

ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Ogwudire Augustine Okereke
*College of Education (Technical), Arochukwu,
Abia State.*

Rev. Fr. Okoko Gabriel Ogbuagu, Ph.D
*College of Education (Technical), Arochukwu,
Abia State.*

And

Okwuchi Blessing Obinna
*College of Education (Technical), Arochukwu,
Abia State.*

Abstract

This work focuses on Adult and non-formal education for changing communities. It examines the non-formal idea in community education as offering a very wide range of learning opportunities for the individual and the community as a whole. It also examines Adult and non-formal education for specific target groups such as, the girls, children in the rural areas and from the minority groups etc. The paper argues that community -work and social work help to inculcate the values of the society to the community members. The paper concludes that due to the flexibility of non-formal education, it helps to ensure equal access to education, eradicates illiteracy among men and women and improves their access to vocational training. Against this premise, the paper recommends some measures that can foster change in the communities and Nigeria at large.

Education plays an important role in the development of any society and it is recognized as an active agent for the achievement of fast growing socio-economic, political, scientific and technical advancement and development in any nation (Harry and Godfrey, 2012). Education can also generally be thought of as the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of society. It is a societal instrument for the expansion of human culture, which may be formal, non-formal and informal. Harry and Godfrey (2012) further stated that education is a process of developing and cultivating

one's mind. Osokoya (2003) saw education as the tapping of qualities, potentials of the individual in the society and acquisition of skills, attitudes and competencies necessary for actualization of skills and for coping with day-to-day life problems.

For sure, the development of a nation hinges on the socio- economic contributions of her citizens. Adult and non-formal Education are among the major components that promote national and community development. Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in a systematic and sustained self-education activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values (Merriam and Brocket, 2007). It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learning (Fenwick and Spencer, 2006). Adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn that they are able and willing to take responsibility for that learning and that the learning itself should respond to their needs.

Adult and non-formal education is one of the most important subject areas that can take adequate care of socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental problems of adults. The success of adult and non-formal education in terms of achieving its goals as stated in Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) cannot be over-emphasized. Adult and non-formal education changes the social and psychological minds of adults more than any other subject area. It instills lost hope in them and liberates them from their prejudice of seeing themselves as not humans that are not capable of learning. Adult education continues from where the formal school system which rigorously inculcates in the individual the desire for knowledge, understanding and education stops.

Adult and non-formal education covers aspects of Nigerian educational enterprise which is neither confined to a classroom situation nor subject to organized strategies and curriculum. The major target groups include the unschooled children, illiterate youths and adults, rural dwellers and nomads and farmers. Adult and non-formal education aims at making learners literate, thereby helping them to be fruitful citizens of the community so that they can contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation (Okeke, 2009). Ugwuegbu (2003) has it that Adult education in Nigeria is not just about literacy or remedial education to fill a gap. That, it is what is needed and wanted by all as long as they are alive and regardless of previous education. This is because the world is constantly changing in all spheres including technology, communication and industry. Human's crave for learning is thus continuous to keep pace with the changes.

Community is a social unit of any size that shares common values. Although embodied or face-to-face communities are usually small, larger or more extended communities, it is a group or network of persons who are connected (objectively) to each other by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties, and who mutually define that relationship (subjectively) as important

to their social identity and social practice.

Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education in its simplest form and meaning is alternative to schooling. It is increasingly recognized that school alone cannot provide quality basic education for all. Non-formal education is one such pathway characterized by high degree of flexibility and openness to change and innovation in its organization, pedagogy and delivery modes, and caters to diverse and context-specific learning needs of children, young people and adults worldwide. It thereby involves a wide range of stakeholders, including educational establishments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and public institutions (UNICEF, 2012).

While the notion of non-formal education based on 1973 definition by Combs and Ahmed is still influential in practice, experts and educationalists have conceptualized non-formal education, reflecting changing educational landscapes and understanding of 'learning'. Some have moved away from the education, by which non-formal education tends to be treated as inferior to the latter (Robinson-pant, 2014). Others claim that boundaries between formal and non-formal education are blurred (Farrell and Hartwell, 2008). Another viewpoint among those who focus on 'situated learning' holds that the tripartite categorization of education should be abandoned, conceiving 'formality' and Informality' as attributes present in all .circumstances of learning (Colley and Malcolm, 2003). There are also these who recognize the breadth and richness of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values acquired outside school, and argue for perception and learning as a continuum of informal, self-directed, on-formal, and formal learning (Rogers, 2004).

