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The Weaknesses of the Curriculum in the Teaching of Arabic (a Muslim Language) as a Foreign Language

Lateef Adebowale Jamiu*

Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria
*Correspondence: E-mail: jamiulateef33@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study has extensively discussed the Weaknesses of the Curriculum in the Teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language. Arabic is a Muslim language. As a foreign language, Arabic is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. It is also the official language of more than 27 Countries. In the U.S. Arabic is the second most common language spoken by English Language Learners after Spanish. Sweden is the next most spoken mother-tongue language after Swedish. In Nigeria, the Arabic language is one of the three international languages. There is a village in Nigeria called Ngala where Arabic is their mother language. A language-based curriculum provides well-planned content information that is strategically presented to facilitate learning and enrich the language experiences of the students across all subject areas . This study aims to analyze the weaknesses of curriculum in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language . Introduction, Definition of Curriculum by different Scholars, The Weaknesses of the Arabic language Curriculum , Ten Weaknesses in the Arabic language curriculum, Suggestions, and Conclusion while the References are illustrated.

A R T I C L E I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

The Concept of "Curriculum" is a linguistic meaning for the Arabic equivalent of the word "curriculum" and is derived from the Arabic word "nahj" which means a clear approach or guide. In Arabic, the word "approach" means a clear path or plan. The words "approach", "curriculum", and "guidance" mean the same thing. Curriculum" in Terminology" The concept of a "curriculum" has evolved following the development of modern academic viewpoints and following the perspectives of scholars and researchers towards the elements of the academic process. These elements are the teacher, the book, and the student (Maryanti *et al.,* 2021).

A group of these scholars put the most emphasis on the teacher. Another group believes the book to be the most important element of the academic process. While the last group overestimated the role of the student (learner), a minority of scholars tried eliminating the student as an element of the academic process, while the majority believed the student to be the most important element of the academic process since learners are the central essence of the academic process in schools and universities (Bermudez *et al.,* 2021). These different viewpoints contributed to complicating and affecting the concept of a "curriculum". They also produced various terminological meanings for the concept of curriculum, which caused problems. On the other hand, these seemingly contradictory viewpoints have led to huge developments in the concept itself. It is imperative to analyze these different viewpoints as they hide - directly and indirectly – many shortcomings related to the Arabic language curriculum (Maryanti and Nandiyanto, 2021).

This paper aims to point out these shortcomings in a detailed approach to analyze them and find suitable solutions. Before explaining the concept of a "curriculum", we must first point out its constant development. The old classical forms and restraints no longer restrict it. Today, the "curriculum" concept can be found in many forms such as being the connection between the teacher and the student and affecting them the most, which justifies giving the academic approach/curriculum a lot of attention.

2. METHOD

This is a literature survey. Data were obtained from an internet source, especially articles from international journals. Data were then collected and summarized to get some explanations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Definitions of Curriculum by Different Scholars

As a consequence, many studies have discussed the mutual root of the curriculum's concept. The curriculum defined as "The entire academic experiences that are offered to the student to give him knowledge and general skills" (Maryanti & Nandiyanto, 2021). On the other hand, others referred to the curriculum as "An academic scheme containing elements, such as objectives, content, academic experiences, education and knowledge (Widiaty *et al.,* 2020). All these elements are derived from philosophical, social, and cognitive fundamentals that are related to students, and gathered and applied in educational interactions inside and outside the school to contribute in achieving an integral and complete learner's personality." The previous definition is in total alignment with Marsh's definition. Similarly, another scholar defines the curriculum as "The core of the academic work and the mediator assisting the educational environment to achieve its targets and objectives, because the teaching and learning factors (the teacher and student) are mostly affected by the curriculum (Rosina, 2021). As long as the curriculum is an intensive subject matter, many attempts were found to

have one comprehensive terminological definition. A scholar has adopted a new definition that defines it as "A group of educational, cultural, social, mathematical and artistry experiences the school offers to its students to help them achieve comprehensive development and to improve their behavior according to its educational objectives.

Furthermore, some studies comprehended the shortcomings within the curriculum through the shortcomings within the concept itself, as the curriculum requires having a conveyor (teacher) who does not only offer knowledge. Such studies defined the curriculum as "A group of experiences and activities a school offers to the students to interact with those experiences which produce learning and improvement in their behavior and leads to accomplishing complete and comprehensive progress which is the highest goal of education (Maryanti & Nandiyanto, 2021). At the same time, another study has defined the curriculum as "A group of fundamentals and bases that clarify the perspective of an individual, society or a nation to reach their objectives (Landero *et al.,* 2022). This urges us to discuss the matter of concentrating on the general output as a whole rather than concentrating on each student's output. It is rather clear that the most visible mutual factor from all the previous definitions is the agreement on having wanted results from the educational curricula.

