

RE-ENGINEERING ARABIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

The paper focuses on Arabic Language Education taking a look at its history and development in Northern Nigeria. It also attempted to look at Arabic Language Education in the WAEC curriculum, National Policy of Education (NPE), Universal Basic Education (UBE), as well as global and national challenges for Qur'anic Schools integration for the Nigerian Educational system.

The teaching and learning of Arabic Language is of great relevance to the entire Muslim community, because it helps in understanding the Quran and helps in worshipping Allah the Most High without much difficulties. It is important to learn Arabic Language because it the language in which the Holy Quran was revealed, Allah the Most High says in Quran chapter 43:3.

“we have made it a Quran in Arabic that they may be able to understand”.

Arabic is the language of our Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW. It is necessary for all Muslims to learn Arabic language, so many text books, journals are written in Arabic language. It is an international language for Muslims, both Arabs and non Arabs. According Aisha Lemu, retreated that:

“Ideally every Muslims should learn to read, write, understand and speak Arab language”.

Therefore, for one to understand and practice the religion of Islam effectively there must be an effective teaching of Islamic studies and this cannot be without the knowledge of Arabic Language. Badmus (1991) identified knowledge of Arabic among the major factors that can enhance the teaching of Islamic studies (Salahudeen 1995). However, for effective teaching and learning of Arabic Language, there is the need for provision of appropriate materials and teachers development which mean ways of helping teachers to improve their teaching (Salahudeen, 1995). Arabic language has impact on our general way of life. It has a vital role to play in the life of not only the Muslims but also the non Muslims and the nation in general. For instance, there are many text books and materials written in Arabic, in the field of history, sciences, Information and technology etc.

Arabic Language education need to be reengineered restructured for Nigeria educational system not only in the Northern Nigeria but in Nigeria at large.

History of Arabic Language in Northern Nigeria

The coming of Arabic language could be traced back to the coming of Islam in Nigeria when the Safawa court was converted to Islam in the 11th century. But they mainly emphasized on Qur'anic Arabic at the time. Reading skills was taught through role method for the purpose of reciting the Qur'anic in daily prayers. (Gwarzo 1995).

In 12th century scholars from Kanem Bornu introduced Islam into the then Hausa states, but it was not successful, because the inhabitants of the Hausa states preferred their traditional religion than the new faith. By the mid 14th century A.D., the Wangarawa Mallams come, followed by the Fulanis

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and later the Arabs, and as a result many books were introduced in various subjects both in Arabic and Islamic studies. (Gwarzo 1994).

The emergence of the clan of Shehu Uthman Danfodio gave a boost of Arabic and Islamic learning. Members of the clan wrote many books, pamphlets and poems in Fulfulde, Hausa and Arabic language to enlighten people on religious matters. The foundation was laid but later on reached its peak during the Sokoto caliphate.

Development of Arabic language in Northern Nigeria

Arabic language needs to be developed to achieve better understanding in Nigeria. Arabic education has to be looked from the diachronic and synchronic view points.

During the Sokoto caliphate although there were no formal school system, the traditional formal school were in existence for the teaching of Islamic studies and Arabic in places like Kano, Zaria, Katsina and Sokoto and the schools were of two types, the Qur'anic and Ilimi schools.

Qur'anic school. is a type of school whereby pupils gathered under the shed of a tree, in (Zaure) hall or in the mosque under the control of a teacher called Mallam. Qur'anic school is regarded as an elementary stage that covers some verses of the Quran to enable the child say his daily prayers and other Islamic rituals. (Gwarzo, 1995).

The Arabic learnt in such school is elementary as stated by (Gwarzo, 1995)

“The Arabic learnt in this school is elementary and is mainly concerned with learning the Arabic consonants and identifying the last ten (10) chapters of the Quran that is Surat al-Nas-Sural al-Fil...”.

The Ilimi school on the other hand is that type of school that was mainly for students who wish to further their education after completing their Quranic school the method of instruction in the Ilimi school is from simple to complex. The curriculum of Ilimi school consist of almost all Islamic studies courses, Arabic language and literature (Gwarzo, 1995).

