

Problems and Prospects of Almajiri Integration Programme in North West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The term *Almajiri* in Nigeria is used to describe those children or youths who left their hometowns in search for Islamic education. Unlike pre-colonial Nigeria, the *Almajiri* system of education flourished and recorded exceptional accomplishment in literacy and social services, but today the system is faced with a myriad of challenges with glaring abnormalities. The aim of this study was, therefore, to conduct an empirical inquiry into the problems and prospects of the integration programme in North West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. A total of 240 *Almajiris*/pupils and 60 *mallams*/teachers responded to questionnaires designed for the study, while 33 community leaders and school heads were interviewed. The study reveals that authorities are performing below expectations in the area of education, which hinders the achievements of quality education for Nigerian *Almajiris*. Shortage of qualified teachers in some schools and inadequate numbers of *Almajiri* integrated schools in North West Nigeria were also recorded. The researchers further discovered that the government is not consistent in its policies and programmes there were a lot of irregularities and corrupt practices in institutionalized education, including the Almajiri Integrated Programme. It is therefore, recommended that the government should be consistent in its policy and programmes for the betterment of its citizens. Authorities' approach to quality education should be centred on the eradication of corrupt practices. Almajiri Integrated Programme should be handled as introduced by president Goodluck's Administration.

Key words: Problems, Prospects, Almajiri, Integration Programme

INTRODUCTION

Almajiri as Hausa concept, which was coined from the Arabic, word "*Muhajirun*", meaning an emigrant. It is widely used to refer to people who migrate from their homes mostly living behind all their luxuries to far-way places in search for safety, knowledge or religious freedom. The term *Almajiri* in Nigeria is used to describe those children or youths who left their hometowns in search for Islamic education. According to Abdulqadir (2003), this system started in the 11th century because of the involvement of Borno rulers in Qur'anic literacy. Over seven hundred years later, the Sokoto caliphate was founded principally through an Islamic revolution based on the teaching of the holy Qur'an. These two empires ran similar Qur'anic learning systems that over time came to be known as the *Almajiri* system. The *Almajiri* system of education during the pre-colonial era, the pupils lived with their parents for moral upbringing. All the schools were located within the immediate environment from where the pupils came. The Danfodiyo's revolution brought with it some modifications like, the establishment of an inspectorate of Qur'anic literacy. The inspectors reported directly to the emirs of the provinces, concerning all matters relating

to the schools. This was seen to be the height of Qur'anic education in northern Nigeria. The schools were maintained by the state, communities, the parents, *zakkah* (aims giving), *waqf* (charity) and supplemented by the teachers and students (Abdulqadir, 2003).

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Unlike pre-colonial Nigeria, when the *Almajiri* system of education flourished and recorded exceptional accomplishment in literacy and social services, the system is today faced with myriad of challenges and glaring abnormalities. Since the live wires that used to be the sources of funding and morale booster for the scheme are late and incapacitated, the proprietors of *Makaranta Alo* (local *Madrasah*) and their pupils were left on "to whom it may concern". Shittu and Olaofe (2015) reported that, 6 out of 10 of the *Almajiri* pupils never find their way back home. Many lose their lives through street violence, ritual killing, kidnapping, disease and hunger. Those who are able to survive the harsh condition are subjected to exhaust most of the profitable hours of learning on the streets in the name of eking out a living, while majority of them eventually drop out at the long run. They added that,

instead of being brought up, they grow up like wild grass and miss all grounds educationally, morally and, above all, religiously. It is on record that the current insurgency in Nigeria and some neighboring countries handily recruit their foot soldiers from the *Almajiri* schools after brainwashing them that the Western system of education is a sin. Through this loophole, the future workforce of the nation that is supposed to man various sectors of the economy slowly but steadily and gullibly wasted away. Those who prefer a “dignified” means of livelihood among them end up as *maigadi* (security guards), housekeepers, bus drivers, conductors, etc. The lazy ones who are comfortable with the life on the street continue to beg throughout their lives. The luxury loving ones usually end up as political thugs and live on handouts from unscrupulous politicians (Goodluck & Juliana, 2017).

In April 2012, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), through the UBEC, launched a national education policy initiative known as the *Almajiri* Integrated Model School (AIMS). Its main goal was to integrate Qur’anic schools into conventional schools with modern curriculums in order to provide skill-based education to the *Almajirai* and empower them with career skills, in addition to their religious education. The AIMS initiative was also intended to increase educational access, specifically for the 10 million “out of school children” in northern Nigeria by providing classroom facilities, uniforms, books, and feeding programs. These out-of-school children are predominantly students of the Qur’anic schools. Another goal was to close the regional school enrollment gap between the northern and southern parts of the country, as the southern part of the country has the highest primary, secondary, and tertiary school enrollment and graduation records. Yushau et al. (2013) noted:

The purpose of the integration of the two system of education is to provide educational opportunities for those categories of children to acquire Traditional *Qur’anic* Education and Basic Western Education so as to improve their living condition and empower the *Almajirai* and their *malams*. This will also enable each State of the federation to achieve Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The AIMS initiative rebuilt about 36 schools, and the first batch of which covered the 19 northern states and Edo state (Okonkwo & Alhaji, 2014).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The word, *Almajiri*, which used to command respect, sympathy and solidarity, nowadays generates obnoxious feeling in the public domain. What quickly comes to the mind of many people whenever the word is uttered is the image of malnourished and destitute school age-street children, who constitute public nuisance and security threat to the society. In addition to child labour, child abuse, and a vague future, the *Almajiri* pupils today are being linked to the insurgency in the country due to their vulnerability to crime. While justifying this assertion, some analysts argue that a person who solely relies on begging for survival; who is enduring instead of enjoying the preamble of his life as a result of societal negligence; and who does not know where his next meal

will come from, can easily fall prey to terrorists’ biddings through a peanut bait.

