

METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING IN ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS AND ITS CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Almajiri system of education in Northern Nigeria represents a longstanding tradition centered on Quranic memorization and Arabic instruction. This paper critically examines the methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools, elucidates the challenges faced within this educational framework, and proposes recommendations for reform. This study employs a qualitative research approach, synthesizing findings from scholarly articles, reports, and empirical studies. Primary data sources include academic journals, international organizational reports, and governmental publications focused on education in Northern Nigeria. Secondary data sources provide empirical insights into the challenges facing Almajiri schools, the effectiveness of current pedagogical practices, and the socio-economic impact on students within this system. The methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools centers on Quranic memorization through rote learning, supplemented by basic Arabic language instruction and informal teachings on Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. While fostering religious literacy, this approach neglects formal education in critical subjects such as mathematics, science, and English, limiting students' academic and vocational opportunities. Inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic barriers exacerbate educational disparities and hinder overall student development. It is useful and applicable to all government agencies like ministries of education and policy makers as well as curriculum developers. Many contemporary scholars in the field of education and curriculum developers lacks the familiarity of the significance and role played by Almajiri education system and its achievements in the yester years before the adoption of the modern educational system in the study area. This can bring the attention of people concern on the restructuring of Almajiri system of education to compete with the modern educational system.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is the main concern in every government and society nowadays. It highlights the importance of developing students holistically covering the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects. The objective of the Nigeria's educational system is captured in the National Education Policy as education is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God (Oduolowu, 2020). Such an effort is designed to produce good citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large. In Northern

Nigeria, the Almajiri system of education has been a traditional method of Qur'anic instruction for centuries. The methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools primarily revolves around memorization of the Quran, with an emphasis on recitation and basic understanding of Arabic. This system is rooted in the Islamic tradition and has served as a means of imparting religious knowledge to young boys (Almajiris) from various backgrounds, often from impoverished families (Adamu, 2018).

The Almajiri system has been a prominent feature of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria, where young boys (Almajiris) receive religious instruction primarily in Quranic memorization and Arabic (UNICEF, 2014). This system, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, has evolved over centuries and continues to play a significant role in the educational landscape of the region. However, the methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools and its associated challenges pose critical concerns for educational policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders. Rooted in Islamic tradition, the Almajiri system has historically served as a primary vehicle for Qur'anic education among young boys in Northern Nigeria. Emphasizing rote memorization and recitation, often under the guidance of a single teacher (Mallam), Almajiri schools operate in informal settings known as Tsangaya (Isyaku & Mohammed, 2019). While integral to cultural identity and religious literacy, the system confronts profound challenges in meeting contemporary educational standards and addressing socio-economic disparities.

The literature on Almajiri education underscores its dual role as a custodian of Islamic knowledge and a site of socio-economic marginalization. Mustapha (2016) posits that the Almajiri system, rooted in historical and theological contexts, emphasizes Quranic memorization as central to religious education. Conversely, UNICEF (2014) highlights systemic deficiencies in infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum diversification, contributing to educational inequities and perpetuating socio-economic disadvantage among Almajiri students. Oduolowu (2020) argues for comprehensive reforms, advocating for integrated educational approaches that balance religious teachings with formal education in science, mathematics, and vocational skills.

There are some challenges in implementing new curriculum and integrated Almajiri school method in northern Nigeria. Although the current Nigerian education system has come out with a new model and curriculum for Almajiri Schools under the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), issues related to teaching methodologies are still prevalent. Studies conducted by previous researchers showed that most of the Islamic Education teachers do not utilize instructional materials to enhance the teaching and learning processes relevantly (Mustapha, 2016). Therefore, this paper is aimed to identify the teaching methodologies among Almajiri school system in northern Nigeria and to identify their major challenges as well as most preferred teaching methodologies to be adopted for the success of the reform.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing literature review and analysis of existing scholarly works on the Almajiri education system. Primary sources include academic journals, reports from international organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO, and government publications related to education in Northern Nigeria. Secondary data from educational surveys and empirical studies provide insights into the current state of Almajiri schools, their methodologies of teaching, and the socio-economic challenges faced by students within this system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools centers on Quranic memorization through rote learning, guided by a single teacher (Mallam) in informal settings known as Tsangaya. While this approach fosters religious literacy, it neglects formal education in subjects such as mathematics, science, and English, limiting students' opportunities for academic and vocational advancement. Poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic disadvantage further impede educational progress and overall well-being among Almajiri students. Social stigma and policy neglect exacerbate these challenges, perpetuating systemic inequalities within the education system.

