The teaching of

Arabic language and culture

in UK schools

March 2015

Contents

18 August 2015   Teresa Tinsley

1   Introduction

1.1   Aims

Recent research commissioned by the British Council into the languages most needed by the UK in the next 20 years put Arabic in second place after Spanish[i]. The report emphasised the importance of Arabic not only for business reasons but as a priority language in diplomacy and security and in international cultural and education strategies. It called for improvements to language teaching including the provision of a wider range of languages and noted that, in the case of Arabic, the gap between current provision and current and future need is particularly great.

This report was commissioned by the Arabic language and culture partnership in order to map out the current state of play with regard to Arabic language and culture in the UK and to assess the opportunities for extending the teaching of Arabic to more schools and learners. It is understood that the findings will inform a strategy and a programme of activity to promote the teaching of Arabic.

Data from examination boards on numbers taking national exams in Arabic indicate that the number of learners is increasing. The report seeks to investigate which types of schools and types of learner are contributing to this apparent growth and where the potential is for further expansion. It seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the extent and nature of Arabic provision in UK schools?
- Who are the learners, and what motivates them?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this provision?
- Where are the opportunities, and the threats?
- How can the promotion of Arabic best be approached?

1.2   Policy context

The four nations of the UK have different education systems, with different policies towards languages, different curricula, and, in the case of Scotland, different accreditation systems. A strategy to promote the teaching of Arabic UK wide must be differentiated to account for these different circumstances.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the study of a foreign language is currently compulsory from age 11 to age 14 and there are concerns in all three nations about declining numbers of students who choose to continue with a language (usually French, Spanish or German) up to 16 and beyond. In Scotland the Curriculum for Excellence places languages within a wider curriculum area of languages and literacy, which includes English, Gaelic and classical languages. Scotland introduced language learning at primary level during the 1990s and more recently this policy has been refreshed with a manifesto commitment on behalf of the SNP government to introduce the European policy ambition of 'mother tongue plus two languages' during the course of two parliaments. Current thinking is that the first foreign language is to be introduced at the beginning of primary school, and the second, perhaps in a more light touch way, in Year 5. Although there have been some pilot projects, languages are not part of the primary curriculum in Northern Ireland or Wales.

In England, the government a new National Curriculum was introduced in September 2014 which includes the requirement to study a foreign language throughout Key Stage 2 (ages 7 to 11). In response to feedback from a public consultation on its earlier proposals, it withdrew a prescribed list of 7 languages which could be taught (which did not include Arabic) and now recognises any modern or ancient language as contributing to this area of the curriculum. It has restated the importance of continuity in language learning across Key Stages and phases of education, as achieving a transition from primary to secondary school which enables learners to take forward and build on their prior learning is seen as one of the most pressing challenges for success of the new policy[ii]. Language teaching within the new

national curriculum at Key Stage 3 (11-14) may be in 'any modern foreign language' although it should 'build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2'.[iii] Beyond the age of 14, a modern foreign language is an optional subject, though there is some incentive for schools to encourage pupils to take one through the E-Bacc performance measure.

Free schools and academies

The government is inviting all schools in England to become Academies – publicly funded schools depending directly on central government rather than the local authority, with the freedom to set their own curriculum and to negotiate teachers' pay and conditions. It sees this as an important way of improving standards in education. At the same time it is encouraging parents and other groups to set up 'free schools' which will function in the same way as Academies. Progress on Academy conversions has been very rapid and by the end of July 2011 there were 124 primary Academies, 652 secondary Academies and 27 all through Academies. By January 2014, 57 per cent of secondary schools were academies and 30 per cent of all English pupils (primary and secondary) were enrolled in academies or free schools.[iv]

Support structures for languages

The National Languages Strategy (2002-2010) depended on a number of support structures which had promoted developments in primary languages and, in secondary schools, the teaching of a wider range of languages. These included local, regional and central support for the implementation of primary languages, and the development of Specialist Language Colleges (SLCs). SLCs were mainstream schools which received additional funding not only to boost the teaching of languages in their own institutions, but to reach out to the community by offering support for languages teaching in local primary schools and other secondary schools in their areas. Under the National Languages Strategy, Asset Languages qualifications were developed to recognise achievement in a wide range of languages, including Arabic (see section 2.6 on Accreditation). The coalition government has not continued to fund these initiatives and the support structures have largely disappeared.

Faith schools

The term faith school was introduced in Britain in 1990 following demands from Muslims for institutions comparable to existing Christian church schools. Such schools teach a general curriculum but have a particular religious character or links with a religious organisation and may make religious affiliation a criterion for admission.

The Association of Muslim Schools lists 172 members on its website, with schools throughout England and in Cardiff, but none in Scotland, Northern Ireland or other parts of Wales[v]. The Imam Muhammad Zakariya School in Dundee closed in 2006[vi]. Most Muslim schools are independent, though a few are Voluntary Aided (in receipt of 90% state funding). A number of previously independent Muslim schools are now applying for Free School status[vii], others are opening for the first time as free schools in 2013 and beyond. Research identified 17 of these, listed at Appendix 1 of which only one was functioning as a free school by September 2014. However it is understood that the Tauheedul Education Trust, 'founded on a progressive Muslim ethos and promoting British values'[viii] has recently submitted applications to open five new free schools to add to the six that it already runs[ix].

Teachers in the Muslim schools visited, and a representative of the Association of Muslim Teachers consulted for this report, confirmed that it was almost certain that all Muslim faith schools would teach Arabic as a modern language as well as Qu'ranic studies.

1.3   Methodology

The work for this report was conducted in two phases. Phase I, conducted in April 2013, involved a brief review of existing published sources (exam statistics, university student numbers, school surveys) and desk research of web-based data. It also drew on Alison Scott-Baumann and Sariya Contrator's excellent report into motivations of university students of Arabic.[x]. Statistical data were updated in March 2015.

Phase 2 was conducted between August and December 2013 and involved a wider range of methodologies, as follows:

1. Compiling, populating and analysing databases of primary, secondary and supplementary schools involved in Arabic teaching, using a range of sources.
    a. Schools belonging to the Association of Muslim Schools
    b. Supplementary schools offering Arabic (listed by the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education)
    c. Schools represented at the Arabic conference held at the British Council, London on 8/11/13
    d. Schools featured as teaching Arabic in previous reports and newsletters
    e. National surveys of language teaching (Language Trends)
    f. Schools in London which enter students for Arabic GCSE
    g. Web searches, visits and telephone calls
    h. Personal contacts

    The database consists of 105 primary schools, 207 secondary schools and 87 supplementary schools.

2. Online surveys for each group of schools (primary, secondary and supplementary). These sought to investigate further certain issues identified in Phase I such as the qualifications and training of teachers, teaching materials and perceived gaps, and the use of different forms of accreditation. These were advertised via web forums and emailed to initial contacts listed on the database. There were 83 valid responses providing information about provision, resources, accreditation and support needed. These surveys were intended to provide qualitative rather than quantitative information and although the information gleaned is very useful in helping to understand the complex picture of Arabic teaching across the UK, it is not necessarily representative.

3. Visits to different types of schools, and interviews with Head teachers, teachers and students. The schools visited were chosen to include both primary and secondary, independent and state, and faith and non-denominational schools. They were also selected on the basis of geography, to include North East and North West England, the East of England, London and the South East. The schools were:

    a. Al-Noor Primary School, Goodmayes (independent Muslim school)
    b. Horton Park Primary School, Bradford (state primary)
    c. Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford (state secondary)
    d. Bolton Muslim Girls School (Muslim state secondary)
    e. Eton College (independent)[1]
    f. Peace School, Neasden (supplementary school)
    g. Arabic School for All, Lincoln (supplementary school)

    It was not possible to arrange visits to any of the very few schools outside of England which teach Arabic.

4. Interviews with other key informants including teachers, teacher trainers and language advisors. These included Rukshana Yaqoob, President of the Muslim Teachers' Association.

---

[1] Because of term dates, it was not possible to carry out a visit to this school

2   Findings

2.1   Primary schools

Phase I

Very few primary schools were found to be offering Arabic teaching. Wade and Marshall[xi], researching progress towards the 'entitlement' for all primary age children to learn a language enshrined in the National Languages Strategy, found a 'minority' of local authorities (=less than 5%) offering support for the teaching of Arabic in primary schools. This had remained unchanged since a previous investigation in 2006.

A case study of a local authority-led initiative to introduce the teaching of Arabic in a cluster of 6 primary schools in Bradford was included on a national advisory website providing support for developing the teaching of languages in primary schools[xii]. In 2009, it was reported that a local supplementary school (Bradford Arabic School) had been successfully providing the teaching of Arabic in 4 of these same schools, offering weekly classes to all pupils[xiii].

A survey in 2012 which gathered responses from more than 700 primary schools across England found 2 schools offering Arabic in Years 3 and 4 and just one in years 5 and 6[xiv]. Similar surveys in 2013 and 2014 have also identified just one or two schools teaching Arabic as a curriculum subject[xv]. With such small numbers this proportion cannot be said to be statistically valid across all 18,000 primary schools in England. However, were this picture replicated across England, it was estimated that there might be around 20-40 primary schools across the country teaching some Arabic. It appeared that Arabic might be being taught in these schools in very light touch ways, introducing children to the sounds of the language and some basic vocabulary, without following a formal programme.

Where primary schools adopt 'language awareness' approaches, pupils who speak Arabic at home – and sometimes their parents – may be encouraged to present spoken or written Arabic to the rest of the class. An Ofsted report on initial teacher training in primary languages offers an example of this[xvi].

There have been no surveys of Arabic teaching in independent primary schools.

Phase 2

Phase 2 sought to follow up the information gathered in Phase 1. It found that of the 6 Bradford primary schools in the above-mentioned pilot, only 2 continued to teach Arabic in the curriculum (including Horton Park Primary school featured as a case study below). A further 2 continue to offer Arabic as an after school option, and the other 2 have ceased to teach the subject. One school said this was because it had moved on to another language.

In Phase 2 a list of 105 schools relevant to the teaching of Arabic was compiled, including both infant, primary and all-through schools. Of these the vast majority, 84, are independent Muslim schools belonging to the Association of Muslim Schools. 28 of these are all-through schools which also cater for secondary pupils. The 20 state-funded schools include a new free school and two academies. Six are also members of the Association of Muslim Schools. One of the schools is in Glasgow and 2 in Cardiff; the rest are spread across England.

Primary schools involved with Arabic teaching	Independent	State	Totals
Muslim	84	6	90
Non-Muslim	1	14	15
Totals	85	20	105

Not all of the state primary schools on the list are currently teaching Arabic. For example, Pimlico Academy has been included because its sister secondary school is known to enter a large number of its pupils for Arabic GCSE. Ben Johnson School (Tower Hamlets), Dovedale (Liverpool), Lister (Bradford) and Preston Manor (Wembley) offer Arabic teaching as an after school option but do not teach it to all pupils within the curriculum. Others previously taught Arabic in the curriculum but no longer do so (e.g. Atlas Primary School, Bradford). Haslemere Primary School in Merton is interested in teaching Arabic as it caters for many bilingual children from Islamic or Arabic-speaking countries. The number of non-Muslim state primary schools teaching Arabic which this study has been able to identify is therefore very low.

Responses to the survey from primary schools

The responses to the on-line questionnaire showed that Arabic is taught most intensively in the independent Muslim primary schools. Most such schools which responded said that Arabic was taught to all year groups, either as a timetabled subject or in some cases as a medium integrated with the teaching of other subjects (CLIL). For example, Al-Qalam primary school in Glasgow follows the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence but uses bilingual teaching to enhance provision. Similarly Fitrah Southampton Islamic Primary School is starting to embed Arabic in cross-curricular work and whole-school projects.

The International School of London, the only non-Muslim independent school that has been identified as offering Arabic at this level, does so only to native Arabic speakers, who come from about 7 different Arabic-speaking countries.

Of the primary schools which responded to the survey, only 4 offered Qu'ranic Arabic and this was always in addition to Modern Standard Arabic. None taught a regional variety of Arabic.

All schools which replied to the survey had either increasing numbers of children studying Arabic or similar numbers to previous years. Where numbers were similar, this is where Arabic was a subject for all on the curriculum and overall pupil numbers were constant.

Case study 1: Horton Park Primary School, Bradford

Horton Park is a two form entry school with 360 children aged 4-11 on the roll. 64% are registered as having English as an Additional Language and 48% are eligible for free school meals. It serves a diverse community and just over half its pupils are from a Pakistani background. About 5 years ago, when the school was considering which new language to teach pupils, it decided that Arabic, as a global language, would give children the most advantages in future and would be the best fit with the school's ethos and constituency.

Arabic is taught as a new language for all pupils - there are just two Arabic first language speakers in the school – although children who attend the mosque have some familiarity with the language. Parents have not always been supportive as many see Urdu as an aspirational language for them and one which offers progression to GCSE in local secondary schools. A small minority of parents are unconvinced of the benefits of teaching any foreign language and the school is aware that it needs to communicate the advantages.

Soon after taking the decision to develop Arabic, the school appointed an Arabic speaker with a degree in Arabic literature (though not a mother tongue speaker of the language) as cover supervisor and HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant). He has developed the teaching of Arabic within the school from scratch, initially as part of a pilot project funded by Bradford local authority. Arabic is now fully embedded within the school and all Key Stage 2 children from Year 3 to Year 6 receive one ¾ hour lesson per week.

The scheme of work has been developed to fit closely with the wider curriculum with a very strong cultural element aimed at allowing children to step into another culture. For example, in Year 5, children learning about inventions study Ibn Firmas, the 9th century Andalusian inventor and engineer credited with an early attempt at gliding. Children are introduced to the Arabic alphabet, but most of the writing and reading they do is done through transliteration of Arabic into English script. There are close links with English literacy: in working with the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar, children chose and colour-coded the words they would need to know in Arabic in order to tell the story. By Year 6, children are introduced to Arabic verbs in past and present tenses. All resources have been developed by the teacher to fit with the children's needs and the wider school curriculum. The fact that language lessons link so closely to class topics and with other curriculum areas like maths, geography, history, art, music and creativity has helped class teachers to see the benefits of language teaching for developing skills across the whole curriculum.

The teacher is very well networked, and has benefitted from appropriate training and from mentoring by a local secondary school teacher of Arabic. He is now looking to make changes to the scheme of work in the light of the new national curriculum and expects to concentrate more on reading and writing in Arabic script. The school would like to develop a partnership with a school in an Arabic-speaking country, and it also sees liaison with secondary schools over progression as a priority.

The school management is clear about why they chose to develop Arabic and is proud of its provision. It 'kept faith' with this even when Arabic did not appear on the list of languages first put forward in the DfE's consultation on languages in Key Stage 2. In order to present Arabic as a viable option in Head teachers' minds, the Arabic language and culture partnership should showcase and promote what has been done and make the case for Arabic. Other schools would be more likely to take an interest if there were an 'off the shelf' curriculum developed by a group of primary Arabic teachers, linked closely to the new curriculum and accompanied by flexible and adaptable resources. Spreading Arabic teaching to other local primary schools would benefit the community in providing employment for Arabic scholars whose skills are currently under-utilised.

