

**REPOSITIONING ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR POVERTY
ALLEVIATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND THE
WAY FORWARD**

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Abstract

The paper examined the issues and challenges of repositioning adult and non-formal education for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The paper highlighted a number of issues of repositioning adult and non-formal education, amongst which include sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives, wealth creation and employment generation, development of relevant curriculum, availability of human and material resources as well as adequacy of funds as critical areas of concern in the initiative. Some recommendations are proffered to reposition adult and non-formal education with a view to making it responsive in alleviating poverty in the Nigeria 21st century.

Education no doubt is a veritable instrument for national development and this explains why nations all over the world accorded priority to this sector. Three main types of education exist in Nigeria, namely; formal, informal and adult and non-formal education. As it is, adult and non-formal education which is the focus of this paper affords a sizeable population of Nigerian adults who previously dropped out of the school system the opportunity of dropping in again. Many children and youths either left school prematurely or never attended formal school before. Adult and non-formal education which is an organized educational activities for people, who are not in regular full time attendance to schools or other educational institutions in a formal school system, becomes a viable alternative open to these Nigerians.

The issues of repositioning adult and non-formal education are very important in addressing the prevailing poverty situation amongst the citizenry. Adult and non-formal education as an important area of Nigerian educational sector focuses on provision of functional education to youths and adults both in the formal school system and outside the formal school system in the country

Concept of Adult and Non-Formal Education

According to Jamal (2010) adult and non-formal education is often referred to as a movement, dedicated to making things better, as well as providing professional expertise in teaching and in helping

adults and children who did not get opportunity to attend the formal education to learn. According to Jamal (2010) the prioritization of adult and non-formal education is to empower communities in the fight to alleviating poverty and achieve one of the MDGs of poverty eradication by 2015.

According to Aruma (2011a) the scope of adult and non-formal education has widened in recent time to address certain contemporary national and global issues and challenges. He reiterated that the scope of adult and non-formal education includes functional literacy education, functional numeracy education, education for disadvantaged groups and people with special needs in the society, distance education, community development, adult education administration, environmental adult education, consumer education, health education, prison education, on-the –job training, in-service training, pre-retirement education and nomadic education among others.

Britain (1989) in Aruma (2011a) rightly noted that adult and non-formal education which also includes training for people in employment, the provision of education for people in employment, or workers education becomes highly imperative in order to enable people to keep abreast with recent technological changes and research findings. This will ultimately enhance the efficiency, productivity and effective service delivery of such people in their various workplaces in the contemporary society. The writers quite agree with the view that adult and non-formal education is an important complement to formal education and has the potential for contributing to individuals and national development when properly planned and implemented.

Poverty

Poverty in its widest context is a socio-economic issue and has enjoyed varied interpretations. Alimeka (2001) conceptualized poverty to comprise various manifestations including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihood: hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environment, social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision and in civil social and cultural life.

Poverty in the view of World Bank (1999) is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school; not knowing how to read or not being able to speak properly, not having a job, fear of the future; losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness; lack of representation and freedom. Concisely put, poverty refers to a condition of living below a specified minimum of income.

Mohammed (2006) opined that poverty is not only about poor or low income but also access to lack of basic necessities of life like education, housing, health, safe drinking water, sanitation and clean environment. In this case, the person is in a type of condition that makes it particularly impossible to maintain himself in accordance with the living standard of his group. This economic deprivation and social misfit do not only bring about psychological fortune but, also the inability to achieve mental and physical efficiency.

No country has succeeded to alleviate or eradicate poverty, if it has not educated its people. Not only is education, important in reducing poverty, it is a key to wealth creation. The eradication of poverty confirms that adult and non-formal education is central to the fight against poverty. Nzeneri (2002) observed that it is in adult and non-formal education that a lot of emphasis is placed on life-long education. Braimoh (2006) stated that it has become increasingly known that education is a process which continues throughout adult life. The implication of this is that without adult and non-formal education for adults, the life of adult population will not be meaningful in the contemporary global environment. Consequently, adult and non-formal education which offers an opportunity for adult

population to learn throughout life contributes significantly to poverty alleviation in Nigeria, hence national development.