Studies have shown that Northern part of Nigeria is lagging behind in terms education compared to its counterpart in the south this might be connected with low enrolment of pupils right from primary school whereby a large number was enrolled into Qur’anic schools for *Almajirci* (i.e. *Almajiri* education). Health survey data (2004) cited by Goodluck and Juliana (2017) revealed that parents/guardians in the south, southeast, and south-west Nigeria have the highest literacy rates of 74, 73 and 72 percent respectively. In contrary to the north-west which has 39%, northeast 43.6% and north-central 59.5%. Reports from various educational departments indicated that the north suffers a serious declined in education. For example, in 2000 the six states with lowest number of applications in the university matriculation examination (UME) were from the north. These states had a combined total of 6,729 applications or 1.45% of the national total (NPC, In Goodluck & Juliana, 2017).

The immediate past administration designed a programme under which few *Almajiri* Model Boarding Schools were established through the Federal Government intervention programme. The program aimed at integrating the conventional western education with Islamic education even though it was not enough to properly address the problems of the destitute children because less than five percent were captured by the federal government’s programme, which was meant to remove the *Almajiri* off streets (Abaro, 2016). Kumolu (2012) reported that federal government has inaugurated the first *Almajiri* model boarding school in Gagi, Sokoto state. This type of school is intended to be replicated across the country and dedicated to the *Almajiris* to ensure education for all Nigerian children to sustain access to quality education. Former president of Nigeria in his inaugural speech stated that, “our administration believe that the time has come for the nation to build on the moral foundations of the traditional system by providing the *Almajiri* with conventional knowledge and skills that will enable them to fully realize their creative and productive potentials.” *Almajiris* has constituted a segment of Nigerian population poses tremendous challenges to attainment of Education for All (EFA) and millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as other notable international conventions and protocols. To neglect this group does not only deny their fundamental human rights but also their innate potentials would remain largely untapped and this may eventually jeopardize the country’s pursuit of her home grown technological development and economic transformation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the problems facing *Almajiri* Integration Programme in North West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria?
2. What are the possible solutions to the problems of *Almajiri* Integration Programme in North West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study uses descriptive survey design with a target population of all the *Almajiris*/pupils and their teachers/*Mallams*,

community leaders alike, village head, district heads, local government chairpersons and the school heads of the area under study. The study covers North West geo-political zone of Nigeria, which consists of seven states. In selecting the sample number of states, purposive sampling technique was used to select three states in the zone; these include; Sokoto, Kaduna and Kano states. Similarly, to obtain the number of local government areas for the study purposive sampling technique was also used whereby the local government areas in the states where *Almajiri* Model Schools were established were sampled for the study. In this regard, Sokoto state has Sokoto South, Wamakko, Bodinga, Tureta, Sabon Birni, and Dange Shuni local government areas. Kaduna state comprises of Kaduna North, Igabi, Birnin Gwari and Zaria local government areas. Kano state consists of Dala, Doguwa, Madobi, Dawakin Tofa, Nasarawa, Wudil, Warawa, Tsanyawa, Bichi, Gaya, Albasu, Kibiya, Dawakin Kudu and Kobo. This gave a total of 25 local government areas for the study.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researchers selected three local government areas from each state and Kaduna state was not visited for security reasons. Therefore, a total of six local government areas were selected for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 40 *Almajiris*/pupils and 10 *mallams*/teachers that filled in the study questionnaires in each local government area of the study. Therefore, 240 *Almajiri*/pupils filled the study questionnaires, 60 questionnaires were completed by teachers/*mallams*, and 10 community leaders who comprise 1 local government chairman, 3 district heads, 5 village heads, and 1 school head, making 10 respondents for each local government area under study except Kano state where each local government area has only one district head. Therefore, only two village heads were selected and one coordinator for Qur'anic and Islamiyya School Management of the respective LGEA^s this gave 45 community leaders and school heads for the interview. As indicated on Table 1.

Researchers' Designed Questionnaires and Interview (structured) were used for data collection. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were analyzed in detail and explained in descriptive analysis form using themes and sub-themes.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section deals with presentation and interpretation of data results collected through qualitative and quantitative

design of the study. The quantitative data were presented and analyzed using frequency table and simple percentages. Information obtained from qualitative data was analyzed in themes and sub-themes.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

The target respondents for the interview were forty-five, but due to various reasons ranging from respondents' personal and official commitments only thirty-three respondents were captured. Therefore, findings from the interview were presented and summarized under the following themes and sub-themes:

Problems of *Almajiri* Integrated Programme in North-Western Nigeria

As outlined by Federal Government Implementation Committee to access, *Almajiri* Integrated Programme has some problems that make it difficult to (i) record the full success that it was designed to achieve, (ii) provide equity to basic education for all *Almajiri* school age, (iii) discourage and gradually eliminate itineracy and begging of *Almajirai* in the country, and (iv) support the emergence of enabling environment that could facilitate the effective integration of Islamic discipline into basic education programme.

How many of the above mentioned objectives were realized? In fact, minimal success was recorded in line with the set objectives. An empirical investigation by the present study revealed the following as some of the problems affecting the success of the programme.

Government negligence on education sector

Provision of good education to all Nigerian citizens irrespective of socio-economic background and without any prejudice remains a responsibility of government at all level. Education should be qualitative and functional for the survival of individuals and society. Nevertheless, government had neglected the sector without due considerations.

Respondent 4, describes that,

The problem is, government had neglected the education sector, which remains its responsibility this called the attention of the international donors and agencies to assist in that direction, and the problem is no matter how good a programme is; our people will consider it as a green snake under the green grass.

Table 1. Sample size of the study

S/N	State	Local Govt Area	<i>Almajiris</i> / Pupils	<i>Mallams</i> / Teachers	Community Leaders/Sch. Heads	Total
1	Sokoto	Sokoto Sth.	40	10	10	60
2	Sokoto	Dange Shun	40	10	10	60
3	Sokoto	Wamakko	40	10	10	60
4	Kano	Dala	40	10	5	55
5	Kano	Nasarawa	40	10	5	55
6	Kano	Kabo	40	10	5	55
Total	3	6	240	60	45	345

On adopted integrated schools, Respondent 26 added lack of government financial support as one of the problems faced by the schools. For instance, one *Mallam* might have a reasonable number of students, but has insufficient space to accommodate them.

