



 Research Article

HOW TO UPLIFT THE EDUCATION SYSEYM OF ALMAJIRI IN THE NORTHERN PART OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Almajiri issue is a term with cultural or religious undertone. The Almajiri is with many problems. There is need to involve the traditional and religious leaders for guidance, counseling and implementation of proper laws to improve Almajiri education.

KEYWORDS

Almajiri, Education, Uplift Part , Nigeria , System , Northern .

INTRODUCTION

Muhammad received an inspiration from God that he was appointed as a prophet, sent to convey the word of God. The pagans did not give him a good place to preach and teach. His disciples were attacked and killed. He fled to Medina with his disciples and continued teaching. At the time, people who sat round the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to learn were called 'Almuhajirun' which means emigrants.

These were people that went to Medina because of the opposition in Mecca. This revealed the significance of knowledge seeking in Islam. Those Almajiri schools are very important as they try to impart knowledge on the Almajiri Muslim child. Almajiri is a Hausa word derived from Arabic word Almuhajir. Almajiri refers to a person (mostly child) who left his home to attend an Islamic boarding school to learn Islamic knowledge. The



Almajiri abandoned his home for many months or years in the course of study. It is a predominant system of Islamic education among Muslims in Northern Nigeria and other nearby countries such as Niger Republic, Chad, Ghana, etc. It is an ancient practice and has been successful over the years with the support of government and wealthy people. But presently, because of shift of support to the western education, the government and people left the system to languish. The Almajiri schools are now in deplorable conditions, likewise the teachers and students (Almajiri). Children of 4 and above years are allowed to seek for living and study through begging and other forms of labour. Thus, they are vulnerable to abuses. The present problems of Almajiri are in contrary to the Islamic teaching and principles. Islam gives children the rights to health and be nurtured in a very good environment and manner. They have the right to be educated in a socially acceptable fashion. It is well-known that, in the past, male children were taken to areas other than their birth places and they stayed for years under the care of a scholar who fed and clothed them as they acquired Qur'anic knowledge. This shows the institution was an organized boarding school system. Today, the system is devastating; the Almajiri has to sleep on the bare floor in the school or street. The Almajiri is not properly fed and clothed as it was in the past, but he has to engage in various odd labours like begging, domestic work and street work.

The schools have no organized boarding facilities, even though it has in the past boarded the Almajiri with a much better boarding condition than it is presently. The payment of school fees, and scholars is done based on the individual Mallams discretion, therefore; the school and its runners (including the students) depend on some bountiful givers of alms in the form of clothes, food and money; for both the Mallam and the Almajiri. The condition that guides the Traditional Quranic

Schools has made the boys weak and vulnerable to abuse by many. They are also denied of years of constant emotional and physical contact with their families, which affect them psychologically; leaving them at the mercy of the negative minds of the society.

The importance of education in an individual's life cannot be overemphasized in achieving an organized society. Thus, the orderliness and stability of society are predicated on the premium placed on its educational system. This is why the philosophy of education emphasizes the pursuit of rational as well as the moral development of humans that will ultimately lead to the betterment of society. It has been established in Article 24 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "everyone has the right to education". Globally, one of the indices of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the provision of "quality education", and it is ranked as number four in the "Envision 2030" document. Therefore, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has also included the right to education in its 1999 Constitution with an emphasis that "Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities" for all and sundry. To achieve the objective of providing equal and adequate educational opportunities, the government in Nigeria has made several attempts to grant and expand access to education. The attempts include the implementation of the 2004 education policy, which underscores the right of every Nigerian child to have full access to quality education. The access, according to the policy, is to make it possible for everyone who is entitled to education to receive it

The Almajiri educational system is also aimed at addressing the rising number of out-of-school children, which is now more than 13 million, with ten northern states accounting for eight million of those children.



