

## FROM HERE WE START: TOWARDS RESUSCITATION OF ARABIC/ISLAMIC-BRIDGED PROGRAMME IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### **Abstract**

*The twin discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies, as academic disciplines in some Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities have been witch-hunted with various obstacles. Out of these obstacles, the major one is shortfall admission and low enrolment of the students qualifying for the duo programmes which later led to the introduction of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme to rescue the situation. This paper aims at looking at the origin of the twin discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Southern Nigeria and its in-road to western stereo-typed universities in 1960s. It also aims at show-casing the intervention of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programmes, its purpose, its advantages and how it served as timely intervention and rescue between 1960s and 1980s. It is discovered that this Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme had served as an effective linkage of students from the private purely Arabic schools (Madāris) to the western stereo-typed schools with obvious fruitful results in the duo disciplines in the Departments of Arabic and Islamic studies in Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities. The findings show that Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities would continue having the problems of shortfall in admission and low enrolment of the students qualifying for the duo programmes if they fail to resuscitate the Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme. The study recommends that this Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme should be re-introduced into the affected universities so as to sustain the duo disciplines from extinction in the western stereo-typed institutions in the Southern Nigeria. It also recommends that each of these private purely Arabic schools in the Southern Nigeria should harmonise their syllabus with that of National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) and Joint Examination of Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JEBAIS) which are the presently recognized examination bodies for this programme. It further recommends that Federal Ministry of Education should give its moral and financial supports by taking up the academic and financial challenges of some of these private purely Arabic schools, if not all, as it is in operation in the Northern Nigeria so as to enhance their academic output to meet the demand of the western stereo-typed universities in the whole country.*

**Keywords:** Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme, Resuscitation, Department, Arabic and Islamic Studies, University, Southern Nigeria.

## Introduction

The two disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies are among the various academic disciplines offering in public and private universities in Nigeria. Apart from being one of the subjects that fall under religious and moral education in the curriculum, Arabic and Islamic Studies in all the levels of education in Nigeria are designed to equip the students in character and mental power for the purpose of leading the best way of life within Nigeria and diaspora. Arabic and Islamic Studies form essential part of spiritual and moral education which seek to determine how man should live, behave and lead a meaningful life so as to contribute his own quota to the development of his environment. Both disciplines come into play in African continent when we are dealing with history of West Africans, their nations, political institutions, religions and socio-cultural lifestyles. Contemporarily, these two academic disciplines in some Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities have been witch-hunted with various obstacles ranging from societal recognition of the duo disciplines to the shortfall admission and low enrolment of the students qualifying for the programmes. On this premise, there is need for urgent intervention to arrest the situation to save the duo disciplines from extinction by searching for the way-out of making use of the feeder sources from which the in-takes for the two programmes could be sourced for. This urgent intervention is highly needed in this crucial time when the National University Commission (NUC) is making every effort to widen the curricula and syllabi of all academic programmes in Nigerian universities so as to meet the demand of the time and touch every phase of national development in the areas of social, economic and political activities in the country. Arabic and Islamic Studies as a subject in both public and private pre-primary (*Tamhidiyyah*), primary (*Ibtida'iyah*), junior post-primary (*Idadiyyah*), senior post-primary (*Thanawiyyah*) and tertiary institution (*Kulliyah/Jāmi'ah*) in Nigeria in the twenty-first century should be geared towards a meaningful and sustainable development in the educational policy in Nigeria.

This paper therefore concerns itself with the resuscitation of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme to rescue the Arabic and Islamic Studies in the universities situated in Southern Nigeria from shortfall admission and low enrolment of the student intakes. It examines the emergence of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme in the privately-owned Arabic schools (*Madāris*) in Southern Nigerian environs and its in-road to western stereo-typed universities in 1960s as a linkage between privately-owned Arabic schools (*Madāris*) and the western stereo-typed Departments of Arabic and Islamic studies in Southern Nigerian universities.

