

Integrating the Skills Edifice of Curriculum into Almajiri Education in 21st Century Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper attempts an in-depth study as well as critical analysis of Almajiri education system in the 21st century Northern Nigeria, with a particular emphasis upon areas in which its curriculum needs improvements and innovations. It equally underscored the governments' efforts at integrating Almajiri education in Universal Basic Education program and the causative organisms for the failure of government's integration program. And therefore the predicaments of Almajiri seem to have been lingering year-by-year, partly due to propound deficiency of vocational / entrepreneurship development skills within the framework of Almajiri education. Related literature was reviewed. Document analysis method was adopted for the study. The findings revealed that integration program enhances efficiency of Almajiri education system by striking balance among the acquisition of Qur'anic knowledge, moral development and accomplishing economic self-reliance / employability. And the researcher suggested that Federal, state and the local governments in Nigerian should look into the need to integrate the entrepreneurship / vocational skills enshrined in National Policy on Education in the curriculum of Almajiri School as response to the vocational challenges which strangle the program from contributing to Nigeria's national unity and national development.

Keywords: Integration, Skills, curriculum, Almajiri Education, 21st Century

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Introduction

The Almajiri education is as old as Islamic education system in Africa. History of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria could be traced back to second half of the 11th century, when Islamic religion was introduced in the region through the activities of Arab traders. During that material time, there emerged hundreds of Qur'anic schools (Tsangaya) which accommodated thousands of students (Almajiris) from across Hausaland purposely to learn Qur'anic sciences. Having catered for the socio – economic and political needs of the people via the production of books, ideas and scholars of high repute who served Hausa land at distinctive capacities, the system benefited from the support of all stakeholders. Up till the advent of colonial masters, that was the status and position of Almajiri education in Hausaland.

By 1906, when the entire of Hausaland fell under the control of British colonial masters, Qur'anic education experienced an unprecedented change regarding its position. By 1909, western education became successfully introduced in Northern Protectorate, following the success in Nasarawa experiment by Hans Vischer under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). hence, the stakeholders were compelled by colonial authorities to value as well as support western education at the expense of Qur'anic education. And since then, Qur'anic education has been relegated to background.

Since the pre – colonial era, the Almajiri education had been the only machinery utilized for effective inculcation of positive moral virtues and values amongst the generation of youths in Hausaland. And it has continued to play a vital part towards the overall moral development by equipping the youths with such morals as; “trustworthiness, open-mindedness, tolerance, courage, activeness, fellow-feeling, compassion, politeness, fidelity, perseverance, co-operation, interdependence, integrity, diligence, obedience and magnanimity (Okam, 2012) which desperately desired for the development of prospective citizens who will become the building – blocks of a strong nation.

However, it is very sad that the trending in Almajiri education system is being accompanied by some challenges which border on the lack of certification that prepares Almajiri for job opportunities in the public as well as private sectors and admission for further studies in the tertiary institutions including

universities; lack of vocational skills that enable the Almajiris accomplish self-reliance through self-employment; child labor and abuse; involvement of some Almajiris in terrorist activities; street begging and hawking which raise serious concerns from the government, researchers and writer about it. This chapter therefore, aims at uncovering the vitalities of integrating the vocational skills perspectives implicit in the curriculum that operates within the framework of apprenticeship system in Nigerian education, towards improving the Almajiri education system so as to prepare its proceeds for self-reliance via self-employment. This will surely make the Almajiris functionally contributing to the economic development of Nigeria.

Literature Review

A review of related literature was carried out on the concepts of Almajiri, curriculum, integration and curriculum integration.

Almajiri and Almajiri Education

Many people in Nigeria see the word 'Almajiri' as a person who goes in tattered rags, hawks along the street and begs for means of livelihood by the road sides or in religious places. As a child born in a muslim Hausa state of Northern Nigeria who puts on rags and survives on begging. The Muslim Hausa people who did not attend western schools and roam about the city streets (Olaniran, 2018) and religious places begging for a living. These definitions represent a portrait of popular but erroneous and sentimental conception of the concept being held by some people for the purpose of degrading as well as debasing the personality of some religious and ethnic groups.

