

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEMALE SCHOLARS MODIBBE TO THE GROWTH OF ISLAMIC AND MUNDANE KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE FEMALES IN SOKOTO CITY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

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Abstract

This study examines the contributions of female scholars Modibbe to the growth and development of female education in Sokoto city in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a historical study that uses qualitative content analysis of the existing literature and intensively discusses the emergence of Modibbe and the dispensation of knowledge to their female folk. Both primary and secondary sources contained in the materials were perused, analysed, evaluated and interpreted. The data collected was analysed through corroboration in order to arrive at informed opinions and judgments. The findings in the study indicate that the dearth of female scholars in the society was what triggered the advocacy of female education prior to the break of the Jihad. Through massive campaigns and advocacies, the Jihad leaders introduced a female education policy known as Yan'taru that was championed by Nana Asmau after the establishment of the caliphate, which resulted in the emergence of a significant number of Modibbe at the nook and crannies of Sokoto.

Keywords: Female Education, Islamic and Mundane knowledge, Modibbe and Sokoto city

Introduction

Before the coming and spread of Islam in most societies in the regions of western Hausaland, formal education was not in existence. What perhaps Fafunwa refers to as the informal traditional African education system passed orally from parents to their siblings through informal methods dictated by the nature of their crafts and occupation (Fafunwa, 1989:9). Before the Jihad of 1804, which took place in the region where Sokoto city later grew, the females in the area (defunct Gobir kingdom) had rightful and prestigious positions as the custodians of useful knowledge on many issues concerning their natural environment and the people inhabiting them. It was through this system that the female folk in the kingdom mastered quite a number of knowledge and skills as traditional birth attendants, female herbalists, female priestesses, female crafts workers and even political affairs of the kingdom as Mother of the kingdom (Inna of Gobir) (Yandaki, 2018:1-2). The introduction and spread of Islam in the area, was the beginning of a formal system of education through the aid of wandering proselytizing scholars and Muslim traders that came through trans-Saharan trade routes (Junaidu, 2000:3). It should however be noted that the involvement of female at this stage was minimal in the view of the peripatetic nature of the scholar's mobility which was part of the learning process could not be

applied to women, thus education at this stage was gendered (Junaidu, 2000). Kware assert that it was the activities of Sheikh Usman bin Fodiyo that changed the status quo in the entire Hausaland, as he insisted on female education for female but also emphasized the importance of imparting them secular instructions connected with business transactions (Kware, 2014:15).

Statement of the Problem

Scholars across the globe have written much on the Jihadists and the contributions of their children in the jihad movements as well the establishment and growth of the Caliphate. The most outstanding and remarkable contributions to female education was that of Nana Asma'u, the daughter of Sheikh Usmanu. Asma'u left no stone unturned in the pursuit and advocacy of female education in the Caliphate. Her role and contributions have been studied and documented by numerous scholars across the globe. There is insufficient knowledge of other notable scholars in Sokoto city who have contributed in expanding the frontiers of female education in the city. The apparent neglect of the study of other prominent scholars Modibbe warrants the current initiative to carry out the study. Secondly, there is misconception about the roles and contributions of the Modibbe in advancing not only the basic Islamic knowledge of Quran and Hadith but also other branches of knowledge such as the mundane knowledge that comprise of business transactions, business and vocational skills, home management and nutrition, personal and environmental hygiene among others.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this work is to examine the roles and contribution of Modibbe to growth of female education in the Sokoto City. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- I. To identify the prominent Modibbe who advocated for female education in Sokoto City,
- II. To assess the major roles of the Modibbe in the advocacy for female education in Sokoto City.
- III. To examine the extent of the branches of knowledge instructed to female students.
- IV. To examine the outcome and impact of the knowledge imparted to the female folk and the society at large.
- V. To evaluate the Yan'taru system of education which was introduced by Nana Asma'u after the 19th century Sokoto Jihad movement

Research Questions

- I. Who were the prominent Modibbe that advocated for female education in Sokoto City?