## Emergence of Arabic/Islamic Studies in Southern Nigeria

One of the prophetic responsibilities of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is dissemination of Islamic education to the whole mankind in order to revolutionize the secular lifestyles of the people. Since there is no continuity in prophethood after the demise of Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W), the dissemination of Islamic education came down to prophet's companions (*Aṣḥābu'l-Rasūl*), their students (*Ṭābi'ūn*) and their disciples (*Ṭabatu'l- Ṭābi'īn*) who preserved this heritage and passed it on from one generation to the other. (Doi, 1984)

The advent of Islam into West Africa in the eight century of Gregorian calendar through the commercial linkage of North Africans and West Africans served as the beginning of Arabic and Islamic Studies disciplines in the area as the development paved way for the introduction of Islam and its cultures which naturally followed the introduction of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Majority of West African empires rose and later declined but what remained in their domains were the Arabic and Islamic Studies which represented Islamic cultural heritage in those areas. The best sample of this are Sankore Islamic Centre at Timbuktu and Islamic Centre at Jenne, both in Mali Empire. From these notable centres of learning in West Africa, Arabic and Islamic Studies entered Nigerian milieu in eleven century of Gregorian calendar through Kanem-Bornu Empire, from there to Kano, to Sokoto and down to Ilorin which led to its in-road to Southern Nigeria, most especially South-Western which is domiciled by Yorubas. (Doi, 1984)

From the beginning, the mosque (*Masjid*) and Muslim community, as usual, has been the centre of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the Muslim communities in Southern Nigeria which consists of three geo-political zones namely South-West (Yorubaland), South-East (Igboland) and South-South (Niger Delta). Both venues, serve as well as a place for prayer and meditation, a centre of religious instruction and learning. Arabic and Islamic Studies started in Southern Nigeria in the seventeenth century by two groups of Islamic scholars. The first group of Islamic scholars who pioneered the teaching-learning of the duo disciplines were scholars from Northern Nigeria who migrated down to the Southern Nigeria for either Islamic evangelism or business transaction. The second group of Islamic scholars was the indigenes who happened to be the products and graduates of notable centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies in some towns and cities in the Northern Nigeria (Adegoke. 2013). This group, after their studies, came back to their various towns and cities and established their own Arabic/Islamic centres to train the natives. The samples of these scholars were Shaykh Abubakr Ibn Al-Qāsim Alaga, a native of Ibadan who received his training at Ilorin. He came to his home town in Ibadan and established his Arabic school at Oke Aremo where he trained some scholars like Haruna Matanmi Oke Gege, Muhammad Sanusi Ibn Haruna and Ahmadu'r-Rufa'I Ibn Muhammad Bello. Another scholar was Ahmadu'r-Rufa'I Ibn Muhammad Bello who also established his own Arabic school at his residential place at Oke Are, Ibadan. On this line was Shaykh Abdu's-Salam Bamidele who established Arabic and Islamic centre at Ibadan after he had received the training from Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji from Ilorin.<sup>3</sup> Both groups of scholars established their centres of Arabic and Islamic studies popularly called *Islamiyyah*, *Ile-Kewu*, *Makaranta* which was organized in semi-formal and non-formal approach at three different location in the Muslim community like scholar's residential home, community mosque and open space in the community under the shade of tree. Since these centres are individually and privately-owned, the proprietors operated free curricula in terms of the subject matter, time table, class size and duration of the studies. (Adegoke. 2013) The founders do not receive salary from any certain body as they operate within their own resources, however they receive any form of lawful voluntary donation from parents and well-wishers. The curriculum of these centres includes teaching of recitation of the Qur'an from alphabets to reading of the text and study of selected book of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) like *Al-Akhḍarī*, *Al-Ashmawī* and *Ar-Rasālah*. This curriculum could enable the product to further his or her studies in formal Arabic/Islamic centre initially in the Northern Nigeria and later in the South-Western Nigeria. In the South-East and South-South, Arabic and Islamic Studies started late in the twentieth century due to the fact that the areas were already dominated by pagans and Christians (Ottenberg, 2012). The duo disciplines was privately-pioneered by some Northern Islamic scholars who migrated to the environment in search of greener pasture in some major town like Benin, Auchi, Agbede, Warri, Asaba, Aba, Onisha, Enugu, Awka, Owerri, Aniocha, Afikpo, Calabar, Port-Harcourt *et.cetera*. These scholars are using their few mosques in the areas as the classrooms (Kilani, 2000). Like South-West, these centres are also operated free curricula in terms of the subject matter, time table, class size and duration of the studies. The

