

HINDRANCES AND SCENES OF ASSIMILATED ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The Hindrance of Almajiri education has been an issue of dialogue among scholars and an issue of great concern to the system. Almajiri education started from time immemorial in the Northern part of Nigeria. This paper tries to explain how the whole method started; the various scopes the system took overtime and how government came in to rescue the deteriorating state of the system by assimilation the system with the modern system, thereby making the beneficiaries (Almajirai) learn both the Almajiri education and the modern education simultaneously. In the end, the paper offers suggestions as to how the system could be improved so as to meet the standard set by National Policy on Education and subsequently attain Education for All.*

Key words: *Almajiri education system, Assimilated, Hindrance, Scenes.*

INTRODUCTION

The Hindrance of Almajirai has remained worrisome in the minds of northern leaders. This is because the practice has been a source of embarrassment to the region. The concept of Almajiri came as a result of Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina (Shehu 2014). According to Muhammed (2010) the concept of Almajiri education in Nigeria started in the olden days when the quest to acquire knowledge was prevalent, especially the Qur'anic knowledge by the Muslims, there were no laid down procedures or channels to adopt in obtaining such, except the unconventional way of handing over wards to a supposedly teacher, known as Aramma (Abdulqadir 2003). It was this Aramma that now enlist the child and the teaching of religious scriptures and way of life are indoctrinated into the young pupils (Dahiru 2011). It was so perfect and rewarding that highly educated Sheikhs and Aramma who became successful in life by holding positions of judges and teachers that were moulding the minds of the young on how to become righteous and exemplary in their future lives (Taiwo 2013). However, when the civilized life styles of the west started encroaching into the big cities of the north, some of these Arammas became allured to the greed for money and started migrating to the cities and towns with their pupils and subjected them to the vagaries of the streets (shittu and Olaofe 2015).

He further explains that one teacher can register up to a hundred and more pupils who he singularly keeps, guides and controlled; to keep them fed and accommodated are also part of the teacher's responsibilities. But nowadays even to keep and feed one hundred mouths are not easy, and perhaps impossible. But life must go on, and the pupils have to, as a must, acquire the knowledge their parents sent them to do (Abuh 2015). The little stipends the parents were able to give their wards for them and the teachers hardly sustains them for a month, so an alternative means of getting more income has to be employed (Junaid et al 2015). During the day time, when there are no classes the pupils are allowed to stretch into the town and wander around until when classes are to begin (Abdullmalik 2003). It is this going about around the town that affords the pupils to engage in menial jobs that fetches them some little

amounts. This also was kind of stopped by the people because they have other means of doing such jobs and so the pupils venture into house to house begging for remnants of food to eat. It is also said that the pupils take back part of this food to the teacher (Abdulqadir 2003). It is clear from the above, that the teacher himself is gaining from the engagements of the pupils in the town, and can do anything to sustain it.

The system that was hitherto organized and well charted has now been bastardized and abused to the extent of letting our children roam streets and picking remnants of food leftover from dustbins (Dahiru 2011). One other aspect of the system that has been abused nowadays is the degenerated value of trust and togetherness that our forefathers have lived and died with. This issue of lack of trusts is as a result of the changing world in terms of orientation and our rush for acquiring the status of a civilized lot (shittu 2015). Coupled with this is also the government's nonchalant attitude of fending for the citizenry that results in thousands of our youths daily roaming the streets looking for what to eat (Muhammed, 2010).

According to Salis (1995), Said (1992), and Garba (1996) cited by Ndem (2012) assimilation of almajirai education becomes necessary due to the predicaments of traditional almajirai educational system. Assimilation is the merging of the two system of education together, The combination of the western system of education with Qur'anic system of education, the establishment of Almajiri Assimilated Schools (AAS) across the country is one of the governments' intervention strategies to curtail the menace of street begging by children and youth in the name of pursuing Qur'anic Education (Gomen 2017). The school is to accommodate the Almajiri who are coming to the city from far and near villages for Qur'an knowledge. They mostly arrive without provisions and other essential needs; consequently they move from house to house, street, motor packs, restaurants, and other public places. Gradually they become exposed to child abuse, neglect, health hazard, hawking and other forms of social vices. Many of the Almajirai are orphans and vulnerable children (shittu and Olaofe 2015). The purpose of the assimilation of the two systems of education is to provide educational opportunities for these categories of

children to acquire Traditional Qur'an Education and Basic Western Education so as to improve their living condition and empower the Almajirai and their Aramma. This will also enable each State of the federation to achieve Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Mahuta 2009).

