



The Coordination between Arabic Studies Programs and Job Prospects for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students in Chennai City, India

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Abstract

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, it's essential to adapt strategically to changing trends and job opportunities for graduates. The Master's Program in Arabic Language is taking proactive steps to ensure the curriculum remains relevant to the demands of the job market. This study aims to assess the alignment between the curriculum and job requirements for graduates and postgraduates, the time taken to secure employment, the skills utilized in Arabic teaching roles, and the adequacy of the curriculum in preparing graduates for the challenges of the professional world. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data was gathered from alumni and employers between 2018 and 2022 through questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions. Analysis of the data revealed that 69.9% of graduates found their work aligned with the curriculum, with 39.2% working as Arabic language teachers, 20.3% in Computer, Media, and MNC Companies, and 28.4% working outside the education sector. The average time to secure employment was less than six months, with technology-based teaching skills being the most impactful. Recommendations include adapting the curriculum to embrace technology in Arabic teaching, enhancing research methodology, and encouraging the publication of articles and books to meet the demands of the digital era and the labor market.

Keywords: Curriculum coordination, digital age, Arabic language, employment prospects, job market.

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Introduction

The technological revolution has significantly impacted job markets, including education. (Shen & Zhang, 2024); (Hötte et al., 2023); (Ra et al., 2019); (. et al., 2020); (Kolade & Owoseni, 2022). With the rise of smart systems, there is a growing reliance on technology, leading to a reduction in the need for high-skilled workers in traditional roles. This shift has prompted educational

institutions to reassess their approaches, particularly in terms of curriculum development and its alignment with the changing job market.

In response, Arabic language departments in the University of Madras, such as The New College in Chennai, have undertaken studies to analyze the relevance of their programs in preparing students for the workforce (Witt et al., 2019); (García-Aracil et al., 2021); (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This includes understanding the competencies required by employers and the effectiveness of the curriculum in equipping students with the necessary skills. (Undari et al., 2023); (Derin Asyri & Devan Asyri, 2024). Increasingly, platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp are being utilized to enhance language learning, prompting educators to adapt and compete with online content creators in delivering engaging and high-quality educational material.

This study aims to assess the suitability of the Arabic language curriculum at The New College, Chennai, for addressing job market challenges. By tracking the employment outcomes of graduates and analyzing feedback from stakeholders, the study will provide insights into how the curriculum can be improved to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving employment landscape. The findings will help guide curriculum adjustments and support the college's efforts to maintain national accreditation standards.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the alignment between graduates' skills and the needs of the job market. The researchers used surveys to gather quantitative data from Arabic Language graduates of The New College, Chennai, who completed their studies between 2018 and 2022. The surveys focused on employment outcomes, waiting periods for jobs, and the applicability of skills acquired during their studies in the workplace. For qualitative analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with graduates and employers to obtain in-depth insights into the curriculum's effectiveness. These discussions helped clarify ambiguous data and resolve any differences in understanding regarding key concepts and the real-world application of the graduates' competencies. The researchers employed Hooperman analysis, a structured data analysis method, which involved reducing the data, presenting the key findings, and extracting final results. This combination of surveys and FGDs allowed for a nuanced understanding of how well the Arabic Language curriculum at The New College prepares students for the job market, providing valuable data for future curriculum development and improvement.

Results of the Study and Discussion:

Suitability of Employment Opportunities for Graduates:

The New College is one of the government-aided colleges, under the auspices of the Muslim Educational Association of Southern India (MEASI), located in central Chennai city. This College was founded in 1951, It has several faculties:

The Arabic department operates in a way that supports students' educational and linguistic abilities and professional competence to face the world of the Arabic language in India. Its main objectives were: (1) preparing Arabic language teachers and qualifying them, (2) preparing a curriculum designer for Arabic language education, and (3) preparing a scientific researcher in the field of Arabic language education. As for the study's results, this study found the following:

1. Administrative Capacity 12.2%
2. Arabic Teachers in Schools, Colleges and Institutes 39.2%
3. Computer, Media and MNC Companies 20.3%
4. Private Sector Employees 28.4%