The result shows that government is performing below expectations in the area of education, which retard the development of qualitative education in Nigeria including the *Almajiri* Integrated Programme.

Shortage of almajiri integrated schools

Almajiri Integrated Schools are the institutions where the full implementation of the programme is taking place. The more the schools are established the more beneficiaries of the programme. Integrated Model *Almajiri* schools are very few in North-Western Nigeria. For instance, in the whole of Sokoto and Kano states had only seven and thirteen schools respectively. These numbers are quite insignificant considering the population of the states.

Respondent 14, explained that,

The major problem is inadequate schools for the integration programme people complained seriously on absence of integrated schools in their areas. And, government should bear the total responsibilities of education in the schools.

This shows that there is shortage of *Almajiri* integrated school in northwestern Nigeria.

Inconsistency of government education policy

It is becoming a tradition to Nigerian government that a policy or program will be ignored after some years of existence. As there is continuity in government so should be on programme and policies. According to the researchers' findings in most of the schools visited, No new structure or building was added to the initial ones, which made some schools not to have yearly admission because of shortage of classrooms and hostels. This means that the schools were ignored by the government after establishment. With this, there are no much expectations on new ones and extension of the programme.

Respondent 6, lamented that,

One problem with our government policies is inconsistency, people will accept certain government programs but along the way, it will be abandoned. We hoped this should not happen to this program and schools. Capable management team should be maintained alongside with vibrant PTA and SBMC, as they could assist in the continued existence of the schools.

This shows that government is not consistent in its policies and programmes and there was a signal that *Almajiri* integration program is on the way to be abandoned completely, after positive acceptance by the public.

Shortage of infrastructure

School infrastructures are those facilities in schools that enhance the welfare of students/pupils in schools. These include; the physical building (plant) class rooms, dormitories, electricity supply, water supply, health facilities and

furniture, among others. Most *Almajiri* Integrated Schools were boarding, which made the infrastructure as necessity for the survival of the schools. Availability of good and enough infrastructures assist in arousing the interest of students in schools facilitating conducive learning atmosphere. They will be happy that they had enough water to use, good toilet facilities among others. Shortage of which can adversely affect students and atmosphere for learning. Respondent 28 explains that, "the main problem I observed is the need for the school to have more classes and hostels in order to function fully with its yearly admission and graduation of pupils".

Respondent 19 laments that

We observed some problems. The school has shortage of electricity even if students want to read in the night, it become difficult or impossible. There is also a need for standard source of water that will prevent the students from going outside the school to fetch water.

This shows that some *Almajiri* integrated schools had no adequate water and electricity supply. There was even one of the schools that the researchers saw buying water from wheelbarrow vendor for school kitchen for cooking.

Problem of instructional materials

Instructional materials are central to the teaching and learning process without them the instructions will be rendered worthless and ineffective. *Almajiri* schools especially the lower category suffered the menace of inadequate instructional materials. Even the model I and II that has significant number of the materials, they were still using first issue of the materials. The textbook series published for *Almajiri* schools stopped at class three (3) there is no 4-6. Moreover, some model schools had no provision for computer labs though they had the computers. Parents were also left with the task of buying exercise books, pens and textbooks for their children; teachers were also left with the task of searching for the right textbooks for their pupils, which brings about a variation in the content and instructions of *Almajiri* integrated schools' syllabus.

Respondent 6 lamented that

The only problem is pertaining to teaching and learning materials like, exercise books, chalks and pens. We do not want parents to be buying for their children, we want always to be giving them in order to relief parents, because this alone may cause some parents to deny the children going to school because they cannot buy or afford its cost. In addition, is not always that the school gets the materials in good time from donors. There is the need for school uniform even if it is two Pairs.

This shows that *Almajiri* integrated schools are not in possession of adequate instructional materials for pupil/students.

Shortage of qualified teachers

Teachers are the backbone of *Almajiri* integration programme implementation at the instructional level. They interact directly with curriculum and pupils for the smooth

implementation of the programme. The study found that there was shortage of specialized teachers like *Tahfizul Qur'an* among others, because some regular Islamic studies teacher cannot effectively handle them. To overcome this problem in some part of Kano state a non-governmental organization from Egypt employed the services of qualified *Alarammas* to Train pupils *Talifizul Qur'an* in the *Almajiri* integrated schools and is greatly yielding fruit. In the adopted *Qur'anic* centres, some teachers posted were not punctual they only go to school at their own wish. Part of the teachers complains was non-regular payment of salaries from LGEA. Respondent 32 added that

There is the need to increase the height of the school fence and paste security wire, this will prevent the new intake not to even make an attempt to cross the fence. As a model school, there is the need to re-supply mattresses and pillows because the first issue had completely spoiled the children were now using mats. The school also needs cash allocation because of the daily requirements of the schools. There is shortage of Tahfeez and Arabic teachers in the school because according to the curriculum, a pupil at primary six is expected to memorize Holy Qur'an, but due to teachers' problem we cannot meet the target.

This shows that the *Amajiri* integrated model schools were in shortage of qualified teachers for all the school disciplines.

Communication gap between traditional rulers and school authority

Traditional rulers are the closest community leaders that exert honour from their wards. They also act as intermediary between the government and people in their respective communities. The present study observes that there was communication gap between some traditional leaders and *Almajiri* integrated schools' authorities in their respective areas. This had rendered them inactive in the school affairs and uninformed about the school programmes and activities. Their role of mediating between government and its programmes was paralyzed.

Respondent 22 added that

One of the problems of this programme is lack of giving responsibilities to the right personalities. It is a well-known fact that anything that affect people in northern Nigeria traditional rulers used to be included therefore such leaders need to be bring into the picture so that they can provide possible ways for the success of the programme.

This shows that not all traditional rulers (District and Village heads) in the local government area were contacted about the school programme on *Almajiri* education.

Irresponsible parentancy

Parents are naturally responsible for the feeding of their children. However, some parents shun away from this responsibility by sending them to *Almajirci* to beg for food in the name of seeking for *Qur'anic* knowledge, after the children

had intensively worked in the parents' farms. Surprisingly *Qur'anic* and *Islamiyya* schools are found in every village and towns in the north-west. The main rationale for sending them away is only to reduce the cost of living in family.

