

The Goodluck Jonathan Almajiri Schools Initiative in Nigeria: Examining the Cause Célèbre

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Abstract

There are about 13.2 million out of school children in Nigeria. Over 10million of these children are Almajiri (boys left to fend for themselves whilst learning Islamic scripts far away from parental homes). These set of boys have no access to formal education and have since become street urchins in major cities in Nigeria. The Goodluck Johnathan administration in a bid to get these children into schools and curb the social malfeasance associated with this demographic group initiated the Almajiri schools programme. However, the programme has since been criticized and abandoned even after committing colossal State resources in building the schools. This paper examines the controversy around the Almajiri initiative using extant literature and offers thoughtful suggestions for rethinking the policy. It contends basically that the programme was not well thought-through and was poorly implemented due to deliberate sabotage by some stakeholders. The paper therefore concludes that the Goodluck Johnathan Almajiri schools initiative was a top to down intervention. It ended as a futile attempt by the Federal government to resolve a problem that had local tap roots.

Key words: Goodluck; Johnathan; Almajiri; Schools; Initiative; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The Almajiri problem is a puzzling national question. The complexity of the quandary is due essentially to the cultural and religious basis of the system. Religious issues are often sensitive and fragile. Resolving issues with religious links through secular approaches usually pose enormous challenges. This is because the sentiments that are constructed around theological questions tend to undermine attempts at altering the status quo. There is a near consensus on the fact that the Almajiri system is generating contradictions inimical to national security and indeed human capital development. But how to confront the ills of the system has remained controversial due to the divergent views that have been proffered as remedies.

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In fact, there are traces of deliberate sabotage of interventions aimed at altering the Almajiri system. Two major view points are discernable, there are those who argue that the system requires reformation but the exact nature of reforms to institute is not agreed upon. There are also views that favor a complete ban of the Almajiri system. But advocates of this position fail to convincingly indicate how a mere ban of the system would solve the problem of millions of out of school children; resolve the abdication of parental responsibilities and mitigate poverty which are the major drivers of the Almajiri system. The Goodluck Jonathan administration alarmed by the increasing number of Almajiri children begging along streets of cities in Nigeria and the fear of their potential recruitment as Boko Haram foot soldiers and as bandits decided to promote the idea of Almajiri schools. These schools were meant to blend Islamic education and Western education in a manner that is productive and beneficial to national development. Over 15 billion naira was allegedly spent to actualize the programme. But the schools are not functional thereby rendering the massive scarce resources expended on them, a monumental waste. The question that begs for answers is; why has the Almajiri schools initiative failed? This discourse sets out to attempt answers to this very important question and by so doing refocus policy prescriptions on the subject. For clarity of exposition, the paper is organized in sections. The first section is the introduction. The second section explains the ideation of Almajiri schools. The third section examines the criticisms and controversies that undergird the Almajiri schools initiative. The conclusion is in the fourth section.

2. The Basis and Policy Thrust of the Goodluck Johnathan Almajiri Schools Initiative

The ideation on Almajiri schools flowed from the increasing numeric of out of school children and the horrid scenes of urchins on streets. Added to this, is the danger of harboring a large demographic group of untrained citizens. While addressing an audience at the Peace Summit at the Junior Chamber International in Malaysia, the former President reiterated the idea that birthed the Almajiri schools initiative thus; In Nigeria, there were 10.5 million (about 15% of the population) out of school children who were of school age, going by UNICEF figures, as at the time I became President...over 80% of these children for which majority are known as Almajiri came from the northern part of Nigeria, where I recorded the least votes in the elections I contested...knowing the value of education, I could see that the ugly situation was limiting the opportunities of these children and negatively affecting the development of my country...that was why my administration decided to build 165 Almajiri integrated model schools which combined both Western and Islamic education in its curricula [1]. The above excerpt informs on the thinking that drove the Almajiri schools initiative. The fact that hundreds of Almajiri children roam the streets of cities in Nigeria begging for food and alms is not contestable. For it is a common scene in northern Nigeria. The historicity of the Almajiri system as well as the problems the system is generating is well stated in extant literature [2, 3]. Our interest here is not to restate this familiar narrative but to put into proper analytical perspective the intellection on the Almajiri schools initiative. It is instructive to note that having vulnerable urchins in cities across a nation that is fighting an ideological war is a terrible risk that should bother any government in power. It is therefore not surprising that the Johnathan administration committed a colossal sum of money to build Almajiri model schools. Obviously, the Almajiri system has created a situation whereby young boys who are out of school are exploited and used for selfish political ends after the promise of monetary rewards or psycho-social brainwashing. A considerate appreciation of this potential threat to national security provided some justification for the interest of the Johnathan administration in