Some of the short coming of Ilimi school according to Dr. Aliyu Abubakar, include:

“The methodology of the Ilimi school is boring and uninteresting due to its reliance on word by word translation.... Lack of freedom of questioning and discussion... another issue is lack of evaluation”.

Arabic in this school is more advance than that learnt in the Quranic school. With the coming of European Arabic, learning witness a decline up to when the Nationalist struggle for reforms in Islamic education. The unfavourable attitude of colonial government towards Islam retarded the development of Arabic learning in many ways. According to (Gwarzo, 1994)

“As a result of the colonial masters retarded the development of Arabic in a number of ways. For instance there was no planned syllabus for the subject prior to 1938, and adequate periods were not allocated to Arabic. In addition, teachers were not trained. To crown it all, the introduction of latin alphabets (Boko) was an attempt to replace the Ajami “writing which was formerly used as a means of communication”.

Due to these issues many Muslims were attracted to propose reforms in the educational system of Arabic and Islamic studies to bring it more in line with modern system of education. This development led to the establishment of first Islamic Law School in 1934 by the then Emir of Kano,

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Abdullahi Bayero after his return from pilgrimage. He brought some ideas and patterns of Islamic education from the Middle East and Arabian in Nigeria Unit 1947 when its name was changed, the task of the school was also changed to training of teachers in Islamic studies and Arabic and also arithmetic and English language. The curriculums consist of Islamic and other secular subjects. The curriculum includes: Nahwu, Grammar, Hadith and Quran, Sirah, Arithmetic, Arabic writing and English language etc. (Galadanci SAS 8). Since then, similar schools were established for instance at Sokoto in 1963 and at Gombe in 1965.

Arabic Language in the WAEC Curriculum

Due to the fact that the government gave less concern to the subject, Arabic language have been struggling for survival and recognition in the National curriculum. (Gwarzo, 1994). In 1953 West African Examination Council (WAEC) approved the inclusion of the two subjects Arabic and Islamic Studies. As examinable subjects in Nigeria Secondary Schools. Even though there is no specific syllabus for the subject.

The situation continued until when the first Arabic Syllabus for (WAEC) ordinary level has been drawn up and implemented in 1974 and it was in use for more than a decade till when it was changed to “SSCE” Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. In accordance with the National policy on education (6-3-3-4) (Gwarzo, 1994).

Arabic Language in the National Policy on Education (NPE)

In 1969, there was a National Curriculum Conference during which it was agreed that an overhauled school curriculum is required to meet the development challenges (Fafunwa, 1974). The resolutions of that conference were to form the key reference points for the first National Policy on Education for Nigeria in 1977, and 1981 a revised policy emerged for structuring the Nigeria Education System into 6-3-3-4 system. The 6-3-3-4 had commended earlier in 1976 with universal Primary Education scheme. Thus, had began the journey of the search for restructuring and reforming the Nigerian Education System.

According to the National Policy on Education known as the 6-3-3-4 system of education, (though still in used) a child is expected to spend six (6) years in the primary school, three (3) years in Junior Secondary School, three (3) years in Senior Secondary School and four (4) years in higher institution (NPE, 2004, and UBE act of 2004). While Secondary education had in the National Policy on Education six (6) years and was divided into 3 (three) years Junior Secondary, and 3 years Senior Secondary Schools. The Junior Secondary School (J.S.S) curriculum is categorized into three: core subjects, pre-vocational subjects and non – vocational subjects. The Senior Secondary (S.S) curriculum is divided into two: core subjects, and the electives. The core subjects are compulsory and every student must offer them. While the electives are optimal subjects. In Senior Secondary (S.S) curriculum, Arabic language is placed among the electives.

However, Arabic is non vocational elective in the Junior Secondary (J.S) curriculum and elective in Senior Secondary (S.S) curriculum as a result of which Arabic had been recognized as a subject in the Nigerian Secondary School. Teaching curricular was developed and published for Arabic at junior and Senior Secondary Schools level (Gwarzo, 1994).

