ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This paper assessed the contributions of non-formal education to national development. The paper acknowledged the fact that the over emphasis placed on formal education has de-emphasized the critical role of non-formal education as a medium through which capacity building and relevant skills can be acquired for running the wheels of national development. As an organized educational activity outside the framework of the formal school, non-formal education is the closest avenue of spreading educational opportunities to all in line with the Jomietien Declaration for education for all in Indonesia in 1990. The training and re-training of beneficiaries aimed at improving their basic knowledge and skills in designed to enable them cope with challenges and change in their environment (society). It is further emphasized in the paper that it is non-formal education that can save us from the lethal problem of youth restiveness and educated unemployment. The paper concluded by pointing out that if non-formal education is to play its role in the Nigerian society as documented by the NPE (2004), all stake holders-government(s), the organized private sector, communities, parents and individuals must have to contribute their quota in promoting, accelerating and sustaining non-formal education towards national development efforts.

Introduction
Education has been recognized as the key that open the padlock of national development and the individuals quest for self-actualization. It is an instrument needed to sustain and accelerate overall national development. In line with this belief, education is seen as a pervasive catalyst that must be integrated into all development efforts of any given society. One implication of this pervasive nature is that education must cover a wide range both in contest and in form. The context can include basic knowledge acquisition to advanced knowledge, and from training in basic living skills to highly sophisticated production skills (Ibeh, 1987). As for the form, it can vary from the formal types of schooling to the most specific kinds of non-formal education, and from the simplest levels of education in literacy and numeracy to the most advanced graduate academic disciplines.

The importance attached to education by Nigeria like other countries is encompassed in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) when it emphatically stressed that education is an instrument for national development and as a result, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national
development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education.

In order to attain the main national goals of the country – a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and land full of bright opportunities for all citizens, education has been recognized as an instrument par excellence for the attainment of the above goals. Education is highly rated in the national development plans because it is the most important instrument of change and accordingly. Any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by an educational revolution (NPE, 2004). Life-long education which non-formal education is an integral part is recognized as the basis of the nation’s educational policy.

In the words of Aghenta (2001), education is an experience, what happens to us from birth to death, while Moore (1982) believed that education is the sum total or a person’s experiences. Sociologically speaking, education can be seen as a way or process of transmitting, advancing and consolidating culture both at the national and international levels. One major way of achieving this is through the national educational system that comprises informal, non-formal and formal education. In recognition of this integral nature of educational system, the World Bank (1980) sees the development of people as encompassing education and training, better health and nutrition, and fertility reduction.

It does appear however, that much is written and said of the formal education system and its contribution to national development to the neglect of non-formal education and its contribution to national development. The focus of this paper therefore, is to re-evaluate the place and role of non-formal education in our national educational system, vis-à-vis its functions and contributions to national development.

The Concept of Non-Formal Education in the Education System

Many people see educational system as being synonymous with formal education to the neglect of other sub-systems which non-formal education is a part. Educational system therefore is not just formal schooling but all those process, agencies including individuals that play different roles which are mutually inclusive in the provision of opportunities geared towards learning in any society (Nwadiani, 1997). As observed earlier, educational system includes formal, informal and non-formal processes of learning such as formal schools education, in-service training, on-the-job education, education provided by apprenticeship centre, industries and firms, about union activities, governmental agencies for farmers and other rural dwellers; forms of learning provided for migrant nomads and fishermen, legal institutions, the press and mass media; educational efforts provided by churches, political parties and social clubs. Central to this wholistic picture of an educational system is learning and the fact that an educational system is not mutually exclusive but all inclusive.
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According to Coombs (1968), the phrase educational system means not merely the several levels and types of formal education (primary, secondary, post-secondary, general and specialized) but also all those systematic programmes and processes of education and training that lie outside “formal” education.