intervening in the Almajiri conundrum though the actual implementation of the programme left gaps. The Almajiri schools initiative is a product of a policy framework with two basic prongs. The first prong of the policy seeks to engage the existing traditional system of Islamic education with a view to addressing existing problems and challenges, consolidating achievements and expanding opportunities for growth and development of the system. The second prong visions a system that would integrate effectively Islamic disciplines and conventional school subjects; instill values and morals; provide dual language competency in English and Arabic; and cultivate a culture of educational excellence. These prongs essentially provide the theorization for the Almajiri schools initiative of the Jonathan Administration. The programme was officially launched on 10th April, 2012 with the commissioning of the first Almajiri integrated school in Gagi, Sokoto State. It is important to also make the point that Almajiri schools derived legal footing from the compulsory Free Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 [4]. The law sought to make basic education free and compulsory for Nigerians. Basic Education according to the Act refers to six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school education. States and local governments were saddled with the responsibility of control of basic education while the federal government provides interventions in terms of counterpart grants and funding. The Act also provided for the existence of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to provide interventions while each State and local government was mandated to establish State Universal Basic Education and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) respectively. The Almajiri model schools were constructed by UBEC and handed over to SUBEB. The table below provides the names and places where the schools were located.

Table 1: Almajiri Model Schools Constructed under Goodluck Jonathan Administration across Nigeria

S/No	State	Name of School and Location
1.	Adamawa	a. Almajiri Model School, Mubi North LGA. b. Almajiri Model School, Song LGA. c. AbdulmalikSaniBukarTsangayaAlmajiri School Hansari, Michika Ward 1, Michika LGA. d. Model Almajiri School, Mayo Balwa LGA. e. Almajiri Model School MimetaKofare, Yola, Yola North LGA. f. Model Day Primary School, Maiha LGA. g. Model Boarding Primary School, Yolde Pare, Yola South LGA. h. Model Tsangaya School, Fufore LGA (UBE).
2.	Bauchi	a. TsangayaMagayakiGwaram, Alkaleri LGA. b. TsangayaAlarammaGundumarKaafinLemu, Ningi LGA. c. TsangayaAlarammaBadamasi, Unguwar Kudu, Gwmawa LGA (Model 1). d. Model Almajiri School, Darazo LGA (Model 2). e. Model Boarding Primary School, Azare, Katagum LGA. f. Model Boarding Primary School, Buzaye, Bauchi LGA. g. TsangayaAlarammaAbdullahiGaba, Ragwam, Katagum LGA. h. TsangayaMalamMatoGumau, Toro LGA.
3.	Borno	a. MashariGoniIdrisTafizul Qur'an, Mashari Ward, Jere LGA (Model 1). b. Goni Suleiman Tsangaya School, Shehuri North, MaduguriJere LGA. c. DamboaTsangaya Kura, ShuwariDamboa LGA. d. Model Boarding Primary School, Dikwa, Dikwa LGA. e. Model Day Primary School, Munguno LGA. f. Model Day Primary School, Gwoza, Gwoza LGA. g. Ali-ShiwurTsangaya School, DamasakMobbar LGA (Model 1). h. Former College of Education Site, Magumeri Road Axis Maiduguri, Konduga LGA. i. GajiramAjariTsangaya, Ajari North GajiramNganzai LGA.
4.	Taraba	a. Almajiri Model Education Centre, Jalingo Town, Jalingo LGA.