- II. What were the major roles of Modibbe in the advocacy for female education?
- III. What were the other branches of knowledge instructed to women?
- IV. What were the outcome and impact of the Modibbe teachings on female folk and to the society at large?
- V. What were the results of the Yan'taru system of education towards achieving female education in the city

Significance of the Study

The study serves as a mirror through which the lives of people and their efforts could be understood. In understanding the prevalence of female folk in the teaching profession in Sokoto today, it is important for one to understand the significant role of female scholars Modibbe in the pursuit, advocacy and dispensation of Islamic and mundane knowledge among the female folk in the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, this study is important because it serve as a valuable contribution to the frontiers of Islamic and mundane knowledge. It is an additional research material to be used by scholars and students. And its opens a new vista in historical discourse on female education and vocational skill acquisitions, which is of immense benefit to policy makers, researchers and the society at large.

Conceptual Clarification

The key concept used in the study include: Female Education, Islamic Knowledge, Jaji, Moddibe, Mundane Knowledge, Sokoto City and Yan'taru.

Female Education: Female education a kind of knowledge given to the female folks, it may be informal or formal. It involves the female gender, who received a particular form of education aimed at improving their knowledge and skills (Mamman, 1995).

Islamic Knowledge: Simply refers to the knowledge of Islamic religion. It is a kind of that believers who believe in Allah being the Supreme God and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) his Messenger indulge themselves into so as to worship God and strictly abide by its principles and teachings (Jagaba, 1996).

Jaji: is the singular while Jajis (plural). The word Jaji is referred to as a senior scholar of a or of a school from the outlying towns and districts (Boyd, et al, 1999:133-135). It is an official title in the organizational structure as well as leadership operation of the Yan'taru. The title is conferred to the most educated and dedicated Modibbe, who demonstrated their abilities were chosen and crowned as Jajis. Jaji presided over all matters relating to instruction, movement and activities of her students contingent to and from Sokoto (Omar, 2014:4).

Modibbe: is the plural of Modibbo, a Fulfulde term which refers to a group of learned Islamic persons, scholars or teachers. In Sokoto, the concept Modibbo usually refers to a female scholar. This is why the above study will maintain the status quo, by referring to female scholars as Modibbe. Literally, Modibbe could also mean erudite teachers or

scholars who teach and help students to learn and acquire knowledge, competence or virtue. Modibbe are versed in Islamic knowledge, intellectual activities, trained in Islamic law and interprets Islamic sciences and doctrines. (Malami 2021). The meaning of the name Modibbo invokes firmness, creativity, generosity, loyalty and a core for domestic life (Modibbo, et al, 2021).

Mundane knowledge: means worldly, earthly, profane, vulgar as opposed to heavenly knowledge. The fact of knowing about something; general understanding or familiarity with a subject, place, situation etc. It refers to the knowledge of something relating to or characteristics of the world. [www.powerthesaurus.org]. It is the knowledge of the immediate concerns and daily activities of human beings (Webster, 2000). The study defines it as the general day to day knowledge of for human survival.

Sokoto City: The city was named and established by Muhammad Bello in 1809 as the capital of the defunct Sokoto caliphate. It served as a provincial headquarter during the colonial rule, a capital of the defunct north Western States and the capital of modern day Sokoto State. The city is located in the extreme northwest of Nigeria near the confluence of Sokoto River and Rima River (Isa, 2013).

Yan'taru: The concept derived its name from the Hausa word "Taru", meaning a cluster or congregation of people (Boyd, 1995). Omar (2014:1) believes that the concept of Yan'taru which later became to be identified with a popular women mass education and community participation programme initiated by Nana Asmau derived its name from the fulfulde word "taroje", and in Hausa "taro", which means study group or reading cluster base on this study. Yan'taru is therefore, a mass education programme organized or designed for women to enable them practice their religion as well as participate and contribute towards the development of the society (Mairiga, 1995).

Review of Related Literature

One of the significant works related to the study is the work of Omar that examines the literary songs composed by prominent female Scholars in the Sokoto Caliphate. The Scholars converted most of their teachings (religious, historic and mundane messages) into written songs, composed to educate and preserve the history of the Caliphate. The Author states that learning through this medium became more comprehensible, easier, faster and motivational (Omar, 2021). However, the work focused on only their literary songs as their major contributions. Perhaps this made this study to examine and outline other contributions apart from the literary songs made by the prominent female Scholars to female education in Sokoto city.

