

John Benjamins Publishing Company



This is a contribution from *Applied Linguistics in the Middle East and North Africa. Current practices and future directions*.

Edited by Atta Gebril.

© 2017. John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way.

The author(s) of this article is/are permitted to use this PDF file to generate printed copies to be used by way of offprints, for their personal use only.

Permission is granted by the publishers to post this file on a closed server which is accessible to members (students and staff) only of the author's/s' institute, it is not permitted to post this PDF on the open internet.

For any other use of this material prior written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

Please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website: www.benjamins.com

Tables of Contents, abstracts and guidelines are available at www.benjamins.com

Arabic language teacher education

Hanada Taha

Endowed Professor for Arabic Language, Zayed University, UAE

Quality teacher preparation programs have been shown to greatly impact student learning outcomes as studies often refer to the importance of quality teacher education as a key factor in learning. Linguistic realities in the Arab world reflect a bleak situation where Arabic language teachers remain largely poorly prepared and deprived of sustained and meaningful professional development. This situation is manifested in students' results on international standardized Arabic language proficiency tests. This chapter describes current practices in teacher Arabic language teacher education and cites student Arabic language learning outcomes as demonstrated on the 2011 PIRLS test. The chapter covers research investigating the importance of effective teacher education including quality of preservice admissions, and field experiences associated with those programs.

Keywords: Arabic language, Arabic teacher education, Teacher preparation in Arab World, Arabic teacher quality, PIRLS, Arabic literacy, Arabic standardized tests, Arabic teachers' outcomes, teaching Arabic, Arab colleges of education

Introduction

The importance of quality teacher preparation programs has been one of the most repeated mantras in the world of education recently. Research published in the field of education in many parts of the world has emphasized the role of competent teachers in ensuring quality instruction and learning outcomes (Alamouh, 2009; AlMazroui, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Holtman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005; Faour, 2012; Taha, 2013; Taha-Thomure, 2009). Quality teacher preparation programs are expected to graduate well prepared teachers are those who not only have mastery over the subject matter, i.e., content they teach, but have various pedagogies and methodologies that they employ to ensure that learning happens (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond,

Holtman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005; Faour, 2012). Well prepared teachers promote higher order thinking skills in their students through the use of hands-on and real world experiences that they can resolve, analyze, and reflect on (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Holtman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005). In addition, well prepared teachers tend to stay longer in the teaching profession, and produce better student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Current status of Arabic language teachers

In his work entitled “Arab Education Report Card”, Faour (2012) depicted that most teachers in the Arab world lack the knowledge and skills required for functioning within an economically and politically changing world. Faour, moreover, emphasized that the deficient teacher education programs in the Arab world do not help teachers engage their students in any of the 21st century skills including critical thinking skills, higher order thinking skills, oral presentation skills, and accepting a diverse body of interpretation when it comes to classroom discussions. Recent studies indicate that despite the reform efforts introduced in Jordan as one example, pre and in-service teacher training remain unfit for its purpose (Bannayan et al., 2015; Innabi & El Sheikh, 2006). Arabic language teachers are no exception in this and they share with many other teachers in the Arab world the same plight of being ill-prepared. This, though, is a serious matter as Arabic language teachers play an immensely important role in the Arab world. They are entrusted with ensuring that the students reach adequate fluency and accuracy in their native language (Arabic) and are able to think, analyze, and create using this language. Moreover, whatever learning happens (or does not happen) in class carries its effect over to all other subjects that use Arabic as the language of instruction, including Mathematics, Sciences and Social Studies. If students are to acquire some desired 21st century qualities such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, and higher level thinking skills, it is a necessity that they reach a level of proficiency in their native language that qualifies them to easily focus their attention and cognitive effort on concepts and ideas rather than on linguistic aspects of expression.

In the knowledge age where economy is built around the idea of creating knowledge and new ideas, language becomes critical as it is the carrier of all those new ideas and knowledge. Students need to learn how to access knowledge, assess, analyze, and do new things with it, and if they have poor language proficiency, they will not be able to carry out those 21st century functions that are critical in a knowledge-based economy. Those functions are impossible to attain if not practiced in the classroom on a daily basis where discussions of diverse opinions, debates, analysis of multiple interpretations of an issue or a text, and deep

reflection on teaching and learning are not main and recurring staples. The Arab Knowledge Report (2014) stipulated that in order for the Arab world to move into the knowledge economy and ultimately knowledge society, it will need to resolve 8 challenges that it currently faces. Those challenges can be summarized as follows: (1) a weak educational, research, and training system; (2) an inflated public/government sector; (3) a weak private sector; (4) a weak entrepreneurial system; (5) youth unemployment; (6) Arab brain drain; (7) weak governance; (8) a rigid look at the Arabic language and how it is taught. The report recommends that Arabic language instruction and infrastructure need to be modernized since the national language is the impetus for any knowledge society and that language needs to be in sync with the demands of the knowledge economy, productivity, modernity, and humanity.