The term 'Almajiri' as Shittu & Olaofe (2015) said is a derivative of the Arabic terminology '*al-Muhajir*' (the traveller or migrant), meaning someone who migrates for a precious purpose. The word 'Almajiri' according to Zakir et al (2014), connotes a student who leaves his parent for Qur'anic education. They come mostly from rural areas to urban centres for the purpose of acquiring Qur'anic education. Shittu and Olaofe (2015) conceive that in Northern Nigeria, *Al-Majiri* is particularly used to refer to school-age children who leave the comfort of their homes and parental care to seek knowledge in nearby towns and cities. Goodluck & Juliana (2014) opined that children sent from their homes and entrusted into the care of Islamic teachers to learn the Islamic studies. Whereas Olaniran (2018) posits that the children of nomadic population in Nigeria are referred to 'almajiris'. The Almajiris consist of

children of the mobile fishermen, pastoral nomads, and farmers, among others. Accessing formal education is a problem for almajiris because they must move with their parents wherever they go in search of greener pastures for their cattle (Olaniran, 2018). This definition conveys a package of erroneous, sentimental as well as derogative conception which emanates from the author's shallow or superficial knowledge of the Almajiri phenomenon as it operates in sub-Saharan Africa. It is vital to note that this definition narrowed down the meaning of 'Almajiri' to those children who migrate to urban centres purposely to acquire Qur'anic knowledge. This is because there are a number of children who study in Tsangaya / Almajiri schools and do not migrate from anywhere, they are born as well as brought up within the hosts community of the Tsangaya school. And this situation is prevalent in about 57% of 'Almajiri' / Tsangaya schools in Northern Nigeria. Similarly, there are lot of adolescents and elderly people that storm the restaurants, motor parks, religious places, roadside etc, begging to earn livelihood and the aforementioned definition did not capture this groups of beggars. Perhaps, Zakir's conception of 'Almajiri' was guided by the lateral meaning of the word 'Almuhajir' which simply denotes physical migration of a people from one place to another.

The word 'Almajiri' simply refers to as the students of Tsangaya school. It is true that Almajiri migrates for Qur'anic epistemological motive. But the migration could be understood from two dimensions, first, the physical and second, the spiritual migrations. While physical migration refers to as the movement of an individual from rural to urban areas or vice versa, in a search of Qur'anic knowledge. This sort of migration, in Islam, is surrounded by the following conditions, namely; relatively enough fund to cater for Almajiris' numerous needs during their stay at Tsangaya school; child's gender should be masculine not the feminine; and lastly, age of the children should be taken into cognizance in order to be able to carry out the academic tasks in the Tsangaya. Secondly, the spiritual migration, according to Gada (2010) entails movement of the person's minds from his personal wims and caprices to the obedience of dictates of Allah the Almighty amongst which, the search of Islamic / Qur'anic knowledge fall in. Therefore, the concept of 'Almajiri' refers to as the student of Tsangaya schools who migrate from all his enjoyment to what Allah wants (acquisition of Qur'anic knowledge).

Curriculum

The concept of curriculum is defined by scholars narrowly, as subjects or content(s) which learners are taught in schools. It is broadly viewed, as experiences that individuals are exposed to during a learning exercise (Ornstien & Hankins, 2018). McLachlan, Fleer, & Edwards, (2010) agreed with Scott's (2008), conception that a curriculum may imply a "system, as in a national curriculum; an institution, as in a school curriculum; or even to an individual school, as in the school geography curriculum require for full participation in society". But in another conception by subscribed to Grundy's (1987) view that a curriculum as:

a way of organizing educational practices based on three rationales: (i) product where the focus is on reproducing knowledge for a defined outcome, (ii) the practice which emphasizes the development of understanding in order to make judgments and apply knowledge, and (iii) praxis of instruction which focuses on learners' reflection of learning on their real live activities.

