New Methods and Techniques in Teaching and Learning

Abdalla Uba Adamu [1]
Department of Education
Bayero University, Kano

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Introduction

The 1950s and 1960s were eras of absolute faith in education as a major instrument of social or economic development. This saw the unprecedented curriculum development efforts geared towards a new interpretation of the role of education in development. This was more as many developing countries at that time were getting independence from colonial administration, and therefore a new orientation was needed for the new emergent society. Thus the changing economic, social and political situations in both developed and developing countries have combined to create needs for constant innovations and reforms in education. Due to this new social configuration it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate.

This was more so as by late 1960s and early 1970s there was general agreement among politicians, educational and social planners, and schools that education was a key change agent for moving societies along the development continuum.[2] Within this context, expanded and improved educational provision became a focus of development efforts, especially in developing countries as a means of acquiring new skills and increasing productivity, especially as educational systems were said to produce the skilled manpower and the new knowledge requisite for technological advancement and economic growth.[3]

The rationale behind this argument is reflected, for instance, in a review of several documents issued in the 1950s and 1960s in several African, Asian and Latin American countries. These documents, in the form of National Plans, expressed a desire to use educational provision for economic development.[4] A common theme has been that education is not seen to be pursuing relevant goals, and its various outcomes subsequently unsatisfactory.[5] Educational innovations are often introduced to make education more utilitarian, and this has generated a whole theoretical field with a focus on how the innovations

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[1] Abdalla Uba Adamu is Professor of Science Education and Curriculum and Development. He is is also the Head, Department of Education, and Director, Management Information Systems (MIS) of Bayero University, Kano.

[2] Fagerlind, I and Saha, L J (1983) *Education and National Development: A Comparative Perspective*. (Oxford, Pergamon Press).

[3] Adams, D K (1977) Development Education. *Comparative Education Review*. Vol 21 Nos 2 and 3 June/October 1977 pp 296-310.

[4] Lewin, K (1984a) Goals, Educational: Developing Countries, an entry in *International Encyclopaedia of Education*. (London, Pergamon).

[5] Hurst, P (1983) *Implementing Educational Change - A critical review of the literature*. E D C Occasional Papers No 5 (London, Department of Education in Developing Countries, University of London Institute of Education).

were initiated and how they achieve their effects. It is this belief that led to massive world-wide reforms in educational: equity for all.

However, it was not long before a disquietening feeling started to develop among policy makers that education was not the great equalizer it was projected to be. This was more noticeable in science education where it was believed that a massive cash injection and reform in curricular provisions for learning science would accelerate the creation of a literate society based on scientific rationalism. Every country in the world soon jumped on the bandwagon of *science for development* curriculum strategy. While activities in the developed world were motivated by the increasing tensions of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union, the developing countries were busy copying whatever models became available from the industrialized nations. Thus projects such as the Nuffield Foundation course in England, the National Science Foundation science programs in the United States all became models from New Zealand to Iceland, criss-crossing the planet in a hopeless gorge of enhanced retroactive curricular laziness.

And yet all these were motions without movement. This is because although the objectives assumed by formal education increased dramatically during the 20th century, the format and techniques of schooling have remained, for the most part, quite stable and resistant to change. In the US, for instance, despite occasional experiments—such as the introduction of movable rather than fixed desks, team teaching, and ungraded courses—the practice of teaching and the process of learning in 1900 closely resembled that of today. Students took courses; classes consisted of groups of 20 to 30 students with a teacher at the front of the room; instruction proceeded by lecture, demonstration, discussion, or silent work at a desk; and teachers often assigned homework for the students to complete after class.

However, some aspects of teaching have changed. The influence of modern psychology and of education reformers such as John Dewey caused schools to become less formal, more relaxed, and somewhat more centered on the individual child rather than on the institution or the society. School facilities improved for most students, except perhaps in the inner cities. More money was spent on education, resulting in both a general upgrading of teacher salaries and improvements in programs that focus on specific kinds of students, such as special education.

By and large, however, many educators and some political leaders have increasingly viewed mere access to a school and its offerings as an inadequate solution to the problem of educational inequality. Since the 1960s, education reformers have argued that special programs and resources were essential to guarantee genuine equality of education to disadvantaged youth. Disadvantaged youth could take the form of many dimensions. These may include youth that are specifically handicapped, disenfranchised youth, the girl-child, the *almajiri*, inner-city children, and rural dwellers.