All in all, to express non-formal education, different terms are used, such as 'flexible learning', 'alternative learning', 'complementary learning', second chance education; and 'extracurricular activities. Due to the concept's vagueness, some advocate using descriptions of each framework, rather than attempting to arrive at a common definition (Bhols, 1983).

It is pertinent to note here that there is no universally accepted definition of non-formal Education. But it should be understood that this form of education is that which is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of 'the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure. It may be short in duration and/or low-intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars (Brennan, 2006), Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications at all. This form of education can cover programmes

contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of school children, as well as programmes on life skills, and social or cultural development (Romi and Schmida, 2009).

Types of Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education is a loosely defined term covering various structured learning situations, such as swimming sessions for toddlers, community-based sports programmes and conference style seminars which do not either have the level of curriculum, syllabus, accreditation and certification associated with formal learning, which typically take place naturally and spontaneously as part of other activities. Thus, the various types of non-formal education are as follows:

Community work, which is participatory, wide spread in Nigeria, fosters people's commitment to their neighbours and encourages participation in and development of local democratic forms of organizations.

Youth work is another type of non-formal education and it focuses on making people more active in the society.

Social work which helps young people in homes to develop ways to deal with complex situations like fostering fruitful relationships between parents and children, bringing different groups of career together.

In France and Italy animation in a particular form is a kind of non- formal education. It uses theatre and acting as means of self expression with different community groups for children and people with special; needs. This type of non-formal education helps in ensuring active participation and teaches people to manage the community in Which they live.

Youth and community organization is also a kind of non-formal education in which young people have the opportunity to discover, analyse and understand values to guide their lives. They run work camps and meetings, recruit volunteers, administer bank account, give counseling, etc to work toward social change (Erant, 2000).

Adult and Non-Formal Education for Specific Target Groups

The following is a brief illustration of non-formal education targeted at specific groups of out-of-school children and adolescents, highlighted by UNICEF and UIS country and regional studies for improved policies and interventions.

❖ **Girls:** Many interrelated factors prevent girls from entering or staying in school such as early marriage, pregnancy, poor household or cultural bias. Adult and non-formal education offers them a chance to continue education and reintegrate into formal education. The adult education centers in various local governments in Nigeria target girls who have dropped out of school due to social, financial or other reasons.

❖ **Children suffering from man-made or natural disaster:** Millions of out-of-school children and adolescents impacted by natural and man-made disasters, conflicts and food crisis, are in need of learning. Adult and non-formal education is an approach used in helping children under this category have access to learning through floating schools when a combination of flood and poverty make normal schooling almost impossible.

❖ **Children in rural areas:** Large majority of the world's out-of school children and adolescents reside in rural areas where series of socio-economic barriers are persistent. Beyond the question of limited access to formal schools, rural children tend to encounter the quality challenges as a result of inequitable distribution of resources within their countries. Adult and non-formal education is a response to the access and quality challenges faced by children and adolescents in rural areas. Its flexibility mode of delivery and provision, such as multigrade classes, and flexible schedule, enables them to study while supporting their families at home. Specific curricular can be developed, in light of the national framework and local knowledge to respond to global, national and local consensus.

❖ **Children from minority groups:** Adult and non-formal education programmes can better accommodate children from minority groups who may need special attention due, for example, to ethnicity, race and language. UNICEF and UIS (2012) reported that in Brazil, Afro-Brazilian children and adolescents face a disadvantage compared to their white peers due to racial discrimination. Appropriate non-formal curricula, materials, pedagogies and the use of appropriate language of teaching can help out of school children from minority groups to learn in safe and appropriate environments and can prevent potential discrimination.

Adult and Non-Formal Education and Community Education

Community education has various meanings and have been defined by different authors in different ways. In view of the above, Ezimah (2004) defines community education as a process aimed at raising consciousness, spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills, including the human and material resources, for the social, economic, political and cultural development of the community. Community education is necessary in gingering-up community members to actively participate in social activities, increase their incomes and improve their quality of life. Findsen (2006) reports that the climate of change in political, economic and cultural affairs of Aotearoa New Zealand has been tracked into Adult and community education.