The first conception of curriculum as 'product' aligns with Ornstein's (2016) 'prescriptive' definitions that signifies what "ought" to happen, and it more often than not takes the form of a plan, an intended program, or some kind of expert opinion about what needs to take place in the course of study. Scholars like Okam (2012) subscribes that curriculum is an all-embracing concept which implies a subject matter, content area, a discipline being rendered by an authority or teacher within the framework of classroom in a school system, in order to achieve predetermined objectives. Also, Okeke (1978) viewed curriculum as a series of planned and / or unplanned learning activities which a child is exposed to in the course of his development, the aim of which is to make him develop fully his potentials so as to function effectively in the community.

The second conception of curriculum as 'practice' reveals the postmodern viewpoint of the subject matter, emphasizes on the learners development of understanding in order to make judgments and apply knowledge. This conception exposes the significance of using activity-based methods of curriculum development, materials and resources that combine into a paradigm that allows the learners to participate in hands-on instructional activities mainly to uncover knowledge and understanding.

Furthermore, the third layer of this conception is, curriculum as the ‘praxis’ of instruction, transforms learning into an instructional template that allows the learners to collaboratively interact, work and brainstorm, discuss on learning experiences purposely to foster the learners’ reflection of learning on the real live activities

Therefore, designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum program should aim at help individuals to uncover and develop their potentials via a positive inculcation of the knowledge forms, namely; knowing and recall of concepts, ideas, principles etc, feelings, emotions and attitudes, and skills so as to become functionally contributing members of their societies. This paper represents an attempt towards proffering certain apt modalities for integrating the vocational / entrepreneurship skills implicit in the curriculum of Nigerian education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2013) being an appropriate for equipping the Almajiri with specific employability skills. This will surely help the Almajiri not only achieve self – reliance via self – employment but also develop in them a healthy attitude to work.

Curriculum of Almajiri / Program

The Almajiri system is basically a literary education that aims at producing people who are learned in Arabic language, shari’ah law and theology. Qu’ran has been the core-curriculum of this system of education, (Goodluck & Juliana, 2014) this implies that learning experiences of Almajiri school are sourced from the Holy Qur’an and the sunnah of the Prophet (Prophetic traditions). The curriculum has provided each learning level with apt learning experiences that will enable Almajiris with accomplish a reasonable degree of development in terms of cognitive and affective components. The major disciplines derived from the Holy Qur’an for Almajiri instruction in school include the following; (1) Huruf, (2) Tajweed, (3) Recitation and Memorization of Qur’an, and (4) Tafseer. Similarly, Fafunwa had categorize instructional activities in Almajiri school into three (3) levels, namely; (1) the primary level, (2) the secondary level and (3) the post – secondary level (Fafunwa, 1998).

The primary compartment starts as early as 3 years, instructional engagements involve rote learning and choral recitation of the verses of the 1st two chapters of the Qur’an and then elementary literary practice involving reading and writing of Arabic letters of alphabet (Fafunwa, 1998). While at secondary

level, learners are introduced to more varied items of the Hadith text, and begin a more meaningful study of the Holy Quran (Fafunwa, 1998). However, instructions are conducted through the utilization of rote and repetition methods (Fafunwa, 1998). The post - secondary students are exposed to other subjects such as Arabic language, syntax, shari'ah, theology, jurisprudence etc (Fafunwa, 1998).

Furthermore, methodology of instruction in Almajiri schools was the 'individualized method' of learning that allows every learner to learn at his own rate. Whereas the organization and administration of school were decided by the Islamic scholar spearheading its activities.

Curriculum Integration

Integration simply denotes combining two or more things, concepts or ideas together. The curriculum integration is a jargon within the parlance of curriculum organization. Curricular program comprised of knowledge forms which organized to reflect a particular pattern that can best help design the education system towards addressing various societal problems and provide adequately for its multifaceted needs. The variety of patterns in which the curriculum is designed include the following: the discrete subject, the correlation, the broad field and the integration designs (Ellis, 2013).

The concept of integration in the realm of curriculum design simply means the pattern of combining concepts, principles, ideas, laws, phenomena and theories from two or more distinct discrete subject areas into an integrated curriculum (Audu, 2011) that aims at acquainting learners with variegated cognitive structures, attitudes, emotions and feelings, and skills that will help them to leave and work in distinctive circumstances.

Integrated curriculum is described as one that connects different areas of study by cutting across subjects – matter lines and emphasizing unifying concepts (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2019).

