studies were not detailed. The content was a little shallow since we were just being giving tips about the Islamic religion."

Going by the lecturers' responses, it was ironical that though being lecturers in the seminary, none of them acknowledged to have had proper understanding of Islamic Studies in their seminary days. Only few of them 8(16.3%) accepted that they understood this subject matter averagely. This was counteracted by majority 41(83.7%) who explicitly pointed that in the seminary; they understood only a glimpse of the Islamic studies. This was confirmed by one of the Islamic Lecturers (IL 1) who acknowledged the present state of the study of Islam at the seminary as very shallow as he

blatantly stated "The content of Islamic studies in my seminary is not reach enough for students to properly understand Islam. The course is simply an introductory course to Islam. Students are merely introduced to the origin of Islam. This was the case during my seminary days".

This therefore implies that the content of Islamic studies and its influences has remained stagnant over the years. The lecturers understood very little of Islamic studies during their seminary days and the same situation prevail with the present seminary students. That notwithstanding, a Seminary Graduate (SG 1) still admitted that though they understood only little about Islam in the seminary, their experiences in ministry in general has exposed them to much of Islam as he explained:

My Islamic studies in the seminary were very shallow. However, the fact that I have been in the field for many years where I worked in most of the departments of the church and in Muslims dominated areas, I read a lot and experienced a lot about Muslims and Islam. Therefore my studies in the seminary did not give me a better understanding, but it was an eye opener; introducing me to this religion that one knew nothing about.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	46	24.1	8	16.3
Small degree	63	33.0	36	73.5
Moderate	25	13.1	1	2.0
High degree	24	12.6	4	8.2
Very High Degree	33	17.3	8	16.3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 4: Respondents' Responses on relationship with Muslims as part of Christian Mission

This question was to enable the researcher know whether from respondents' study of Islam they see building relations with Muslims as part of the Christian Mission. According to the results on Table 4 above, 46(24.1%) of the students noted that building relations with Muslims is not at all part of Christian Mission, 63(33.0%) of them held the opinion that it is part of Christian mission to some extent while 24(12.6%) of them argued that it is part of it to a high degree and 33(17.3%) said to a very high degree. About 25(13.1%) of the respondents took the neutral option. Collapsing the above results, it was seen that about half of the students 109(57.1%) held that building Muslim relations was not part of the Christian mission, as opposed to 57(29.8%) of them who thought it forms part of the Christian mission.

With regards to lecturers' opinions, the result was harmonious with those of the students. More than three quarters of the lecturers 44(89.8%) held a similar opinion that building Christian-Muslim relations is not part of the Christian mission while only few of them 12(24.5%) saw that it is the responsibility of a Christian to relate with a Muslim. Only 1(2.0%) of the respondents took a neutral stand. The above statistics was an indication that from the study of Islam, most respondents did not see it necessary to make relations with Muslims because it is not part of the Christian mission or duty. This goes contrary to the WCC (2011) report on Christians mission, where the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and

the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) noted that interfaith relations is part of Christian mission.

From the examination of respondents' opinions on the content of Islamic studies and understanding of Islam, it is apparent that the content of Islamic studies in Cameroon seminaries is very superficial. Students are just given tips about the religion and that is done mostly in a single unit not weighty enough to enhance understanding. As such, most students only retain basic knowledge of the study content while the major content is not well understood. This instigates the notion that the study of Islam in seminaries does not actually accomplish the aim of education as stated by Wells (2002), that it is only when understanding has been enhanced that true learning can be said to have taken place. Rather, this learning is merely informative. In the same light Seemndzeand Ngalim (2015) lament about the educational structure in Cameroon:

Regrettably, the present Cameroon educational system is largely geared towards knowledge acquisition, material progress, and passing examinations at the expense of sound development of moral character and religious values. In such a set-up of course, it becomes very difficult to achieve the main purpose of education, corresponding to the development of the whole personality (holistic) of the individual and his sense of value here is placed in jeopardy (Seemndze& Ngalim, 2015, P. 211).