Goals of Adult and Non-formal Education

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) outlines the goals of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education as follows:

- i. To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education.
- ii. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- iii. To provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- iv. To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and,
- v. To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Jamal (2010) further highlighted the goals of adult and non-formal education with specific references to adult literacy with the following objectives:

- a. Attainment of permanent and functional literacy and numeracy;
- b. Acquisition of functional skills relevant to life in the community;
- c. Development of national awareness of individuals by building social, political and civic competencies, including instructions on national and international issues;
- d. Promotion of life-long learning in the community in order to update professional competences required by the world of work;
- e. Basic of fundamental education so as to make good the deficiencies many people experience because of curtailed education or non-existence period of formal schooling and;
- f. Vocational and technical education necessary for the acquisition of certain specific skills.

Discussions on adult and non-formal education usually highlight the goal of fitting the adult into his society. UNESCO (1976) in Okujagu (2000) maintain that an important goal of adult and non-formal education is civic citizenship training. That is, adult and non-formal education helps the individual learn element of socialization which prepares him or her for participation in communal life. The need for adult and non-formal education is based on the fact that, it is only by continual retraining that people can fulfill their social and economic roles in the face of rapid social and technological changes.

Issues of Repositioning Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria:

There is an urgent need to reposition adult and non-formal education in Nigeria in order to meet up with certain human challenges in time. The idea is basically to identify issues of common concern that will help reasonably to address the problem of poverty in the society.

To address the problem of poverty in Nigeria, Aruma (2011b) have suggested the repositioning of adult and non-formal education in the following ways:

1. Repositioning adult and non-formal education for sustainable entrepreneurial enterprises in Nigeria.
2. Repositioning adult and non-formal education for wealth creation.
3. Repositioning adult and non-formal education for employment generation for the teeming population.

Repositioning Adult and Non-formal Education for Entrepreneurial Enterprises in Nigeria:

There is no doubt to believe that there is an increasing number of students that graduate from Universities and other institutions of higher learning every year leading to various qualifications of the educational institutions concerned awarding degrees, Higher National Diploma or Ordinary National Diploma and Nigeria Certificate in Education as the case may be in Nigeria. Adult and non-formal education as a distinct department in various Universities and Colleges contributes significantly to enhance production of manpower that will be engaged in productive workforce for the alleviation of poverty in the society. Aniemeka, Ezeani (2005), further confirmed that man is the most important factor of production. They reiterated that capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulated wealth, exploit material resources, building social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. It is a fact that a nation which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people will be unable to develop anything else.

Additionally, adult and non-formal education in various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria can be refocused on the provision of training for people who are already in employment. This obviously will enable such people to keep abreast with technological changes or technological development. Essentially, it can be seen that through adult and non-formal education establishment, certain initiatives are taken to explore that possibilities of improving opportunities for adult learners to engage in meaningful academic enterprise to acquire relevant knowledge and skills which will ultimately enhance their capabilities for effective service delivery in their various workplace in the country. Ochim and Ode (2007) further highlighted the economic functions of adult and non-formal education which include:

- a. Up-grading of the partially trained;
- b. Providing training for school leavers;
- c. Providing training for agricultural improvement;
- d. Keeping the highly educated up-to-date; and,
- e. Providing vocational and technical education.

Fundamentally, efforts should be made to reposition adult and non-formal education in Nigeria to be responsive in meeting the demands of contemporary global work environment and needs to local people. The area of focus in this circumstance as suggested by Aruma (2011) should be specifically on promotion of professionalism, industrial and commercial competencies. According to the author, this can, however, be achieved by mandating the relevant departments in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics to design academic programmes that will enable people, especially the middle manpower in the country to update their knowledge and skills for effective service delivery in the society.