curriculum could enable the product to further his or her studies in formal Arabic/Islamic school in the Northern Nigeria or locally in Auchi because of its proximity to the North (Adegoke, 2004). These centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies setting-up by individuals, communities and sometimes, by Muslim organizations like Ansar ud-Deen, Ahmadiyyah, Anwar ul-Islam, Nawair ud-Deen *et.cetera* were in vogue during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period in Southern Nigeria till the present day, although some modifications and reformation are currently taking place (Adegoke, 2010).

### **Advent of Formalized Centre of Arabic/Islamic Studies in Southern Nigeria**

The first formalized centre of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Southern Nigeria was established in 1904 in Lagos by Shaykh Muhammad Mustafa Al-Afandi, a Syrian Islamic scholar and settler (Sanni, 2012). As an highly experienced scholar in the field, he wrote Arabic textbooks for his pupils, *Miftāhu'l-Lughati'l-'Arabiyyah*, which happened to be the earliest works in Arabic as a teaching material of Arabic to West African non-Arabic speakers and students. Another alien scholar of Arabic who was also a pioneer of formalized centre was Shaykh Abdu'l-Karim Al-Tarabulisi who was another settler from Tripoli in Libya. The first Nigerian scholars who established his formalized centre of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Lagos in 1908 in Southern Nigeria was Shaykh Waziri Al-Bidawi who hailed from Bida. He was a Nupe man who lived in Lagos, Ibadan and Ilorin teaching and publishing Arabic textbooks (Abubakre, 2012).

Thereafter emerged standard and formalized centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies established in Southern Nigeria by natives in which some element of modern systems, organized sessions and classrooms, use of illustrated school textbooks and classification of the study levels were incorporated (Abubakre, 2004). The first of this kind of centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies established by natives was Markazu't-Ta'limi'l-'Arabiyy (Centre for Arabic and Studies) which was established in 1952 *ab initio* at Abeokuta but later moved to its permanent site at Agege Area of Lagos in 1957. This was followed by the establishment of Ma'hadu'l-Arabiyy An-Naijiriyy (The Arabic Institute of Nigeria) at Elekuro, Ibadan by Shaykh Murtada Abdu's-Salam at Ibadan in 1958 (Abubakre, 2004). Shaykh Khidr Salahuddin Apaokagi also established his centre of Arabic and Islamic Studies popularly known as Ma'hadu'l-Adabiyyah in 1955 at Owo in Ondo State (Oseni, 2002). Another centre of Arabic of this caliber is Madrasatu'l-Kharaziyy which was established by Shaykh Yusuf Kharazi in 1945 at Odo Okun, Ibadan, Nahdatu'l-Arabiyyah Wa'l-Islamiyyah which was also established by Shaykh Sanni Omiyale situated at Odinjo, Daru'd-Da'wah Arabic Centre established at Olorunsogo, Ibadan by Shaykh Adelani, Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Omiyale, Ibadan by Shaykh Abdu'l-Barii Adetunji, Daru'd-Da'wah Wa'l-Irshad Centre established by Shaykh Mustafa Zughlul in 1970 at Isolo, Lagos and Ma'had Zumratu'l-Adabiyyah Al-Kamaliyyah at Orile-Iganmu in Lagos by Shaykh Oniyangi (Opeloye & Makinde, 2012). Thereafter emerged several centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies at different towns and cities in the Southern part of Nigeria which were established by the products of the first generation centres earlier-mentioned (Onibon, 2010).

