

# The Impact of Language Policy on Private Arabic Schools (Gansu Province, China)

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## Abstract

Private Arabic language schools, also known as China-Arab schools, are a new form of education for Hui people everywhere since the reform and opening up. Modern education methods, on the one hand to popularize the knowledge of national religion, on the other hand to teach basic knowledge, Chinese and Arabic are taught at the same time, to cultivate the knowledge of Islamic culture, and have the development of all aspects of the compound talents. Although this form of education emerged after the reform and opening up, its root is the continuation and improvement of traditional Jing tang education and modern Hui education. In the past, researchers only focused on the development history of private schools and studied Hui education and teaching in private schools, while ignoring the impact of language policy on private Arabic schools. The purpose of the research is to understand the impact of language policy on private Arabic schools, and the researchers aim to fill in the gap in this field. The analysis is completed through historical data and interviews.

## Key words

Language policy, private schools, Arabic, influence

## 1. Text

"The late scholar Feng Zenglie believes that the Hui education in history was basically carried out in three forms: first, the Arab model of education; Second, Chinese-style education; Third, it is the intersection of these two kinds of education. Although the forms of division are different, they both affirm that the Hui education started from the formation of the Hui nationality, that is, the initial Islamic education existed in the ancestral period of the Hui nationality"<sup>1</sup>.

In the previous question, the author analyzed the Jing tang education in the Ming Dynasty. The most important thing in the reform of Jing tang education in the Ming Dynasty was to attach importance to the education of Chinese. In terms of the core content of modern education, it was based on the religious culture of Islam while taking into account modern cultural knowledge, which reflected the characteristics of the teaching of Chinese and Arabic at the same time, and the teaching was more rational and Chinese. From the perspective of education, general education is still the first choice, and then other education makes the second choice. In fact, this kind of education is related to national policies and interacts with local general education. This

<sup>1</sup> Gao Zhanfu, 2004, The Development of Hui Islamic Education, New Yue hua, P1

interaction of education reflects that education is a two-way choice behavior between people and society. The geographical environment, social condition and people's political and economic life of the Hui Islamic culture and education are related to a certain extent.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, schools with ethnic characteristics were changed into ordinary schools, and the training of ethnic talents was incorporated into the national education system. Children of Muslims and other ethnic groups were able to receive education equally, which played a huge role in improving the knowledge of Han culture of Hui Muslims and the overall national quality. The requirement of social education and the claim of separation of religion and state require that religious courses should not be offered in ordinary schools. There are almost no ethnic special courses in national general education. However, such progress of social development and national development is distorted due to the influence of religious policies, so Muslims lose the opportunity to learn Islamic culture. "Against this background, our education, especially foreign language education including Arabic, has been at a standstill"<sup>2</sup>. "Arabic majors in every university are suffering, the teachers were criticized and teaching is at a standstill"<sup>3</sup>. "After the transition phase of the implementation of religious policies in the 1980s, the

state allowed normal religious activities, and people's religious enthusiasm was released, which can be seen as a rebound against the repression of Buddhism"<sup>4</sup>. With the deepening of reform and opening up, the development of market economy and the gradual acceleration of social modernization, people's religious ideas and religious behavior have formed a strong impact. The rapid development of market economy also challenges people's daily communication and religious practices, On the one hand, economic development forces people to be busy making money, on the other hand, because of the cultural revolution, people were afraid of religious practices.

Therefore, cultural inheritance is carried out among religious staff, which seriously hinders the function of cultural communication in the mosque community, changes the close ties and traditional channels of communication among Muslims, weakens the function of cultural communication in the mosque, and adds more economic factors to the interpersonal communication, It is very common for the consciousness of religious belief to be weakened, and young people ignore faith. Some even give up faith altogether. Many families who used to follow Islam in the past, busy with their personal or family life in the competition of market economy, find it difficult to fulfill the tasks and requirements of religion as before.