In a book of three chapters that gives a brief biography of Nana Asma'u and the evolution, roles and functions of Yan'taru (Associates). The author enumerates a number of Yan'taru songs and examined the messages contained therein (Omar, 2014). The book is very useful to the study as it outlines the structure of the mass education programme and how it was coordinated. However, the methodology involved in disseminating the knowledge as well as the example of a particular Jaji was not mentioned. Mention was only made of the founder and co-founders of the association (Asma'u, Maryam and Tamodi). Therefore, it is the aim of the study to identify the methodology involved in dispensation of knowledge as well as some prominent scholars and officials of Yan'taru.

In another study, Omar (2017), gave an account on the importance of female education in Islam. The author discusses the emergence and brief biography of female scholar in 19th and 20th centuries, which have served as a background study to the paper. In the same vein, Kware (2014), also made an attempt to discuss on the importance of female education during and after the Sokoto Jihad. He further examines the activities of Yan'taru as well as extracted out prominent female scholars in the pre-Jihad period in most of Nana Asma'u poems.

Boyd (2004) gave an insight narration on the role of educated women in Sokoto caliphate particularly the spouses and daughters of the Sheikhs. Her visits to their respective domains enabled her to compile a comprehensive profiles and scholarly contributions they rendered. She got the privilege to interview one of the contemporary Modibbo of the Sheikhs' lineage, known as Modibbo Kware, the great-great granddaughter of Isah Mai Kware (the youngest son of the Sheikh) who at the time was the head of Yan'taru in Kware and Wurno districts.

Bawa (2019) examined the historical narratives of women's contributions to education in northern Nigeria, which she analysed in tripartite structures: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. She argued that Nana Asmau scholarly position and intellectual contribution to the development of women education were the major factor for the solid foundation of women education in the region.

From the above literature reviewed so far, all have discussed adequately the importance of female education, and the role played by prominent female scholars in the advocacy and development of female education in general. However, none of the above have attempted to point out that, in the course of disseminating such education to the female folk, there were specific mundane knowledge imparted to students such as business transactions, midwifery, craft and vocational skills, home management, personal and environment hygiene, to which may be seen as another significant landmark as far as formal education is concerned in Sokoto in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Emergence of Modibbe and Female Education in Sokoto City

Education whether to female or male, Islamic, western or general knowledge becomes the aggregate of all processes by which the receiver develops the ability, attitude and other modes of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he/she lives in (Junaidu, 1991). The advocacy for female education has been emphasized by Islam as it does not discriminate between sexes in the quest for knowledge. The Prophet (PBUH) has emphasized the need for female education. He personally taught females especially, his family and those of his companions; which resulted in the emergence of female scholars like Aisha, Hafsa, Ummu Salmah (his spouses) and others like Fadimatu daughter of the Prophet, Nafisah (great granddaughter to the Prophet (PBUH)), Juwairiyah Bint Ahmad, Umm Waraqah, Hind bint Assed, Ummu Hisham Bint Harith, Zaidali Bint Hayyan, Umm Sa'ad bint Sa'ad among many others (Ghandanfar, 2001). These scholars played significant roles in educating other females and even the males in their societies. For instance, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani studied the hadith under Juwairiyah Bint Ahmad and the famous hadith scholar Imam Shafi'i studied under Sayyada Nafisah (great granddaughter to the Prophet (PBUH)) (Ghandanfar, 2011).

Similarly, same applies to Hausa land, a few numbers of female scholars emerged as a result of the spread of Islam in Hausa land. The jihadists during their revolutionary write ups and documentation mentioned few female scholars who have migrated from Senegambia to Hausa land. The migrants who were of Torobde clan, settled and began their scholarship activities in Hausa land (Omar, 2013). In fact, Muhammad Bello mentioned in his book *Infaq-Al Maysur fi Tarikh Bilad - al Tukrur* of a female scholar known as Ummu Haani, whom he described as a prominent scholar of her time, a well learned, pious and faithful woman of God from Torobde clan. Ummu Haani was said to have prophesized the coming of Shehu Danfodiyo as an Islamic reformer even before he was born, that he would change the course of Islam and its teaching in Hausa land. Ummu Hanni's contemporaries were said to have been the grandparents of Sheikh Bin Fodiyo from both paternal and maternal side known as Rukayya and Maryam (Bello, no date). Both are known to be well learned in Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Arabic language and others. These two women had educated a number of females during their time (Asma'u, no date). This has proven the statement made by Adamu that women are responsible for the upbringing of their children who will be leaders of tomorrow, thus their formative years should not be marked by misguidance of ignorant mothers (Adamu, 1982). In this regard, Sheikh was blessed with scholarly parents and grandparents who in so many ways paved way for his scholarly activities.

