

EFFICACY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR AL-MAJIRI SYSTEM IN THE NORTHERN NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Al-Majiri system had been playing significant roles in religious knowledge and moral inculcation in the northern part of Nigeria. Prior to colonialism, most scholars were produced by this system. In the 21st Century, different spheres such as: education, political and socio-economic facets of human endeavours have been improving. Nonetheless, the system cannot withstand the challenge of the 21st Century because of its stagnation. The current government's policy has not included entrepreneurship as a potential to be tapped to improve the condition of the destitute children in Al-Majiri and most studies on entrepreneurship in the context of Nigeria neglect Al-Majiri children in the northern part of Nigeria. The primary objective of this paper is to examine entrepreneurship education towards enhancing the socio-economic condition of Al-Majiri children in the northern part of the country. The paper has demonstrated that, entrepreneurship is viable especially through policy that will support the effectiveness and efficiency of entrepreneurship education. In conclusion, it has been argued that, this inclusion is important in addressing the street begging by the majority of these children. It is thereby suggested that, UBEC and NBAIS should collaborate in initiating Entrepreneurship Development Act for business initiative among Al-Majiri students. The government should provide infrastructural facility and funds for the implementation of entrepreneurship education. Also, the management of Al-Majiri should provide commercialization strategies for the implementation of entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: *Al-Majiri, Entrepreneurship Education, Policy, Entrepreneurship Act, UBEC, NBAIS.*

INTRODUCTION

Islam at the onset has been promoting knowledge and learning. This was also obtainable in Nigeria when the religion reached the country in the 11th century whereby teaching and learning was considered as pivot in all spheres of human endeavours. Different centres of learning were established to fulfill the educational needs of Muslims. Indeed, education develops individual's capability specifically in contributing to socio-economic development of the society. It is in this regard that literature contends that, education is considered as an important instrument for promoting social justices among marginalized group in the society (UNESCO, 2010). It is only through education that citizens can actively participate in the socio-economic activities of the society.

As a result of colonialism and introduction of western secular knowledge, several Islamic schools popularly known as *Al-Majiri* predominant in the northern part of Nigeria because subservient to the western secular educational system. Hence, Islamic educational system that significantly contributed to all spheres of human endeavours became weak. It is due to

discrepancy between *Al-Majiri* educational system and conventional western oriented educational system in the northern Nigeria that, different administrations in the country have been making tremendous efforts in improving *Al-Majiri* educational system which is an integral part of fundamental human right of the children (Abdulkadir, 2008).

Hence, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international conventions have been the concern of many nations including Nigeria where ugly situation of *Al-Majiri* inhibits the attainment of this. Most of these children instead of being in the schools are rooming round the streets seeking for help such as food, clothes and alms. This trend becomes a concern by the stakeholders especially the government whereby continuity of this is a serious threat for the national security and socio-economic growth in the country (Nkechi, et al., 2012).

More concrete effort was made by the federal government through the establishment of Ministerial Committee on *Al-Majiri* Education (2010) whose primary task was to ensure that almost ten million *Al-Majiri* children that are out of schools are integrated into University Basic Education (UBE) programmes across the states in the North. Also, Ibrahim (2012) affirms that an approximate of ten million *Al-Majiri* children are out of school in the country. This scenario led to the establishment of *Al-Majiri* integrated model schools in different parts of the country which has been shown in the activities of UBEC (2010). This step is necessary because *Al-Majiri* children that are out of the schools are undoubtedly considered as a great social problem, a threat to social cohesion, social exclusion and anti-social tendencies within the society.

In spite of the above concern with regards to the improvement of *Al-Majiri* educational system, there is still a gap in the existing body of knowledge with respect to the adequate attention in addressing the problem of *Al-Majiri* children in various parts of the north. More importantly, less focus is given to entrepreneurship education as a practical solution in solving the problem of street begging among *Al-Majiri* pupils. Considering entrepreneurial activities as complementary to the effort of the government can bring lasting solution and sustainable development to *Al-Majiri* educational system. Hence, the paper is guided by the following question: Can inclusion of entrepreneurship education make meaningful contribution to sustainable development of *Al-Majiri* system in the northern part of the country? Therefore, this paper respond to the aforementioned question by meticulously examining an overview of *Al-Majiri* educational system, the inclusion of entrepreneurship education into *Al-Majiri* system in order to attain sustainable development; conclusion and suggestions are made for better practice of the system.