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<sup>2</sup> Chen Hejuan, 2015, An Analysis of the development of Chinese Arabic education ,

Statistics and management, P136

<sup>3</sup> Zhou Lie, 2010, Arabic Teaching and Research in New China, West Asia and Africa, P60

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"The transformation of Arabic education from traditional jing tang education to new schools is a

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<sup>4</sup> He Qimin, 2006, The Choice of ethnic education -- Hui Arabic Schools as an example, Research on ethnic religious Issues in contemporary China, P245

great progress in the field of Arabic education in Gansu Province, and also a historic transformation, which is of great significance in the history of the development of Arabic education"<sup>5</sup>. After the reform and opening up, great changes have taken place in the economy and society of Gansu Province, and the production and living conditions of the people of all ethnic groups have been significantly improved. The Muslim people have generally accepted the national compulsory education, and their cultural quality has been rapidly improved. At the same time, they are very enthusiastic about learning Islamic traditional culture, especially Arabic, and the traditional jing tang education can no longer meet the needs of the Muslim people.

"If the backlash is seen as the beginning of the rise of Arabic-language schools in the 1980s, then the real enthusiasm for opening Arabic-language schools came after the reform"<sup>6</sup>. Since the implementation of the national policy of reform and opening up, private Arabic schools have been set up one after another in minority areas of our country. Schools with a scale and influence are as follows: Linxia Foreign Language School of Gansu Province, Kaiyuan Arabic School of Yunnan Province, Najiaying Arabic School of Tonghai County of Yunnan Province, Xi 'an Dabiyuan Arabic School of Shaanxi Province, Changge Baizhai Arabic School of Henan Province, Changzhi Arabic School of Shanxi Province, etc. The teaching scale and teaching level of Arabic language schools are different in different regions, but they are

basically similar in the form, purpose and teaching content of schools. "Develop ethnic education, cultivate ethnic talents, revitalize ethnic culture and improve ethnic quality"<sup>7</sup>. It is a private education in nature and approved by the education department of the government. Its purpose is to carry forward the national cultural tradition and serve the reform and opening up as well as economic development. The core purpose of teaching is to cultivate a large number of translation talents, with Chinese, Arabic, English<sup>8</sup>, politics and sports as the main, and basic knowledge of Islamic culture as the secondary.

"In the first half of the 20th century, the Arabic language education in China has successfully stepped out of the narrow scope of the traditional Confucian education, making the Arabic language education take a big step forward in facing the society"<sup>9</sup>. "Independent Arabic language schools, currently characterized primarily by language and vocational technical education, in addition to learning the language, basic Islamic faith courses are incorporating"<sup>10</sup>. In 1977, Linxia Foreign Language

<sup>5</sup> Xu Yanqing, 2015, The History and Current Situation of Arabic Teaching in Gansu Province, Youth and Society, P153

<sup>6</sup> He Qimin,, P245

<sup>7</sup> Linxia Chinese- Arab School, Gansu, China, July 2005, p. 4

<sup>8</sup> Ma Bin, 2023, Historical Linguistics And Economic Perspectives Of The Arabic Language In Gansu Province, China, Thesis Submitted For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy (Ukm), P150, Footnote number 240 (47)

<sup>9</sup> Xu Yanqing, P153

<sup>10</sup> Ma Qiang, 2015, Reflection on Islamic

School was founded in very primitive conditions. After a period of difficult and tortuous development, it gradually formed an Arabic language school with independent teaching buildings, library, computer room, student canteen, shower room, stadium and other teaching facilities. The courses offered mainly include language, religion and cultural knowledge, and the learning time is 3 to 5 years. The language courses are mainly Arabic, English<sup>11</sup> and Chinese, including grammar, reading, writing and translation. Religion is mainly about Sharia, Quran, hadith and other aspects of the course; Culture includes Chinese and foreign history, ideology and politics, legal knowledge and so on. In terms of Arabic teaching, most of the teaching materials of Arabic majors in colleges and universities are used, especially Arabic Language and Basic Arabic Grammar by Beijing Foreign Studies University and Arabic Course by Shanghai International Studies University. Some schools also use some middle school textbooks from Arab countries as reference or supplement.