In general, and the Arabic language curriculum in particular. Through these definitions, we can determine the shortcomings of the curriculum and have a variety of different definitions that may help in revealing the gaps. Hopefully, these shortcomings can be fixed by a scientific analysis that can end this dilemma. At this point, we must refer to Majed Harb's study in which he describes the concept of a curriculum using an adequate scientific description that directly points out the shortcomings of the curriculum itself, he says: "A discourse that carries a value with a certain purpose, appears inside and outside the academic environment at the same time, clearly and unclearly. The one analyzing this definition sees that there is a variety of explanations for the curriculum within the same circle.

3.2. The weaknesses of the Arabic Language Curriculum

The shortcomings of the Arabic language curricula are not based on assumptions; they can be seen in our elementary and academic institutions. The biggest clue is the weak academic output from the students. These outputs have proven to be a direct result of the curricula and, also apply to various other academic fields. The current state of the Arabic language curricula is not up to par. The problem is not the language itself. The problem lies in the state of its native speakers, students, and teachers. For instance, if we observe an Arabic language class at a university, we would notice weaknesses and shortcomings in the basic elements of the academic process: the teacher, the book, and the student. Once again, these observations are supported by weak academic output. Additionally, the weaknesses in school classrooms must be categorized as the most dangerous problem. This controversy has no end and the problems can't stop getting more difficult. What one must notice are the weaknesses found in the student's skills and potential regarding the Arabic language, which is direct evidence of having weak curricula. From this point forward, we must agree that the notion of having many shortcomings in the Arabic language curriculum is not based on assumptions; they are a reality we all live. Perhaps, analyzing the previously mentioned elements of the academic process would help us in diagnosing the gaps between the approach as a theory and as an application.

What one has to realize is that most of the concepts have not been tested scientifically, while many of them have stayed as unapplied theories. These points contributed to destroying the accumulated and demanding process of teaching the Arabic language. After this, it's normal to say "A description of this type is nothing but a result of a structural defect

in the performance of the educational systems in the elementary schools, high schools, and universities as well. As is known, the cognitive background is the starting phase to building one's art and literary work; such as what critics, poets, and writers do. They analyze and interact with related texts and previous works related to their fields to produce professional pieces of work and to enter the circle of art and creativity. This also applies to Arabic language learners and falls under the establishing phase, which enables learners to speak classical and modern standard Arabic. Likewise, the same strategy applies to the initial approach starting from the student's elementary stage. The curriculum must be organized systematically and be adequate to build other advanced curricula on a solid foundation. This point is crucial because it prevents the learners' from having mental and cultural confusion, or having contradictory values as a result of a weak approach that lacks scientific standards in teaching a particular language. This paper aims to encourage educational institutions to amend their Arabic language curricula from the early stages to have greater and stronger academic output in the advanced stages, as well as, to take into consideration avoidance of including certain ideologies and ideas that students and teachers do not prefer or need.

3.3. Ten Weaknesses in the Arabic Language Curriculum

This part of the paper will clarify ten major shortcomings in the Arabic language curriculum. These ten shortcomings are the most crucial as they affect the anticipated outputs of the academic process (Maryanti *et al.,* 2021). Ten shortcomings in the Arabic language curriculum. Needless to say, there are more shortcomings, but this paper considers these to be the most significant:

(i) The Signifier and Signified. The first thing a young student learns is sounds and their relevance to the signifier and signified through a certain approach chosen by the writer of the curriculum. At this stage of compiling a curriculum, the authors must choose signifiers that are easy to pronounce by the young students; following their sound production abilities and breathing movements. All the choices must be very specific and not chosen randomly. In addition, it is advisable to involve an expert, in children's pronunciation abilities, in the procedure of choosing the appropriate signifiers. All these points are related to the variation of having different cases related to the children's potential regards learning a certain language, taking into consideration the IQ levels and their readiness to learn new vocabulary which is the scale to evaluate children's intelligence. The entire process of choosing the correct signifiers is related to the children's ability to pronounce sounds and their comprehension of "The Signified and Signifier". This shortcoming is the most important one on the list because it's the foundation on which the curricula will be built in the future according to the outputs of the earlier stages. In turn, a young student can learn how to use correct wording in the first academic years. The student will be able to express himself and his ideas in the future, as well as, can read and comprehend texts quickly and appropriately following his level and the curriculum's level.