The above findings uphold Shitu (2013) report on Islamic studies in Umaru Musa Yar'adua University of Nigeria as having less concern for dialogue. The findings also agree with Asamoah-Gyadu (2010) view on the neglect of Islamic studies in theological education. On the other hand, the findings are contrary to Mvumbi (2008); Mvumbi (2013) view of an expected outcome of Islamic studies that will lead to a change of attitude towards Islam. The content of Islamic studies to a great extent has not enhance the understanding of Islam since most respondents reported not to have understood Islam, still consider Islam as a religion of violence and do not see Christian-Muslim relations as part of the Christian mission.

#### D. THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

The second objective was to examine what role Islamic studies curriculum implementation approach play on Christian-Muslim relations. Questions related to this objective were 04, all set in closed ended form, but 02 of them contained alternatives among which respondents had to choose and 02 were likert scale questions. All questions were included in the analysis.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
One	122	63.9	39	79.6
Two	12	6.3	0	0.0
Three	13	6.8	0	0.0
Four and above	44	23.0	10	20.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 5: Respondents' responses on the number of Islamic units studied

The statistics above suggest that more than half of the students in the seminaries 122(63.9%) study only one Islamic unit. This was followed by a contrasting number 12(6.3%) and 13(6.8%) who agreed to have studied about two to three units respectively. On a higher scale of four units and above, a considerable number of respondents 44(23.0%) admitted to have been taught this number of units. Going by these percentages, it is glaring that most students study only one Islamic unit in the seminary while a few of them are introduced to more than one.

Considering the lecturers' responses, one could hastily confirm students' responses by virtue of the fact that about three quarters 39(79.6%) of the lecturers also agreed that only one Islamic unit is taught to the students in their seminary. Same like the students' indicated. The remaining one quarter 10(20.4%) of the lecturers accepted that about four units and above are being taught to the students. On aggregate, one can conclude that most seminaries in these regions mostly teach only one Islamic unit to their students throughout their studies. These studies are not integrated into others subjects but handled as individual disciplines. This was supported by the responses of a Student Graduate (SG 1) as seen below:

I mostly studied Islam in the very first year in the seminary, for one semester. The studies were done like any other study; the lecturer gives notes and students are evaluated at the end. We had just one unit for Islam 101: Introduction to Islam. We usually had the class for 30 minutes as one period, once a week... It is not integrated in other courses.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once	33	17.3	4	8.2
Twice	8	4.2	0	0.0
Thrice and above	9	4.7	0	0.0
Never	141	73.8	45	91.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 6: Respondents' responses on visit to the Mosque

Regarding respondents' visit to the mosque, it was very apparent that only approximately a quarter of the students 50(26.3%) have ever gone to a mosque while the remaining three quarters 141(73.8%) have never been opportune to visit the mosque during their seminary studies. This was greatly confirmed by almost all their lecturers 45(91.8%) who acknowledge that their students have never been taken to the mosque as part of their Islamic studies. Only an insignificant number 4(8.2%) noted that students have been taken to the mosque once.

This was further confirmed by an Islamic Lecturer (IL 1) who reported that: "I lecture and give notes on Islam; students are also encouraged to carry out research and are evaluated at the end of the course. Our studies are carried out only within the seminary and not out with Muslims or any other group of persons".

By implication, Islamic studies in seminaries in the two regions are highly theoretical, with little or no exposures for experiential learning. At best, students are encouraged to do

research at their individual levels but the curriculum does not make provision for follow-up to ensure that the study objectives are achieved. This contradicts the findings of Dunbar (1998), who stated that an important approach of studying another religion is the experiential learning. Also, Westheimer (1998) explains in the theory of empiricism that, reality is objective. The behaviour or experience or experiential activities could transform students' political and social orientation towards fighting injustice.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never	155	81.2	47	95.9
Sometimes	16	8.4	0	0.0
Frequently	9	4.7	0	0.0
Always	11	5.8	2	4.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 7: Respondents' responses on visiting Muslim Islamic Lecturers in the Seminary

In order to further examine the teaching approaches employed in these seminaries, respondents were required to indicate whether they have had Muslim visiting Islamic lecturers in their Islamic classes. According to the students' responses, a bulk of them 155(81.2%) have never been taught by a Muslim Islamic visiting lecturer as opposed to few 36(18.8%) who have been opportune to have Muslim Islamic visiting lecturers sometimes. This was a clear indication that most seminaries do not invite a Muslim Islamic lecturers to teach in their seminaries, as almost all the lecturers 47(95.9%) confirmed.