The challenges cited by the Arab Knowledge Report are not isolated from several other reports that flagged the teaching and learning of Arabic language as an essential component to mending the educational system in the Arab world. However, most Arabic language teachers are the product, or most likely the victims, of those same broken educational systems and teacher education programs that fall short of adequately preparing them in content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and higher order thinking skills (Education in the Arab World, 2009; Faour, 2012). They are the outcome of educational systems that expect them to teach from prescribed grammar-based textbooks that are outdated, boring, and unresponsive to student needs. Many teachers of Arabic are found to be lacking in content knowledge and in adhering to the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the language of instruction in their classrooms (Alamouh, 2009; Obaid, 2010).

Arabic is a diglossic language (Aldannan, 2010; AlMoosa, 2007; Ferguson, 1959, 1991; Obeid, 2010) that has many regional spoken dialects and a higher level written standardized variety. All textbooks are written in MSA and students are tested in all content in MSA. This means that conducting Arabic language class using local dialects which can vary from community to another and from one Arab country to another and from one geographical area to other causes a gap in students' learning and ability to fully comprehend the subject matter they will be assessed on (Arab Thought Foundation, 2009). The same can be argued for subjects taught using Arabic language which might include mathematics, science, social studies, and extracurricular activities.

Covering the textbook content, memorizing grammar and spelling rules, and content review seem to be the goal of most teachers in public school systems in the Arab world and as such teachers are there to teach regardless of whether students learn or not (Faour, 2012; RTI, 2012). Quality control measures are absent and periodical national standardized tests that illicit useful data to help track students' progress and achievement are almost non-existent (Aldannan, 2010; Alrajhi, 2006;

England & Taha, 2006; Obaid, 2010, Taha-Thomure, 2008). Added to that is the absence of various Arabic language academic and pedagogical authorities in charge of drafting national language policies, accrediting Arabic language teachers, producing quality studies on Arabic language teaching and learning, assessing Arabic language national learning outcomes, designing Arabic language arts standards, and creating a professional learning community for Arabic language teachers. This absence has had some serious consequences on the state of Arabic language teaching and learning as reflected in students' results on international standardized literacy tests which will be discussed in some detail in the next section of this paper, and probably has had tragic consequences on all other subject matter taught in Arabic including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects.

The problem of preparing Arabic language teachers is quite alarming as most of them join the teaching profession via various channels including: (1) colleges of education that provide training in primary education with no Arabic language content or subject matter, (2) colleges of Art with a degree in Arabic literature with no preparation in pedagogy and methods of teaching, (3) various colleges and various degrees that have no connection to Arabic language nor education, and in some cases (4) no college degree at all. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that in Arab countries where data is available, half of the primary school teachers are lacking in both pre-service and in service training and are not equipped to deal with a rapidly changing world in which data and information are constantly challenged, edited, and updated (Faour, 2012).

Student results on standardized Arabic literacy tests

High quality teacher education, accreditation, and later professional development and training have been linked to improved and high performance on standardized tests (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Education Testing Service, 2003; NCATE, 2006; Taha, 2013). The value added model assesses gains in student achievement by estimating the impact individual teachers have after accounting for all other factors that affect student learning such as socio-economic status, class size, giftedness or disability, and achievement in the last two years (Coe, Aloisi, Higgins, & Major, 2014). England and Taha (2006) argue that the quality of language programs is heavily dependent on the quality of teaching and the quality of teaching has been shown to be related to the quality of preparation and pre-service training teachers receive (Bannayan & Al-Attia, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2006). The links between student achievement, thus, and teacher preparation are quite strong

and telling and as such merit a closer look at some of the results on international literacy tests.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international, standardized, literacy achievement test for native fourth graders in primary schools. Each country takes this literacy (reading comprehension) test in its own national language. The test's purpose is to measure students' ability to read in their native language and comprehend both literary and informational texts using the following processes: (1) being able to access straightforward information, (2) making explicit inferences, (3) explaining ideas presented in the text, and (4) analyzing the meanings, language, and other features presented in the text (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). The PIRLS test was administered in 2006 with the participation of 46 different educational systems from around the world. In 2011 another round of PIRLS test was administered with the participation of 45 different educational systems including five Arab countries (Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman). The test comprised 10 reading passages, five of them were informational and five were literary. The test was designed in such a way where there was 20% focus on retrieving explicitly stated information, 30% focus on making straightforward inferences, 30% focus on interpreting and integrating ideas and information, and 20% focus on examining and evaluating content, language, and textual elements (Mullis et al., 2012).

Results from the 2011 PIRLS test show that out of the 45 countries participating in the test, Morocco was ranked 45th, Oman 42nd, Saudi Arabia 41st, Qatar 37th, and United Arab Emirates 34th all scoring well below the international scale average of 500. Countries with the highest achievement on the PIRLS 2011 test were Hong Kong, Russian Federation, Finland, Singapore, and Northern Ireland. High performing countries showed strength in the ability to interpret, integrate, and evaluate reading comprehension skills and strategies (Mullis et al., 2012). The PIRLS test administrators analyze as well five indicators that could affect students' reading performance. Those are (1) home environment, (2) teacher education, (3) school resources for reading, (4) school climate, and (5) classroom instruction.