Case study 2: Al-Noor Primary School, Goodhayes, Redbridge

Al-Noor Primary School is an independent Muslim school on the outskirts of East London catering for 170 children from Reception to Year 6. Its curriculum is based on the National Curriculum, informed and supplemented by Qu'ranic, Islamic and Arabic Studies. The school is hoping to become Voluntary Aided in future, and to be able to expand. Children start to learn Arabic on entry in Reception, and receive 3 sessions of 50 minutes per week taught by a specialist teacher. None are native speakers of Arabic, and the vast majority are of Indian, Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin. The main home languages are Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali and Panjabi.

Teaching emphasises speaking and listening and lessons are designed to be fun, interactive and positive, with fluency valued above accuracy in class. Each child has a 'buddy' with whom they practise conversations and role plays. These are then filmed for assessment purposes, with the children themselves critiquing their own performance and that of their partner. There is a lot of whole class choral work and the use of songs and rhymes to help memorisation, for example 'five special letters'. Children also learn to read and write Arabic and their Qu'ranic studies support this. By the time children reach Year 6, their progress is impressive: they are able to take part in extended, though simple conversations and write up to 300 words using different tenses and correct grammatical agreements – a level which has been judged equivalent to GCSE. If they progress to Muslim secondary schools they are able to continue with their Arabic. However, most go to local non-denominational secondary schools, where Arabic is unfortunately not an option.

There was a happy, friendly atmosphere in all of the classes visited and the children were overwhelmingly positive about learning Arabic. They said they liked the games, the songs and the speaking activities. The teacher, who is not himself a native speaker, is clearly creating confident, well-motivated learners who are not afraid to show off their skills in front of visitors. Because it is a Muslim school, the other teachers in the school are clearly very supportive of the Arabic teaching and there is a Teaching Assistant who works alongside the specialist teacher. Parents too are said to be very supportive and impressed by their children's progress. Special workshops are organised for parents who don't speak Arabic to show them the best ways of supporting their children with the language at home.

The teacher has developed his own scheme of work, working backwards from the knowledge, skills and understanding required for GCSE, adapted to the needs and interests of younger children. He has developed all his own resources,

2.2 Secondary schools

Phase I

Although in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, secondary schools are required to teach a language to all children in Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14), there are no national registers of which languages they offer. National surveys in England show that almost all offer French, more than three quarters offer Spanish and around two thirds offer German[xvii]. Other languages, including Arabic, are much less widely taught (both in terms of the number of schools, and in terms of the number of pupils within those schools) and often vulnerable due to dependency on individual teachers[xviii].

National surveys in England have gathered data on languages annually from samples of secondary schools (both state-funded and independent) and since 2007 have specifically asked about provision for Arabic[xix]. In the most recent survey about 4% of state schools said they offer Arabic at some level within the school (including as an extra-curricular subject), as shown in Figure 1:
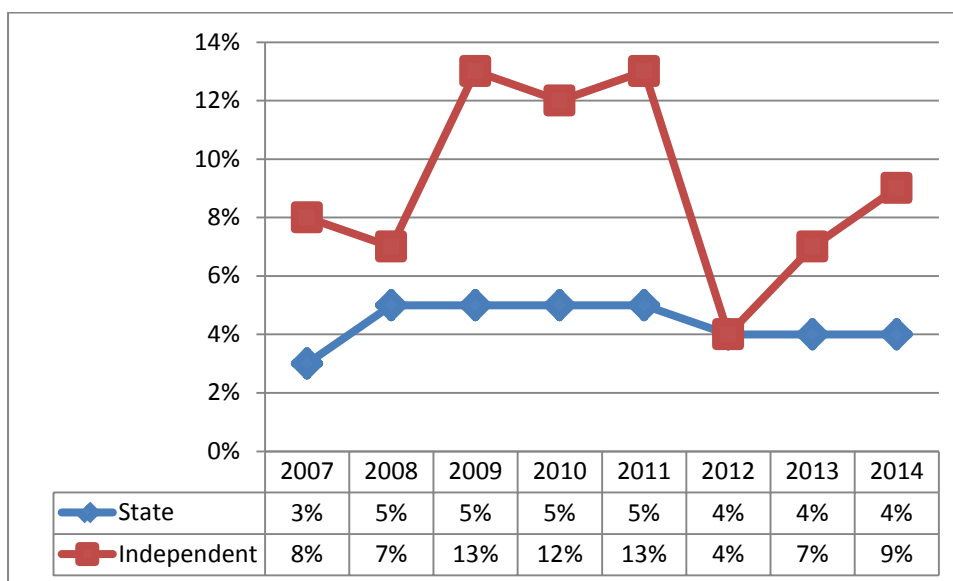

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
State	3%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Independent	8%	7%	13%	12%	13%	4%	7%	9%

Figure 1: Proportion of state and independent schools in England offering Arabic at any level, 2007-2014[xx]

Because of the small numbers of schools involved (the percentages equate to 13 state schools and 6 independent schools in the 2012 survey) we cannot say that they are statistically representative of the country as a whole. In 2009/10 a survey of Specialist Language Colleges found 122 of these were offering Arabic teaching in some form or other – although sometimes only at the level of 'taster' sessions. However, with the demise of this initiative it thought unlikely that many of these are continuing to do so[xxi].

The situation is difficult to estimate from sample surveys because of the existence of a substantial number of Muslim faith schools, most of which are independent but some state-funded, all of which are thought to teach Arabic. In Figure 1 above the drop recorded in the proportion of responding independent schools teaching Arabic between 2011 and

2012 may be a result of the 2012 survey sample containing fewer of these schools – neither this nor the apparent increase in 2013 and 2014 should not be taken as a sign of any national trend. The surveys have shown that, as is the case with other lesser taught languages, independent schools are more likely than state schools to offer Arabic.

The surveys do not provide any information on the numbers of pupils studying Arabic, or their level – exam data provide the best source for this – see section 2.4. However, they do show that in both state and independent sectors, Arabic is more likely to be offered in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 (i.e. as a GCSE option rather than as a foundation subject). This again is consistent with the offer of other lesser taught languages such as Mandarin Chinese[xxii].

Similarly, in both the independent and state sectors, Arabic is more likely to be offered as an enrichment or extra option than as a subject on the main timetable. Schools mention 'one day Arabic workshop for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils' or 'A 10 week taster of Arabic for all Year 7's'. Others mention support for students who speak Arabic at home, although this appears to be under pressure from funding cuts: 'In the past we have prepared students for Arabic GCSE. Unfortunately all offers are subject to having staff in the school or in the local EMAG/EAL network (now defunct) with whom we could share resources for exam preparation and speaking tests'[xxiii].

From 2008/09, an initiative placed small numbers of Foreign Language Assistants from Oman in UK schools, but this has not been viable in recent years.

Phase 2

A list of 207 secondary or all-through schools relevant to the teaching of Arabic was compiled. Only two of these are outside England, one in Glasgow and one in Cardiff[2]. They include 98 independent Muslim schools, all assumed to be teaching Arabic, and 11 state Muslim schools. Several of the latter have been involved in controversies (not related to the teaching of Arabic) and one even told us by phone that Arabic was being phased out.

Secondary schools involved with Arabic teaching	Independent	State	Total
Muslim	98	11	109
Non- Muslim	24	67	91
Other		7	7
	122	85	207

Not all schools on the list are teaching Arabic. Many of the state schools appear on the list because they enter pupils for GCSE Arabic or are known to have taught Arabic in the past. One new school – City Heights E-Act Academy – is keen to explore the possibility of offering Arabic amongst a range of other languages.

Responses to the survey from secondary schools
There were 44 valid responses to the survey from secondary schools. The table below shows the number of schools offering different types of provision for Arabic in each year group. The results confirm that Arabic is more likely to be offered in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. A surprisingly high proportion of schools offer it as an option in the Sixth Form, where perhaps there is more space in the curriculum for optional enrichment activities.

		Arabic is compulsory for	Arabic is compulsory for	Arabic is optional for	Arabic is optional for	Total responding

---

[2] Two further schools in Scotland are listed on the Yaqut locations portal (http://yaqut.org/where/) being established by the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World at Edinburgh University. They are Merchiston Castle School and Fettes College, both in Edinburgh. These were only identified at a late stage in the research.

		all students	some students	all students	some students	schools offering Arabic
Key Stage 3	Year 7	14	7	4	2	27
	Year 8	12	6	6	3	27
	Year 9	12	5	11	4	32
Key Stage 4	Year 10	11	5	12	6	34
	Year 11	9	4	13	6	32
Sixth Form	Year 12	4	2	10	6	22
	Year 13	4	2	9	7	22

The schools where Arabic is compulsory for all students are all Muslim schools. However, there are two maintained non-Muslim schools where Arabic is compulsory for some students (Belle Vue Girls School in Bradford and a comprehensive school in London – although it is being phased out in the latter). There is also a group of independent non-faith schools where Arabic is optional either for all or some students (for example, Marlborough College, Eton College and Queen Margaret's York).

Schools which enter pupils for Arabic GCSE

The research followed up schools which enter relatively large numbers of pupils for Arabic GCSE to ascertain whether they were actually offering the subject as a modern languages option. Only a small number of these schools do so, and sometimes only for those deemed Arabic native speakers. These include Bristol Metropolitan Academy and Westminster Academy (the latter is an outstanding school that has been set up in conjunction with a sponsor with links to Iraq). Fulham Cross Girls School offers an after school Arabic GCSE class once a week. At Stroud High School the Arabic teaching is offered as an after school activity, for which pupils have to pay. Others do not teach the subject at all, merely acting as exam centres. Some schools host supplementary schools on their premises and the closeness of the relationship with the provider seems to vary. It usually involves a rental agreement, particularly where pupils from other schools also attend the classes. Some schools, for example Copland Community School in Brent, whilst not teaching Arabic, strongly encourage community languages as an important element in students' education. Schools currently have an incentive to enable pupils with skills in languages they have learned outside school to sit exams in them, as they contribute to school performance tables and the English Baccalaureate measure.

Free comments on secondary school provision from respondents to the survey:

- *In Years 8 and 9 Arabic is offered to pupils who speak Arabic at home and who are among the less able pupils in the year group.*
  Whalley Range High School, Manchester (state)
- *We offer Arabic mother tongue classes to all native speakers of Arabic.*
  International School of London (independent)
- *We have just opened this September for Year 7 students. We will grow to an 11-16 school. We have a languages specialism and I am keen to explore possibility of a wide range of languages options. We have an educational partnership with Dulwich College.*
  City Heights E-ACT Academy
- *When S1 pupils choose their choices for S2, Arabic comes as a choice along with other modern languages like French and Spanish. Then the pupils who choose it, continue Arabic in S3 and in S4 they sit their GCSE.*
  The Glasgow Academy (independent)
- *Pupils can choose Arabic from Year 9, only started this September. Arabic club for pupils from Year 10 to Year 13*
  Queen Margaret's (Independent)
- *One fortnightly lesson offered as part of the school's enrichment programme.*
  The Kings School, Chester (independent)
- *I offer one lesson a week of Arabic, outside the normal school timetable - an Arabic club - open to any pupils from Year 10 up.*
  Bradfield College (independent)

- *All Year 7 will taste Arabic for a term. Letter will be sent to parents to choose it as modern language. Places will be offered from year 7- year 9. Arabic is also an option to students in Year 10 to continue to Year 11 for GCSE. Usually 55% students choose Arabic in Year 7 and 20% in Year 10*
  Feversham College (independent)
- *We are an independent secondary faith school and Arabic is a MUST subject for us*
  Jalaliah Educational Institution
- *The students who join the school in Year 10 are given the option to sit the GCSE*
  Al-Karam Secondary School (independent)
- *Pupils undertake GCSE exam in Year 9*
  Al-Furqan Community College (independent)

Varieties of Arabic

The majority of responding schools teach Modern Standard Arabic and 9 also teach Qu'ranic Arabic. Three responding schools (e.g. Al-Noor College) say they teach Qu'ranic Arabic but not MSA. Al Karam secondary school says they teach Qur'anic Arabic in Years 7, 8 and 9 and MSA to Years 10 and 11 as there is no GCSE in Qur'anic Arabic. Eton College is the only school which claims to teach a regional variety – Egyptian – alongside MSA and Qu'ranic Arabic. Belle Vue Girls School says: 'We value Modern Standard Arabic and we teach Arabic as a language without any links to the Qu'ran or Islam. We teach Arabic as a modern language used by Muslim, Christian and Jewish Arabs around the Arab World'.

Teaching staff

Teachers are most commonly Arabic specialists trained in the UK or to a lesser extent abroad. The use of Foreign Language Assistants, volunteers from the community or outside specialists is uncommon amongst the schools responding to the survey.

Numbers learning Arabic

The 44 schools which responded to the survey between them catered for approximately 500 pupils in each year group, possibly representing a sample of about 15% of the total number of pupils learning Arabic (calculated on the basis of GCSE entry figures). Some catered for cohorts of over 60 pupils, in others just single figures of pupils were learning Arabic.

Nineteen of the responding schools have more pupils learning Arabic now than three years ago. Respondents say this is where they have made an effort to promote the subject within the school.

Five schools, all non-denominational and 4 of them independent, have fewer pupils learning Arabic than previously. The reasons for this are given as:
- *The international situation and media affected attractiveness of and interest in Arabic.*
- *This is due to lack of support from government to Arabic and the different vision of new school head towards languages.*
- *We no longer have a Fast-track French set at GCSE. These pupils used to go on to do a short course in Arabic in Year 11. Now Arabic is only offered outside the regular timetable.*
- *Arabic used to be an option for Year 9 to Year 11. The school decided to take the option out due to lack of numbers.*
- *Arabic was compulsory for KS3 and KS4, but will be taken away from curriculum within the next 3 years.*

Case study 3 – Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford

Belle Vue Girls School is a larger than average 11-18 comprehensive school in Bradford which has had academy status since 2012. It is designated a specialist academy for languages and science with mathematics and has the International Schools Award. Almost all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Pakistani heritage and 82.1% are registered as having English as an additional language. The proportions of students with special educational needs and eligible for free school meals are well above national averages and its GCSE performance slightly below average. The school was rated 'good' in its last Ofsted inspection.

When pupils arrive in Year 7 they are tested for language competence and aptitude and allocated to either French, Spanish, Italian, Urdu or Arabic. French gathers the most numbers, but one Arabic group runs each year. As with other language groups, girls receive 3 lessons a week in Key Stage 3 and 2 lessons a week in Key Stage 4. 95% of girls are Muslims and many have exposure to Arabic at the mosque. Teaching involves firstly a six week block at the beginning of Year 7 to teach Arabic script and following that, typical good quality modern languages teaching with plenty of speaking and listening practice and sentence-building. The quality of Arabic teaching was specifically mentioned in the school's last Ofsted report.

