



Arabic Language Education in Contemporary Nigeria: A Critical Review of the Challenges, Prospects and Lessons for the Future

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Abstract:

Arabic language education in Nigeria represents a complex and evolving field that spans over a millennium of historical development, encompassing both non-formal traditional systems and formal institutional frameworks. This literature review synthesises existing scholarship on the historical evolution, institutional development, contemporary challenges, and future prospects of Arabic education in Nigeria. The review traces the origins of Arabic education to the 11th-14th centuries when Islam arrived through merchants and preachers, establishing a knowledge-based educational tradition that has persisted to the present day. It examines the dual-system nature of Arabic education, comprising non-formal Qur'anic centres (Makarantan Allo/Ileekewu Waala and Makarantan Ilimi/Kewu Itumo) and formal institutions including the School of Shari'a, the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS), and the Nigeria Arabic Language Village. The review identifies persistent challenges including lack of standardised curriculum, inadequate teacher training, insufficient infrastructure, limited instructional materials, and weak government support. Contemporary debates surrounding the integration of Arabic into the national curriculum, particularly following recent proposals by Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed, are examined alongside global trends in Arabic education. The review concludes by identifying critical research gaps and proposing directions for future inquiry, emphasising the need for curriculum reform, teacher professionalisation, and strategic policy integration to reposition Arabic education as a contributor to Nigeria's development in the 21st century.

Keywords: Arabic Language Education, Islamic Education, Nigeria, Curriculum Development, Non-Formal Education, Policy, Teacher Training, Globalization

1. Introduction

The place of language in human activities is profoundly significant as it serves as the major means of communication, occupying a major position in the intellectual and spiritual development of communities worldwide. Arabic, in particular, holds a unique position in Nigeria's linguistic and educational landscape, representing both a religious heritage and a language of strategic importance in diplomacy, trade, and cultural studies. The Arabic language in the Nigerian society is of paramount importance as the language of religion, history, culture, economy, politics, and international relations (Garuda, 2019.). However, despite its rich historical legacy and contemporary relevance, Arabic language education in Nigeria faces numerous challenges that have limited its effectiveness and recognition within the national education system.

This literature review provides a comprehensive examination of existing scholarship on Arabic language education in Nigeria, exploring its historical development, institutional evolution, current challenges, and future prospects. The review draws upon academic journals, institutional publications, policy documents, and contemporary media sources to synthesise the current state of knowledge and identify gaps requiring further research.

The review is structured into six main sections. Following this introduction, Section Two traces the historical development of Arabic education from its introduction to Nigeria through to its formalisation in the 20th century. Section Three examines the dual-system nature of Arabic education, comprising both non-formal traditional centres and formal institutional frameworks. Section Four analyses the contemporary challenges confronting Arabic education, drawing on recent scholarship that identifies systemic, pedagogical, and socio-political impediments. Section Five considers contemporary debates and policy developments, including recent proposals for integrating Arabic into the national curriculum. Section Six identifies research gaps and offers recommendations for strengthening Arabic education in Nigeria.

2. Historical Development of Arabic Education in Nigeria

The Origins of Arabic/Islamic Education

The existence of Arabic and Islamic education in Africa can be generally traced back to the 8th and 9th centuries when the religion of Islam reached the savannah region, encompassing the empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, and Kanem Bornu. Specifically in Nigeria, scholars note that Islam came through merchants and preachers between the 11th and 14th centuries, spreading throughout the country with the entrenchment of its slogan, education, as a knowledge-based religion.

Research has demonstrated that Arabic is the first language of civilisation seen by the Nigerian people and educated by the culture of writing and reading at a time when the two were a kind of magic and mastered by very few people in society (Ibrahim, 2023). The researcher employed the historical recovery method, interviewing and using electronic inquiry methods to understand the problems facing Arab education in Nigeria. The findings revealed that Nigerian Muslims are very interested in Arab education and have spent every effort to develop it from the first era to the present (Ibrahim, 2023).