In March 1979, the Ministry of Education issued the "Several Suggestions on Strengthening Foreign Language Education" proposed by the National Conference on Foreign Language Education, which clearly pointed out that, according to the needs of realizing the tasks in the new era and summarizing the experience of developing foreign language education for 28 years, the general requirements for foreign language education in the future period are as follows: While improving the quality of foreign language education, grasping the basic education and doing well in professional foreign language education

Education of Hui People, Newspaper of North University for Nationalities, P83

<sup>11</sup> Ma Bin, P150, Footnote number 243 (47)

in high-level schools and public foreign language education, various forms of amateur foreign language education are implemented, and specific requirements are put forward for the layout of foreign language education, college construction, teacher training, textbook compilation and other aspects<sup>12</sup>. The implementation of the language policy and the establishment of Linxia Foreign Language School have the following impacts on private Arabic in Gansu Province:

First, "In accordance with the provisions of the" Regulations on the Implementation of the Law on the Promotion of Private Education of the People's Republic of China ", comprehensively implement the educational policies of the Communist Party of China, strive to practice the important thought of "Three Represents"<sup>13</sup>", comprehensively implement quality education, and implement the spirit of the Law on the Promotion of Private Education. From the ancient unofficial Arabic teaching to the founding of the People's Republic of China, Arabic teaching has been unofficial teaching. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, foreign language education has received the attention of the official education department. First, it is to teach Chinese and Arabic at the same time, and second, it is to adhere to the correct teaching direction, firmly establish the

<sup>12</sup> Fu Ke, 2004, History of Foreign Language Education in China, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press

<sup>13</sup> The Communist Party of China must always represent the development requirements of China's advanced productive forces, the trend of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. (Three Represents)

awareness of quality, characteristics and innovation, and actively build a harmonious society. To develop the economy and improve services, to serve the promotion of employment and re-employment, to serve agriculture, rural areas and farmers, and to promote the development of the western region. At the same time, to provide opportunities for the vast number of aspiring young people who have dropped out of school or are unemployed to return to school, and to train idealistic and moral foreign language professionals for the country. Because of their natural affinity for Arabic and Persian, the Hui people have special talents and wisdom. The strengthening of guidance and training in Arabic schools will be of great benefit to our foreign exchanges and the transportation of high-level language talents for universities. The establishment of private schools with rich teaching contents and the comprehensive implementation of quality-oriented education are inseparable from the important influence of the national language policy. The school emphasizes the teaching of Chinese, Arabic and English at the same time, which is the first time in the history of Chinese school education. It is also close to the international high-level university and strengthens the foundation for cultivating high-level students.<sup>14</sup>

Second, "Teachers in China-Arab schools are very weak in the early stage"<sup>15</sup>. In the early days of Chinese and Arab schools, the teachers were very weak. The main difficulties faced by the schools were funding and teachers. Arabic and religion courses

were mainly taught by some mosque staff, the founder of the school, Ma Zhixin, was himself a mosque staff, while other courses were taught by teachers from local middle schools or normal schools. After the reform and opening up, with the increasingly close economic and cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries, in addition to the universities opened after the founding of the People's Republic of China, private Arabic schools have been set up in Gansu, Yunnan, Henan, Shanxi and Ningxia Autonomous regions, all of which have a certain teaching scale. At the same time, "the upsurge of studying abroad after the reform and opening up has played an important role in promoting the long-term development of Arabic teaching in contemporary China"<sup>16</sup>. "They mainly study Arabic, religious principles and teaching law in religious universities, language institutes and comprehensive universities in Arab and Islamic countries. Some students who have a solid foundation in Chinese language and literature, or have received systematic sutra education in China, or have basic knowledge of Chinese, English and Arabic have made contributions to Islamic research and teaching after returning to China"<sup>17</sup>. Since the 1990s, under the influence of the implementation of the language policy, after the establishment of the school, the students who graduated from the foreign language school in the early stage and the outstanding students who studied abroad later returned to the school with the feeling of serving

<sup>14</sup> Ma Bin, P152, Footnote number 246 (53、 55、 59)

<sup>15</sup> Ding Jun, 2013, History of Arabic Education in China, China Social Sciences Press, P104

<sup>16</sup> Ding Jun, 2004, The Contribution of Hui Muslims to Arabic Teaching in China, Newspaper of Northwest University for Nationalities, P24