Whiteboard and printed resources are prepared by the teacher and there is a dearth of suitable commercially-available resources for Arabic compared with Spanish and French. The fact that language learning websites and software are often not compatible with Arabic script, or require special software which children do not have at home, is a further barrier. Children do not have Arabic keyboards at home so homework tasks are more limited. Children are expected to buy 'Mastering Arabic 2' as a reference book to use at home but this is not used in class. The school also has some native speakers of Arabic who are required to take a new language to GCSE, but also take GCSE Arabic.

Case study 4 - Bolton Muslim Girls School

Bolton Muslim Girls School is a Voluntary Aided comprehensive school catering for around 500 girls aged 11 to 16. Previously an independent Muslim school, it gained Voluntary Aided status in 2007 and was designated a Language College in 2010. All students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the majority being of Indian and Pakistani heritage with 92.3% registered as having English as an Additional Language. Girls achieve GCSE results which are well above the national average and the school received a glowing Ofsted report in 2013, with all areas classed as 'outstanding'.

'A distinctive feature of this school is the success it achieves in blending the academic progress of the students with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are provided with an excellent curriculum which not only meets their academic needs but provides them with an extensive range of enrichment opportunities. This has created a cohesive and caring society where students recognise their responsibilities to those in the school and the wider community'. Ofsted report 2013

Although the school receives high praise from Ofsted for its support for literacy across the curriculum, the report omits any reference to its status as a Language College. Yet the school's multilingual ethos - and the conviction that 'English is not enough' – clearly underpin both the academic and the enrichment aspects of the schools' achievements.

Girls regard English as their first language, though they speak a variety of other languages at home. Most attend the mosque from a young age and have exposure to Arabic there. When they arrive at the school in Year 7, all start to learn French, plus a choice between Arabic and Urdu. From Year 9, French becomes optional but all pupils must take a GCSE in either Arabic or Urdu. The Year 11 girls I spoke to had taken (and passed with good grades) GCSEs in French, Arabic and Urdu at the end of Year 10. Though they had not attended classes for Urdu, the school had supported them to prepare for the exam. Their home language was Gujarati, so they were therefore competent in 5 languages, of which they thought French was the hardest. Those pupils who obtain high grades are able to progress to AS in Year 11, and the school co-operates with local colleges to enable pupils to continue to A2. Because the school does not have its own Sixth Form, it is not aware of progression rates to higher education, or the subjects studied.

Although most pupils are used to the sounds and rhythms of Arabic in the mosque, they come to it in Year 7 as a new foreign language. The teaching methodology is typical of English modern foreign language classrooms, with the GCSE syllabus being the main driver. But the school takes every opportunity to draw on and extend pupils' multilingualism

and acquiring a new language is seen as positive and normal. For example, pupils are able to learn Spanish as an extra-curricular activity. The status of Arabic as 'the language of our religion', as one girl put it, provides particular opportunities to add to this very rich language environment with the Arabic language present in art and wall displays around the school, recitations from the Qu'ran before and after lessons, and the presence of a small number of native Arabic speaking pupils. Many pupils I spoke to had visited Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Saudi Arabia where they spoke enthusiastically and movingly of their experiences on the Hajj. This had provided a strong further motivator for improving their Arabic, with the straightforward communicative motivation – of being able to get by in a foreign country - clearly very closely linked to integrative motivations and a desire for deeper cultural contacts.

The Year 10 girls interviewed were very positive about their experiences learning Arabic. Many (perhaps around half the class) expected to live or work in an Arabic-speaking country in future, and almost all said they found it easier than French. Learning a new script was not seen as a problem 'you learn it just like you learn the English alphabet'. When asked what they would like to do more of they said they would like to do more speaking and to see and take part in Arabic drama. They thought they would need the language in future for travel (especially on Hajj) and also saw that it would be useful for business. They were not sure whether Arabic would be beneficial for non-Muslims except for business purposes. When asked whether they would have liked to have started learning Arabic in primary school the answer was a resounding yes!

2.3   Supplementary schools

Phase I

Supplementary schools are schools which exist alongside mainstream schools, run by community groups and providing supplementary tuition at weekends or after school. They vary in nature and size and cover a vast array of different aims, some functioning as homework clubs, some teaching the curricula of children's countries of origin, some religious in purpose, others focussing on cultural manifestations such as dance or calligraphy. Many teach pupils' home languages, or use them as a medium of instruction.

The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) provides strategic support for the supplementary education sector, championing excellence, innovation and partnership in supplementary education. It campaigns on behalf of supplementary schools and aims to help raise the profile of supplementary schools and their standards of teaching, learning and management. NRCSE's national database of its members[xxiv] lists 65 supplementary schools teaching Arabic, more than any other language mentioned. In comparison, there were only 14 such schools teaching Urdu, 34 Polish, 11 Bengali and 10 Chinese. These numbers are likely to represent only a fraction of the actual number of supplementary schools operating throughout the country since many, particularly smaller and more informal foundations, will not be members of the NRCSE. However, the data confirm previous findings that Arabic was the language most frequently provided for by such schools[3]. The NRCSE is London-based and its membership is likely to be skewed towards supplementary schools in the capital. It had no members teaching Arabic in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales. The schools listed were spread regionally across England as follows:

---

[3] 47 out of 194 Welsh and English complementary schools (24%) responding to a national survey in in 2005 said they taught Arabic, with Urdu and Bengali the next most commonly taught languages each with 14% of respondents.
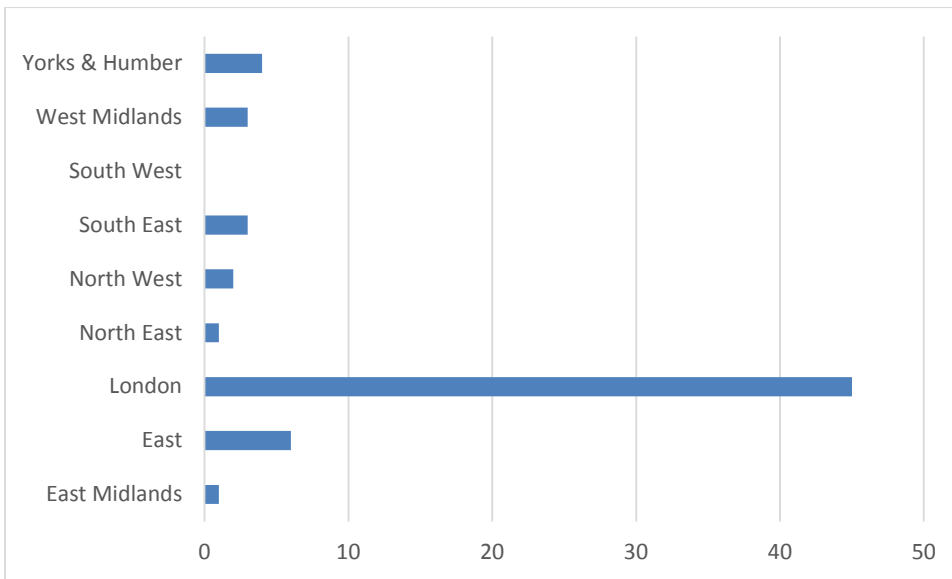
Figure 2: Number of supplementary schools teaching Arabic, by English region

A review of those schools listed as teaching Arabic shows that such institutions are extremely diverse, some predominantly religious in focus, others providing more general educational input or support for newly arrived groups. They serve a large variety of different communities from Muslim countries in North and East Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The Somali, Moroccan, Sudanese, Kurdish, Eritrean and Syrian communities are among those represented. The Coventry Muslim Swahili Association and the Africa Women's Group are also among the providers.

Such schools vary widely in size and scope. Some are quite large – for example the Al-Manur Arabic School in Manchester was reported in 2008 as catering for 360 students from 22 nationalities and employing 22 staff, of whom 18 were qualified teachers[xxv]. Others are more modest in size. In addition there may be many smaller madrassas or groups meeting in individual houses which are not reflected in this database[xxvi]. Scott-Baumann and Contractor note the difficulty in estimating the numbers attending such schools because not all keep formal records[xxvii].

Many such schools have partnerships with local state schools, using their premises and collaborating with them to enter pupils for exams. As shown in the Phase 2 research with secondary schools, a significant proportion of entries for GCSE and A level exams come from such arrangements.

Information about supplementary schools teaching Arabic in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is scarce. Surveys of community language teaching in 2005 (the latest available) found provision for Arabic in 6 Welsh Local Authorities and 6 Scottish Local Authority areas[xxviii]. At that time the local authorities were themselves supporting this provision for Arabic in Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot and Newport (Wales) and in South Lanarkshire and Fife (Scotland).

Phase 2

A database was compiled of 87 Arabic supplementary schools, from across England, plus one in Scotland. These are very diverse, including mosques, adult learning centres, and community organisations. In 2012 and 2013 the British Academy made cash awards of £4000 each to 7 outstanding supplementary schools meeting the criteria under its British Academy Schools Language Award scheme[xxix]. Two case studies of such schools which won awards for their provision are included below.

Responses to the survey from supplementary schools

There were 26 responses to the online survey of which several were not valid. The remaining respondents included local community organisations (e.g. the Liverpool Arabic School, which has 70+ learners between the ages of 5 and 17), universities with supplementary provision (e.g. a university which has an Arabic club for young beginners as well provision for future university applicants and others) and two mainstream schools (one primary and one secondary) hosting supplementary provision. The breakdown of schools catering for different age groups of learners is shown below:
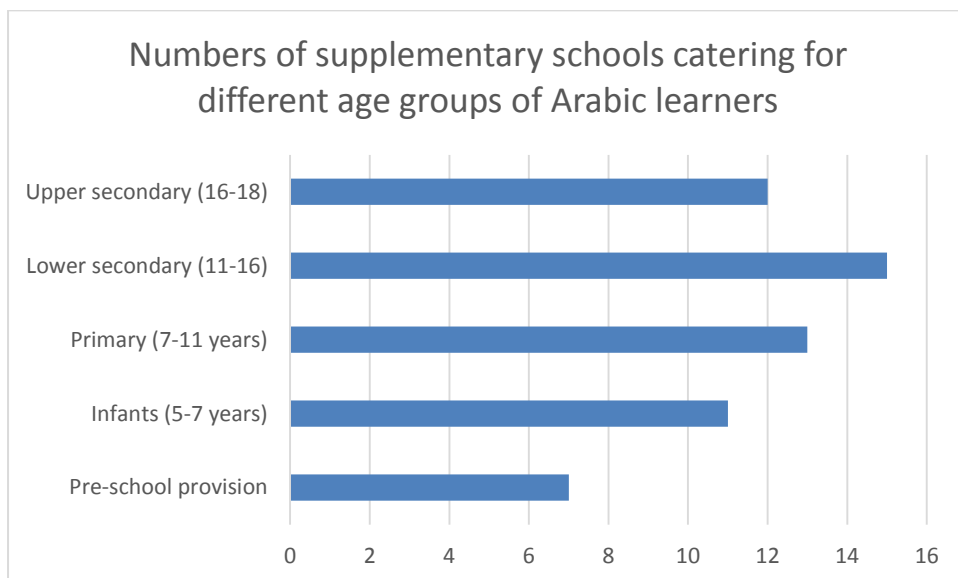

Figure 3: Age groups catered for by Arabic supplementary schools in England

With just one exception, all those which responded have more pupils now than 3 years ago. The reasons for this were thought to be the quality of the teaching, the close community connection and the growth in the Arabic-speaking community. Free comments included:

- *The school is doing an excellent job for the community and this is recognised by the families.*
- *The quality of our teaching and the quality of our teachers. We also operate from a formal school which offer the children safe and secure environment and fantastic environment*
- *More adults taking part*
- *The Arab community is growing and the number of the children increased*

The one school with reduced numbers – a primary school - said that Arabic had been dropped through lack of interest by pupils and parents. One of the universities said that Arabic is seen as a good choice second language at university for applicants with only one language at A-level.

All those responding taught MSA and 5 also taught Qu'ranic Arabic but none taught the latter without also teaching MSA. Only one also taught a regional variety of Arabic but did not specify which.

In most of the responding schools Arabic was taught as a separate timetabled subject. In 4 schools it was integrated with the teaching of other subjects, and in 3 schools it was used as a medium of instruction alongside English (bilingual teaching). Only one school, which focussed solely on adults, used Arabic as a medium of instruction for other subjects. It is slightly more common for teaching to be carried out mainly by an Arabic language specialist trained abroad than an Arabic language specialist trained in the UK (11 versus 8 schools mostly use such teachers). 6 schools sometimes use a trained teacher who is not an Arabic specialist and 3 mostly use an Arabic speaker who is a member of the local community without formal qualifications, although 8 never do.

Half of the responding schools prepare students to sit GCSE exams, and 4 prepare them for A level. Three schools use ABC accreditation and 3 use Asset Languages. None of the responding schools used IGCSE or the CIOL certificate in bilingual skills. One school used its own accreditation and another deliberately did not teach to accredit.

Case study 5 - Peace School, North West London

The school meets on a Saturday in premises rented at Braintcroft Primary School, Neasden NW2 and has approximately 250 students aged from 5 to 16+. Arabic is an important part of its curriculum which also covers religious and cultural studies and sport. There are separate classes for those who speak Arabic as a mother tongue and those who are learning it as a new language – numbers are fairly evenly split between the two. The aim is to provide a rich cross-curricular content using technology and CLIL methodology where Arabic is used as a medium to access learning in history, geography, music and art. Children have used specialised software to create and tell stories in Arabic, integrating the four skills and allowing pupils to comment on each other's work. The pupils interviewed were highly motivated by this: 'I am learning to use the software as well as learning the language'.

Children come from very diverse backgrounds. Those interviewed were of Malaysian background (one girl and two boys aged between 11 and 13). All spoke Malay at home but considered English as their first language. None spoke any Arabic before attending the Saturday school. They had started it from scratch as a new language from age 7 and then started a foreign language at school (Spanish or German) at age 11. The girl had been born in Malaysia and had also returned there for a substantial period since first arriving in the UK. The 11 year old boy said he loved the Arabic school where he learned through technology and found learning German in his mainstream school less fun and less active, with 'just pencil and paper'. However he felt he was good at German and had an advantage over pupils who had never learned another language. The 13 year old boy also said he enjoyed the Saturday school, there was a fun, happy environment and nice teachers. All these three children had been sent to the school by their parents who were keen for them to learn Arabic as a way of engaging with global Islamic culture. The religious aspect was important because it gave them an entrée into other Muslim countries, particularly the richer ones where there might be good career opportunities.

