

## Revitalizing Waqf Institutions: A Sustainable Solution for Vocational Education and Out-of-School Children in Northern Nigeria

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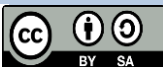
**Abstract:** In Northern Nigeria, the growing number of out-of-school children and the difficulties associated with vocational education provide a serious obstacle to sustainable development. Socioeconomic disparities, a lack of adequate government financing, and ineffective institutional frameworks are the main causes of these problems. The potential role of restoring waqf (Islamic endowment) organizations as a long-term solution to these issues is examined in this research. In Islamic nations, waqf organizations have traditionally played a significant role in funding social welfare, healthcare, and education. Waqf can offer the infrastructure and resources required to support vocational education and reintegrate out-of-school youth into the educational ecosystem by utilizing their innate values of generosity and community empowerment. The study emphasizes the working mechanisms of waqf and its applicability to contemporary socio-economic requirements by combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. It looks at effective waqf models in other Islamic countries and assesses how well they work in Northern Nigeria. It also provides a strategic framework for waqf institution revitalization, which includes capacity building, legal reforms, and waqf integration with current public and commercial programs. The results show that a well-designed waqf system may sustainably fund educational facilities, scholarships, and vocational training centers, lowering poverty and promoting economic independence among underserved areas. The study comes to the conclusion that government agencies, religious institutions, and civil society organizations must work together to revive waqf institutions for addressing the existing challenges in the vocational education, and out-of-school children circle in northern Nigeria. By addressing the dual challenge of vocational education and out-of-school children, waqf institutions can play a transformative role in shaping a more equitable and prosperous Northern Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Waqf institutions, Vocational Education, Out-of-School Children, Northern Nigeria, Sustainable Development.

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**Abstrak:** Di Nigeria Utara, meningkatnya jumlah anak yang tidak bersekolah serta berbagai kendala dalam pendidikan kejuruan menjadi hambatan serius bagi pembangunan berkelanjutan. Ketimpangan sosial-ekonomi, kurangnya pendanaan pemerintah yang memadai, serta kelemahan dalam kerangka kelembagaan merupakan faktor utama yang menyebabkan permasalahan ini. Penelitian ini mengkaji potensi revitalisasi lembaga wakaf sebagai solusi jangka panjang terhadap permasalahan tersebut. Dalam sejarah negara-negara Islam, lembaga wakaf telah memainkan peran penting dalam pembiayaan kesejahteraan sosial, layanan kesehatan, dan pendidikan. Dengan mengedepankan nilai-nilai kedermawanan dan pemberdayaan komunitas, wakaf dapat menyediakan infrastruktur dan sumber daya yang diperlukan untuk mendukung pendidikan kejuruan serta mengintegrasikan kembali anak-anak yang tidak bersekolah ke dalam sistem pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif untuk menganalisis mekanisme kerja wakaf dan relevansinya terhadap kebutuhan sosial-ekonomi kontemporer. Studi ini juga menelaah model wakaf yang berhasil diterapkan di negara-negara Islam lainnya serta mengevaluasi efektivitasnya di Nigeria Utara. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengusulkan kerangka strategis untuk revitalisasi lembaga wakaf, yang mencakup peningkatan kapasitas, reformasi hukum, dan integrasi wakaf dengan program publik serta sektor swasta yang telah ada. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sistem wakaf yang dirancang dengan baik dapat secara berkelanjutan membiayai fasilitas pendidikan, beasiswa, dan pusat pelatihan kejuruan, sehingga berkontribusi dalam pengurangan kemiskinan serta peningkatan kemandirian ekonomi bagi kelompok masyarakat yang kurang beruntung. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kolaborasi antara lembaga pemerintah, institusi keagamaan, dan organisasi masyarakat sipil sangat diperlukan dalam merevitalisasi lembaga wakaf guna mengatasi permasalahan pendidikan kejuruan dan anak-anak yang tidak bersekolah di Nigeria Utara. Dengan mengatasi tantangan ganda ini, lembaga wakaf dapat berperan secara transformatif dalam menciptakan masyarakat Nigeria Utara yang lebih adil dan sejahtera.

