

ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: A PROMISING FACILITATOR OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

No educational practice can be deemed all sufficient and adequately fit to combat wholesomely contemporary societal problems; as such education is a continuous process both for the developed and the developing communities. For this fact any educational practice that can uplift the wellbeing of individuals, groups, communities and the nation at large could be adopted and promoted. Adult and non-formal education therefore is proposed and discussed in this paper as promisingly a veritable instrument for individual, group community and national development. On this backdrop the evolution of adult and non-formal education; the forms of adult and non-formal education and the characteristics were itemized and discussed in this paper. More so, the thrust of adult and non-formal education in community development was also examined before the conclusion.

Keywords: Adult education; Non-formal education; Formal education; community development; National development

Education generally is an instrument for effecting personal, community and national development. In recognition of this fact Nwaka (2015:18) affirmed that 'education is an important recipe for national development'. Nwaka further observed that obviously the greatest asset of any society is her citizens and the various skills, attitudes, abilities and capabilities they possess. Education no matter the form it takes with respect to non-formal education; provides a base for the acquisition of human skills, attitudes, abilities and capabilities that are necessary proponent and prerequisite for promoting and sustaining community and national development in Nigeria and developing nations at large.

Developing countries previously and recently, increasingly appreciate the fact that the promotion of social, economic and political development depends wholesomely on their abilities to produce skilled and informed adult population, capable of understanding national problems and needs and able to channel their efforts and resources towards the fulfillment of community and national goals in every dimension.

In the same consideration there is a reaffirmation that in no doubt all nations of the world are revolutionizing their education systems to help them achieve national economic growth and stability (Iwuamadi and Obasi, 2015:240). Iwuamadi and Obasi further reiterated that education is the anchor for national development, and any nation working towards sustainable development must recognize education as such.

Although the emphasis is skewed on formal education, nevertheless, formal education has been given more than it can chew, as such alternative form of education is urgently needed and rife to make up the deficiencies and losses, of which non-formal education should be one of them. Ngwu(2016) in his analogy referred to the work of Dewy(1946), a prominent 20th century philosopher of education that once asserted that 'the various modes and forms of human activity are instruments developed by man to solve his multiple, individual and social problems; and since the problems are constantly changing, as such the instruments for dealing with them must also change'.

Adult and non-formal education is therefore imperative, not only in promoting community and national development but also in sustaining the development height achieved by communities and nations. Adult and non-formal education need to be invigorated and harnessed in content to urgently address and to cope with the speed of change in the current social and economic predicaments of communities and nations.

Evolution of Adult and Non-formal Education

Adult and non-formal education came into lime light after the Second World War purposely for the empowerment of educationally disadvantaged group and the casualties of the war. The belief that adult and non-formal education occupies a central position in the development of the third world communities and Africa in particular was long conceived and practiced by the colonial masters at the early part of the 20th century.

Mayanchi and Husseini(2012) cited the view of Nzeneni(2008) to support the assertion that the end of the second world war ushered in the recognition of adult and non-formal education worldwide. Further explanations revealed that the notion if not practice of formal education surfaced in the global education and earned more recognition than ever in the late 1960s as a lot of criticisms trailed formal education(Yasunaga,2014).

In discovery of the fact that non-formal education best fitted the predominantly illiterate Africans; Community Betterment in Africa was introduced after the Second World War, as adult and non-formal education programme geared towards empowering adult citizens to deal with the social, economic and political predicaments of the period. Ngwu(2016) affirmed that the assumption is that people have unlimited and great potentials for development through problem solving education based on experience.

The programme suggested how a person or adults might better himself, so that he might better his family and the community in which he lived. The message which the concept of Community Betterment in Africa was designed to convey to Africa and the people of

West Africa was the urgent necessity for the education of adult population in all spheres of human endeavour as a necessary prerequisite for the development of African communities.

It is factual that adult education is an embodiment of many educational activities. It is therefore characterized with concepts such as lifelong education or education Permanente, expressive or instrumental education, adult basic education, adult non-formal education, extra-moral education, vocational education and the host of others.