		<p>b. Model Day Primary School, Ibbi, Ibbi LGA. c. MakarantarAlmajiri, MutumBiyu Town, Gossol LGA (Model 1).</p>
5.	Yobe	<p>a. BuniyadiTsangaya School, Gujiba LGA (Model 1). b. Model Day Primary School, Gashua, Gashua LGA. c. Model Day Primary School, Geidam, Geidam LGA. d. Almajiri Model School, KL3, MachinaRaod, Nguru LGA. e. Almajiri Model School, Damagum Town, Fune LGA. f. Model Almajiri School, Damaturu Town.</p>
6.	Gombe	<p>a. Model Day Primary School, WuroLande, YamaltuDeba. b. Sabon Sara Almajiri School, Kwami, Kwami LGA. c. MallamHamzaTsangayaShediya, Funkaye LGA. d. MallamMuhammaduBasajjwace, Mallam Inna, Gombe, Gombe LGA.</p>
7.	Jigawa	<p>a. TsangayaAlarammaJafaru, Dangwani, SuleTankarkar LGA (Model 1). b. MuhammadLawan Mai-injiTsangaya, Mai Aduwa Village, Gagarawa LGA (Model 1). c. AlarammaMallamGidanRuwaTurabu, Kirkasama LGA (Model 1). d. Model Day Tsangaya Primary School, Birniwa, Birniwa LGA. e. Model Boarding Tsangaya Primary School, Gantsa, Guji LGA. f. Model Almajiri School, Guiwa, Guiwa LGA (Model 2). g. Tsangaya School of Alaramma M. Yakubu, Zango Dan Barama Town, Jahun LGA.</p>
8.	Kaduna	<p>a. Makarantar Mal. Yusuf Labar at Igabi LGA (Model 1). b. AlarammaMohammed LawalIslamiyya School, Soba Town, Soba LGA (Model 1). c. MakarantarNurul Islam JagindiSuke, Jema,a LGA. d. Makarantar Dan Alhaji Town, Lere LGA (Model 1). e. Model Boarding Tsangaya Primary School, BirninGwari, BirninGwari LGA. f. Model Day Tsangaya Primary School, JereKagara LGA. g. Model Almajiri School, Hunkiyi, Kudan LGA. h. Almajiri School at Kuban Town, Kuban LGA. i. IzalatulBidah Was IgamatusSunnahUnguwarSobawa, Igabi LGA. j. Model Tsangaya School (UBE), Igabi LGA.</p>
9.	Kano	<p>a. WarawaTsangayaIslamiyya Model Primary School, Warawa LGA. b. Almajiri School, KwachiriAlbasan LGA. c. Kofar Kudu Almajiri Model School, Angawaran-KwammiTaraisaya Road, Kibiya LGA. d. Model Day Tsangaya Primary School, Bichi, Bichi LGA. e. Model Day Tsangaya Primary School, Gaya, Gaya LGA. f. Model Boarding Tsangaya Primary School, Tsakuwa, Dawakin LGA. g. HayyatudeenIslamiyya Primary School, KofarFada, Doguwa LGA (Model 1). h. Almajiri Model School, Ganduje Town, DawakinTofa LGA. i. MakarantarMallam Ibrahim HamzaTudun Mai ZabiGaro Town, Kabo LGA (Model 1). j. HarbauAlmajiri Model School, Tsanyawa LGA. k. Makarantar Mal DahiruAbdullahiGidanSherifaiKanwa, Madobi LGA. l. MadunatulandabQur'anic and Islamic School, DandusheBaibah, Dala LGA.</p>
10.	Katsina	<p>a. MadrasatuHadikatul Qur'an, Liman Quarters, Funtua LGA (Model 1). b. MadrasatuAbibakarihNissidiqUlumullIslamiyyahKwarawan School, Daura, Daura LGA (Model 1). c. MadrasatuIslamiyyah Al-Mubarakah, SabonGari, Danmusa LGA (Model 1). d. Model Tsangaya Primary School, Batsari LGA. e. Model Boarding Tsangaya Primary School, Jibia LGA. f. Model Almajiri School, Dutsin-Ma LGA (Model 2). g. Ma'ahadUthman Bin Affan, Barhin Quarters, Along Mani Road, Batagarawu LGA. h. Almajiri School Mahura, Kafar LGA. i. Almajiri School Kankara Town, Kankara LGA. j. Almajiri School BabbanMutum, Baura LGA.</p>
11.	Kebbi	<p>a. AbubakarSadiq Model Almajiri School, Koko, Koko Besse LGA. b. Ma'ahadMalamRabakayaIslamiyyah, Permanent Site, Beside J.I. Umar Model</p>

