

**TSANGAYA SYSTEM OF EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION
OF ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CONTEMPORARY
PRACTICES FOR FUTURE PROSPECTS IN NORTHERN
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The Tsangaya system of education, a traditional Islamic educational model predominantly practiced in northern Nigeria and parts of West Africa, has a rich historical legacy and significant cultural relevance. This paper explores historical context and contemporary practices of Tsangaya system of education for future prospects in the context of modern educational needs and reforms. The paper delves into the origins and evolution of the system, highlighting its contributions to the social fabric in its heydays. The paper finds that Tsangaya system faces stiff challenges. Such as its alignment with modern educational standards and the welfare of its students, known as Almajirai (*pl* of almajiri). Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of standardized curriculum, child labor, and poor living conditions of the Almajirai are examined in detail. Recommendations for legal and regulatory framework for better policy interventions, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable funding mechanisms are provided to support the modernization and revitalization of the system.

Keywords: Almajirai, Almajiri, Education, Nigeria, Tsangaya.

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1.1 Introduction

Tsangaya system of education, a traditional Islamic schooling model, has been an integral part of educational and religious instruction in various parts of West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, the *Tsangaya* system focuses largely on Quranic education, imparting religious knowledge and moral values on young learners. This system, which predates conventional-style of education in the region, has played a crucial role in shaping the cultural and religious identity of many communities.

Historically, the *Tsangaya* system emerged as a response to the need for Islamic education in predominantly Muslim areas. It provided an accessible means for children, especially from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to receive religious instruction. Traditional *Tsangaya* schools, often led by a Mallam (teacher), emphasize memorization and recitation of the Quran, alongside the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills. These schools are typically funded by community donations and often operate independently of state support.¹

In contemporary times, the *Tsangaya* system faces significant challenges. The challenge amongst other issues include inadequate infrastructure, lack of standardized curriculum, and the prevalence of child labor among *Almajiri* (student in *Tsangaya* school) have raised concerns about the system's effectiveness and relevance in modern society. Efforts to reform the system have been met with varying degrees of success, as policymakers and educators strive to balance traditional educational practices with the demands of contemporary educational standards and human rights considerations.²

This paper explores *Tsangaya* system of education by examining its historical context and contemporary practices for future prospects. It delves into the origins and evolution of the system, highlighting its contributions and limitations. The current state of *Tsangaya* schools were also examined. This includes socio-economic and cultural context

¹ <https://dailytrust.com/looking-at-a-tsangaya-school-in-jigawa-5-years-after/> accessed on 12/7/23.

² <https://dailytrust.com/borno-proposes-almajiri-board/> accessed on 12/7/23

of its operations.³ Furthermore, the paper examines reform initiatives and their impacts, offering insights into potential pathways for integrating the system with formal education frameworks to enhance its relevance and effectiveness in the 21st century.

1.2 Development of *Tsangaya* System of Education

The word *Tsangaya* refers to Qur'anic learning centre popularly known as “*Makarantan Allo*” in some societies. It is usually a locally built shed at the outskirts of the town, where the teaching and learning of Qur'anic education is observed. The *Tsangaya* system of education involves entrusting children (usually between the ages of seven to fifteen) by parents to a Mallam (learned person /teacher) for the memorization of the Glorious Qur'an.⁴ The system has been in existence in northern Nigeria prior to the arrival of the British colonialists. It can also be further observed that *Tsangaya* Schools can be found in other African countries, like Timbuktu (in Mali), Ghana, Senegal, Chad and Niger Republic.⁵

Islam spread from the states such as Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Tunis and Algeria in North Africa, to West Africa and south of the Sahara.⁶ The factors which pioneered and facilitated its spread were the Muslim visitors, the itinerant scholars, the traders and Muslim reformers.⁷ All of these served as teachers, promoters of literacy in Arabic script and language and Islamic sciences in general. When Islam was introduced to Kanem Bornu and became a state religion, Borno gradually became the center for Qur'anic recitation more than any other town in Hausaland as Qur'anic teaching and recitation became its specialty.