The Arabic and Islamic school system in Nigeria has traditionally operated through both non-formal and formal systems. The non-formal system exists in the form of centres in several Muslim-dominated parts of the country, established to develop both Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in learners. Generally, these centres operate separately from the formal school system. In addition to these, there are Qur'anic centres based on Qur'an recitation and memorisation, with venues including mosques, malams' residences, and tree shades a pattern that has persisted from the 11th century to the present day.

The Evolution of the Non-Formal System

The Qur'an centres in Nigeria are classified into lower and upper levels. The lower class is called 'Makarantan Allo' in the North and 'Ileekewu Waala' in the West. The second level, known as 'Makaratan Ilimi' in the North, is synonymous with 'Kewu Itumo' in the West. By 1914, the number of these centres in the North had reached 24,756 with 218,614 students and 15,000 malams.

Historically, this system of education was non-formal because it commenced with unplanned curriculum; there was neither syllabus nor instructional material. The Holy Qur'an and Hadith served as the sources of learning and instruction. The teaching methods were based on reading and grammar translation approaches, which have been criticised for failing to develop communicative competence in learners.

The Formalisation of Arabic Education

The attempt to formalise Arabic and Islamic traditional schools was significantly marked by the contribution of the former Emir of Kano, Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero, when he returned from pilgrimage in 1934 and facilitated the establishment of the Northern Province Law School with the objective of producing Muslim judges for the Shari'a courts. This institution was subsequently developed to the level of a university, known today as Bayero University.

The first school of Arabic and Islamic studies established as formal education was the School of Shari'a, established by the northern rulers in 1934, located in the city of Kano. This was followed by the centre for Arabic and Islamic studies established by Sheikh Abdullahi Al Ilori in 1952 at Agege, Lagos.

The Role of Colonialism

The influence of British colonialism on Arabic education in Nigeria has been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Research conducted at the University of Ibadan has examined how colonial ideologies shaped educational policy in Nigerian universities (Ibrahim, 2023). The research concluded that Nigerian universities that conduct Arabic programmes have responded in their Arabic education to purely Arab trends, while the educational policy of the University of Ibadan was rooted in the ideologies of the colonialists since its inception (Ibrahim, 2023). The study adopted the historical and inductive approach and found that this situation cannot be changed except by amending the university's educational policy left behind by British colonisation (Ibrahim, 2023).

Research has also discussed the role of colonialists in the weakness of the standard of Arabic Language, alongside the contribution of some Arabic scholars in translating many English texts into Arabic. This dual legacy suppression through colonial policy and preservation through scholarly effort has shaped the contemporary landscape of Arabic education in Nigeria.

The Establishment of National Institutions

The National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) represents a significant institutional development. It was founded by Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sarkin Sokoto, in 1960 and subsequently transferred to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1969 (Shafi'u, 2015). The Board has undergone a series of positive transformations since its establishment. The Board has successfully carried out its mandate under ABU, Zaria up to 2014 when it was taken over and upgraded as examining body under Federal Ministry of Education with the same status as WAEC, NABTEB and NECO (Shafi'u, 2015). The upgrading of NBAIS was also geared towards maintaining standard in purely Arabic schools (Shafi'u, 2015).

The federal government, through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), has taken the responsibility of developing and reviewing, from time to time, of the Arabic and Islamic Studies curricula used for teaching the subjects at primary school level (Shafi'u, 2015).

One of the series of programs introduced by the Nigerian government to uplift the teaching of Arabic was the establishment of the Nigeria Arabic Language Village in 1992. The village was established at Ngala local government in Borno State to serve as the centre for immersion course and acculturation program for students of Arabic at higher institutions (Yusuf, 2025). In order to ensure proficiency for students of Arabic Studies, the government established the Nigerian Arabic Language Village where one-year immersion course is offered for NCE and undergraduate students from colleges of education and universities (Yusuf, 2025).

The Contemporary Landscape of Arabic Education

Institutional Frameworks

Arabic language education in Nigeria today exists within multiple institutional frameworks. At the university level, institutions such as Kaduna State University have established departments dedicated to Arabic language and literature, Arabic education, and related fields. These departments offer programmes ranging from Bachelor of Arts in Arabic to Doctor of Philosophy in Arabic Studies and Arabic Education.