		<p>Primary School, NEPA Road, GRA, BirninKebbi LGA (Model 1). c. Model Day Primary School, Gwadangwaji, BirninKebbi, Argungu LGA. d. Tsangaya Model Day Primary School, Argungu, Kebbi. e. Model Almajiri School, Baadariyya, BirninKebbi LGA. f. MallamKwairreQur'anic School, Dakingari, Suru LGA.</p>
12.	Sokoto	<p>a. Mal. Haruna T-wadaQur'anic School, SabonBirnin LGA (Model 1). b. Mal. Buda BadauQur'anic School, Bodinga LGA (Model 1). c. Mal. LawalQur'anic School, Tambuwal LGA (Model 1). d. Model Almajiri School, Tureta LGA, Sokoto (Model 2). e. LimaminKalambainaQur'anic School, Kalambaina, Wammako LGA. f. Mal. Muhammad Dan Dare KaurarTabaDagawa, Yabo LGA. g. Model Tsangaya School, Plot 253 Old Airport Layout, Phase 1, Sokoto South LGA.</p>
13.	Zamfara	<p>a. MadrasatuTanbihulIslamiyya, Danmarke, Bungudu, Bungudu LGA. b. LimanDaraQur'anic School, Kanwuri, Gusau LGA (Model 1). c. MallamMaheKambarawaQur'anic School, KauranNamoda LGA (Model 1). d. Sheikh BalarabeZawiyyaQur'anic School, Gusau LGA (Model 1). e. Model Day Primary School, Gusau, Gusau LGA. f. Model Day Primary School, Gummi, Gummi LGA. g. Mallam Bashir Qur'anic School, Yelwa Area, TalataMarafa LGA (Model 2). h. MallamAbubakar Umar Qur'anic School at Dankurmi of Damgatau Emirate, Maru LGA. i. MallamBawa Umar School for Qur'anic and Sunah, Jangbe, TalataMarafa LGA (Model 1). j. MallamFaruquNalimanQur'anic School, Maradun LGA. k. LimanHabibuQur'anic School, Tsafe LGA. l. MallamAbubakarSarkinMalammaiIslamiyya School, Bakura LGA.</p>
14.	Benue	<p>a. Model Primary School, Katsina-Ala.</p>
15.	Kogi	<p>a. Model Day Primary School, Lokoja, Kogi. b. The School of Chief Imam Imane, Olamaboro LGA (Model 1). c. The School of Chief Imam of Ankpa, Along College of Education Road, OwelleAnkpa, Ankpa LGA (Model 1). d. School of Chief Imam of Anyigba, Behind Anyigba Central Mosque, Anyigba Town, Dekina LGA (Model 1). e. The School of Chief Imam, Gbede, Ijumu LGA, Kogi State (Model 1).</p>
16.	Kwara	<p>a. MallamAbubakarQur'anic School, Shinawu, Baruten LGA. b. MarkazTa'alim Arabic Al-Islamiy, Ero-omo, Ilorin South LGA. c. MarkazDarulHikmatilIslamiyyahOlaoti, Ilorin East LGA (Model 1). d. MadrasatulSiratalMustaqim, Patigi LGA (Model 1). e. Tsangaya Model Day Primary School, IsaleBaani, Ilorin, Kwara. f. Model Day Primary School, Kaiama LGA. g. Ibrahim Islamic Centre, Tepatan, Moro LGA.</p>
17.	Nasarawa	<p>a. NaibinLimaminAkwanga Traditional Qur'anic School, Ungwar Zaria, Akwanga LGA (Model 1). b. MasallachinImanAlmajiri Model School, Unguwar Salami Awei in Awei LGA (Model 1). c. MallamAbunKofa Traditional Qur'anic School, Opposite Science School, Nasarawa LGA. d. Model Almajiri School, Shabu, Lafia North LGA (Model 2). e. Model Day Primary School, Laminga LGA. f. Model Almajiri School, Toto, Toto LGA (Model 2).</p>
18.	Plateau	<p>a. SabonGidonKandarAlmajiri School, Jos South.</p>
19.	Niger	<p>a. DarulQur'anic School, ToshonGarinGulbinBoka, Mariga LGA. b. IbadurRahman Schools, SherikhAbdullahi Road T-wada, TungaMinna, Chanchaga LGA. c. AliyuYerima Islamic Model School, Bida, Bida LGA. d. Model Almajiri School Konayi in Paggo, Paikoro LGA. e. Model Boarding Primary School, Kontagora LGA. f. Model Day Primary School, Minna, Chanchagi LGA. g. Tanbilhul Islam Sheikh Jibril Memorial Nursery and Primary School, Mokwa,</p>