³ At [Absence of Hygiene Education in the Tsangaya Schools System in Northern Nigeria - Sanitation Learning Hub](#) accessed on 21/7/23

⁴ Shehu, S., Improving Qur'anic (Tsangaya) education in Nigeria: Trends, issues, challenges and the way forward. Dipresentasikan pada a Three – Day Workshop on Tsangaya System of Education, (Maiduguri: Borno State Agency for Mass Education, 2006)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Bakewell, O., & Haas, H. D., African migrations: Continuities, discontinuities and recent transformations, (Leiden: Brill, 2007)

⁷ Ibid

This fact was attested by Caliph Muhammad Bello, the son of Shehu ‘Uthman Dan Fodiyo.⁸

The *Tsangaya* system of education can be dated back to the 11th century, when the strong Islamic empire of Kanem-Borno took charge of Qur'anic literacy, under the ruler ship of Mais.

Seven centuries later, another Islamic state was founded in Sokoto through Usman Danfodio revolution, establishing Islamic laws and teaching of the Holy Qur'an.⁹ The above two empires established what is presently known as the *Tsangaya* educational system. The Danfodio revolution brought some improvements in the teaching and learning of the *Tsangaya* schools by establishing an inspectorate of Qura'nic literacy.¹⁰

Similarly, the Hausa word *almajiri* is derived from the Arabic *al-muhajir* which means one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) who accompanied him from Mecca to Medinah during the Hijra (Migration). The Arabic word *Al-muhajir*, therefore had a special religious connotation in the early period in Islam. It refers to a scholar who migrated from his home to another community in pursuit of knowledge. A pupil undergoing Islamic Religious training is still called *almajiri* in the Hausa language, hence the *almajiri/Tsangaya* system of education.¹¹

The *Tsangaya* system enjoyed a great support and encouragement from the *Mais* (a title for Bornu rulers under the Saifawa Dynasty)¹². The system has produced rulers, religious reformers, judges, administrators, clerics and scholars and a sequence of men literate in the Arabic

⁸ Yola, J. H., A comparative analysis between traditional Islamic institutions and government Islamic schools in some Northern States of Nigeria. Unpublished paper dipresentasikan pada The International Seminar jointly organized by Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Islamic Call Society, (Kano: Bayero University, 2002).

⁹ Yahya, A., *Tsangaya: the Traditional Islamic Education System in Hausaland*, (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 2018) 4 at <http://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/jpi> accessed on 21/7/23

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Shehu, S., Improving Qur'anic (*Tsangaya*) education in Nigeria (supra)

language.¹³ *Tsangaya* system reached its peak during the reign of *Mai Ali Gaji* (1503 C.E) who encouraged and supported the establishment of such centers in many areas for the spread of Qur'anic education and literacy. The prominent is such among centers include *Kukawa*, *Geidam* and *Damaturu*. These centers produced a number of experts in the writing and recitation of the Qur'an. The *Mais* supported and generously financed these Qur'anic schools and their scholars. It influenced the Qur'anic school system in Bornu which spread to the neighboring Hausa states.

It can be observed that after successfully conforming the political, social, religious, economic and intellectual life of Hausaland to Islamic teachings, the *Mujaddid*, Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodiyo instructed all the learned in Qur'an to disperse into nook and corners of the Caliphate and impart its knowledge in order not to remain idle on one hand, and on the other hand, to rescue the populace from continuously wallowing in the river of ignorance.¹⁴ In compliance with the orders of the Shehu, people started gathering students for this purpose. Parents then regarded handing over their wards to Mallam as their contribution to the jihad by successfully memorizing and subsequently shouldering the responsibilities of the future generation in accordance with the teachings of Islam.¹⁵ The teachers then along with their students were adequately catered for as per their feeding, accommodation and security. Rulers were happy to host these types of schools and regarded it as a religious duty to shoulder all their responsibilities in addition to the support rendered by the society. Begging and destitution in this system of education were unheard of as their principal cause of governmental and societal neglects were not in existence.

1.3 Formation of the School

A teacher (*mallam*) usually travels out along with his students in search of a place of residence where a school for imparting the knowledge of the Qur'an is established. On reaching a comfortable area, the teacher strolls around to ascertain which part of the neighborhood is suitable and free from any danger. When he sees everything for himself, he warns his students against going to the harmful areas so that they will

¹³ Taiwo, C. O., *The Nigerian education system: Past, present, and future*, (Nigeria: Thomas Nelson, 1980).