Community education is a form of Adult and non-formal education. In this regard, educational activities are carried on outside the confines of the formal school system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the community. It is an education geared towards encouraging and assisting the community members

to think about their problems, formulate and embark upon action projects to solve their problems.

Anyanwu (2002) has it that the non-formal nature of its operational strategies determines the objective of community education. The primary aim of Adult and non-formal and informal community education is to return education to the people in their communities. This implies that programmes such as extra-moral classes, literacy, continuing education of all categories, vocational training, health, re-creation, citizenship, refresher programmes, cultural activities and any special activities are aimed at solving community problems.

Being that it is non-formal in nature, community education is the type of education appropriate to a type of people as distinct from one derived from a theory. Thus, community education can be geared towards spreading understanding and providing the necessary skills in the areas of agriculture, health, domestic science, cooperatives, public amenities, economic, political, and cultural developments. It is on this ground that Obanya (2002) underscores Adult and non-formal education as the type of learning the Nigerian society needed in the present century. It is therefore within the framework of non-formal education that the dream of empowering the individuals in the community to be socially useful participate fully in the Nation's democratic process and be economically more productive, can be fully realized. Adult and non-formal education in this vein provides an avenue for bringing about transformation and change in individuals, communities, societies and nations.

Conclusion

Community education being a form of non-formal education makes it clearer that non-formal education is a change agent. Adult and non-formal education is popular among the adults specially women as it increases women's participation in both private and public activities. According to UNESCO (2010), non-formal education helps to ensure equal access to education, eradicate illiteracy among women and men and improve women's access to vocational training, science technology and continuing education. The effectiveness of such literacy and non-formal education programmes are bolstered by family, community and parental involvements. All in all, Adult and non-formal education offers a good number of activities that encourage young people to choose their own programmes and projects that are important because they offer the youth the flexibility of free access to explore their emerging interest.

References

Anyanwu, C. N, (2002). *Community Education: The African Dimension*, Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Bhola, H. (1983). Non-formal Education in Perspective. *Prospects* 13(1), 45-53.

- Breunan, B. (2006). Reconceptualizing non-formal education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 16(3), 185-200.
- Brocket, R. G. & Merriam, S, B. (2007). *The Profession and Practice of Adult Education: An Introduction*. Jossey Bass.
- Colley, H. & Malcolm, J. (2003). *Information and Formality in Learning*. London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.
- Erant, M. (2000) *Non-formal Learning*. Bristol: Policy Press,
- Ezlmah, M. O. A. (2004). *Knowing Adult Education. Its nature, Scope, and Process*. Owerri; Spring Field Publishers Ltd.
- Farrel, J. & Haitweil, A. (2008). *Planning for Successful Alternative Schooling: A Possible Route to Education for Ail*. Paris: IIEP.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos; NERDC
- Fenwick, T. J. & Spencer, B. (2006). *Context of Adult Education: Canadia Perspectives*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Findsen, B. (2006). "Access and Participation issues in New Zealand Adult, Community and tertiary Education as Social justice" Akpovire, Oduaran and Hsrkans S. *Bhola* (eds). *The Netherlands: Springer*.
- Harry. C. I. & Godfrey, K. (2012). Adult and No-formal: *Education as Instrument for Eradication of Poverty and literacy, African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*8(1) 264 - 272.
- Obanya, P. (2002). *Revitalizing Education in Africa*. Ibadan: Stirtlng- Heren Publishers LNiq) Ltd.
- Osokoya, I. O. (2003). *The 6-3-3-4 Education in Nigeria. History, Strategies, Issues and Problems*, Ibadan; Laurel Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Robinson-Pant, A. (2014). *Learning Knowledge and Skills for Agriculture and Improving Rural Livelihoods: Unpublished Work*. Paris: UNESCO.

Journal of Assertiveness

Rogers, A. (2004). *Non-formal Education: Flexible Schooling or Participatory Education?* Hong Kong: Comparative Education Centre.

Romi, S. & Schmida, M. (2009). Non-formal Education: A Major Educational Force in the Postmodern Era. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 257-273.

Ugwuegbu, L. T. (2003), *Adult Education: Principles and Programme Design*. Awka: Ekums Co. Ltd.