

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT ENROLMENT IN ARABIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION AT FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (SPECIAL) OYO: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTION

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Abstract

The introduction of Arabic education in Nigeria is long before the advent of modern education system in the area. It is a known fact that the first medium of formal education was Arabic language. Thus Arabic language learning in the Arabic department in colleges of education in Nigeria was introduced and Arabic language was taught accordingly. Recently, the enrolment of students to the Department of Arabic language in our colleges of education has drastically reduced. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the factors influencing student enrolment in Arabic language education at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The only college of special education in sub-Saharan Africa for a decade (i.e. 2008/2009-2017/2018 academic sessions). Secondary data for the sessions under review were used for the study through descriptive method of research. The study highlights the trends in the admission processing into the department in the College, likewise factors responsible for the low intake of students into the department and suggestions were made for improvement in student's enrolment.

Keywords: Arabic language, Department of Arabic language, Education, enrolment, students

Introduction

Education, as a social service, is very important and it must not be shirked under any guise. It constitutes the standard upon which any society may be assessed. Educational development is imperative and urgent. It must not be treated as a national emergency, second only to war, but must also move with the momentum of a revolution (Muraina, 2015; Abdullah, 2022; Sabella & Hasan, 2022). However, the individual being educated develops physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially. An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead its students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge in which Arabic language inclusive.

Moreover, Arabic education has been defined as the process by which Arabic-related skills, competence, attitudes and cultural heritage are developed in learners, using professionally approved method of teaching carried out by trained teachers, who are guided by general and specific principles and practice (Oladosu, 2012). It is the language of original Arabs who are inhabitant of *al-Jaziratul 'Arabiyyah* (Arabian Peninsula). It is also the language of the Arabized nations such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and the whole of North Africa (Abdul-Raheem, 2004). Arabic is the language of Qur'an and Qur'an is the final authority of Islamic studies. It is a language of liturgy which convey scientific knowledge and discoveries from one part of the word to another. Arabic as a language exists Islam. The language is popular to Nigerian as (Suwar Arabs) has Arabic as her mother tongue in the Northern Nigerian (Oladosu, 2002).

Furthermore, Arabic constitutes one of the academic subjects in Nigerian secondary schools, Oladosu (2003) states that the approved Islamic studies (I.R.K) and Arabic language syllabi designed under the auspices of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) came to operation in 1968 and 1974 respectively. Therefore, the question of enrolment is a crucial and recurrent one in the history of Department of Arabic language in Nigeria tertiary institution, including Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. Students and staffs are major stakeholders, forming the human components of the college as they interrelate, cooperate and interact on regular basis. Without either students or staff, there is nothing called college talk less of department. Thus, the enrolment of student to any department in Federal College is very essential and important especially department of Arabic language. Therefore, this paper will extend on the enrolment of students to the Department of Arabic language, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The paper will look at how students' enrolment is, at the inception of the department to date.

Arabic as a Language

Language is one of the oldest man's tools of communication and it is specie-specific. There is no human being without language, whether verbal or non-verbal and it is unique attribute of man (Kehinde, 2013). Language was defined by Akaito & Dowyawo (2007) as a method of means, a system of sharing of ideas, thought, feelings, experiences, etc. using sound, signs or symbols. It is a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by the people of a particular country or area (Akinsowon, 2013). However, language remains a fundamental and common heritage of human society. It is the language heritage that distinguishes human species from other living species. Therefore, Arabic language is the language of Arabs. It belongs to Semitic group of languages, and the second largest most widely used alphabetic writing system in the world (the Latin alphabet is the most widespread). Moreover, today, Arabic is universally recognized language with a rank international language such as English and French. Long time, it has been adopted by United Nation (UN), Organization of Africa Union (OAU), Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) etc. Amuni (2004) submitted that Arabic is an official language of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Confederation of African Football (CAF), Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) and other Internationally recognized organizations as a tool for political and other diplomatic transactions. It also studies and accorded high status like others in the world.

Arabic Language and Education

Arabic language has contributed much to the development of education in the world. With the contribution of Arabic scholars who have written many works in Arabic on various disciplines such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, history, philosophy, etc. they helped to preserve the legacy of Greek and Roman civilization. Among those Arabic scholars are: *Al-Razi*, a philosopher and natural scientist; *IbnKhalidun*, a historian; *Jabir Ibn Hanya*, the father of chemistry; *Usman Ibn Fodio*, a philosopher, mystic and reformer. The works of these great scholars had been translated into English and other languages of the world. Modern researchers have benefited immensely from them. Also, Arabic learning started in Nigeria long before the event of British colonials. There were various Arabic institution market in places like, Kano, Sokoto, Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ilorin etc. later, some scholars started to modernize their schools in to Arabic schools and they were awarding certificate for primary schools and

secondary school levels such as *'Idadiyyah* and *Tanawiyyah* certificates respectively. These certificates made the products to be qualified for admission to degree programmes in Arabic countries such as Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon and a lot of others.