Respondent 25 stated that

Conservative attitude of some parents, that their children should only learn the Qur'an. Secondly, some parents were just running away from their responsibilities that is by sending their children out for Almajirci instead of feeding them at home. These are some of the reasons why the number of Almajiris keeps increasing day-in-day out.

It shows that some parents were running away from their responsibilities that is why some children were sent for *Almajirci* instead of learning *Qur'an* within their domains.

General problem

These numerous problems affect the integrated schools under investigation. Respondent 33 explains that, the school has shortage of classes, hostels and teachers and there is no latrine, the existing one is still under constructions for months now.

Respondent 30 stated that

The problems are numerous, for instance there are shortage of infrastructure. The school needs classes and hostel for new admission, which we do not have. Therefore, our pupils are still hundreds in number. There is also shortage of water in the schools and no cash allocation is issued to the school and we were buying water. Fortunately, parents had agreed to be contributing money that we use to buy water and pay caterers. The schools also required Nannies to take care of the young children among the pupils. The schools also have problems of teaching staff.

These revealed that the *Almajiri* integrated schools had numerous problems, ranging from; shortage of infrastructure, lack of cash allocation, nannies, lack of textbooks series from 4-6, problem of standby generators, lack of allowances for the model schools, lack of security personnel and grinding machines.

Possible Solution to the Problems of Almajiri Integrated Programme

The investigations conducted by the present study revealed a number of ways through which these numerous problems of *Almajiri* integrated programme could be tackled. Some of the possible ways are discussed below:

Government should give education the desired attention

Government at all levels should devote their energy and resources on their legal responsibilities on education. The period of lip service should go and avoid politicizing education. The leaders should have the political will to move education forward. In a democratic society like Nigeria, government should always consider what will benefit the society and salvage members from hardship. A sound and solid *Almajiri*

integrated programme will go a long way to better the life of many Nigerians, especially in the northwest geo-political zone.

Respondent 12 stated that

Government should give the integration programme the desired consideration it deserved and shoulder full responsibilities. All village head should be given a certain number of pupils/students that they should forward for admission into the school high percentage of which must be itinerant Almajiris.

Respondent 8 added that, 'elected leaders should reward their electorates by giving them the most important ingredient of human life that is sound education and reduce or eradicate Almajiri itinerancy in the communities'.

This shows that government is performing below expectation on education and Almajiri education programme in particular, without political will in that direction. The government should wake up and give a devil his due, as the wise men said. There is the need to reward the electorate by giving their children a sound education and allocate number of applicants to all district and village heads in the local government majority of which must be Almajiris, and ensure regular school supervision.

Establishment of more almajiri integrated schools

The integrated model schools were the centres designed by government to run the programme of Almajiri integration in Nigeria. If the school remain very limited it means limiting the success of the programme, and extension of the schools means widening the success of the programme. Government as the initiator of the programme should have the mandate to establish at least two Almajiri integrated schools in all the local government area in northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Respondent 3 lamented that

To increase, the number of schools and promote Almajiri education, the sultanate council in collaboration with SEDTF ordered the construction of one classroom in each of the 86 districts in Sokoto state to teach children of 3-5 years Qur'anic and western education after which the children will be admitted into a nearby primary school under the guidance of sultanate committee on the programme. Secondly, the district heads or traditional leaders should be allowed to supervised and monitor those schools within their jurisdiction and include them in their monthly reports for updates about the schools.

This shows that more Almajiri integrated schools are required for the maximum success of the programme. The classrooms established by the sultanate council can be regarded as integrated nursery schools; therefore, it is a giant effort at the right directions, though Almajiris were not included. The required number of schools should be established to cater for itinerant Almajiris and out of school-children in all the local government areas of North West geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Consistency on government policy and programme

Continuity of any programme or policy is very important in the achievement of the set goals and objectives. There is no much indications that the present federal and state governments are interested in the expansion and progress of Almajiri integrated programme. This can be justified by the following reasons no new structures or buildings were added in the existing schools, no continuation in the publication of textbook series for Almajiri schools for classes 4-6, no establishment of new schools. This indicates a signal for the collapse of the programme. This is a setback for Nigeria, because the programme comes with three important things first, to cater for the out of schoolchildren especially in northern Nigeria, secondly, to control child itinerancy in Nigeria and lastly, to ensure education for all. Therefore, the programme should be sustained and maintained.

Respondent 5 stated that

To sustain the standard of the school as inaugurated by the federal government of Nigeria there should be community participation, traditional rulers, well to do individuals (Philanthropists) and Sokoto state governments to ensure the sustenance of the school standard. A consultative forum should be organized to meet periodically and review problems and prospects of the schools for necessary actions.

This shows the importance of the programme and the need to sustain it. There should be concerted effort by the stakeholders at school and community level to maintain the school standard. In addition, there should be a consultative forum to review the problems and prospects of the schools. Tradition of morning and evening Qur'anic recitation should be maintained.

Avoid corruption in education

Corruption is a cancer that affects almost all aspects of our socio-economic activities in Nigeria. Corruption in education has greatly hampered the smooth delivery of the education system and destabilized the successful achievement of the expected outcome. With this, Nigerian society will continue to lag behind other nations, because education is an instrument for any meaningful development, technologically, socially, politically, economically and religiously. Therefore, Nigerians cannot afford to surrender this because of few irresponsible members (corrupt people) of the society. As such, corruption must be avoided and face educational development with sincerity.

Respondent 4 elaborated that

Government should carry out its constitutional mandate on its citizens and avoid a lip service. Corruption should also be eradicated or minimized to the lowest level because most of what was budgeted on education may not have 20% implemented to the last level. Political sentiment godfatherism and low wages are some of the contributing factors that hinder accountability in public sector. Therefore, right thing should be done. Avoid politicking education and appoint competent and professional people to teach and manage education on the side of the community, people should not be demanding

money from politicians because if they were forced to give, they loot from education treasury. Lastly, there should be a proactive engagement of stakeholders in education, traditional leaders and civil society organization to serve as pressure groups in running the education sector.