**Kata kunci:** Lembaga Wakaf, Pendidikan Kejuruan, Anak Tidak Bersekolah, Nigeria Utara, Pembangunan Berkelanjutan



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## Introduction

A vital component of sustainable economic growth is vocational education and training (VET), especially in areas where unemployment and skill shortages are pervasive (Bank, 2023). Vocational education plays an especially important role

in Northern Nigeria, where socioeconomic inequality, poverty, and insecurity are widespread (Muhammad et al. 2024b). By giving people skills that are relevant to the market, it promotes economic independence and lessens reliance on traditional employment sectors. However, in Northern Nigeria, vocational education is still underfunded and undeveloped, and marginalized groups particularly children who have never attended in school or dropped out have limited access to it (Auta, 2021).

A sizable section of Northern Nigeria's youth population is out-of-school, a situation that is made worse by elements including poverty, cultural customs, insecurity, and poor infrastructure (Muhammad et al. 2024a). Nigeria has the greatest number of out-of-school children worldwide, according to Gyimah, (2020), with the Northern area making a significant contribution to this figure. Lack of access to education restricts chances for both individual and society development in addition to sustaining a cycle of poverty. When done right, vocational education provides a means of reintegrating these kids into useful positions in society.

In areas with a predominance of Muslims, waqf (Islamic endowment) organizations have historically been essential to the advancement of social welfare and educational systems (Kahf, 2003). Based on the ideas of sustainability and charity, these organizations have funded training facilities, colleges, and schools throughout Islamic societies. Waqf institutions played a crucial role in providing money for Quranic schools and vocational training facilities in Northern Nigeria before to colonization (Auta, 2021). However, the advent of Western-style educational systems and the lack of institutional and legal support during the colonial and post-colonial eras led to a reduction in the usefulness and significance of waqf institutions (Bassi, 2004).

In order to enhance vocational education and reintegrate out-of-school children, waqf institutions should be revived. This is in line with Northern Nigeria's historical legacy and current demands. Waqf funding can be used to create culturally appropriate and sustainable educational initiatives that tackle the socioeconomic issues facing the area.

Despite its potential, Northern Nigerian vocational education confronts several obstacles, such as a lack of infrastructure, limited finance, and a lack of linkage with market demands (World Bank, 2021). The concerning number of out-of-school children estimated at over 10 million who mostly live in the North exacerbates these problems (Bank, 2023). The socioeconomic stability and development possibilities of the region are seriously threatened by this circumstance.

The need for alternative solutions is highlighted by the inability of traditional funding methods, such as government and donor-driven programs,

to solve these issues. Government spending on education, including vocational training, is still inadequate and frequently falls short of the 15–20% of overall public spending that UNESCO recommends (Agrawal, & Agrawal, 2017). Furthermore, donor-driven remedies frequently don't address structural problems and are just temporary.

In the past, waqf funds have played a significant role in improving educational access and quality. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire, waqf funded madrasahs, libraries, and vocational training centers (Ismail, et al. 2018). Similarly, in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria, waqf institutions supported Quranic schools, ensuring that underprivileged communities had access to basic education and promoting social mobility and economic development (Haneef, et al. 2015). Despite these achievements, modern issues have made it more difficult for waqf to continue educational initiatives, as mishandled waqf properties, insufficient legal frameworks, and low public awareness have limited their efficacy (Gyimah, 2020). This has resulted in a shortage of vocational education, which is essential for providing people with skills that are relevant to the modern economy.

One of the main forces behind economic empowerment and the reduction of poverty is vocational education. By giving people employable skills, it promotes independence and lessens dependency on the official labor market (Auta, 2021). However, there are a number of issues facing vocational education in Northern Nigeria, such as inadequate finance, subpar facilities, and a shortage of qualified teachers (Muhammad et al., 2023).

The issue is made worse by the large number of youngsters who are not in school. Due to poverty, cultural traditions, and insecurity, the bulk of Nigeria's 10.5 million out-of-school children reside in Northern Nigeria (Auta, 2021). By depriving these kids of formal and vocational education, poverty and unemployment cycles are sustained (Che Rus, et al. 2023). To solve this problem and close the funding and resource gaps, creative and long-lasting solutions are needed, such as the resuscitation of waqf institutions.