A further attempt was later made in 1980s by governments, Muslim Philanthropists and associations to establish Colleges of Arabic and Islamic studies. Such institutions were affiliated to one university or the other for award of diploma in Arabic and Islamic studies (Onisabi & Adamu, 2007). Among the Muslim philanthropists and associations or institutions that established those colleges were Late Alhaji Moshood Kasimowo Olawale Abiola, (Suliya Abiola College of Arabic and Islamic studies); Alhaji Sulaiman Awayewaserere (Awayewaserere College of Arabic and Islamic studies); both in Abeokuta and were affiliated to Uthman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto. Others are Late Shaykh Muritado Abdul Salam, the Proprietor, Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Elekuro, Ibadan (Muritado College of Arabic and Islamic studies and now Muritado College of Education); Late Alhaji Mufutahu Olanihun Ajadi (Mufutahu Olanihun College of Arabic and Islamic studies and now Mufutahu Olanihun College of Education) both in Ibadan and by then were affiliated to University of Ibadan.

Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo (1977-2017)

Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, at its inception in 1977, the college was known as Federal Advanced Teachers' College (special). With initial student enrolment of only fifty-five (55) and fifteen (15) members of staff drawn largely from Federal Public Service Commission. The college was headed by principal until 31st May, 1987 when Dr. O. I. Onwuegbu who was appointed as principal became the first provost of the college. For a long time since the College was established in October 5, 1977, it operated at its temporary site seated at Anglican Methodist Grammar School, Ajagba, Oyo up till 1993. However, the Federal Government having secured a 97, 425 acres of land at Akinmoorin and Jobele via Oyo directed that the College be moved to its permanent site. Therefore, the College paved movement to its permanent site which began in 1994 during the tenure of Professor, C. A. Bakare and was completed in 1996 during the tenure of Professor, Taoheed A. Adedaja (FCES, Oyo, 2022).

However, the College started with five departments with only fifty-five (55) students and fifteen members of staff. More so, at the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic session, the students' population increased to about 9,000 out of which over 300 are students with special needs. The departments have also increased to thirty-five (35) all distributed within seven schools i.e. School of Arts and social Science, School of Early Childhood, Primary and Adult Education (ECPAE), School of Education, School of Languages, School of Science, School of Special Education, and School of Vocational and Technical Education. Also in 2015/2016 another five new departments were added to make up for forty-two (42) departments. Those department were Cultural and creative Arts History, Political Science (in School of Arts and Social Sciences), Communication and Behaviour Disorder (CBD) (in School of Special Education), and Physics (in School of Science) (Usman (2018). The department of Economics, Geography and Chemistry were commenced with the approval received by the College from National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) to commence academic programmes in the three academic programmes.

The institution according to a UNDP/UNESCO 1996 report (NIR/87/008),

“... has the best qualified staff in special education not only in Nigeria but in West, North, East and Central Africa”.

The College is an autonomous public institution saddled with the responsibility of training professional teachers with competencies to teach and handle various categories of exceptional children (Adeniyi, 2015). It is a college established to produce Nigeria certificate in education (NCE) graduates and its programmes are essentially among other to:

- Provide training for teachers of students with special needs at the primary and junior secondary levels of education;
- Undertake a thorough investigation, through research into the peculiar needs of persons with special needs in the Nigeria society; and
- Organize training programmes to serving teachers through part-time so as to upgrade their skills.

The mandate of this institution as a College of Special Education is unique and quite differs from those of the conventional colleges of education. And in line with the National Policy on Education which emphasized the provision of educational opportunities for all citizens of Nigeria without form of discrimination.

Adeniyi (2015) explains that out of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria, the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo stands out because it is unique in its orientation, scope and programme content being the only one that focuses on Special Education. It is in consideration of its unparalleled contribution to special education in Nigeria, and its dynamism and persistent pursuit of precedence in its focus that the College is designated “Centre of Excellence in Special Education”. Apart from these, the uniqueness of the College is underscored by the following verifiable thus:

- (i) Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo is the only one of its kind in sub-Sahara Africa established to train Special Education Teachers who would teach and care for children with special needs from pre-primary to Junior Secondary School levels;
- (ii) It is the only College of Education in Nigeria authorized to train teachers and other Para-professionals in Special Needs for the states of Nigeria;
- (iii) About eighty-five (85) percent of the academic staff has postgraduate degrees in Special Education. This was corroborated by UNDP 1996 report which stated, interalia, that the College is the best “with qualified staff in Special Education not only in Nigeria but in West, North, East and Central Africa”.
- (iv) More than what can be found even in Universities offering undergraduate and post-graduate courses in special Education, federal College of Education (Special), Oyo has the largest concentration of specialized facilities and equipment for the teaching of special education teachers in Nigeria (Adeniyi, 2015).

