

INTEGRATING ALMAJIRI SYSTEM OF EDUCATION WITH CONVENTIONAL EDUCATION: A STIMULUS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The efforts to integrate the almajiri system of education with conventional system is an age long policy thrust in Nigeria. It concerns the Northern Nigeria which has the exclusive practice of Almajir system. There are palpable frustrations confronting the assimilation of the integration. With the deviation from the actual doctrinal practice of seeking Qu'ranic knowledge, the exercise somewhat takes a differential dimension where the Almajirai are abused and brainwashed. This inculcates irreligious doctrines thereby making them susceptible to extremism and available for use by Islamic terrorist group. The study uses Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) cultural and social reproduction theory. The study recommends that, Education being in the concurrent legislative list, the Federal and the States Governments of the Northern Nigeria should consolidate and intensify the hitherto efforts in integrating Almajiri system of education with the conventional system. Northern states should leverage on the repatriation of Almajiri to their states of origin occasioned by Covid-19 pandemic. This will ensure a stoppage in dissuading the Almajiri to join violent groups thereby making a peaceful and guaranteed security in Northern Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Integration, Almajiri System, Education, Peace, Security

INTRODUCTION

Education, forsooth, is the wheel on which development rides upon. Acquiring knowledge is therefore a necessity for holistic socio- economic and political development of a nation. As a citizen, education has no alternative as much that it is a right of an individual to acquire it. Education enhances the capabilities of an individual. It is a mechanism for enabling active citizenship; thus those who are denied the rights to education face the possibilities of limited chances in the future. UNESCO for instance states that, meaningful education as a right is key to advancing social justice; as people who are marginalised in education face the prospect of bleak future chances which truncates their participation in social processes affecting them (8).

Almajiri system is a form of discipleship or religious training whereby a young child, usually less than 15 years old, is sent to another part of the village, town or country to learn about Islam (Sule –Kano). Without food, school fees, boarding materials, etc. he is to cater for himself by begging in streets. This practice has been entwined with people's way of life over a thousand years and had played a pivotal role in the transmission of moral and religious values, as well as discipline and enhanced literacy in the society. According to Dukku most of the outstanding Islamic Scholars of pre- colonial and 20th century northern Nigeria were products of the system. The Almajiri falls among the category of extremely poor children in Nigeria. These children constitute about seven and half million street-begging, maladjusted, aggressive and out of schools. Wike reveals that there is a high occurrence of out-of-school children in Nigeria estimated at 10.5 and Almajiris make up over 9 million of this number. These children are concentrated mainly in the northern part of Nigeria.

Okonkwo and Alhaji opine that successive governments in Nigeria have at various times, introduced inclusive policies aimed at providing education as a fundamental right of every child. However, it is the realization of this that necessitated the Federal Government of Nigeria decision to set up the Ministerial Committee on Madrasah Education, which was inaugurated on 16th February, 2010. The survey conducted by the Committee revealed that there was a staggering more than 9 Million Almajiri across the country. At the submission of the committee's report, Government set up an implementation committee on Almajiri Education Programme and charged it with the responsibility of ensuring that this more than 9 Million Almajiri is integrated in to the UBE (Universal Basic Education) Programme within the shortest possible time. This therefore led to the establishment of Almajiri model schools in various part of the country by President Goodluck Jonathan. 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. By 2012, the AIMS initiative rebuilt about 36 schools, the first batch of which covered the 19 northern states and Edo state (25).

In spite of the above milestone, the enrollment and attendance rates continue to remain low in these newly reconstructed model schools because the children and their families were uncomfortable with the initiative and its mode of operations. Spencer's excerpt in Fafunwa, complicates the age-long perceptions that the people of northern Nigeria dislike Western form of education; rather, they were cautious of the Christian missionary education mission of converting Muslim into Christianity through education, which was not compatible with the Islamic norms, and values Hausa people had embraced and localized as a total way of life. In the Muslim northern Nigeria, the Christian Missionaries were seen as evangelists first and educationalists second because they were with the Bible that was also written in English language.

In Dukku's statement, bringing up these children to be "Manicurists" or "Shoe-shiners" or "Water-vendors" could constitute a serious national security problem and a threat to social cohesion and active citizenship. With the spate of sectarian crises that bedeviled the northern region in the last few years, there is the apprehension that this sorely neglected section of our young population, if left uncontrolled, could be dragged into these crises. Furthermore, in recent times, Almajiri was seen as one of the serious challenges before Social Scientists in Nigeria and perhaps some of the ruling elite in northern part of Nigeria. This is because large number of out-of school children is a threat not only to social cohesion but also to active citizenship. It breeds social exclusion and anti-social tendencies amongst youths and adults thereby making it difficult for the attainment of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other international conventions and protocols. Its practice in the northern region has affected government priorities.