Although adult education is a concept commonly used to refer to all forms of education out-side formal school setting as listed above for adult citizenry but in reality non-formal education is an integral part of adult education. It is crucially essential and central in social, economic and political development of any nation. As a result of this central role, many scholars and organizations delved into repositioning and popularizing adult and non-formal education in a bid to create more awareness on its essentialities in coping with the challenges of millennium and sustainable development goals.

It is a believe also that some of the events that lead to non-formal education (NFE) movement were preceded by experience worldwide following the industrial revolution, scientific revolution, the American economic revolution the green revolution, and the technological and computer revolution, even as it is believed that NFE was the movement that gave birth to the green revolution (Ngwu,2016).

Apart from the movements and revolutions noted above, it is expedient to note also that NFE is rooted in the indigenous form of education. Irrespective of the fact that NFE is rooted in indigenous out of school which forms the general historical foundation upon which the origin of the concept of NFE is anchored; there are also four theoretical roots to which any discourse on NFE can be traced, namely; the practitioners of non-formal education, the international studies specialists, the critics of schooling and the economists of education (Ngwu, 2016:).

Precisely, NFE came to recognition in Nigeria in 1974 following the creation of Adult and NFE Unit in the federal Ministry of Education resulting from pressures by Association of professionals and academics in the field of Adult and NFE known as Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE). By 1977, Adult and NFE were included in the national policy on Education (NPE, 2013). Presently the activities of literacy and NFE are under national commission for Mass literacy, Adult and NFE which was later established in 1990.

Definition of the Concept, Non-formal Education

According to Rogers (2005), the term non-formal education appeared in 1968 when Phillip Coombs included a chapter entitled “Non-formal education: to catch up, keep up and get ahead” in his seminal book; *The World Educational crisis: A systematic Approach*. Since the appearance of the concept many scholars and organizations took turn in defining NFE. UNESCO (2017) emphasized that depending

on the country context, NFE may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out of school children, life skills, work skills and general knowledge. It is also described as an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that ensures that young people and adults acquire and maintain skills, abilities and dispositions needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment and circumstance. It can be acquired on the personal initiative or group of individuals through different learning platforms and less strictly taking the form of formal educational system

It is therefore safe to state that NFE implies learning that ranges from experience to formal training on-the-job, apprenticeship, adult basic education, and participation in organized out of the school programmes such as seminars, workshops conferences and other learning activities in groups. On this platform adult and non-formal education was defined as a practice in which adults engage in a systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values (Sharan and Brockett 2007)

In furtherance of the definition of the concept United Nation Economic commission for Africa (1978) in P.N.C Ngwu(2014) enthused that NFE is an integral part of entire system of education lying institutionally outside the formal system of education and very much as supplement as well as complement to it. In another view Youth for Exchange and Understanding (2017) enthused that “NFE is a methodology, which translates in carefully adjusted to the participants and structured practices (although the activities are seldom associated to conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects) which foster the personal development of people on a voluntary basis”. It is a product of change and development in the society and it covers a wide range of activities, depending on prevailing social, economic and political circumstances.

Blakey (2015) in his own contribution affirmed that “NFE is any organized educational activity that takes place outside the formal educational system. Usually it is flexible, learner-centered, contextualized and uses a participatory approach”. Based on the observations made above it is therefore an organized and not strictly structured alternative to schooling which is multidimensional in approach. It is a learning process that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However it can take place in an organized and secure environment and well structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support by skilled professionals.

From the aforementioned definitions, it implies that NFE is derived from the assumption that as a product of change and development, it is a veritable educational approach that covers a wide range of activities of contemporary social, economic and political challenges confronting individuals, groups, communities and the nation at large. NFE can rightly be defined also as alternative educational approaches and techniques that regenerate human capital through non-formalized platforms for increased efficiency and productivity by individuals or group who had acquired formal education and those who are not privileged to have access to formal education.