This shows that there are a lot of irregularities and corrupt practices in education section, Almajiri integration programme inclusive. The corrupt practices in education that need to be avoided include, false documentation, lip service, fraud, cheating, selfishness, liars, mesmerize, contract misappropriation, political sentiment, looting, godfatherism and no government attention to remote schools. All these and other related must be avoided.

Participation of medium enterprise and companies in provision of almajiri education

For certain reasons, it was observed that government alone might not be able to provide all the public demand on education. For instance, the problem of sustainability faced by the integration school sponsored by international agencies who served for a specified period of time in Nigeria is one of the challenge that necessitate the intervention of such enterprises and companies who always operate in our communities. Secondly, sometimes government supplies or interventions to school use to arrive late or totally absent, when these companies or enterprises become committed they can fill the gap and move forward.

Respondent 3 described that:

Time has passed, when we continue to solemnly depend on government to solve our problems. Our intention is to mobilize medium enterprise like pure water manufacturers, bread industries, among, others, and commercial school in the area to shoulder the responsibility. For instance, there was a private school proprietor (Dagamas Legacy) who gave us ten slots that he would sponsored either at nursery or primary school level up to senior secondary school level without tuition fees. Companies would also be invited to participate as part of their social corporate responsibilities, though MTN and Oando foundations, has started making their mark in the area.

This shows that medium enterprises and companies could play a significant role in educational development. One private school and two companies were already engaged in Tudun Wada District in Sokoto State. That was the indication that when others are mobilize they can equally assist in that direction.

Sensitization workshop/public enlightenment

Sensitization workshop is a forum that brings individual together either from the same or various backgrounds with the intention of educating them about a particular issue, programme or policy. While public enlightenment aimed at educating the public about an issue, programme or policy through any means by which the facilitators felt appropriate to disseminate the information like mass media, town hall meetings, public address at motor parks or other points.

Sensitization workshop and public enlightenment will go a long way in informing the stakeholders and the public about the mission, vision and other activities involved in Almajiri integrated programme, so that people will have positive attitudes towards Almajiri integrated programme.

Respondent 15 describes that

There should be an organized forum or work shop to sensitize the village heads, districts heads, Imams and any other relevant community leader to understand and appreciate the programme so that the same understanding and appreciation can reach the generality of the community members so that positive attitude could be developed towards the programme.

This shows that sensitization workshops and public enlightenment is essential for the successful implementation of Almajiri integrated programme.

Active participation of traditional rulers

Traditional rulers are the closest community leaders that exert honour and respect from their wards. They also act as intermediary between the government and people in their respective communities. The present study observes that there is communication gap between some traditional leaders and Almajiri integrated schools' authorities in their respective areas. This had rendered them inactive in the school affairs and uninformed about the school programmes and activities. Their role of mediating between government and its programmes was paralyzed. Their active participation in the programme is highly required.

Respondent 21 describes that

Just like what used to be in the past, allow traditional leaders to have active participation in the programme. They are immediate community leaders who had influence over their people. There is no way one can play vital role in an event without formal invitation.

This shows that traditional rulers when fully incorporated in the programme, can help in recording tremendous success. They can participate in school issues like; admission of new students, public orientation, and supervision, among others.

Parents should emphasize on the moral up bring of their children

Parents are the first socializing agent of every individual. They contribute immensely in shaping and developing of human character. They also guide the moral conduct of their children to conform to the norms and values of the society. It was generally agreed that children that left their parents homes to Almajirci were no longer under the moral care of any body. Because the Mallam only control them in the school, after school when they go out begging for food or rendering services to other people no one knows what happens. Nevertheless, pupils attending model Almajiri integrated school are more organized and directly taken care of by their teachers and non-teaching staff at all times. With this, parents need to allow their children to study near them in their towns' Qur'anic schools, Islamiyya or integrated model schools.

Respondent 25 added that

Parents should take full responsibilities of their children. And, there should be public enlightenment on education because there are children that are still out of both western and Qur'anic schools, because time has passed when one only gave birth to a child and give other people to feed for him.

This shows that Qur'anic education can be acquired in the children's domain, because the schools are found everywhere. Some parents send their children to Almajirici for some reasons other than Qur'anic learning. Therefore, parent should be up to the task of being parents and take good care of their children.

Pupils' registration for Qur'anic schools

For Almajiri integration programme to set a focus on whether it is reducing itinerant children or not, pupils' registration for Qur'anic schools should be introduced. This will mandate all *Malams* to have a sort of admission register to record the information of their Almajiris. This will enable the government to have a standard census of the Almajiris in their respective states and where they came from. With this government will ascertain the number of Almajiris that were enrolled into Almajiri integrated schools.

Respondent 8 describes that

The Qur'anic school teachers (Malams) should have a register that contains the pupil's and parent's name, village, or town, GSM number, to assist in verifying indigenes among them and to know the exact number of those who graduate or left the school. Arabic and Islamic Education Board can be charged to take this responsibility.

This shows that Qur'anic schools Almajiri's registration is very important for these reasons, identifying non-indigene, planning for Almajiris, ascertain the number absorbed by Almajiri integrated programme, and record keeping on Almajiris.

Provision of cash allocation to schools

Cash allocation is needed in Almajiri Integrated Schools because of the emerging issues in the schools, payment of casual staff like caterers, Alarammas and medical care, among others.

Respondent 30 states that

Government and members of the public need to intervene. Government should provide the required infrastructure like classes, hostel, water and staff quarters. There is also the need for cash allocation for the schools the members of the public can play their roles through P.T.A and SBMC.

This shows that there is the need for cash allocation to the Almajiri integrated schools for the smooth running of the schools

Construction of more classes and hostels

More classes and hostels are required in the Almajiri integrated schools, shortage of which made some schools to

continue managing only one hundred pupils of two sets for years. In addition, there is no chance for yearly admission because there is no space to accommodate the new intakes. Respondent 33 "explains that, the right things to be done in the schools include; construction of more classes and hostels, employment of more qualified teachers, and construction of good latrines".