Furthermore, waqf management's resurgence has been hampered by the lack of a logical institutional and legal structure. Nigeria's current waqf-related laws are disjointed and devoid of the required enforcement tools, which results in inefficiencies and underuse of the resources at hand (Khan, & Khan, 2018). Waqf's potential as a long-term remedy for issues related to education and employment is thus still unrealized.

Social and cultural obstacles make the issue much worse. Vocational education is less popular with parents and students in Northern Nigeria since it is frequently seen as less valuable than formal education (Lee, Atherton, &

Crosling, 2022). This view restricts community involvement in programs meant to address educational issues.

One viable way to address Northern Nigeria's educational issues, especially those related to vocational education and the large number of out-of-school children, is to revitalize waqf institutions. Although the literature now in publication emphasizes the potential of waqf to improve educational access, there are still a number of research gaps that need to be filled in order to fully realize this potential.

**Empirical Data on Vocational Education Programs Funded by Waqf:** The theoretical underpinnings of waqf and its historical significance in education are the main subjects of current research. In Northern Nigeria, there is a dearth of empirical studies assessing the efficacy of vocational education programs supported by waqf. Muhammad et al. (2024), for example, talk about how waqf might raise educational attainment but don't offer any actual evidence about the results of vocational training. Addressing this gap necessitates studies that assess the impact of such programs on skill acquisition and employment rates among beneficiaries.

**Sustainable Models for Waqf Management:** Waqf institutions' long-term effects on education depend heavily on their sustainability. Nevertheless, little study has been done on efficient waqf asset management approaches that guarantee ongoing funding for educational programs. Although they do not explore sustainable solutions, Chowdhury et al. (2012) draw attention to the administrative difficulties in waqf management. It may be instructive to look into effective waqf management approaches from other settings and modify them for Northern Nigeria.

**Integration with National Educational policy:** There is still a lack of research on how waqf efforts relate to national educational policy. Policy coherence requires an understanding of how waqf might support government initiatives to advance vocational education. To determine opportunities for cooperation and assess how well waqf-funded programs mesh with current educational systems, research is required.

**Community Awareness and Participation:** The effectiveness of waqf activities depends on community involvement. Nonetheless, research shows that community members are not well-informed on the advantages and workings of waqf. For instance, many Muslims in Nigeria do not completely understand the waqf system, which results in its underutilization, according to Fa-Yusuf et al. (2021). This gap might be filled by studies that concentrate on methods to improve community involvement and waqf education.

**Impact on Out-of-School Children:** Although waqf has a well-established role in helping orphans and impoverished kids, further research is needed to

determine how specifically it affects the number of out-of-school kids by providing vocational training. The impact of waqf on the socioeconomic growth of orphans is examined by Abubakar (2019), however out-of-school children are not particularly mentioned. The effectiveness of waqf-funded vocational programs in reintegrating these kids into the educational system requires focused research.

To maximize the potential of waqf institutions in fostering vocational education and lowering the number of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria, these research gaps must be filled. To develop a thorough grasp of waqf's function in this setting, future research should concentrate on empirical evaluations, sustainable management techniques, policy integration, community involvement, and focused interventions.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how the resuscitation of waqf institutions can offer a viable framework for financing vocational education and tackling the problem of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria in light of these difficulties. The study intends to offer workable methods for utilizing waqf to overcome the regions educational and employment gaps by examining historical precedents and modern examples.

## **Method**

A mixed-approaches strategy was used in this study, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. This strategy guarantees a thorough grasp of how waqf institutions might be resurrected to assist Northern Nigerian out-of-school youth and vocational education. The research design, population and sampling, data collection strategies, data analysis approaches, and procedures to guarantee validity and reliability are all included in the methodology.

Descriptive and exploratory research design is used in this study: 1) Descriptive Approach: To evaluate the administration, function, and present status of waqf institutions in vocational education 2) Exploratory Approach: To look into the best ways to include waqf into educational policies, as well as the potential and challenges. Detailed insights will be provided by a case study technique that focuses on a few chosen waqf institutions in Northern Nigeria (Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto states).