Moreover since the creation of the school in Yobe state, Almajiri within and outside the state has been enrolled while teaching and learning process had already commenced. Therefore, this paper (Hindrance and scenes of assimilated almajiri education system in northern Nigeria) intends to portray the hindrance and scenes of the programme and the students of Almajiri Assimilation Model School since its inception with a view to proffer recommendations (Shehu 2015).

2. The meaning and origin of Almajiri

The word 'Almajiri' is derived from the Arabic word 'Almuhajirun' migrants. It refers to a traditional method of acquiring and memorizing the Glorious Qur'an in Hausa/Fulani land where boys at their tender ages are sent out by their parents or guardians to other villages, towns or cities for Qur'an education under a knowledgeable Islamic scholar called Aramma. According to Bambale (2003), Almajirai (plural of Almajiri) are categorized into 3 classes:

1. *Gardi* (adult).
2. *Titibiri* (adolescent) and
3. *Kolo* (an infant)

The *Gardi* (adults) engage in some labour-intensive services for a means of livelihood while *Titibiri* (adolescent) and the *Kolo* (infant) beg for alms/food (Laniyan 2011).

Almajirci is the activities in which *Almajiri* (pupil/student of traditional *Qur'an* schools), get involved during the process of acquiring *Qur'an* and Islamic education. It's an educational system that is primarily Islamic. According to Alkali (2001) Almajirci is a semi-formal system of *Qur'an* education in which children mostly boys, are sent by their parents to take up residence with Islamic *Aramma*, for instruction in the *Qur'an* and other Islamic texts (Ja afar 2008). They further explain that it is originated from the Arabic root word *Almuhajirun* which means "immigrants", this is an allusion to the time of Prophet

Muhammad (SAW) when the people of Mecca migrated to Medina. Traditionally, children would be sent to places far away from their parents, where they would be under the custody of an *Aramma* to acquire religious knowledge while also learning to fend for them (Salis 1995 cited by Abuh 2015). They would beg for alms or serve in their teachers farms as a means of compensation for their religious education and upbringing.

Also, studies by Ayuba (2009) and Hassan (2010) indicate that *Almajirci* practice is religiously legitimized since the Prophet (S.A.W.) was reported to have advised Muslims to travel in search of knowledge even up to China. It is said in a Hadith that:

"Who ever is able to set out seeking knowledge will be walking in the path of God until his return and who ever dies while in pursuit of learning will be regarded as Martyr".

This is the reason why Islamic scholars travel and migrate to different parts of the world in search of knowledge with their students, but right from initial stage begging was not a virtue of this practice as the Prophet of Islam that brought the Qur'an and knowledge of Islam discouraged begging (Yau 2001). As the Prophet says that it's better for a believer to go and cut firewood in the bush and sell than begging.

Ibrahim (2010) observes that Islam encourage people to seek knowledge but does not in any way promote begging or allowing children to be wandering on empty stomachs under the guise of searching for *Qur'an* education.

3. Almajiri system of education

The term Almajiri is a Hausa word for pupil or student and emanates from the Arabic word Almuhajir which means a seeker of Islamic knowledge. Its origin can be traced from the migration of Prophet Mohammed from mecca to medina. Those who migrated with the prophet to medina were called Al-muhajirru; meaning migrants. In Nigeria, the word Almajiri mean those who left their village or town, parents, relation I have another one from next publication, if is ready for next, let me know will send it to you for next publication and friends in search of Islamic religious knowledge and scholarship, (Khalid 2000).

The Almajiri in northern Nigeria started around the 11th century in Kanem Borno and was later

replicated in the Sokoto caliphate after the triumph of the Jihad led by sheikh uthman Dan fodio. Both empires not only promoted the scheme but also supported it with public finances (Abdulqadir 2003). Aside the authority's recognition and promotion the scheme also enjoyed the support of other major stakeholders such as the community, the parents and the pupils themselves. Later on the products of the system were to from the group of elite that controlled various government organs and parastatals in the pre and post-colonial northern Nigeria (shittu and Olaofe 2015).

In 1904, when the British invaded and colonized northern Nigeria they manned the treasury and abolished state funding of Almajiri school system, which they saw as mere religious school. "Boko" meaning western education, was introduced and funded instead (Abdulqadir 2003, Gomment and Esoachi 2017).

The present day Almajiri, who are victims of neglect and exploitation are seen everywhere singing and begging for food and money, being vulnerable to abuse, drug trafficking and various forms of exploitation. The conditions of living are below average as shown in their torn, dirty looking cloth, hungry stomach and unkempt body (Okonkwo 2017).