The Almajiri practice of the centuries did not only affect the literacy level and cognitive development of the people, but responsible for the low socio-economic development of the region. To the extent that recently, many people have through print and electronic media expressed displeasures at the concept of Almajiri system in the northern region. The problems it generated from ignorance, poverty and child labour have reached an alarming rate. Not only

has that made quite a number of them to be religious extremists but ferocious. The Maitatsine disturbance in Kano alone resulted in the death of 4,177 people between December 18 and 29, 1980. The main adherents of Maitatsine were almajiri (OnWar, n.d.). Abuh finds that the rising insecurity in Northern Nigeria creates threat to economic and political stability. The spate of violence in the region, which has of late come under attack by the members of Boko Haram Islamists group, has worsened in spite of the opportunities offered by the return to democracy.

In the same direction, between 1980 and 1985, Northern Nigeria witnessed four main religious crises and, according to Winters, the participants in these riots were the almajiri(71). In the 2004 religious crisis in Kano city, the violence unleashed on innocent residents was successful because the participants comprised mainly almajiri (Human Rights Watch 1-83).

The implication of the above is that, the economic development of the region has been adversely affected due to the rampant situation of Almajiri syndrome in northern Nigeria. Their number is huge, the practice becomes susceptible followership to violent Islamic sects. These groups (Maitatsine, Yandaba and Boko Haram) are known for violent crimes. The interaction of almajiri with these groups is a breeding ground for juvenile delinquency among almajiri and future terrorism (News24). Nigeria's National Security Adviser (NSA) Babagana Monguno recently warned the Nigerian government of the future of the Almajiri system. He says the future would be dark if the system isn't improved.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Almajiri

Kabiru quoting Sheik Abba Aji, a renowned Maiduguri-based Islamic scholar, Almajiri, is a word borrowed from Arabic language which was derived from the word 'AlMuhajir' meaning a seeker of Islamic knowledge. Its origin was the migration of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. Those who migrated with the prophet to Medina were called 'Al-Muhajirun', meaning emigrants. These emigrants had no means of livelihood on getting to Medina, but based on the fraternity established by the prophet, between their hosts and them, were co-opted into different trades and vocations as apprentices who were paid for their services. The Islamic religion came to Nigeria via the North; Fafunwa records that, 'Islam was brought to Hausaland in the early fourteenth century by traders and scholars. About forty Wangarawa traders were thought to be responsible for introducing Islam to Kano. During the reign of Yaqub (1452 – 63), some Fulani scholars migrated to Kano, bringing with them books on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. During the reign of Muhammad Rumfa (1463-99), Islam became firmly rooted and Islamic principles were taught in different places. It was during this period that Muslim scholars from Timbuktu came to Kano to teach and preach Islam.' Armed with the Islamic Tradition which states that, 'the best man among you is one that learns Quran and then cares to teach it. Fafunwa says Islam gradually spread in the north and to the other parts of the country. The system of teaching and learning Quran and Arabic started from the Northern Nigeria where the teachers depended on charity (sadaqah).

AbdulQadir presents that, the British invaded the region and killed most of the Emirs and disposed some. The Emirs lost control of their territories and accepted their new roles, as mere traditional rulers. They also lost fundamental control of the Almajiri system. The British deliberately abolished state funding in respect to the system arguing that, they were religious schools. With loss of support from the government, its immediate community and the helpless Emirs, the Almajiri system collapsed like a pile of cards. Karatun Boko, western education was introduced and funded instead. The pupils now turned, Almajirai together with their Mallams, having no financial support resorted to begging and other menial jobs for survival. This is certainly the genesis of the predicament of the Almajiri system today.

Peace

Johan Galtung, the father of peace studies often refers to the distinction between 'negative peace' and 'positive peace' (1). Negative peace refers to the absence of violence. When, for example, a ceasefire is enacted, a negative peace will ensue. It is negative because something undesirable stopped happening (e.g. the violence stopped, the oppression ended). Positive peace is filled with positive content such as restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of conflict.

Peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of violence in all forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), one of the famous philosophers in second half of 17th century, says that peace was not an absence of war, it was a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice.