Case study 6 - Arabic School for All, Lincoln

The school has just celebrated its 10th anniversary and is based at Lincoln Christ's Hospital school, a language college. It runs every Saturday during term time from 10am to 4pm and has 32 students from age 6 upwards of which 19 (a small majority) are from an Arabic speaking background. It also runs Arabic foreign language classes for adults and has started offering English language classes for parents who are mainly Arabic, Urdu or Chinese L1 speakers. It also runs taster and workshop sessions in local schools and the Manager also coordinates a network of supplementary schools in Lincoln involving 13 languages. Although they pay rent to Lincoln Christ's Hospital school they see this as fair as they use heating, lighting and computers. The school acts as exam centre for Arabic GCSE and other exams and they have run workshops within the school for all pupils. Particularly successful was their one day Arabic and Architecture workshop where pupils work through simple Arabic learning about construction, the environment and architecture in Arabic speaking countries.

The school is very keen to expand and extend its offer within mainstream schools. The school sees running supplementary classes in Lincoln as much more challenging than in London. They would like the Arabic language and culture partnership to coordinate training and would like to be involved in delivering this and in presenting their projects to others. They would like to be linked to British Council offices in Arabic speaking countries and to be invited to take part in activities.

Four girls aged between 13 and 16 were interviewed for this report. English was the first language for all of them, but all spoke some Arabic at home, and attended classes in order to speak it better, to pass GCSE and AS exams and to learn to write it. The 16 year old's family was Egyptian and she had been born in the UK. She had taken her GCSE Arabic the previous year and was now studying for AS. She was not studying any other language at school. The 13 year olds were studying French, German or Spanish. Two had come to the UK at a young age (3-4) and one had subsequently left and spent some time in Egypt. She therefore spoke fluent Arabic and English and hoped to train to be a doctor. Another

was from the Sudan and wanted to return to Sudan to go to university (also to study medicine). Another was from Iraq but had lived/had family in Syria and Jordan also. All felt that Arabic was harder than French/German/Spanish but felt it was important for international mobility and gave them more options in life. They all still had close family contacts in Arabic speaking countries and wanted to be able to communicate properly with family members.

2.4   Arabic in Further and Higher Education

This information was compiled entirely in Phase I since Phase 2 focussed on Arabic at school level.

FE

In addition to Arabic teaching in primary and secondary schools, it is also possible to study Arabic in the FE and Sixth Form College sector. A search of the Hot Courses website[xxx] found 8 of such colleges (all in England – see Appendix 2) offering A level Arabic and 6 offering courses at GCSE. One of the latter was in Cardiff, the rest were all in England.

In all, the Hot Courses website lists 113 institutions offering Arabic teaching. These include universities, private academies, colleges and distance learning institutions and are mostly aimed at adults.

HE

Arabic is offered as a degree course by 16 universities in England and Scotland – see list at Appendix 3 – although some only offer it in combination with other subjects. This makes Arabic the 9th most widespread language offered in the UK university system, although Japanese, Russian and Portuguese are all more widely offered. There are no universities in either Wales or Northern Ireland offering degrees in Arabic[xxxi].

In addition, Markfield Institute, an associate college of the University of Gloucestershire, offers specialist post-graduate programmes in fields such as Islamic Banking and Finance, Islamic Education and Islamic Studies. Foundation courses in Arabic are offered for those not able to access the necessary reading material. Also, the London-based Islamic College for Advanced Studies offers a range of courses at different levels including a foundation certificate in Qu'ranic Arabic and a BA in Islamic studies validated by Middlesex University.

It is difficult to obtain a complete picture on the position of Arabic teaching and learning at university level because of the inconsistent way in which information is collected and reported by institutions[xxxii]. All the indications are that numbers are small. A recent analysis found that in the academic year 2009/10 there were 1,595 students at UK higher education institutions enrolled on courses with the word 'Arabic' in the title. This figure included both undergraduates and post graduates, in all years of their course. Of these, 1,495 were undergraduates, and this number had increased by 34% over the preceding 5 years. 100 were post graduates, whose numbers had increased by 5% over the same period[xxxiii].

The Higher Education Statistics Agency classifies Arabic within a subject code entitled 'Modern Middle Eastern Studies' – there is no subject code specifically for Arabic. Students on these courses may well be studying Arabic and/or another language of the Middle East, or they may be following area studies courses with no linguistic component at all.
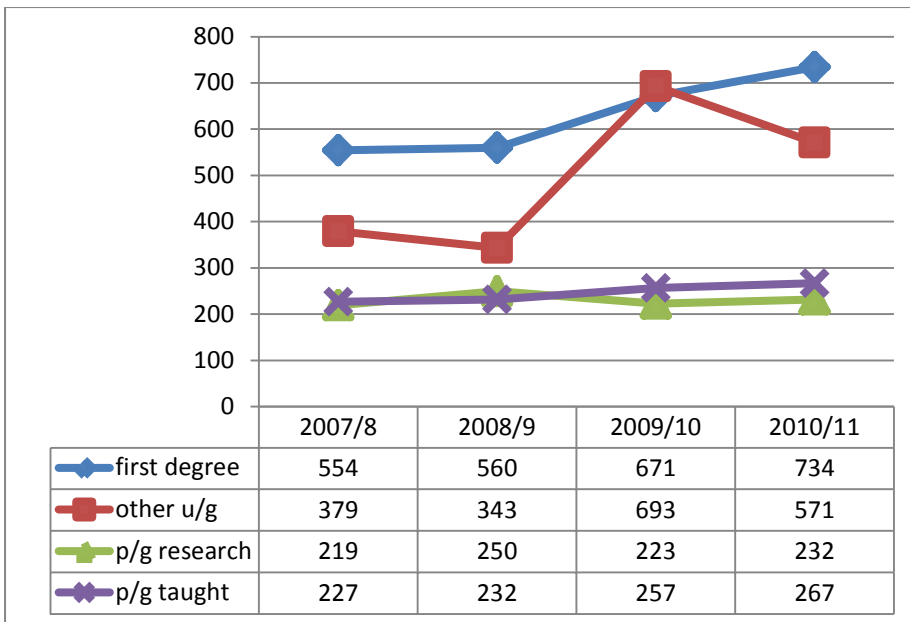
	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
first degree	554	560	671	734
other u/g	379	343	693	571
p/g research	219	250	223	232
p/g taught	227	232	257	267

Figure 4: Students reported studying Modern Middle Eastern Studies (HEFCE headcount data)[4]

Figure 4 above shows that the number of students enrolled on first degrees in 'Modern Middle Eastern Studies' rose by 32% between 2007/8 and 2010/11, and by 51% for 'other undergraduate courses' (although these latter dropped back in the last year for which data is available). Increases in post graduate study were more modest, with research degree students increasing by 6% and taught post graduate degree students increasing by 12%. Previous to this, Professor Michael Worton identified a 14% growth in Modern Middle Eastern and African Studies between 2002/03 and 2007/08[xxxiv].

However, figures available from UCAS – the university admissions organisation - show a rather flat picture in terms of acceptances for Modern Middle Eastern Studies (Figure 5). Applications for these courses have also remained fairly steady over the last three years.
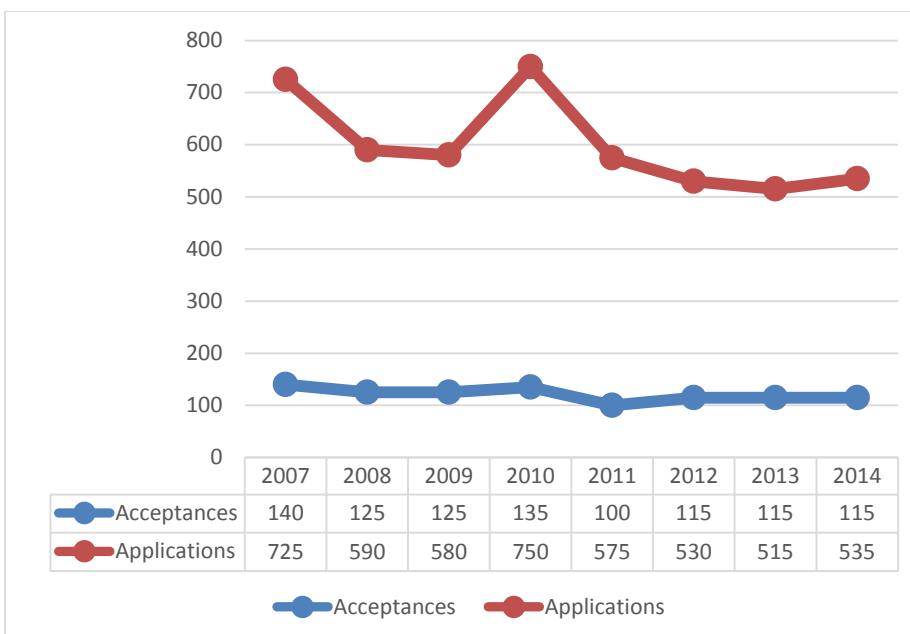

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Acceptances	140	125	125	135	100	115	115	115
Applications	725	590	580	750	575	530	515	535

Figure 5: Applications and acceptances to Modern Middle Eastern Studies courses (UCAS)

---

[4] More recent data is not available via the HEFCE website

Arabic has since 2012 been given the status of a 'Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subject' in higher education in recognition that provision for the subject in universities is misaligned with the needs of employers or government. Scott-Baumann and Contractor's 2012 study of Arabic and Islamic studies in UK universities identified the following issues:

- UK universities assume that those applying to study Arabic will be ab initio learners. There is no logical progression for those who have already studied or speak the language (whether as international students or from the UK). This is in part due to lack of opportunities to accredit learning which takes place outside the school system, and a lack of contact between Muslim institutions and the HE sector.
- There is poor awareness of career opportunities and how to build on existing skills in order to match employer demand.
- The variety of Arabic taught (Qu'ranic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), 'regional' varieties, *muttawasit)* is dependent on the goals of the course, the background of the teacher, or the requirements of the Year Abroad. There is no overarching strategy which enables students to bridge different varieties and/or learn in an integrated way.
- There are differing approaches to the teaching of Arabic: the formal grammar-focussed approach often favoured by native speaker scholars versus the more communicative approaches commonly used in the teaching of English and other western European languages.
- There are very few post graduate opportunities.

In addition to degree courses, Arabic may be offered by university language centres to students of other disciplines. This may count towards the degree or be a completely additional module. Surveys of such provision have found that Arabic is growing in popularity[xxxv]. The latest of these found that Arabic was the seventh most popular language studied in such courses and it was offered by 45 universities, that is three quarters of all universities taking part in the survey. In those universities there were 3,094 learners of Arabic, representing nearly 6% of all learners on such language courses[xxxvi].

2.5 Trends in numbers of students taking recognised exams

Data on exam entries provide an important source of information on numbers of learners and medium-term trends. The data published by the Joint Council on Qualifications (JCQ) include entries from all types of institution across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The DfE publishes separate figures for examinations taken in secondary schools in England (as opposed to FE and adult colleges, and secondary schools in the rest of the UK), but does not offer any breakdown of entries for Arabic, including them in a catch all 'other languages' category. This data could be elicited via a direct approach to the DfE, possibly as a freedom of information request. The DfE would also potentially be able to supply data on achievement – i.e. the proportions of entrants gaining different grades at GCSE and A level and again, a formal approach would be necessary.

Scottish examinations taken in secondary schools, including Highers and Standard Grade, are not available in Arabic.

GCSE

Over the 20 year period for which figures are available, the number of entries for Arabic has grown more than threefold from just over 1125 in 1995, to 3641 in 2014. Its evolution contrasts with the picture of decline generally in language subjects at GCSE: the number of entries for French and German, although involving much bigger numbers, halved over the same period. However, Arabic represents only a very small share (less than 1%) of all GCSE language entries. Over the same 20 year period, the numbers of entries for all language subjects at GCSE dropped by 34% from 558,990 to

371,007 and as a proportion of all GCSE entries from just over 10% to just over 7%. Within this context, Arabic increased its position as a proportion of all language entries at GCSE from 0.21% to 0.98%. In 2014 it was the 8th most popular language at GCSE, having overtaken Irish in 2006 and Chinese in 2011.

Summer 2013 exam results showed an 11% increase in entries for GCSE Arabic over the previous year, which was however slightly less than the overall increase in GCSE languages entries of 14%. This was due to the impact of the English Baccalaureate being felt for the first time.
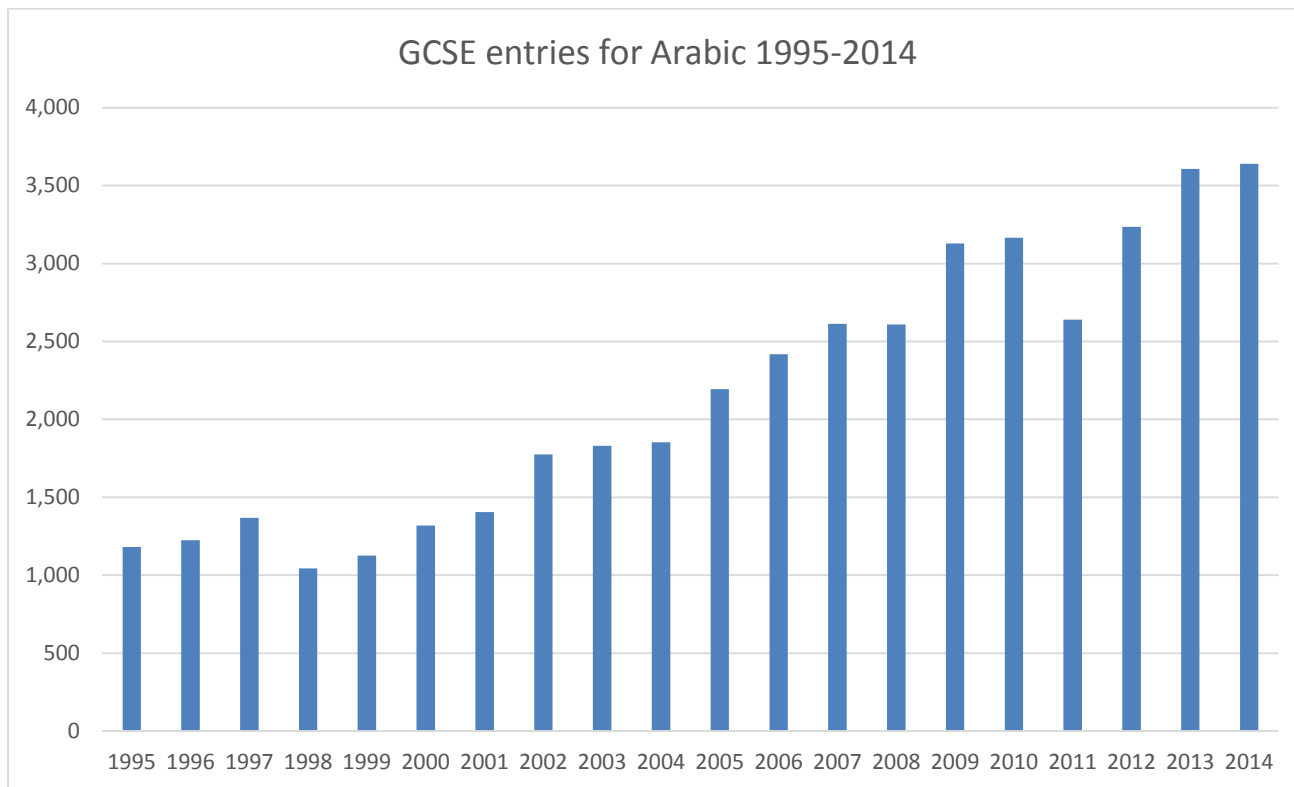