A. Methodology of Teaching in Almajiri Schools in Northern Nigeria:

The methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools in northern Nigeria centers around several key aspects which includes:

1. **Quranic Memorization:** The primary focus of Almajiri education is on memorizing the Qur'an. Students spend substantial time each day reciting and memorizing verses under the guidance of a teacher (Mallam). Quranic memorization is conducted through rote learning, where repetition and recitation are integral to the learning process. This method aims to instill deep familiarity and mastery of the holy text.
2. **Teacher-Student Dynamics:** Almajiri schools typically operate in informal settings, often outdoors or in simple structures known as Tsangaya. A single teacher oversees the education of a group of students, providing individualized instruction in Quranic recitation and memorization. The teacher-student relationship in Almajiri schools is characterized by mentorship and guidance, with the Mallam playing a central role in the students' educational and personal development.
3. **Arabic Language Instruction:** Alongside Qur'anic studies, Almajiri students are taught basic Arabic language skills. This includes learning to read and write Arabic script, which is essential for understanding the Quranic text and engaging with Islamic scholarship. Arabic language instruction in Almajiri schools aims to equip students with foundational linguistic skills necessary for religious study and communication within the Islamic community.
4. **Informal Curriculum:** Beyond Qur'anic memorization and Arabic language instruction, Almajiri schools may include teachings on Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), Islamic history, and ethical principles. The scope and depth of these subjects vary depending on the knowledge and expertise of the Mallam. The informal curriculum of Almajiri schools reflects a holistic approach to Islamic education, encompassing religious knowledge, moral development, and community values (Dahiru et.al. 2022)

B. Challenges Facing Almajiri Schools:

1. **Lack of Formal Education:** One of the primary challenges facing the Almajiri system is its limited focus on formal education in subjects such as mathematics, science, and languages other than Arabic. This narrow curriculum restricts students' opportunities for academic and vocational advancement beyond religious studies.
2. **Poor Learning Conditions:** Many Almajiri schools lack adequate infrastructure, including classrooms, teaching materials, and sanitation facilities. Students often study in overcrowded and unsanitary environments, which hinder their ability to learn effectively and comfortably.
3. **Socioeconomic Disadvantage:** Almajiri students predominantly come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with limited access to basic necessities such as healthcare, nutrition, and social services. Economic hardship further exacerbates educational challenges and impacts students' overall well-being.
4. **Social Stigma:** There exists a social stigma surrounding Almajiri children, stemming from perceptions of neglect or abandonment by their families. This stigma can affect students' self-esteem, social integration, and opportunities for positive engagement within broader society.
5. **Policy Neglect:** Historically, the Almajiri system has received minimal attention from governmental policies aimed at improving educational standards and welfare. Efforts to reform the system have often been inadequate or inconsistently implemented, leading to persistent challenges in educational quality and equity (Mustapha, 2016).

Discussion

Addressing the challenges facing Almajiri schools requires comprehensive reforms and strategic interventions:

1. **Enhanced Curriculum Diversification:** Introduce a balanced curriculum that integrates Qur'anic studies with formal education in subjects like mathematics, science, English, and vocational skills. This approach broadens students' educational horizons and enhances their prospects for future academic and professional success.
2. **Improvement of Infrastructure:** Invest in the construction and renovation of Almajiri schools to provide adequate classrooms, sanitation facilities, and learning resources. Create conducive learning environments that promote student well-being and educational attainment.

3. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Implement professional development programs for Almajiri teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and instructional methodologies. Empower teachers to deliver high-quality education that meets the diverse needs of students.
4. **Socioeconomic Support:** Establish initiatives to alleviate socioeconomic barriers faced by Almajiri students and their families. Provide access to healthcare, nutrition programs, and social services to promote students' physical and mental well-being.
5. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Foster community involvement in supporting Almajiri education through advocacy, partnerships, and resource mobilization. Raise awareness about the importance of inclusive and equitable education for all children in Northern Nigeria.
6. **Policy Reform:** Advocate for policy reforms that prioritize the integration of Almajiri education into the broader educational system and promote inclusive and equitable educational practices.

CONCLUSION

The methodology of teaching in Almajiri schools reflects a longstanding tradition of Quranic memorization and Arabic education deeply rooted in Islamic culture. However, the system faces significant challenges, including the lack of formal education, poor learning conditions, socioeconomic disadvantage, social stigma, and policy neglect. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, communities, and stakeholders to reform and strengthen Almajiri education in Northern Nigeria. By implementing comprehensive reforms and investing in educational quality and equity, we can create positive change and improve the educational outcomes and welfare of Almajiri students.

Furthermore, your conclusion should add emphasis to your manuscript, pull the different parts of the manuscript together, emphasize important points, and demonstrate the possibilities for future exploration of the topic under research. Finally, provide some possible implications of your research for the field of study and education in general.

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