New Reforms, Old Packaging

Further, the massive educational reforms of the 1960s, especially in science education, while seemingly egalitarian, soon revealed themselves as educational strategies set to further entrench the privileged status of the already elitist clients of the education system all over the world. This is because a

significant portion of the assumptions on which the reforms were carried out were found out later to be in need of reassessment.

Quite a few investigations in many countries on the nature of cognitive demands of various science curricula which are based on specific learning theories show discrepancies between the various demands made on the children when being taught certain concepts in science, and their ability to integrate these concepts into their overall conceptual schema.[6] In most cases, there were indications that failure to subsume scientific concepts was a result of not reaching specific stages of development, consciously or unconsciously assumed by the curriculum. Consequently the curricula became hard to teach and learn, requiring a significant amount of resources and cognitive entry levels many schools and students do not possess. They were however perfectly suited for well-equipped schools in terms of superior teachers as well as better-prepared students.

Thus the curriculum reforms of the 1960s led to soul searching in 1970s yielding clutches of new strategies and techniques in teaching and learning delivery systems in the 1980s set to carry the educational mainstream into the next millennium. For instance, a National Educational Summit, the second such conference held in the U.S., met on March 26-27, 1996, in Palisades, N.Y. Like the earlier conference in 1989, the 1996 meeting--attended by leaders in business, government, and education--focused on U.S. students' academic deficiencies, particularly in mathematics and science, in comparison with students from other industrialized countries. Calling for improved academic achievement, the summit recommended that state and local districts establish specific standards for basic academic subjects, especially in English, science, and mathematics.

In Nigeria, immediately after independence in 1960 it dawned on some key policy makers that the British educational system Nigeria inherited was designed to create a British manpower factory destined for a British designed civil service. It was seen as being totally irrelevant in a new era of soul-searching and sovereign empowerment. The disquiet and disaffection with the then educational model in the country led to the convening of a national conference on curriculum in 1969 — the first of three conferences to deal with the objectives of education — which paved way for the eventual emergence of a National Policy on Education in 1977 and 1981 which laid out the road-map for Nigerian education to the end of the first millennium.[7] Even then, by 1997, there were rumblings that the National Policy on Education

[6] See, for instance, Herron, J D (1975) Piaget for Chemists: Explaining what "good" students cannot understand. *Journal of Chemical Education*. Vol 52 No 3 March 1975 pp 146- 150; Lawson, A E and Renner, J W (1975) Piagetian Theory and Biology Teaching. *The American Biology Teacher.* Vol 37 No 6 September 1975 pp 336- 343; Haley, S B and Good, R G (1976) Concrete and Formal Operational Thought: Implications for Introductory College Biology. *The American Biology Teacher*. Vol 38 No 7 October 1976 pp 407-412; Ohuche, R O and Otaala, B (1981)(eds) The African Child and His Environment. (London, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Pergamon Press); Shayer, M (1978) Nuffield Combined Science: Do pupils understand it? *The School Science Review*. Vol 60 No 211 pp 210-223; Shayer, M et al (1978) The distribution of Piagetian stages of thinking in British middle and secondary school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. Vol 46 pp 164-173.

[7] Fafunwa, A. B., "National Policy on Education: A planner's viewpoint." in Tamuno, T and Atanda, J A (eds) *Nigeria Since Independence - The First 25 Years, Volume III: Education*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Ltd, 1989.

guidelines were no longer realistic and its curricular provisions incapable of being effectively implemented.[8]

Reaction To Disillusionment

Although it would be quite wrong to blame educational policies for the failure of past development strategies, it must be recognized that *a non-formal education* idea is to some extent a reaction against formal school systems. The faith shared by most educators and politicians in the 1950s and 1960s about education as a major factor in development has been considerably eroded. As argued by Kazim Bacchus, the evidence now seems to indicate that education has reached a point in many developing countries where it is making a negative contribution to their development. Already in many of these countries the products of the school system are finding it difficult to secure employment, giving rise to the growing phenomenon of the 'educated unemployed.'[9] It is clear that new methodologies and techniques of education are needed.

Interestingly, most of these new methods and techniques seem to have their antecedent roots in the United States, before spiraling to other parts of the world.[10] For instance, *Title I* (later called *Chapter I*) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* of the United States provided federal funds for supplementary education programs targeted toward poor and black children. Most of these funds were spent on young children, according to a prevailing theory that educational disadvantages could best be eliminated at an early age, before their effects had become more difficult to reverse. The federal *Head Start* program, established in 1965, created special education programs for preschoolers and remains one of the most admired achievements of the War on Poverty programs of the 1960s. In the Nigerian reform matrix, significant emphasis was laid on vocational educational provisions for a junior high school portion of the educational stream. This was with the view of encouraging self reliance among a vast pool of junior high school graduates which reduced chances of continuing along the academic streaming.