Quality and functionality are two indices most compromised in the Nigerian Education System today. Good enough, NERDC is already taking the lead in re-enacting the entire education curriculum. NUC is also taking initiatives in developing entire preneurship education for the universities the two agencies must go beyond the rhetoric of it all to ensuring concrete steps for implementation. Hands on component of all subjects at Basic and secondary education levels while curricular review for re-nomaclaturing and making the present traditional subjects in the tertiary institutions and universities development – oriented still remain crucial to a more whole some education curriculum innovation proposed hear with.

Arabic Language in the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a programme which is aimed at addressing problems of access, quality and equity in primary and junior secondary schools. It is a 9-year educational programme of six years duration for the primary segment and three years of junior secondary. These two levels of basic education are universal, free and compulsory for all Nigerian children aged 6-15. The UBE programme also stimulates learning from the early years of 3-5 + which is called Early Child Care Development Education (ECCDE).

Under the New 9-year Basic Education Curriculum recently developed by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) and approved by the National Council of Education (NCE), Arabic Language is recognized as an Elective subject.

The curriculum for the nine (9) years of continuous schooling is divided into three (3) component parts as follows:

- i. Three (3) years of lower Basic Education Curriculum (primary 1-3) (Arabic = Elective).
- ii. Three years of middle education curriculum (primary 4-6) (Arabic = elective).
- iii. Three years of upper Basic Education Curriculum (J.S 1-30) (Arabic = Elective).

Table 1: Structure of the New 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum

Basic Education Curriculum Levels		Core Compulsory Subjects	Electives
Lower	Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 1-3)	1. English Studies 2. One major Nigerian language (Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science and Technology 5. School studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious Studies 9. Physical and health education (PHE) 10. Computer Studies/ICT	Agriculture Home Economics Arabic Note: must offer elective but not more than 2
Middle	Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 4-6)	1. English Studies 2. One Nigerian Language (Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science and Technology 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious Studies (CRS or IS) 9. Physical and Health Education (PHE) 10. Computer Studies/ICT 11. French Language	Agriculture Home Economics Arabic Note: must offer 1 elective but not more than 2.

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Upper Basic (JSS 1-3)	1. English Studies 2. One Nigerian Language (Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious studies (CRS or IS) 9. Physical and health Education (PHE) 10. French Language 11. Basic Technology 12. Computer Studies/ICT	Agriculture Home Economics Arabic Business studies Note: Must offer 1 elective but not more than 3.
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Source: NERDC (2007) The 9-year Basic Education Curriculum at a Glance, Lagos: NERDC Press.

For the first time in the history of Nigeria education, basic education is offered as a combination of primary school and junior secondary school and is to run for 9 years of continuous schooling. This arrangement is in line with the UBE Act 2004 as the comprehensive education component i.e a combination of academic pre-vocational and vocational course.

The Core– Subjects are:

1. English Language
2. Mathematics
3. Social Studies
4. Primary Science
5. Vocational Education

Religious Studies :(IS) Subjects

1. Quran
2. Tajweed
3. Hadith
4. Fiqh
5. Sirah
6. Hausa – Ajami

Qur’anic Schools and Universalization of Basic Education

An operational understanding of the conceptual frameworks of Qur’anic Schools (QS) and universalization of Basic Education is very critical to the appreciation of the reference point of “Integration”. While Qur’anic Schools are essentially Islamic oriented education learning system (s) operating on the basis of semi-formal approaches for the acquisition of knowledge of the Holy Quran, Universalization of the enhancement and achievement of target modern literacy rates within a specified society or nation.

Traditional Qur’anic Schools (TQS) as they obtain especially in the Northern part of Nigeria are largely operated in the context of (Makarantun Allo) Islamic schools for learning with wooden states and (Tsangaya) magnet schools for showcasing adherence to the tenets of the acquisition of Islamic knowledge. While makarantun Allo are operated more as neighborhood-based schools in urban and rural communities under the supervision of a Mallam (teacher) and assistants. The Tsangayu are operated mostly as independent settings within or outside communities under the supervision of a number of Mallams “incharge” of the “upkeep” if the setting and other dependents therein.