<sup>17</sup> Ma Qiang, P84

their Alma mater and began to participate in the teaching work. The faculty has been strengthened and relieved to a certain extent, under the premise of focusing on teaching, Teachers are also encouraged to actively engage in academic research in teaching and translation, and the China-Arab Schools Journal is published internally to publish teachers' teaching experiences and students' translation exercises. "I have no survey, can only talk about a hope: to strengthen the construction of teachers"<sup>18</sup>. Through policies to encourage teachers to continue their studies, they have been awarded higher certificates of study. The classical Arabic philosophy classic "Almuhadhib min ahya ulwm aldyn"<sup>19</sup> translated by young teachers of this school has been included in the World Religious and Cultural Classics series published by the Commercial Press. Some teachers have also published papers on teaching research in journals such as The Arab World and Hui Studies. By publishing high-level articles and achieving research results in teaching, the government requires teachers to have a bachelor's degree, and policies encourage teachers to continue learning, so as to fundamentally solve the phenomenon of weak teacher teams.<sup>20</sup>

Third, "The development of the new type of partnership between China and Arab States indicates the growing demand for Arabic language talents. Premier Wen Jiabao put forward in the article «Education is the Foundation of a Century Plan» that

<sup>18</sup> Zhu Weilie, 2009, New China Arabic Professional View, Arab World Studies, P7

<sup>19</sup> 圣学复苏精义, 2001 年

<sup>20</sup> Ma Bin, P153, Footnote number 252 (3, 41, 23, 69, 2, 67)

the teaching scale of universities is not important, but should have teaching characteristics"<sup>21</sup>. Over the years, many students have graduated from Linxia Foreign Language School, some have gone abroad to study, some have gone to Peking University, Beijing Foreign Studies University and other universities to study Arabic. Some students have been recruited by Chinese construction companies as translators, and some students have worked as translators or shopping guides in Guangzhou, Yiwu<sup>22</sup> and other places. In the past few years, the teaching content was economics and trade and business Arabic. In recent years, the teaching content is e-commerce. The teachers and students of the Arabic school have played an important role, which has far-reaching influence. It has also attracted the attention of many news media. For example, the local carpet factory has sold a large number of products with ethnic characteristics to the Middle East and achieved good sales performance. For example, on November 21, 1992, Gansu Daily published a special report on Linxia Foreign Language School with the title of "Hezhou Goes to the Middle East". At the same time, it also distributed a large number of pictures reflecting the school's educational activities. On July 12, 2021, according to a special report of Linxia TV Station, the main leaders of Linxia held a farewell ceremony for the graduates of Linxia Foreign Language School to work in Yiwu. With the expansion of social demand, employment demand, rapid economic development, the implementation of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the demand for translators has increased. The state has issued

<sup>21</sup> Zhu Weilie, P7

<sup>22</sup> Yiwu City of Zhejiang Province is located in eastern China, is a small commodity distribution center, the economy is highly developed.

policies to expand the scale of student training, universities have expanded the scale of enrollment, and expanded the policy of continuing education. The scope of students for continuing study in schools has continued to expand, to some extent easing the demand for foreign language talents.<sup>23</sup>

Fourth, in 2007, after several inspections and guidance by the education department of Linxia City, we adjusted the courses in accordance with national policies and applied to the Education Bureau of Linxia City for approval according to the development of the situation, which approved the name change to Linxia Foreign Language School in accordance with the Private Education Promotion Law. The change of the school's name reflects a richer and more professional curriculum, and reflects the increase of the school's characteristic courses, such as economics and trade, architectural engineering, newspapers and magazines, and Arabic media. The characteristic courses are set up according to the syllabus of the education department, submitted by the school and approved by the education department, and are taught in an orderly and rigorous manner, with the aim of promoting economic development and meeting social needs. Cultivate high-level inter-disciplinary talents. The increase of featured courses requires teachers to constantly update teaching methods, teachers actively use electronic screen, PPT, Word and other effective teaching methods, in the past, teachers wrote by hand, students had no interest in learning and teachers had no interest in teaching, unable to expand the scope of knowledge, unable to master the teaching content.