AN OVERVIEW OF *AL-MAJIRI* EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

This part presents the educational practice of *Al-Majiri* system predominant in the northern part of the country. *Al-Majiri* is regarded as religious training of children who are being taken to a teacher (Malam) in another village, town or state for the purpose of learning about Islamic knowledge (Abdulkadi, 2008). The system had produced a number of religious scholars who had immensely contributed in mass production of religious experts in various fields in the northern part of the country ((Dambuzu, 2012). In other words, it has been acknowledged that, most of the renowned scholars prior to colonialism and more importantly, majority of the 20th Century scholars in the northern part of the country were products of the *Al-Majiri* system (Bobboyi, 2007). However, the stagnation of the system and more importantly, the street begging by *Al-Majiri* pupils have painted the system so negative as if it is does not have any values. Many years ago, the system has been playing significant role in religious and moral values of the

young children. It is not disagreeable to posit that, the system promoted literacy and discipline among the children (Frey & Osborne, 2013).

Onwards, as a result of the fact that, there is no reform in the system for years, and there are no essential facilities and support given to the system in order to make it compete with the conventional system. This problem immensely contributes to lack of cognitive ability that can withstand the challenge of the contemporary time especially in contributing to socio-economic development in the country. There is a negative perception about *Al-Majiri* especially as being promoting child labour, poverty and ignorance (Sule-Kano, 1998). In other words, when people literally measure poverty in the northern part of the country, *Al-Majiri* Syndrome is a fundamental indices that would be used (Indabawa, 2000; Iguda, 2006). However, literature contends that, it is not common that, *Al-Majiri* children involve in atrocious behaviours such as killing, vandalization, looting etc. but they have been actively used in religious and political protest (Binta, 2006). Contrarily, it can be posited that, *Al-Majiri* Syndrome affects the overall socio-economic development in the northern part of the country (Khalid, 1997). Despite the fact that studies have demonstrated that *Al-Majiri* system has been inculcating religious values unto the children, there are still a concern on the matters of livelihood of both the teachers (malams) and the pupils (*Al-Majirai*) in the northern part of the country. Notably, integration of enterprise or entrepreneurship education into *Al-Majiri* system can be regarded as an initiative of religious and cultural shifts of the system, which expectedly to make a deep impact on socio-economic development.

Thus, there have been several agitations in addressing this because it is believed that, the condition of destitute *Al-Majiri* children contribute to the low socio-economic progress in the north (Khalid, 1997). It is undoubtedly inferred that, the system did not develop that capacity of the students in overall development of the north. Thus, there is need for total transformation of the traditional Islamic educational system (*Al-Majiri*) by incorporating essential skills especially entrepreneurship skill in order to address the problem of socio-economic progress of the region. Since there are several efforts by the government and individuals in ensuring that these children are given proper care especially by taking them out of the present predicament (i.e. street begging) which will be transformed into socio-economic development (Idabawa, 2000; Igudu, 2006). Yet, there is a gap in the existing body of knowledge with particular reference to inclusion of entrepreneurship education into *Al-Majiri* system, which should serve as alternative to the current practice of destitute of the children in different parts of the north. It is as a result of this concern that the present study attempts to find out incorporation of entrepreneurial activities into the overall activities of *Al-Majiri* system specifically by responding to the socio-economic transformation of the contemporary time.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR *AL-MAJIRI* SYSTEM

Notably, literature posits that, there is no stability with regards to the opportunities of Arabic students in Nigeria (Oladosu, 2012a; Oladosu, 2012b). This is due to the fact that, limited opportunities especially entrepreneurial activities are not incorporated into the system. As a result of this concern, this paper advocates for inclusion of entrepreneurship skill in overall activities of *Al-Majiri* system in the northern part of the country. The discourse on the entrepreneurship is considered from linguistic and technical meanings. On one hand, linguistically, entrepreneurship is derivable from the French origin of the word *entreprendre* which means to understand. On the other hand, the technical connotation of the word

entrepreneurship refers to an attempt to understand and explore business opportunities by taking risk involves into consideration (Metu & Nwokoye, 2014; Salem, 2014).

From the global perspective, it has been noted that, the international market has been growing since few decades ago where South-East Asia and Latin America have been playing significant role in the international market. Various manufactured goods such as technological products and other goods are being exported to different parts of the world. Literature contends that, there is an exploration of business opportunities towards maximizing profits (Engelhoff, 2005). This very important in the context of *Al-Majiri* in the northern part of the country because there is little or no understanding about the entrepreneurial activities in *Al-Majiri* system. Hence, literature considers an entrepreneur as someone who has an innovative idea specifically in bringing new business idea into existence (Ayandike, Emeh & Ukah, 2012). This is necessary to be cultivated in learners in *Al-Majiri* system in the northern part of the country.