These Almajiri are mostly found far away from their places of residence in search of Islamic knowledge, which mean they do not reside with their biological parents, who far religious, tolerance, marry as many wives as possible and produce scores of children and dump them in Almajiri school because Islamic education is free; and in most cases, some of the parents never show up again, let alone cater for their children (Gomment and Esoachi 2017).

Almajiri education is an aspect of Northern Nigeria Islamic Education System. It is semi-formal non-secular education in which children between the ages of four and eighteen are assigned to wandering Islamic teachers usually referred to as Arammass to learn the Qur'an and also acquire some form of Islamic knowledge (Ja afar 2008). *Almajirci* is a sunnah of the prophet (SAW) that is being practiced in most Muslim countries. Though Almajirci is a good system, but the phenomenon as it is being practiced in the Northern part of Nigeria is immoral, obsolete and

it needs a concerted effort to reform (Khalid 2002). The hindrance is not with the system but the process, the traditional *Qur'an* schools still remain mostly one classroom located outside a mosque, private house or under a tree. The school environment in most cases tends to be unfriendly, overcrowded and unhygienic, the negative impact of the system is child labour in which *almajirai* must assist their teachers in earning what to eat with his family and they also have to earn a living by begging not only to feed themselves but also to contribute to the welfare of the *Aramma* (teachers) (Jega 2000). These *Qur'an* schools have their own types of syllabus, methodology, time table and several years before the child graduates (shittu 2015). The system evolved with good intention, and it is serving a good purpose, but nowadays the *almajiri* system has turned *almajirai* (pupils) to be tools for money making for their *Aramma*, some are even required to give a fixed amount on daily basis, feed themselves and cloth themselves, so they have to always roam about at motor parks, house to house, the streets and other public places begging for money just to escape punishment from the *Aramma* (Abdulqadir). They render services as plate washers in restaurants and even prohibited places, which make some of the *almajirai* to result in intermingling with bad people, engaging in prohibited conducts like pocket picking, stealing, or being mobilised by other people to promote violence in return for money. They even waste their time in other unnecessary activities instead of acquiring knowledge (Yau 2001).

Bako and Sule (1994) cited by Yushau *et al* (2015) observed that, in Northern Nigeria the *Qur'an* school system predated the western education system, but the majority of the population still looks upon the *Qur'an* system to provide training for their offspring. In fact, most families view the *Qur'an* system as assimilated educational set up with the capacity to provide training for children, but unfortunately the realities of the system has changed; it's not in a position to carry on with its traditional task as before.

That the degeneration of the *Qur'an* school system into the present state of not being able to provide adequate care for its pupils and students had its roots in the history of the socio-economic,

Hindrances and Scenes of Assimilated Almajiri Education System

political and cultural transformation of the society in Nigeria (Umar 2003). He also added that the colonial experience was the turning point in the history of this transformation. It is believed that to acquire Islamic education is the creation of a good and righteous man and Islam is a religion that is primarily based on education. It encourages literacy pursuit and enjoin its followers to seek more and more knowledge generally (Abdullmalik, 2008). Furthermore, Islam attaches great importance to knowledge and considers it the basis of human development and key to the growth of culture and civilisation.

4. The Dilemmas of Almajiri system of education

Almajiri is a religious practice which has come up with some innovations that are contrary to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) because instead of being in the school to study, unfortunately, all they do is to waste their time to beg for livelihood and engage in unlawful activities. Khalid (2000) observed that, one of the most serious charges leveled against *Almajiri* is that it subjected its clients to a condition of begging (Khalid 2002). The Kano State Committee Report on *Almajirai* adequately reflected this opinion when it reported that the agony of lives of five – ten years old child having to live barely on his own with virtually no visible means of support for his livelihood other than the little charity he gets from good Samaritans is a real one (Umar 2003). This report identified some factors that contributed to the hindrance of *Almajiri* apart from begging and wandering on the street. These factors include;

- I. Norms and values of society encourage children of age 3-5 years to be enrolled in *Qur'an* school.
- II. Parental ignorance and poverty as most of these children come from peasant families
- III. Inadequate commitment on the part of the government
- IV. Distance of centres of learning from the rural areas to communities.
- V. Non specific year of graduation in the traditional *Qur'an* boarding school, make the *almajirai* pupils/students to lack opportunities for western types of education.

In a nutshell, the major hindrances affecting the *Almajiri* schools are:

- I. Unfriendly environment

- II. Over crowdedness
- III. Inadequate instructional materials
- IV. Insufficient teachers and instructors.
- V. Inadequate community support to *Qur'an* schools among others.