This was supported by a Student Graduate (SG 6) who said: "Our class was never given the opportunity to listen to a Muslim scholar or lecturer talk about the Islamic religion. We were only taught by Christian Islamic teacher, who never had a qualification in Islamic Studies..." An Islamic Lecturer (IL4) further buttressed "Students study Islam within the seminary under the supervision of their Christian Islamic lecturer who is specialized in Islam, the seminary does not invite any other person".

Respondents were equally required to indicate whether they carry out combined activities with Muslims as part of their studies. A great number of students 145(75.9%) held the opinion that they have never carried out joint activities with Muslims as part of their Islamic studies. This was highly confirmed by majority of the lecturers 44(89.8%). This means that, Islamic studies are not interactive and learners are not given opportunities to enable them relate with Muslims.

Options	Seminary Students		Lecturers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	39	20.4	11	22.4
Agree	63	33.0	20	40.8
Undecided	37	19.4	6	12.2
Disagree	33	17.3	6	12.2
Strongly Disagree	19	9.9	6	12.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 8: Respondents' responses on the sufficiency of the Islamic Course

The last aspect of curriculum implementation examined in this study was respondents' opinions on the sufficiency of the Islamic course offered in the seminary. Going by students' responses, 39(20.4%) of them strongly agree that to them the number of units allocated for Islamic studies are sufficient, closely followed by 63(33.0%) of the respondents who agreed. This was highly disagreed by 52(27.2%) of the respondents while some 37(19.4%) did not take any definite standpoint.

Cumulatively, it was established that the units within the course for Islamic Studies offered in the seminary in the two regions are not sufficient to enhance understanding by virtue of these percentage distributions. This further supported the point that among the courses offered at the seminary, the course on Islam was allocated the least time period and number of units as seen in one of their time tables, PTS year one time table (2017) PTS library (Islam on Fridays from 8-845 am).

Another responded mentioned the importance of the teaching approach, Islamic Lecturer (IL 5) who explained that: "...It all depends on the lecturers, if he presents Islam in a negative way and as something not to be respected, the student will follow suit. But regarding the content of Islamic studies I do not think, there is any intention to disrespect Islam but to be objective as possible". The influence of the lecturers' approach of teaching on students' understanding and behaviour is emphasized in Albert Bandura (1977) social learning theory which has guided this study. He argues that in the reproduction process, the observer (learner) will reproduce behaviour based on the pattern of modelling by the teacher.

The new discipline approach employed by the seminaries in South-West and Littoral regions has not provided an adequate platform for the students to experience and understand Islam to an extent that will lead to a relationship with Muslims. In addition to that, the individual opinion of Islam by some Christian Islamic lecturers has influence their subjective teaching approaches and their presentation of Islam.

#### E. VERIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

		Islamic Studies	Christian Muslims relations
Pearson Correlation	Islamic Studies	1.000	.185*
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.010
	N	191	191
	Christian Muslim Relations	.185*	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.
	N	191	191

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlation Results

The Pearson's Bivariate Correlation was used to verify the relationship and the results indicated that there is a significant correlation ( $r = 0.185$ ), between Islamic studies and Christian-Muslim relations. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis retained. Therefore, there exists a significant relationship between the studying of Islam in seminaries and the level of Christian-Muslim relations in the South-West Littoral and Regions of Cameroon. Given that there is a relationship, the regression was used to further

examine the effect of Islamic studies on Christian-Muslim relations as shown on the table 10 below.

**Dependent Variable:** Christian Muslim Relations

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Curriculum implementation(visits to Mosque)	-0.064	0.074	-0.860	-0.391
Content of studies(understanding)	0.051	0.294	0.696	0.487
Constant (C)	3.495	0.073	11.883	0.000
R-squared	0.298			
Adjusted R-squared	0.286			
F-statistic	26.407			
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000			

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Table 10: Regression Results on Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations

The regression results revealed thus: The constant term C in this study represented other variables that have not been mentioned in the model but which impact Christian-Muslim relations in seminaries in the South-West and Littoral Regions of Cameroon. Here, the constant term was positive that is 3.495. This showed that the constant term has a positive effect on Christian-Muslim relations though it was not included in this study. Looking at the coefficients, the findings revealed that the content of Islamic studies have a positive effect on Christian-Muslim relation. The coefficient was 0.051. This means that, for every single attempt to increase students' understanding of Islam; there is a 0.051 unit change in the Christian-Muslim relations towards increment in relationship building.