Figure 6a: GCSE entries for Arabic 1995-2014 (Source: JCQ)

The exam entry data noted above covers all entries from all types of institution across the UK. The DfE has recently provided time-series data for GCSE entries from candidates at the end of Key Stage 4 in English schools, which account for around three quarters of total entries for Arabic (Figure 6b). This confirms the upward trend in entries, with the proportion coming from end of Key Stage 4 candidates in English schools rising from 69% in 2008 to 81% in 2014.
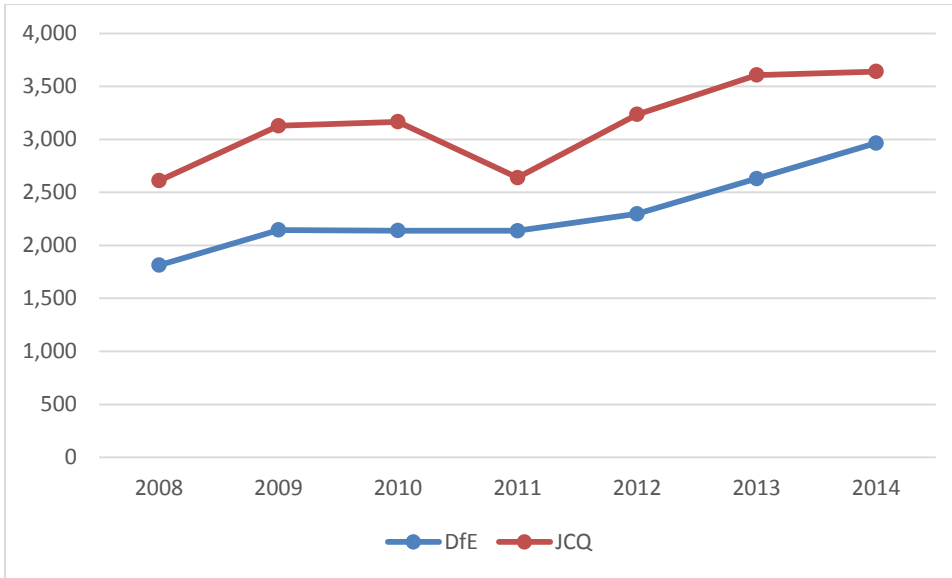
Figure 6b: GCSE entries for Arabic 2008-2014, DfE and JCQ data

A level

A level Arabic was introduced in 2002 and has more than doubled since then from around 300 entries to just over 600 in 2014. In the same period French declined by 30% and German by 40%. Entries for A level Arabic rose by 6% in 2013 compared to 2012, while language entries overall declined by 5%. Over the period, Arabic increased as a proportion of all language entries at A level from 0.85% to 1.93%. It was the 9th most popular language at A level in 2014, with more entries than Urdu although it has had fewer entries than Polish since 2010.
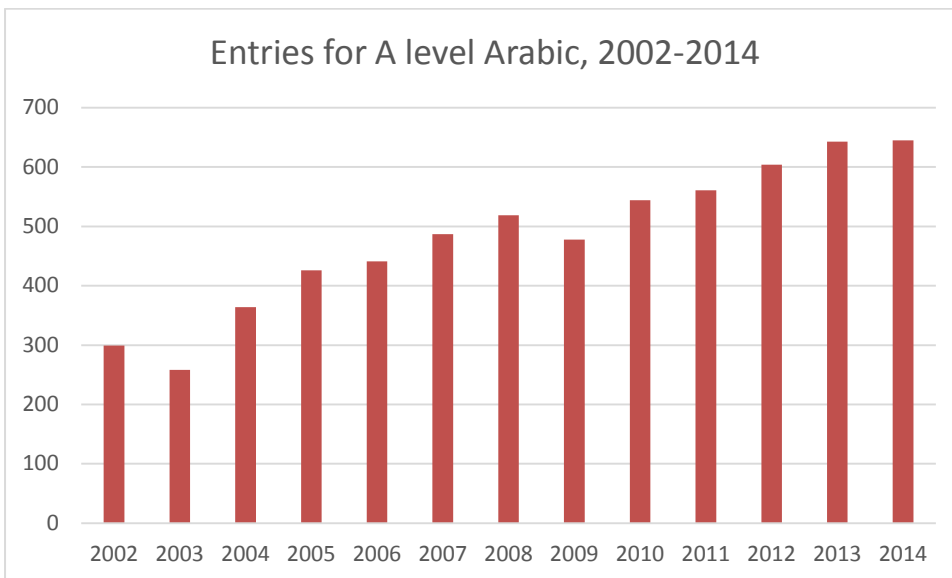

Figure 7: Entries for A level Arabic, 2002-2014 (Source: JCQ)

The figures above reflect all entries from institutions across the country. Unlike in the case for GCSE, the DfE has not provided any further breakdown for Arabic.

2.6 Accreditation

GCSE

GCSE Arabic is offered by EdExcel. A new syllabus was introduced in September 2012, in line with revised syllabuses for other subjects. This requires all assessment to be undertaken at the end of the 2-year course. There are 4 units based on speaking, listening, reading and writing, all of which are externally assessed. There is also a short course option in which students are examined on just 2 units, focusing either on Spoken Language (speaking and listening) or Written Language (reading and writing). The units are as follows

Unit	Content	Test	Value
Listening and understanding	Draws on common topic areas such as shops, travel, personal information, work and education	Students are tested on their ability to understand a number of spoken passages or interactions in Arabic	23% of marks
Speaking	Focuses on topic areas chosen by the centre in conjunction with the student	Candidates must discuss or present a picture, with follow up questions, and also take part in a general conversation on the chosen theme	27% of marks
Reading and understanding	Draws on common topic areas	Students are tested on their ability to understand a number of short texts including both formal and informal language	23% of marks
Writing	Focuses on prescribed themes: media, travel and culture or sport, leisure and work	Choice of 2 out of 8 writing tasks	27% of marks

The GCSE Arabic specification provides details of the linguistic structures and writing features which are expected to be covered, together with core vocabulary lists and high frequency language which candidates are expected to have learnt.

Teachers interviewed for this report said that the GCSE syllabus was in general appropriate both for learners with a background in the language as well as those who study it as a foreign language. Some felt it was overly skewed towards those with an existing background in the language, although those who had learnt just Qu'ranic Arabic would need to learn modern vocabulary. Others felt that changes to the syllabus since 2009 had made the exam completely accessible to new learners and that this had contributed to the recent increase in numbers.

The student guide makes a point of stressing that the exam is equally accessible to those who take the language up in Key Stage 4 as a GCSE option as to those have studied the language from Key Stage 3. However teachers say that in practice, the need to learn a new script – and vocabulary with few cognates with English - means that where it is taken up as a new language in Key Stage 4, the amount of time needed to obtain a good grade is greater than for some other languages and this can have a depressing effect on motivation. This is particularly so in high-performing schools where pupils expect to be able to gain an A or A*. However, where schools start Arabic from Key Stage 3 or earlier (see secondary case studies), it is completely within reach. Teachers consulted felt that the vocabulary used in the exams did not always correspond to the word lists provided and that the existence of a large number of synonyms in Arabic made it more difficult than other languages.

Some teachers consulted felt that as the exam is based on Modern Standard Arabic, it does not provide enough recognition to those who have learned/or want to learn regional or colloquial varieties. However, apart from the level of difficulty in relation to the time available to study it, teachers felt that the specification for Arabic was largely consistent with other language GCSEs. Language teachers in general feel these need reviewing, particularly in relation to the speaking element, which they feel is more a measure of memory than of linguistic knowledge.[xxxvii]

As noted above, GCSE exams have recently been revised. However further more far-reaching changes are due to be implemented with new GCSE exams which for first teaching from September 2016 for French, German and Spanish and from September 2017 for other languages.[xxxviii]. The new language GCSEs are intended to be more demanding and more rigorous in terms of assessing learners' understanding of grammar and structure. They will be based exclusively on terminal assessment and externally assessed; oral exams will be conducted by teachers but marked externally. In common with other subject, the new language GCSEs will be graded according to a new 1-9 scale. The DfE has published the subject content which is to be common for all languages[xxxix] and, following consultation, Ofqual has published the detailed assessment arrangements for French, German and Spanish. It is expected that Ofqual will run a further public consultation during the course of 2015 in relation to the assessment arrangements for other languages, including Arabic.

There has been an unconfirmed press report that exam boards are seeking to reduce the number of subjects in which they offer GCSE and A level exams and that 'minor languages' are at risk of being cut[xl]. The examination body AQA has already announced that it will be discontinuing some of its Entry Level certificates and A levels in Bengali, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi and Polish from 2018, and has posted the following notice on its website explaining its position:

'Ofqual's development and design requirements for Modern Foreign Languages currently present very significant awarding and resourcing challenges for subjects with a small entry. We will be discussing these issues with Ofqual to see whether they can be overcome and will provide more information as soon as we can.[xli]'

Although AQA does not offer Arabic, its counterpart Edexcel will clearly experiencing similar 'resourcing challenges' and this could represent a threat to the viability of Arabic since, as shown above, the existence of the GCSE exam is a strong motivator for schools, parents and students.

A level

A level and AS level Arabic are also offered by the EdExcel exam board. These modular exams allow students to take AS level during their first year of Sixth Form and choose whether to continue to A2 level in their second year. AS and A2 each consist of three papers: Reading, Translation and Essay. Speaking and Listening are not directly assessed. The level is considerably harder than GCSE and makes many more demands of learners. This is seen to be a barrier. Teachers also say that it is too focussed on the written word and makes unnecessary demands of learners in terms of grammar. This means that it is not generally accessible for foreign language learners who have not been learning Arabic for very long.

Reforms to the teaching of A levels are also underway. In line with reform plans for other subjects, the reforms to languages A levels will do away with the current modular structure and 'decouple' them from AS, which will become freestanding examinations. An A level Content Advisory Board for Languages (ALCAB), made up of representatives of Russell Group universities published recommendations on the content of the new languages A levels and, following a public consultation, the DfE published a final version in December 2014[xlii]. There is a new emphasis on the culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken and a requirement for critical analysis and evaluation. There is also a strong emphasis on the study of literary and other 'works' and on the learning of grammar, and ALCAB has published an indicative list of themes, works and topics for French, German and Spanish[xliii]. Ofqual is currently consulting on the assessment arrangements for the new A levels in those languages, which will be taught from September 2016[xliv]. As with GCSE, it is expected that details of A levels in other languages will be published and opened to consultation a year later, although given AQA's stated objective to withdraw four of its smallest-entry languages at A level, the future for other language A levels looks far from assured.

In summer 2013 there was a significant drop in A level entries for French and German (10% and 11% respectively), and a concerted campaign by language associations to draw attention to severe and inconsistent grading which they said was acting as a deterrent to pupils[xlv]. As a result the exam boards and Ofqual both launched investigations and some

adjustments have been promised to the setting and marking of questions for the 2015 examinations, with the expectation that the overall reform of GCSE and A levels in languages will address the wider issues[xlvi].

Asset Languages

Asset Languages was an initiative promoted as part of the 2002-2010 National Languages Strategy to provide a flexible and motivating way of recognising progress in language learning. Exams offered by the OCR awarding body in 25 languages enabled learners to be assessed in small steps, when they were ready, in each skill separately, at different levels linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In early 2013 OCR announced that, because of declining take up, linked in part to new schools performance measures for which the exams are not recognised, Asset Language exams were to be withdrawn in all languages except French, German, Italian, Mandarin and Spanish as of 2013. More recently it confirmed that it will be discontinuing all Asset languages exams, although teacher assessment materials will still be available online.

Although the Arabic Asset exams did not have a wide take up (only 241 entries were reported in 2012[xlvii]), the Level 1 exams were thought useful for providing a lower level of certification than GCSE in situations where very little time was available to study the language. One teacher mentioned that she only had one hour per week with her group – too little to reach GCSE - and that the exam was a good motivator. One criticism was that the exams were too generic – Arabic appeared to have been developed on the same basis as French and Spanish rather than in line with the particular needs of learners of this language.

IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations offers IGCSE qualifications in Arabic as a foreign language and Arabic as a First Language. For Arabic as a foreign language there are two levels, Core and Extended. The Core consists of two papers: Reading and Directed Writing, and Speaking. Candidates taking the Extended curriculum, which provides access to higher grades, also take a paper in Continuous Writing. It was not possible to obtain statistics on numbers taking Arabic IGCSE, although numbers are believed to be very small. Only one school in the survey (Buckswood) was found to be using the IGCSE in Arabic.

ABC Awards

These are vocational qualifications linked to National Occupational Standards and designed to meet the needs of employers. They are tailored to working life but aimed at young people as well as adults already in employment. Qualifications are available at Entry level and Levels 1 and 2 (2 is technically equivalent to a good grade at GCSE but is not recognised as such for the purposes of school performance tables). The exams are internally set and test up to 6 skills, including Reading and Written Response and Dialogue. It was not possible to obtain statistics on numbers taking Arabic ABC Awards although numbers are likely to be very small. Only one secondary school in the survey (Eton College) was found to be using ABC certification for Arabic. However, they are used by 3 of the supplementary schools.

ASDAN

Asdan is a curriculum development social enterprise and an awarding body. Courses focus on skills development through the curriculum and their specialism is in the field of 'Preparation for Life and Work' for the 13-19 age group. Their courses are generally seen as alternative accreditation to GCSE for students of lower ability or with Special Educational Needs. A languages short course has been developed in conjunction with the Association for Language Learning which is a generic course applicable to any language. It can be used with a range of abilities, for ages 12 and upwards and it can be used flexibly to suit different learners and situations, for example to accredit cultural activities and links, to provide structure for language clubs, to provide progression and to help develop learner confidence.

Learners can achieve a Languages Short Course certificate of achievement for between 10 and 60 hours' language activity. This can include work at home or on visits. The Awarding body provides a student record book which contains seven modules covering a range of topics and some skills sheets. There is a choice of short activities and longer activities in each module to provide for differentiation. Students keep a portfolio of evidence and teachers check this, sign off and request certificates online. There is no external moderation; it is not a qualification set to standards. However, credits earned for the number of hours certificated can go towards CoPE qualifications which are regarded as GCSE-and AS comparable qualifications.