As the Nigerian population growth rate proliferate, the enrolment of students into *Al-Majiri* also increases. It should be reiterated that, the current level of poverty and unemployment has been established since a decade ago when National Bureau of Statistics (2010) reported that, one hundred and five million citizens equivalent to 70% live below poverty line. It is not disagreeable to posit that, *Al-Majiri* students are inclusive in this figure because there is an infinitesimal numbers of students that get employment by either government or private sectors after graduation from *Al-Majiri* system.

It is undoubted to posit that different aspects of entrepreneurship can be explored by *Al-Majiri* students in the North part of the country. For instance, literature contends that, there are more than 70% of agriculture potentials in the country which the students can explore but with the governmental and communal supports. In exploring this, it can provide substantial job opportunities to most *Al-Majiri* students which will consequently reduce the rate of unemployment. In so doing, the products from investment can be sold to local and international markets which is an attempt to compete with South-East Asia and Latin America.

It is significant to reiterate that, there are different governmental policies meant for socio-economic development of the country, although, the policies do not fully cater for *Al-Majiri* students in attaining substantial socio-economic development in the country. Indeed, the governmental policy since few decades ago has not directly influenced the overall activities of *Al-Majiri* system until recent time the federal government under Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) tries to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) which made the government to pay attention on out-of-school and destitute *Al-Majiri* children in the north. It is on this basis that, literature contends that entrepreneurship education is important in attaining sustainable educational development (Arogundade, 2011). Hence, enterprise or entrepreneurship education cannot be achieved in *Al-Majiri* system without policy initiative and coordination by the government. Undoubtedly, the current government's policy is focusing on integrated education of *Al-Majiri* with conventional system, which has been championed by the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS). The role of government's policy in influencing and promoting entrepreneurship education.

Thereby, policy should be formulated for galvanizing human and material resources in fostering the entrepreneurship skills of *Al-Majiri* students in the northern part of the country. Thus, promoting domestic entrepreneurship especially among *Al-Majiri* students can meaningfully contribute to creation of employment opportunities and overall socio-economic development. Literature contends that, entrepreneurship education is important because it has significant impact on the international economy. In so doing, Nigeria plays significant role in the

world economy, hence, it is important that the government give meticulous attention to entrepreneurial activities among *Al-Majiri* students. Without catering for a teeming youth including *Al-Majiri* students despite the fact the government has been having various economic policies, the government cannot attain meaningful economic progress.

It is paramount to stress that, enterprise or entrepreneurship is required among the destitute *Al-Majiri* children in order to address their vulnerability. Undoubtedly, the study by Pittaway & Cope (2006) contends that, educational aspect is relevant to the enterprise or entrepreneurship skills specifically in the aspect of employability skills; social enterprise, self-employment, venture creation, employment in small businesses, small business management and the management of high-grown ventures". All the aforementioned aspects are important to *Al-Majiri* children because their levels and competencies will determine the relevance of each of the aforementioned factors. However, the general skills and theoretical knowledge are essential to all students irrespective of their levels and competencies. It should be reiterated that, pedagogy of enterprise or entrepreneurship education in the context of *Al-Majiri* system might be different from one state to the other because the approach to the implementation of entrepreneurship may vary from one school to the other as well.

Literature such as Adebayo (2010) notes that curriculum of *Al-Majiri* is majorly concerned about personal development of students. This assertion is in line with position of Ahmad (2017) that stresses that religious science is knowledge for self-survival or what Sidek (2013) termed as knowledge to manage-self while less attention is given to knowledge for communal survival or knowledge to manage the system. Undoubtedly, less focus is given to knowledge for communal survival or knowledge to manage the system and entrepreneurship is an integral part of knowledge to manage the system or communal-survival which needs to be incorporated into the curriculum of *Al-Majiri* system in order to address the syndrome ascribed with the system.