Methodology

Document analysis method was adopted for this study. The researcher studied as well as reviewed appropriate journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, magazines and newspapers in order to form solid foundation for the discourse.

Integration of Western Education into Almajiri System in Nigeria

It is undisputed fact that the Department for International Development (DFID, 2000) established strong relationship between levels of education of citizens and economic growth of a nation (Olaniran, 2018). It notes education as a fundamental tool that enables less – privileged individuals to develop skills, enhance productivity and provides essential underpinnings for economic growth. In line with aforementioned, the concept of all-inclusive education continues to gather momentum in the third world nations. All-inclusive education has expanded as well as metamorphosed into a human right framework that demands access to, and equity in, education or learning for all, irrespective of status, gender, and geographical location (Olaniran, 2018).

It is in view of foregoing exposition that Federal government of Nigeria under the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 proclaimed that every government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age’ (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). Attaining this, as Yunusa, (2013) opines that the Act provides that every parent shall ensure that his or her child or ward attains and completes primary school education and junior secondary school education. The scope of the implementation of the program according to Federal Ministry of Education (2011) will centre upon education of special groups including the migrants, the girl – child and women, Almajiri street children and disabled groups. This mandate has encouraged the Universal Basic Education Commission to envisage ‘main streaming and promoting a dynamic Almajiri Education model that will ensure gradual integration of the Almajiri into Universal Basic Education program’ (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). For the first time, Federal government designed specialized education program that seek to provide Almajiri with the necessary knowledge and skills to function and contribute positively towards socio – economic development of the society and the nation (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). And some eight objectives formulated to guide the implementation of the program, in the following areas to:

- I. Design and develop appropriate Almajiri school,
- II. Identify the traditional Qura’nic schools for integration,

- III. Fund the model schools,
- IV. Harmonize the curricular for the schools,
- V. Issue textbooks and learning materials for core subjects,
- VI. Mobilize the stakeholders for sensitization of the program,
- VII. Establish management committees at various levels of government,
- VIII. Interface with development partners, organized private sector, non – governmental agencies and community - based organizations, and
- IX. Recruit teachers, capacity – building for teachers and managers.

A panoramic look at the above objectives translates Federal government's beautiful intention towards improving socio – economic conditions of Almajiri, through the means of mainstreaming Almajiri education into Universal Basic Education program. This culminated in establishment of two Tsangaya Model Science Primary schools; one cited in Sokoto and the other in Katsina states of northern Nigeria, in the year 2012.

However, it is indeed sad to announce that despite its lofty objectives, integration of Almajiri integration was not a success due to the following reasons:

- I. Neglect of the needs, interests and values of Almajiri and his society,
- II. Superficial study of the needs of the Almajiri system of education,
- III. Laxity of the history of Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria,
- IV. Poor sensitization of the stakeholders in Almajiri education,
- V. Corruption / misappropriation of the fund and other inputs,
- VI. Improper planning of the integration program.

It will be vital if the foregoing are considered in some details below:

First of all, Almajiri integration program was designed, planned as well as implemented without giving due cognizance to Almajiri needs, interests and values. And there has not been disagreement amongst all curriculum theorists that any attempt towards curriculum designing, improving and or innovating curriculum program, like Almajiri integration, must capture and rhyme with the needs, interests and values of the target learners and the society.

In fact, Almajiri needs, interests and values as they manifest, revolve round two principal activities, namely; Qur'anic / Islamic epistemology, while, the second is petty economic gainful economic activities. And majority of them are neither interested in western education nor do they value it. In a nut shell, all stakeholders in Almajiri system of education developed and sustained phobia to western schooling. Therefore, how can the program's integration into western schooling be successful? It cannot.

Furthermore, Almajiri education system had for more than 500 years back, been serving the motives it is meant for in Northern Nigeria, in terms of imparting students with cognitive structures implicit in the Holy Qur'an, purposely to enable learners accomplish a higher level of moral standing. This will facilitate their metamorphoses into prospective citizens. The need of Almajiri education system as observed should be emphasized in the integration process and then innovate structured 'apprenticeship' program that will acquaint and equip Almajiri with an apt vocational / employability skills with a sole view to enhancing the economic status and improve their economic contributions to the development of the Nigerian nation.