Therefore, Almajiri education is a special intervention to stem the tide of the lingering menace of Almajiri culture or syndrome in Northern Nigeria that is now being rightly described as a "time bomb". It is a special education system that is designed to provide quality and accessible education for all categories of children including orphans, children from the low-income earning family, children from the socio-economic and ethnic minorities, and children from broken homes in the northern states of Nigeria. Its introduction is to cater to the educational needs of over 9.5 million Almajiri children who accounted for 72 percent of Nigeria's 13.2 million out-of-school children, It is to imperative implement to the Nigerian Child Right Act, which enjoins that: "Education is the birth right of every Nigerian child, and should be brought close to the environment of 13 Education and Information Technologies the child". As it is entrenched in the Act that established the Almajiri education, signed into law in 2012, the main objective of the Almajiri schools is to ensure that Almajiris are provided with opportunities for access to Basic Education. These are some of the concerns about the Almajiri. Thus, the objectives of this paper were to determine the ways for improving the Almajiri education in Northern Nigeria.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIVING CONDITION OF THE ALMAJIRI

The Almajiri are children living under a horrific condition, few of them do not know their homes or who their parents are as they are left early in life. These children had no option than to follow other group of children that came their way. These groups of children are normally under a teacher (mallam) who is vast in the Islamic knowledge. In the mornings, they are seen following a bean cake (kosai/ food) seller who approaches a buyer to buy her food and distribute it as sadakah (gift offering) to these children. In most cases

these children population is large and their mallam (teacher) will have no option than to send them out to beg. They have no choice on what they eat, they do not care about the nature of the food cooked, fresh or stale and it can be picked from anywhere. From their appearance too they rarely take their bath. They are growing in geometrical progression a population too large for individuals to handle; this has led the Quranic education system into a modern form of slavery and unimaginable child abuse.

NEGLIGENCE BY THE GOVERNMENT

Report has it that, there are more than 10 million Almajiris on the streets of northern Nigeria, without formal education and invariably going to face a problem to the nation now or soon in the future. The government and people of the north have left this situation to persist untamed. Today, a huge problem has been created and has even gained international recognition and support. Unfortunately a monster when created and perfected, it will never know its creator or victims, it destroys whatever comes its way.

SUSTAINING THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The Almajiri education system is an integration of western education with the traditional Quranic School systems without interfering with the goals of the latter. It is a special education system, which aims at strengthening the ability of the learners to read, write, and memorize the Qur'an in conducive learning environments. At the same time, it aims at introducing secular subjects of education into Qur'anic school system to make the products of the system literate, numerate, and skilful as a way of meeting the goals of Education For All (EFA). In other words, it incorporates elements of basic education (literacy, numeracy, and life skills of the western type of education) into the traditional Qur'anic school system through certain



strategic frameworks. Many state governments in Northern Nigeria had, indeed, begun the operation of the Almajiri education system, adopting different models to achieve its objectives. For instance, about 117 Model One Almajiri schools that integrate western education with Quranic education are in operation across 26 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Also, 138 schools in 30 states and the FCT are already adopting Model III of the Almajiri system, retaining the Islamiyya and Arabic training in a more formal environment provided through government intervention funds. On the 10th of April, 2012, the president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan open a new dawn by formally undertaking a pragmatic move towards the rehabilitating of the Almajiri schools in Nigeria. He tried to integrate the Almajiri school into the formal school system. This is a welcome development as the population of abandoned and underfeed children roaming about our streets will be given a transformed future. tate, brought the actualization of the age long dream of the Almajiri modern. The president declared that this programme will engulf 9.5 million Almajiri population across the Northern states. He added also that the school would provide the children with a conventional quality education as envisaged under his administrations education policy thrust.

The previous education scheme or programme failed due to factors such as poor planning; lack financial support, mismanagement of resources allocated to such programmes; changes in Government; inconsistency on the part of policy makers and implementation; lack of monitoring and evaluate mechanism as well as supervision. Noteworthy, various state and local governments over the years have not paid any attention to this group of-out-of school children in spite of the explicit provisions of the

National Policy on Education and the Universal Basic Education Act).