In the words of Ahmed (1975), “Any organized, systematic educational activity carried out outside the framework of the formal system, to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adults as well as children”. Thus defined non-formal education includes for example agricultural extension and farmer training programmes, adult literacy programmes, occupational skill training given outside the formal system, youth clubs with substantial educational purposes, and various community programmes of instruction in health nutrition, family planning, co-operatives, and the like.

Scholars have observed that the formal system of education is incapable of solving the learning needs of members of a society and national development strides of a nation. This is why non-formal education is required as a critical linking bridge between the society and overall national development. From the definition of non-formal education given above and its all embracing capacity, one has no doubt in his mind that it is a major tonic required to oil the wheels of national development.

Nwagwu (1978) asserted that non-formal education is voluntary. It is less specific about the ages of its participants but is usually more concerned with adults, school learners and dropouts, and all those who are no longer or have never been in the formal system.

In the words of Thompson (1981) non-formal education (NFE) seeks to provide clients specific and immediate needs. NFE may be focused on the specific task or skill which is needed and will be able to deal with modular units of learning derived not from some accepted concept of the way knowledge is structured but for the problems which is being faced.

The integrated and comprehensive nature of non-formal education makes it all embracing. Putnam (1982) described lifelong education which non-formal education is an integral part as including but not limited to adult basic education, continuing education, remedial education, agricultural education, business education, labour education, occupational education and job training programmes, parents education, post-secondary education, special needs, and also educational programmes for groups or for individuals with special needs, and also educational and professional skills, to assist agencies and other organizations in the use of innovation and research results, but also programmes that serve family needs and personal development.

Non-formal education is an organized education activity outside the framework of the formal school. According to Aghenta (2001), it is designed to provide selected types of learning to particular groups in the population particularly the adults. He went ahead to enumerate the components of non-
formal education as comprising literacy and basic education, technical and vocational training; community development, family planning, agricultural extension services, education and training programmes of trade unions, industries, professional associations, the military, government, the church, the press and so on. The mode of operation include seminars, workshops, short courses on the job training like tailoring, roadside mechanic workshop training and others. This form of education has no general syllabus nor a general end of course examination. It is a means of extending the skills and knowledge gained in formal education, indeed it is a means of counter balancing some of the distortions in formal education (Aghenta, 1993).

Non-formal educating like its umbrella system – lifelong education should be such that can equip the individual with skills and attitude to cope with change. Cropley (1976) notes that this new goal of education for coping with change is what is required since skills, values, attitudes which children are spending their childhood acquiring, in areas such as knowledge development and sense of individuality, may no longer be relevant to the world they will live in as adults. Cropley position is incontrovertible.


Section 6, sub-section 31: 25 of the NPE (2004) identifies mass literacy, adult and non-formal education as encompassing all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. The goals of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education is to provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education. Among this group are nomads, migrant families, the disabled, young people who did not complete secondary school, different categories of completers of the formal education system (aimed at improving their basic knowledge and skills), different categories of workers and professionals who need in-service, on the job, vocational and professional training as a way of improving their skills, and above al the adult citizens of this country who need education for aesthetic; cultural and civic education for public enlightenment. This no doubt is a second chance education.

In order to implement this policy, the Federal Government established the National Commission for Mass literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education by Decree 17 of 1990 with very clear mandates in the areas of monitoring, co-ordination, among others. The same commission was duplicated in the 36 states of the federation and supposedly the local governments in the federation. One of the strategies for achieving the goals of this policy is “each-one-teach-one or “fund-the-teaching-of-one”.

Apart from the areas covered by non-formal education as enumerated above, the open Apprenticeship system; MANSER, High-Boys dropout
syndrome in the South-East, low girl-child participation in education in the health and the integration of elements of basic education into Qur’anic schools also in the North, literacy for the disabled and prison education are other areas covered.

International recognition given to adult and non-formal education by such agencies like UNICEF/UNESCO gives a picture of the relevance of non-formal education to national development. Available literature indicate that such programmes as “Animation rurale” in Morocco and Senegal, the Brigades skill system in Botswana, the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNE) in Indonesia, the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) and Action Cultural Popular (Acpo) IN Columbia, and others scattered across countries, are programmes put in place by various countries as “second chance” to compensate for the non-school attendance initial deficiencies and mis-training in the formal education system (Nwadiani, 1996).