However, the most significant departure towards the new millennium in world-wide educational circles was the concentrated focus on *literacy education* as a new method of learning. A survey of social and economic conditions in 162 countries in 1996 revealed the belief that industrialized nations needed to redirect aid for less-developed countries into literacy programs. This was because it was argued that the reduction of illiteracy could empower underprivileged nations to become partners of wealthy countries and reduce the gap between rich and poor societies. In Nigeria, this is exemplified, for instance, through the series of interventionist programs initiated by the World Bank through the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) which created the Nigerian Primary Education Project.

[8] See Professor U.M.O. Ivowi's paper, *A New Structure for Nigerian School Curricula*, being a keynote address at the National Feedback Conference on School Curricula organized by the NERDC at the International Conference Center, Abuja, 21-24 December, 1997.

[9] Bacchus, K., (1979), Structural Change and Transformation, paper presented at the Commonwealth Conference on Non-Formal Education for Development, New Delhi, 1979. London, Commonwealth Secretariat.

[10] The Nigerian National Curriculum Conference of 1969 was itself was subsidized by the Ford Foundation of the United States.

The Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) through USAID has also been active in providing interventionist strategies for the empowerment of youth, especially girls through a series of related projects in Northern Nigeria.

The new techniques and methodologies of teaching and learning therefore placed significant emphasis on departure from the tried and disappointed methods, to embracing an experimental innovation with fresh, bold and new strategies of educating children. Firstly, as we have seen, there was growing dissatisfaction with the effects of formal school systems in relation to development goals; and secondly, fundamental changes were taking place in the definition of development itself. As the World Bank put it in 1974, 'Questions of employment, environment, social equity and, above all, participation in development by the less "privileged" now share with simple "growth" in the definition of objectives (and hence the model) of development toward which the effort of all parties is to be directed. These changes have their counterpart in the education sector.' Further, 'Education systems have been irrelevant to the needs of developing countries during the last two decades because education policies were often keeping company with overall development strategies which were themselves irrelevant to the societies and conditions of developing countries.' [11]

Revolution and Reform

Thus the pace of change was relentless in the dying years of the millennium. A new lexicon, *political correctness* appeared in the linguistic landscape and lent shape to the subsequent reforms of education and emergence of new techniques and methods of teaching.

Consequently while the formal education system still remains predominantly the main developmental pathway in educational progression, yet increasingly innovative methods for promoting literacy, not based on formal structures, are being adopted in various parts of the world. For instance, following its success in Australia, a literacy project for less-privileged children, entitled *First Step*, was introduced for experimental use in the United Kingdom. Another approach to literacy training imported from Australia appeared in the British *Link-into-Learning centers*, which were designed to provide adults with efficient reading and writing skills to obtain work and help their children with school tasks.

In Uganda a program named *Reflect*, which engaged learners in creating their own written materials, was credited with enabling 60% to 70% of the course participants to become literate; previous programs had achieved only 12% success. A *Finger Phonics* scheme that associated letter sounds with finger movements gained popularity in Canada and the U.K. just recently.

In the United States a concerted focus on growth, change, and reform was marked in 1997. Among the major trends were efforts to establish academic standards and tests to assess students' academic progress, a continuing movement for alternative *educational arrangements* such as *charter schools*. Although public schools, charter schools exhibited the following characteristics: (1) the state authorized organizations to establish and operate

[11] World Bank (1974) Education, Sector Working Paper. Washington, The World Bank.

charter schools and issued a waiver freeing them from many regulations governing public schools; (2) the school was “public”— that is, nonsectarian and supported by public funds; (3) the school, through its charter, was responsible for students' academic progress; (4) the school was one of choice for educators and parents; the choice, however, was within the public, not the private, sector.

Similarly, efforts to promote educational opportunities for girls were expanded in various parts of the world. In Africa UNICEF established a large number of *community-operated primary schools* in Burkina Faso, Mali, Egypt, and Zambia, offering equal access to schooling for girls and boys. In Kenya teaching and learning materials for the schools were revised to eliminate gender stereotyping. In Zimbabwe courses for parents and school administrators were organized to increase *community support for gender equality* of educational opportunity. In South Asia Bangladesh introduced *part-time study programs for girls who worked*, and Pakistan established a *mobile teacher-training* project. A French Parliament report criticized *sexist portrayals of women* in school textbooks. Definitions in children's dictionaries associated gentle, passive, and home-based qualities with females and assertive qualities with males. In the nation's official primary-school history book, the only two women studied were Marie Curie and Joan of Arc.