If taken as indicators of student achievement in Arabic language literacy, the picture those results draw is quite alarming and calls for immediate action on the part of those nations. The results could reflect the fact that educational systems in those countries and most of the Arab world, including teacher preparation programs, curricula, and assessment are in need of serious analysis and large scale reform. Most reform initiatives to date in the Arab world have randomly focused on numeracy, science, and English language leaving Arabic language lagging behind (Sabella, 2014; Toukan, Alnoaimi, & Obaidat, 2006). Some national initiatives left Arabic language education reform in the hands of the somewhat

inexperienced and outdated curriculum directorates found in ministries of education. Most reform initiatives in Arabic language education are centered mostly on writing in-house textbooks based neither on solid pedagogical and linguistic theory nor a deep understanding of Arabic language arts standards that can give teachers a real benchmark against which learning outcomes could be assessed (Taha-Thomure, 2011).

Arabic language teacher education programs

Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, and Ahn (2013) at the National Academy for Education described several attributes related the teacher preparation programs (TPP) quality and evidence used to measure them. They listed those attributes as follows: (1) admissions and recruitment criteria measured via GPAs of high school graduates, average score on entrance exam such as Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT), American College Testing (ACT), etc.; (2) quality and substance of instruction including course syllabi, course offerings, lectures and assignments, textbooks and required content courses; (3) quality of the field experience or teaching practice including field work policies and required hours, qualifications of mentors, and records from observations of student teaching; (4) faculty qualifications; (5) effectiveness in preparing employable teachers; and (6) success in preparing high quality teachers.

The author examined several Arabic language teacher education program websites, those included: Bahrain Teachers College at the University of Bahrain, College of Education at the Sultan Qaboos University, College of Education at Qatar University, and College of Education at Al-Mansoura University in Egypt. Many other university websites were examined including Ain Shams University in Egypt, United Arab Emirates University, College of Education at the University of Jordan, and Umm AlQura University in Saudi Arabia but were not included because they either offered generalist four-year education programs that are not Arabic language specific or because the information provided on the websites was not clear or comprehensive enough.

This chapter looks at some of the Feuer et al. (2013) measures described earlier including: (1) quality of students entering the program, (2) curriculum, (3) field experiences, and (4) induction practices (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Holtman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005).

Quality of pre-Service teachers entering the program

Ensuring that only the best pre-service teachers are admitted into teacher education programs has been shown to be one of the best ways to ensure graduating effective teachers who can make a difference in the classroom. Teacher education programs that have higher entry standards of their students and strict selectivity criteria tend to be more effective programs (Cooper & Alvarado, 2009; Plecki et al., 2012). Teachers with higher cognitive abilities have been shown to be better teachers in the classroom (Boyd et al., 2006; Fetler, 1999; Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, & Staiger, 2011). High standard admission criteria might be one of the best indicators of the quality of teacher education programs. The highest ranking teacher education programs around the world make sure that stringent admission criteria are in place to ensure that only the best qualified students are admitted into their programs. Admission criteria for the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore, for example, ask students interested in their undergraduate program to show proof of GCE, O and A levels passing scores, or International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, in addition to passing an English language proficiency test, a physical proficiency test, a recommendation letter from their high school principal and an interview. Admission criteria in the United States, for example, require most high school students regardless of the major they want to specialize in to pass the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing (ACT) which test knowledge in reading, writing and math, in addition to an essay and a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of B- or higher.

In most Arab countries students with the highest (CGPA) in high school are traditionally accepted into colleges of engineering, medicine, and theoretical sciences, and those with the lowest high school CGPA are sent off to the colleges of arts and education. High school CGPAs required for admission vary widely from one university to another and from Arab country to another ranging from 65% for Jordanian colleges of education (Alamouh, 2009) to 80% at Bahrain Teachers College (BTC, 2014).

Colleges of education in the Arab world vary in their admission requirements. Many colleges of education including the University of Jordan (Alamouh, 2009), United Arab Emirates University, and Kuwait University are examples of universities that do not have a specialized pre-service Arabic language teacher education programs and have opted instead for a general approach that awards a generalist teaching diploma for primary school teachers leaving middle and high school teaching to graduates with no formal training in pedagogy. Entry into those colleges is guaranteed based on the high school CGPA, an interview, and in some cases testing is required. In the universities surveyed, it was found that

the Bahrain Teachers College at the University of Bahrain screens via a battery of tests including English language, Aptitude, and Arabic language in addition to an interview. However, when screening Year 1 pre-service teachers for its Bachelor of Education program, pre-service teachers who do not score well on the English and Mathematics streaming tests tend to be lumped into the Arabic and lower elementary classroom teacher programs. This can have grave ramifications on the Arabic language profession which is for the most part left with the weakest pre-service teachers who could not “make it” into other specializations. As a matter of future policy and strategic educational reform, it will be crucial to tighten up selection criteria for future Arabic language teachers at teacher education colleges as it will have an impact later on student achievement as emphasized in many studies (Cooper & Alvarado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Quality of teacher education curriculum used