Commenting on the hindrances of *Almajiri* system of education, Muhammad (2010) explained that many people criticize and condemn the system of *Almajiri* education due to some hindrances associated with it. The condemnation is not in relation to the type of knowledge received by the pupils, but due to some identified hindrances in it which include;

I. Inadequate provision of feeding: The *Almajiri* migrates without adequate provision for feeding, clothing, shelter and essential human needs. This may not go well for small children, who may not be able to work elsewhere as labourers to feed themselves. This sometimes exposes them to juvenile delinquency (Ndem 2012).

II. Over population: Numerical growth of these *Almajiri* per *Aramma* and *Qur'an* centers makes it difficult for *Aramma* to control them and it also leads to congestion, health hazard, poor environmental conditions and insecurity among others (Sifawa 2006).

III. Lack of payment of salary: Although imparting knowledge in this type of schools are on voluntary basis, with an intention of seeking Allah's reward in this world and hereafter. This has some negative effects on the pupils because *Aramma* may not concentrate fully on the teaching process, because of other business like trading, farming etc. so as to get means of survival for himself and his family, this is the major reason why they engage *Almajiri* in farming, hawking, child labour and begging (Sule 2002).

IV. Age: Pupils in *Almajiri* system of education are under aged (below six years) admitted into the system (boarding) instead of studying on domestic based schools where they will be under the care of their parents/guardians.

V. Methods of discipline: The nature of discipline in some *Almajiri* school does not help in changing the pupils for the better. For instance, continuous flogging is assumed to instill fear in the minds of the *Almajirai* but instead of them to change their negative attitudes they become recalcitrant.

Sule (2002) lamented that in Northern Nigeria the hindrances of *Almajiri* were manifested in

Hindrances and Scenes of Assimilated Almajiri Education System

various forms of social explosions like:

- I. Mai-tatsine crisis
- II. Yan Daba Phenomenon
- III. Area boys
- IV. Yan Daukar Amarya incidences.
- V. Yan Sara suka
- VI. Accommon
- VII. Boko Haram

He continues to say that *Almajirci* became an ideal reason for some parents to condense the burden of rearing children and that the *Almajiri* phenomenon provided the basis for enrollment of masses of Muslim kids into all sorts of anti-social activities, mostly twisted into beggars, hawkers and wanderers (Taiwo 2013). The *almajirai* were made to live in remorseful state of learning and most of them live in condition of poor:

- i. health
- ii. mal-nutrition
- iii. Accommodation
- iv. Immorality.

Hamza (2009) opined that *Almajirai* of present time are somehow made as tools for money making for the Aramma. Some of them do go to restaurants to wash plates and fetch water so that they will be given left over foods. They are all over the streets, very dirty, hungry, thirsty, lack all kinds of necessities of life and at times they cause traffic hazards. United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF (2008) added that *Almajiri* -child also serves as domestic servants or porters to other people and do odd jobs that are hazardous, detrimental to their health and exploitative. Their basic rights to survival and development as well as protection are violated as they are exposed to all forms of violence, discrimination, abuse and neglect by parents or guardians. The empirical findings of their study confirmed the value of ability of the *Almajirai*-children of *makarantan-allo* and reveal the fact that they are further disadvantaged, discriminated against and are marginalized by members of the society who operate, patronize and condone the *Almajiranci* system of education (Shittu and Olaofe 2015). This is further made apparent by the violations of right to life human dignity, universal basic education, health, parental love, care, maintenance Socialization, value orientation and the right to grow up in a family environment (Abuh 2015). These deprivations constitute gross

violation of children's rights guaranteed under both the Shari'a and the Nigerian constitution. The *almajirai* are socially and even psychologically disoriented, they cannot be mobilised for positive social change. Apart from loss of filial and by extension human emotions, they are so deprived. These deprivations are not only disincentive for positive social change but the humiliations and agonies of endangers makes them very violent (Okonkwo 2017).

5. Assimilate Almajiri education

Assimilation means merging two things or two system of education together to form a whole. In this case, it is the combination of the western system of education with *Qur'an* system of education. The concept of assimilation as clearly understood is the introduction of the elements of basic education i.e. the literacy, numeracy and life skills of the western type of education into the traditional *Qur'anic* school system. In other words, it connotes injecting the essential components of public schools into *Qur'an* schools (Mahuta, 2009). The concept of assimilation means to join elements of basic education that is, western type of education together with traditional *Qur'an* school systems without interfering with the goals of the *Qur'an* school system (Alkali 2001). But just to strengthen the ability of the learners to read, write and memorise the *Qur'an* in a conducive learning atmosphere and to introduce secular subjects of education into *Qur'an* school system thereby making the products literate, numerate and to enable them acquire manipulative and survival skills in the modern formal system to meet the goals of Education For All (EFA) and to eradicate *Almajirci* method of involving teenage children into street begging, hard labour, unhygienic condition, social vices and also to provide adequate and qualitative instructional materials in both Islamic and secular subjects (EFA 2005).