Peace is a situation of tranquility, a phenomenon where there is no fear, anxiety, rancour etc. Where people live without threat to their wellbeing, peace is extant in that environment. Peace therefore exists where people are interacting non-violently and are managing their conflict positively – with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interest of all concerned.

Security

The nature of security defies pursuit of an agreed general definition. Security has faced a paradigm shift from the perspective of primacy on military's safeguard of the territorial integrity from external attack to the inclusion of human security as a focal point.

Security, in any objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. Whatever constitutes a national interest would be safeguarded from any form of attack (Wolfers). Security is about survival and the condition of human existence. Security also exists when people live together in a certain environment without disturbance or violent. Adejumo states that security is the act of keeping peace within the governing territories. This is usually done by upholding the national law and defending the nation from internal security threats in different areas. Adebakin also views security as freedom from danger or threats, and the ability of a nation to protect and develop itself, promote and cherish values and legitimate interests and enhance the well-being of its people.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Pierre Bourdieu's cultural reproduction and social reproduction theory to explain the integration of Almajiri Education in Nigeria. The theory underpins the frustrations in integrating almajiri education in Nigeria. Bourdieu affirms that "The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and sections of a class) in that the culture which transmits is closer to the dominant culture and that the mode of inculcation to which it has recourse is less removed from the mode of inculcation practiced by the family" (Bourdieu 80). The statement above aligns with the popular belief that the family, as the first institution of learning, has a significant impact on children's school enrollment and educational attainment. The researcher proposes that access to education in Nigeria is determined by factors such as parents' education level, family income, and community values, religion and norms. All of these factors are influenced by family background through socio-economic status, cultural and social capital.

According to Bourdieu, "cultural capital embodies the sum total of investments in aesthetic codes, practices and dispositions transmitted to children through the process of family socialization (or in Bourdieu's term habitus). In the same vein Durliem (cited in Bourdieu, 1973) calls it 'the conservation of a culture inherited from the past,' i.e. the transmission from generation to generation of accumulated information. Classical theories tend to dissociate the function of cultural reproduction proper to all educational systems from their function of social reproduction. Tramping, as they do, the representation of culture and of culture transmission of commonly accepted by the ethnologists, to the case of societies divided into classes. Nigeria is a segmented society with several ethnic groups with varied ways of life, infused in their tradition, culture and disposition notwithstanding the criticality of religious differentials.

Indigenous forms of education in Nigeria were organized around culturally diverse groups in the north and the south of the country. These institutions based their education upon their tradition and culture before the advent of western-styled education. Thus, both the south and the north developed early childhood education through various means; for the north, this was based on Quranic education while the south, had a traditional system related to inculcating respect

for elders and knowledge in communal heritages (Imam 1). These forms of education handed down through generations gave the child the necessary skills to fit into adult communal life. However, these systems especially for the southern parts of the country soon gave way to western-styled education brought on by the colonialists and Christian missionaries. This model of education was more receptive in the southern parts than in the north-an occurrence that has given rise to huge disparities in literacy and enrolment rates of pupils in western-styled schools till date (Imam 182, Antoninis 4). This is partly also due to the fact that Quranic education has long been in existence centuries before the introduction of western education and has evolved as “valued institutions of religious socialization and social reproduction” (Nasir 4).

INTEGRATING ALMAJIRI EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE RESPONSE

As early as the 1950s there was yearning for transforming the almajiri education to a more refined system that would meet conventional realities. People like the late Malam Aminu Kano have, as early as the 1950s, advocated the establishment of *Islamiyyah* schools in place of *makarantar allo* (almajiri schools) so as to reflect the socio-economic dynamics of modern world. In this kind of arrangement, children can attend schools within their immediate vicinity under the watchful eyes of their parents and guardians (Khalid).

In the recent time federal Government of Nigeria made attempts to integrate western education with Islamic education so as to transcend the Almajiri to functional member of noble society. The purpose of integrating the two system of education is to provide education opportunities for this category of children to acquire Qur’an education as well as basic western education so as to improve their living condition. By doing these, it will enable each state of the federation to achieve Educational for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The integrated Almajiri schools are to offer the following core subjects, English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies together with Hausa, Computer, PHE(Physical and Health Education) and Handwriting under formal system of education with Agriculture, Trade, Commerce, Handcraft, Mechanic, Vulcanizing and Islamic Calligraphy among others as vocational skills of their curriculum. While the component to the curriculum of non-formal education is Qur’anic education which involves strong foundation in recitation of the Glorious Qur’an and Islamic studying include Qira’atul Qur’an, Tahfeez, Tajweed, Arabic, Islamic Studies, Tauhid, Hadith, Fiqh and Sira (Yusha’u, Tsafe, Babangida and Lawal 125-134).

