What Are They Doing After School? An Analysis of the Post-School Activities of Arabic School Graduates

Olaniyan-Shobowale
Department of Language Arts and Social Science Education
Lagos State University, Ojo. solalaniyan_2004@yahoo.com

Abstract

Education of any kind remains an instrument of change and a tool for personal and national development. It is seen to be a social process and the medium for the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for survival. Arabic schools are purposely built to promote the understanding of the Islamic faith. They offer instruction in the Islamic sciences and Arabic language using the Arabic language and or the local language. They boast wide popularity and population. This paper therefore, examines the graduates of these schools located in Lagos State, Nigeria to see how relevant they are and contributions of Islamic education in their personal life. It also exposes its impacts on the lives of its graduates either as a step to further education or as a means of livelihood. The paper concludes on the recommendation for the need to involve a robust governmental regulation and integration.

Key Words: Arabic, Graduate, Post-School, Activities, Education.

Introduction

Education is social process and the medium for the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for survival in a changing world (Danmole, 2011). It is, according to Onisabi, Adam and Jami’u (2007) the cornerstone of economic, growth and social development and the principal income of improving the welfare of individual. Education is essential to increasing the productivity and capacity of any institution.

In Nigeria today, there exist basically three major systems of education; traditional education; Islamic education and western education. All above forms education aims at improving the lots Nigerians that engage in them thereby enabling them to contribute their quota to the development of Nigeria as a nation. Indeed, as stated in the National Policy on Education (2017), one of the National Development plans of the country is to create 'a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens’’. This is further highlighted in one of the stated aims and objectives of education to be “the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society”.p.11.
Arabic School in Yoruba land

Arabic school is used in this paper to mean schools where instruction is offered in Arabic and or the local language(s). They are purposely built to preserve the Islamic faith and offer subjects in the Islamic sciences and Arabic language. This model of education established since the 14th century is based on the study of jurisprudence theology, mysticism, grammar, rhetoric and exegesis and has remained largely unchanged to the present day (Baba, 2012). Many factors have been attributed to the fluorescence of Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Yoruba land and Nigeria in general. These according to Jamiu, (2014) include the proliferation of standard Arabic schools in Yoruba land and the renewed zeal of Muslims to be committed to Islam and Arabic studies. The realization that one can attain any height with Arabic and Islamic education as long as one is committed and the availability of role models in the field such as Shaykh Kamaludeen al-Adab, Shaykh Adam al-Ilori, Shaykh Murtada Abdus-Salam, Shaykh Tahir Uthman Bauchi, Shaykh Sharif Ibrahim Salih al-Hasan, Shaykh Abubakar al-Miskin, Shaykh Khidr Salahud-Din Apaokagi, Shaykh Abdur-Rahim Amin and Shaykh Yahya Murtala has further boost their popularity.

Arabic Education in Yoruba land exists in two distinct forms as classified by Umar (2003); those operating the ‘Madrasa’ curriculum and those providing the modified national curricula of public schools. While the later, in addition to incorporating elements of western education in their curricula, the Islamic (Arabic) schools differ in their conscious projection of distinct Islamic cultural identity and orientation in the physical outlay of the school, dressing and discipline.

Umar (2003) further opines that, it is the emphasis placed on Arabic and Islamic studies in the curricula that shapes the Islamic character and differentiates them from public schools. They also do not have any linkage to the educational bureaucracy of the Nigerian State and are neither under the supervision of any government agency.

Modern Islamic schools reflect modified curricular that incorporate the national curricular thereby facilitating the integration of graduates of Islamic education into the educational and career opportunities available to graduates of western education system without abandoning their pursuit of Islamic teachings. The Arabic school however, offers a complete exposure to a classical Arabic and Islamic education and provides little or no space for a secular context or the use of English as instructional medium. In his analysis of the curricula content of these schools, Adedeji (2006) highlighted its content to be full of moral values capable of making the recipients better citizens, able to communicate in Arabic and to memorize numerous Qur’anic texts. The schools however, do not operate a unified syllabus. They lack uniform admission policies and do not expose learners to technology oriented learning experiences.

Example of these schools include: Ma’ had iluri ad-Din founded by Shaykh Kamal ad-Deen al-Adabi (d. 2006) in Ilorin in 1942 and later affiliated to al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1963. Another notable one is Markaz-at-Ta’lim al’Arabi founded by Shaykh Adam al-Ilori Agege in Lagos in 1954. Similar to these two is Darul Irshad wal is’ ad, Orile-Iganmu founded by
Shaykh Sa’eed Ibraheem Olawumi in 1978. Similar schools are scattered in the nooks and crannies of Yoruba land.

On an annual basis, these Arabic schools turn out very significant number of graduates who have spent significant number of years in the schools back to the society. No accounted work has been done towards determining the activities of the students after graduation to justify the relevance or otherwise of Arabic education. This study is therefore aimed at analyzing the contributions of these schools to nation building through an analysis of the activities of their product.

In the above context, this study intends to: identify the products of these Arabic schools and raise some pertinent issues for analysis and further systematic research on the relevance of Arabic school education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study answers some pertinent questions like; whom does the initiative serve? Under whose control? For what purpose? Its quality and impact on the lives of the participants, quality and relevance of what is offered to the social, cultural and economic benefits of its graduates.

Methodology

The paper employed the survey method using the incidental technique. A total of 46 graduates of Arabic schools constituted the sample. Incidental sampling technique was deemed suitable because they are graduates and therefore could not be located at a specific cluster or school.