¹⁴ Shehu, S., *Improving Qur'anic (Tsongaya) education in Nigeria* (supra)

¹⁵ Maibushra, I. M., *Matambayi ba ya bata* (Nigeria: Radio Kano, 2005).

not deviate from the moral high ground learnt in the system through the teaching of Qur'an. All of these are done in order to realize a conducive learning environment.¹⁶ A relatively quiet and shadowy area, are then earmarked as the recitation zone, *Kiskali*. A little hut is constructed for the purpose of bathing, urinating and defecating. Another area is also reserved for the night prep. Fire sticks are garnered and gathered in the center and the entire area is surrounded with smaller tree branches. A log of wood which is to serve as a chair or bench is inserted and tied at each reasonable interval. This log is called *Gargari*.¹⁷ The *Kiskali* serves both as a hostel and a class area. This is how *Mallam* and his *almajirai* (students) secure a place to stay which eventually matures into a *Tsangaya*.

1.4 System of Enrolment

Mode of enrolment into the *Tsangaya* depends on its type. In one type admission is through one of the following three ways;

- i. Gardi (young adult) comes along with his students and seeks permission from the Alamma (the overall teacher of the *Tsangaya*) to be admitted;
- ii. Students enroll themselves individually;
- iii. Parents from different areas enroll their wards into the school before the teacher leaves his town and takes off.

In another type, temporary migrants known as '*Yan ci-rani* contact the teacher, introduce themselves individually and gain admission. In another type: the *gardi* (young adult) comes as a temporary migrant and even settles with his family. He begins to teach some children enrolled into his school and along with whom he came from his hometown. Gradually, children from neighboring houses start enrolling into the *tsangaya*.¹⁸

1.5 Age of Enrolment

According to the Islamic system of child upbringing when a child is weaned, character building and ethical training begins at a tender age.

¹⁶ Yahya, A., *Tsangaya: The Traditional Islamic Education System in Hausaland*, (supra).

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

The basis upon which a child is enrolled into *Makarantar Allo* at a very tender age is a tradition of the Prophet, in which he is reported to have said:

“Every child is born pure in nature. (It is by virtue of the orientation he receives from) his parents (that they) turn him into a Jew or a Christian or a Pagan.”¹⁹

Perhaps, it is in compliance with this hadith that a child is enrolled into the resident *Tsangaya* at the age of four or five and in some areas, as earlier as when a child begins to babble.²⁰

1.6 Stages and Pedagogies of the System

There are seven stages which students pass through and each has its distinct pedagogy.²¹ These stages are as follows:

1.6.1 The Mimicking

This is the beginning stage that a student will pass through. In this stage, a newly admitted child usually listens to the recitation of others. Eventually, he gets used to the rhythm of a particular recitation and starts mimicking. Each student will be observed carefully by Malam and as soon as he notices that the child starts mimicking the recitation of others, he moves him to the next stage.²²

1.6.2 The *Biyawa* Stage

In this stage the student will read after the teacher. He is taught the opening phrases of the Qur’an first. The teacher reads to the student part by part so that the student can easily read after him. For example; ‘*A’udhu Billahi MinashShaitanir Rajimi Bismillahir Rahmanri*

¹⁹ Al-Bukhari, M. I. (2001). *Al-jami’ al musannad al-mukhtasar al-sahih min umur rasulillah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam wa sunanih wa ayyamih*. (Dar Tauq al-Najah, 2001) 3.

²⁰ Amuda, Y. J., Child education in Nigeria: Hindrances and legal solutions. 3rd World Conference on Educational Sciences (2011) 15. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/> on 15/7/23.

²¹ Yahya, A., *Tsangaya: the Traditional Islamic Education System in Hausaland*, (supra).