Consequently, national guidelines for the development and integration of the Almajiri education into basic education were developed for the states, local governments and nongovernmental organizations, which may collaborate with the federal government on the project to meet its objectives and sustainability. The guidelines have three models:

- a. Model One focuses on the integration of traditional Tsangaya Qur’anic School into the formal education system within its original location.
- b. Model two, model boarding Almajiri schools involving the establishment of model boarding schools to serve a group of Tsangaya/Qur’anic schools within a given location.
- c. Model Three is the integration of basic education in established Islamiyyah and Ma’ahad schools (Media trust 1).

A total of 125 Almajiri model schools are being constructed in 27 states of the Federation, out of which over 80 have been completed and the remaining ones are in their final stages of completion. The completed schools are being handed over to the state governments to facilitate enrolment and employment of teachers to man them. The responsibility of constructing the schools was shared among the funding agencies of both basic and tertiary education. The Universal Basic Education, UBEC, is constructing 89 of these schools, out of which 64 have been fully completed and furnished with learning taking place, while the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund, constructed 35 of these schools, which were already commissioned last year. On the November 2, 2013, President Jonathan performed a symbolic launching of the 64 newly completed and furnished Almajiri schools in Sokoto state. The 64 schools commissioned are located in Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Bauchi, Yobe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Oyo, Osun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Edo, Rivers, Kogi, Niger, Katsina, Taraba and Nasarawa States (Media trust).

Nigeria is a nation that values and has embraced education for a very long time. The government is of the hope that for the benefit of all citizens, the country’s education goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the realities of our environment and the modern world. FGN (2004) states that ‘every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability’.

The policy on education in Nigeria has always meant well for the development of both the individual and the nation at large; different regimes (uniformed and civilian) have pursued educational programmes with vigour. Even the UBE scheme which focused on the education of the various segments of the less privileged Nigerians did not quite address the integration of the almajiri system into the Western education. Successful northern rulers did not envisage that the neglect of this teeming almajiri population could and would become a menace and a thing of national disgrace in the future. Recently there is a sudden renewed interest in the almajiri syndrome and the need to integrate them into the formal school system. The Nigerian government formally signed into law almajiri education on the 10th April 2012. In his presentation to the National Economic Council in July 2013, the Minister of state for Education, Ezenwo N. Wike, wrote that: ‘to ensure that Almajiris are provided with opportunities for access to Basic Education, Federal Government set up the National Committee on Implementation of Almajiri Education Programme. The Committee is charged with integrating the Almajiris into the UBE Programme without prejudice to acquiring a sound mastery of Qur’anic knowledge. The programme is to help in the acquisition of skills to enable them participate more actively in society. The programme is in line with the Transformation Agenda of the Administration under President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

A Presidential Review Meeting on Almajiri Education Programme was convened by the then Vice President, Arc. Muhammadu Namadi Sambo GCON on 11th May, 2012 at the Banquet Hall of the Presidential Villa. At the meeting, the stakeholders (Governors, Secretaries to State Governments, Commissioners for Education, SUBEB Chairmen and Traditional Rulers) signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) to support the efforts of the Federal Government and replicate the Almajiri Education Programme in their respective States. The Commission had trained 58 UBEC Quality Assurance Officers and State Almajiri Education Desk Officers on Quality control in Almajiri Schools. 270 Almajiri Model School Proprietors and head teachers who commenced Academic activities were trained on curriculum implementation and use of textbooks in teaching and learning. 174 number of SUBEB Desk officers, Local Governments Education Secretaries and Chairmen of SBMCs were trained on establishment of School Based Management Committees in Almajiri Schools (UBEC, Almajiri Education Programme Unit, Update on Almajiri Education Programme).

Kano State initiated a prohibition against almajiri by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development (MOWASD) in order to reduce prevalence of child labor in Nigeria by 2015. This initiative which was meant to take almajiri off the streets of Kano has only succeeded in taking them off the major streets but the story is still the same in the interior and slum areas of the city as demonstrated by respondents in the interview conducted in Kano metropolis. The program is being jointly implemented by two Kano based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), the Justice Development and Peace/Caritas Advocates (JDPCA) Kano and Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED).

CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING ALMAJIRI EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

UBEC reports that in the process of implementing the Programme and interaction with the major stakeholders, major challenges were identified. These challenges relate to the following:

- a. Lack of political will on the part of some state Governors to adopt and replicate the programme, as stipulated in the signed MoU.
- b. The use of Model Almajiri schools for purposes other than the Almajiri education by some State Governments.
- c. Non-recruitment/deployment of Basic Education teachers into Almajiri schools by some states.
- d. Non-integration of Alarammas/Mallams/Proprietors into the programme. This is of great concern to the success of the programme.
- e. Recruitment/deployment of non-Muslim teachers to teach in Almajiri Schools. This act, at the initial stage, can endanger the programme.
- f. Non-inclusion of feeding as a retention strategy by the States and Local Governments. It was observed that only a few states have taken action in this regard (1-11).

Isiaka says the Model Almajiri educational has been implemented for more than one year since inception in 2013. Like any other innovations in education, there has been verbal report on some issues revolving around non availability of relevant curriculum in school, inadequacy of well trained and qualify teachers, poor funding, inadequacy infrastructural for learning, poor sanitation, lack of adequate sensitization and mobilization, and among others.

i. Cultural and religious differential and peculiarity

Indigenous forms of education in Nigeria were organised around culturally diverse groups in the north and the south of the country. These institutions based their education upon their tradition and culture before the advent of western-styled education. Thus, both the south and the north developed early childhood education through various means; for the north, this was based on Quranic education while the south, had a traditional system related to inculcating respect for elders and knowledge in communal heritages (Imam 1). These forms of education handed down through generations gave the child the necessary skills to fit into adult communal life. However, these systems especially for the southern parts of the country soon gave way to western-styled education brought on by the colonialists and Christian missionaries. This model of education was more receptive in the southern parts than in the north-an occurrence that has given rise to huge disparities in literacy and enrolment rates of pupils in western-styled schools till date (Imam 182, Antoninis 4). This is partly also due to the fact that Quranic education has long been in existence centuries before the introduction of western education and have evolved as “valued institutions of religious socialisation and social reproduction” (Nasir 4). This scene consequently, showed a triple system of education in Nigeria before independence.

Anderson-Levitt says an important reason for these views on western-styled education came up in his interaction with one of the Imams. According to him, parents fear that western schooling may alienate their children from learning the Quran. He also highlighted the narrow focus of western education as teaching only the means to be wealthy whereas parents want an education that is also morally relevant to their children. These fears of parents confirmed the views that western-styled schooling serves to crowd out local knowledge. With such beliefs, western-styled education and schooling have not meshed local values central to early child’s development (987-1006).

Political Merchants, Elites Perception and Political Will

Niraland forum quotes Salisu Tambuwal a Zamfara based Islamic scholar that he (Salisu), reads hypocrisy into the supposed efforts of the northern governors. He says, ‘For the nine years some impact should have been made in the area of poverty alleviation, which is the root cause of this problem. There is no sincerity in their hearts because if they eradicate the problem, there will be no place for them to recruit political thugs.’ Yau establishes that Yandabas, that almajiri, from mere street beggars, do transform to street gangs known as Yandabas in Kano. The activities of this group of thugs have led to the death of many in the past. Politicians have allegedly used this group to attack political opponents and to promote electoral fraud in their quest for power.

The Federal government initiative on Almajiri is not well supported by northern states government even though education is on concurrent legislative list. There is palpable lack of political will of the governors of beneficiary states. After building the magnificent Almajiri Model Schools Structures, equipping them and commissioning thereafter, they were not run effectively by the states.

According to Shehu, there is basically nothing new in saying Boko is Haram. The perception that Boko is Haram has been with us since Boko (Western education) came to the North through Christian missionaries. Northern Muslims then and some even now, feared the Christianization of their children if they enrolled them in Boko schools, hence the predominance of Almajiri schools. The products of these schools have often preached that Boko is Haram and in spite of this, decade after decade, the northern elites have allowed this system to flourish.