		Jebba Road, Mokwa LGA. h. MadrasatulNurul Islam, Bida Road Kpakungu, Minna, Chanchangi LGA.
20.	FCT	a. Model Day Primary School, Gwagwalada, FCT. b. Al-ilmu Nursery and Primary School, Kubwa.
21.	Lagos	a. Lutful-lah Arabic Almajiri School, Orofin, IbejuLekki LGA, Lagos (Model 1).
22.	Ogun	a. Alasalatu College, Oke-Effin, Abeokuta North LGA (Model 1). b. Almajiri Model School, Owode Town, Owode LGA. c. ZulihatAbiola Memorial Comprehensive High School, Osiele, Abeokuta, Odeda LGA.
23.	Ondo	a. Imam Muhammad Arabic and Islamic Institute, IkareAkoko LGA (Model 1). b. Almajiri's School Building, along Ijare Road, Akure South LGA.
24.	Ekiti	a. Islamic Modern School, EsunIkole, EkitiIkole LGA (Model 1).
25.	Osun	a. RaodatulDirasatulIslamiyya and Arabic School, Ikirun, Ifelodun LGA (Model 1). b. ZumratulMumin Al-AdabiyahQur'anic and Arabic School, Osogbo, Osogbo LGA (Model 1). c. A-Haramain Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Oke-Sunna, Ededimeji, Ede, Ede South LGA. d. Umar Bin Khatab School for Arabic and Islamic, Olukotun Area, Iwo, Iwo LGA.
26.	Oyo	a. MarkazNafin Arabic Training Institute, Iseyin, Iseyin LGA (Model 1). b. College of Arabic Studies and Islamic Education, Oyo Central, Atiba LGA (Model 1). c. Markaz Al-Mahmoun Study Centre, Apata, Iddo LGA (Model 1). d. Olore Islamic and Rehabilitation Centre, Geeru Town, Near Ajibade, Akinyele LGA (Model 1). e. Nasiruddeen Islamic Institute, Fofu Area, Ilesha Ibariba Road, Saki, Saki West LGA.
27.	Rivers	a. Model Almajiri School, Omerelu, Ikwere LGA (Model 2).
28.	Edo	a. Hira Comprehensive School, Iyakpi, Etsako West LGA (Model 1). b. Model Day Primary School, AuchiTsetsako West.

Source: EDUCELEB, "List of Almajiri Schools in Nigeria", 2020.

