ARABIC EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN NIGERIA

BY

Abdul-Hamid Habibullahi (Ph. D): Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria; E-mail: habdulhamid@alhikmah.edu.ng

Abstract
This paper discussed the concept and the programme of Arabic Education in Nigeria. It focused on its fundamental and historical development as well as practical dimensions. Furthermore, the paper followed the trends of Arabic curriculum development and innovation in the Basic and Post-Basic schools in Nigeria. The venues for the schools are majorly mosques, mallams' residence and tree shades. The school is in two divisions: the lower and upper classes. The lower class is known as Quranic School, which is called 'Makarantan Allo' in the North and 'Ileekewu Walaa' in the West. Also, problems associated with Arabic curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools were identified and relevant solutions were suggested.
Keywords: Arabic Education, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Innovation, Curriculum Implementation

Introduction

The term "Arabic Education" will be considered in this paper as a combination of two words: "Arabic" as a language and "Education" as the arts of class-room instruction. Arabic is an Asian Semitic Language that contacted to the world and became famous through the business activities of the Arab merchants and Islamic and Islamic Missionaries. The Language which is of the same category of Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Aramaic has major native speakers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Lebanon, Syria and others. It is equally spoken as an official language in some countries in Africa such as Egypt, Libya, Mali, Sudan and others (Oladusu, 2020). In Nigeria, Arabic is officially adopted as a second foreign language. However, it enjoys a multi-dimensional status as it is used as a mother-togue/first language (L1); a second language (L2); and a foreign language (FL) as well as a medium religion practice. As a mother-tongue/ first language (L1), Arabic is used by Shuwa Arabs of Borno State (Abubakare, 2004). As a second language, it used as a second language by some Nigerian Muslims who learn it in addition to their mother-tongue instead of English; Furthermore, It is learnt as a foreign language (FL) for academic profession. It is also pursued for the propose of Islamic research and preaching skills (Oladosu, 2020).

For the word "Education," according to Birabil and Ogeh (2020) is etymologically derived from two Latin words "educere" meaning 'to lead out' and "educare" meaning 'to bring up". Based on these meanings, education could be said to conceptualise the knowledge and practice of leading out the skills in the learners and bringing them up to be relevant in the society. In the class-room, the elements of educational pedagogy include curriculum, instruction, methods and instructional materials. Consequently, Arabic Education could be defined following Oladosu (2012) as the process by which Arabic-related skills, competences, attitudes and cultural heritage are developed in learners, using professionally approved instructional method and relevant material. The learning of Arabic in school context is guided by a curriculum and pedagogical principles of practical of instruction.

Emergence and Historical Development of Arabic Education in Nigeria

The Arabic school system in Nigeria emerged inform of non-formal and the formal education system. The non-formal Arabic Education is the kind of Arabic and Islamic knowledge offered in the centres abounded in many parts of the country. Wherever there is a Muslim population, some kind of Arabic schools are established where both Islam as a religion and Arabic as a language are taught simultaneously. In most cases, these centres operate independent of the formal school system. There are usually Quranic schools that concern themselves with the art of reciting Quran (Oladosu, 2012). This is the oldest system, which has been in existence since the 11th century till today. The venues for the schools are majorly mosques, mallams' residence and tree shades (Oladosu, 2012). The school is in two divisions: the lower and upper classes. The lower class is known as Quranic School, which is called 'Makarantan Allo' in the North and 'Ileekewu Walaa' in the West. The upper class is called 'Makaratan Ilimi' in the North, similar to 'Ile

Kewu Onitumo' in the West. Fajana (1978) reported that in 1914, the number of these Quranic schools in the North had reached 24,756 with about 15,000 mallams as teachers, while pupils were 218,614.

Moreover, the school curriculum is unplanned and non-formal. It is Arabic and Islamic oriented. The holy Quran and Hadith serve as the sources of the curriculum (Oladosu, 2010). In the lower class, spelling, reading, recitation of the Holy Quran and dictation are taught, while in the upper class Quranic interpretation, Islamic jurisprudence, Hadith and methods of preaching are offered. The common method used in these schools is direct face-to-face approach. The teacher reads out the word and the pupil repeats after him (Adam & Abdulwaid, 2013). There are also private Arabic Schools, established by voluntary Muslim organizations or individual proprietors. In such schools, students pass through three distinctive stages of education. The 'Ibtidāiyyah, the 'Idadiyyah and the Thanawiyya stages. This looks like a total borrowal from the foreign system of education. Most of the schools' curricula, syllabi and even textbooks are foreign (Oladosu, 2013, pp. 20-23). Examples of these schools are: Ma'dul- Islamiy (Islamic Institute, Ede); Al-Azhar Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ilorin; Arabic Institute, Ibadan and the Progressive Arabic and Islamic College, Kishi. However, some of these Arabic schools are affiliated to some of the Nigerian universities, such as the University of Ilorin, Ilorin; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Bayero University of Kano, Kano and University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Some of these schools are supervised by the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS). These schools include in their curricula, some of the Western Education subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Economics, Integrated Sciences, Geography and Yoruba.