Usman (2018) declares that upon the approval of the National University Commission, the College started a degree programme in 2012/2013 academic session in affiliation with University of Ibadan and commenced sandwich Degree Programme in affiliation with the Lagos State University (LASU), Ojoo in the 2017 modular year. He explains further that the College also runs part-time and sandwich programme to cater for serving teachers who find it difficult to run full-time programmes. It also runs computer training programmes.

Department of Arabic language journey so far

The department of Arabic language came into existence in 1991 as a section of department of Arabic and Islamic studies in the school of arts and Social Sciences. It took up with six students and lecturers, who were originally employed for Islamic studies, but soon after the take-off, a purely Arabic lecturer was employed for the section. In 1996, the department

emerged from the Department of Arabic and Islamic studies and became an autonomous department in the school of language now School of Secondary Education (Language Programmes)

Since its inception, the Department has produced many NCE graduate of Arabic language and it can now boast of eight lecturers who are specialists in Arabic and Literature and almost all of them are master's degree holders and had one Ph.D. holder.

The aims and objectives of the studying Arabic language at the level of Colleges of Education are as follows:

- i. Prepare the student-teachers for the task of teaching the language at the Junior and Senior Secondary School levels;
- ii. Help student-teachers acquire spoken and written competence in Arabic language;
- iii. Enable student use Arabic as a Medium of Instruction;
- iv. Acquaint student-teachers with the social-political and cultural lives of the speakers of the language with a view to promoting international understanding; and
- v. Prepare them for further studies in Arabic education and other areas of Arabic studies (NCCE, 2020).

Admission requirements

Before a student can be admitted into department of Arabic, he or she must fulfill one of the following requirements:

(i) General

- (a) A senior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate or Certificate in Arabic and Islamic Studies or Higher Islamic Studies Certificate from recognized institutions and relevant examination bodies such as Joint Examination Board of Arabic and Islamic Schools (JEBAIS) and National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) will be considered for admission provided they have not less than four (4) credits/merits which must include Arabic and Islamic studies and at least a Pass in English.
- (b) *Attawjihiyyah/Ath-thanawiyyah*: Senior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate from recognized Arabic institution in Nigeria and abroad.
- (c) Senior secondary school certificate (SSSC/WAEC/NECO or GCE "O" level) with credit in five (5) subjects, including English language, at not more than two sittings. Two of the credits should be relevant to the course the candidate wished to offer. A pass in mathematics may, however may be required.
- (d) A Grade II Teachers Certificate (TC II) with credit or merit in four (4) subjects, at two sittings, two of which must relevant to the course the candidate wishes to offer. Credit/merit in English language and Pass in Mathematics may be required.
- (e) Associate Certificate in Education awarded by an approved institution in Nigeria or abroad is also acceptable as qualification.
- (f) All candidates wish to be considered for admission must enroll for and write the selected examination organized by an accredited body such as JAMB.
- (g) Successful candidates in Pre-NCE final examinations who also take and succeed in a selection examination organized by an accredited body are qualified for admission.
- (h) It should be noted that some colleges may in addition to all of the above, administer their own elimination tests and/or interviews for some courses. This is legitimate.

(ii) Additional

In addition to the admission requirements, candidates for NCE Arabic must possess at least one of the following:

- (a) Credit or Merit in Arabic at the Grade II Teacher Certificate level.
- (b) Credit in Arabic at the SSSC/WASC/GCE O/L.

Note: Candidates who do not have a credit in the Language may be admitted into one-year preliminary programme, provided they meet the Pre-NCE entry requirements (NCCE, 2020).

Students' Enrolment: Department of Arabic between 2008/2009-2017/2018

Students' enrolment may refer to Matriculation, that is, the process of initiating attendant a school. Therefore, the students' enrolment between 2008/2009 and 2017/2018 academic session of the Department of Arabic, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo is presented below:

S/N	SESSION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	MALE	FEMALE
1.	2008/2009	12	11	01
2.	2009/2010	11	11	-
3.	2010/2011	05	05	-
4.	2011/2012	17	15	02
5.	2012/2013	28	28	-
6.	2013/2014	23	21	02
7.	2014/2015	25	23	02
8.	2015/2016	20	18	02
9.	2016/2017	11	11	-
10.	2017/2018	16	15	01
	TOTAL	168	158	10

Source: HOD's Office, Department of Arabic, FCES, Oyo.

From the table above, it is shown that the total number of students admitted to the Department of Arabic language, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo for the period covered by researcher is one hundred and sixty-eight which one hundred and fifty-eight were male and ten (10) were female.