### **Arabic and Islamic Studies' In-Road to Southern Nigerian Universities**

As a request to the yearning of Nigerians for local university education in the country at the beginning of twentieth century, University College was founded in 1948 at Ibadan as a college extension of the University of London. It was realized that Islamic intellectual heritage had a lot to offer to the academy at such a high level of education, Arabic documents and those in African

languages using the Arabic script have been found to be veritable sources for the history of the African continent, and indeed for unlocking the secrets of its past. Apart from this fact, University College as college extension of the University of London as earlier-mentioned had been given Arabic and Islamic Studies due attention and support through its School of Oriental and African Studies. William Kensdale, an expatriate Librarian and an Arabist *per excellence* was posted University of Ibadan in the early 1950s. This man developed interest in the collection of Arabic manuscripts from the immediate environment of the Southern Nigeria and the rest of the country which later led to the establishment of the Centre for Arabic Documentation at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ibadan. This centre still exists till today welcoming indigenous researchers from around the world to publish their researches in its periodical Research Bulletin (Abubakre, 2002). As a result of this development, Arabic and Islamic Studies started in the University College, Ibadan (UCI) as an academic unit of the Department of History for a year. The University College later became full-fledged university in 1962 with new name of University of Ibadan (UI) with new indigenous Vice-Chancellor in person of Professor Kenneth O. Dike who is a professor of African History (Abbas, 2008). Professor Kenneth O. Dike and Professor John O. Hunwick, the first Head of Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies Unit put in place independent academic departments for Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1962 for which students were admitted in 1963 for degree courses leading to the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Hunwick, 2008). The B.A Degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies aim at under-studying Arabic language and Literature, and Islamic culture and civilization, which is the common heritage of all Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle-East and of many other countries and communities in Africa and Asia (Malik, 1999).

### **Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Western Stereo-Typed Institutions of Learning and Intervention of Arabic-Islamic Bridged Programme**

With the commencement of Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies as one of the courses running in the Faculty of Arts of western stereo-typed university (University of Ibadan), the stage had been set for the advancement of the twin discipline of Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian higher institutions of learning (Oloyede, 2012). As a result of this development in the duo discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies, the traditional objective of engagement in the disciplines necessarily had to be modified beyond the rigid and immanent circle of spiritualism and faith-based endeavour. The curriculum also has to be designed to fall in line with the overall objective of university education which includes the provision of qualified manpower for the various sectors of the national life (*Faculty of Arts Brochure, 2002-2003*). The first challenge facing the studying of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the University of Ibadan was shortfall in the admission and low enrolment of the students into the duo disciplines. This obstacle was premised on the fact that despite the fact that there were lot of Arabic and Islamic Studies competent candidates in the country, the university was still experiencing the low enrolment into the duo disciplines because of language barrier that prevented them from being admitted into western stereo-typed institutions of learning. To rescue the duo disciplines from untimely extinction, the Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme was introduced to feed the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies with candidates without Arabic background. The programme served as an academic linkage between traditional Arabic-Islamic centres and purely western stereo-typed institution of learning in Nigeria. These Arabic/Islamic-Bridged programme could be divided into the following seven;

**i. Syllabus B Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme**

This programme was designed for the candidates who do not have Arabic background. They were to spend four years of intensive learning in Arabic including one year acculturation in an Arab country to equip them with the language (Abbas, 2008). Islamic Studies was later added to the syllabus to add more value to the programme.

**ii. One-Year Arabic Certificate Course**

This is one-year intensive course for purely Arabic teachers (*Mu‘alimūn*) who could not express themselves in English language which is the official language of instruction in Nigerian institution of learning, some of whom have had many years of experience in the teaching of the language in an Arabic school (*Madrasah*). This programme would equip these Arabic teachers in English conversation in order to equip them to meet up with other students of western-oriented institution background (Balogun, 1985).

**iii. Two-Year Diploma Course in Arabic and Islamic Studies**

This is Two-Year Diploma Course in Arabic and Islamic Studies. This programme was initially designed for the candidates who have Grade Two Teacher Training Certificate, or preferably a certificate holder from College of Education who had taken Islamic Studies as one of their subjects while on training and ‘O’ Level Certificate holders with Credit passes in five subjects including Islamic Studies. This programme is designed to arouse the interest of the candidate for the twin disciplines in the university (Sanni, 2012).

**iv. Madrasah Approach Arabic/Islamic Studies-Bridged Programme**

This programme is to enable the products of conventional secondary schools, Arabic Teacher Colleges into specialized colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies. It also includes those products of Arabic schools who through private efforts acquire entry qualifications, into Southern Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning for degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Oloyede, 2012).