Effective teacher education programs have a solid curriculum that balances content knowledge courses with pedagogy and methods courses especially in programs that are training primary school teachers (Cooper & Alvarado, 2009). Effective teacher education programs ought to have enough subject matter courses where students graduate with a body of knowledge that enables them to run their classes. They will also need training in child development, classroom management, social context of schooling, lesson planning, assessment of learning, action research, and using data to drive practice. Reviewing the websites of some of the Arab universities, the author picked the universities which had details of their teacher education programs posted online and found out the following: Sultan Qaboos University in Oman requires Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) in Arabic language students to take 67 credit hours in Arabic language and literature including Abbasid, Umayyad, literary analysis, and syntax, 30 credit hours in pedagogy and educational psychology, nine credit hours of teaching practice done in the fourth year of the program, in addition to 17 credit hours in university general requirements and electives (see Table 12.1). The Bahrain Teachers College in the Kingdom of Bahrain Arabic language teacher education B. Ed. program requires students in the Bachelor of Education in Arabic language and Islamic Studies to complete 11 credit hours in university general requirements, 15 credit hours in teaching practice starting in freshman year and throughout the four-year program, 70 credit hours in pedagogy and educational psychology, 60 credit hours in Arabic language, and Islamic studies content courses and methods courses that include syntax, Arabic children’s literature, standards-based instruction in the Arabic language classroom, Arabic writing strategies, and reading strategies, etc. as shown in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 Arabic language Education Degree Plan at Sultan Qaboos University

FIRST YEAR					
SEMESTER ONE		Cr. H	SEMESTER TWO		Cr. H
ARAB1001	Arabic (univ. requirement)	3	LANC1009	English (univ. requirement)	3
LANC1008	English (univ. requirement)	3	ASLM2106	Analytic Interpretation	3
ARAB1110	Introduction to Linguistics	3	ARAB2125	Syntax & Morphology (1)	3
PSYC 1000	Introduction to Educational Research Methods	1	ARAB2325	Old Literature Criticism	3
ARAB1220	Jahili Literature	3	COMP1100	Introduction to Computer	2
ARAB3215	Rhetoric	3	HIST1010	Oman & Islamic Civilization	2
			ASLM1010	OR Islamic Culture	
TOTAL		16	TOTAL		16
SECOND YEAR					
SEMESTER THREE		Cr. H	SEMESTER FOUR		Cr. H
ARAB2220	Umayyad and 'Abbasid Literature	3	ARAB****	Department Elective	2
ARAB2115	Syntax & Morphology (2)	3	ARAB3155	Syntax & Morphology (3)	3
ARAB3235	Linguistic & Literary Sources	3	ARAB3210	Abbasid Literature	3
ARAB3130	Language Sounds	3	ARAB2260	Literature of Oman & Gulf	3
EDUC2007	Educational objectives	3	PSYC2000	Educational Psychology	3
SOCI2320	Omani Contemporary Society	1	EDUC2004	Foundations of Educations	3
TOTAL		16	TOTAL		17
THIRD YEAR					
SEMESTER FIVE		Cr. H	SEMESTER SIX		Cr. H
ARAB4115	Syntax & Morphology (4)	3	ARAB4150	Prosody & Rhyme (Qafia)	3
ARAB4120	Semantics & Dictionary	3	ARAB4235	Andalusi & Moroccan Literature	3
ARAB****	Dept. Elective	2	ARAB****	Dept. Elective	3
TECH3007	Intro. to Instructional Technology	3	CUTM3011	Methods of Teaching (1)	3
*****	Univ. Elective	2	PSYC3000	Counseling and Development	3
CUTM3206	Educational Curriculum	3	*****	Univ. elective (univ. requirement)	2
TOTAL		16	TOTAL		17

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

SEMESTER SEVEN		FOURTH YEAR		SEMESTER EIGHT	
		Cr. H			Cr. H
ARAB4320	Modern Literary Criticism	3	ARAB4330	Comparative Literature	3
*****	Univ. Elective	2	EDUC3104	Educational system in Oman & Gulf	3
ARAB4245	Contemporary Literature	3	CUTM4500	Teaching Practice	9
CUTM4011	Methods of Teaching (2)	3			
PSYC4000	Psychological Measurement and Educational Evaluation	3			
ARAB3170	Syntactic Texts and Exercise	3			
	TOTAL	17		TOTAL	15

<http://www.squ.edu.om/tabid/4665/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

The Sultan Qaboos teacher education program adopts a relatively more classical course of teacher preparation for Arabic with an emphasis on Arabic language and literature similar to those offered in colleges of arts. No courses in Arabic language teaching strategies are required including writing strategies, reading strategies, and/or standards-based instruction in the Arabic classroom. At the Bahrain Teachers College the emphasis in its B.Ed. program is more on teaching methods, educational foundations, and methods courses in addition to teaching practice which makes the nature of these two teacher preparation programs differ significantly. Al-Mansoura University did not have a breakdown of its course offerings online, but described the program as one that is dependent on studying the various eras of Arabic literature in addition to syntax, rhetoric, and literary criticism, and Islamic studies with 75% of the course load dedicated to content courses and 25% dedicated to pedagogy courses (Ministry of Higher Education, 2005).

Field experiences

Having frequent and well-designed teaching practice/practicum opportunities early on in the teacher education program has been found to be one of the more powerful components in graduating effective teachers (Cooper & Alvarado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feuer et al., 2013). Exposing pre-service teachers early on in their teacher education to as many real life school experiences as possible helps them experience hands-on what teaching is all about and gives them the

opportunity to put into practice the strategies and concepts they have been taught in their program (Allen, 2003).