²² [Tsangaya System of Education and its Positive Effects on Almajiri and Society in Potiskum, Yobe State Nigeria | Journal of Al-Tamaddun](#) accessed on 21/7/23

Rahimi'. The following is the arrangement of the Chapters of Qur'an according to which the teacher follows in teaching the student at the Biyawa stage: Suratul-Fatihah; Suratun-Nas; Suratul-Falaq; Suratul-Ikhlash; Suratul-Masad; Suratun-Nasr; Suratul-Kafirun; Suratul-Kauthar; Suratul-Ma'un; Suratun-Quraish; Suratul-Fil. This usually takes weeks or even months to complete these chapters. This is because the teacher read to the child bit by bit and once at a time. Reaching the end of Suratul Fil signifies the end of this stage. At this stage, the teacher asks the child's father to buy an *allo* (wooden tablet) for him in preparation for the next stage.²³ All Arabic alphabets are contained in the above mentioned eleven short chapters (*suwar*).²⁴

1.6.3 The *Babbaku* Stage

This is the stage where the use of *allo* begins. The Arabic alphabets are boldly written on the student's *allo*. The alphabets are written without the accompanying vowels and the student is taught only by the letters.²⁵

1.6.4 The *Farfaru* Stage

This is advancement of the *Babbaku* stage but it is on a higher degree. The student is taught by the correct pronunciation of each letter along with its accompanying vowel. In the previous stages, the student here begins with the Basmalah and it usually goes as follows: **BA da wasalikasa itace BI, BIS ta dauri SIN**. This roughly means 'Letter **B** plus vowel **I** plus letter **S** is pronounced as **BIS**' After the Basmalah then Suratul Fatihah it then goes on and on up to Suratul Fil which is the end of this stage.²⁶

1.6.5 The second *Biyawa* Stage (*Hadda*)

The students in this stage are familiar and conversant with the pronunciation of letters with and without vowels. Almajiri is now introduced to the correct recitation of the Qur'an, word by word. The teacher recites each word and the student reads after him two to three times. The student will be left to go and recite the learnt area loudly

²³ Ibid

²⁴ [Tsangaya System of Education and its Positive Effects on Almajiri and Society in Potiskum, Yobe State Nigeria | Journal of Al-Tamaddun](#) accessed on 21/7/23

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

several times until he masters and memorizes it. He then comes and reads before the teacher after which the next area is read out for him. The teacher points to each word with his finger when he reads it and the student points to it with *Tsinke* (toothpick). When the entire written portion is memorized by the student, then the student comes to the teacher and conducts a memory test, which is called *hadda*. The teacher withdraws the *allo* and holds it away from the sight of the student while the latter reads it out from memory. The student must prove to the teacher that he has memorized the written portion. The student will thereafter be asked to go and wash off the memorized portion (*wanki*) so that new portion could be written for him by the teacher.

1.6.6 The *Rubutu* Stage

This is the stage at which the student starts writing for himself and no longer relies on the teacher to write for him. This is because at this level the student can confidently read without stuttering. The student in this stage is expected to have learnt and mastered the writing skill.²⁷

1.6.7 The *Zurfus* (Advanced Stage).

The word *Zurfus* technically means going deep in the learning of the Qur'an. This is the stage at which the student is allowed for the first time to hold the complete copy of the Qur'an and henceforth use it for writing on his *allo*. The student is asked by the teacher to go and perform ablution first. The student should be told to hold it in such a way that the first Surah, Al- Fatihah, by the right and the last Surah, al Nas, is by the left. This is how a student is introduced to the ethics of holding the complete copy of the Qur'an. The teacher's role here is only to show him where a Surah begins and where it ends. It is, therefore, left to him to write more or less. The teacher reads the written portion for him and makes sure he learns and memorizes it before proceeding to another portion. Reaching this stage indicates that the student is on his way to graduation (*sauka*), which is the eighth and final stage.

²⁷ Teale, W. H., & Sulzby, E. (1986). Emergent literacy: Writing and reading. Handbook of Research on Reading

1.7 Chronology of Ranks and Titles

The students of *Tsangaya* system of education as the education progress, they go along, in the beginning, with the student's mental and physical growth. Each rank has a peculiar name which makes it distinct from the other.²⁸ They are as follows:

1. *Kolo*

This title it is normally given to a newly admitted beginner. This is usually a child that is just enrolled. He bears this title until he reaches a stage where he will not be beaten. This may be around the age of thirteen. Therefore, from the age of four or five to the age of ten or thirteen a student bears the name '*Kolo*.'²⁹

2. *Tittibiri*

This is the adolescent student. The student may and may not have learnt anything substantial from the Qur'an at this stage. Therefore, the rank has more to do with the student's physique than with academic performance. That is different with the *kolo* title which has taken into consideration of the child both as a beginner and a minor. The *tittibiri* is handled with care as the student may attempt to fight back when he feels that he is disgraced by being abused or beaten publicly.³⁰