(ii) Communication. The communication shortcoming in the Arabic language curricula is the most dangerous shortcoming on the list because the main purpose of any spoken and written language in the world is communicating with others through that language. Still, many Arabic language curricula neglect this crucial point. Unfortunately, the Arabic language curriculum's attitude towards the importance of communication as a secondary requirement amplifies the problem and creates issues for the learner when communicating with others in the future. Curricula must stop treating Arabic as a rigid language and must focus on factors other than listening and speaking; there are more

elements related to communication other than these two. It is interesting to note that non-Arab speakers who learn Arabic as a second language have more advanced communication skills than native speakers. Perhaps, one of the reasons for this is the domination of teaching grammar and syntax in Arabic courses. In addition, this shortcoming gets more complicated as the entire approach of teaching grammar is not useful and cannot be linked with the learner's social life. This study recommends focusing on the applied approach of the communication skills topics and practices simply because communication will always be the initial element that leads to the Arabic language acquisition and exchange of wording and vocabulary within the organizational patterns and society's culture.

(iii)   The Exclusion of the Teacher. The teacher is the absolute expert in the field, who knows the reality of the academic process more than anyone else. In particular, Arabic language teachers know the smallest details in their classes and are aware of the student's emotional and psychological conditions. As we all know, the curriculum is often prepared by the Ministry of Education's supervisors or university professors. During the process, they prepare daily and semester plans and tasks without paying enough care and attention to the role of the instructor. Notwithstanding, we expect instructors, who feel like pre-programmed machines that only obey stereotypical orders and directions, to be creative, innovative, strict, optimistic, funny, and good-looking. Neglecting the role of the teachers makes the problem worse, they are not involved in the process of compiling curricula and they cannot decide how to control their classes as well. On top of that, they are constantly being evaluated, observed, and criticized by their supervisors according to stereotyped scales made by stereotyped plans. Surely, the output of the Arabic curricula will be stereotyped and predicted according to prior judgments that have nothing to do with the students' lingual and creative output. The role of the Arabic teacher is not only teaching; "we have to involve them in compiling the Arabic language curricula too.

(iv)   Linguistic Evaluation Scales. The fourth shortcoming of the Arabic language curriculum is forgetting the linguistic and learners' evaluation scales, especially after finishing the first three years at school. The widespread excuse for this matter is always justified by saying that the curricula of the first three years are based entirely on the first three years of middle school, which leads to a clear defect in the verbal curriculum's structure and content. As a solution, teachers can give students oral and written tests to evaluate their verbal skills after the first three grades by choosing a sample, which to some extent, covers a certain geographical part of the country. Then, a new edited curriculum that reaches the lowest linguistic level must be prepared. This method can be applied to all ages. For sure, having children of the same age in the same class is not a condition. Another problem is that strategies of curricula don't depend on pre-prepared evaluation scales to determine the students' levels. These scales are very important as they help the Arabic language curricula avoid the dilemma of "matching" and taking into consideration the psychological and perceptual growth of learners from different ages, to expand the interaction's circle with the educational programs and curricula with harmony that creates bigger motivation towards learning." Most international languages, particularly the English language, apply these standards. Also, many instructors apply them when teaching non-native speakers of a certain language.

(v)   Bias. The fifth shortcoming in the Arabic language curricula is the bias found in the content towards certain ideologies and political viewpoints. This study is not referring to ideologies and political viewpoints that are related to genuine patriotism and

national loyalty as they express a nation's culture. The Arabic language is very flexible, has many connections with ideologies, and is full of literature and creativity. These points allow the Arabic language to contain many kinds of literature such as poetry, prose, novels, plays, speeches, etc. These creations add more value to the Arabic language, besides a variety of explanations, tastes, and criticism. The previous variety is capable of making Arabic keep up with the current century, despite the fact of having many scholars neglect the importance of Arabic. Even if the ideology is unchangeable in the Arab countries; policies and strategies change, which produces another dilemma when changing the curricula's content following the dynamic changes in the political visions and political sciences. By doing so, each generation will be forced to deal with new ideologies and perspectives according to the political vision of the country. Surely, every curriculum will be different from the previous curriculum. The problem lies in creating a new generation that lives in mental and ideological confusion. This will surely reflect on the generations to come. We advise detaching the Arabic language curriculum from the ideological and political state, to bring more creativity, development, and continuity according to the normal un-ideological global development.

(vi)   The Domination of Traditional Curricula. The sixth shortcoming of the Arabic language curriculum is the appearance and domination of traditional curricula. Those traditional curricula are not based on a certain creative preplanned approach and they do not provide any development regards the linguistic outputs of the Arabic educational system. So where is the literacy we have asked for many decades ago? Unfortunately, we have no literacy in our Arabic learning approaches; yet we have in the English learning approaches in our society and academic institutions. The beginning of this shortcoming started in the mid-twentieth century when many Arab academic institutions replaced the old curricula with new curricula brought from the West by some Arab academics like Taha Hussein. For instance, the lingual curriculum in France cannot be in line with the supposed Arabic curriculum.