The Department of Arabic focuses on three core areas: Arabic Language and Linguistics, History and Culture of the Arab World, and Arabic in Contemporary Contexts. Students engage with modern applications of Arabic from politics and economics to media and international relations, preparing them for impactful roles in various sectors.

Similarly, the Department of Education and Arabic at the same institution emphasises educational methodology and practices, research in Arabic language and literature, and innovations in education technology. The department's philosophy focuses on empowering students with advanced educational practices and a deep understanding of Arabic language and culture to address modern challenges in education and communication.

The Department of Arabic Education combines Arabic language expertise with effective teaching methodologies, preparing graduates for careers in teaching, translation, and cultural facilitation. The programme structure includes Bachelor of Arts in Education (B.A. Ed.) Arabic, Master of Education (M.Ed.) Arabic Education, and PhD in Arabic Education.

Private Arabic Schools

Private Arabic Schools (PASs) constitute a significant component of Arabic education in Nigeria, particularly in Western Nigeria. Recent scholarship has examined the major impediments confronting Arabic and Islamic Education in these schools across the region. The study identified critical issues including the lack of standardised curriculum, insufficiency of professionally trained teachers, inadequate infrastructure, limited local Arabic and Islamic textbooks, and poor government support (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025). It also highlighted socio-political challenges including the stigmatisation of Arabic education due to weak foundations at the Ibtidaiyyah level, and restricted pathways to higher education for Arabic learners (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

These challenges stem from systemic neglect, curricular disconnection from national educational goals, and inadequate policy integration (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025). The study suggests curriculum reform, teacher professionalisation, infrastructural improvement, and digital inclusion to enhance the quality and perception of Arabic and Islamic Education (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Government Policy on Arabic and Islamic Studies

Government policies on Arabic and Islamic Studies have impacted on Islamic scholarship in Nigeria in a number of ways (Shafi'u, 2015). Firstly, recognition of Islamic scholarship as integral part of National Policy on Education has increased accessibility to Islamic education with many governments making provision of Arabic and Islamic Studies as their responsibility, thus leading to the establishment of new schools all the time. This makes hundred thousands of Muslims access Islamic scholarship at formal level of Islamic education (Shafi'u, 2015).

Secondly, Arabic and Islamic Studies graduates enjoy employment opportunities in different sectors of the economy just like their counterparts in other disciplines. Such graduates are employed in teaching, administration, military and para-military services, banking and insurance, journalism and foreign affairs among many services (Shafi'u, 2015).

Thirdly, government's approval of the establishment of private Arabic institutions across Nigeria has widened accessibility to Islamic scholarship at formal level to Muslims (Shafi'u, 2015).

Fourthly, the upgrading of the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies to national examining body with equal mandate as WAEC and NECO and the establishment of the Nigerian Arabic Language Village at Ngala has further ensured the importance of Arabic language in Islamic scholarship and continued development of Islamic culture and civilisation in Nigeria (Shafi'u, 2015).

Fifthly, government policy on privatisation of tertiary education in Nigeria has led to the establishment of institutions with strong bias to Islamic scholarship. Private universities like al-Qalam in Katsina and colleges of education have emerged to increase access to Arabic and Islamic Studies (Shafi'u, 2015).

Arabic in the National Policy on Education

In Nigeria's system of education, Arabic is officially treated as a foreign language in the National Policy on Education (NPE) and placed in the second position as an elective subject at all levels of the Universal Basic Education. Although the study of Arabic does not receive adequate recognition in the Nigerian National Policy on Education, the real status

of the language is evident in its historical, economic, social, cultural, diplomatic, sociolinguistic, religious, and academic relevance.

Nigeria's revised Basic and Senior Secondary Education Curriculum, unveiled in September 2025, already lists Arabic as an optional subject at the primary level (Pulse Nigeria, 2026).