Repositioning Adult and Non-formal Education for Wealth Creation:

The concept of wealth creation simply means a process of changing the state of something to another preferred state in order to enhance its economic values in the society. In fact, enhancement of the economic values of any particular thing from its original state or present state to a new state or form certainly adds value to it with its attendance improved services, more attractive, financial rewards or economic rewards. The goods in their new state or form usually stimulated wealth creation, income and employment generation, subsequently poverty reduction in the society. Aruma (2008) remarked that adult and non-formal education helps to prepare people to face challenges of life in the society and contributes remarkably to poverty reduction and development of various communities.

The issue of repositioning adult and non-formal education for wealth creation deserves urgent attention in Nigerian economy that is over labored with much reliance on crude oil production as the main source of the country's revenue for a number of years now. The economy must certainly be diversified in order to guarantee sustainable national development and poverty reduction in the country. The diversification of Nigerian economy calls for urgent attention to focusing in the development of educational sector, particularly adult and non-formal education. Aliogo (2009) also identified reforms for

wealth creation through diversification of production in agricultural and solid mineral sectors as very critical for the economy and poverty alleviation in the country.

Repositioning Adult and Non-formal Education for Employment Generation for the Teeming Population:

A high rate of unemployment characterizes Nigerian economy in recent time. The poor managed Nigerian economy cannot guarantee generating adequate employment for the teeming population in the country. The managers of the economy and the key players in the management of the economy and education sector that help to train the teeming unemployed young adult population including adult educators who train adult learners should explore possible ways of repositioning adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

The idea for this is basically to reverse the unimaginable trend of the high rate of unemployment which cannot guarantee a healthy environment. An idle mind can easily see kidnapping, robbery and youth restiveness as quick ways of being engaged in doing indecent jobs for the purpose of survival in the society.

It is pertinent to state that the idea of repositioning adult and non-formal education through employment generation for the teeming population is a surest way to minimizing the rate of poverty among the people of this country. Supporting this view, Ochim and Ode (2007) stated that adult and non-formal education should be targeted at preparing adults and youths to enhance their employability or updating them on new development and necessary skills in their chosen occupations. This component of adult education according to the authors is the key to the production of skilled manpower who would be able to utilize the resources in the community for community development.

Consequently, repositioning adult and non-formal education will certainly explore means of collaborating with Federal Ministry of Labour and productivity to seek possible ways of creating paid jobs for the teeming unemployed young adult population in Nigeria. According to Anowor (2011) project establishment should try as much as possible to increase the number of employment opportunities in the society. This obviously becomes more relevant when employment opportunities are available to the local population in the country. Repositioning adult and non-formal education for employment generation for the teeming population also requires adequate government and institutional support including corporate organizations in the training of adult learners who will be job creators instead of job seekers in the society. This will involve both public and private sectors of the economy in order to widen the choices and opportunities open to adult learners. The concern of the government is to ensure that business can operate successfully and also create job for people in the society.

The issues of repositioning adult and non-formal education should focus on exploring viable employment opportunities in Nigerian developing economy for poverty reduction. Britain (1989) in Aruma (2011) stated that the government can take action to enhance the employment opportunities in the labour market by encouraging better training as well as removing any regulatory obstacle that hinders employment of young people in the society. Indeed, the enabling environment must be created if the opportunities for job creation are to be achieved. The creation of opportunities for viable economic, financial and industrial environment which usually help to promote employment creation and successful business according to Aruma (2011) are important areas of focus for repositioning adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. This will usually promote more opportunities for employment and widen the access of people to viable economic initiatives which will create wealth, reduce poverty level through generation of appreciable income as well as employment in Nigeria.

The Challenges of Repositioning Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

The challenges of repositioning adult and non-formal education in Nigeria are the following:

1. Poor Funding of Adult and Non-Formal Education.

The issue of poor and inadequate funding of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria has caused a serious concern to adult education professional and other key players for many years now. Hinzen (Ed.) (2000) agreed with international experts that the current funding of adult education is not adequate in various parts of the world. Igbo (2008) noted that poor funding has made it difficult for effective implementation of adult and non-formal education for many years now in Nigeria.