Similarly, Almajiri integration program failed at the planning stage due to government laxity of history of the system in Northern part of the country. The Federal government did not pay desired attention to the history of Almajiri system when planning for integration program. And this is partly why instead of accomplishing objectives that prompt the programme, it fall victim of the same guilt as the Christian missionaries in northern Nigeria during the colonial epoch.

Historically, the attempts by various missionary societies to introduce western education in the then Northern Protectorate, had faced a stiff resistance from the people who saw the missionaries as agents of education and thereby missionary schools were established primarily to convert students to Christian faith, the northern Muslims had come to see western education as a

deliberately planned and calculated action towards destroying their Islamic faith. Therefore, integrating Almajiri education is a volatile issue which requires a proper homework for its success.

In 1898, Bishop Tugwel of the Church Missionary Society based on Lokoja obtained Lugard's permission to penetrate into Hausa land. Lugard also allowed the Sudan Interior Mission. The Church Missionary Society established a school called 'home school' in Zaria. The C.M.S attempted the same in Kano, but were driven out by the Emir of Kano (Olaniran, 2018). In 1902, the Roman Catholic Mission (R.C.M) made several attempts to open stations and school at Ibi and Basa (present day Taraba state), but finally withdrew in 1905 without much impact.

The Sudan Interior Mission established farms at Patel, Wushishi and Bida, but their inclusion of religious instruction in their curriculum made them come to bad terms with Lugard (Olaniran, 2018). The C.M.S opened school for mallams at Bida which was to be secular so as to train court officials, but with carefully – chosen texts based on Christianity as a curriculum. The school soon disintegrated as the mallams discovered the religious motives of the mission.

In 1907, Dr. W. Miller of the Church Missionary Society established two schools, one for boys and the other for mallams at Zaria. Both schools failed to take off because of Miller's strong religious convictions that the students must be converted to Christianity (Olaniran, 2018).

Until in 1909, when Hans Vischer of the C.M.S studied the immediate needs of the local population, introduction of western education became an uphill task to Christian Missions in Northern Nigeria. The federal government needed to lay hand on such historical literature at the planning stage of Almajiri integration programme so that it becomes a success.

Another vital factor to the failure of Almajiri integration in Nigeria is the poor sensitization of the stakeholders in Almajiri system. A rigorous sensitization campaign of all stakeholders was intrinsic in the Almajiri integration programme so as to create ample awareness of the programme that will surely culminate in its success. However, hardly if a campaign of this nature was carried in any part of Northern Nigeria.

Finally, corruption and misappropriation of fund was yet another reason for the woeful failure of the Almajiri integration programme in Northern Nigeria. A lot of fund allotted for the implementation of the programme were misappropriated and diverted to personal expenditure of some of the unpatriotic officials. And this adversely affected the overall success of the programme.

Skills Edifice of Curriculum and Its Integration into Almajiri Education

The curriculum being operated within the framework of Nigerian education system is an embodiment of numerous knowledge forms that appeal to distinctive human capabilities, namely; the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor edifices. The psychomotor / skills component of Nigerian education programme concerns itself with inculcating generation of youths with vocational skills under the auspices of entrepreneurship / apprenticeship programmes. This is purposely aimed at ascertaining youths' achievement of self – reliance through self – employment.

A list of various vocational / entrepreneurship development skills is enshrined in National Policy on Education (2013). Not only that but also mandated each Nigerian youth to acquire, develop as well as achieving a reasonable mastery level in at least one of the following vocational / entrepreneurship skills of need and interest under the guidance of school.