This study has not found any schools so far using ASDAN to accredit Arabic, though interest has been expressed by teachers contributing to email forums.

Resources and examples are available at http://www.asdan.org.uk/Award_Programmes/languages

Arabic Language Trust

Arabic teachers believe there are many more people learning Arabic than take the GCSE or A level exams, and that these exams do not suit all needs or necessarily provide good evidence of what students have learnt. The Arabic Language Trust – a voluntary organisation run by teachers and students – has therefore developed a suite of 'bite-sized' qualifications suitable for non-native speakers studying Arabic. Each certificate shows exactly what the student is able to do (e.g. Beginners certificate in the Arabic alphabet; Intermediate Certificate in Arabic Grammar - use of the Hans Wehr dictionary) and the setting and marking of examinations are moderated by university tutors from Oxford University and SOAS. It is intended that this suite of exams will eventually include recognition for knowledge of different regional varieties of Arabic as well MSA. Further information is available from:
http://arabiclanguagetrust.org/qualifications/

Scottish Qualifications
There are no Scottish (SQA) qualifications in Arabic and this is seen as a barrier to developing the teaching of the language in Scotland. The Scottish secondary school responding to this survey uses the GCSE exam.
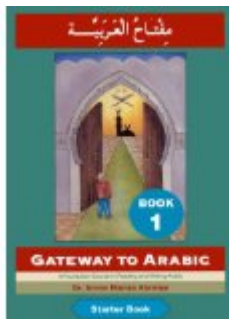
Comments on accreditation from secondary school survey respondents
- *We only teach Arabic to Year 7s and 8s therefore no accreditation is used*
- *Middle Years Programme (International Baccalaureate). In 3 years' time we will be offering the IB Diploma. We only offer Language A Arabic, that is for native speakers.*
- *I used to enter pupils for the ISEB exam in Foundation Arabic, which is no longer available. I've been in contact with [Arabic Language Trust] who has another exam which I am hoping to use if enough pupils are interested.*
- *Depending on support it would be nice to move away from the GCSE and to the IGCSE*
- *We would like to offer GCSE and A-level*
- *No exam yet.*

2.7   Pedagogical materials

Primary

Both of the primary schools visited had developed all their own resources, including their own schemes of work. They would be pleased to share these. Respondents to the online survey variously mentioned using the Gateway to Arabic (3 respondents), the CILT Curriculum Guide for Arabic (available for download at http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/cg_arabic_web.pdf) or resources available on arabalicious.com which they can adapt. Others had brought materials from abroad, or ordered from the online bookshop Dar-el-chamal. Because Arabic provision in primary schools is so diverse and patchy, it is difficult to draw conclusions about what is most needed – one respondent wanted 'more workbooks and interactive exercises' another wanted 'resources utilising 3 stage questioning' - but most agreed that suitable resources were difficult to find, so better signposting to what is already available might help.

Comments included:

- *Quality resources appropriate to the learning needs of British students are not available.*
- *Resources fit for 30 min/40 min lessons - which is the length of lessons in KS2 - are not available.*
- *Need material that is differentiated, with clearer learning objectives, much more creativity in the learning experience and is thematic*
- *We have developed our own curriculum and resources covering all four strands of learning. We select our resources in relation to what will enhance motivation. Particularly, we utilise lots of kinaesthetic learning and making use of the ICT.*
- *Dearth of high quality, effective, age-appropriate resources that are benchmarked to an assessment framework.*

Secondary

Secondary schools used a wider range of existing published materials than primary schools, including those published in the Gateway to Arabic series (see above), books which tie in with the Arabic GCSE, and the al-Kitaab text book with DVD. The most popular series was Mastering Arabic, while several used Carnival books for pre-GCSE. Arabalicious.com was also mentioned, as well as Vocab Express's online vocabulary learning site for Arabic, past papers, and A level texts.
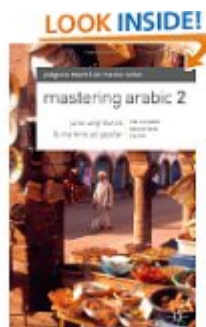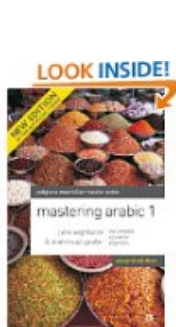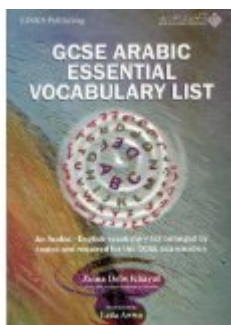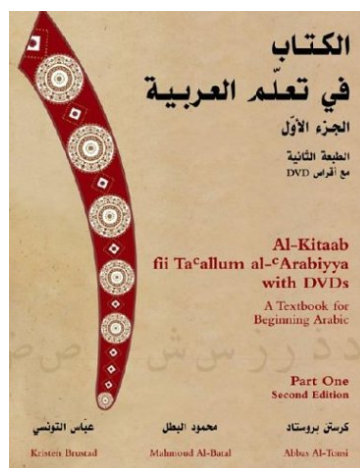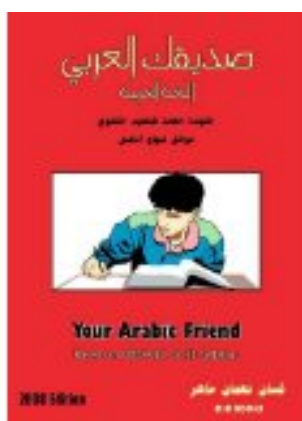
As well as these published resources, teachers used those they had made themselves from a range of sources, or resources from the web such as YouTube videos. Teachers responding to the online survey did not agree about whether there were enough resources available, but clearly there is nothing like the choice of materials available for GCSE French, Spanish or German. On the one hand, with such small numbers taking GCSE and A level Arabic, it is not commercially viable for publishers to invest large sums in producing specialist resources. On the other, songs and films suitable for teenagers tend to be in colloquial Arabic rather than Modern Standard Arabic.

Barriers to the more widespread use of ICT applications in Arabic teaching include the fact that students do not have Arabic keyboards at home and the incompatibility of some language teaching software with the Arabic script.

Free comments included:

- *No listening material available, very little material available of good quality on the internet.*
- *I find it very difficult to get Arabic reading books/stories that are interesting and at an appropriate level and interest the pupils.*
- *Haven't yet found a simple to use Arabic course for school-age pupils.*
- *I find that there are very poor resources especially for pupils who start with no knowledge of Arabic. Most of the songs, films you find are in colloquial Arabic and the ones in Modern Standard Arabic are either too advanced or not age appropriate.*
- *Excellent for beginners and advanced students. More resources needed for intermediate students.*
- *I always make my own resources to provide for different abilities.*

The following additional comments on pedagogical materials available for teaching Arabic were collected via interviews for this report:

- There is no need for more material on learning the Arabic alphabet.
- Some resources are good, but there is little which specifically addresses the GCSE syllabus. There is a gap in materials for speaking. Most speaking resources are aimed at business or holiday adult learners.
- Teachers may feel awkward about teaching speaking and listening in Modern Standard Arabic – more materials are required to help with this.
- Resources are starting to improve but are still not adequate. Those brought from Arabic countries intended for teaching Arabic as a foreign language are not suitable for schools.

At the 2013 Arabic conference at the British Council there was little appetite for a rigid course book, but support for the provision of high quality flexible resources in a range of media which could be readily adapted by teachers.

Supplementary schools

Supplementary schools used a range of different published and homemade resources including Mastering Arabic, Gateway to Arabic, your Arabic Friend and other GCSE support materials and al-Kitaab mentioned above. They also mentioned Arabic without Tears ('A first book for younger learners'), Arabic at your hands (Al-Arabiya Bayn Yadayk) and The Key to Arabic (Fast track to reading and writing Arabic).
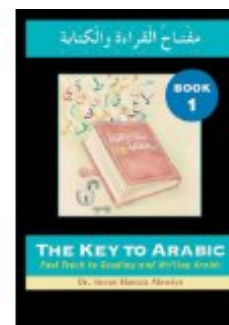
The main problems for supplementary schools as regards resources appears to be on the one hand the cost, but also the need to cater for both Arabic and non-Arabic speaking children: 'Very limited hence why we have created our own syllabus to deal with students whose background is Arabic and those who come from a non-Arab background'. 'We need a mixture of resources.'

One respondent complained that although some of their teachers have been trained to use interactive whiteboards, they are not allowed to use those of the school whose premises they rent.

Signposting of materials and resources for Arabic

There are a number of websites and blogs run by or for Arabic teachers drawing together useful materials. These include:
- o http://arabalicious.com/teaching-resources.html also at:
- o https://www.facebook.com/groups/arabalicious/
- o http://www.arabicscope.co.uk/
- o Arabic K12 Teachers network (US) www.arabik12.org
- o Association for Language Learning email discussion forum for Arabic teachers: http://www.all-languages.org.uk/about/languages_at_all/arabic_at_all

2.8   Teacher training courses and numbers of trained Arabic teachers in the UK

Between 2002 and 2014, Goldsmiths College, London, ran a Flexible PGCE course which provided the opportunity to gain Qualified Teacher Status specifically in Arabid: during that time it trained a total of 34 teachers. The course allowed trainees to combine their course with French or with Teaching English as an Additional Language – combinations which offer greater flexibility of employment. Because of the dearth of Arabic teaching in state secondary schools, tutors developed partnerships with a number of independent Muslim Faith Schools who provided teaching placements and mentors for trainees. However, as a result of cuts to its numbers as part of the government reforms to teacher training, Goldsmiths has had to withdraw this course and is no longer accepting applications for September 2015. There are therefore currently no opportunities to train specifically as a teacher of Arabic in the UK, potential teachers would need to gain Qualified Teacher Status through a training course in another subject.

The new reforms transfer much of the responsibility for teacher training to the schools themselves, and the Greenwood Academies Trust in Peterborough is listed on the UCAS website as offering a teacher training course in Arabic, though this appears to be in combination with either French or German.

The above courses prepare teachers for secondary education. There are no courses to train primary school teachers specifically in Arabic. However, it should be noted that Qualified Teacher Status is not specific to the subject being taught, so it is possible for an Arabic speaker to gain qualifications to teach in primary or secondary schools, specialising in other subjects, and then going on to teach the language. In practice it is thought that most qualified teachers of Arabic have gained their teaching qualification in either French or Spanish. Some may have qualified overseas without their qualifications being recognised within the English system, others may not be qualified at all. This is particularly likely to be the case in the independent sector where the lack of a formal qualification may not be penalised for salary purposes. However, lack of experience in the British school system is seen as a barrier to employment.

Recent changes to the structure of teacher training in England have created a network of Teaching Schools whose role is to work in alliance with other schools and their local universities to provide both initial and in-service training for teachers. Madani High School, a Muslim School in Leicester, is a partner in the Leicester Teaching School Alliance and other schools where Arabic is taught have been involved with a DfE-funded programme[xlviii] to develop the capacity of Teaching School Alliances in relation to languages. There is potential to support the development of Arabic within these networks. However, Madani High School told us by phone that Arabic teaching was being phased out. The Teaching Schools initiative has meant that the responsibility for planning and delivering teacher training is being switched away from university Schools of Education, towards the schools themselves. Universities, who in many cases have lost teacher training places, are consequently less able to lead innovation and improvements.

A specialist Arabic teaching qualification for those teaching the language in higher education, or hoping to do so, is available at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). This is thought to be the only qualification of its kind in Europe. The one year full time course (or two years part time) has in recent years recruited about 11 trainees per year, both men and women. However it was not running in 2012/13 because of the loss of a key member of staff.

Similarly, Goldsmiths College continues to run its level 3 certificate course in partnership with the British Council and Qatar UK – one of the few opportunities now available to develop and exchange expertise in the teaching of Arabic.

Findings from the online survey and school visits show that where Arabic teaching is successful, teachers have been extremely self-motivated in seeking out opportunities to acquire and develop their pedagogical skills and understanding of the wider curriculum context. The success of Arabic teaching in these schools is very dependent on the energy and commitment of these individuals and it is likely that schools where Arabic teaching has not been sustainable have either lost or have never been able to recruit teachers with these special qualities. Further investigation would be necessary in order to probe more deeply into the extent to which teacher supply and poor access to training contributed to schools' decisions to stop teaching the language.

2.9   Motivations for learning Arabic

University students

Scott-Baumann and Contractor's research on Arabic in the university sector provides a useful insight into older students' motivations for learning Arabic. They point out that 70% of British Muslims are from non-Arabic speaking backgrounds and that the learning of Arabic is therefore seen as a religious duty. New converts may take the learning of Arabic especially seriously as part of adopting their new religious identity.

Dr Ataullah Siddiqui, author of a report on Islam in universities in England, found differing views on the relationship between the learning of Arabic and the study of Islam:

'There are those who see Arabic language as the core of Islamic Studies, and who do not consider anthropological and ethnographic study of Muslim societies as a necessary or proper part of the Islamic Studies syllabus. There are others who believe that the teaching of Arabic and textual analysis does not address the issues facing Muslims in contemporary societies in different parts of the world'. [xlix]

Siddiqui also noted that the resurgence of Islam in world politics had boosted demand for Islamic Studies, and that this included a desire to improve career opportunities, as well as a desire to understand socio-economic and political issues at play. Case studies in Scott-Baumann and Contractor highlight a number of different career motivations – not just for international business but teaching, social work, translating and to work in government departments. They also interviewed a number of students whose interest was for travel – to gain an understanding of Arabic-speaking countries through time spent living or studying there. The authors noted that these motivations required a knowledge of the regional varieties of Arabic spoken in those countries.

Parents

The case study of 6 primary schools in Bradford (see section 2.1) provided insight into multiple motivations of parents in relation to their children's learning of Arabic[l]. In these schools nearly all pupils were from a Muslim background, largely from Mirpuri, Panjabi, Bangla or Urdu-speaking backgrounds. Some children had access to Qu'ranic Arabic through classes at their mosque, but very few, if any, were from Arabic-speaking homes. Arabic was seen as an attractive language to teach to these children, with its status as an international language of communication, but also offering cultural links with the local community. The aim was to teach Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in keeping with the aims of the primary languages initiative, rather than Qu'ranic Arabic. The response from parents was reported to be very positive. Reasons given included:
- knowledge of MSA will help their children's career prospects
- the initiative will bring home and school life closer
- knowledge of MSA will ease access to Qu'ranic Arabic in their children's mosque studies
- learning MSA will help children to learn about the culture of the Middle East
- children will be able to communicate when taking part in Hajj.

These motivations were confirmed by the Phase 2 visits to primary schools and in interviews with children who had attended Arabic classes in supplementary schools from a young age. Muslim parents see Arabic as a high status language, although sometimes it competes with Urdu in this respect. The religious aspect is important, but this also has a practical economic dimension: the access which Arabic gives to global Islamic culture is seen as providing opportunities for work, study or travel in future. This motivation was particularly evident in the case of children attending the London supplementary school.