In the formal school system, Arabic Education started enjoining its formal status in 1934, when the Emir of Kano Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero returned from the pilgrimage and set up the Northern Province Law School. The School was aimed at training Muslim judges of the Sheria courts. As a next step, in 1947, the school was renamed 'School of Arabic Studies' under the management of the government (Abdul-Hamid, 2015). This was purposely for training Arabic and Islamic teachers. The school curriculum included Arabic and Islamic Studies as core subjects with English and Arithmetic as additional subjects. In 1960, a post secondary course in Arabic and Islamic Studies was introduced in the school leading to the establishment of the Abdullahi Bayero College, Kano (Abubakre 2004). In the late fifties, eligible candidates were presented for the West African School Certificate (WASC) in both Arabic and Islamic Studies which resulted to designation of an approved Arabic Language syllabus by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) (Oladosu, 2012). Furthermore, the 1969 National Curriculum Conference set in the motion for the 6-3-3-4 educational system. The new system included Arabic Language as contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, revised 2004, section 4, p.8; section 5). Presently, Arabic Language is offered in the Basic and Post-Basic Schools majorly as a foreign Language. Initially, at the primary level, Arabic was merged with Islamic Studies. However, in the junior and senior secondary schools, there is a distinct curriculum for each of Arabic and Islamic Religious Knowledge. Arabic Language had a curriculum at the primary school for the first time only in 2007, when the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) was designed.

The Arabic Language Curriculum developed for secondary schools in 1982 was not reviewed until after 25years in 2007, when it supposed to have undergone through reviews and innovations at least five times. In addition, the problem of Arabic is more obvious in the government's nonchalant attitude in disfavoring it in the National Policy on Education by making it an elective subject. Despite the receptive of inadequate recognition from the Government, the potential status of the language manifests in its economic, historical, social-cultural, social linguistic, diplomatic, religious and educational relevance. (Oladosu, 2006 & NERDC, 2007). Arabic language is not an ordinary foreign or religious language in Nigeria. Rather it is the mother tongue of a Nigerian tribal group.

Trends of Arabic Curriculum Development in Nigeria
The term curriculum is a Latin word, meaning "the course of a chariot race". The term has been plagued with a definitional problem and this has resulted in many definitions. For instance, Tyler (1949) defines it as "all the learning of the student, which is planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goal". Taba (1962) sees curriculum as "a plan of learning which usually contains statement of aims and specific objectives; which indicates some selection and organization of content and which implies or manifests a certain patterns of learning and teaching". Wheeler (1967) defines it as "the planned experience

offered to the learner under the guidance of the school". Onwuka (1981) states that a "curriculum is the deliberate, systematic and planned attempt made by the school to change the behaviour of members of the society in which it is situated. Looking at the definitions given above, a curriculum can be considered as a planned learning that encompasses all the experiences that student undergoes at school. The planned learning experiences referred to in these definitions, are planned educational programmes, which must include the programmes of studies containing learning experiences that are academic in nature and those that are non-academic. These include the daily assembly, club, social activities and others. This means that curriculum encompasses all the experiences both curricular and extra-curricular activities, which the learner undergoes under the school administration. Oladosu (2012) summarizes the foregoing definitions of curriculum as learning experiences that are usually planned, guided, systematic, deliberate and designed for learners to effect behavioural change under the auspices of the school but not necessarily within the school premises. these experiences must be capable of helping to attain spelt out educational objectives, be translated into specific subject matter (content), be integrated with the subject matter (method) and be assessed to determine their effectiveness in bringing about the spelt out educational objectives (evaluation) (Oladosu, 2012). In a nutshell, a curriculum is the result of the selection of objectives, content, learning experiences and evaluation to ensure excellence in the quality of the education received by the society.

Furthermore, the organization and integration of learning experiences and content are the basic determinants of the curriculum styles or patterns. Scholars have suggested many different patterns of curriculum design. However, the common patterns introduced are: the subject centred, the core, the broad fields, the child-centred and the activity-centred (Abdul-Rafiu, 2009). The subject-centered curriculum is a pattern centered on a single discipline. It contains a body of knowledge arranged in order of procedure with deliberate placed barriers and traditional center range. This appears to be the oldest and commonest of all. The core curriculum translates the most important aspects of the curriculum that are fundamental and compulsory for the learners (Omoniyi, 2000 and Abdul-Rafiu, 2009). The child-centred curriculum focuses on the learners. Needs, abilities, and learning experiences of the learners are paramount in the curriculum making (Abdul-Rafiu, 2009).The activity curriculum is a modern pattern, introduced like child-centred in reaction against the subject centered. It is pertinent to mention that hidden curriculum is an integral part of any curriculum. It connotes the unwritten, unplanned and unofficial, yet potent set of influences, exerted through the teaching and the organization of the schools. These include camping, debating, theatre visits, swimming, painting and drawing, athletics, keeping pets, youth club, playing soccer, wrestling, religious inclination etc. In relation to Arabic, a curriculum as a well planned Arabic Education programm technically designed with relevant selected content and learning experiences that are documented to achieve the use of the language at a particular level of education and in a specific time.