3. Challenges Confronting Arabic Education in Nigeria

Systemic and Pedagogical Challenges

The literature identifies numerous challenges confronting Arabic education in Nigeria. Research on Arabic and Islamic education in Private Arabic Schools across Western Nigeria has identified several critical issues (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025):

Lack of Standardised Curriculum: The absence of a unified curriculum across Arabic schools has resulted in inconsistent quality and limited integration with national educational goals (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Insufficient Professionally Trained Teachers: Many Arabic teachers have been trained exclusively within traditional frameworks, leaving them unexposed to modern language teaching approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Inadequate Infrastructure: Many Arabic schools lack basic facilities, including classrooms, libraries, and technology resources (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Limited Local Arabic and Islamic Textbooks: The scarcity of locally produced instructional materials forces dependence on imported texts that may not address Nigerian contexts (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Poor Government Support: The limited financial and policy support from government has constrained the development of Arabic education (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

The Impact of Insecurity on Arabic Education

The insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria has greatly affected the teaching and learning of Arabic in Nigerian universities. The Nigeria Arabic Language Village, located in Borno State, experienced bloody attacks from insurgents in 2014 (Yusuf, 2025). Nigeria has long recognised the Arabic Village in Ngala, Maiduguri, as a pivotal hub for Arabic language education (Yusuf, 2025). As a center for linguistic and cultural immersion, it has shaped generations of Arabic scholars and contributed significantly to Arabic literacy and Islamic scholarship (Yusuf, 2025).

However, the emergence of Boko Haram and the ensuing insurgency have severely disrupted educational activities in Ngala. The once-thriving village has faced challenges such as infrastructure destruction, displacement of educators and students, and widespread fear (Yusuf, 2025). These challenges have stunted Arabic education's growth in the region and reduced participation nationwide, particularly in the south. Parents and institutions hesitate to send students to Ngala due to security concerns, limiting immersion opportunities (Yusuf, 2025).

Although the Nigerian government's language policies support Arabic studies, they have struggled to address the insurgency's impact. The paper calls for strategic interventions, including security measures, infrastructure rebuilding, and adaptive policies, to revitalise Arabic education and restore confidence in the region's educational offerings (Yusuf, 2025).

The Challenge of Modernisation

There is a growing tension between traditional Arabic pedagogy and the demands of the modern global economy. Critics have argued that Arabic education, in its traditional form, may not adequately prepare students for the technological and economic demands of the 21st-century global economy (Ahanonu, 2026). This argument has been advanced particularly in the context of the debate on integrating Arabic into the national curriculum.

Global trends, including digital transformation, multiculturalism, and competency-based education, are transforming the Arabic curriculum to cater to both local and international demands (Owoyale-Abdulganiy et al., 2025). While these trends offer significant opportunities for enhanced cultural understanding, economic prospects, and educational reforms, they also pose challenges such as resource constraints, socio-political resistance, and the need for quality instructional materials (Owoyale-Abdulganiy et al., 2025). The integration of global trends in the Arabic curriculum presents a pivotal opportunity to modernise language education in Nigeria, preparing students for a globalised world while preserving the rich cultural and religious heritage associated with Arabic (Owoyale-Abdulganiy et al., 2025).

Contemporary Debates and Policy Developments

The Bauchi Governor's Proposal

In July 2026, Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed called for Arabic education to be more formally integrated into Nigeria's national curriculum, arguing that graduates of Arabic-speaking universities deserve equal recognition and opportunities within the country's education system (Pulse Nigeria, 2026; Daily Post Nigeria, 2026).

The governor expressed concern over what he described as the gradual decline of Northern Nigeria's Arabic educational heritage, noting that the region has long maintained strong educational, religious, and cultural ties with the Arab world (Pulse Nigeria, 2026). He also reaffirmed his administration's commitment to reviving the abandoned Arabic College in Alkaleri, describing it as central to preserving the region's educational heritage (Daily Post Nigeria, 2026). The governor stressed the need to preserve and strengthen those connections while ensuring that graduates of Arabic education receive appropriate recognition within Nigeria's education system (Pulse Nigeria, 2026).