Curriculum reforms in India took a more nationalistic turn as a growing number of foundation-sponsored private schools supplemented the government syllabus with studies of *Indian culture, music, philosophy, and Sanskrit language*. In addition, uniforms in many convent schools were replaced by *traditional Indian garb*. Hindu nationalists of the Bharatiya Janata Party sought to replace Western science in schools by introducing *Vedic mathematics* and the ancient science of *vastu shastra*. Party spokesmen charged that Western science was a source of imperialism and rationalism that conflicted with Hindu tradition.

The revisions featured such new subjects in the curriculum as China's national *spoken version of Chinese language* (*putonghua*) and public-affairs classes that stressed the combined place of China and Hong Kong in world affairs. Existing syllabi were altered to provide a politicized historical framework relevant to Hong Kong's national identity under China, and British colonial history was deleted from the course of study. The number of schools employing English as the medium of instruction was also reduced in favor of Cantonese and *putonghua*.

Computer-literacy instruction has also advanced in China, where urban schools were increasingly providing such training. The number of Chinese families owning personal computers rose in 1996 to more than one million, a figure expected to reach five million by the year 2000. At the same time, schools emphasized training children in the *use of the abacus*, the traditional method of calculating sums by moving wooden beads along wires set in a wooden frame. Proponents of the abacus asserted that in contrast to computer instruction, abacus training equipped children to visualize calculations and thereby fostered speed and accuracy in mental arithmetic.

The study of *values* has been receiving attention in several countries. In 1996 the then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged the introduction of

new values into the nation's education system, with the approach modeled after religious nationalism. The proposed program would include such topics as sex education and traffic safety. Critics, however, feared the plan would impose a single group's values on the entire school system.

The publication of guidelines for *sex education* in Nigeria officially encouraged the study of sexual behavior in the health programs for schools and youth groups. In Russia research revealed that young people were increasingly becoming sexually active as a result of liberal attitudes toward sex in the mass media. When public opinion surveys found the majority of Russians in favor of sex education, the government established a project targeted at educating youth.

Adult-education efforts progressed in The Sudan and in China. The mobile *tent-school program* for lower-primary-grade children of nomadic tribes in The Sudan added 126 new schools by early 1997 and expanded the project's offerings to include literacy and self-improvement classes for adults. A special school for *divorced couples* in China's Jian province completed its fifth year with a record of success in reducing the number of divorces in the region. The school was established to teach divorcing couples constructive methods of handling family disputes by means of a three-month course consisting of classroom instruction, individual counseling, and the analysis of court cases featuring marriage law, the effects of divorce on children, and causes of family disorder.

Thus the search for ways of increasing the equality of educational opportunities within the matrix of educational innovations are characteristic of societies all over the world. Each reform, innovation or strategy comes with new techniques and methods of teaching, often requiring radical retraining of teachers, or a sublimal change in the teachers' orientation during lesson delivery. It is clear that the shifting configurations of educational development, interlaced with high dosage of *political correctness* provide a series of challenges to teachers in their attempt to cope with the new learning contexts.

Increasing demands for the education of minority groups posed further challenges to policy planners who, in the wake of world-wide ethnic soul-searching, are faced with the demands for catering the literacy needs of a large group of learners outside schooling systems, or with specialized educational requirements.

An interesting trend in the United States was the prominence given to *Ebonics* among African Americans and their insistence of the new language being used in literacy programs of African American children since 1960s. *Ebonics*, a Black vernacular English, or Black English, is fundamentally a spoken language. In fact, it is several distinct languages, encompassing the vernacular speech of blacks in the United States, the Caribbean, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Besides having a characteristic grammar and a changing vocabulary, *Ebonics* is marked by its distinctive approach to rhythm. In contemporary America, the most important shapers of *Ebonics* are hip hop culture and rap music. The policy aspect of Black English was made prominent in the heated 1996 debate over the proposed teaching of *Ebonics* in the Oakland, California, public schools. This conflict pitted advocates of

Black English, and those favoring multicultural approaches in general, against those who insisted upon Standard English as a necessary source of cultural homogeneity. The controversy served as a reminder that at least some African Americans harbor doubts as to whether the public schools truly understand and respect the linguistic backgrounds of all their students. Above all, the continued vitality of Black English or *Ebonics* seems assured by the emergence since 1980 of rap music and hip hop culture.