Teaching practice and various field experiences allow students to bridge the gap between course work they take in college and real life experiences that they will most likely face in the classroom. Making sure that pre-service teachers have interested and effective cooperating teachers and supervisors who are well aware of best practice in their field is key to a successful teaching practice experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Taha, 2013).

The common practice, however, in teacher education programs in the Arab world is to leave the practicum till the third or last year as is the case with the Sultan Qaboos University program and Qatar University, for example. Teaching practice starts in Year 3 of the program in Ain Shams University and Al-Mansoura University (Egypt). Jordanian universities, according to Alamoush (2009), do not really graduate Arabic language teachers but rather teachers who have had some content knowledge in Arabic language and literature with very limited teaching practice or practicum time allocated to the program (three credit hours for the diploma). She adds that the emphasis in teacher education programs in Jordan on the content focuses more on the quantity rather than the quality. Teaching practice in Jordan according to Alamoush (2009) remains very weak, loosely tied to the course work pre-service teachers do at the college, in addition to the fact that schools in which pre-service teachers are placed for teaching practice are quite crowded and do not give them the needed opportunities and resources to implement modern teaching methods. Add to that pre-service teachers spend limited time in teaching practice which is about eight days a year in Years 3 and 4 of their Bachelor's degree.

Bahrain Teachers College requires pre-service teachers to go on teaching practice starting Year 1 and every year thereafter till they graduate with teaching practice counting for 15 credit hours distributed across the four-year program (two credit hours which are equivalent to 25 days are spent in schools in Year 1, two credit hours in Year 2, two credit hours in Year 3, and nine credit hours which are equivalent to 80 days in Year 4). This gives pre-service teachers at Bahrain Teachers College about 155 days of teaching practice over the span of their four-year degree.

One of the main weaknesses in most Arabic language teacher education programs in the Arab world has to do with the very limited time pre-service teachers spend in actual classrooms, observing and shadowing experienced cooperating teachers, co-teaching, reflecting on the practices they see, analyzing videos of themselves teaching, keeping journals in which deep reflections and analyses of teaching are noted, planning lessons with the cooperating teachers in addition to designing standards-based activities and assessments (Taha, 2013).

A good and cooperative relationship with Ministries of Education (MOE) and universities with teacher education programs is crucial as students are being placed for practicum in public schools and with various cooperating teachers (NIE, 2014). The MOEs are needed to facilitate the process of pre-service teacher placement in teaching practice and ensuring that student-teachers are paired with the most effective and able to coach, cooperating teachers that the system offers.

New teachers' induction

Teacher education does not really end with graduation. Ensuring that new teachers are placed in the “right” schools and ensuring that they have a year or two of a carefully designed induction program into the profession are necessary tools to retaining those teachers and “settling” them into a profession that is quite demanding (Allen, 2003) and are important to student achievement. Placing new graduates in schools that are failing on quality assurance measures, in which the administrators are not supportive of the new teachers, or placing them in schools whose environment is substandard could be detrimental and could be the catalyst that will lead new graduates to leave the teaching profession in search of easier jobs that can give them better support.

Having a well-planned one or two-year induction program that eases new teachers into the profession and coaches them until they get the “hang of things” could play a significant role in how effective these teachers end up being in the classroom and will thus affect student achievement. Highly effective teaching systems ensure that new teachers are helped from day one of their joining the school and set a roadmap for their professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Good teacher education programs can guarantee producing strong and quality teachers, but it is what happens in schools that ensures that quality teaching is promoted. Induction programs help new teachers have access to a professional community and to the expertise of the more mature teachers around them. Induction programs are typically organized by schools in which new teachers are appointed and include giving them access to a mentor who works with them in addition to a reduced teaching load that allows them the time to reflect on their practice, observe classes with their mentors, and be able to discuss and deeply analyze what they see in the form of knowledge sharing sessions that will help improve their own classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Arabic language teachers in the Arab world do not, for the most part, get the benefit of a year-long or two-year induction program that allows them to settle into the profession and be mentored by experts in the field while in their own schools and classrooms. This can be due to a shortage in training staff at ministries of

education who are the largest employers of Arabic language teachers. It also could be the result of the lack of cooperation between ministries of education and colleges of education. There is as of recent, however, a realization of the importance of induction and although the efforts to date remain minimal, yet this could be a start. The Abu Dhabi Education Council, for example, runs annual 3-day induction training for new teachers (ADEC, 2014), however, induction is a long process of hand-holding and scaffolding – taken on usually by the employer and possibly by the colleges that they graduated from – that ought to be done throughout the year in classrooms rather than it being a one time workshop. The Queen Rania Foundation is another example, whereby, induction of newly minted teachers has featured quite prominently in their new, internal circulation white policy paper, 10-year curriculum and assessment policy plan.