Education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and value from one generation to another, e.g. instruction in schools.' The above definition clearly portrays education as an activity that is functional within the life of a nation or people. In other terms, education as a systematic course of instruction, giving intellectual and moral training to persons, bringing up of the young, helping the young to develop, to lead out the best in him to evolve an integral personality. The integration of the Almajiri education into the formal school system is on its way to fulfill the above definition and views on education. Almajiri integrated schools (Almajiri schools) give the children the opportunity to learn modern skills such as basic Arithmetic and English language which they would need to function in the wider world; since the Almajiri system was designed to build in young minds, sounds doctrine of Islam as specified in the holy Quran. Essentially, it was meant to teach children basic spiritual, moral and social value in order to enhance their sense of responsibility. It was also meant to inculcate in them the value of caring for those in need. Unfortunately, these esteemed goals have been defeated over the years in many cases because of sheer negligence of government and the society. From the above view, a modern Almajiri school system will complement the existing local structure of the Islamic Almajiri education. The pupils will have the opportunity of having a broaden outlook and exposure to life, its values, awareness and respect to other peoples culture and tradition. It will enhance the development of their Psychic to tolerate others and their different religions. It will serve as a ground for the correction of wrong indoctrination and manipulation. These modern Almajiri schools will be a grooming ground for the

training and making of future Nigerian political leaders, engineer, doctors, lawyers, teachers and expert in all other field of human endeavours. Educated and enlightened citizen are easy to rule and govern because they would realize and appreciate the effort of the government and make meaningful contributions to assist her. In a tranquil atmosphere, people will develop their abilities, potentials and express freely the creativity in them. If the issue of these nearly ten million Almajiris, whose population continues to grow, is adequately addressed our country will witness a positive and prosperous transformation. However, the government should be mindful of their responsibilities to other children in the other parts of the country, as the neglect of one part will give rise to more pandemonium being presently experienced in the country.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the sections above the results of literature review was shown. At this section the results for qualitative exploratory study was revealed underneath.

1. An interview Malam said" If I were a traditional rulers, I will just start to detain the Almajiri till when their parents arrived I will detan them. Because, why can you bring your child to search for food or knowledge?. Some of them (Almajiri) are very young, they cannot even wash for themselves. Can you remember the God Almighty will grill you about custodianship of your child?. Why can you give birth to a child and failed to cater for him. If you want him educated, you need to take him to school and all he wanted shall be brought. You should not release him.

When you brought money from your pocket to buy something, about three Almajiri students or more will appear begging for money to buy food. This is

mercilessness of parents. During farming season the parents take their Almajiri child to their houses to farm for them, but when the stored their harvested food they immediately send the kids back to cities and towns to beg. The kids can become are boys when they grow or another catastrophe to the society"

How can we solve the issue?

" Two things are utilized. A rule should be put by the traditional rulers to compel the Almajiri teachers to only accept children when all they needed is brought by the parents. Parents have to visiting their wards frequently." " Otherwise, whosoever breach the rule should be imprisoned"

2. A class focused group discussion carried out at an Islamiyya school leading to the following findings:

What can you say about Almajiri?

" It has a problem"

What are it's problems?

" Lack of food, lack of shelter, lack of tidiness"

What are ways to solve the problem?

3. Focus group discussion at Islamiyya shows the following:

" Almajiri are not attending prayers appropriately, because they are wallowing in begging, or at market.

They received less care

They are untidy

They care not about their religion

They care not about their food. Whether steal to eat or not or they beg to eat. If the Almajiri failed to get food,

they usually engaged in stealing. They (Almajiri) used to still food at homes.

It is pertinent that Almajiri shall be treated equally like boarding students (at Western Schools). They should be treated with enough food, shelter, care and everything"

How can we solve the problem?

" The parents should be admonished/ warned to brought all their Almajiri kids need at Schools, whenever they are taking them to Malama".

Who should warn them?

" The Almajiri teachers, traditional rulers, and Malaman Zaire".

The results of the interviews revealed that Almajiri are uncatered at schools due to the negligence of parents, teachers, community and the governments. Similarly, many studies in the past had reported the bad states of Almajiri .The suggestions to control Almajiri are through utilization of laws enacted by traditional rulers in their domains. They laws should be fully implemented.

Focus group discussions analysis shows that Almajiri has problems to the kids and the society. The children looks untidy, food insecure. They are without good enough shelter. Showing that the receive less care from their parents and Malams and even the public. Their vulnerable nature make them potential recruits into many bad behaviours. To mend the Almajiri problem, parents should brought all the needs of their wards like the culture of western boarding schools. The teachers and parents should be admonished by the traditional chiefs.

CONCLUSION

The Almajiri issue is a term with cultural or religious undertone. The Almajiri is with many problems. There is need to involve the traditional and religious leaders for guidance, counseling and implementation of proper laws to improve Almajiri education.

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