Arabic is officially treated in the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum as a foreign language and placed in the second position under non-vocational electives at all levels of the Universal Basic Education (NERDC, 2012; FGN, 2013). Though, Arabic remains an elective subject (9-year BEC, Arabic1-3, 2007), its teaching seems to improve more in the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The new Arabic Language Curriculum, which was prepared for Basic Education, separates Arabic Language from Islamic Religious Knowledge and makes it an autonomous teaching subject at all levels of the Universal Basic Education: Lower, Middle and Upper Basics. The Lower Basic Arabic Curriculum includes Primaries 1-3; the Middle Basic Arabic Curriculum includes Primaries 4-6 and Upper Basic Arabic Curriculum 7-9. The contents of the curricula were selected based on the stated objectives that include: to enable the students understand what they hear in Arabic conversation and to compose oral speech by themselves; to equip the students with the capacity for natural language processing; to equip the students with linguistic and grammatical principles required for correct speech composition; to improve the students' writing skills; and to equip the students with the capacity to relate symbols with sounds between symbol and voice. (Translated from NERDC ARABIC BEC: 7-9 2006, p. 6).The Council (NERDC) also introduces the Basic Arabic Language Skills as Listening Skill, Speaking Skill, Reading Skill and Writing Skill (NERDC, 2006. BEC 1-3). Furthermore, thirty-four topics were selected to facilitate basic skills of communication in the learners.

More so, in the secondary schools, the 1982 invented curriculum of Arabic Senior Secondary School which was revised in 2007 and reviewed in 2012 for an innovation to capture the 3-year of Post-Basic Education and Career Development (BPECD). The major objectives of Senior Secondary School is to sustain

learner's intrest as already initiated in Basic Education; to improve learner's Arabic skills based on the already laid down foundation in the basic level; to provide adequate opportunities of using standard Arabic in speech and writing in a real life social context; and to enable the learners to use standard Arabic as a vehicle for self improvement; and motivate the learners to continue with Arabic Education within and outside the country (NERDC, 2008). In view of this the National Policy on Education recognises Arabic as a field of study under Humanities. Its curriculum was developed in a more advance of Arabic Basic Education curriculum. It includes six major themes and one –hundred and thirty-three topics to achieve the stated objectives.

Difficulties in the Basic and Post-Basic curricular implementation
From the above discussion, the following are some of the problems identified of proper implementation of Basic and Post-Basic Arabic curriculum:
  i. The government nonchalant attitude Arabic Education. This could be noticed in the national language policy.
 ii. The position of Arabic as an elective subject.
iii. Lack of adequate and timely review of Arabic curriculum. For example 1982 Arabic curriculum was only reviewed in 2007.
 iv. Insufficient of qualified Arabic teachers. Some teachers are still holding diploma certificate.
  v. Poor method of teaching and incorporation of relevant instructional materials.

Conclusion
Ever since eleventh century, Arabic has been as a language of elite in Nigeria. It was also recgnised as the language of academic research and the major medium of Islamic faith. The language is offered in formal and non-formal settings. In the non-formal setting, it is majorly learnt to acquire Islamic Knowledge, to preach and to conduct research. In the formal setting, Arabic is offered for academic professional pursue, international relations, politics and business communication as well as other special purposes such as pilgrimage and tourism. Consequently, a formal curriculum of Arabic was well planned and technically designed, and documented to achieve the use of the language inform of communication at a levels of education in the country, specifically, the Basic and Post-Basic levels. Moreover, some innovations were also made to improve on the curriculum over the years. However, the implementation of the curricula is experiencing lack of motivation from the Government policy, inadequate and untimely review of the curricula to move with the current issues; insufficient qualified teachers and poor instructional methods and materials.

Suggestions
The following recommendations were made in view of the curricular implementation problems:
 i. The Government attitude of language policy making should be improved more to motivate Arabic Education in Nigeria.
 ii. Arabic should be re-positioned from elective to core status.
iii. The existing Arabic curricula should monitored for implementation and reviewed when it is due.
iv. Sufficient teachers should be employed to teach Arabic at all levels of education in Nigeria.
 v. Arabic teacher should be orientated on the use of appropriate language methods of teaching and relevant instructional materials.

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