It is summarily observed that for most advocates of NFE, it is widely viewed as a means to provide education to those for whom schooling is not a realist alternative; make new skills and attitude available to the rural poor; circumvent cultural obstacles that prevent some people from utilizing school effectively; use scare educational resources more effectively and modify the school system (Ngwu, 2016).

Although some definitions are provided, but not withstanding, Kriauciunas (2009) attributed the challenges of defining NFE to lack of academic work and the huge variety of forms and ways of non-formal education practice.

Forms of Non-formal Education

In spite of the fact that adult education has many components, or all embracing, NFE has striking form which makes it unique. Some of these forms are identified as follows:-

1. The small-scale individual or small group of educational activities to large scale national program.
2. Highly contextualized to standardized program.
3. Temporary learning programs that is introductory to formal schooling to a permanent alternative to formal schooling.
4. Literacy and basic education to post initial vocational advanced continuing professional development.
5. National programs commonly offered by commercial agencies.
6. Separate educational activities to practical exercise inside schools' (Rogers 2005).

In another point of view also the forms of NFE are categorized as:

- a) Educational programme which may help in the acquisition and mastery of occupational skills;
- b) Educational programme for the development of basic knowledge and attitudes towards personal and civic life;
- c) Educational programme which may help job placement and work competence or career and professional education (Anyanwu, 1979).

Evidences abound going by the categorizations above that proved many activities and programmes that took forms of non-formal education. Different forms of NFE contributed to the democratic, social, economic, cultural and indeed community development of nations all over the world. The crux of the matter is that NFE has been in practice for many decades, but it has not been formally tagged as such.

Practices of different forms of NFE in Europe and America especially include community work, rural animation, youth work, social organizations, vocational education, entrepreneurial education, domestic science and extension education. Some of these NFE practices that contributed to the development of the advanced world can be selected and briefly discussed as listed below.

i) Community work

In Europe and Scotland especially, community work was widely practiced, which educated, and fostered youths and adults' commitment to neighborhood relationship; and encouraged peoples' participation in local organization. It is out of school program that tremendously influenced neighborhood relationship and community organization. The process is educational, and it is about people in communities creating opportunities for growth and change and deliberate movement towards the ends which they determined and in the process of doing so increased their critical awareness, knowledge, skills and initiatives for greater empowerment and productivity. Shaw (1997) maintained that "community work is essentially an educational activity" (www.youthworkcentral.tripod.com/sean1.htm)

ii) Youth work

Youth work on its own part focuses on making young people to be patriotic, enterprising and more skilled for their wellbeing and community development. Youth work is an integral part of NFE programs that enables youths make choice about career, marriage, lifestyles in relation to clothing, food, child rearing, and civic involvement; in this context, youth empowerment can be viewed from the point of life-growth and development perspective (Anyanwu, 2015).

iii) Social work practice

By character and approach social work in its entirety could be classified as NFE. In Europe and America where social work originated and widely practiced, it helped adults individually through case work and social group work at homes and work places to develop ways of dealing with socio-economic and political situations, fostered more fruitful relationships between parents and young ones; and brought group of careers and associations together for greater functioning for self actualization.

iv) Animation rurale

Animation rurale is another form of NFE commonly practiced in Italy, France and their colonies. It is theatrical in approach as means of expressing problem situations and self, with community groups, and adults with special learning needs. It creates a forum for active participation of people in problem solving situations in their communities. Animation bridges isolation among the members of communities. It educates adults in varieties of issues affecting their existence within the community and means of promoting healthy leaving.

v) Youth organization

Youth organization has been in the fore front of non-formal education through their various activities. It is a plat form for youths' interactions and education, that enabled

them to discover, analyze and understand values and acquire skills which would be useful for immediate and community problems. The activities of community and youth organizations include youth camping, meetings, fund raisings, for projects, voluntary works, peer support, counseling, cultural activities ,and sports. Through these activities they acquire both work and leadership skills through practical participation that would enable them promote personal, group and community development.

vi) Extension education

Extension education refers to educational practices in any field of human endeavour for adults outside formal school system. It takes different forms like conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia. It equally connotes agricultural education through extension services on modern techniques of farming, health practices and habits, and other practices innovated and packaged for adults outside formal school system and rural communities.

vii) Vocational education

This form of non-formal education used in a broader sense encompasses educational activities tailored to up skill the beneficiaries occupationally through apprenticeship. It could be marketing techniques, book keeping, craftsmanship, fashions and designing, in-service training and the likes. Other areas include updating the beneficiaries in technological developments, and the applications, food and nutrition and home management. Vocational adult and non-formal education is skills and needs driven.

