

## Teaching of the *sîra* in Islamic schools in Northern Cameroon

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The biography of the Prophet Mohammad (*sîra*) is part of the curricula in the Islamic schools in Northern Cameroon, and the course is taught by scholars to students attending the complementary level. His early life, the first revelation and preaching in Makka, the persecution he experienced, the Hijra to Madina and the state foundation, the battles he conducted and the farewell pilgrimage are among the main topics highlighted in the teaching of the *sîra*.

Since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic schools, both Quranic and reformed or contract Islamic schools, have been functioning within the Muslim community. Locally trained teachers were the pioneers who opened the first schools in the Adamawa region. During the French colonial administration (1916-1960) the reformed schools known as *Ecole franco-arabes* (French and Arabic Schools) were initiated to promote the French education in a rather hostile environment. The post-colonial state introduced structural reforms and monitor the whole Islamic education sector through contract system and training of teachers. Nevertheless, the curricula remains unchanged and is articulated around the Prophet's life and his contribution to the Muslim community.

This paper focuses on the impact of the teaching of *sîra* on moral education and social development within the Muslim community and beyond. Details on the Prophet's life, Islamic ethics and law, and leadership as well as responsibility to uphold community values are central in the teaching of the *sîra* in the Islamic schools in Northern Cameroon. The research was made interaction with teachers and students, on textbooks used and through the Arabic manuscripts compiled or duplicated by some renowned scholars in Northern Cameroon. How the Cameroon government is dealing with the teaching of *sîra* within the curricula of Islamic schools in a competitive and sensitive context governed by exclusive secular law and regulations is the core question this paper will address. The teaching of the *sîra* in Islamic schools has been one of the sensitive issue on which the National board of education and the Islamic education are permanently negotiating.