Respondent 31 added that

Government should intervene in constructing more classes and hostel in the schools, so that the number of newly admitted students can increase and have a yearly admission in the schools. Textbooks series for classes 4-6 should be provided to the school. There should be incentives for head teachers and teachers of Tsangaya schools in the state this can increase their productivity level.

This shows that there is need for the construction of more classes and hostels for the increased number of the school pupils, because without more construction the number of pupils in model III will continue to be one hundred only.

Employment of qualified teachers

Teacher can be considered as the heartbeat in the curriculum implementation. For a teacher to be effective and efficient in the performance of his duty, he/she must have good knowledge of the subject matter. Added to teacher's qualification is his experience and perception of his role in the teaching/learning process. Almajiri Integrated schools required such teachers that are knowledgeable and competent in the curriculum of the schools. Therefore, government should employ qualified teachers for the schools in areas like; Tahfeezul Qur'an, Arabic, English, Computer Studies, Integrated Science, among others.

Respondent 32 stated that

Government should endeavor to recruit Alarammas for Qur'anic recitation and memorization. Qualified Arabic teachers were also needed there is also the need for re-training (seminar) of all the teachers in Almajiri school in the state on the proper implementation of Almajiri school curriculum. Cash allocation should be given to Almajiri schools for the smooth running of the schools.

This shows that there is the need for qualified teachers for Almajiri integrated schools, especially in some specialized areas

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

The quantitative data of the study was gathered from two hundred and forty (240) Almajiri/pupils' questionnaires and sixty (60) mallam/teacher questionnaires when combined together is three hundred (300) questionnaires which was presented under the following tables;

Table 2 above presented the gender distribution of the respondents. From the result, all the pupils were male, 98.6% of the teachers were male while only 1.4% were female. This suggested that Almajiri schools could be dominated by male children and male teachers.

Result presented in Table 3 shows distribution of teachers by educational qualification. From the result, the respondents

were made up of 8.6% secondary certificate holders, 30% NCE/Diploma holders and 61.4% with other qualifications. This indicates that data were gathered from respondents that are educated enough to participate in the study.

Table 4 above shows whether children are pupils or *Almajiri*. From the result, it was gathered that 25% were *Almajiris* (in Qur'anic schools) while 75% were pupils (from integrated *Almajiri* schools).

Table 5 presents responses on government commitment in the provision of facilities to *Almajiri* integrated model schools. The respondents submitted their agreement concerning the following facilities: classes (36.1%), hostel accommodation (49%), furniture (61.6%), water supply (57.4%), and electricity (71.6%). These results indicated that the government is not adequately providing facilities to *Almajiri* integrated model schools in North West geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Result presented in Table 6 shows response on how *Almajiri* integrated system can be sustained. Based on the response of the respondents, the system can be sustained through: establishment of *Almajiri* model schools in all local government areas in North West geopolitical zone, Nigeria (66.1%), admission into *Almajiri* model schools should be through *Mallams* (60.3%), the programme should only cater for itinerant *Almajiris* (71.6%) and increase in fund allocation to the programme (84.5%). These indicated that, if the programme should be sustained, more schools should be established in each local government area in North West geopolitical zone, Nigeria, admission of pupils should be through *mallams*, the programme should only cater for the itinerant children and increase in fund allocation to the programme.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by gender

Category	Male Frequency (%)	Female Frequency (%)	Total Frequency (%)
Pupils	240 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	240 (100.0)
Teachers	59 (98.6)	1 (1.4)	60 (100.0)

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

Table 3. Distribution of respondents (teachers) by educational qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	0	0.0
Secondary	5	8.6
NCE/Diploma	18	30.0
Others	37	61.4
Total	60	100.0

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

Table 4. Distribution by pupils or *Almajiri*

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Almajiri</i>	60	25.0
Pupil	180	75.0
Total	240	100.0

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

Table 7 presents result on how *Almajiri* integrated system can succeed. From the response, *Almajiri* integrated system can succeed through: deployment of qualified teachers (80.6%), integration of *Mallams* and *Alarammas* into the programme (61.3%), provision of special incentives to *mallams* and *alaramma* (70%), and organization of seminars and workshop for teachers (86.1%).

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are;

1. The study reveals that government is performing below expectation in the area of education, which retard the development of qualitative education in Nigeria, *Almajiri* Integrated Programme inclusive. It also reveals a shortage of *Almajiri* integrated schools in northwestern Nigeria. Its further uncovered that government is not consistent in its policies and programmes in relation to education and there was a signal and indication that *Almajirti* integration program is on the way to be abandoned, after heavy acceptance by the public. It further reveals that some *Almajiri* integrated schools had no adequate water and electricity supply. Shortage of instructional materials were discovered in the schools. The study also reveals shortage of qualified teachers for some school disciplines. It further reveals that the adopted Qur'anic schools for integration were not enjoying assistance and cooperation from government that will enable them to feed their pupils. The study also discovered that adopted Qur'anic integrated schools in Sokoto state where facing problem of mainstreaming their children to primary schools unlike Kano state. And, those in Sokoto are perishable because the sponsors had a specified term to operate in Nigeria. While those in Kano were taken care of by their *Mallams* and community which seem to be more permanent and reliable. It also reveals that there is communication gap among traditional rulers (District and Village heads) in their respective local government areas on the school programme on *Almajiri* education.
2. The study discovered the need to reward the electorate by giving their children a sound education. There was the need for more *Almajiri* integrated schools for the maximum success of the programme. More schools should be established to cater for itinerant *Almajiris* and

Table 5. Response on government commitment in the provision of facilities to *Almajiri* integrated model schools

S/N	Items	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Undecided F (%)
1	Classes	108 (36.1)	179 (59.7)	13 (4.2)
2	Hostels accommodation	147 (49.0)	116 (38.7)	37 (12.3)
3	Furniture	185 (61.6)	102 (33.9)	13 (4.5)
4	Water supply	172 (57.4)	110 (36.8)	18 (5.8)
5	Electricity	215 (71.6)	45 (15.2)	40 (13.2)

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

out of schoolchildren in all the local government areas study. The need for the sustenance of the programme was also emphasized. There should be concerted effort by the stakeholders at school, community level to maintain the school standard. Moreover, there should be a consultative forum to review the problems and prospects of the integrated schools. The study further reveals that there were a lot of irregularities and corrupt practices in education section, *Almajiri* integration programme inclusive. The corrupt practices in education that need to be avoided includes, false documentation, lip service, fraud, cheating, selfishness, liars, mesmerize, contract misappropriation, political sentiment, looting, godfatherism and low government attention to remote schools. All these and other related must be avoided and corrected if optimal objective and goals of the programme is to be achieved.