Hauwa'u bint Muhammad (Sheikh's mother) was a learned Islamic scholar and teacher, she taught many women and children in her compound (Yar'dubu, 2021). Other notable female scholars that were related to the Sheikh included the following: Aminatu - a prominent scholar and grandmother to Waziri Gidado. Hassanatu - a prominent scholar and maternal grandmother to Waziri Gidado who hails from the Galanko'en Fulbe clan from Futa-jallon. Hassanatu and Inna Kabo - they were wives to Mallam Adamu and Muhammadu Hajji, the Sheikh's Uncles, who were also versely learned and both engaged in teaching and studies of Islamic books. Habiba - a prominent scholar of her time, was one of the daughters of the Sheikh Usmanu's Uncle. She established a learning session in her family compound and extended to her matrimonial home in Galmi. She was quoted in one of Nana Asma'u's song titled *Tawassuli ga Mata masu Albarka'* as a gentle, pious and educated lady who has passion for teaching and learning (Omar, 2021). Distant relations including Ja'aibatu, Amina Lubal and Amina, daughter of Ade were all prominent scholars who engaged in teaching and learning of Islamic books to younger children and women. The above categories of scholars were said to have taught the Sheikh's children and those of his companions (Omar, 2021).

The learned spouses of the Sheikh include: Maimuna, Hauwa'u and Aishatu Gabdo. They were at the forefront in massive advocacy for female education during and after the Jihad of 1804. They played significant roles in dissemination of knowledge to their children and community at large through learning sessions they conducted in their compounds. They served as mediators and advisers to women especially when a rift arose between co-wives, mother's in-law and daughter's in-law and others (Omar, 2021). Apart from the above scholars, the Sheikh's female children also played significant roles in the advocacy, dispensation and awareness on the importance of female education during the peak and after the Jihad movement. Prominent scholars among them were Khadijah, Fadimatu, Nana Asmau and Maryam (Boyd, 1989). Their contributions to female education and the Jihad itself was outstanding which superseded that of their female predecessors. Even

after the Jihad, their literary works and teachings (legacies) still exists. The most remarkable is the formation of Yan'taru by his daughter Nana Asma'u (a mass education programme targeted to teach young and old women) within and beyond the city of Sokoto. This system of education yielded and is still yielding immense benefit to the society at large (Mairiga, 1995).

Another set of scholars who were contemporaries with the Sheikh's children included his nieces and granddaughters such as Aisha bint Abdullahi, Aisha Bint Buhari, Fatima Bint Muhammadu Bello, Aishatu (Utiya) bint Muhammadu Sambo, Fadimatu Janejo Bint Mustafa Al-Torodi & Maryam (Tamodi); bint Abdulkadir Adde (Boyd, 1989). It is important to note that even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were female scholars who continued to revive the tradition of teaching and learning that the jihadists, their families, relations and companions initiated. The Yan'taru system of education that was hitherto stationed at Nana Asma'u's matrimonial home relocated to Hubbaren Shehu, (Sheikh's house) after the demise of Asma'u in 1864. At Hubbare, Maryam continued to lead the affairs of Yan'taru until her demise in 1890 when her daughter, Ta Modi continued to head the activities of Yan'taru. It was after the death of Ta Modi that the affairs of Yan'taru changed a new course in its management. The title of Modibbe began to be used officially to address of female scholars that continued to run the affairs of Yan'taru at Hubbare. Modibbe continued the teaching and learning tradition at Hubbare. While many others established schools in their homes and began to teach women and children. Prominent among the Modibbe included: Aisha Dudu bint Abdullahi, Dikko bint Ahmad Gwandu, Hafsatu Bint Mani, Modibbo Maryamu, Modibbo Mowa, Modibbo Audi, Modibbo Nana, Modibbo Yar'Ali, Modibbo Dije,

Modibbo Ladi, Modibbo Ige, Modibbo Hauwa Mammange, Modibbo Saudatu Bint Mahmud. (Modibbo Kilo), Modibbo Lamido Kilo, Modibbo Safiya and Modibbo Hajara bint Isah Mai Kware, Modibbo Sume, Modibbo Jumma, Modibbo Amo, Modibbo Yarmamma, Modibbo Yardubu, Modibbo Koko and others (Modibbo, 2021).