However, non-Muslim parents clearly would not share these motivations and the head teachers of schools I visited felt that it might be quite difficult to convince non-Muslim parents of the benefits of learning Arabic. One primary school head felt that it would be 'a step too far' and that much more work needed to be done to redress negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslim culture before parents in her locality would accept such an initiative. An approach which stressed the business benefits and the contribution to literacy (as with Latin) might tactically be the best approach. However another head felt that introducing Arabic to children of all faiths was an important way of breaking down prejudice and misconceptions and could play a very valuable role in promoting intercultural understanding and reducing conflict.

Secondary age pupils

The secondary age pupils interviewed for this study were all from Muslim backgrounds and were all very strongly motivated to learn Arabic. They did not see it as a hard language and felt it would bring them many opportunities in future. Many of the children interviewed were already internationally mobile and expected to be so in future. They understood the importance of Arabic for practical communication – with family members, on Hajj and for career purposes in future - as well as something they would like to learn as 'the language of our religion.'

The possible motivations of secondary-age children of non-Muslim origin are more difficult to assess. Teachers point to growing awareness of the economic value of Arabic and its usefulness for careers[li]. They also mention 'curiosity', which may be linguistic or cultural or be motivated by an awareness of the importance of Arabic as a world language and in world affairs.

For Arabic in secondary schools, the question is not so much the motivation of pupils as that of Head teachers and the logistics of provision for them and school managers. Those interviewed for this report highlighted especially the (non) availability of teachers as a barrier for schools who might be interested in offering Arabic. They felt it would be difficult for heads to find teachers of Arabic and to have confidence that they would be able to offer high quality teaching appropriate to the needs of their pupils.

Learner profiles

The visits to schools found very few pupils learning Arabic who were native speakers of the language – there were just one or two children from Arabic-speaking homes in each school. This gives the lie to a widespread misconception that Arabic is a soft option because 'children speak it at home'. Certainly Muslim children who attend Mosque have background exposure to the language and inhabit an environment which is strongly Arabic-friendly, but they must work hard and put in many hours' study to gain competence in the language.

There was a higher proportion of children identified as 'native speakers' of Arabic in the supplementary schools researched for this study – slightly over half in one school - but the situation is actually more nuanced. Rather than dividing neatly into two categories, learners are located on a continuum between fully 'native speakers' at one end (i.e. those who have been brought up and educated in Arabic) and native speakers of English who come to Arabic as a foreign language. There are many students either born in the UK or from third countries with parents who have been internationally mobile with varying degrees of exposure to Arabic. As noted above, many students who are understood to have competence in Arabic and attend supplementary schools are entered for GCSE by their mainstream school but it is impossible to judge how many could accurately be described as 'native speakers'.

2.10   What support would schools teaching Arabic welcome most?

The chart below shows the responses from Primary, Secondary and Supplementary schools to the question on what sort of support they would like to receive from the British Council. All groups prioritised teaching materials and resources, followed by training and networking for teachers. All groups gave a lower priority to teacher supply issues and the provision of foreign language assistants. The secondary schools in particular would like to see greater promotion of Arabic at national level. These responses reflect the immediate practical needs of teachers in schools where, in many cases, Arabic is already successfully embedded. Although there appears to be less support amongst this group of respondents for the more strategic aspects of support which could be offered by the Arabic language and

culture partnership, a more in-depth consideration of these by a wider target group could well draw out different answers.
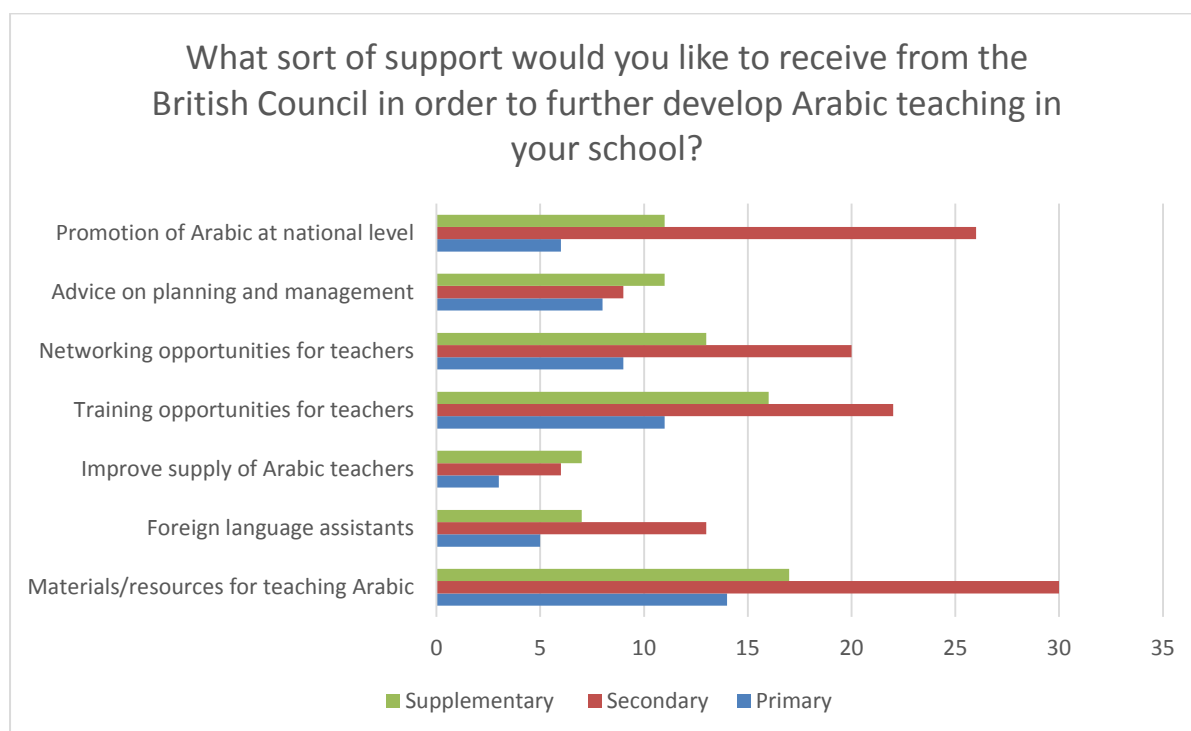

Figure 8: Types of support most required by responding schools

Free comments on this question were as follows:

Primary respondents:

- *As we grow it has become an absolute necessity that an established organisation provides consistent support in supply of teachers and resources to the school. Including planning of assessment and examination to ensure delivery of Arabic is professional and a language pupils can use in their professional career globally irrespective of industry sectors they work in. (*Al-Qalam Primary School, Glasgow)
- *The main area for support would be through providing differentiated materials linked with Edexcel's vocabulary and topic lists, graded according to the NC descriptors of the four skills - Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing (*Oldknow Academy, Birmingham)
- I*n the short term, resource materials. In the medium-term, training. In the long-term, promoting Arabic at a national level. (*Olive School, Hackney)
- *The DfE questioned our teaching of Arabic and why we were not teaching a different language like French. I do not feel that Arabic is appreciated for its potential and the fact that it is one of the fastest growing languages and also in terms of job opportunities abroad while fluent. (*The Olive Tree Primary School)

Secondary respondents:

- *Help in developing Arabic apps for IOS, Android and Windows specific to the GCSE curriculum*. (Independent Muslim secondary school)
- *I would like to see an active teach resources similar to EdExcel MFL. I tried to get in touch with different institutes to support this matter, but no luck! I would be very happy to offer my support, if needed. It has everything a teacher need to teach (text book, interactive white board book with videos, audios, worksheets, assessment pack -similar to GCSE and student's work book). I used it in teaching German and it was excellent*. (State secondary school)
- *Supporting qualifications for non-native speakers*. (Eton College)
- *Appropriate materials that confirms with the MFL guidelines for Languages. Similar to material available for major European Languages such as French, Spanish etc.* (London Islamic School)

Respondents from supplementary schools:

- *Training teachers mainly on how to choose and develop their own materials, training schools on how to develop a curriculum suitable to the needs of non-speakers of Arabic and making the best of learning hours available.* (Sudanese Supplementary School).
- *We also would like to go through formal accreditation and promote good practice.* (Liverpool Arabic School)
- *Financial support for the establishment* (Arabic 4 Adults, Uniplacement)

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations based on a SWOT analysis have been grouped into four interconnected areas:
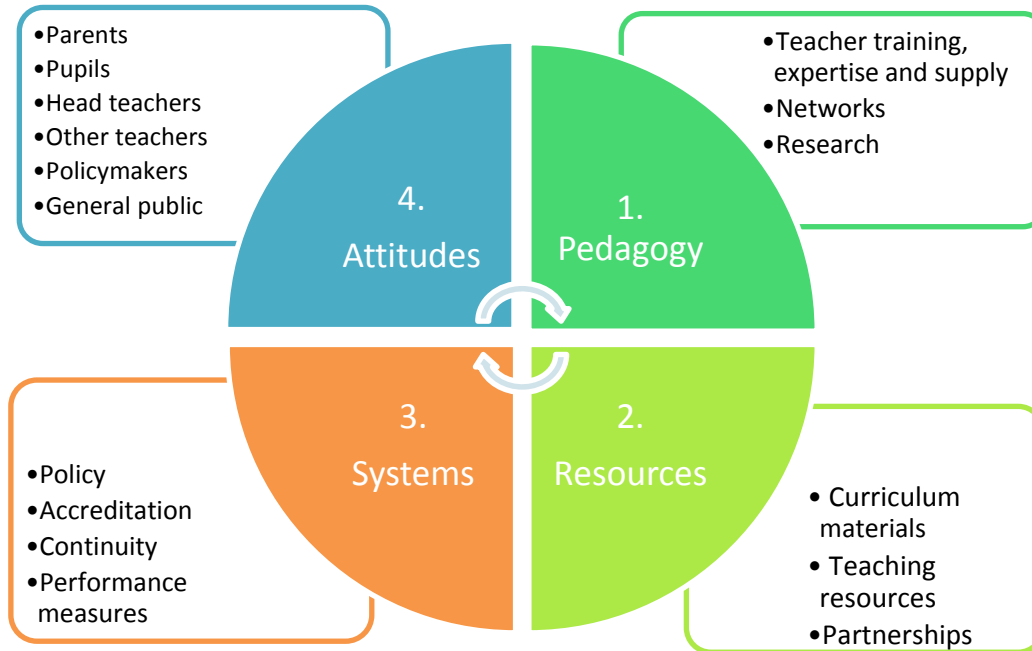- Pedagogy and provision
- Resources
- Systems
- Attitudes

Figure 9: Elements of successful provision

3.1 Pedagogy and provision

As can be seen from the case studies, Arabic already benefits from some strong models of provision at both primary and secondary level, showing what it is possible to achieve. These schools have found answers to the objection that there is 'not enough time in the curriculum' or that Arabic is somehow more difficult or different from other modern languages and they achieving better results with Arabic than many schools do in French, Spanish or German. They demonstrate how Arabic contributes not just to academic achievement but to students' moral, social and cultural development. There are good examples also of its contribution to wider literacy and plurilingual competence involving English, home languages and other European languages.

Outside the mainstream, supplementary schools are making a major contribution to the teaching of Arabic and preparing pupils for exams. Children's experience of learning Arabic in supplementary schools is sometimes a much richer and more far-reaching one than language learning in mainstream schools. Arabic is important as a heritage language, but this does not mean it is always taught as a mother tongue. There are many pupils from non-Arab backgrounds learning it as a foreign language. This means teachers have a special expertise which is as relevant to mainstream modern foreign language teaching as to mother tongue teaching.

Arabic is a growing subject with strong links to Muslim communities who see it as an aspirational language. Religion and the desire to belong to the global Islamic community are strong drivers and provide many of the conditions needed for success including: support from parents, from Head teachers and the wider school community; allowing links to other

curriculum areas; opportunities to engage with the language outside the classroom; and a sense that the language will be relevant and useful in future. Supplementary schools and Muslim schools are fulfilling a real and growing demand to study Arabic which is derived from and largely supplied by the community.

However, the learning of Arabic is so frequently associated with Muslim faith, and so rarely taught to children of non-Muslim heritage, that this may reinforce an impression that learning Arabic is not a viable option for those of other faiths, or none. It would be difficult to replicate the conditions referred to above for non-Muslims. Yet to allow a situation to develop in which Arabic is seen as a no-go area for non-Muslims would be dangerous and divisive.

Where Arabic is taught to non-Muslims, it often takes the form of 'enrichment' rather than a rigorous and sustained language-learning experience. This may be extremely valuable from the point of view of awareness raising. Taster programmes, particularly in the Sixth Form, may be effective in encouraging students to take Arabic at university. However, Arabic is frequently a marginal subject, not fully embedded in the curriculum. It provides added value as an enrichment option but it is not seen as critical and is therefore vulnerable to new policies or changes of personnel (whether head teachers or subject experts).

There is a dearth of opportunities to train as a teacher of Arabic and a perceived shortage of suitably qualified teachers acts as a deterrent to schools who are in any case juggling complex arrangements for languages. Universities which provide initial teacher training in languages have little flexibility and scope to innovate in the context of the latest policy developments (Schools Direct). Few (if any) schools teaching Arabic are involved in Teaching School Alliances. Professional development opportunities are rare and difficult to access, especially for teachers in supplementary schools. This means that developments are over-dependent on enterprising and committed individuals – and therefore vulnerable to them moving on. Few existing modern languages teachers have any knowledge of Arabic.

Opportunities (Pedagogy and provision)[5]

Support (through advocacy and partnerships) existing Initial Teacher Training for Arabic and seek to develop accessible pathways to Qualified Teacher Status in more areas of the country[6].
Work with Teaching Schools and their Alliances to train new teachers of Arabic. Help them to build links with schools already teaching Arabic successfully.
Consider working with Teach First.
Offer beginners courses for existing primary school teachers or secondary school teachers of other languages (c.f. Japanese, German, Spanish). Provide resources so teachers can immediately put into practice what they have learnt.
Offer online courses for teachers not able to attend in person (Spanish).
Offer courses in Arabic speaking countries, with strong input from existing UK teachers who understand the environment and what teachers need to know. Provide resources as above.
Use good practitioners in supplementary schools to deliver taster or enrichment sessions in mainstream schools. Pay them to do so or support them in other ways on a reciprocal basis.
Develop pilot programmes with schools to offer Arabic as a foreign language from the beginning of secondary school
Develop pilot beginners courses for Sixth Formers aimed at encouraging them to take up the study of Arabic at university
Encourage academic research into the teaching of Arabic at various levels in the UK

3.2   Resources

Arabic teachers have been innovative and creative in developing curricula and assessment systems which meet the needs of pupils as well as fitting into the national curriculum and exam syllabuses – this ground work can be shared

---

[5] Where other languages have used this method to promote greater take up, this is indicated in brackets
[6] A more detailed study of the policy environment and issues faced would be required.

with others. Teachers have developed some good resources and would be happy for them to be more widely shared. There are already a number of well-regarded websites and networks for sharing information, expertise and resources.