However, it should be observed that in the case of Nigeria, implementation of the policy on – non-formal education is still more of a paper work. The level of implementation, effective and efficiency of implementation strategies, leaves much to be desired because it does seem that the clientele of this policy are not benefitting maximally from it. A highlight of some of the problems encountered in the policy on non-formal education will be x-rayed below. The questions which this paper intends to find clues to include: what are the functions of education? Is this form of education contributing meaningfully to national development in Nigeria.

The Functions of Non-Formal Education

The fundamental concept surrounding non-formal education obviously underlines its functions. Non-formal system of education is a comprehensive, coherent and integrated system designed to meet the education and cultural aspirations of every person according to his abilities. Like the life-long education, non-formal education is a system which emphasizes a learning process by which an individual acquires knowledge and skills throughout his or her life span, in order to maintain or improve occupation, academic or personal development. Basically, its goals is to enable everyone through his work or through his leisure activities, to develop his or her personality.

A Non-formal education provides a wide range of learning services particularly skills which lie beyond the scope of formal education The skills are on areas of unskilled and semi skilled workers in factories, fari construction, agricultural extension services, among others It provides alternative of a substitute for formal education with a trade-off for development policies in areas of deficiencies among electricians, masons, carpenters, plumbeis, filters who may have been in an employment- training for skills to fit into the job

Fundamentally, non-formal education is to bridge the world of learning, post- formal education opportunities and the world of work. Human resources development which is akin to vocational or trade training is a continuous life
long process of learning. It provides a means or an opportunity for learning new experiences by fulfilling alternative positions. Aghenta (2004) noted that non-formal education provides a means of counter-balancing some of the distortions created by formal education and in that wise, it create a gate way to position or status. It provides a greater opportunity for innovations, widening scope for experimentation with new techniques, new media, etc.

**Non-Formal Education and National Development**

It has been generally accepted that the greatest investment a nation can make, especially for national development, is the one directed at training citizens. The reference here is on human capital which is the provision of a skilled labour force that has gone through educational training. It involves the training of the educated citizens in the acquisition of specific or general skills that will enable them to function in the society (Fadipe, 1984). Since non-formal education is an integral part of the educational system which makes it mutually inclusive and not exclusive, then it is reasoned that non-formal education is critically required also for national development. The type of national development Nigerians envisage will be a function of the quantity and quality of education given.

It is the role of education in national development envisaged above that we can agree with Curle (1973) when he viewed development as the creation of a form of society in which certain conditions - safety, sufficiency, satisfaction and stimulus (4s) – prevail for human beings. There is the reasoning that when nation is developed, there is socio-cultural reconstruction, economic development and political stability.

Aghenta (2002) citing UNESCO (1963) described development as growth plus change which involves materials, mental, psychological, physical, institutional and organizational innovations.

Summarily, Iziren (1975) opined that development is associated with modernization, materials advancement, industrialization, scientific and technological progress, the emergence of unclear energy, electronic and biological revolution, new knowledge about man and universe, urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, mass literacy, vertical and horizontal mobility, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles. These enumerated areas are critical when the issue of national development are emphasized and non-formal education is one major ingredient in the education system that is required to oil the wheels of national development.

The input of non-formal education to national development has been neglected by the various government or at most given an ad-hoc treatment. This causal treatment given to it could be as a result of the over importance attached to formal education which majorly certifies but does not quite equip its holders of critical skills needed for the labour market. This is where non-formal education is a linking bridge between skills acquisition opportunities, the labour market and employment.
Combs (1986) reacting to the problems of growth oriented education condemns the unsuitability of the products of the formal school system when he regretted that the growing inability of the economics of the developing countries to absorb the human output of the educational systems, was exacerbating the lethal problems of the educated unemployed. This scenario painted by combs is already with us in Nigeria situation where our graduates that are unemployed are more than the ones in employment simply because they lack skills that will make them employable thereby contributing to national development.