By the nature of the operation of Qur’anic Schools in the Northern States of Nigeria (including Niger State), various studies and efforts are made towards reforming them (both

Makarantun Allo and Tsangayu) have become recognizable as relevant entry points for the universalization of basic education in Nigeria (Acker and Solarin, 2005). Indeed, an emergent critical position by international development partners – IDPs (especially the United Nations Children’s fund – UNICEF, and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, and the World Bank – WB) is that the educational and related needs of children in countries subscribing to the traditional Islamic/Qur’anic School system must be met, to be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and the Education for all (EFA) targets set for between 2012 and 2015 across the globe.

The strong link between the achievement of the MDG’s and EFA targets, (particularly in respect of the eradication of illiteracy, extreme poverty, endemic childhood killer diseases and HIV/AIDS as they affect children) and the Qur’anic Schools Education (QSE) is not unconnected with the plight faced by children attending these schools. Much of such plights of Qur’anic School children (beggary, lack of modern basic literacy and life skills, and abuse of exploitation) affect the Northern states of Nigeria. It is in this context that the writer of this paper views his assignment as a clarion call in the foremost interest of the Government’s desire to achieve the MDG’S and EFA targets as an integral part of vision 3:2020. It is also in this context that Arabic language need to reengineered for educational system.

National Challenges of Integration of Qur’anic Schools

Even though Islamiyya school models prescribed since the 1960’s under the directives of the Late Sir. Ahmadu Bello of blessed memory have continued to stand the test of time, there has been no doubt that the TQS system has not over the years transformed into the expected model in the Northern States. There has also been a lack of organized and deliberate efforts by government and the Muslim Umma to evolve the level of synergy required for the transformation of the TQS. Hence, while the conventional school system continued to grow in leaps and bounds towards trying to meet the universal basic education needs of the country, the Qur’anic Schools remained stagnant or in some cases even retrogressed into undesirable practices unexpected of Islamic model of education. Unfortunately, three issues are more of a phenomenon of the Northern States of Nigeria.

Given the sheer size of the Northern States and its population, the neglect of the TQS and the eventual decay that began to emerge in the conventional education sector became a matter of concern beginning in the 1980’s. Particularly in the context of the Qur’anic and Islamic oriented schools, integration of curriculum began to become a way forward in addressing observed poor trends in enrolment, retention and completion rates in Northern Muslim areas. It was, therefore, hoped that integration of the core subject’s curriculum of conventional schools into Qur’anic schools would go a long way to bolstering conventional literacy skills and enrollment in schools towards the achievement of EFA goals.

Global Challenges of Integration of Qur’anic Schools

Essentially, key International Development Partners (IDPS) which focus on education sector programme agendas as priority intervention areas of focus have come to recognize the opportunities inherent in Qur’anic/Islamiyya Schools in the Muslim countries as a means of achieving targets. It is in cognizance of this that the UNICEF Consultation on the role of Qur’anic schools and madrasahs in 2003 appraised the global challenges to include the following:

- i. Evolving modalities by governments for working with Qur’anic schools
- ii. Eliminating negative attitudes towards integration efforts.
- iii. Development policy regulatory mechanisms which can be understood and bought by stakeholders.
- iv. Development of national or sub-regional curriculum standards’
- v. Addressing gender inequalities
- vi. Institutionalization of data sourcing and data banking mechanisms for sustainable planning.

Conclusion

Some of the key components aspects of restructuring and reengineering Arabic Language for educational system have been discussed.

In this paper, highlights has been made on the basic quantitative and qualitative history and development of Arabic language in Northern Nigeria, in WAEC, UBEC and NPE and the situation of Arabic – Qur’anic schools in Nigeria against the background of global and national challenges for Qur’anic schools integration were discussed for Nigerian educational system.

Recommendations

From the finding of this study the following recommendation are made:

1. The government should sought to put in place an action plan centering on stakeholders sensitization and mobilization, total government internet and support, feeding arraignments for pupils, capacity building for teachers and operators and provision of teaching and learning materials for Quran and Islamiyya school.
2. The curriculum should be updated to enable pupils acquire sustainable life skills and state intervention should be harmonized to jump start the proposed reforms.
3. Exploring the possibility of establishing Arabic and Islamiyya Education Agencies, adaptation of cost - effective and sustainable funding approaches, curricular innovations and adaptations and specialized teacher education and capacities development. Seminars workshops etc.

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