The non-challant attitude of Nigerian political office holders and politicians has, undoubtedly, denied education in general as well as adult and non-formal education in particular reasonable budgetary allocation for effective service delivery in Nigeria. Supporting this, Okediran (2006) stated that inadequate financial resources is one of the problems that militate against adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Omolewa (2005) noted that the funding of adult education has, however, remained lamentably very low. Sadly enough, in spite of the continued appeal from Adult Educators for increased funding of adult and non-formal education, the situation remained the same in a country that is richly endowed with abundant human and material resources, especially the huge deposits of oil and gas in the commercial quantity.

There is need to reverse this trend of poor funding of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria which has been generally classified as very poor in a richly endowed country like Nigeria. Adequate financing of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria will help to ensure that the goals of adult and non-formal education as rightly stated in National Policy of Education (FRN, 2004) will hopefully be achieved in the country. Indeed, in repositioning of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria, there should be adequate involvement of both public and private sectors of Nigeria economy including other relevant stakeholders in funding of this important area of the country's educational sector.

2. Poor Public Perception of Adult and Non-Formal Education

The challenge of poor public perception of adult and non-formal education is considered as another serious problem of adult and non-formal in Nigeria. The poor public image of adult and non formal education as an area of study for the old people is, undoubtedly, partly responsible for its poor choice as an important

area of study in Nigerian Colleges, Polytechnics and universities. Omolewa (2005) noted that a lot of people in Nigeria lack adequate information about many opportunities which adult and non-formal education offers in the society. There must be adequate information about adult and non-formal education in order to stimulate significant interest of people in the field as an important area of study that offers many opportunities to the teeming number of people, seeking for admission into the higher institutions of learning in the country. Importantly, repositioning of adult and non-formal education will start with refocusing of public image on adult and non-formal education as an important area of study that offers many opportunities to people in the areas of community development, human capital development, environmental adult education, extension education, workers education, among others.

3. Poor Curriculum Content

Curriculum is a total experience with which the school deals in educating young and adult members of her society. It is the deliberate systematic and planned attempts made by the school to change the behaviour of the members of society in which it situates. It is sad to note that most of the teaching and learning process in educational system in Nigeria, including adult and non-formal education is basically theoretical and certificate oriented. The curriculum is merely centered

primarily on cognitive development such that learners were not given due opportunities for the maximum development of their potentials. It is often forgotten that the knowledge we are imparting to the children now in certain subjects would not be used until the distant future when most of it may have been forgotten, modified, or overtaken by events, whereas an adult would begin immediately to demonstrate and implement the new knowledge that he has acquired, given the right environment. It follows that as long as we do not help the adults to acquire the right type of knowledge, information or education for effective citizenship we are likely to continue to have many of the problems like the wrong attitude to work (especially in the public service), bribery and corruption, distorted value system which debases anything African and places premium on anything foreign.

Nnadi (2011) noted that though some landmark reforms were made in tailoring our educational system to the needs of Nigerian society, it has failed to adequately prepare citizens for self-reliance and job creation. This is an area where curriculum reform in educational system particularly adult and non-formal education is not only imperative but urgent.

4. Poor Infrastructure:

Poor infrastructure is another major challenge which confronts repositioning of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Most adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria operate under a poor and borrowed premises and equipments as well as in rented houses. Under such circumstances it becomes almost impossible for adult and non-formal education to make optimum contributions to community and national development with regards to teaching, research and other public awareness services.

Another strong case in point is the non-availability of steady power supply which has hindered the development of Nigerian economy to a certain extent. Repositioning of adult and non-formal education without adequately addressing the issue of poor facilities and infrastructure as well as power supply cannot achieve the expected dividends in training people who will be ready to work diligently to stimulate national development. The issue of repositioning adult and non-formal education for poverty reduction with adequate infrastructure notably improved facilities and equipments, power supply, enhanced information and communication technology (ICT) among others cannot guarantee widen access to global knowledge that will be vital for sustainable national development in the country.