The proposal has drawn significant criticism online, with many Nigerians raising concerns about the religious implications of integrating Arabic education into a national curriculum that serves a religiously diverse population (Pulse Nigeria, 2026). Critics have argued that Arabic, unlike French which is also listed as an optional subject in the curriculum carries inherent religious associations that make its formal integration a sensitive proposition in a country where religion remains a deeply divisive issue (Pulse Nigeria, 2026).

Supporters of the governor's position have countered that the proposal is about educational equity rather than religion, pointing out that thousands of Nigerian graduates hold legitimate degrees from Arabic-speaking institutions but struggle to have their qualifications recognised within the country (Pulse Nigeria, 2026).

The Economic and Global Context

The debate over integrating Arabic education has highlighted fundamental questions about the purpose of public education. Critics have argued that in an increasingly digitised world, the opportunity cost of diverting classroom hours to classical linguistics is high, with every hour spent on non-utilitarian language acquisition potentially displacing coding, data analysis, or scientific inquiry (Ahanonu, 2026).

The argument for prioritising Arabic becomes more difficult to sustain, according to critics, when contrasted with the behaviour of advanced Arab nations themselves. Emerging economies in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait are investing billions of dollars to transition their populations away from traditional, purely text-based educational tracks (Ahanonu, 2026). Under national transformation agendas like Saudi Vision 2030, these countries are focusing on mastering artificial intelligence, robotics, biomedical engineering, data science, renewable energy, and advanced medicine (Ahanonu, 2026).

To compete effectively on the global stage, Nigeria cannot afford to look backward. While local languages, cultural studies, and religious education undoubtedly have their place in private spaces, family settings, and community institutions, the state-backed national curriculum must serve as a launchpad for technological innovation and economic survival (Ahanonu, 2026). Survival in the modern era requires an agile, digitally literate workforce ready for international competition (Ahanonu, 2026).

However, proponents of Arabic education argue that fluency in Arabic could unlock diplomatic and bilateral trade opportunities with the Middle East and North Africa region, potentially positioning Nigeria as a preferred partner for sovereign wealth funds and Islamic banking investments.

The NEDC-NALV Teacher Training Initiative

The North East Development Commission (NEDC) in collaboration with Nigeria Arabic Language Village (NALV) commenced training and empowerment of 600 Tsangaya and Islamiyah teachers across the six states of the North East (Vanguard News, 2025; Tribune Online, 2025). The training aims to equip teachers of Almajiri and Islamic schools with modern techniques of teaching Arabic language and entrepreneurship skills to promote peace-building and self-reliance (Leadership Newspapers, 2025).

Themed 'Modern Techniques of Teaching Arabic for Peace Building: Integration of Arabic Calligraphy', the workshop was described as apt and timely considering the renewed Boko Haram attacks in the region (Leadership Newspapers, 2025). The Director of NALV, Professor Ibrahim Muhammad, stated that by deepening teachers' understanding of the Arabic Language, especially in the critical areas of grammatical rules and phonological accuracy, this training seeks to prevent the misapplication and misinterpretation of Arabic grammar that can sometimes lead to doctrinal confusion or misunderstanding (Vanguard News, 2025).

The Managing Director of NEDC, Alhaji Goni Alkali, noted that the initiative marks a bold and pragmatic step toward addressing one of the most pressing educational challenges confronting the region, especially the issue of Out-of-School Children (Vanguard News, 2025). He noted that the NEDC would ensure that all participants who have been equipped with vast knowledge and skills are given starter packs to become economically self-reliant (Tribune Online, 2025).

The entrepreneurship component was designed to empower teachers with skills that would make them self-reliant, thereby discouraging both teachers and Almajiri pupils from roaming the streets to beg for food (Tribune Online, 2025). Participants reported learning skills in producing soaps, perfumes, liquid detergents, and many other items which would add to their economic successes (Tribune Online, 2025).