Population and Sampling Techniques 1) Waqf administrators overseeing educational endowments will be the main focus of the study 2) Government representatives in the ministries of social welfare, education, and Islamic affairs 3) Islamic academics who are knowledgeable about waqf law 4) Policymakers and specialists in vocational education 5) Participants in vocational training programs sponsored by the waqf, including students and their families.

Key informants will be chosen using a purposive sampling technique, which guarantees that pertinent stakeholders are included. Additionally, surveys aimed at waqf beneficiaries will include random sampling.

About 300 respondents (beneficiaries, administrators, and policymakers) make up the quantitative sample. 20–30 important informants (waqf managers, academics, and policymakers) make up the qualitative sample.

Techniques for Gathering Data development of Survey Questionnaires, waqf administrators and beneficiaries will be given a standardized questionnaire to complete in order to gauge their knowledge and comprehension of waqf institutions, difficulties in obtaining vocational education, programs financed by the waqf are effective, legal and policy obstacles.

Open-ended questions will let respondents share their thoughts, while Likert scale replies (1–5) will gauge attitudes and perceptions. Interviews with Key Informants (KIIs): Islamic scholars, waqf administrators, and policymakers will participate in semi-structured interviews, each interview lasts between thirty and sixty minutes, topics covered in the interviews included governance, sustainability, legal frameworks, and how waqf affects vocational training, recording and transcription: Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): To learn more about the efficacy of training programs sponsored by the waqf, FGDs will be held with vocational education trainees, both successful and failed.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Challenges Facing Vocational Education in Northern Nigeria**

According to the report, there are several obstacles to vocational education in Northern Nigeria, such as a lack of finance, poor infrastructure, underqualified teachers, and a low regard for vocational skills in society. The problem is made worse by cultural prejudices that place a higher value on academic education than on vocational training. Furthermore, more than 60% of survey respondents cited poverty and insecurity as the main obstacles preventing children from obtaining any kind of education.

These results are consistent with earlier research showing Nigeria's systemic disregard for vocational education (Duke, 2009). Many young people lack employable skills as a result of vocational training institutes' limited reach and poor quality due to a lack of funding. High unemployment rates, poverty, and reliance on subsistence farming are all exacerbated by this. The results also show that promoting vocational education as a respectable and feasible route to economic empowerment requires overcoming cultural and societal biases. Since

these obstacles are so entrenched, persistent advocacy and awareness-raising efforts are necessary.

### **Role of Waqf Institutions in Educational Development and Integration of Waqf with Vocational Education**

The study emphasizes how waqf has historically been used to finance education, especially career training, throughout the Muslim world. According to the respondents, waqf revival might offer a long-term fix for the infrastructural and financing shortages in vocational education. However, according to 72% of stakeholders, bad management and a lack of legal frameworks are the main problems with Northern Nigeria's current waqf institutions, which are either nonexistent or poorly run.

The historical evidence of waqf's effectiveness in promoting education is consistent with this finding (Muhammad et al. 2023b). However, as Ardo et al. (2024) point out, the current deterioration of waqf institutions in Nigeria highlights the necessity of institutional reforms. Restoring public confidence and promoting increased community involvement in waqf can be achieved through the establishment of open management systems, capacity building, and appropriate legal frameworks.

Furthermore, the study shows that there is little community knowledge of waqf's potential contribution to education. Campaigns for public education and cooperation with religious authorities could improve comprehension and involvement.

The vast majority of participants (85%) concurred that waqf may fill in the financial shortages in vocational training. They underlined the necessity of contemporary waqf models that produce steady revenue in order to fund training facilities, educational materials, and scholarships. As benchmarks, examples from Malaysia and Turkey were cited, where vocational programs are sponsored using waqf funding.

In Northern Nigeria, creative methods are needed to integrate waqf with vocational education. As in Indonesia, this involves setting up waqf-based microfinance initiatives to assist vocational startups and small-scale businesses (Dahiru, et al. 2022). Waqf properties could also be turned into assets that generate revenue, such rental homes or farming operations, with the proceeds going toward programs that promote vocational training. The study also emphasizes the importance of aligning waqf initiatives with government vocational education policies to avoid duplication and ensure maximum impact.