However, there is a relative lack of commercially-available materials and as yet no critical mass of Arabic learners to ensure commercial viability. Resources are regarded as 'difficult to find' and there are issues with hardware and software (at home and in school) which are barriers to making full use of ICT for learning Arabic. Supplementary schools do not always have access to technology and may be isolated and excluded from networks.

Although schools are well networked within their local communities, there are few partnerships with other schools, in the UK or abroad (although these would be welcomed) and no formal access to Foreign Language Assistants. There are too few examples of supplementary and mainstream schools working together and no evident business or HE involvement.

Opportunities (Resources)

Publish a primary curriculum with linked resources for Arabic, based on those already developed by enterprising schools.

Plug gaps in resources with flexible, up to date and attractive materials which can be readily adapted by teachers.

Improve the signposting and facilitate the sharing of teaching resources.

Facilitate links between schools both within the UK and abroad.

Facilitate links with business and with the university sector.

Encourage links between Muslim faith schools (primary and secondary) and schools where pupils have little or no exposure to Islam.

Encourage partnership working between supplementary schools and mainstream schools.

Stimulate and promote existing networks and forums.

3.3 Systems

There are a number of opportunities within the policy environment to develop the teaching of Arabic. In Scotland, the policy of 1+2 offers an explicit entrée for lesser taught and community languages and the time is right for the development of pilot projects. In England, the introduction of a language into the Key Stage 2 curriculum in 2014 means that all schools need to develop a policy on language teaching and many may wish to adopt approaches which are inclusive of a range of languages, particularly those perceived to be of global importance, or relevant to local communities.

The existence of the GCSE exam and its value in school performance tables is a strong incentive for schools to enable children who have learnt Arabic outside the school to sit the exam, and the qualification is an important motivator for such pupils and their parents. There are increasing numbers of GCSE and A level entries and Arabic is growing in popularity in higher education. Free schools and Academies are sparking some new and potentially interesting developments.

Across the UK, public debate concerning the need to diversify the range of languages taught is starting to gain traction, and the promotion of the case of Mandarin can only help raise awareness of the need to diversify more generally.

However, the range of accreditation for Arabic is generally poor and there is no accreditation for Arabic at all in Scotland. GCSE is often prepared externally, meaning it is only an option for those already committed to learning Arabic through their communities. Ofsted often do not give credit to schools for their Arabic provision or recognise the contribution of languages education more generally. There are poor arrangements for progression from primary to secondary and from secondary to further and higher education, meaning that investment in teaching and learning

Arabic at earlier stages may be wasted. Supplementary schools suffer from lack of funding. They are dispersed, diverse, and hard to reach. There is an incomplete picture of Arabic in adult and higher education (despite an excellent report) and statistics are hard to obtain.

The political environment which is highly sensitive to the impact of immigration, and seeks to implement less centrist and cost-cutting policies, is not conducive to public investment in Arabic. There must be a risk that GCSE Arabic may be cut because it is not commercially viable for exam boards and seen as a 'community language' by policy makers (and therefore something which should be supported by communities rather than by central government).

Opportunities (Systems)

Encourage cluster working between primary and secondary schools to enable progression.

Promote new forms of accreditation and develop pilots and case studies to put forward as viable options (if successful).

Carry out further research to obtain a better understanding of the barriers for those schools not currently teaching Arabic.

Support and follow the progress of new developments in Free schools and Academies.

Lobby for the retention of the GCSE in Arabic at all costs and provide evidence of its status and value as a foreign language

Research Arabic provision for adults and in non-degree courses in HE.

Influence policy with compelling evidence and models of effective practice (see also Attitudes, below)

3.4 Attitudes

Learners interviewed see Arabic as providing access to the global Islamic community. They see this as important socially, culturally and economically. Many of those interviewed were already highly mobile internationally and expect to be so in future.

Although the teaching of Arabic enjoys strong support from the Muslim community, Islamophobia and negative portrayal of Arabic speakers in the media is seen as a barrier to introducing the language more widely. Some Muslim schools have been negatively portrayed in the press and others may fear becoming a target for anti-Muslim sentiment. Head teachers and policy makers need to take account of public opinion and as noted above, the policy environment may be seen as unfavourable to the expansion of Arabic because of concerns about immigration and its relation to public expenditure. There is perhaps a lack of understanding of the situation of Arabic at policy level and false assumptions that because of Arabic's role as a community language, those who speak or learn it are necessarily native speakers and doing so for the narrow benefit of their communities rather than the wider society. All these are misconceptions and potential risks to the expansion of Arabic teaching. The growth in the study of Arabic has come about as a result of demographic and cultural changes and may be vulnerable to further changes in the external (global) environment.

Opportunities (Attitudes)

Challenge misconceptions relating to Arabic. This should be seen in the context of other efforts to promote the Arabic-speaking world e.g. through tourism. (The rise of Spanish was closely linked to the growth of mass tourism to Spain).

Promote access to Arabic for people of all faiths, in the interests of spreading knowledge and awareness of the Arabic-speaking world beyond those with a Muslim background

Offer visits to Arabic speaking countries to head teachers (Mandarin).

Offer opportunities for head teachers to visit other UK schools teaching Arabic, to see it in action.

Promote and support the work of supplementary schools. Work with the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education to show their value for the whole community, not just for religious or ethnic minorities. Break down their isolation and suspicion.
Develop Arabic-based taster activities with a strong intercultural element for widespread use within the school system.
Ensure that the strategy for Arabic is accompanied by a robust communications plan.

The four categories identified about are clearly different but interconnected (See figure 9 above). Any strategic attempt to improve the status of a language in the curriculum needs to address all four areas to be successful: it is clearly pointless to focus exclusively on training teachers if systems and attitudes mean that schools cannot provide employment. Similarly there is no point in creating an appetite to learn Arabic if trained teachers and resources are not available.

Based on the findings of this research, it is clear there is a need for:

- Immediate practical support in the areas of materials/resources and networking/training for teachers
- A more strategic approach to developing Arabic as a foreign language – with buy-in from a range of stakeholders including schools and teachers (it should not be top down)
- A vision for Arabic which balances the need to break down barriers by introducing 'tasters' with the development of more rigorous and sustainable provision for the subject within the curriculum in a smaller number of schools initially. Take a decision about whether these are to be both primary and secondary schools.
- Setting realistic goals which enable prioritisation and avoid interventions being too thinly spread.
- Further research to support planning, plug information gaps and monitor developments.

Teresa Tinsley
Alcantara Communications
Updated March 2015

Appendix 1

Muslim Free Schools

Name of proposed Free School as stated in application	Proposed Local Authority area to site the Free School	Name of independent school if converting to Free School status	Faith designation
Al Islah Free School	Blackburn with Darwen	Al Islah Girls' High School	Sunni Muslim
Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Boys	Gloucestershire	N/A	Sunni Muslim
Al-Burhan Girls' School	Birmingham	Al-Burhan Grammar School	Muslim - Sunni/Sufi
Al-Risalah Girls Academy	Wandsworth	N/A	Sunni Islam
Birmingham Free School	Birmingham	N/A	Muslim
Bolton Free School	Bolton	N/A	Muslim
Edge View Muslim Girls' School	Oldham	N/A	Muslim
Fitrah Southampton Islamic Primary School	Southampton	Fitrah SIPS	Islam
Khoja Jaffery Academy	Harrow	N/A	Islamic Twelver Shia Islam
Oakwood Islamic School for Girls	Birmingham	Oakwood School (BIETTEC)	Islamic
Palfrey Girls School	Walsall	Palfrey Girls School	Islam
Preston Free School	Lancashire	N/A	Muslim
The Olive School, Blackburn	Blackburn with Darwen	N/A	Muslim
The Olive School, Hackney	Hackney	N/A	Muslim
The Olive Tree Primary School	Bolton	N/A	Islamic Deobandi Hanafi
Tower Science Academy	Tower Hamlets	N/A	Sunni Islam
Waltham Forest Leadership Academy for Girls	Waltham Forest	N/A	Muslim

From DfE Wave 3: Free school applications: free schools proposing to open in 2013 and beyond

Appendix 2

FE and Sixth Form Colleges offering Arabic

City of Westminster College
Cambridge Centre for Sixth Form Studies
Sheffield College
Manchester College
The Language Connection
Sir John Cass Sixth Form College
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College, Birmingham

Appendix 3

Universities offering degrees in/with Arabic

1. Aston (in combination with International Politics and French)
2. Cambridge
3. Central Lancashire
4. Durham
5. Edinburgh
6. Exeter
7. Leeds
8. Manchester
9. Manchester Metropolitan University (in combination with other subjects)
10. Oxford
11. Regent's University London, incorporating European Business School (in combination with international business)
12. Salford
13. School of Oriental and African Studies
14. St Andrews
15. University of Warwick (in combination with other languages)
16. Westminster (in combination with other subjects)

References

[i] British Council, *Languages for the Future,* 2013

[ii] Teresa Tinsley and Kathryn Board, *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England. Findings from the 2012 Language Trends Survey*, 2013 <http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation/our_research/evidence_for_schools/specific_subjects.aspx>.

[iii] Department for Education, *The National Curriculum in England. Framework Document for Consultation*, 2013 <http://www.education.gov.uk/a00221262/reform-national-curriculum>.

[iv] DfE Statistical First Release, *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*, 2014

[v] http://ams-uk.org/muslim-schools/

[vi] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4643080.stm

[vii] http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/f/article%202%20-%20free%20schools%20wave%203%20applications%20-%20information.pdf

[viii] http://www.tauheedulschools.com/

[ix] http://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-releases-details-of-latest-free-school-applications/

[x] A Scott-Baumann and S Contractor, *Arabic Language and the Study of Islam. Who Studies Arabic and Why and How Can These Skills Be Used at University and Beyond?*, 2012.

[xi] Pauline Wade, Helen Marshall and Sharon O'Donnell, *Primary Modern Foreign Languages Longitudinal Survey of Implementation of National Entitlement to Language Learning at Key Stage 2*, 2009.

[xii] http://www.primarylanguages.org.uk/teaching__learning/community_languages/key_stage_2_curriculum_models/arabic,_bradford_la_-_full_cas.aspx [Accessed 20/12/2013]

[xiii] NRC bulletin Autumn 2009 http://www.continyou.org.uk/what_we_do/supplementary_education/files/nrcbulletinautumn09 [accessed 3 April 2013]

[xiv] Teresa Tinsley and Kathryn Board, *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England. Findings from the 2012 Language Trends Survey*, 2013

[xv] Kathryn Board and Teresa Tinsley, *Language Trends 2013/14. The State of Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England* (CfBT Education Trust/British Council, 2014).Kathryn Board and Teresa Tinsley, *Language*

Trends 2014/15. The State of Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England (CfBT Education Trust/British Council, 2015).

xvi Ofsted, *Primary Languages in Initial Teacher Training*, 2008.

xvii Teresa Tinsley and Kathryn Board, *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England. Findings from the 2012 Language Trends Survey*, 2013

xviii Ofsted, *Every Language Matters*, 2008.

xix Language Trends series of surveys, CILT, 2002-2011

xx Teresa Tinsley and Kathryn Board, *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England. Findings from the 2012 Language Trends Survey*, 2013

xxi The survey was carried out by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, an organisation which went into administration in 2012 as a result of government spending cuts. http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6243018 The database of schools teaching Arabic, which was an outcome of the survey, is no longer available. Telephone interview with former employee, 5 April 2013.

xxii CILT, *Mandarin Language Learning. Research Study. Department for Children, Schools and Families*, 2007.

xxiii Teresa Tinsley and Kathryn Board, *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England. Findings from the 2012 Language Trends Survey*, 2013

xxiv http://www.supplementaryeducation.org.uk/school-directory/ [accessed 7/3/2015]

xxv www.ourlanguages.org.uk [accessed 2 April 2013]

xxvi Scott-Baumann and Contractor.

xxvii Ibid. p 31

xxviii Joanna McPake, *Provision for Community Language Learning in Wales*, 2005.Joanna McPake, *Provision for Community Language Learning in Scotland*, 2005.

xxix http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/BASLAs.cfm

xxx www.hotcourses.com [accessed 8 March 2015]

xxxi Teresa Tinsley, *Languages: The State of the Nation. Demand and Supply of Language Skills in the UK. British Academy.*, 2013 <http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/State_of_the_Nation_2013.cfm>.

xxxii For a discussion of this see Ibid. Appendix 3

xxxiii Scott-Baumann and Contractor. Data in Appendix 2

xxxiv Michael Worton, *Review of Modern Foreign Languages Provision in Higher Education in England*, 2009 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2009/200941/> [accessed 1 January 2013].

xxxv Nick Byrne, "How University Language Centres Are Offering Integrated and Non-Integrated Language Modules," *Association of University Language Centres*, 2009 <http://www.aulc.org/meetings/01-2009/limerick_2009.html> [accessed 1 January 2013].

xxxvi Higher Education Academy, *UCML/AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in universities in the UK (2013/2014)*, 2014

xxxvii Tinsley and Board.

xxxviii https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reforming-qualifications-and-the-curriculum-to-better-prepare-pupils-for-life-after-school/supporting-pages/gcse-reform [accessed 8 March 2015]

xxxix https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-modern-foreign-languages [accessed 8 March 2015]

xl Axing of soft GCSEs to hit PE and Drama, Sunday Times 27/10/2013 http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Education/article1332693.ece

xli http://www.aqa.org.uk/supporting-education/policy/gcse-and-a-level-changes/structure-of-new-gcses [accessed 9 March 2015]

xlii DfE, *Modern foreign languages. GCE AS and A level subject content* (December 2014)

xliii A Level Content Advisory Board. *Modern languages, A level and AS level. Illustrative content: themes, works and topics*. Revised December 2014.

xliv https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-modern-foreign-languages [accessed 9 March 2015]

xlv http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6354767

xlvi Ofqual, *The assessment of A Level Modern Foreign Languages*, 2014. JCQ, *A review of Modern Foreign Languages at A Level: A* grade and low take up*, 2014.

xlvii TES, 5 January 2013 http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6289107 [accessed 5 April 2013]

xlviii CfBT Education Trust, *Languages Support Programme Audit Report*, 2012

xlix A Siddiqui, Islam at Universities in England: Meeting the Needs and Investing in the Future, http://www.mihe.org.uk/the-siddiqui-report [accessed 4 April 2013] . p.8

[i] http://www.primarylanguages.org.uk/teaching_learning/community_languages/key_stage_2_curriculum_models/arabic,_bradford_la_-_full_cas.aspx [accessed 20/12/13]

[ii] For a comprehensive review of demand for different languages including Arabic see Tinsley. The State of the Nation…