A wholistic approach to educational reforms which also involve non-formal education should be that which can equip and pro the people an opportunity to take part in the development process and at the same time generate an enabling social environment with the right values attitude, motives, asp skills on which national development depends. Such educational system should fill the void between the rich and poor, level out the greater inequalities, reduce the injustices which discourage and impoverish the indigent majority, and which thereby perpetuate the vicious circle of underdevelopment. Experts in developmental studies suggested that what the poor nations need is an education system that not only surveys universal knowledge, but also helps people to live creatively within their own culture.

In line with Curie, Ibeh (1987) suggested that the framework of lifelong, education for adult and non-formal education is the provision of opportunities for continuing learning for those adults and youths who want education but who, for personal and social reasons, have not been able to receive it within the formal system. It will suffice to say that adult and non-formal education no doubt is regarded in the National Policy on Education (2004) as not only as a means of combating illiteracy but also as bridge between mainstream education (formal) and work (employment).

The organized Nigerian Private Sector can be said to be the foremost contributor to the development of the ideals, policies on non-formal education. Though their efforts have not been fully documented, for so many years now, they have been involved in the training and re-training of their staff to acquire the relevant skills on the job. As a way of providing “Education for All” in line with the Jomietein Declaration (even before) of 1990 in Indonesia, they have contributed so much in this direction. Assessing the contribution of the private sector to formal education alone could be misleading since they are equipped to make an even more valuable contribution in non-formal education. Available literature indicate that some multinational companies responding to lower standards observed in their new recruits, organize extramural training for graduates, pick the best and offer the rest the society as their own contribution. Such companies as the Nigerian Breweries PLC, Nigerian Bottling Company, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Dunlop Nigeria PL, the Banking Sector, Co-operatives and a host of others are involved.
The various organized workshops, conferences seminars, on-the-job training for lower, middle and higher level manpower are all geared towards equipping these individuals with relevant skills needed for national development. The various supervisors, foremen, craftsmen, technicians and others who receive these skills from the small scale industries and big manufacturing companies no doubt contribute their quota to national development.

**Problems Facing Non-Formal Education in Nigeria**

One major problem confronting non-formal education in Nigeria is the disturbing fact that policy makers, educational planners, administrators, implementers, parents and even learners neglect Non-Formal Education (NFE). As observed by scholars, the situation has a darker image in developing countries where the euphoria of the faith in formal education as the solution to the yawning problems of underdevelopment has not really subsided.

The establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) by Decree 17 of 1990 with clear cut mandate on monitoring and co-ordination, was Government’s effort at actualizing the policies on Mass Literacy as documented in the National policy on Education (2004). The establishment of skill acquisition centres, youth empowerment centres in some or thirty-six states of the federation is also another measure taken towards implementing the policy.

Nonetheless, the neglect given to non-formal education is so pronounced that Nwadiani (1997) noted that though nations have recently recognized the complementary role of non-formal education to formal education, there are no concrete data with which to express mathematically its growth and expansion. He remorseful concluded that it does appear the non-formal education will continue to occupy a complementary position to formal education in the societies (Nigeria inclusive).

Despite the lack luster attitude towards non-formal education by stakeholders, it still faces the problems of access. Education Sector Status Report (ESSR, 2003) documented that even where there is access, participation is restricted on the bases of non-functional programme offering and other factors including age, unsuitable programmes, lack of interest, ill-health, among other reasons. It concluded that 3% of adults have access to adult and non-formal education programme. The rural communities are the most hit. This information is worrisome since public, private agencies as well as civil society groups are supposed to be involved in this literacy delivery.