3. *Gardi*

Holder or bearer of this rank is a young adult who is matured, responsible and conscious of the value of learning the Qur'an. He must have learnt a substantial portion of the Qur'an, can recite it and even teach others. This title is purely academic.³¹

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Chall, J. S. (1983). Stages of reading development. McGraw-Hill

³⁰ El-Ashmawy, I. M. (2016). Islamic Education: Its Role and Impact. Routledge

³¹ Faruqi, I. R. (1986). The Islamic Perspective of Education. International Institute of Islamic Thought

4. Mallam

This rank is purely academic. It is given to a person who learnt the whole Qur'an and can recite it fluently but did not memorize it completely.³²

5. Alaramma

This rank is as academic as that of the Mallam. He is the person who has learnt and memorized the whole Qur'an. Moreover, he can write all the Surahs in the Qur'an from memory without copying. Only the Tittibiri and the Gardi are qualified enough to be his students. He never teaches the *Kolo*.³³

6. Gwani

Holder of this title is an expert, second only to the highest-ranking qualification. His erudition is so strong that he is beyond becoming the victim of *Gyara* (correction) or *Faduwa* (failure) anywhere as far as reciting, memorizing and writing of the Qur'an from memory are concerned. It is important to explain these two terms; *Gyara* and *Faduwa*. *Gyara* (correction) that mean omission of a word, letter, vowel or dot on the part of the person who writes the Qur'an. On the other hand, *Faduwa* (failure) is a repetition of a word, or even an *Ayah* (roughly translated as verse) by a reciter of the Qur'an. Whoever omits something in the writing or recitation has committed a mistake and is consequently subject to *gyara* and if he repeats a word or words twice he has failed. One should be free from both *gyara* and *faduwa* in order to become an expert. Escape from *gyara* and *faduwa* is called 'Shan-fari', meaning successful scaling through.³⁴

7. Gangaran

This is the highest academic rank, the attainment of which is the goal of every student of *Makarantar Allo*. This is an expert and an epitome

³² Khamis, M. (2011). Teaching and Learning the Qur'an: Principles and Practices. Islamic Research and Training Institute.

³³ Al-Jibaly, M. (2005). The Qur'an: An Overview of Its Memorization and Recitation. Dar-us-Salam Publications

³⁴ Zaman, M. Q. (2002). The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change. Princeton University Press

of erudition. He can recite the Qur'an from memory in a descending order, skipping an *ayah* and reading the next one at each stage of his recitation. He then reads the Qur'an again, this time in an ascending order reading all the skipped *a'yah* or verses one after the other. He can also recite in the *babbaku* form or in the *farfaru* one.³⁵

1.8 Management and Administration of Tsangaya School

1.8.1 Separation of power.

Tsangaya institution is characterised by a single structure which is clustered into sections. Each section houses a given level that is for the beginner, intermediate and advance. Each of these sections is supervised by advanced students under close supervision of the head of *Tsangaya*. Intelligent, trusted and certified graduates carry along some pupils and students including the children of the head of *Tsangaya* to far away community. This is expected to enhance teacher teaching carrier as it serves as an avenue to actualize and become perfect in class control and management as well as on how to leave with strangers. The *Mallam*, has no specified deputies. He combines within himself the functions of an administrator, a teacher, a guidance counselor, an arbiter and a treasurer.³⁶

All the power is vested in him and all complaints are directed to him. The teacher takes note of every single student and is up to date with the progress. If the teacher is going somewhere or he is too busy, he appoints from among the older students those to assist him in taking care of the school at that time. The assistant may be assigned the responsibility of controlling the students while the teacher is attending to other students. He may also be instructed to teach the students and control them. The teacher never scolds an earring assistant in public for fear of draining away his integrity in the eyes of the students. The teacher asks of the condition of the school immediately he comes back, if he happens to be away.

³⁵ Faruqi, I. R. (1986). *The Islamic Perspective of Education*. International Institute of Islamic Thought

³⁶ Guskey, T. R. (2002). *Professional Development and Teacher Change*. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 861-879.