ii. Lack of proper collaboration of government with international organizations

UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics (UIS), UNESCO Fact Sheets Documents/fs-18-OOSC-2. 61 puts that million children of primary school age were out of school in 2010, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for one-half of this total worldwide(1). Children drop out due to poverty, social marginalization, irrelevant/poor education content (Wim, Integrating) and/or conflicting social or economic obligations (Wim, Towards). Conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as natural calamities (e.g., typhoons, floods, earthquakes), are also temporary or long-term reasons for not attending school. Because failure to attend school leads to entrenchment in a lifetime of poverty, many developing countries have set national priorities to universalize basic education. And yet despite this desire to expand access to education, many governments still do not recognize let alone support alternative programs such as community schools, mobile schools, and Qur’anic schools as centers of learning.

iii. Deviation from established tenets of almajiri education

The almajiri system was designed to build in young minds, sound 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 by some dubious and modern-day Islamic scholars, who superintend over these unfortunate children (Fowoyo 67).

This deviation cannot produce nationalist and peaceful citizens but rather a radicalized youth who may not socialize with anybody outside their religious and ethnic identities. Awofeso, Ritchie and Degeling say the Almajiri school system served as an instrument of radicalization for three important reasons “first it involves children being relocated or separated from their family and friends to the guardianship of Mallams in towns. Second, it is restricted almost exclusively to boys. Third, the curriculum of the schools is concerned primarily with teaching the sixty chapters of the Koran by rote memorization. Fourth, each school serves 25 to 500, from the ages 6 to 25. These schools are largely autonomous from government oversight”(311-325).

LINKS OF ALMAJIRI TO TERRORIST ISLAMIC SECTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

The Maitatsine disturbance in Kano broke out in 1980 with the main recruits drawn from the almajiri. In a research conducted by Shehu, it was discovered that the main adherents of Maitatsine are almajiri who the leader of Maitatsine easily indoctrinated through his teachings and fake promises. Lacking the basic necessities of life was enough to make almajiri fall easy prey to any promise that is connected to bettering their lots, so as to have a face lift. Many lives and property were lost including the members of the Police and the Army.

The Yandaba gangs are political thugs in Kano State. The membership is said to have been drawn from the almajiri. It establishes that almajiri, from mere street beggars, do transform to street gangs known as Yandabas in Kano (Yau 178-199). The activities of this group of thugs have led to the death of many in the past. Politicians have allegedly used this group to attack political opponents and to promote electoral fraud in their quest for power.

A study conducted by Salam on the members of Yandaba, majority of the gang members were school dropouts or had become involved through the process of almajiri. More than half the gang. This shows the level of intimacy between almajiri and Yandaba. Furthermore, it shows that the difference between Yandaba and almajiri is age because the Yandaba are graduates of Almajiri schools. One should not be perturbed to hear that almajiri go to Yandaba hideouts to look for food and accommodation. It is like the madrassahs in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia producing the Talibans in Afghanistan and other terrorist groups in the Middle Eastern Asia(68-77).

The origin of Boko Haram, otherwise known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda Al wa jihad' had Mohammed Yusuf as its leader and later Shekau took over. Both were killed in separate circumstances. The relationship between the almajiri and Boko Haram is not farfetched, as demonstrated by Nigerians. The belief of most Nigerians is that Boko Haram is an Islamic terrorist group who proclaimed that Western education is a sin. This background is justified by the fact that the almajiri do not attend formal school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is in the concurrent list where states and federal governments exercise powers upon. The integration should not be left to the federal government alone. The northern states governments should frontline responsibility for the integration of almajiri education with western education. The advent of Covid-19 has necessitated state governments to repatriate Almajiri to their states of origin. This situation should be leveraged upon and further make it a national policy to correct the anomalies. There should be clampdown on parents who give out children for Almajiri activities and mallam who run Almajiri system of education exclusive of the provision of Government in terms of Almajiri schools environment. Government should provide adequate funding for Almajiri schools for sustainability. This funding should cover infrastructural development and sustainability, vocational training for self-employment after completion of school.

Hence the Northern Traditional Rulers' Council (NTRC) recommend banning almajiri and outlawing begging as part of measures aimed at securing the Northern region from what it termed “sustainable socio-economic developments” just as it called on the federal government to apprehend, prosecute and punish those behind what it described heinous crime, the implementation should be pursued by the northern states.

CONCLUSION

Northern Nigeria does not have any alternative to the preponderant security breaches in the region than completely integrating Almajiri system of education to the conventional. This starves their mentors mallam from inculcating inciting and hate doctrines to the Almajiri, takes them off the streets, shores up their socio-economic status thereby vanishing the attendant susceptibility to, overtures and influences of Islamic violent extremist group.

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