Two research instruments were used for data collection namely; Arabic Student Post-School Activities Questionnaire (ASPAQ) and an open-ended interview. The ASPAQ consisted of 15 items with responses ranging between agreed, strongly agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The open-ended interview consisted of 12 items. With the Cronbach Alpha reliability test, the reliability of the ASPAQ was established at .68. The ASPAQ was administered to 31 graduates and retrieved on the spot while only 15 graduates were interviewed at different points of contact.

Result/Findings

1. Open ended interview

Below is a summary of responses drawn from the interview:

Certificates obtained prior to enrolment at the Arabic school, 14 out of 15 of those interviewed had passed their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) prior to enrolment in the school while only I participant possessed only the primary school leaving certificate. What is the equivalence of Arabic school certificate issued? They had all obtained an equivalent of Senior Secondary School called “thaanawiy”. Duration spent in the school ranged between 7-8 years. All the respondents ranged between 17-32 years.

The major aim of their attendance or enrolment at Arabic school was “for better understanding of both the Islamic faith and the Arabic language”. With only one exception, all the15 respondents are currently employed either in a government agency or a private company.
The exception ran a private business in commodities. After graduation they all obtained a Bachelor degree in specializations that cut across the sciences, arts and commercial fields. All participants agreed that the knowledge acquired has helped broadened their knowledge of the Islamic faith, improved their spoken Arabic and hence believe they can favourably compete with any graduate of Arabic and Islamic studies from the universities. All the respondents equally attested to the need for such schools to be recognized by the government and upgraded to degree awarding institutions. Except for a participant, all the other 14 were of the view that Arabic is relevant to national development and to the social, moral, and economic development of the people. All agreed they will without hesitation recommend their peers to study in Arabic schools.

2. Analysis of ASPAQ

Q1: How relevant is the qualification of graduates of Arabic schools for employability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>DS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I got a government recognized certificate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Government does not recognize the certificate that we were given from the Arabic school.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I work in government establishment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I work in the private sector</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I work with a multinational company</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I know other graduates of Arabic school who work in government establishment</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 item 1, 51.6% of the respondents affirmed that they got a government recognized certificate but 80.6% in item 2 disagreed to government recognizing the certificate that they were given from the Arabic school which are conflicting opinions. This conflict seems to be addressed in the responses in item 6 in which 74.2% disagreed to working in the government...
establishment. In item 9, 87.1% of them maintained that they knew other graduates of Arabic school who work in the government establishment. This is an evidence of the relevance of the qualification of graduates of Arabic schools for employability. It is further buttressed in the responses for item 7, in which 67.7% accepted that they are employed in the private sector.

Q.2: How relevant are the certificates obtained in these schools to national development?

Table 2: Percentage frequency score of Arabic school graduates’ responses on national development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>DS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I know other graduates of my Arabic school who are now studying in universities</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I still want to study to get a university degree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I can advise people to go to Arabic school</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I believe Arabic schools should try to teach their pupils some entrepreneurial skills</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Graduates of Arabic schools have important contributions to make national development</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 2 items 9 and 10 it could be inferred that 90.3% and 96.8% respectively of the Arabic schools’ graduates endorsed that they still wanted to get a university degree and that they knew other graduates of their school who are now studying in universities. Likewise, item 15 shows that 100% of the respondents strongly consented to graduates of Arabic schools having important contributions to make to national development. Nevertheless, in item 14, they suggested that Arabic schools should try to teach their pupils some entrepreneurial skills for more meaningful contribution. These responses testify to the fact that graduates of Arabic schools contribute meaningfully to national development.

Q.3: What skills do Arabic school graduates possess for self-reliance?
Table 3: Percentage frequency score of Arabic school graduates’ responses on self-reliance.

A = AGREE:  DS = Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>DS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I know other graduates of my Arabic school who are now studying in Universities</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I still want to study to get a University degree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I can advise people to go to my Arabic school</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I believe Arabic schools should try to teach their pupils some entrepreneurial skills</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to item 3 in Table 3 reveal that 90.3% of the respondents endorsed that they use the knowledge and skills acquired from Arabic school as their means of livelihood. This is an indication that they could be self-reliant. However, the skills so acquired seemed to be limited as revealed in their responses to other items. Based on analysis of item 4, 80.6% agreed that they do not learn other skills in their Arabic school apart from the Quran. Consequently, responses of 96.8% of them to item 5 affirms that they teach other people in their neighbourhood the Quran and in item 11, 77.4% of them established that their means of livelihood is mainly clergy (i.e. as an Alfa).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be noted from the findings that Arabic Education occupies a pride of place among the Yorubas and Muslims in general. As unlike in the formal Schools, Education in these schools separate the concept of 'education' from that of 'instruction'. It views education as a means to help in the complete growth of a personality; it describes a form of functional education that is ingrained in the youth irrespective of professional aspiration, whereas instruction merely trains an individual in the efficient performance of some task. It is therefore serves complementary purposes to formal education and perhaps also serves as compensation for the short comings of the formal learning.

It is also to be noted from the foregone that the attention paid to Arabic schools by government authorities was reluctant and far from being wholehearted. It is regarded, as Rogers (2004) described non-formal education "the poor and badly dressed guest at the education table, whose presence was hardly desired and who no one knew quite how to approach". Yet their presence cannot be ignored for they fill a certain educational need and vacuum of certain individuals and groups within the society. As a viable alternative or supplement to formal learning, this paper recommend that Arabic schools should enhance it capacity by the inclusion of some basic entrepreneurial skills and training to their curricula. These schools also can grow and be adequately integrated into the formal system. Policy makers and planners should interact with such schools with a view to becoming an issue of interest to education ministries, planning directories and benefitting from donor agencies to education.
References