The scarcity then of adequate induction programs means that the most newly minted and graduated teachers are thrown full thrust into teaching full loads at their schools. The result of that often is disenfranchised young teachers who are disappointed by a system that failed them and who tend to revert back to old teaching methods that require little effort and little preparation (Bannayan & Al Attia, 2015; NCHRD, 2012). Beginner teachers are asked to conform to the existing system and to the status quo. These new teachers face a number of challenges including a demanding profession, lack of support from school administrations, classrooms in excess of 30 students, extra-curricular duties, lack of resources including children’s literature and classroom libraries, in addition to meaningless administrative work. Given all these challenges, new teachers soon reach a burn out stage and frustration levels that force them to stop trying. They accordingly slip into the mold and start conforming to what everyone else is doing in schools including teaching to the textbook, focusing solely on summative testing, and losing interest in what they do. In the process, they lose the opportunity to build on and carve their own distinctive professional identity that every effective teacher needs to work on (Kremer-Hayon, Faraj, & Wubbels, 2002). None of the Arabic language teacher education programs reviewed had any articulation on their websites of an induction program for new graduates on any teacher education program.

Continuous professional development for in-service teachers

It is not enough to prepare Arabic teachers and expect them to excel and be effective and efficient teachers without sustained and continuous professional development. Continuous professional development or what is called “professional learning” (Fullan, 2007) is key to helping in-service teachers deepen their knowledge, reflect

on their practices, and receive support from peers within their network. According to Fullan (2007), student learning depends on ensuring that every teacher is learning all the time. Few teachers of Arabic receive professional development and when and if they do it is mostly what educators call “drive-through” professional development comprised of a few hours spent looking at a new concept or strategy that does not lead to any change in classroom practice (England & Taha, 2006). Ministries of education in several Arab countries are slowly recognizing the importance of professional development as indicated in the many “training bids” they post on their websites calling on interested parties to bid for a chance to win a teacher training contract with them. This is in itself a great start, but because of the lack of a strategic plan with long and short term performance indicators linked to training, most trainings done thus far have not yielded much results. If the end product of any professional development or learning is to improve teacher practices in the classroom and thus most importantly have a positive effect on students’ learning outcomes (Stoel et al., 2002) and achievements, then whatever trainings teachers of Arabic have received thus far have not been of great value given the scores achieved on the international literacy tests. These results, in addition to many outcries around the Arab World that are sounding great concern over the quality of the Arabic language teaching and learning, ought to prompt all ministries of education and other concerned institutions to sit down and create data-driven and well-informed strategies for professional development and learning (Ghanimeh, 1996; Taha, 2013; Taha-Thomure, 2009). Such strategies have to be grounded in data extracted from the field rather than data taken from Western resources that remain incapable of bringing great solutions beyond the context they were meant for. What is needed now in the Arab world is professional development and learning strategies that do not follow what is trendy and fashionable in the world of Western education, but rather follow what is mostly needed in the Arab world based on data collected from their own schools.

Future needs and plans

The needs of Arabic language education are many; however, in the area of Arabic language teacher education future plans in the opinion of the researcher will have to focus on:

1. Studying current practices in all Arabic language teaching education programs in the Arab world. Enriching the field with data is key to helping policy makers and stakeholders make the necessary and needed changes.

2. Tightening up admissions criteria including high school GPAs and admission tests for those wanting to become Arabic language teachers.
3. Reviewing all Arabic language teacher education program structures in light of international best practices and student achievement on Arabic language tests. International successful models of teacher preparation take a great interest in early and intensive field experiences, deep content knowledge that is relevant, modern methods that are in touch with the current pedagogic realities in each country, qualified faculty members who speak a common pedagogic language and who understand K-12 teaching and professional and ethical attributes, and graduate life-long learners who are ethical and skillful teachers.
4. Requiring national, standardized exit exams for soon-to-graduate Arabic language teachers that would be similar to the qualifying exams and credentialing process that high performing countries require of their teachers as a condition for licensure as a teacher.
5. Introducing a two-year induction program for all beginner teachers where they get a lowered teaching load (lowered by 30%) so they can have time to work with more experienced assigned mentors and coaches.
6. Ensuring that teachers have access to well designed, needs-based, data-driven, meaningful, and continuous professional development and learning opportunities that would help deepen their knowledge and reflect on their practice.
7. Marketing the profession and elevating the status of Arabic language teachers. Teaching in general and teaching Arabic language in particular are not highly regarded in the Arab world. The reasons lurk in less than desirable pay and benefits, an outdated and stagnant cadre and drive-through professional development. In order to elevate the status of teachers and especially Arabic language teachers, Arab governments will need to start drafting educational policies that expect to have only highly prepared teachers in schools but that pay them generously as well, give them adequate benefits and continuous professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

The importance of having quality teacher education programs is a premise that a large body of research has emphasized over time. Ensuring that the best students are admitted into teacher education programs, creating programs that have a coherent curriculum with very early teaching practice and practicum requirements in addition to well structured induction processes form the key components to

producing quality Arabic language teachers who, with the proper follow-up and professional development opportunities, can deliver quality teaching in the classroom (Goldhaber, 2006). Unfortunately, most Arabic language teacher education programs in many Arab countries looked at in this chapter do not even come close to having what it takes to produce quality teachers. Results on International Arabic literacy tests such as the PIRLS confirm extremely low student proficiency in the language and reflect a dismal teaching and learning situation across the Arab world that ought to summon immediate, large-scale action, and strategic planning.