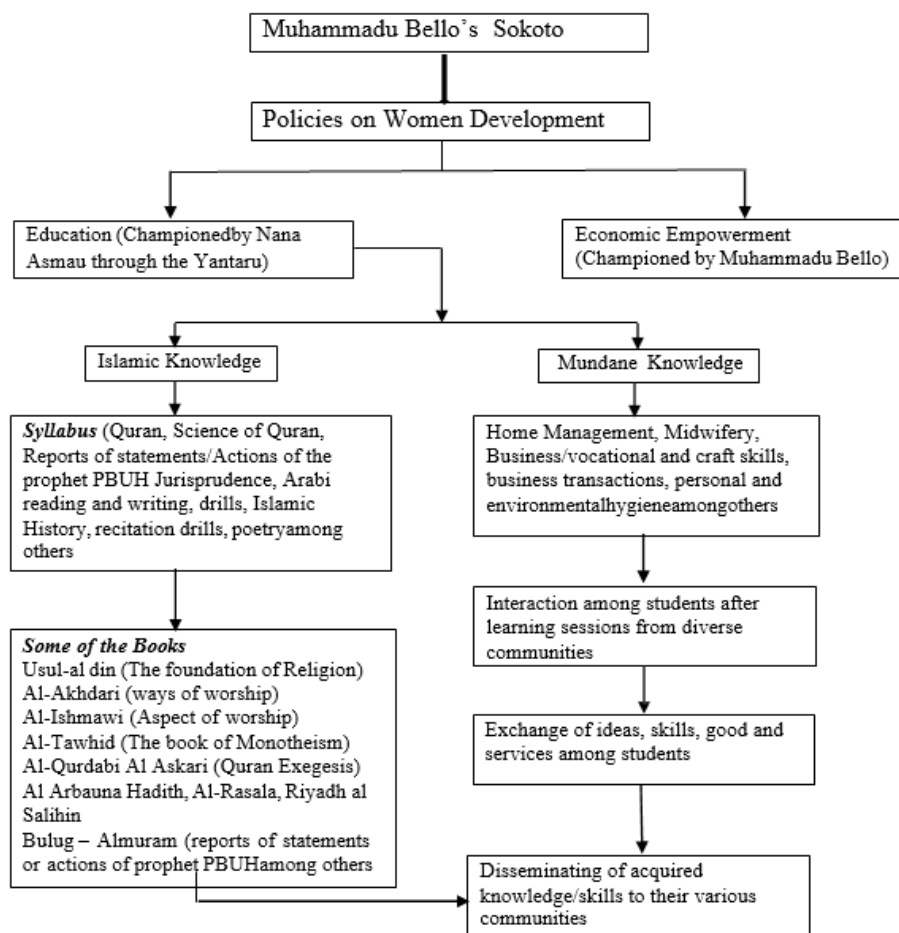


Figure 1: Nana Asma'u/Yan'taru's Instructional Model (Bako, 2021)

The above instructional model showcases the strategy and patterns of educational instructions implemented by Nana Asma'u and Yan'taru. It is important to note that Yan'taru is a mass education programme organized and designed for women with education to enable practice their religion and relate well with the society. As indicated in the above chart. Hence, this system of education attracts students from far and within to converge for learning. Ideally, the students' contingents come in troops along with male escorts. Each contingent has a female leader who may have been crowned as Jaji. The student contingent comprises of elderly women and younger females who are about to get married. They came along with items such as guinea corn, millet, sorghum, spun thread, hand fans, coverlids, hats, calabashes, fermented mills, butter, money and other items as goods to be sold as well as alms to be given to their tutors. The commodities for sale are meant to be traded with colleagues and other people in the area only after learning sessions (Boyd, 1985) cited in Omar (2014).