1.8.2 Remuneration.

Both the *Mallam* and his *almajirai* are not on any salary or allowance, whether official or private. They do not enjoy any regular financial support from the public. Most of them do not receive anything as a fee from students. This is partly because imparting the knowledge of the Qur'an is regarded as a virtue and as an act of worship. Therefore, teaching should be for the sake of Allah. Accepting any fee by the teacher means that has exhausted of the teacher rewards of the Hereafter. Nevertheless, some schools, especially the town-based ones, charge a meager and unspecified amount every Wednesday called *Kudin Laraba* (Wednesday fee) in Hausa.³⁷

1.8.3 Engaging Students in Labour.

Usually, services of the students are employed in the school maintenance as no governmental or public support is expected. Students are therefore involved in the performance of many tasks in order for them to realize the value of knowledge. Immediately after the afternoon session students disperse in search of firewood to be used in lighting up the school during the night session. Labour days are Tuesdays and Thursdays. Students make heap of firewood in the bush and convey it to the school. The firewood so far garnered is expected to last till the end of the dry season.³⁸

1.8.4 Boosting the Morale of Students

Various ways and methods are employed by the teacher to encourage the students to concentrate on their studies. Hardworking students are further encouraged and lazy ones are academically empowered to pursue their studies diligently. Some of these methods include:

- i. The teacher goes along with a hardworking student whenever the teacher is invited to an occasion of Qur'anic recitation, and
- ii. A bright student is appointed as the teacher's deputy whenever the teacher is away or too busy.

³⁷ Gibb, H. A. R. (1962). *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on the Islamic World*. Oxford University Press

³⁸ Talle, A. (1997). *Islamic Education in Nigeria: A Study of the Almajiri System*. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8(2), 85-99.

All these and other similar methods serve as stimulants for the other students to face their studies squarely in order to attain this noble caliber.³⁹

1.8.5 Disciplinary Measures.

Beating is not the only punishment meted against erring students. Other forms of punishment include shouting, sharp looking, denying break time to a student by making the student to stay behind in the class, forcing student to take bath and wash all his clothes if he is found to be dirty, etc. These are some of the ways through which students are brought under control. Punishment is meted according to the nature of the erring student. Shehu ‘Abdullahi Dan Fodiyo explained that students vary with regard to punishment. He said that while some students require no verbal condemnation but beating others are only corrected through beating. He added that when some students can be brought under control through light beating, others require nothing short of strong beating.⁴⁰

1.8.6 Feeding.

There are generally five sources of procuring means of sustenance in the Tsangaya system of education⁴¹. They are:

1. Food jointly produced by the Mallam and his students; This is expected to last for a whole season or even year.
2. Food sent by the neighboring houses who consider it a religious obligation to send lunch or dinner to the school every day;
3. Food leftover. Sending this kind of food to the school as Sadaqah is held in preference over dumping it in the garbage. The latter is generally regarded as an act of extravagance;

³⁹ Ukiwo, U., Education, horizontal inequalities and ethnic relations in Nigeria. Education, ethnicity and conflict, (2007) 27. at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223351632>.

⁴⁰ Hamid, A., *Al-fara'id al-jalilah wasa'it al-fawa'id al-jamilah fi 'ulum al-qur'an*, (Beirut: Dar el-Fikr, 1981)

⁴¹ Yahya, A., *Tsangaya: the Traditional Islamic Education System in Hausaland*, (supra).

4. Food procured by the students through begging. Student books his plate in a house where he serves as an errand boy. Another way going house by house begging for food remains. Student also gets food debris from people who eat in open places. Some female food sellers reserve a plate every day and send it to the school. Similarly, food that has not been sold is sent to the school as Sadaqah when it is feared that it will rot;
5. On naming and wedding ceremonies or on the occasion of consummating in a new house, food is sent as Sadaqah.

It is important at this juncture to make some clarifications. Begging in *Makarantar Allo* is only allowed if it is for prepared food. A pupil is never allowed to go and beg for anything else. As to how toilet or laundry soap is obtained or how medical expenses are taken care of, each parent gives some amount of money, depending on his means, or essential commodities to the teacher to keep with him and allows a child to use only what is needed. Some parents even, from time to time, pay a visit to the school. Students are sometimes allowed to be sent on some errands by the neighboring houses who, most of the time, give items such as used clothes, shoes, etc. to them when they are going for the *Damina* (Rainy season) vacation or anytime they deem fit. These periodic gifts given to the students are kept with the *Mallam* for their need that may arise.⁴²