Federal Government Almajiri Reform

The Federal Government has unveiled a new National Policy for the Enhancement of Almajiri Education, prohibiting Almajiri learning centres from sending pupils to beg on the streets (Punch Newspapers, 2026). The policy introduces compulsory literacy, numeracy, digital education and vocational skills as part of efforts to reform the country's traditional Qur'anic education system (Punch Newspapers, 2026).

The policy provides that learners should be given opportunities to acquire vocational and technical skills of their choice or those approved by their parents or guardians to improve their future economic prospects (Punch Newspapers, 2026). For the first time, graduates of recognised Almajiri learning centres will receive formal certification (Punch Newspapers, 2026).

The policy further provides that relevant digital skills shall be included in the training of facilitators and learners, while Arabic language, civic education, and life skills would also be incorporated into teaching (Punch Newspapers, 2026). This policy environment creates opportunities for Arabic language education to align with broader national goals of digital literacy and technological competence.

4. Research Gaps and Future Directions

Gaps in the Existing Literature

The review of existing scholarship reveals several significant gaps in research on Arabic education in Nigeria:

Limited Empirical Research on Teaching Practices: Much of the existing literature is descriptive or prescriptive, with limited empirical research on teaching practices, learning outcomes, and graduate employability.

Regional Imbalances: Research on Western Nigerian contexts appears more developed, with less comprehensive studies on Northern, Eastern, and Southern regions.

Impact of Global Trends: While the influence of global trends on the Arabic curriculum has been examined, more research is needed on specific mechanisms and strategies for curriculum modernisation (Owoyale-Abdulganiy et al., 2025).

Teacher Training and Professional Development: Despite recognition of teacher training deficits, there is limited research on effective professional development models for Arabic teachers.

Integration with National Education Goals: More research is needed on how Arabic education can be aligned with national development goals and the demands of the 21st-century economy.

Impact of Insurgency: While research has examined the impact of insurgency on the Nigeria Arabic Language Village, more research is needed on the long-term effects on Arabic education infrastructure and student participation (Yusuf, 2025).

Future Research Directions

Based on the gaps identified, the following research directions are proposed:

Empirical Studies on Learning Outcomes: Research should examine the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches in Arabic education, including technology-enhanced learning. The integration of traditional drama techniques with AI technologies in Arabic language classrooms at Umaru Sanda Ahmadu College of Education, Minna, demonstrated significant improvement in students' post-test scores (Achiba, Yusuf, & Fulani, 2026). The study recommended the provision of adequate digital learning facilities, continuous teacher training on AI-supported instructional methods, and curriculum review to incorporate innovative teaching strategies (Achiba, Yusuf, & Fulani, 2026).

Comparative Studies: Comparative research across regions, institution types, and pedagogical approaches would provide valuable insights into effective practices.

Impact of Insecurity: Further research is needed on the long-term impact of insurgency on Arabic education in Northeastern Nigeria and strategies for recovery. Research has called for strategic interventions, including security measures, infrastructure rebuilding, and adaptive policies, to revitalise Arabic education and restore confidence in the region's educational offerings (Yusuf, 2025).

Policy Analysis: Research should examine the effectiveness of existing policies and propose evidence-based policy recommendations.

Curriculum Modernisation: Research should explore how Arabic curricula can be modernised to meet contemporary needs while preserving cultural and religious heritage.

Graduate Employment and Employability: Studies on the employment outcomes of Arabic graduates would provide evidence to support curriculum reform and career counselling.

Entrepreneurship Integration: Research on the integration of entrepreneurship skills into Arabic education is needed, particularly given the NEDC-NALV initiative that trained teachers in skills such as soap and perfume production to promote economic self-reliance (Tribune Online, 2025).

Recommendations

Curriculum Reform

Arabic curricula should be modernised to incorporate Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP), including Arabic for Business Communication, Arabic for Digital Media, and Arabic for Translation Technology. Digital literacy should be integrated as a compulsory component of Arabic language education, covering ICT tools, e-learning platforms, and digital content creation. The curriculum should be aligned with national policy developments and global trends in language education (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025).