- I. Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting,
- II. Auto Electrical Work,
- III. Auto Mechanical Work,
- IV. Auto Parts Merchandise,
- V. Air Condition and Refrigerator Repairs,
- VI. Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice,
- VII. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work,
- VIII. Radio, Television and Electronic Servicing,
- IX. Block Laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work,

- X. Painting and Decorating,
- XI. Plumbing and Pipefitting,
- XII. Machine Woodworking,
- XIII. Carpentry and Joinery,
- XIV. Furniture Making,
- XV. Upholstery,
- XVI. Catering Craft Practice,
- XVII. Germen Making,
- XVIII. Clothing and Textile,
- XIX. Dyeing and Bleaching,
- XX. Painting Craft Practice,
- XXI. Cosmetology,
- XXII. Photography,
- XXIII. Mining,
- XXIV. Tourism,
- XXV. Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair,
- XXVI. Stenography,
- XXVII. Data Processing,
- XXVIII. Store Keeping,
- XXIX. Book Keeping,
- XXX. GSM Mentainance and Repair,
- XXXI. Animal Husbandry,

- XXXII. Poultry,
- XXXIII. Fishery,
- XXXIV. Marketing,
- XXXV. Salesmanship.

Moreover, since the Almajiri form a parcel of Nigerian youths, they should equally be enjoined to acquire, develop and master at least one of the aforementioned vocational / entrepreneurship development skills of need and interest, under the auspices of a structured apprenticeship programme that will be guided as well as coordinated by the Malams (Head of the Almajiri schools), the government and the private partners.

In this apprenticeship programme, the government would partner with vocational schools / centres that are within the reach of a group of Almajiri schools where the Almajiri will receive instructions in his chosen vocation.

The Almajiri school would prepare and compile a list of its Almajiri population and ensure that each of them indicates and register for a vocation of his choice. And submit the same to vocational school / centres for further action.

An arrangement would be planned by Almajiri schools on when the Almajiri apprentice children would be attending the vocational centres for instruction. And the Almajiri schools should be left to decide on this aspect because it needs to be planned in a manner that would not interfere with or disrupt Almajiri academic activities. The Almajiri needs to attend the vocational centres for apprenticeship training, at least 48 hours every week.

Findings

Based on the study, the following findings were revealed:

That the integration program enhances efficiency of Almajiri education system by striking balance among the acquisition of Qur'anic knowledge, moral development and accomplishing economic self-reliance / employability.

That with integration program Almajiri will have been equipped with self-reliance and employability skills that transform him into job-creator in addition to memorization of the Holy Qur'an.

That integration program offers Almajiri new socio-economic status in the society, the Almajiri lives on begging in the society but now engaged to work as petty trader or service provider in the community. This will have really scaled up the worth and value of Almajiri.

That integration will have program impact on Nigeria's growth domestic product (GDP), when the number of Almajiris are focused on small scale production of good and services in the society, then it will impact on the private sector economy which will have incremental effect on the nation's GDP.

That integration program will improve the security condition of the nation, as the unemployed Almajiri will be given a job to hang on for survival. And this truncates the mercenary supplies for terrorist groups operating in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The Islamic epistemological activities had been a component of the peoples' culture since the advent of Islamic religion in Northern Nigeria. And for more than 500 years back, the Qur'anic education system provided not only for the yearnings of the Muslim population but also contributed its quota to the production of effective Nigerian citizens through inculcating the youths positively with the moral virtues and values implicit in Holy Qur'an. However, the rising security challenges that pervaded the region and changes in the economy with their consequential repercussions upon the population, necessitated government intervention into the system with a view to ameliorating the predicaments surrounding Almajiri education. Though almost all efforts failed to make much impact, it is hoped that integration of the skills component of Nigerian education system, in a manner that does not interfere with Almajiri schools' academic engagements. This will play a vital part towards the empowerment of Almajiri children to accomplish self – reliance through self – employment, and enhance their economic status that in the long run results in boosting their contributions to national development.

Suggestions

Based on the foregoing paragraphs the authors suggested that:

- I. The Federal, state and the local governments in Nigerian should look into the need to integrate the entrepreneurship / vocational skills enshrined in National Policy on Education in the curriculum of Almajiri School as response to the vocational challenges which strangulate the program from contributing to Nigeria’s national unity and national development.
- II. The relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should provide collaboration support with skill acquisition centres across Northern Nigeria for this integration program to be achieved.
- III. There is need for adequately sensitize the Parents, Almajiri school scholar on the integration program, its direction and focus in order to avoid misperception.
- IV. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) should work out modalities of government – NGOS – Almajiri school collabotion in order to ascertain uniformity in the integration program across the country.

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