**v. Arabic Remedial Programme**

This is sub-degree programme in Arabic and Islamic Studies which is designed to incorporate candidates whose educational background was in Arabic to the conventional western education system and to prepare them for higher studies in Arabic and Islamic education (Oloyede, 2012).

**vi. Affiliated Programme for Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies**

This is an affiliation of some privately-owned colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies to the public conventional institution of learning in Nigeria in order to get their certificates recognized by the government and for their products to be employed as manpower in public schools or admitted into the public university. Such private colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies running three-year diploma programme are affiliated to University of Ibadan and Lagos State University in the Southern Nigeria. Some of these affiliated colleges were Mufutau ‘Lanihun College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Institute of Arabic both at Ibadan, Awayewaserere College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ososa-Ijebu, Ansar-udeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Isolo,

Lagos, Osun Theological College, Osogbo and Zulikhah Abiola College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Abeokuta *et.cetera* (Abbas, 2008).

### **vii. National Boards and Examination Bodies for Arabic and Islamic Centres**

The present national boards and examination bodies for Arabic and Islamic centres in Nigeria popularly are National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) and Joint Examination Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JEBAIS). These two bodies organized Senior Islamic Studies (SISE) and Senior Arabic and Islamic Secondary School Examinations (SAISSE) for both junior (*Idadiyyah*) and senior Arabic schools (*Thanawiyyah*) respectively. They have been incharged of registering private Arabic centre in the countrys, preparing their syllabi, standardizing their curriculum and conducting centralized final examinations for them (Oloyede, 2012).

### **Glorious Days of Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in Southern Nigerian University**

Arabic/Islamic-Bridged programmes in Southern Nigeria was pioneered by the University of Ibadan, later joined by the Lagos State University in 1996 and Ekiti State University in 2018 through its recognition of NBAIS Senior Islamic Studies Certificate (SISC) and Senior Arabic and Islamic Secondary School Examinations Certificate (SAISSC) as one of the admission requirements for a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Lawal, 2001). The need for the Arabic/Islamic-Bridged programmes in Southern Nigeria was long overdue before it came on board of academic table of Western-oriented institutions of learning in 1960s. the main reason for this undisputable fact was that Southern Nigeria and its environs which are saturated with several private Arabic schools (*Madāris*) producing specialists in the twin disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies, year in year out, could still be suffering of shortfall admission and entry qualification over the years and cannot boast of sufficient teachers of these subjects for its western-oriented secondary schools (Brochure of Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1999). It should be rightly mentioned at this juncture that Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in these Southern Nigerian universities has recorded a remarkable success in the history of Arabic and Islamic education in the country as majority of professors in the field who have served and still serving in different national parastatals started their career from some of these privately-owned Arabic schools (*Madāris*), institutes (*Ma'āhid*) and centres (*Marākiz*) running Arabic/Islamic Bridged programme (Quadri, 2001). For instance, Markazu'l-Ta'limi'l-Arabi Wa'l-Islami, Agege Lagos produced some renowned professors of Arabic and Islamic Studies like R. D. Abubakre, M. A. Ajetunmobi, R. A. Raji, M. A. Bidmos, S. U. Balogun, I. O. Oloyede, A. G. A. S Oladosu, O. B. Yusuf, S. A. Agaka, Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (*Ma'had*), Olodo, Ibadan produced M. O. Opeloye, I. L. Akintola, I. A. Bello, S. M. Jamiu, A. A. Zubayr, M. G. Raji, M. G. Haroon, Shamsu'sh-Shuhūd School of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Eleta, Ibadan produced M. A. Muhibbuddin, M. A. Abdu-Raheem and M. O. Abdul-Rahmon while Kharasi Arabic and Islamic Studies, Odo-Okun, Ibadan produced K. K. Oloso (Opeloye, & Makinde, 2012). Without mincing word, the programme served as a measure for the production of Arabic and Islamic Studies' teachers for secondary schools and tertiary institutions where their services are needed. If we are to scan the footprint of the programme in the country and outside, we will find out that many of the products of the programme have risen in their capacity in public service of the federation as leading administrators in public service and other corporate bodies such as ministers, commissioners, diplomats, ambassadors, consular, vice-chancellors *et.cetera* (Imam, 2017).