Similarly, within Russia debates enraged over the role that minority-group languages should assume in schools that had used Russian as the primary medium of instruction for more than five decades. Ever since the republics at the end of the 1980s won the right to direct their own educational systems, advocates of using local languages in schools had vied against proponents of maintaining Russian as the dominant national tongue. Provincial leaders agreed that their languages would be lost if not given a key role in the curriculum.

Lending a theoretical framework to all these experiments is the groundbreaking work of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and author who died on May 2, 1997, and who sought to empower the world's oppressed through literacy programs that encouraged social and political awareness. In his seminal work, *Pedagogia do oprimido* (1970; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1972), Freire argued that the passive nature of traditional education promoted repression; it was a system he likened to a bank, wherein a teacher deposited information — which Freire believed was largely false — and the student was simply the collector. Freire favored a "pedagogy of liberation" that encouraged dialog between teacher and student, enabling the pupil to ask questions and to challenge the status quo. He began refining his methods during the 1950s, when he taught literacy to peasants. The use of everyday words and ideas in his lessons proved highly effective — many of Freire's students needed only 30 hours of instruction before being able to read and write.

Revolution, Reform and Reaction: Ajamization of Knowledge

In the light of the international advocacy for non-formal strategies in teaching a lot of youth, especially the disenfranchised, it is clear that to make education relevant, meaningful, and purposeful to a large number of children, especially those out of school, new techniques and methods of teaching are required, and indeed have been advocated in many parts of the world as we have just seen. . One significant advocacy in this direction which is likely to emerge, especially in many parts of northern Nigeria, is the concept of *Ajamization of Knowledge*.

Ajamization of Knowledge is, quite simply, the use of Arabic alphabet to write and read in the indigenous language in Nigeria. This has been perfected to a high level by the Hausa Muslim intellectuals of northern Nigeria since the 16th century. A huge amount of the pre-jihadist as well as post-jihadist literature written by Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodiyo, was in *ajami*. This has reached a level where Hausa language written in Arabic script is referred to as *ajami*. Of course if the Igbira language, for instance, can be written in Arabic letters, then it also becomes *ajami*, just as Persian and Urdu languages are also *ajami*. The potency of *ajami* as a medium of literary expression in

education becomes significant when the stakeholders of *ajamization* of knowledge are considered.

The victims of poverty in our society, especially Muslim Hausa northern Nigeria, are the dispossessed out-of-school youth generally and erroneously referred to as *almajirai*. Their education is almost always seen by the mainstream educational establishment as a religious concern and therefore outside the province of the secular provisions. The lack of a regulatory body (and the sheer daunting impossibility of regulation) means that the mainstream educational needs of this cluster is not on the part of any government interventionist agenda of poverty alleviation and social service. This is reflected by the fact that so far, in about 39 years of political independence, no government policy has attempted to provide a strategy for the education of this large pool of untapped human resources. The fact that the *almajirai* graduate from youth scholars in their early teens to self-employed young adults in their late teens means that they do have the capacity to succeed in life, if their basic educational needs are taken care of early enough. This paper is an attempt to provide a blue-print around which such needs can be taken care of.

Literacy, Writing and Schooling

The invention of devices for representing language is inextricably related to issues of literacy; that is, to issues of who can use the script and what it can be used for. *Competence with written language, both in reading and writing, is known as literacy*. When a large number of individuals in a society are competent in using written language to serve these functions, the whole society may be referred to as a literate society.

Although the uses of writing reflect a host of religious, political, and social factors and hence are not determined simply by orthography, two dimensions of the script are important in understanding the growth of literacy: *learnability* and *expressive power*. Although schooling is critical to the development of literacy, it is not, by itself, sufficient. Historians have shown that the level of literacy produced by the schools of any society is directly tied to the functions and levels of literacy in the society as a whole. Consequently, *it is unrealistic to expect that a modern, literate society could be created simply through establishing schools and teaching children to read*. Schools tend to *reflect the society rather than to change it dramatically*. Schooling in Western societies is successful in achieving relatively high levels of literacy in part because of the literacy practices in the larger society.

When compulsory schooling was introduced in Britain, Europe, and America in the 19th century, it was nurtured by an environment of "lay" literacy in which as much as 75 percent of the population could use written materials for such informal purposes as keeping diaries, reading and writing notes and letters, and personal record keeping. *Such a climate of widespread practical literacy is important to the effectiveness of schooling*.