The study also discovered the need and importance of medium enterprises and companies' participation in *Almajiri* education and general education development. One private school and two companies were already engaged in Tudun Wada District in Sokoto State. Sensitization workshops and public enlightenment was also found essential for the success of the programme. The study also gathered that when traditional rulers are fully involved in the programme, it can help in recording positive tremendous success. They can participate in school issues like; admission of new student, public orientation, and supervision, among others. The parents should be up to the task of being parents and take good care of their children. For various reasons there was the need for Qur'anic schools *Almajiri's* registration. Some of the reasons are, identifying non-indigene, planning for *Almajiris*, ascertain the number absorbed by *Almajiri* integrated programme, and record keeping on *Almajiris*.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study aimed to analyze the problems and possible solutions to *Almajiri* Integration Programme in North West Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The study reveals that the

programme faces a number of problems that hindered the smooth implementation and success of the programme. It shows that the government is performing below expectation in the area of education, which retards the development of quality education in Nigeria. There was shortage of *Almajiri* integrated schools in the North Western Nigeria; the government is inconsistent in its policies and programmes; there is shortage of water and electricity supply in some schools; there was shortage of instructional materials; qualified teachers are also inadequate; there is no government support to adopted integrated schools; communication gap between traditional rulers and school authorities is seen; parents running away from their responsibilities is another issue assessed as inadequate government financial support; and there is a lack of cash allocation to the schools.

Having limited number of schools for the integration means having few numbers of *Almajiris* to be admitted into the schools, which will make it difficult or impossible for government to take off road 9.5 million *Almajiris*. Taiwo (2013) reported that, president Goodluck declared that this programme will cover the 9.5 million *Almajiri* population scattered across northern states in Nigeria. This is not an easy task with the present number of *Almajiri* integrated schools available in the north.

The inconsistency nature of government on its policies and programmes is very clear in *Almajiri* integration programme. The foundation of the programme by President Goodluck Jonathan was left untouched by the subsequent administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. New schools were not established, new textbooks series were not published, no additional computers and other instructional materials, no new supply of beds and mattresses, which were all expected from the federal government by the schools. After the establishment of the schools, there was provision of water sources and electricity in each school. Nevertheless, presently these facilities were faulty in some schools thereby making it difficult for students to have good water supply and electricity in the schools. The government negligence and lackadaisical attitudes towards policies implementation and her refusal to

Table 6. Response on how *almajiri* integrated system can be sustained

S/N	Items	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Undecided F (%)
1	Establishment of more <i>Almajiri</i> model schools in all local government areas of Northern Nigeria	198 (66.1)	91 (30.3)	11 (3.6)
2	Admission into <i>Almajiri</i> model schools should be through <i>Mallams</i> among the Tsangaya pupils	181 (60.3)	99 (32.9)	20 (6.8)
3	The programme should only cater for itinerant <i>Almajiris</i>	215 (71.6)	59 (19.7)	26 (8.7)
4	Increase in fund allocation to the programme	254 (84.5)	31 (10.3)	15 (5.2)

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

Table 7. Response on how *Almajiri* integrated system can succeed

S/N	Items	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Undecided F (%)
1	Deployment of qualified teachers	242 (80.6)	34 (11.3)	24 (8.1)
2	Integration of <i>Mallams</i> and <i>Alarammas</i> into the programme	184 (61.3)	91 (30.3)	25 (8.4)
3	Provision of special incentives to the <i>Mallams</i> and <i>Alarammas</i>	210 (70.0)	62 (20.6)	28 (9.4)
4	Organization of seminars and workshops for the teachers	258 (86.1)	24 (8.1)	18 (5.8)

Source: Questionnaire administered (2019)

focus attention towards the required installation of those social amenities facilities kick against the success of the programme. The schools had no cash allocation to cater for such emerging problems. Therefore, the school administration and the student/pupils were left with the hardship. Instructional materials that served as machinery for effective teaching and learning were inadequate in the schools. This means that some aspects of teaching and learning will be retarded. There was also shortage of qualified teachers who are the principal actors in the school curriculum implementation. They are to facilitate all the teaching and learning activities in the schools. This means that shortage of qualified teachers will provide a vacuum to what the students/pupils supposed to learn in the schools. They are therefore required in good number.

Inadequate government financial support also affects the programme. None of the stakeholders in the programme can make a significant project without the government financial support that is why many activities in the programme were at stand still. The lack of financial support made some schools live in poor condition, whereby the school authorities cannot render a simple project that can put the school in good shape and avoid further dilapidation. Furthermore, government is not supporting the adopted integrated centres, which will add to the number of the existing schools. Because the aid provided will make government to fully regulate and supervise the centres so that the right thing can be done in the schools. Communication gap between traditional rulers and school authorities make some of the leaders to be passive about the school programme in their respective areas. If actively involved, traditional rulers had significant roles to play in the success of the integration programme.