### **Arabic/ Islamic Bridged Programme between Survival and Extinction**

Despite the effectiveness of the Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in the country, some of the options under the programme have been phased-out one after the others as a result of one policy or the other in the institution of learning in the Southern Nigeria. For instance, the University of Ibadan (which serves as an originator and leading university in Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme) phased-out the Arabic Certificate Course and Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1985 while university management decided to do away with various sub-degree courses in the university as a result of some educational policies formulated by the National University Commission (NUC) (Sanni, 2012). This development led to the emergence of colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies which took over the Diploma course in Arabic and Islamic Studies under the Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in the university in 1992 which was also later phased-out in 2003 as a result of review of admission policy of the University of Ibadan that only candidates who hold Ordinary Level of West African Senior Secondary School Certificate (WASSSC) or National Examination Certificate (NEC) would be henceforth be admitted for the degree Arabic and Islamic Studies (Abbas, 2008). The implication of this admission policy on those affiliated colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies is that very few candidates would be qualified for admission and this served as the end of this form of Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme as all of them later opted for the private full-fledged colleges of Education. The affected affiliated colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies affiliated to the University of Ibadan such as Mufutau ‘Lanihun Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ibadan, Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan, Sulayman Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ososa and Ansar ud-Deen Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Lagos.

Similarly, the Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies mounted by the Lagos State University 1996 has been replicated in 2001 in some three private Arabic and Islamic centres which are affiliated to the University. Apart from this, the Lagos State University was also running Part-Time degree programme in the twin courses which are owned by some private proprietors. Unfortunately, these Arabic/Islamic-Bridged programmes has also been winded-up in 2010 as a result of NUC academic policy that all satellite campuses should be henceforth closed down (Sanni, 2012). The only surviving Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in the present time is the modern *Madrasah* Approach System from two examination bodies of National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) and Joint Examination Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JEB AIS) which are running Senior Islamic Studies (SISE) and Senior Arabic and Islamic Secondary School Examinations (SAISSE) for both junior (*Idadiyyah*) and senior Arabic schools (*Thanawiyyah*) in the country as a whole (NBAIS Advocacy Pamphlet, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, undated). Both NBAIS and JEB AIS have no problem in the Northern Nigerian institutions of learning as the bodies, most especially the NBAIS certificate which has been given high recognition of being an equivalent of Ordinary Level Certificate from the West African Examination Council (WAEC), General Certificate Examination (GCE) and National Examination Council (NECO) in their entry and admission requirements for degree programmes in Arts, humanities, social sciences and management. The reverse is the case in the Southern Nigerian institutions of learning where both NBAIS and JEB AIS certificates are battling for recognition and acceptance between survival and extinction. In the whole Southern Nigeria, only Ekiti State University gives recognition to NBAIS certificate as one of its entry and admission requirements for degree programme in Arabic and Islamic Studies since 2018 (K. A Adeyemi, Personal Interview, 23 November, 2019).



### **Towards Resuscitation of Arabic/Islamic-Bridged Programme in Southern Nigerian University**

From the foregoing, it is obvious that various forms of the Arabic/Islamic-bridged programmes, which has been test-run and effectively-functioned, in some Southern Nigerian western stereotyped universities is now being threatened of extinction as a result of various academic policies from either National University Commission (NUC) or the university itself. It is not out of tune to state that the shortfall admission and low enrolment of the candidate to duo disciplines of Arabic and Islamic studies is still in continuation those universities. For instance, in 2018/2019 admission lists of some Southern Nigerian universities, few students applied for Arabic and Islamic Studies and they were given admission to read any of the twin disciplines. Less students out of the few who were offered admission accepted and finally registered for the course because majority of them were crossed-over from their preferred courses to Arabic and Islamic Studies as a result of their inability to meet-up with the cut-off points of their preferred courses. For instance, the table below shows the figure number of the few students offering the duo disciplines in some universities in Southern Nigeria during 2019/2020 Session.