It is not doubtful to say that, the need of workforce and the need for economic viability requires that there is need to promote the establishment of entrepreneurship skill in order to fulfil the need of contemporary industrialization as literature contends (Timmons et al., 2004). Most of the skills such as problem solving and team work require for successful career of knowledge driven economy are lacking in *Al-Majiri* system in the northern Nigeria. It should be stressed that theoretical religious knowledge predominant in *Al-Majiri* system is no more viable in fostering socio-economic development which consequentially leads to the products of the system in becoming liability to the society. This assertion is not negating the paramount importance of education and training as an essential factor for socio-economic development as literature explicates (William, 1999; Kostoglou & Siakas, 2012). Nonetheless, most activities in *Al-Majiri* system does not reflect innovative and creative ideas especially in connection with entrepreneurial activities. This assertion is important to be changed especially by integrating entrepreneurial activities into the system.

Hence, it is important to incorporate creativity and innovation as an integral part of entrepreneurship skill into the overall activities of *Al-Majiri* in the north. The government should give attention to this in order to education of *Al-Majiri* system reflect and make significant impact on the overall economic growth of the country. It has been highlighted that high rate of unemployment among youths contribute to advocacy for entrepreneurship education. This is also essential in the context of *Al-Majiri* system especially preparing students with entrepreneurship knowledge and skills (Vassilis & Errikos, 2012) in order for the children to address their livelihood and well as contribute to socio-economic development of the country.

An emphasis on the entrepreneurial activities among *Al-Majiri* children is important in order to prepare them for higher education and consequently for employment in the workforce or prepare them for independent business establishment. In so doing, the sense of hard work should be cultivated in learners through their involvement in the entrepreneurial activities. It should be reiterated that, in an attempt to incorporate entrepreneurial skill into *Al-Majiri* system, some factors such as political, technological and social are paramount to be taken into consideration. All these factors are essential for entrepreneurship idea especially with the establishment of small and medium scale businesses. This position goes alongside with the need for enhancing ‘experience economy’ as being used in the study by Pirvi & Zamfirescu (2017) in the context of *Al-Majiri* system. This can only be attained when there is positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among the students and intention to engage in entrepreneurship activities is an essential factors as literature contends (Aloulou, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This paper has explicitly explicated on the significance of spiritual cultivation and moral inculcation of need for inclusion of *Al-Majiri* system. It has been further demonstrated that, most traditionalist scholars of the 20th Century specifically before colonialism were products of *Al-Majiri* system. The need for inclusion of entrepreneurship skills into *Al-Majiri* system in the northern part of the country is stressed in order to address the contemporary challenges of the system. This paper provides policy formulation as an essential framework especially in making *Al-Majiri* system viable for inclusion of entrepreneurship activities in order to make the students contribute to the overall development of the country. The paper further provides information to the stakeholders such as policy makers, ministry of education, management of *Al-Majiri* system and the entire northern region in responding to the viability and functionality of the system through harmonization of entrepreneurial activities into the system. This paper has meticulously explored the entrepreneurship education, which is connected to overall system of *Al-Majiri* system. This paper has identified a gap in the existing body of knowledge and such a gap is filled by emphatically stressing on the need to include entrepreneurship education into the system. Nonetheless, different limitations are identified in this paper. For instance, the paper is not an empirical research. However, the paper will be useful to researchers especially those who are concerned with the challenges of destitute of *Al-Majiri* children in the northern part of the country. Indeed, there is lack of proper coordination of traditional *Al-Majiri* system because there is no formal structure that could facilitate the inclusion of entrepreneurship activities into the system. Nevertheless, the establishment of modern *Al-Majiri* Integrated Model Schools (AIMS) by the federal government of Nigeria provides formal structure that can facilitate the harmonization of *Al-Majiri* children with mainstream conventional system. In so doing, with adequate facilities and structures, entrepreneurship can be initiated and integrated into the system. Hence, the following suggestions are made:

1. That this paper provides a framework for an empirical research which should be replicated across the nineteen states that constitute northern Nigeria.
2. That cross-school empirical research should be conducted in examining the possibility of and inclusion of entrepreneurship education in order to achieve rapid socio-economic development in *Al-Majiri* system.
3. That the government under Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) should initiate Entrepreneurship Development Act for business initiative in the context of *Al-Majiri* system in order to achieve economic growth development of the

- country.
4. That the federal government should provide infrastructural facility and funds for the actualization of entrepreneurship education in *Al-Majiri* system.
 5. The cooperation of proprietors, teachers and parents are important for the entrepreneurship programme for *Al-Majiri* system.
 6. There should be commercialization strategies for promoting implementation of entrepreneurial activities and skills in the context of *Al-Majiri* system.

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