Solutions will have to be draconian to teacher education programs that are deemed sub standard and ought to be completely dissolved and shut down, similar to what happened with the College of Education in Bahrain replacing it with a state of the art Bahrain Teachers College. Other solutions could include having these teacher education programs deconstructed by intensive external and internal quality reviews that are truly enabled to overhaul, reconstruct, and redesign them with a different vision, approach, curricula, faculty, and teaching practices that are capable of training the highest quality preservice teachers. Given that most teacher education programs are housed with state and government run universities, it will be imperative to get support from the highest level possible including ministries of higher education in the Arab world in order to turn teaching and learning around. Educational policy and reform will have to look at the right drivers for the Arab world rather than the right drivers for other countries and cultures. Drivers such as technology and mushrooming smart classrooms are not of much use within an environment that is still struggling with basic literacy and numeracy skills in the ranks of its teacher and student bodies. Teacher education should take a front seat in the policy makers' discussions and decisions. It all starts there. Indeed, in the beginning was the teacher.

References

- Abu Dhabi Education Council. (2014). ADEC organizes Arabic medium teacher induction: An exciting journey of discovery. Retrieved from <<https://www.adec.ac.ae/en/mediacnter/news/pages/adec-organises-arabic-medium-teacher.aspx>>
- Ain Shams University, Faculty of Education website. (n.d.). Retrieved from <<http://edu.asu.edu.eg/english/>>
- AlAmoush, K. (2009). Arabic language teacher preparation programs at the Jordanian University: Current practices and ways to develop them. *The Jordan Academy of Arabic*. Retrieved from <<http://www.majma.org.jo/index.php/2009-02-10-09-35-28/374-27-8.html>>
- AlDanan, A. (2010). *The theory of teaching MSA through natural practice: Application, assessment and dissemination*. Damascus: AlBashaer Publishing House.

- Allen, M. (2003). *Eight questions on teacher education: What does the research say? A summary of the findings*. Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <<http://www.ecs.org/html/educationissues/teachingquality/tpreport/home/summary.pdf>>
- AlMazroui, K. (2010). *Common mistakes in Arabic literacy in primary schools and modern strategies to correct them*. Dubai: Arab World Publishing House.
- AlMousa, N. (2007). *Arabic language in the modern era: Constant values and changing values*. Amman: AlShurouq Publishing House.
- Al-Rajhi, A. (2006). A plan for the future of teaching Arabic: A viewpoint from the Arab World. In K. M. Wahba, Z. A. Taha, & L. England (Eds.), *Handbook for Arabic language teaching professionals in the 21st Century*, (1st ed., pp. 381–388). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Arab Thought Foundation. (2009). *The 2nd report on Arab cultural development*. Beirut: Arab Thought Foundation Publications.
- Bahrain Teachers College. (2014). *Admission and Registration*. Retrieved from <<http://www.btc.uob.edu.bh/contents.aspx?id=922ddafa-594e-e211-a2f6-0022191ecece&gid=4>>
- Bannayan, H., & Al Attia, H. (2015). *Preparing teachers, changing lives: A position note on teacher preparations program in Jordan*. Amman: Queen Rania Teacher Academy, Queen Rania Foundation.
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2006). How changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student achievement. *Education Finance and Policy*, 1(2), 176–216.
- Coe, R., Aloisi C., Higgins, S., & Major, L. E. (2014). *What makes great teaching? Review of the underpinning research*. Retrieved from Sutton Trust website: <<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf>>
- Cooper, J. M., & Alvarado, A. (2009). *Preparation, recruitment, and retention of teachers* (Education Policy Series 5). Retrieved from UNESCO website: <<http://www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/Edpol5.pdf>>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1–44. Retrieved from <<http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/392/515>>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *Evaluating teacher effectiveness: How teacher performance assessments can measure and improve teaching*. Retrieved from NYSED, Office of Higher Education website: <<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/TELDH.pdf>>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). *Creating a comprehensive system for evaluating and supporting effective teaching*. Retrieved from Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education website: <<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/creating-comprehensive-system-evaluating-and-supporting-effective-teaching.pdf>>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D., Gatlin, S., & Vasquez-Heilig, J. (2005). Does teacher education matter? Evidence about teacher certification, teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(42), 1–55. Retrieved from <<http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/147/273>>
- Education in the Arab World: Laggards trying to catch up. (2009). 15October. *The Economist*. Retrieved from <www.economist.com/node/14660446>
- Education Testing Service. (2003). *Policy Information Report: Preparing teachers around the world*. Retrieved from <https://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/prepteach.pdf>