It is common to think of literacy as the simple ability to read and write. In part such thinking is a consequence of the naive assumption that alphabetic literacy is a matter simply of decoding graphs into sounds and vice versa. In fact, *literacy involves competence in reading, writing, and interpreting texts of various sorts*. It involves both skill in decoding and higher levels of comprehension and interpretation. These higher levels depend upon

knowledge both of specialized uses of language and of specialized bodies of knowledge. The intimate relations among language, literacy, and specialized bodies of knowledge have contributed to the identification of literacy with schooling.

From Arabic to Hausa to Ajami

An example of the application of these theoretical principles in relation to educational development of huge numbers of out of school youth can be found in Kano State. One of the most significant social and educational reformers in Kano was Sarki Rumfa (1463-1499) whose enthusiasm in revolutionizing the Islamic nature of Kano were matched only by his *Ulama* who undertook the task vigorously. *In order to make learning easier and quicker, Arabic alphabets were Hausanized* and the teaching method was divided into what seemed to be introductory and specialization stages. In the introductory stages all the students were taught the reading and the writing of the Holy Qur'an in general terms, from the very beginning to the end of sixty *hizifs* of its contents. This stage took about five years to complete depending on the learning aptitude of the individual students.

In the second stage, the students were divided in two. The first group is made up of those who revealed signs of ability and interest in the further study of the Holy Qur'an were sent to Borno in the east (or *gabas*) where they would study various professors of Qur'anic education (called *gwani*). *Gwani* is an academic title somewhat equivalent to a doctorate degree given to an expert in the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an who graduated directly either from Al-Azahar University in Egypt or from the hands of its old graduates. After the completion and graduation from Borno, the Qur'anic *Ulama* were given called Bornawiyans or *Barnawa* in order to signify their specialization area. They established Qur'anic schools in various places for both children and adults.

The second group, made up of those who would like to specialize in the Islamic religious knowledge, apart from their Qur'anic education, were attached to what became called *Zaure* schools which were established in various wards in the city. In turn the *Zaure* schools were opened by *Ulama* who, in some cases, studied directly from the University of Sankore in Timbuktu or from the hands of some *Ulama* who studied and graduated there. Like their counterparts from the Borno schooling system, the *Zaure* school student study and specialize in Arabic language and literature, Islamic religious knowledge, history theology, Islamic jurisprudence and other branches of Islamic education. After completing their studies and graduation such *Ulama* were given the name Tumbuktian or *Tumbuktawa* also to signify their area of specialization.

It was during this period and for the propagation of Islam that the Hausa language began to adopt some Arabic words. Hausa grammar relied on the Arabic grammar until it became a written language in Arabic character called *Ajami*. According to Hiskett, "…popular tradition has it that Hausa poetry was first composed and written down, in the *ajami* script, by Isa, the son of Usumanu [an Fodiyo, and we have an early composition by Isa, in which he

states that he has rendered the Shehu's Fula verses into Hausa (*Waƙar ina Gode Allah Da Yarda Tasa*)."[12]

Thus the mechanism of using *ajami* to spread the Islamic message so that it reaches a wider section of the Hausa society by the early jihadists clearly acknowledged the wide-spread literacy among the massive Muslim population of ƙasar Hausa. It is through this that *ajami* came to be adopted as a more or less religious literary mode of expression. This strong link between *ajami* and religious literature is to confer on the genre a sacred value that makes it difficult to create other literary works in the genre, except, perhaps for religious poetry.

Ajami as a Literary Concept Worldwide

Ajami, literarily pidgin Arabic, seems to have originated in Spain. The dialect of Spanish used in Arab-occupied Spain prior to the 12th century and at the end of the 15th century was called *Mozarabic*, from the Arabic word for 'Arabized person,'. It is also called *ajami* ('barbarian language' according to Arabs). It was spoken in those parts of Spain under Arab occupation from the early 8th century until about 1300. An archaic form of Spanish with many borrowings from Arabic, it is known primarily from Mozarabic refrains (called *kharjah*s) added to Arabic and Hebrew poems.