The table above indicates that numerous Almajiri model schools were either constructed or rehabilitated across States in the country. However, it is not clear what criterion was employed in the distribution of the schools, the fact that majority of the schools are in the Northeast and Northwest is obvious. The Almajiri schools were structured along three architectural models with specific targets. Model 1 schools involved the integration of traditional Quranic schools within its original location. Facilities provided included a block of two classrooms and furniture, an administrative block including office, store and toilets, a hostel block with pupils' lockers, a recitation hall with store and furniture/mats, VIP toilets, a borehole with overhead-tank, a gate house and external works and fencing. Model 2 schools were designed to be larger than Model 1 schools and accommodated more pupils. The essential difference between the models was the size of the schools. A typical Model 2 had statutory facilities made up of two blocks of 6 classrooms, an administrative block with 5 offices, a library, toilets, a computer room, 2 laboratories and 2 workshops. Staff quarters were also built to accommodate up to 10 members of staff, a hostel block, toilets and laundry, a recitation hall. One Mallam's residence, a hand-pump borehole and a motorized borehole with overhead tank. Other facilities included a toilet, kitchen and dining, external works and fencing and a gate house. Model 3 schools were rehabilitated pre-existing Islamiyyah and Ma'ahad schools. These schools were provided with infrastructural facilities though the details of the facilities are not explicitly stated in the UBEC documents [5]. A plethora of observations are worth expressing. The policy framers of the Almajiri schools initiative seem to imagine that the establishment of schools would easily facilitate a blend between a religious prescript and a Western doctrine of education. Not much thought

and efforts were given to blurring the expected resistance that might greet the attempt to integrate distinct knowledge systems. Community acceptability of the idea of integration ought to be the central pursuit of the initiative but this was missed. This partly explains the lackluster attitude that host communities showed towards the Almajiri schools. Furthermore, the underlying factors that generated and sustain the Almajiri system appear not to feature prominently in the consummation process that birth the schools initiative. Unless, the question of poverty and the criminal neglect of children by parents are dealt with, it is difficult to see how the mere construction of modern schools would take millions of children out of the streets. It is a known fact that some of the parents send their children to streets to beg for sustenance. The third point to note is that, the three models no doubt indicate a drive towards infrastructural improvement and an attempt at creating a siren learning environment. But the question of sustainability and continuous funding of the Almajiri schools were not adequately articulated and addressed. The idea was simply to construct the schools and hand them over to State governments for control and maintenance. This turned out un-workable given the reluctance of State governments to a top-down initiative. The governors wanted to be given funds to construct the schools on the basis of their peculiarities. This argument is understandable given that basic education is within the jurisdictional sphere of local governments and the States. This point also explains why State governors where the schools were located were not so keen about the programme but it does not justify why they allowed the decay of infrastructural facilities provided. In sum, the Goodluck Johnathan Almajiri schools initiative was a top to down intervention. It ended as a futile attempt by the Federal government to resolve a problem that had local tap roots. But as the experience indicates, local problems are best resolved locally. The State governments, Local governments and various communities must first be persuaded to accept the initiative and own it; engage communities constructively and encourage the Ulama to promote a theological construct that promotes an integrative educational system. The mere erection of modern structures may just be a white elephant project. This largely explains why the schools were abandoned and the initiative has since failed to resolve the problems it set out to mitigate. The next section examines the controversy that has enveloped the Almajiri schools initiative.

3. Disentangling the Controversy over Almajiri Schools

The Goodluck Jonathan Almajiri schools initiative is shrouded in controversy. To properly contextualize the contending positions on the issue, it is pertinent to isolate and x-ray contours of the argumentum. This is particularly important because the raging controversy has largely created a policy dilemma on the Almajiri question. There are two major halves of arguments on the Almajiri schools initiative. The first half describes the initiative as a failure and wrong policy. Subscribers to this viewpoint contend that the initiative was ill-planned and attempts to stigmatize Almajiri children rather than alleviate the ills of the system. An outspoken proponent of this viewpoint, the Governor of Kano State, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje avers; The last Federal government introduced the Almajiri schools but the school is not well articulated, it is a wrong policy... for example in my village, we have this school with only 50 students and in Kano, we have over 3million Almajiris and the number of Almajiri is almost a problem to the number of school children so, the issue is not creating a school [6]. For Ganduje, the idea of building schools for Almajiris is a misplaced priority and will not mitigate the out of school children problem. Given that the Governor hosts the largest number of Almajiris in Northern Nigeria, his articulations on the Almajiri problem attracts attention. Indeed, the Almajiri question is a complex one that