Civic Education/Citizenship Education

To impart and inculcate civic and democratic education requires non-formal approach. Democratic and leadership tenets are better fostered on adults outside the formal school system derived by the facts of dynamism of political process of the society. Patriotism and respect for law and order are very essential and need to be infused into the mind of the citizenry through non-formal education.

It may appear too demanding and over elaborative to short list and discuss the entire components and forms of non-formal education, however it is expedient to list the followings as other programmes of non-formal education: environmental; marriage counseling; nutrition and home economics; family planning; entrepreneur and sanitation to mention but a few.

Assumptions of Non-formal Education

Non-formal education as contemporary education for community and national development is built on the following assumptions:

1) Leaning on the theoretical model of Frère (1970), non-formal education is anchored on the premise that formal education is oppressive to the very people it is meant to aid, hence the need for education that would conscientize the recipients.

- 2) Non-formal education is built on the assumption that formal education hardly provide for all the recipients quality education that provide practical skills that would enable the recipients meet up with the contemporary economic, political and social challenges
- 3) Formal education cannot effectively integrate the vulnerable, disadvantaged, dropouts, nomads and fishing communities and other casualties of formal education programs hence the need for non-formal education.
- 4) The strictness and rigidity of formal education in terms of curricula, fees, admission processes, certification and the rest make people to lose hope on formal education and crave for non-formal as a laudable alternative.
- 5) The dysfunctional nature of formal education in practicality and creativity emanating from lack of adequate and trained teachers, inadequate facilities and wholesome theoretical approach makes non-formal education a readymade alternative to schooling that can redress the afore mentioned pitfalls.
- 6) Indigenous education system in Nigeria and developing world all over is practical and apprenticeship driven which is livened in non-formal education practice.
- 7) The informal sector occupational activities and recurrent social, economic, and political problems and technological development can only be tackled through non-formal education if individuals and communities would be carried along.

Characteristics of Adult and Non-formal Education

NFE has peculiar characteristics that distinguish it from formal education. A proper diagnosis of the characteristics will clarify the erroneous notions in some quarters by some elites on what NFE is and what it can offer in promoting and sustaining community and national development at large.

Many scholars have offered some bits of what the characteristics are. Among them is Paiko (2012) that cited Fordham (1993) that revealed that “in the 1970s four characteristics came to be associated to non-formal education as follows:

1. Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups;
2. Concern with specific categories of persons,
3. A focus on the clearly defined purpose, and
4. Flexibility in organization and method.

In another view, Dannish Adult Education Association (2016) argued that comparing the learning provisions of various educational institutions, adult and non-formal education has five common features which are different from formal education.

Some of the features they listed are:

1. Flexible courses and mutual responsibility that aims at encouraging the learners to believe in him/her self and to regain motivation for learning.
2. Attractive learning environment, that is based on individual learners ‘previous knowledge and strengths and focused on holistic appropriate approach.

3. Motivational pedagogy. The non-formal adult education institutions are based on values and the teaching and the learning process is based on pedagogical praxis.
4. Coherence between training of skills and learning for life. The barriers of formal education are overcome by NFE that focus on whole person and plan programmes which involve the whole range of problems and resources.
5. Coherence between learning and guidance. Guidance and clarification are natural parts of non-formal education provision.

In view of the opinions highlighted above the characteristics of non-formal education can be summarized as follows.