<b>UNIVERSITIES</b>	<b>COURSES</b>	<b>100 Level</b>	<b>200 Level</b>	<b>300 Level</b>	<b>400 Level</b>
<b>University of Ibadan</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>University of Ibadan</b>	<b>Arabic Language and Literature</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>University of Ibadan</b>	<b>Arabic/Islamic Studies (Combined)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>University of Lagos</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>University of Lagos</b>	<b>Islamic Studies Education</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Lagos State University</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Lagos State University</b>	<b>Arabic Studies</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Lagos State University</b>	<b>Arabic Studies Education</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Osun State University, Osogbo</b>	<b>Islamic Studies is running as a servicing course under General Studies Unit (GST)</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Ekiti State</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>

<b>University, Ado-Ekiti</b>						
<b>Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti</b>	<b>Arabic Language and Literature</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti</b>	<b>Arabic/Islamic Studies (Combined)</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	
<b>Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode.</b>	<b>Islamic Studies</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	
<b>University of Benin, Benin.</b>	<b>Islamic Studies is running as a servicing course under Religious Studies</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State.</b>	<b>Islamic Studies is running as a servicing course under Religious Studies</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>University of Uyo, Uyo.</b>	<b>Islamic Studies is running as a servicing course under Religious Studies</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt.</b>	<b>Islamic Studies is running as a servicing course under Religious Studies</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

It should be mentioned at this juncture that majority of these few candidates who are offering admission to study Arabic and Islamic Studies disciplines in some of these universities in the Southern Nigeria are crossed-over to the field as a result of their inability to meet-up with the cut-off points of their desired courses. Consequently, such a candidate will drop along the way as a result of their inability to cope with the nature of the duo courses, especially in the language (Arabic) aspects of the courses. To excel in the duo disciplines, candidate must be very proficient and versatile in Arabic language; even in Islamic Studies which its mode of instruction is English language still has some areas of studies which need a bit level of Arabic for proper understanding. For instance, it is not possible for the candidate to go far in discipline without encountering Arabic in some areas like *'Ulūmu'l-Qur'ān* (Qur'anic Sciences), *'Ulūmu'l-Ḥadīth* (Sciences of *Ḥadīth*), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Sirah* (Islamic History) *et.cetera*. The dramatic irony in this situation is that without previous knowledge acquired from any form of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme, Arabic as a language is not easy to come by, those candidates who start their career journey from the centres of Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme have now been blocked-out from proceeding in their choosing career in the several western-oriented institutions of learning in the Southern Nigeria as some educational authorities are

disqualifying them as one of the admission and entry requirements. This is the reason while the Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme which is represented by the many centres of Arabic and Islamic studies situated in almost, every town in Southern Nigeria should be made to meet with the demand of the time by giving them modern academic touch, re-designing their curriculum, formalizing and re-organising in line with the country educational system. To do this, some steps have to be taken by concerned educational stakeholders in the country.

All private Arabic and Islamic centres in the Southern Nigeria should be made to register themselves with NBAIS and JEBAIS examination bodies. Through this, the syllabi, curricula and examination of these centres would be harmonised with the inclusion of the official language of the country which English, local languages, Mathematics and social science subjects in the same the WAEC and NECO examination bodies are doing in the qualifying assessment of their candidates. Some of these private Arabic and Islamic centres need orientation and enlightenment programmes on this innovative development and this should be organised by dons from the departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Religions and Religious Studies, where applicable, in the Southern Nigerian universities by the virtue of their status in the community through workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences. Apart from this community service of the university dons, Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS), Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic in Colleges of Education and Allied Institutions (NATACEDAI) and other learned associations of Arabic and Islamic Studies should also wave-in by inviting the centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies to some of their capacity-building and training programmes such as workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences in order to keep these centres abreast of recent development in the duo disciplines. Those centres should be made to realise that nothing is lost in their pedigree if they key-in as one of the centres feeding Arabic/Islamic bridged programme in the country as this step would not only make the government give recognition to their certificate but would assist their products getting admission into the public western-oriented universities in the country to proceed in their areas of specialisation.