6. Conclusion

The assimilation of Almajiri education could not have come but now hence there must be some prospects and hindrances encountered by the school. One of the major hindrances faced by the students is the difficulties in the understanding of English language which is the general language of communication in the classroom. Another major notable hindrance is the inadequacy in food

given to the students. However, the schools have qualified teachers who are graduates of NCE, BSc/Bed and even MSc/Med degrees. Likewise the teachers are not only experienced but also punctual and committed to their duty. This suggested that the future could be bright for the school of the *Almajiri*. The *arammas* (teachers) will also be salvaged from poverty.

Honors and dignity will be accorded to the student, graduates and teachers of Assimilated *Almajiri* School in the society as their mode of dressing and way of life will be totally different from the traditional *Almajiria*.

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*Hindrances and Scenes of Assimilated *Almajiri* Education System*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is essential to provide high-quality financial reporting to influence users in making investments decisions, and to enhance market efficiency. A qualitative financial report can be best achieved if properly regulated through high level of compliance with the established standards in the preparation and presentations of financial statements (Herath, 2017). Standards are guidelines, usually in form of statements which provide detailed guidance on how to deal with a specific accounting problem.

Providing high quality financial reporting information is highly important because it will positively influence capital providers and other financial information users in decision making and enhance the overall market efficiency. This implies that, financial information issued by companies has become an essential resource for many users. However, since the users of financial reports, will use it for decision making there is need for companies to provide a relevant and faithful financial report. The report should be understandable, complete, reliable, timely and comparable so that it will not mislead the financial information users in decision making (Kantudu 2017).

In response to the above need, the Nigerian Accounting Standard Board (NASB) now Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN), a body responsible for developing accounting standard in Nigeria developed and issue statement of accounting standards, to facilitate the preparation of financial reports and provide the necessary guides on how accounting information should be prepared and reported in the annual reports, with the view to enhancing financial reporting quality in Companies operating in Nigeria.

Prior to 1st January, 2012 all accounting standard are developing and issue by Nigerian Accounting Standard Board, from 1st January, 2012 when Nigeria adopted international Financial Reporting standard (IFRS) all the IAS, IFRS and SAS are applicable in the Nigeria except that if IAS/IFRS is inconsistent with an SAS, the IAS/IFRS would be inapplicable to the extent of the inconsistency. This implies that on any matter on which IAS/IFRS and SAS make conflicting pronouncement, the SAS shall supersede the

IAS/IFRS in Nigeria (Hamid, 2014). As such, oil and gas companies in Nigeria still use the provisions of Statement of Accounting Standards (SAS) namely; SAS 14 (Accounting in the Petroleum Industry: Upstream activities) and SAS 17 (Accounting in the Petroleum Industry: Downstream activities). It is to be noted that IASs and IFRSs are issued by International Accounting Standard Board (IASB) which was formerly International Accounting Standard Committee (ICANPACK, 2014).

Over the years, numerous standards have been issued by IASB, but suffice to say that

a few of these standards are actually devoted or assigned to oil and gas companies' usage (Oluwagbemiga, 2014). Moreover, the primary assignment of an accountant is to account for the operations of a company in an acceptable manner that will reflect the true and fair financial position of a company and prepare financial report to reflect such economic transactions which will be presented in the Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Financial Performance, Statements of Financial Positions and Explain Key areas in the Notes to Account. Failure to provide a qualitative financial report will result in weakening the investors' confidence towards the management team and the financial reports.

It is against the above analysis that this study is aimed at investigating the impact of compliance with Statement of Accounting Standard 17 (SAS 17) on the Financial Reporting Quality listed oil marketing companies in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

Business firms are considered to have a separate existence and personality of its own. The firm considered to be separate legal entity with the power to have life of its own, own property, assets, create liabilities, sue and be sued in its own name. Moreover, in the modern business world today, there is a complete separation between ownership and control, shareholder provide their resources/capital for business and employ expert to come and manage the affairs of the business. This separation brought about a

relationship between the management and owners of the business (Kantudu, 2014). Financial statement provided by the management have to be