Another problem that keeps increasing the number of *Almajiris* in the North is parents running away from their responsibilities. Parents who cannot or are not willing to fully cater for the needs of their children do send them to *Almajiri* after the harvest period so that they can relief their food stuff and children will moved to cities and town to cater for themselves in the name of *Almajirici*. This will definitely add to the existing number of *Almajiris* and out of schoolchildren in Nigeria. These had clearly shown that the programme was surrounded by a number of problems that hindered the achievement of the set objectives as stated by the federal government of Nigeria. The objectives of the programme as outlined by the Federal Government Implementation Committee (2015) are: provide access and equity to basic education for all *Almajiri* school age; discourage and gradually eliminate itineracy and begging of *Almajirai* in the country; and Support the emergence of an enabling environment that could facilitate the effective integration of Islamic discipline into basic education programme. Abaro (2016) further argues that the federal government intervention, which was aimed at integrating conventional western education into Islamic education, only turned out to be merely removing a spoonful of water from a filled tank, as it was not enough to address the problems of the destitute children properly. Less than five percent were captured by the federal government's programme, which was meant to remove the *Almajiri* off streets. This shows that there are a lot to be done for the success of the integration programme to be achieved.

Some measures need to be carried out to ensure the success of the programme for the betterment of Nigerian citizens. The study discovered some of the measures, which will be discussed in this order;

There was the need to sustain the programme for its ability. President Goodluck lamented that the school would provide the children with a conventional quality education as envisaged under his administration education policy thrust. This shows that the programme is part of the government policy on education, which needs to be sustained by the subsequent administrations. For the programme to succeed and be sustained, the required number of *Almajiri* integrated schools to be established need to be increase to cater for itinerant *Almajiris* and out of schoolchildren within the study area. The whole programme is dependent upon the establishment of the school without which the children will continue to be on itineracy and out of school. There should be concerted effort by the stakeholders at school, community level to maintain the school standard. This will help the proper functioning of the schools for quality education. It will lead to the establishment of consultative forum to periodically review the problems and prospects of the schools for necessary actions. The study further reveals that there were a lot of irregularities and corrupt practices in education sector, *Almajiri* integration programme inclusive. The corrupt practices in education that need to be avoided include: false documentation, lip-services, fraud, cheating, selfishness, liars, mesmerize, contract misappropriation, political sentiment, looting, godfatherism and no government attention to remote schools. All these and other related negative issues must be avoided. Corruption is a cancer that almost eats in all aspects of our social life. It must be killed for the betterment of our social life, education inclusive.

There should be more classes and hostels in all model III *Almajiri* Integrated Schools. The existing ones can only accommodate one hundred pupils without yearly admission in the schools. This is very expensive in term of teacher pupil ratio and has little output. Therefore, more classes and hostels will access yearly admission and increase the pupils' enrolment in the schools as well as improves teacher pupils' ratio. Government should support the adopted *Tsangaya* Integrated schools this will raise the number of *Almajiri* integration education centres as well as increase the number of children that will be off-street and enrolled into formal school systems as required or envisaged by government policy.

Provision of cash allocation to *Almajiri* Integrated Schools is of paramount importance as this will assist the school management to cater for any emerging issue that is within capacity of the fund. It will also reduce burden on parents and stabilize head teachers' emotions about the numerous problems they encountered without means of solving them. There is also the need to employ qualified teachers for *Almajiri* integrated schools. This will ensure the full implementation of the *Almajiri* curriculum plan, and ensure the acquisition of quality education.

The study further discovered the need and importance of medium enterprises and companies' participation in *Almajiri* education and general education development. These bodies can complement government effort in public education. They

therefore need to be mobilized and incorporated into the programme so that they can render all the necessary assistance they could. For instance, one private school and two companies were already engaged in Tudun Wada District, Sokoto state.

Parents should be up to the task of being parents and take good care of their children. Allow them to learn Qur'an and western education within their domain not to send them outside for begging (*Almajirci*) in the name of learning Qur'an, such can be done in Qur'anic schools, *Islamiyya* and primary schools that can be found in almost all the villages and towns, within the study area.

Sensitization workshops and public enlightenment were found essential for the success of the programme. This will help the members of the public and stakeholders to be informed of the provision and aspirations of the programme, so that everyone involved will act positively in a desired direction. It was gathered that when traditional rulers are fully engaged in the programme, it can help to record tremendous success. They are the closest leaders in their respective communities and schools. They can participate in school issues like; admission of new students because they knew those parents having itinerants and out of school children, public orientation because they exert honour and respect from the people and knew parents or areas where parents are still skeptical about the programme and supervision because they are always within the school community which give them easy access to the schools. For various reasons, there was the need for Qur'anic schools *Almajiris'* registration. Some of the reasons are, identifying non-indigene, planning for *Almajiris*, ascertain the number absorbed by Almajiri integrated programme and record keeping on *Almajiris*. The registration can drastically lead government towards formalizations of the Qur'anic schools, which can eventually eradicate begging (Bara) among the *Almajiris*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government should give education the desired attention so that the rights thing can be done. It should be consistent in its policy and programmes for the betterment of its citizens. Therefore, *Almajiri* integrated programme should be handed as introduced by president Goodluck's Administration. There should be more classes and hostels in model III schools in order to have yearly admission and increase number of pupils. Similar secondary schools should also be established to allow for continuity in learning pattern. The *Almajiri* Integrated Schools should be provided with cash allocation that will assist the school management to cater for any emerging issue that is within capacity of the fund.
2. Government should sustain and continue with *Almajiri* integrated programme for its usability. There should be a concerted effort by the stakeholders at school community level to maintain the school standard. This will lead to the establishment of the consultative forum to periodically review the problems and prospects of the schools. Authorities concern should fight corruption in education as it hinders progress and quality education.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can come in to aid a certain number out of the ten million *Almajiris* and out of schoolchildren in Nigeria so that they can be enrolled into the mainstream education system.

CONCLUSION

Members of the public especially parents had accepted the programme the only problem was the provision made by government to accommodate the admission demand was very low and insufficient. This occurred as a result of a number of problems encountered by the programme which include, inadequate government financial support to the programme, shortage of qualified teachers, shortage of infrastructure, government negligence on education, inadequate *Almajiri* integrated schools, inconsistency of government policy and programmes, problems of instructional materials, lack of cash allocation to the schools, communication gap between traditional rules and school authority as well as the general schools problems. All these and more stood as barrier to successful integration of *Almajiri* education into the mainstream of Nigeria education system. Much need to be done in order to save the programme from total collapse. The study therefore, and finally, recommended some useful solutions to the problems.

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