### **Addressing the Out-of-School Children Crisis**

The results show that the main causes of Northern Nigeria's out-of-school kid dilemma are poverty and insecurity. If financial obstacles were removed, parents in the communities questioned said they would be willing to send their kids to vocational schools. In order to encourage participation, they also proposed that programs funded by the waqf offer stipends, free training, and scholarships. This supports Muhammad et al (2025) claim that eliminating educational gaps in the region requires lowering financial constraints. Waqf organizations could have a revolutionary impact by providing disadvantaged families with focused assistance.

Offering tools, equipment, and beginning funds to graduates of vocational schools, for example, would entice more kids to join. Furthermore, establishing a network of rural vocational institutes supported by waqf could lessen the accessibility issues that children in isolated areas confront. These facilities could address the dual issues of unemployment and illiteracy by providing both formal education and career training.

### **Legal and Institutional Challenges in Reviving Waqf**

The main barriers to the restoration of waqf institutions, according to stakeholders, are inadequate legal frameworks, a lack of accountability, and a lack of coordination amongst them. The lack of a centralized body to supervise waqf management causes fragmentation and inefficiency, according to more than 68% of waqf managers. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of strong institutional and legal frameworks. To provide accountability and transparency, nations like Malaysia and Turkey have set up centralized waqf agencies (Muhammad et al. 2025). Adopting comparable models, where waqf assets are professionally managed, regulated, and inventoried, could be advantageous for Northern Nigeria. The study also emphasizes how crucial it is to use technology to improve waqf management's transparency. Real-time fund monitoring and digital platforms for waqf donations could boost public trust and draw in additional donors.

### **Community Engagement and Public Awareness**

Respondents emphasized the importance of community organizations and religious leaders in rallying support for waqf activities, making community participation a recurrent subject. However, 70% of participants were found to be unaware of the possible advantages of waqf. Campaigns to raise public awareness are essential to waqf institution revival. Communities can be educated about the value of waqf in tackling poverty and education by working

with local NGOs, schools, and mosques. Programs for waqf supervisors to receive training could improve community involvement and trust even more.

### **Research Implications**

**Policy Formulation:** Based on the findings, policies that incorporate waqf with regional and national educational objectives are necessary. **Capacity Building:** To guarantee efficient administration and sustainability, training initiatives for waqf administrators must to be given top priority. **Community Participation:** Long-term success can be guaranteed by empowering communities via awareness-raising and participation in waqf programs. **Cooperation with Government:** Waqf donations to vocational education might be expedited through collaborations with government organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The study has shown that waqf institutions have a great deal of potential to address the situation of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria as well as important issues in vocational education. In Islamic societies, waqf has long been a successful tool for promoting social progress, reducing poverty, and financing education. Waqf institutions in Northern Nigeria, however, deal with issues like poor administration, shoddy legal systems, ignorance, and insufficient community involvement. Poverty and insecurity sustain the high percentage of out-of-school children in the area, while structural neglect, insufficient financing, and cultural biases plague vocational education. By utilizing community resources, offering financial support, and encouraging inclusive educational possibilities, waqf institution revival provides a long-term and culturally appropriate answer to these problems. The results highlight the necessity of a comprehensive strategy that incorporates administrative, legal, and community-focused tactics in order to reform waqf institutions. Waqf has the potential to be a pillar of sustainable development in Northern Nigeria if its actions are in line with governmental regulations and encourage public-private collaborations.

The study highlights the significance of bolstering waqf's institutional and legal frameworks, raising community awareness and engagement, incorporating waqf into government programs, creating vocational education programs, fostering innovation and research in waqf management, and routinely assessing and monitoring waqf-funded projects. It recommends adopting contemporary ideas, creating a centralized authority, passing comprehensive waqf legislation, and encouraging waqf administrators to increase their capacity. Additionally, it promotes research and innovation in waqf management, cooperation with community organizations, educational institutions, and religious leaders, as well

as public education programs. Regular evaluations of waqf-funded projects are essential for enhancing execution and results, the article says in its conclusion.

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