- England, L., & Taha, Z. A. (2006). Methodology in Arabic language teacher education. In K. M. Wahba, Z. A. Taha, & L. England (Eds.), *Handbook for Arabic language teaching professionals in the 21st Century*, (1st ed., pp. 419–436). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Faour, M. (2012). *The Arab World's education report card: School climate and citizenship skills*. Retrieved from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website: <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/school_climate.pdf>
- Ferguson, C. A. (1959). Diglossia. *Word*, 15, 325–340. doi:10.1080/00437956.1959.11659702
- Ferguson, C. A. (1991). Diglossia revisited. *Southwest Journal of Linguistics*, 10, 214–34.
- Fetler M. (1999). High school staff characteristics and mathematics test results. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7(9). Retrieved from <<http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/544/667>> doi:10.14507/epaa.v7n9.1999
- Feuer, M., Floder, R., Chudowsky, N., & Ahn, J. (2013). *Teacher preparation programs: Purposes, methods and policy pptions*. Retrieved from National Academy of Education website: <http://www.naeducation.org/cs/groups/naedsite/documents/webpage/naed_085581.pdf>
- Fullan, M. (2007). Change the terms for teacher learning. *National Staff Development Council*, 28(3), 35–36.
- Ghanimeh, M. (1996). *Policies and Arab teacher preparation programs and the structure of the teaching-learning process*. Cairo: Egyptian-Lebanese Publishing House.
- Goldhaber, D. (April, 2006). *Everyone's doing it, but what does teacher testing tell us about teacher effectiveness?* Paper presented at the AERA Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. Retrieved from <http://public.econ.duke.edu/~staff/wrkshop_papers/2006-07Papers/Goldhaber.pdf>
- Innabi, H., & El Sheikh, O. (2006). *The change in mathematics teachers' peceptions of critical thinking after 15 years of educational reform in Jordan*. Berlin: Springer.
- Kremer-Hayon, L., Faraj, H., & Wubbels, T. (2002). Burn-out among Israeli Arab school principals as a function on professional identity and interpersonal relationships with teachers. *Internaional Journal of Leadership in Education*, 5(2), 149–162. doi:10.1080/13603120110057091
- Ministry of Higher Education. (2005). *Faculty of Education Enhancement Project*. Retrieved from <http://edufac.mans.edu.eg/images/edu_default/about_faacc/Regulation.pdf>
- Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Drucker, K. T. (2012). *PIRLS 2011 international results in reading*. Retrieved from <<http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/international-results-pirls.html>>
- National Center for Human Resources Development NCHRD. (2012). *Classroom observation baseline study report, monitoring & evaluation partnership (MEP) project*. Boston, MA: World Education.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education NCATE. (2006). *What makes a teacher effective? A summary of key research findings on teacher preparation*. Retrieved from <<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED495408>>
- National Institute of Education NIE. (n.d.). *NIE's partnership with the ministry of education, Singapore*. Retrieved from <<http://www.nie.edu.sg/office-teacher-education/nies-partnership-ministry-education-singapore>>
- Obeid, A. (2010). *Reasons for the low performance in the teaching of Arabic language*. Tunisia: Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science.
- Plecki, M. L., Elfers, A., & Nakamura, Y. (2012). Using evidence for teacher education program improvement and accountability: An illustrative case of the role of value-added measues. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63(5), 318–334. doi:10.1177/0022487112447110
- Qatar University. (n. d.). *College of Education*. Retrieved from <<http://www.qu.edu.qa/education/>>

- Rockoff, J. E., Jacob, B. A., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2011). Can you recognize an effective teacher when you recruit one? *Education Financy and Policy*, 6(1), 43–74. Retrieved from <<http://www.nber.org/papers/w14485>>
- RTI International. (2012). *Student performance in reading and mathematics, pedagogic practice, and school management in Jordan* (EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance, Task Number 16). Retrieved from USAID website: <<https://www.eddataglobal.org/reading/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubDetail&ID=425>>
- Sabella, T. (2014). *Curriculum reform in Jordan: A review of the lower primary curriculum design, pedagogy, and teacher preparedness components*. Amman: Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development.
- Sabella, T., & Taha, H. (internal circulation white paper). Curriculum and assessment policy plan for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (white paper). Queen Rania Foundation. Amman, Jordan.
- Sultan Qaboos University. (n.d.). Retrieved from <<http://www.squ.edu.om/>>
- Stoel, C. F., & Thant, T-S. (2002). *Teachers' professional lives: A view from nine industrialized countries*. Retrieved from Council of Basic Education website: <<http://cct2.edc.org/saw2000/TeachersProfLives.pdf>>
- Taha, H. (2013). Arabic language for life report. Prime Minister's Executive Office, Dubai, UAE.
- Taha-Thomure, H. (2008). The status of Arabic language today. *Journal of Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 1(3), 186–192. doi:10.1108/17537980810909805
- Taha-Thomure, H. (2009). The ghoul, phoenix, loyal friend and reading. *Proceedings of the Arab Thought Foundation Conference in Arab Publishing*. Beirut: Arab Thought Foundation.
- Taha-Thomure, H. (2011). *Teaching Arabic using standards based instruction*. Beirut: Academia International.
- Toukan, K., Al-Noaimi, T., & Odibat, A. (2006). National education strategy. Amman, Jordan: Ministry of Education, Directorate of Education.
- Umm AlQura University. (n.d.). Retrieved from <<https://uqu.edu.sa/education>>
- University of Jordan. (n.d.). Retrieved from <<http://educational.ju.edu.jo/Home.aspx>>
- UNDP. (2014). *The Arab Knowledge Report for 2014: Youth and the Nationalization of Knowledge*. Retrieved from: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/report/UAE_KR2014_Full_Arb.pdf>
- United Arab Emirates University. (n.d.). Retrieved from <<http://www.eng.uaeu.ac.ae/en/>>