It was originally the spoken language of the urban bourgeoisie, who remained Christian while the peasantry generally converted to Islam, but it appears that many Arabs also came to use it as a spoken language. The language died out with the diminishing of Arab influence in Spain at the end of the 15th century, though Mozarabic has left its mark on the dialects of southern Spain and Portugal. It from there that it leapt to North African countries of Tunisia, Morocco and finally winding its way to Islamized Sudanic nations. [13]

Swahili in East Africa, has also been greatly influenced by Arabic; there are an enormous number of Arabic loanwords in the language, including the word *Swahili*, from Arabic *sawahili* (a plural adjectival form of an Arabic word meaning "of the coast"). The language dates from the contacts of Arabian traders with the inhabitants of the east coast of Africa over many centuries. Under Arab influence, Swahili originated as a lingua franca used by several closely related Bantu-speaking tribal groups. In the early 19th century, the spread of Swahili inland received a great impetus from its being the language of the Arab ivory and slave caravans, which penetrated as far north as Uganda and as far west as Zaire. Swahili was later adopted by European colonialists, especially the Germans, who used it extensively as the language of administration in Tanganyika, thus laying the foundation for its adoption as a national language of independent Tanzania. In Kenya and Uganda, other local languages also received official encouragement during the colonial period, but the tendency in these countries is now to emphasize the use of Swahili. *The oldest preserved Swahili literature, which dates from the early 18th century, is written in the Arabic script*. However, to break the intellectual tradition of the Muslim population in East Africa, the British colonial administration

[12] M. Hiskett, "The Historical Background to the Naturalization of Arabic Loan-Words in Hausa", *African Language Studies*, VI, 1965, pp. 18-26.
[13] For more information on this, see W.D. Elcock, *The Romance Languages,* new and rev. ed. revised by John N. Green, 1975.

discouraged the use of Arabic script in the writing of Swahili. The language is now written in the Roman alphabet.

The official language of Iran, *Persian* (or *Farsi*) is also *ajami*. It is most closely related to Middle and Old Persian, former languages of the region of *Fars* ("Persia") in southwestern Iran. Modern Persian is thus called *Farsi* by native speakers. Written in Arabic characters, modern Persian also has many Arabic loanwords and an extensive literature. Thus shaped out of the vernacular of northeastern Iranian courts and households and making skillful use of additional Arabic vocabulary, the Persian language emerged as a literary medium.[14]

But perhaps the most spectacular and extensive use of *ajami* is in the evolution of *Urdu*. The *Urdu* language, written in a modified form of the Persian Arabic alphabet, is the primary language of the Muslims of both Pakistan and northern India. With a few major exceptions, the literature is the work of Muslim writers who take their themes from the life of the Indian subcontinent. Poetry written in Urdu flourished from the 16th century, but no real prose literature developed until the 19th century, despite the fact that histories and religious prose treatises are known from the 14th century. More colloquial forms of writing gradually displaced the classically ornate literary Urdu in the 19th century; in the 20th century, Urdu literature was stimulated by nationalist, pan-Islamic, and socialist feeling. The language also displays wholesale acceptance of Perso-Arabic literary traditions, including genres, meters, and rhetoric; as well an increasing acceptance of Perso-Arabic grammatical devices and vocabulary.

Principles of Ajamization of Knowledge

The advocacy in this paper is for the adoption of ajami as a literary language in the non-formal education of out of school youth from the north of Nigeria. However there are bound to be problems with this approach, mainly to do with the standardization of *ajami*. Almost every *ajami* scholar will harp on the fact that there is no standard form of writing in the genre. Yet there is a massive jihadist literature in *ajami*, although a counter argument is that the jihadist literature, being religiously inspired, would find it easy to express thoughts using vocabulary common to Arabic and *ajami*.

Another problem deals with the fact that *ajami* uses alphabets associated with Arabic language, and consequently the Qur'an. Any writing in the language is therefore seen as religious, and not meant for leisure — which contributed to ignoring any specific rules for writing in *ajami*. And yet now it is becoming clear that not all things written in Arabic are Islamic. Further *ajamization* is seen, for instance, on bottles of spring water (e.g. *Ragolis* brand) which often carry an *ajamized* information box stating its contents. Even if it is argued that the typical *ajami literati* is not prone to quaffing bottled spring water, at least an effort is being made by some companies to revive a *betrayed* tradition.

Finally, the *ajami literati* community suffers from one or two peculiar superstitions concerning the use of certain alphabets in *ajami* which were apparently used in Hausa shamanism. Thus they are avoided in everyday discourse — further restricting the vocabulary of any *ajami* text.

[14] See, for instance, Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 1968.