5. Poor Political will and Commitment.

Political will is the concerted efforts or collective resolve of people in government to do things that will obviously improve the people's living conditions in the society through appropriate reforms and policies. Todaro and Smith (2009) defined political will as a determined effort by people in political authority to achieve certain economic objectives and goals through reforms. Interestingly, the people in government should demonstrate strong will power and commitment to enhance socio-economic wellbeing of the governed people through appropriate institutional framework and reforms. In the context of this paper, necessary institutional structures and facilities must be put in place to create a conducive learning environment for adult learners in Nigeria.

It is sad to note that there is lack of political will in Nigeria which hinders national development. Consequently, advocating for repositioning of adult and non-formal education without demonstrating strong political will and commitment to support the initiatives through adequate funding, enhancement of infrastructure and learning

environment will not yield any meaningful result. Lack of political will has, indeed, impacted negatively on many development initiatives including adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

The Way Forward:

The way forward in repositioning adult and non-formal education for poverty alleviation can be briefly summarized as follows:

- 1. Establishment of National Commission for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria:** the establishment of the National Commission for Entrepreneurship education will help to co-ordinate various entrepreneurship initiatives of adult and non-formal education and other departments in the universities as well as other institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. This will promote effective co-ordination of this new and noble area of study in the society.
- 2. Curriculum Development:** The curriculum development in adult and non-formal education should reflect local challenges and needs of adult learners as well as national demands. This will make the curriculum development in adult and non-formal education to remain relevant both locally and nationally in addressing the prevailing issues and problems concerning national development in the country.
- 3. Enlightenment Programmes for Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes in Nigeria:** There should be a constant and vigorous enlightenment programmes to create public awareness about many opportunities which adult and non-formal education offers in the society. The institutions of higher learning should be encouraged by government to offer admission in adult and non-formal education. There should be adequate information about the value and prospect of adult and non-formal education in order to stimulate the interest of people in this field of study.
- 4. Adequate Provision of Infrastructures and Learning Facilities:** The need to provide adequate infrastructures and learning facilities to boost the image of adult and non-formal education programmes cannot be overemphasized. The three tiers of government, the private organizations and other institutional providers of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria should make a conscious effort to provide adequate infrastructures and equipments as well as instructional materials that help this important sector of the Nigeria economy to meet up with their desired goals.
- 5. Availability of Human and Material Resources:** Additionally, in repositioning adult and non-formal education in Nigeria, availability of both human and material resources for effective service delivery is needed. There is urgent need for continuous staff productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the challenges of contemporary global work environment.
- 6. Availability of Funds:** Both the Federal, State and Local government should be committed politically to make adequate funds available for adult and non-formal education programmes in the country. Making adequate funds available will certainly guarantee to secure a firm future for functional adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. There must be an upward review of budgetary allocations to education in general, and adult and non-formal education in particular in Nigeria for more funds to accrue to educational sector in the country.

Conclusion:

A large number of illiterate youths and adults in Nigeria are left out from the benefit of formal educational institutions. Many children and youths either left prematurely or never attended formal school because of societal challenges faced by them. Adult and non-formal education is therefore, another alternative form of education left for them to benefit from. Repositioning of adult and non-formal

education becomes imperative in order to make it a result-oriented academic enterprise in Nigeria. This will open more opportunities to many adult learners and youths to be bold and courageous enough to initiate a lot of ideas that will sustain them in wealth creation, income and employment generation amongst other factors that will reduce poverty in the society.

Adult and non-formal education have suffered greatly from challenges of poor funding, poor public perception of adult and non-formal education, poor curriculum content, poor infrastructure and poor political will and commitment to drive the noble ideas of repositioning the entire sector. Indeed, adult and non-formal education can be repositioned adequately enough if these challenges can be addressed properly by the government of Federal Republic of Nigeria as a key stakeholder in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders in Nigeria.

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