requires deep introspection and wide consultations. To attempt to take millions of Almajiris out of the streets by just erecting modern structures is too simplistic and cosmetic. Ganduje's quarrel with the Almajiri schools initiative is essentially with the stigma that a segregated school system would confer on Almajiri children. More so, the initiative is silent on addressing the underlying problems that have interplayed to generate and sustain the system. Ganduje is not a lone voice of this viewpoint. A former Governor of Lagos State and now a serving Minister of Power, Babatunde Fashola raised instructive posers that further expose the lax in the Almajiri schools initiative thus; If you train people to acquire certain skills, you must develop avenue where the skills will be useful and that will be the end gain. For instance, graduates of our technical and vocational colleges will become our major contractors... And so it worries me, what is the end gain of products of the Almajiri schools? Will you put your child there? Will a company looking through its job appraisal consider such graduates from Almajiri schools? What chance will the product of the Almajiri schools have working for multinational companies? Are we giving the children a chance when we segregate them into Almajiri schools? [7] Fashola's queries clearly indicate the clog in the Almajiri schools concept. In fact, a further poser could be added; will government also build Almajiri secondary schools, Almajiri universities and provide Almajiri jobs? The answers to these questions are not provided in the policy framework on Almajiri schools. It is a considered view that what government needed to do was to build more basic schools and aggressively persuade community leaders to help sensitize their subjects on the imperative of an integrative educational system. Except there is a buy-in by the Ulama and community custodians; the mere erection of modern schools will hardly yield positive results. The Almajiri is the poster child of the terrible and monstrous conditions of the Nigerian child in northern Nigeria. To segregate them in Almajiri schools is further pillory. The other half of the argumentation features views of supporters of the Almajiri schools initiative. For this set, the Almajiri schools programme was a valuable addition by the Jonathan administration meant to reset the Almajiri system. They blame the poor implementation of the initiative on the ineptitude of State governors who wanted control of the funds for building the schools. A number of views have been tendered to support this line of thought. For instance, Senator Adamu Aliero (APC-Kebbi Central) in a motion presented on the floor of the senate entitled "The Need to integrate Almajiri Education into Modern system of Education in Nigeria argued; We have more than 14million out of school children, most of them being Almajiri roaming the streets of our major cities in Nigeria begging for alms and food... the Almajiri Integrated Model Schools built by former President Jonathan was a laudable Project that allowed the children acquire both Islamic and Western education...some of the structures are either laying fallow or put into uses other than what they were originally intended for and some of the facilities in the Almajiri Model schools are already decaying as they have never been put to use [8]. Similarly, the Muslim Right Concern, MURIC, blamed Northern Governors for showing no political will to end the system. According to MURIC Director, Prof. Ishaq Akintola; "While we commend the Jonathan administration for building Almajiri schools in some parts of the North, Northern governors must be held responsible both for the misuse and disuse of those structures" [9]. Corollary, a former Executive Secretary of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Ahmed Moddibo, provides a lead on the nonchalant attitude of Northern governors towards the Almajiri schools. He alleged that governors in States across Northern Nigeria never wanted the success of the Almajiri Education. He posited further that based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Federal government, the States were to take over the management of the schools after construction. But the State governors left the schools unoccupied, abandoned and vandalized because they

wanted to be given cash to construct them and nominate contractors [10]. It is apparent from the above views that the controversy over the Almajiri schools initiative is fecundated by a discreet political economy. The concept of Almajiri schools from the point of conception it seems, enjoyed the approval of State governors but the disagreement appears to be with control of funds. This possibly explains why the governors elected to disuse the schools constructed. These narratives presage the fact that providing an antidote to the Almajiri debacle was not the main consideration.

4. Conclusion

The paper provided a context on the Goodluck Jonathan Almajiri schools initiative. It noted that the initiative was a Federal intervention targeted at taking a particular demography of out – of- school children off the streets, the Almajiria. However, the initiative has failed to achieve the set objectives due to the ineptitude of State governors and the near absence of critical stakeholders' involvement (Ulama and Community leaders). Aside these factors, the paper contended that the soft economy that undergirds the Almajiri schools initiative largely frustrated the success of the programme. Therefore, a proper understanding of the controversy around Almajiri schools necessarily requires a disentangling of the drivers. The paper concluded that the Almajiri schools concept was not well thought-out, rushed and ended as a monumental waste of scarce resources.

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