Arabic Graduates' Employment Details

Those data indicated the extent of suitability of the majority of the jobs obtained by the graduates after graduation. Among these most chosen jobs by the graduates is as Arabic language teachers at different educational levels, including elementary, middle, and high school in both government and private sectors. Following that, they chose to work as college professors at the higher education level, both government and private. This type of job falls under the first objective in the curriculum objectives document for the department, which includes three main objectives: (1) preparing Arabic language teachers and qualifying them, (2) preparing a curriculum designer for the Arabic language, and (3) preparing a scientific researcher in the field of Arabic language education. (Harris & Clayton, 2019). Unfortunately, the researchers did not find any graduates' jobs in the second and third objectives. After following up on these data through group discussion and interviewing some of the employees, the researchers found that 12 of them did not consider those current jobs as their main profession to rely on for meeting their needs and supporting their families. They do it as a hobby or voluntary work, and they still need another profession to obtain money for their daily needs.

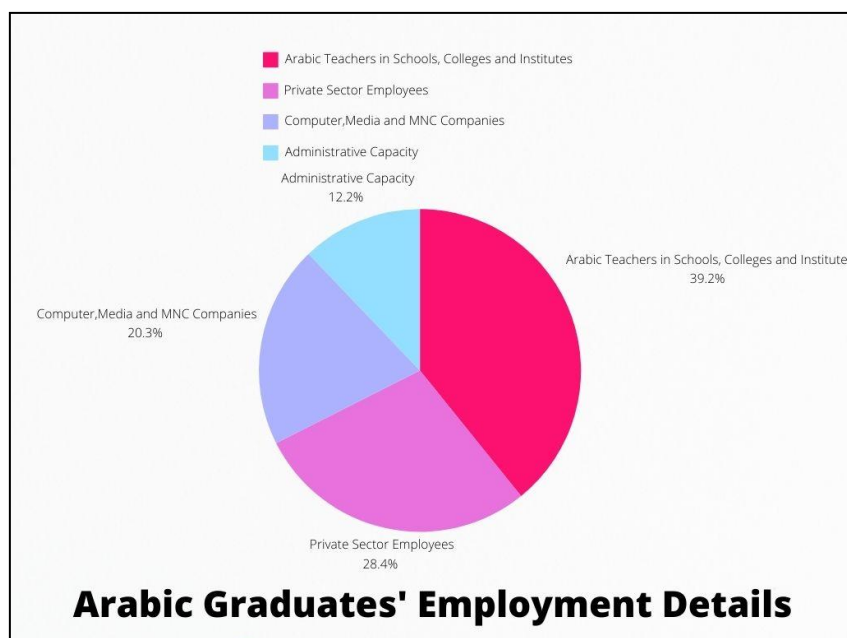


Figure 1. Arabic Graduates' employment detail

Those data indicated that 39.2% chose teaching jobs as their primary profession in their lives. The data showed that most of these individuals found suitable work and a decent salary to meet their daily needs. If it indicates anything, it shows that the Arabic language teaching job market in India still offers good and promising opportunities. Through group discussion, the researchers found another phenomenon, which is the phenomenon of transitioning from one job to another within or outside the field or leaving their first field in the Arabic language to join a private sector affiliated with factories. It was discovered that the main motive behind this is income or salary; the salary in schools or universities differs significantly from that of a village head in the area or a factory manager. The salary in the education sector in this country, especially for those in private institutions, is still low. This mentioned phenomenon leads to a weakened desire among graduates to teach Arabic when compared to the demands of economic factors. Another factor is the remote location of the job, so there is a tendency to move to a job closer to family. The next factor is the inclination towards a presidential position in one of the institutions, which is known among employees; if they are promoted and have competence, nothing prevents them from competing, which is normal for an employee even if they leave their first field. For example, a school principal will be involved in administrative matters and may leave their field of teaching, research, and authoring.