1. It could be a local or a nationwide program organized to meet the immediate needs and aspirations of the recipients.
2. For the fact that the programs of activities are prepared for and by the recipients they are therefore learner centered and draws more commitment.
3. The recipients of the education are most often democratically involved in generating the contents of the curriculum through friendly environmental setting.
4. It is always a short term learning program designed to meet the immediate pressing needs of the recipients and the community.
5. The ultimate goal is not long term or for certification of the beneficiaries, rather knowledge and skills based.
6. It is concurrently part-time activities or a short term courses organized at the convenience of the learners (literate and illiterate alike).
7. Entry requirement is driven by needs and past experiences of the learners and the circumstance.
8. It is relevance to note that non-formal education is garnished and lubricated to a great extent with proper guidance and counseling which is naturally embedded in the entire gamut of teaching and learning process.

In applauding the assumptions, characteristics and the necessity for non-formal education it was observed that the formal education is having several difficulties in teaching general education subjects and as such complementary institutional provisions through non-formal education and other related non-institutional training system should be used for imparting intellectual, vocational, commercial, technical and life skills to out-of-school youth as was evident in the history of United States of America (Ngwu, 2016).

The Thrust of Adult and Non-formal Education in Community Development

It is admissible that formal education is the bedrock of both scientific and technological development of any nation, but experience reveals that the burden of development cannot be squarely shouldered by formal education, hence the need for adult non-formal education. Consequent on the back drops of poverty, school-drop-outs, poor formal education facilities; corruptive attitudes of the politicians, moral decadence,

social maladies and the rest, have created setbacks in formal education meeting the aspirations of communities, and developing nations.

Many third world countries have discovered the promising features and the necessity for adult non-formal education as observed in the assumptions and the characteristics and efforts are garnered and vigorously pursued for promoting community and national development through non-formalized educational practices.

For instance, the Romanian Parliamentary Assembly recognized that formal education system alone cannot respond to the challenges of modern society and therefore welcomed its reinforcement by non-formal educational practices for the country through legislation (Demitrescu, 1999).

Kahler(2000), equally emphasized that what had been missing in many previous efforts was a clear demonstration of how Adult basic and non-formal education activities could be used to expand and extend the efforts of development sectors like health, Agriculture, environment, micro-enterprise development, water and sanitation. In his documentary he applauded the efforts of some governmental organizations in linking non-formal education process in development activities, where programme participants could take action on the contents and made more informed decisions on issues affecting their lives and the community. The case studies of adult and non-formal education in his documentaries include the following successful programmes at the end of 'Education for All Decade':

- 1) The Mokattam project of community and institutional development; Cairo Egypt;
- 2) Women's economic empowerment and literacy programme in Nepal;
- 3) L'établissement de liens entre l'éducation non-formelle et le développement de Senegal;
- 4) Seasons of learning from farmer field schools to farmer organization, management, extension and advocacy in Indonesia;
- 5) Production de material para educacion Basica du jujeres;
- 6) El Caso de PRO Muyer;
- 7) National resources Center for non-formal Education in Nepal;
- 8) Project five O in India, Phillipine, Turkey, Thailand; Zimbabwe; and South Africa.

Most of these non-formal project activities were championed by International non-governmental organizations like:-

- a) International Council for Women,
- b) International Federation of Business and Professional Women,
- c) Soroptimists International and
- d) Zonta International, among others.

Many researches and case studies that cannot be enumerated here proved that adult and non-formal education is promising, ideal and reliable for promoting individual and community development at the local and national levels. Development of any nation starts from the development of the individuals in the community and when a great number of the populace are left out by formal education, imperatively, urgency is

required from policy makers to provide alternative to schooling which is referred to as non-formal education.

Conclusion

It is apparently clear that formal education in Nigeria cannot and indeed has failed in its obligations in meeting up with the contemporary socio- economic problems of the citizenry and the community, hence the need to invigorate adult and non-formal education in all fronts. There should be a clarion call or perhaps a rude awakening to bring to fore the need and aspirations of the citizens for functional education that is empowering in structures and practice.

Kalu(2015:128) lamented that with all these available evidences and assumptions and despite agreeing to the EFA goals, in practice African states have concentrated their efforts towards achieving universal primary education at the expense of adult and non-formal education (sic) and literacy in particular.

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