In areas where NGOs and other civil society groups have set up learning centres, the problem of payment of instructors among others have derailed the capacity and intentions of the programmes. The problem is that most donor support for literacy delivery do not accommodate the cost of stipends to instructors.
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The other problem area facing adult and non-formal education programmes is that of the absence of curriculum and instruction materials. Experts and practitioners are sharply divided as to the need to have a unit structure for the programme(s). Proponents for curriculum/syllabus in this area argue that there is need for curriculum as a guide to set standards that can be used to measure minimum attainment. Curriculum offering of non-formal education favours training and retraining as a strong component of curriculum implementation.

Despite these arguments about curriculum, Education Sector Status Report (2003) confirmed that the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) with support from UNICERF and technical input from National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC), has developed three curricula for use in non-formal education. These are curricula for Girl-Child Education, Qur;anic schools and Boys Drop-out.

The almost non-availability of relevant facilities for instructions at this level is still a problem. There are availability of few equipment scattered all over the place for skills acquisition which are redundant while others are obsolete. The mobilization efforts by the government(s) of the youths into these programmes are very slow and uncoordinated.

Due to the economic recession, the organized private sector finds it difficult to properly articulate and implement various skill acquisition programmes. It does appear that ours is still a buying and selling economy and skills a under these non-formal programmes cannot be fully utilized.

Beside, facilitate in use for adult and non-formal learning centres vary according to providers. Curriculum offering of non-formal education favours training and retraining as a strong component of curriculum implementation.

Another problem faced by non-formal education is that there are hardly any full time instructors. They are mostly hired on part-time basis. Added to this is the fact that the stipends paid to them is very low (ranges between 350-1,500) compared to the demands made on them (ESSR, 2003). The funding challenge is a major problem non-formal education is facing. The payment of instructors is a major setback and most programmes that fail have been attributed to this problem. With this problem, motivation of instructors is low and zeal to continue also is flattened. The expensive nature of skills acquisition structures, equipment and materials and the lack of maintenance culture is another setback for non-formal education.

However, the development oriented nature of adult and non-formal education makes it a field of interest to many development partners who are willing to get involved in training and retaining of instructors. Apart from formal training programmes, it is documented that development partners and NGOs sponsor or organize training programmes for instructors though the quality of these programmes, may sometimes be difficult to measure.
Conclusion and Recommendations

The focus of this paper is to assess the contribution of non-formal education to national development. Since it appears that the formal education system has almost failed to satisfy the intellectual, psychomotor, socio-economic and cultural needs of the individuals and society, there is an alternative educational system which cannot only complement the role of formal education but at the same time provide the relevant skills and abilities for individual and national development process. Education within the framework of adult and non-formal education with the goals and objectives of remedying earlier educational deficiencies, upgrading oneself vocationally and professionally through the acquisition of new skills and abilities, becomes an indispensable, dynamic and creative instrument for grappling or coping with life challenges.

With the upsurge of science and technology, economic challenges of mass retrenchment and growing unemployment, sociological challenge of moral bankruptcy in the form of examination malpractice, corruption, fraud, armed robbery, drug trafficking, cultism, erosion of the family, the family, the collapse of values in the society, political illiteracy, among others, adult and non-formal education becomes the tonic needed by individuals (citizen and the nation to turn the situation around and develop Nigeria. In addition, the provision and full implementation of non-formal education side by side with formal education, will provide equal educational opportunities to all and sundry in line with the Jomelien Declaration in 1990 for education for all.

The government’s ad-hoc treatment and second-rate-value given to non-formal education should change for the positive. This presents a planning and implementational challenge to both educational planners and managers.

The government(s) at the three tiers should mount a vigorous enlightenment campaign on the benefits of non-formal education while at the same time mobilizing all stakeholders to contribute maximally to this programme. Enough financial provisions should be made for it in their various budgets.

Skills acquisition centres should be established and fully equipped all over the federation where they exist. A full mobilization of the youths and other end users of this programmes will reduce to the bearest minimum youth restiveness and all other social malaise enumerated above. This programme should not only be remedial in nature but should be sufficient enough to equip its beneficiaries with creative potentials, instill confidence in their own capacity to be self-reliant, thereby contributing to national developmental efforts.

References

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