Of course, when facing the teaching of characteristic

<sup>23</sup> Ma Bin, P154, Footnote number 255 (27、2  
、45、77、41)

courses, young teachers have more opportunities to develop, while older teachers are not proficient in computers and the Internet. In terms of professional teaching, the teachers has no difficulty in teaching, because the teachers are proficient in oral English, most of the teachers have many years of teaching experience and foreign study background. However, when teachers face the main challenge of a featured curriculum is that some students are weak in writing and cultural foundation, which requires teachers to keep practicing and explaining. Foreign language School attaches great importance to training high-level composite talents, and provides more employment opportunities and development space for outstanding students in the future, the school enriches and changes the curriculum content, attaches importance to the teaching content in the aspect of student training, and changes the curriculum content in time through the submission of the teaching laboratory, the research of the committee and the decision of the Teaching Office.<sup>24</sup>

Fifth, "Linxia Foreign Language School implements the principal responsibility system under the leadership of the board of directors"<sup>25</sup>. At the present stage, the operating fund of the school consists of three parts: social donations, government support and student tuition fees. In the early stage, students were admitted free of charge. With the development of the market economy, the school began to charge fees. Since 2013, "Measures for the Management of Tuition Free Subsidy Funds for Secondary Vocational

<sup>24</sup> Ma Bin, P155, Footnote number 256 (75  
、77、45、83、37、41、43、39、79、51  
、23、13、81、85、49、51)

<sup>25</sup> Xu Yanqing, P153

Schools"<sup>26</sup> has been implemented, and the national education policy has begun to attach importance to the development of secondary vocational education, with the government providing full subsidy funds. There is no doubt that free study is a kind of welfare for students from poor families and ordinary students. The implementation of this policy has the following impacts on schools: first, it alleviates the financial difficulties faced by foreign language schools, alleviates the difficulties in enrollment and teaching; second, give those students who can't go to secondary school or university for various reasons a chance to continue their studies.

One third of the students in Linxia Foreign Language School come from local and two thirds from other places. Most of the students are from poor families and cannot continue their studies due to economic reasons. The implementation of the policy can enable students to continue their studies. On the other hand, these students should be prevented from flowing into the society at an early stage. There is no stable occupation, which will bring instability to the society. At the same time, the state's financial support for the school can ease the school's difficulties. The school can use the social funds raised to help students in areas with poor economic conditions. The Arabic school will reduce or reduce their tuition fees and subsidize their life, which reflects the idea of Islamic relief and assistance from one aspect. In the early stage, the school received social funds from the board of directors, and in 2013, it received financial support from the state, which alleviated the financial

difficulties of the school to some extent. "to meet the needs of minority areas to learn about Islamic culture"<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, it reflects the moral influence of Islam, Arabic schools strengthen the belief of ordinary Hui youth, and objectively play a role of moral purification for the society, the rules of Islam on personal life of Muslims, such as the emphasis on not smoking, not drinking, not gambling, and abiding by the law, are in line with the moral standards of a good society, such as: "To be a qualified Muslim is to be a good citizen." Today, when we guide religion to adapt to socialism, under the theme of promoting a harmonious society, the moral purification function of religion to the society is well reflected through the Islamic culture education in Arabic schools.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Conclusion

The establishment of private Arabic schools cannot be separated from the promotion of language policies, whether it is the lack of national courses in general education, the decline of Hui Islamic culture, weak faith, cultural protection and other self-help behaviors. Without the influence of language policy, so many external influences cannot solve the core problems of Muslims at all. It is precisely because of the implementation of national language policy after the reform and opening up, and the urgent need of Muslims for a way of education that the establishment of foreign language schools is prompted. Through the implementation of a series of policies after the establishment of the school, the school timely adjusts its curriculum. The innovation

<sup>26</sup> 2013 年 6 月 3 日, 财政部、教育部、人力资源社会保障部以〔2013〕84 号印发。该《办法》共 15 条, 自 2013 年 7 月 1 日起施行。

<sup>27</sup> Zhou Lie, P8

<sup>28</sup> Ma Bin, P157, Footnote number 260 (65, 59, 61, 31)



of teaching, the support of state funds, the expansion of teaching scale, the continuous learning of students, and the promotion of teachers' education background through policies had a profound impact on the improvement of the quality of the Muslim community and social stability.

### 3. Research method

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of Chinese language policy on private Arabic schools in Gansu Province, to provide information about the study sample and to analyze the historical data obtained from the study sample. The research design used in this paper is the face-to-face interview and historical data research methods of qualitative research, in order to verify the validity of the research. Therefore, in this study, researchers used historical data research and interdisciplinary research methods to complete the research within the framework of the impact of language policy on private Arabic schools.

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