Division of Job Opportunities

1. Skill-Based Job Opportunities 69.9%
2. Non-Skill Based Job 30.1%

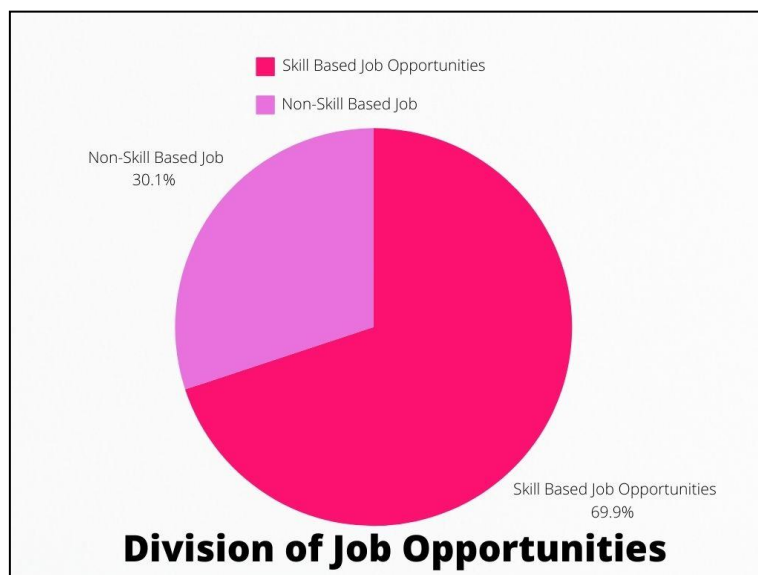


Figure 2. Division Of job opportunities

During the period covered in the survey distributed to the graduates, it was discovered that the waiting period varies from one student to another, and the efforts made to obtain these jobs also varied. The waiting period for the job and the skills used in the job can be known through the following timeline for graduates to obtain a job: The above data results show that the majority of graduates obtain jobs for more than 6 months and less than a year, with the second period being less than 6 months. Some graduates secured jobs immediately in the same month of graduation. Additionally, 10% of the graduates have been employed for more than a year. When researchers confirmed these data through group discussion, they found that all or most of these individuals had jobs before starting their studies, such as Quranic education teachers in *Maktabas*, *Madrasas*, institutes, school teachers, Arabic language trainers, or faculty members in many private schools, all of which are fundamental jobs. However, upon obtaining a master's degree, the majority of students or graduates begin to try their luck in finding a better job. When researchers asked questions about their efforts in obtaining these jobs, they found that the majority of them send job application letters no more than five times, some only once or twice, and others multiple times more than five times to get the job. The data show that the majority of graduates work in the field of teaching Arabic, while the rest work in related fields. However, the reason for choosing another profession should also be appreciated because they have a strong foundation in choosing these jobs as previously mentioned. In addition, the important skills used in the job market were recorded, alongside the skills used by graduates in the workplace and the job.

Responses were obtained from users in schools, universities, and other sectors in the workplace to identify the key skills required for a job seeker. The following diagram illustrates this in detail. The results of the data indicated the extent of suitability of the majority of the jobs obtained by the graduates after graduation. Among the most chosen jobs for graduates is as an Arabic language teacher in various educational stages including elementary, preparatory, and secondary stages, whether governmental or private. Then, they chose to work as college professors at the higher education level, whether governmental or private. This type of job falls under the first goal in the curriculum objectives document of the department, which includes three main objectives. (Kleine et

al., 2021): (1) preparing Arabic language teachers and qualifying them, (2) designing an Arabic language teaching curriculum, (3) preparing a researcher in the field of Arabic language teaching. Unfortunately, the researchers did not find the graduates' jobs in the second and third objectives. The next job chosen by graduates' level is as employees in educational institutions, which are still in demand in the educational world. Additionally, some graduates continued their studies to the doctoral degree (2%) in various places in Tamil Nadu. These students studied the same specialization in the field of Arabic language.

Continuing studies to the doctoral level is not among the main objectives in the curriculum objectives document mentioned above, but studying at the doctoral level has an advantage in society. Only those who have stable work and economy and a strong determination in study and research reach this level. Therefore, this study is considered a substitute for work, for the rise in professional, vocational, and living standards. The researchers also found that graduates worked in the non-educational sector such as e-commerce and the private sector. The percentage of this job is very small compared to other jobs. These may have had these jobs before studying, as they were professional workers, but they completed the master's degree for the sake of knowledge and learning without thinking about the job market or searching for a job. (Herrmann et al., 2023); (Iriundo, 2022). There is a category of graduates who wrote that they do not have work in education or elsewhere. However, upon verification, it was found that they are not unemployed but rather they own institutes or have work or a job in the charity work system. Then, after following up on these data through group discussion and interviewing some users, the researchers found that 12 of them did not consider these current jobs as their main profession to rely on for their needs and spending on their families. They did this as a hobby, voluntary work, and charity, and they still need another profession to obtain money for their daily needs.