Although the Yan'taru organisation was principally geared towards women's education in Sokoto, undoubtedly, it exposed the women to various entrepreneurial skills and ventures in many ways. One of such ways was their training sessions during the programme. Secondly, student contingents of different areas and religions met in one place, and there is the possibility of proliferation of ideas, skills and innovations among the students. This is because each area or region had its specialty in crafts, trade, and production of goods

and services. This aided the exchange and commercialization of goods and services among the women and community at large. And at the end of their learning sessions, Jajis and students returned to their communities and taught their women folk both the Islamic and mundane knowledge they had acquired. These no doubt made women to be self-developed and contribute toward the socio-economic growth and development of their societies.

An Assessment on the Modibbe: Their Roles and Contributions

The contributions of female scholars and Modibbe through the advocacy, pursuit and dispensation of female education has been a significant achievement throughout history. Their commitments and zeal in establishing schools in their homes and participating actively in running the schools with syllabus like Quran, Science, of the Quran Figh, Hadith, Arabic drills and Islamic history among others is no doubt a great sacrifice. In fact, maintaining that aged long tradition of learning and teaching for decades is commendable. Their literary works have played immense role in teaching and enlighten people on the history of the past, religious obligations, Islamic shari'ah, and mundane issues, in form of songs and poems, written documents as pamphlets and books in Fulfulde, Arabic and Hausa languages which ensured a wide coverage of audience and readers (Mukhtasar, no date). Similarly, their efficiency and dedication towards translation and preservation of works written by the Sheikh and other scholars into Hausa and Fulfulde languages, made it easier for their accessibility and understanding. Through these medium, many people were enlightened and educated. Moreso, it was through their hard work and effective service delivery that a number of Sheikhs and Mallams were produced. For example, Nana Asma'u taught Isah Maikware her younger brother, Isah's granddaughter Modibbo Hajara taught Modibbo Hauwa Mammange who also taught Waziri Junaidu. Modibbo Saudat (Modibbo Kilo) was the teacher to the scholar Sheikh Sidi Attahiru and Qadi Usmanu Gusau. It was through the activities of the Modibbe that the spread of Islamic education became rapid in the mid-20th century and a number of Islamic scholars (male and female), a number of Islamic schools and Islamic books increased and their relevance cut across all dynamics.

Again, their advice and guidance and basic Islamic Shariah rulings has molded most of their students into good administrators. Modibbe play vital roles as arbiters and advisers on issues regarding the administration as some were asked to intervene in matters concerning polices on general well-being of women. Nana Asma'u and Maryam Bn Fodiyo intervened in politics in Sokoto and Kano respectively. Their teaching sessions and schools served as an avenue where vital information and administrative policies are conveyed to students.

Moreso, the Modibbe did not only impart the basic Quran, Hadith, Jurisprudence and other Islamic theologies to women and children, mundane knowledge was also taught and encouraged. Business education, rules guiding business transactions craft and vocational skills among others were taught because majority of the women were involved in one form of trade and skills or another, and trading among students took place after learning sessions were over. Likewise, instructions on midwifery, home management, importance of health and its management, personal hygiene as well as environmental hygiene were taught among students because the responsibility of houses and cooking of foods all rest

on the women who were the dominants in the schools. This kind of instructions seems to be foundations of formal entrepreneurship education in a typical Islamic school setting.

Conclusion

Female education is no doubt the key that unlocked the potentialities of women as good teachers, scholars, arbiters, counsellor, craft business woman, wives and mothers. The contributions of Modibbe since the pre-jihad period served as background for the current educational positions by women. The Modibbe left no stone unturned in education, preservation of history, translation of literary works of their predecessors, advocacy and quest for female participation in educational engineering team, to produce learned scholars who will continue the aged long tradition of teaching and learning in the modern times. Some of Modibbe became among the pioneer teachers of modern schools when western education was introduced in Sokoto because of their literacy in reading and writing. Examples Modibbo Sodangi, Modibbo Ige, Modibbo Boya, Mallama Dije, Mallama Hauwa Yabo, and Mallama Abu. These were the pioneer female teachers of the Gidan Haki vocational school established in 1934 in Sokoto metropolis.

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They include: *Modibbo* Aisha, 68 years. *Modibbo* Ige, 75 years. *Modibbo* Hussaina, 71 years. 30th July, 2021 at 4:48pm.

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