Therefore, the following observations were noted by the writer;

- (i) Male students were studying Arabic language than female counterpart;
- (ii) Generally, the number of intake was so low;
- (iii) There were low intake for the first four sessions (i.e. 2008/2009, 2009.2010, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012);
- (iv) Only the sessions in the middle had a reasonable student enrolment i.e. twenty students and above were admitted during the four sessions (i.e. 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016).
- (v) Out of the ten years academic session, female students were admitted in six (6) sessions while in the remaining four sessions, female students were not admitted at all.

Therefore, the following questions arose from the observations made by the researcher:

- (a) What are the factors militating the low intake of students to the Department of Arabic language, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo?

- (b) How the enrolment of students to the department can be improved?
 - (c) What are the efforts of the staff of the department to the students' enrolment?
- The questions raised above would be looked into under the following sub-headings:

Factors responsible for the low intake of students to the Department of Arabic language at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo

There are some factors contributing to challenges associated with low intakes to the Department of Arabic language at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. Among them are the following:

1. **Attitude of parents towards Arabic language:** Parent attitude can affect the learning of Arabic language by their children because many parents are ignorant of the subject or course. In many homes, parents frown on their children saying I want to become Arabic language expert. It is most needed for any chosen career rather than learning about the religion, and also many parents believed in having their children be medical practitioners, lawyers, computer scientists etc. therefore, because of this misconception that little or no attention is paid to Arabic language in Nigerian educational system particularly colleges of education.
2. **Attitude of Government towards Arabic language:** The attitude of education planners in our primary and secondary schools to the Arabic is not helping at all. For instance, the number of periods allocated to Arabic language on the school time table is very low in some schools. Arabic appears once in a week on the time table and this contributes to student negative attitude towards the learning of the subject. Also, the curriculum shows that Arabic language has not been given its due position in the educational policy (Yekeen, 2024). Therefore, students do not feel motivated to study the subject which tantamount to low outcome which affects the next level of education.
3. **Student attitude towards Arabic language:** This is one of the challenges associated with the teaching of Arabic language in Nigerian Colleges of Education. Some students did not attach any importance to Arabic language, they feel Arabic studies is not useful. Some are even ashamed to introduce themselves as Arabic students.

Improvement of the enrolment

The enrolment to the intake to the Department of Arabic can be improved if:

1. The attitude of parents towards Arabic language can be changed positively and they realized that the course is a career course that can lead their children to meaningful life. Also, they understand it beyond learning about the reading of the Holy Qur'an only.
2. The government through Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) make the curriculum designed for Arabic language in our primary and secondary schools to be compulsory and school administrators should make number of periods allocated to Arabic language on the school time table appear more than one.
3. The students attach importance to Arabic language, they should feel it as useful. They must learn to be proud of what nature has given to them and must be contented with what they have and move away from desiring other people's property.

Efforts of the staff

The following efforts were made by the staffers of the Department of Arabic language, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo:

1. The staff of the Department pay JAMB registration fees for some prospected candidates to the Department of Arabic.
2. They also pay half of the school fees for some indigent students.
3. They visit some Arabic schools in Ibadan, Oyo, Iseyin, Saki, Okeho and Ogbomosho and do the orientation for them about their future if they further their Arabic education beyond Arabic schools.

Conclusion

The desired effect of a having a shower in the rain with a raincoat on cannot be achieved because the head could be wet while the other parts of the body would be dry. This picture may be said to represent whatever success the department of Arabic language Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo could achieve without fear to improve the students' enrolment. We should understand that without students there is no staff and by having the students' enrolment improved will further provide a forum for staff-student interaction.

It is crystal clear that the factors associated with low student enrolment in Arabic language education at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo have been highlighted. The solution to these problems involves government, teachers, students and parents. Government as the sole decision maker on educational policies that will ginger the concerned people at the grass-root levels towards promoting Arabic education in their respective vicinities. By so doing, the challenges of low enrolment will be addressed.

Recommendations

The following were recommended by the researcher to improve the students' enrolment to the Department of Arabic language, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo:

1. Arabic language should be given a deserved treatment in our National Policy on Education in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives.
2. Nigeria Muslim students should be allowed to choose Arabic language as a core subject in our secondary schools so as to make provision for intake of the students in Colleges of Education.
3. There is a great need of improvement for a team of effort of the staff of Department of Arabic language to tackle this enrolment malaise that is inimical to the academic development.
4. Organizing and sensitizing students of Arabic schools to know the importance attached to their further study at Colleges of Education in which Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo inclusive.
5. There should be sensitization programmes for proprietors of our Arabic schools to upgrade their schools to the standard required to write JEBAIS examination.

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