The curriculum approach implemented indicated that the curriculum implementation approach implore in the seminaries do not significantly impact Christian-Muslim relations, indicated by the negative coefficient value -0.064 with a corresponding P value -0.391. To examine the overall effect of Islamic studies, the adjusted R-squared was used to examine the extent to which changes in the dependent variable are explained by these explanatory variables. Here, the value of adjusted R-squared was 0.286 implying that about 28.6% variations in the Christian-Muslim relation is accounted for by the joint variation of Study Content and the Curriculum implementation approach, whereas a greater part, that is, 71.4% variations in Christian-Muslim relations is accounted for by factors not included in this study.

#### F. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- ✓ Islamic Studies were carried out in different study settings like classroom, seminars and workshops though regular classroom settings predominated
- ✓ Topics in Islam in Africa and Islam in Cameroon were not given due consideration, making it difficult for theological education to meet the social needs of the people and the challenges of religious plurality, Islam and Christian-Muslim relations to be precise.
- ✓ There is very little understanding of Islam through the Islamic studies in the seminary; as such they do not

consider relationship with Muslims as part of Christian mission.

- ✓ Seminaries in South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon employ the new discipline curriculum implantation approach, where Islam is taught as a standalone course not integrated to any other course.
- ✓ The curriculum implementation approach is static: students are not exposed to experiential learning but limited to the class room, with very few hours for the course.
- ✓ Majority of Lecturers teaching Islam in the seminaries have not specialised in Islamic studies and have subjective views of Islam.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the contribution that the Islamic studies curriculum in theological seminaries is making toward Christian-Muslim relations by looking at the course content and curriculum implementation approaches in theological seminaries in the South-west and Littoral regions of Cameroon. From the findings it was established that Islamic study content in these seminaries is merely informative as little or no measures are put in place to ensure that studies are well apprehended. Moreover, studies do not equip students with the reality of dialogue and relationship building between Christians and Muslims. Since students have not understood Islam, they have also not understood Muslims and find it difficult to relate with them. In addition to that, the static nature of the new discipline curriculum implementation approach has not provided an adequate platform for the students to experience and understand Islam to an extent that will lead to a relationship with Muslims. More therefore is required in regards to the curriculum of Islamic studies within theological education in order for theological education to be able to respond appropriate to the challenge posed by Islam in contemporary times and the necessity for Christian-Muslim relations for peace, peaceful co-existence for the development of the human family.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ A need to improve on the course content of Islamic studies, paying peculiar interest on issues related to Islam in Africa and in Cameroon. This will foster proper understanding of Islam and enhance Christian-Muslim relations needed to attain national unity for an emerging Cameroon by 2035.
- ✓ There is a crucial need for amendments in the curriculum implementation approach for Islamic studies in theological education in Cameroon as a necessity not an option. The project base curriculum implementation approach be introduced alongside the new discipline approach, to expose students to practical experiences with Muslims and Islam.
- ✓ A wider variety of teaching methodologies and techniques that incorporate emerging technologies in order to be able to reach the diversity of student needs and



the complexities of Islam is required. This can be done by instituting a method of evaluating understanding of the study content by the administration and setting up clear objectives.

- ✓ Sufficient time for Islamic studies is required in order to allow convenient coverage of all the required course content. 2 to 3 semesters are recommended. This will help build church leaders who will be able to guide Christians on their relationship with Muslim in order to avoid relativism and syncretism.
- ✓ We recommend that church organisations and theological institutions in Cameroon should have at least one trained lecturer specialised in Islamic studies to teach in the seminaries. This calls for the concern of ecumenical and interfaith organisations involved in interfaith relations in Cameroon such as PROCURA to invest and offer scholarships to theological educators in order for them to specialise in Islamic studies and Christian-Muslim relations.
- ✓ The study recommends the inclusion of a course on Christian-Muslim relations alongside the already existing Islamic course in all theological seminaries in Cameroon and Africa as a whole.

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