(vii) The Integrated Curriculum. Another shortcoming in the Arabic language curriculum is lacking the theory of having an applied integrated curriculum, which deals with Arabic language skills and teaching through an integrated approach and following an integrated linguistic application. The essence of this shortcoming is entirely linked to the false strategies of parting the curriculum when teaching students. The separation has contributed to slowing the curriculum's development. As well as, having contents that are filled up with grammar and instructions which does not allow learners to analyze scientifically. Breaking the Arabic curriculum into sections is a result of demanding partial needs that have negative effects on the receiver (student). I advise teaching those needs as one integrated curriculum that corresponds with the academic growth of the receiver instead of focusing on syntax and instructions, which means neglecting the importance of listening and speaking skills as mentioned previously. Here, we must point out the function of these two skills regards learning the skills of writing and reading "The effectiveness of any lingual curriculum is evaluated by its relevance or irrelevance to the natural circumstances of language acquisition and the skills of oral communication which they are listening and speaking, accompanied with the other two skills of writing and reading. The results of this approach determine if any curriculum is effective or not.

(viii) Content and Students' Preferences. The student's preferences must be taken into consideration when compiling the curriculum. These preferences have an effective role in developing long-term linguistic behavior and forming speech abilities. As long as

learners interact and get affected by the content, we can say the curriculum is effective. Also, adding simplicity to the content and avoiding vagueness, complication and inflexibility give the wanted results from the academic process. As long as the main goal of any curriculum is teaching, then the content must be interesting for learners to feel motivated to learn. To achieve these goals, we advise having a variety of content in the Arabic curricula. Additionally, teachers, mentors, and psychologists should be consulted when choosing texts for the content.

(ix) Extracurricular Activities. Also known as "extra-classroom activities", these activities are curricular and considered additions to the activities inside the classroom. The problem is that, if we add these activities to the content they will not get the wanted attention and they will still be unapplied by the teacher or students. This confusion affects the purpose of applying the Arabic language in real life and society.

(x) The Evaluation Tools. The Arabic language curricula share similar shortcomings regarding the evaluation tools that are based on questions; especially in teaching texts and listening. The tools of the evaluating questions are mostly asked using: Do, Does/What/Why. This means that comprehending texts will not be more than memorizing the answers to such questions, without focusing on analysis, explanation, expressing opinions and thoughts, and interacting with the text's characters when discussing oral or written texts. Unfortunately, the Arabic language curricula lack the correct evaluation tools and scales linked to the responses taken from the learning patterns.

In the learning pattern, there are some points:

(i) Reading lines (capability pattern).
(ii) Reading between the lines (comprehension pattern).
(iii) Reading behind the lines (self-expression pattern).
(iv) Responding to the lines (partly personal pattern).

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has extensively discussed the Weaknesses of the Curriculum in the Teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language. where some studies have been given out the definitions of the concept of curriculum and the present status of Arabic curriculum which need inclusion of some areas of Arabic language when the language curriculum is been planned. The paper also discussed the consideration of Arabic teachers and students in curriculum planning. The weaknesses of the Arabic language teaching curriculum were also successfully identified on which some suggestions were spelled out to tackle the problems of Arabic language teaching in our society.

The Arabic language curriculum suffers from a clear shortcoming in forming educational questions. It is crucial to solving this problem as evaluation is considered the main tool in achieving academic goals. Several suggestions are in the following:

(i) The differences between the concept of the Arabic curriculum and its application need the proper attention of the Arabic curriculum planners.
(ii) The Involvement of biological consultants and speech specialists in the process of choosing the signifiers for young children.
(iii) Focusing on the communication skill with its two sides "Listening and Speaking" give it the greatest importance in the Arabic language learning curricula.

(iv) The Involvement of Arabic teachers in the process of compiling Arabic books and preparing Arabic curricula as they are elements in the educational process that involves the Arabic teacher, student, and book.

(v)   Establish standards and scales that determine the Arabic students' levels after their first three years, and make prior tests that help in choosing the appropriate content following the Arabic students' levels.

(vi) Take into consideration the integrated growth of the Arabic learner and focus on the wanted behaviouristic outputs from the process of teaching the Arabic language.

(vii) Avoid bias and the inclusion of ideologies and politics when preparing Arabic curricula.

(viii) End the domination of the old Arabic curricula that are alleged to maintain our culture, and borrow what benefits and keeps the Arabic language's privacy from the Western curricula.

(ix) Create integrated Arabic curricula and avoid parting language into rules and instructions.

(x)   Prepare Arabic language content that meets students' preferences and levels and end the process of evaluating levels according to age.

(xi) Reconsider the evaluation tools and add questions that develop the skills of self-expression, interaction, and explanation, which lead to creativity.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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