All private Arabic and Islamic Studies centres in the Southern Nigerian environs should form a single body of registered association which would be seeing to their staff capacity-building like organizing training workshops, seminars and symposia from time to time for professional development. This association would also be serving as the pressure group for their need from the individual as well as government of the day.

This registered association in collaboration with NATAIS and NATACEDAI should let National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges Education (NCCE) understand the peculiarities of Arabic and Islamic Studies as academic disciplines in the country. This is what led to the setting-up of Ministerial Committee on *Madrasah* Education by the then minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyah Ahmad Rufa'i on February 2010 to evolve a credible plan for the development of *Madrasah* and Al-Majiri Education in Nigeria. This committee submitted its report in May 2010 with the finding that enrolment of some centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies in all six geo-political environs in Nigeria. In the September of the same year, an Implementation Committee was inaugurated under the chairmanship of a renowned professor of Arabic Studies, Professor S. A. S. Galadanchi. It should be stated at this juncture that centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies in all the three geo-political zones have embarked on this programme with the exclusion of centres of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Southern Nigeria as if they are

not part of the country. Both NATAIS and NATACEDAI as bodies can play a vital role of stakeholders, after all, majority of their members are products of Arabic/Islamic bridged programme from different parts of the country. They should sensitise, enlighten and mobilise the Muslim communities in the Southern Nigeria to establish integrated Arabic/Islamic bridged centres. In the areas where there is Arabic/Islamic bridged centre but with less competent academic staff who can properly manage it, they should provide voluntary services to lessen the short of manpower.

The two recognized examination bodies for the Arabic/Islamic bridge programme of the duo disciplines in Nigeria are National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) and Joint Examination Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JEBAIS). As a result of this, both of these examination bodies have to waive away their element of difference and unnecessary rivalry. They should settle their unnecessary rivalry of superiority since Federal government gives both of them full recognition to run the Arabic/Islamic Studies bridge programme of Arabic and Islamic Studies discipline in the country. It should be rightly mentioned at this juncture that both NBAIS and JEBAIS are licensed by National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), which are educational commissions under the umbrella of the Federal Ministry of Education, respectively. If possible, NBAIS and JEBAIS may merge to form one body so as to mutually work together to achieve their aims and objectives since their mission and vision are the same.

Federal government of Nigeria should either empower or take-over the private Arabic centres in the country by giving them moral and financial supports as they do for Al-Majiri and nomadic education in the country. This would involve provision of educational facilities like human and non-human materials based on the need of specified Arabic/Islamic centres. By this, they would be able to integrate Arabic/Islamic bridged programmes into the conventional school educational system within its original location so as to provide dual language competency in English and Arabic.

## **Conclusion**

Having examined the Arabic/Islamic bridged programmes in the Southern Nigeria and how it, *ab initio*, and how it served as timely intervention for the sustenance of Arabic and Islamic Studies disciplines in both pre-colonial and post-colonial period in Nigeria. With the foregoing discussion, it was observed in the findings that this Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme had served as an effective linkage and crossing border of students from the private purely Arabic schools (*Madāris*) to the western stereo-typed schools with obvious fruitful results in the duo disciplines in the academic experts of the Departments of Arabic and Islamic studies in Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities. It is also discovered that Southern Nigerian western stereo-typed universities would continue having the problems of shortfall in admission and low enrolment of the students qualifying for the duo programmes if they fail to resuscitate the Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme from where they could source their students. As a result of the findings, the study recommends that this Arabic/Islamic-bridged programme should be re-introduced into the affected universities so as to sustain the duo disciplines from extinction in the western stereo-typed institutions in the Southern Nigeria. It also recommends that each of these private purely Arabic schools in the Southern Nigeria should harmonise their syllabus with that of National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) and Joint Examination of Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JEBAIS) which are the presently recognized examination bodies for

this programme. It further recommends that Federal Ministry of Education should give its moral and financial supports by taking up the academic and financial challenges of some of these private purely Arabic schools, if not all, as it is in operation in the Northern Nigeria so as to enhance their academic output to meet the demand of the western stereo-typed universities in the whole country.

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