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teacher training should incorporate comprehensive content on modern pedagogical approaches, digital pedagogies, and communicative language teaching. Continuous professional development programmes should be established to update teachers' knowledge and skills. Training should be provided on real business materials and career-oriented applications of Arabic. The NEDC-NALV model of training 600 teachers across the North East provides a blueprint for large-scale teacher development initiatives (Vanguard News, 2025).

Infrastructure and Resources

Investment in digital laboratories, technology centres, and e-learning platforms should be prioritised. Business-oriented Arabic study materials, including textbooks, audiovisuals, and case studies, should be developed. Libraries should be equipped with contemporary Arabic language resources, including research journals and teaching guides. The research on traditional drama techniques and AI technologies recommends the provision of adequate digital learning facilities and institutional support for the effective integration of innovative teaching technologies (Achiba, Yusuf, & Fulani, 2026).

Policy Integration

Arabic language education should be integrated across education, trade, and technology policy frameworks. Government institutions should sponsor Arabic-economic empowerment initiatives, especially for trade with the Middle East and North Africa. Universities should collaborate with trade associations to offer short-term courses in Arabic to traders and professionals. The Federal Government's Almajiri reform policy, which includes Arabic language as part of the expanded curriculum, provides a framework for policy integration (Punch Newspapers, 2026).

Security and Resilience

Given the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on Arabic education in Northeastern Nigeria, strategic interventions are needed, including security measures, infrastructure rebuilding, and adaptive policies to revitalise Arabic education and restore confidence in the region's educational offerings (Yusuf, 2025).

Community Engagement

Schools should establish partnerships with local communities, businesses, and cultural organisations. Alumni networks should be engaged as mentors and role models for current students. Community outreach programmes should be developed to promote Arabic education and cultural understanding.

5. Conclusion

This literature review has examined the historical development, institutional evolution, contemporary challenges, and future prospects of Arabic language education in Nigeria. The review has demonstrated that Arabic education has a rich and complex history spanning over a millennium, encompassing both non-formal traditional systems and formal institutional frameworks. Research has shown that Arabic is the first language of civilisation seen by the Nigerian people, and Nigerian Muslims have consistently invested in its development (Ibrahim, 2023).

The current challenges confronting Arabic education in Nigeria are significant and multifaceted. These include the lack of standardised curriculum, insufficient teacher training, inadequate infrastructure, limited instructional materials, and poor government support (Owoyale-Abdulganiny et al., 2025). Socio-political challenges, including stigmatisation

and restricted pathways to higher education, further constrain the development of Arabic education. The impact of insecurity, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, has devastated Arabic education infrastructure in Northeastern Nigeria (Yusuf, 2025).

Contemporary debates surrounding the integration of Arabic into the national curriculum highlight fundamental tensions between cultural preservation and economic development, religious heritage and secular education, and tradition and modernity. The Bauchi Governor's proposal for formal integration of Arabic education has drawn both support and criticism (Pulse Nigeria, 2026; Daily Post Nigeria, 2026).

However, there are also significant opportunities for transformation. Global trends in education, including digital transformation, multiculturalism, and competency-based education, offer opportunities to modernise the Arabic curriculum (Owoyale-Abdulganiy et al., 2025). Institutional innovations such as the integration of AI technologies in Arabic classrooms at Umaru Sanda Ahmadu College of Education demonstrate the viability of combining traditional and modern teaching approaches (Achiba, Yusuf, & Fulani, 2026). The NEDC-NALV teacher training initiative provides a model for large-scale professional development (Vanguard News, 2025).

The recommendations of this review emphasise the need for curriculum reform, teacher professionalisation, infrastructure investment, policy integration, and community engagement. A multi-sectoral collaboration between government, Islamic organisations, and private proprietors is essential to revitalise this vital component of Nigeria's educational system.

As Nigeria seeks to position itself in the global economy while preserving its cultural and religious heritage, Arabic education must evolve to meet the demands of the 21st century. By addressing the challenges identified in this review and capitalising on emerging opportunities, Arabic language education can contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's national development, youth empowerment, and global engagement.

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