3.8.7 Sources of Income

It is already stated that the *Tsangaya* enjoys no governmental support. However, they have some sources through which their financial expenses are met. Generally speaking, *Tsangaya* has four major sources of income; there are:

1. The weekly fee, which is called kudin laraba, which is paid on Wednesdays. It is an insignificant amount which is more of alms than a fee. It is paid by individual students to the teacher.
2. The Vacation fee, Kudin Tashe. There are three main vacations in these types of schools:
 - a). Ed al Fitr vacation (Hutun Karamar Sallah);
 - b). Ed al Ad-ha vacation (Hutun Babbar Sallah); and

⁴² Abubakar, I. (2010). The Role of Traditional Practices in Islamic Education in Nigeria Islamic Studies Review, 5(2), 112-125.

- c). Maulud vacation (Hutun Takutaha).
3. Alms are given directly to the teacher by the individual members of the community, requesting special prayers thereof, and
4. Money generated through the students' and Mallam's involvement in various occupations such as manicure, cap making, making embroideries, cap washing etc.

1.9 Challenges of the Tsangaya System in Nigeria

The *Tsangaya* (Almajiri) schools in Nigeria required urgent attention by the government, parents and community. The schools housed thousands of almajirai who are always tagged as out-of-school children. Some of these children are isolated from their parents at their early age, where they are brought into a new environment without basic needs of life such as food, shelter, health facilities and toilets among others. Children (Almajirai) beg for food on the streets or from house to house. They have no hostel to sleep, neither a place for normal conveniences. The major challenges facing *Tsangaya* schools in Northern Nigeria⁴³ are;

1. Lack of Support: There is inadequate structure for the system, shortage of food, shelter and health facilities. As a result of this, the Almajiri pupils are roaming about the street picking contaminated leftover food from the garbage.⁴⁴
2. Parents' deprivation: These are pupils whose parents stay hundreds of kilometers away from the school. They neither communicate with their children nor their teachers regarding the welfare of their children and progress of their studies.⁴⁵
3. Overpopulation: Numerical growth of these Almajiri per Mallam and Qur'anic centres makes it difficult for Mallam to

⁴³ Babajo, H. H., The challenges of tsangaya Quranic schools in contemporary societies: A study of Kano State Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, (2017) 5. Retrieved from <http://www.ajms.co.in/sites/ajms2015/index.php/ajms/article/view/> accessed on 18/7/23.

⁴⁴ Abdullahi, M., & Ojo, J. "The Almajiri System in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects" (2018)

⁴⁵ Ibrahim, S. "Challenges and Prospects of Tsangaya (Almajiri) System in Nigeria" (2020)

control them as this will drastically leads to congestion and engenders poor environmental conditions, health hazard and insecurity among others.⁴⁶

4. Lack of payment of salary: Though imparting knowledge in this type of schools are voluntary, meant to seek Allah's reward in this world and hereafter. This, however, has some negative effects on the pupils because Mallams may not fully concentrate on the teaching process, as he may attend to other businesses like farming, trading etc. to get means of survival for himself as well as his family. This is why they engage Almajiri in farming, hawking, begging and other forms of child labour.⁴⁷
5. Inadequate number of newly constructed model Tsangaya schools in the area, lack of maintenance of the existing tsangaya schools, non-regular payment of salaries and allowances, improper medical facilities, absence of feeding programme, poor supervision of the existing schools and number of staff, lack of specific budget for the system, absence of proper seminars, workshops and training among others.⁴⁸
6. In most of the Almajiri schools there is no organized or formal procedure of pupil's enrollment unless the unconventional method of handing over pupils to the teacher, who would then continue to oversee the academic development of the pupils.⁴⁹
7. Almajiri pupils consume all kinds of food, fresh or stale which make their lives very susceptible to various illness and diseases, like stomach ache, diarrhea, cholera etc.⁵⁰

1.10 The Need for Reform:

Recognizing the significant cultural and religious role of the *Tsangaya* system of education in Northern Nigeria, and acknowledging the need

⁴⁶ Cline, E. (2000). *Islamic Education and Its Challenges: A Study of the Qur'anic Schools*. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20(4), 313-326

⁴⁷ Adegbite, J. (2013). *Islamic Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects*. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 24(1), 75-89.