The graduates answered that work was just a secondary job. After confirmation, the researchers found that this work model is usually implemented by those who serve in Islamic education institutions that have religious schools or institutes. From the beginning, they studied there as a form of social supervision, not as a professional work form, and usually, their professional work is outside the field in the form of entrepreneurship, e-commerce, agriculture, or other work. This fact is unique and hardly exists except in the world of Islamic schools. And data proves that 88 chose teaching jobs as the main profession in their lives. The data indicated that this percentage showed that most of them found suitable work and a decent salary to meet their daily needs. If it indicates anything, it indicates that the Arabic language teaching job market in India still offers good and promising opportunities. Through group discussion, the researchers found another phenomenon, which is the phenomenon of transitioning from one job to another within or outside the field, or leaving their first field in Arabic language teaching and joining a private sector affiliated with factories. It is discovered that the main reason for this is income or salary, as the salary in the educational field in this country is still low, especially for those in private institutions. This mentioned phenomenon leads to the weakening of the graduates' desire to teach Arabic when compared to the demands of economic factors.

Another factor is the distant location of the job, so they move to work in a place close to their family, and the next factor is the tendency towards a leadership position in one of the institutions. This factor is known among employees, where if their position is elevated and they have competence, competition does not prevent them from it, and this is normal for the employee even if he leaves his first field. Such as being the school principal, he will be very involved in administrative matters and may leave his field in teaching, research, and authoring. During the questionnaire period distributed to the graduates, it was discovered that the waiting period varies from one student to another, and the efforts made to obtain these jobs also varied. The waiting period for the job and the skills used in work can be identified through the following chart:

The results of the data above show that the majority of graduates get jobs for more than 6 months and less than a year, and the second period is less than 6 months. Some graduates immediately got jobs in the same month of graduation. (Grosemans et al., 2023); (Jonbekova et al., 2021). There

are 11% of the graduates who got a job for about a year. When the researchers confirmed these data through group discussion, they found that all or most of these graduates had jobs before starting their studies, such as teachers in Quranic education institutes or teachers in schools, Arabic language trainers, or faculty members in many schools, and all these jobs are fundamental. However, upon obtaining a master's degree, the majority of students or graduates start trying their luck in getting a better job. When the researchers asked questions about their efforts to get these jobs, they found that the majority of them send job application letters no more than five times, some of them send once or twice, and some others send multiple times more than five times to get the job.

The data show that the majority of graduates work in the field of Arabic language teaching, and the rest work in related fields. However, the reason for choosing another profession should also be appreciated because they have a strong foundation in choosing these jobs, as mentioned earlier. (Kaleva et al., 2019).

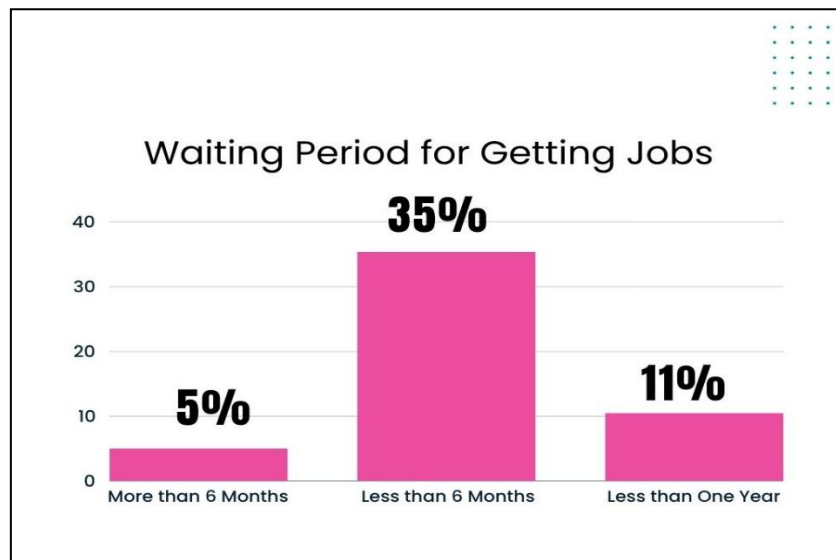


Figure 3. Waiting Period for getting job

Important skills used in the job market: In addition, the skills used by graduates in the workplace and the job were recorded. Responses were received from users in schools, colleges, and other sectors in the workplace to know the main skills required for availability in the job market. The following chart illustrates this in detail:

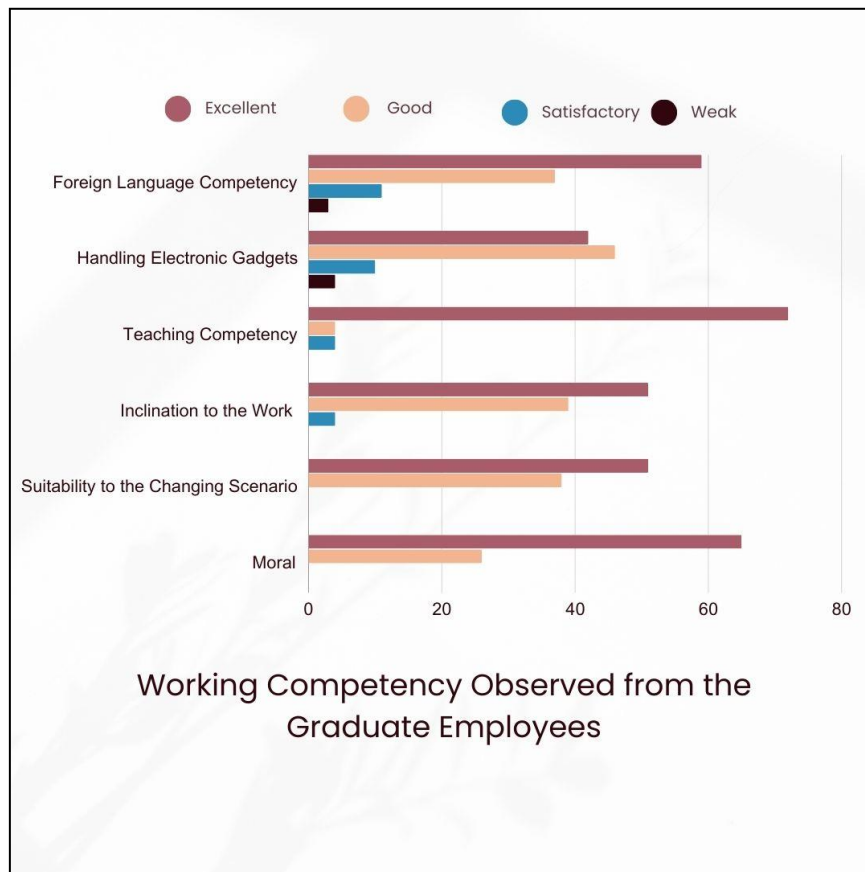


Figure 4. Working competency observed from the Graduate employees

This section indicates that there are still graduates who neglect this skill and rely on others when they need these tools because these tools cannot be excluded from both the work and education fields in general. Those tools gain skills that help in intellectual creativity and self-improvement, and it is of utmost importance that neglecting them reduces the chance of obtaining suitable work in the future. (Ali et al., 2023). Therefore, this point deserves attention, and the sixth point is the skill of foreign language. It refers to both Arabic and English languages. After confirming that the graduates do not have a problem with Arabic language skills, the weak response is in English language skills, no matter what the student specializes in teaching Arabic language and they are urgently in need of mastering English and the new world. Almost all transactions and information are in English. The department forced the students before the discussion to submit one of the Arabic or English language certificates (TOEFL TOEFL).

Curriculum suitability for the job market

This section revealed the results of the questionnaire, interview, and group discussion about the suitability of the Arabic language education curriculum at this stage with the field and job market, and the field of work consists of achieving skill and competence in that worker. These required skills and desired competence can be represented through the subjects taught through the curriculum (Golden, 2023). The data show that 85% of the studied subjects in this department are strongly related to the job market. As it is known, the subjects in this curriculum include three sections: the first section is Arabic language subjects such as Arabic language rules, Arabic language morphology, and contemporary issues about the Arabic language, the second section is educational subjects such as curriculum development and design, material and media development, evaluation, and the third section is Islamic subjects such as an introduction to Quranic and Hadith studies, Islamic philosophy, and the history of Islam (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024).