Despite all these problems, if we wish to lead our people into the next millennium, we must break the paralysis of guilt, indifference and begin to start face the challenges of providing new techniques and methods of literacy and learning for the vast majority of our people. Mass literacy is the only light that will banish ignorance and subsequently poverty. Such literacy cannot be attained through fancy government projects, centers, agencies and other white elephants — which, in any event, are mainly focused on adult learner. It must start from the informal medium. I propose *Ajamization of Knowledge* as one possible way of mass educating at least six million *makarantun allo* pupils. It is their only hope of participating in an economy which set out to deliberately marginalize and alienate them.

Some of the practical ways we can adopt to begin the *Ajamization of Knowledge* would involve institutions, resources and private initiatives. I propose the following steps as starting points:

- Immediate establishment of a *Center for Ajami Studies* or the *Department of Ajami Studies* in any patriotic University whose purpose will be to refine the study of *ajami* as a literary language. After all, we spend millions supporting the study of French Language in Nigerian universities — when probably the number of French language speakers in }asar Hausa would not exceed the total number of pupils in one *makarantar allo*. Further, *ajami* is inherently more functional to this society than French. If the National Universities Commission will not support the establishment of such department or Center, then the patriotic philanthropists of Kasar Hausa should club together and do so. In the United States, many philanthropists and organizations sponsor the establishment of whole departments, and indeed universities, in the pursuit of knowledge. For instance, Trinity College, North Carolina became, under an endowment from the tobacco magnate James B. Duke, Duke University in 1924. Similarly, Harvard University was one of the most abundantly endowed academic institutions, with a capital outlay of more $120 million dollars in 1929.
- A variation of the institutional approach could be the introduction of *Ajami Subject Methodology* in the Education curriculum of Departments of Education, and Colleges of Education which will provide an experimental basis for the full development of *Ajami Study Skills* at an advanced stage.
- Publishing of books in all genres aimed at increasing and enhancing mass reading habit among *makarantun allo* youth. This will have to rely on private initiative of writers. The *fact* that young, bold and innovative Hausa language novelists (e.g. Yusuf Adamu, Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, Bala Anas Babinlata, and Balaraba Ramat Yakubu) have succeeded in awakening the society through the private publishing of new Hausa novels means that a network of printing, distribution and absorption of books written in *ajami* exists. For instance, In East Africa, *Swahili*-language translations now include works by African as well as Western writers. *Swahili* authors who have received local and international acclaim include the novelists Euphrase Kezilahabi and Mohammed S. Mohammed and the dramatists Ebrahim Hussein and Penina O. Mlama of Tanzania, as well as the Kenyan novelists Ali Jemaadar Amir, Katama Mkangi, and P.M. Kareithi. What will make this process easier in *ajami* is the fact that *ajami*, unlike say *Urdu*, or *Swahili* is not really a totally different language from the conventional Hausa

language; its strength and character comes from its *written* rather than spoken form.

- Translating classic Hausa literature books into *ajami*. Instances that come to mind here include *Magana Jari Ce*, *}aramin Sani }u]umi, Da'u Fataken Dare, Ilya [an Mai }arfi*, *Ikon Allah* etc. Noted contemporary *ajami* scholars such as M. S. Ibrahim, R. M. Zarruk, and B. Sa'id can be sponsored by NNPC to do this. After all, NNPC sponsored a competition in 1978 to boost creative reading habits among Hausa youth. Well they now have about six million more Hausa youth from the *makarantun allo* streams — which means a larger market! Both the 1933, 1978 and 1980 literary competitions ignored the creative reading habits of millions of our youth. This would be an opportunity for NNPC to attempt to redeem itself
- Publishing classic *ajami* literary materials in all aspects of history, sociology and political affairs in }asar Hausa. These could eventually be housed in a special *Ajami Library* which will be under the Library Board and serve as a resource center for both the *mallams*, their pupils and numerous researchers. This will also rely on private initiatives. After all, the huge amounts of money they splash at book launchings could better be utilized in this way.
- Creating *ajami* study centers in scholastic communities that provide support group and discussion clusters for the advancement of literary works in *ajami*. In Kano, for instance, *Madabo* would be an ideal starting point, as it was the site of the first university in Kasar Hausa. *Ajamawa* devotees could start this, and subsequently, with support from many people, it could evolve fully into an intellectual movement.
- Incorporating *ajami* in signboards, road posts and other buildings, both by the Government and individuals.

Let the *Ajamization of Knowledge* be one of the ways of re-engineering the future of Nigerian eduation for a vast majority of children shut out of the mainstream. Let it the challenge of techer education in the dawn of the next millenium.