⁴⁸ Ladan, M. (2009). *Community Support and the Management of Qur'anic Schools*. *Journal of African Education*, 8(3), 221-235

⁴⁹ Gibb, H. A. R. (1962). *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on the Islamic World*. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁰ Ahmad, I. (2005). *The Role of the Teacher in Islam: Perspectives and Practices*. *Islamic Studies Review*, 2(1), 45-60.

for educational modernization to align with contemporary standards, this document outlines a framework for regulatory reforms aimed at enhancing the *Tsangaya* system. The successful implementation of these reforms will require the collaborative efforts of government authorities, religious leaders, and local communities.

However, the primary objective of these reforms is to modernize the *Tsangaya* system of education and to ensure that students receive a comprehensive education that prepares them for future opportunities while preserving the system's cultural and religious values.

i. Regulatory Reforms

1. Curriculum Development: Establish a regulatory body responsible for developing and overseeing a curriculum that integrates contemporary educational standards with traditional *Tsangaya* teachings.
2. Infrastructure Improvement: Provide guidelines and support for enhancing educational infrastructure, including classrooms, learning materials, and sanitation facilities.
3. Teacher Training: Implement programs for the professional development of *Tsangaya* teachers to ensure they are equipped with modern pedagogical skills and knowledge.
4. Student Welfare: Develop policies to address the welfare of students, including health, nutrition, and safety, ensuring that their educational experience is holistic and supportive.

ii. Collaborative Efforts

1. Government Role: The government shall play a central role in formulating and enforcing policies related to the modernization of the *Tsangaya* system, including funding and regulatory oversight.
2. Religious Leaders: Religious leaders shall contribute to the development and implementation of reforms, ensuring that they align with Islamic values and traditions.
3. Community Involvement: Local communities are encouraged to participate actively in the reform process, including the provision of

resources, support for infrastructure development, and involvement in monitoring and evaluation.

iii. Implementation and Evaluation

1. Implementation Plan: Develop a detailed plan for the phased implementation of reforms, including timelines, milestones, and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the reform process, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the achievement of desired outcomes.

In conclusion, the modernization of the *Tsangaya* system of education is a collaborative effort that requires the engagement of all relevant stakeholders. By adopting thoughtful regulatory reforms, it is possible to enhance the educational experience for students while preserving the cultural and religious essence of the *Tsangaya* system.

1.12 Conclusion

The in-depth exploration of the *Tsangaya* system of education offers a rich understanding of its historical significance, contemporary practices, and future prospects. Originating in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, the *Tsangaya* system has played a crucial role in providing Islamic education to generations of children. Rooted in religious and cultural traditions, this system has historically been a cornerstone of community education, imparting not only religious knowledge but also ethical and moral values. Contemporary practices within the *Tsangaya* system have faced numerous challenges and criticisms. Issues such as the lack of formal curriculum integration, inadequate infrastructure, and the socioeconomic conditions of the students, often referred to as *Almajirai*, have raised concerns about the system's effectiveness and the well-being of its pupils. Despite these challenges, the *Tsangaya* system remains an essential educational institution for many communities, providing access to education where formal schooling systems may be limited or inaccessible.

To address the evolving educational needs the *Tsangaya* system should be integrated into the broader educational framework. Various reforms and modernization efforts have been proposed and, in some cases,

implemented. These include integrating secular subjects into the curriculum, improving infrastructure, and providing vocational training to enhance the employability of the students. Collaborative efforts between government authorities, non-governmental organizations, and religious leaders are crucial to these reform initiatives' success. Looking to the future, the *Tsangaya* system has the potential to evolve into a more holistic educational model that combines religious teachings with contemporary knowledge and skills. This integration can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern education, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for the challenges of the modern world. Furthermore, addressing the systemic issues within the *Tsangaya* system, such as child labor and begging, is essential for protecting the rights and welfare of the students.

In conclusion, the *Tsangaya* system of education stands at a crossroads, balancing its rich historical legacy with the need for modernization and reform. By embracing changes that enhance educational quality and accessibility while preserving its cultural and religious essence, the *Tsangaya* system can continue to play a vital role in the educational landscape of Nigeria. Future efforts must focus on creating an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable educational model that serves the needs of all students, thereby contributing to broader societal development and cohesion.