In general, these subjects are beneficial in the job market. However, an important question remains about the existence of a 15% vacancy that did not register a convincing answer. This phenomenon indicated the existence of subjects that were not relevant to the job market. The discussion resulted in a conclusion that there are desirable subjects that need to be retained and continued in this curriculum and have a strong connection to the job market, and there are undesirable subjects that should be left out as they are irrelevant to the job market. There are also suggested subjects to be included in the curriculum to face these rapid changes. These are the mentioned subjects:

Table 1: The status of academic subjects among graduates		
Desirable materials	Arabic grammar Issues about the contemporary Arabic language Analysis of Arabic language teaching texts	Preparing Arabic language teaching materials Developing means of teaching the Arabic language Developing the Arabic language teaching evaluation
Developing the Arabic language teaching curriculum		
Desirable materials	Study of the Holy Quran Study of the Prophet's hadith	History of Islamic civilization Study of Islamic philosophy
Suggested materials	Teaching the Arabic language through the electronic curriculum Designing an e- book for teaching the Arabic language Designing electronic tests for language teaching Arabic Arabic language teaching technology	Arabic video editing Developing Arabic pages to teach the Arabic language Material for data analysis such as SPSS A curriculum for teaching the eloquence of the Qur'an Arabic- English and English - Arabic translation

Figure 5. The status of academic subjects among graduates

There are written proposals in the survey distribution and proposals discussed collectively by graduates and users, summarized in three things:

1. The students must be provided with an Arabic language teaching curriculum based on technology. Because the third-millennium lifestyle requires dealing with technological devices inside or outside the Internet network. For example, when graduates are engaged in the teaching and learning process and need to use means on web pages or applications on Android that contain arts, graphics, and audiovisual recordings to deliver the lecture, they are capable of preparing, operating, and activating it in an attractive and distinguished manner in quality. This provision is very important because competitors also come from YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media platforms on the Internet. There is a graduate of this department who can speak, read, and write in Arabic but is unable to employ these modern tools for teaching the Arabic language. They know how to operate the device but do not know how to prepare and design Arabic language teaching materials.

2. Strengthening the four Arabic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing effectively. This opinion emerged from the change in teachers' trends towards focusing on and using technology in teaching more than necessary, and they may exaggerate in glorifying it, but technology is still a means of education, and content represents significant importance. Therefore, the basic skills that a teacher must possess are Arabic language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Many subjects in Android applications and web content still contain multiple linguistic and spelling errors.
3. Developing the skill of academic research and writing academic articles for publication in international journals. This skill has become important. Teachers in schools and colleges are required to conduct research, write it, and publish it in refereed journals. Authoring books published under the international book numbering system is not sufficient for academic advancement in the Ministry of Education, Government of India. The user wanted these teachers to make a prominent contribution to the improvement of the institution under the national measurement system.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the majority of Arabic language graduates from The New College, Chennai, are successfully employed in teaching roles across various public and private schools, with some also securing positions as lecturers in private institutions. This aligns with the Human Capital Theory, which posits that education enhances the skills and competencies of individuals, thereby increasing their employability and economic value in the labor market. However, the absence of graduates in research and supervisory roles points to a gap in the curriculum's ability to equip students for diverse career pathways beyond teaching. Furthermore, the positive reception of these graduates by their employers indicates that their skills in linguistic and pedagogical methods are well-suited to the current demands of the job market. This finding echoes the Skill Mismatch Theory, which highlights the importance of aligning educational outcomes with labor market needs. Graduates' ability to adapt to the digital age also confirms the relevance of their training in the context of technological advancements, reinforcing the need for continued curriculum updates to keep pace with the rapid changes in the job market. Nevertheless, the study also found that the master's level curriculum at the Arabic Language department requires further modifications to address the challenges posed by the digital era. Theories like the Technological Determinism Theory suggest that technological advancements drive societal and educational changes, making it imperative for curricula to incorporate technology-based education. This is supported by findings from similar studies, such as Asrina and Sihombing (2019), which stress the need to develop language proficiency and digital literacy to meet the evolving demands of both the job market and academia. The study thus recommends retaining core linguistic subjects while introducing new courses focused on technology, research skills, and academic writing for national and international publication, ensuring graduates are prepared for a broader range of career opportunities.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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