

# QUALITY ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: A REQUISITE FOR NIGERIAN WOMEN, YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

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## Abstract

*The paper examined quality Adult and Non-Formal Education as a requisite for Nigerian women yesterday today and tomorrow. The term Adult and Non-Formal Education is one of the most difficult to define, and yet it is very often on the lips of people. However, it may be defined as all activities with educational purpose that are carried on by people normally in some form of regular work. Adult and Non-Formal Education includes: out of classroom youth education for school children and university students, literacy education, remedial education for the so-called drop outs, women education etc. On the other hand, women education is that education that empowers women-folk and enable them take care of their children, family and contribute to National development. This paper therefore discusses the need for quality Adult and Non-Formal Education for Nigerian women to enable them contribute to national development. It also discusses some of the problems that hinder women education and way forward. Some prospects of women education such as contributing to education of their children, taking care of their homes and contributing to the health and productivity of the whole families and communities were discussed. Finally, recommendations such as adequate funding of adult education, recognition and more enrolment of women into schools were proffered towards achieving national development.*

**Keywords:** Adult Education, women education, requisite, literacy, growth, Nigerian women.

## Introduction

Over the years, inadequate access education has been identified as one of the main barriers holding back the advancement of women. Education generally is concerned with the imparting of knowledge to people. Etesike and Ogugua (2005) posit that education describes the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted; valuable skills development and facilities trained. They maintain that through education, one generation passes onto the next its knowledge and wisdom and that education frees one's mind, thereby enabling one to think beyond what one is told.

In one of his works, Oni (2013) admits that education seems inevitable to meaningful living at the individual, family, national, and international levels. He also pointed out that education remains a vital tool with which knowledge and understanding are sought, which in turn empowers the recipient with ability to do many things he would not have been able to without education. He further asserts that, the more knowledge a person possess, and the more understanding of how best to utilize such knowledge, the more chances for self-actualization and better management of resources and all that go into good living.

In short, education is primarily concerned with the seeking of knowledge and showing how best to maximize such knowledge for personal benefits, family improvement, community development and the general benefits of humanity and other living beneficiaries (Oni, 2013). He further affirms that education has both direct and indirect influence on character modification and that it seeks to prompt every potential in every person to its optimal level of performances. Indeed, one of the beautiful attributes of education is its insatiable quest for knowledge; ever-ready to trade away ignorance for knowledge, good reasons for better and better reasons for best purposes of improvement and seeking possible derivable benefits that can derive within existence or in life as a whole.

The role of education as the bedrock of social, economic, political and cultural development can never be over-emphasized. All over the world, education is highly rated in national development plans because it is the most important instrument of change. This paper therefore, examines quality and non-formal education as a requisite for Nigerian women: yesterday, today and tomorrow.

### **Concept of Adult and Non-Formal Education**

Adult education, as an integral aspect of education is a learning process whether formal, informal and non-formal which the adult person engages in for better information, self and national development (Onyenemezu, 2012). Adult education emphasizes all forms of functional education programmes for youths and adults outside the formal school system. Such educational programmes include basic literacy programme, post-literacy programme, continuing education programme and vocational education programme (F.R.N. 2008). These adult education programmes are geared towards human and national development.

Onyenemezu (2012), submitted that adult education exerts enormous influence on the larger society in terms of national development. The benefits of adult education to individuals and nations cannot be over-emphasized. Adult education can be relied upon for sensitizing people to analytically assess the impact of government's economic, political, social environmental and general policies (Onyenemezu, 2013).

Adult continuing education, as an aspect of adult education is for national development. It encompasses developing the human (adults) mind, knowledge, attitude,

skills, behavioural pattern, physical and necessary ideas capable of solving human and societal problems in order to achieve sustainable national development. In line with the global trend, Nigeria needs an educational approach that can accommodate young and old adults (male, female, the poor and rich). Adult and non-formal education programmes generally provide basic literacy, functional literacy, post-literacy, literacy for the blind, literacy for the disabled, women's education, nomadic education, continuing education, quranic integrated education, workers' education, vocational education, and prison education. These programmes are offered in the various states under the supervision of the state agencies for public education. The open apprenticeship scheme, operating in the informal sector, can complement these programmes with income-generating vocational skills targeted at eradicating poverty (Aderinoye, 2004).

Given the lifelong learning objectives of adult education, most third-world countries use adult education to improve literacy, to upgrade occupational competencies, and for community development (Hiemstra, 2002). Non-formal education is any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system to provide a selected type of learning to particular sub-group in the population (adults, youth or children) (Ihejirika, 2000). It includes adult education, the apprenticeship system, continuing education, in-service programmes, on-the-job training programmes, personnel and professional development, refresher courses, staff development programmes, and worker and student industrial training.

### **Goals/Objectives of Adult and Non-Formal Education**

The National Policy on Education (2004), revealed the broad nature of adult education as one which consist of functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youths and adults outside the formal education system. However, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) outlines the purpose of adult and non-formal education as follows:

- To provide functional literacy education for adults and youths who have never had the advantages of formal education.
- To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- To provide further education for different categories of completes of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professionals training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

## **Models of Non-Formal Education**

Various options of non-formal education usually indicate and arise from the purpose and needs which they are intended to serve according to prevailing situations and priorities of a society and program sponsors. Amirize (2001) outlined the following models:

1. **Agriculture extension model:** This is about the commonest and earliest model of non-formal education practiced in Nigeria, whose purpose was geared towards increased food production through improved farming methods. Facilitators of this model were agricultural extension officers and the target audiences were rural farmers and cooperative societies. Extension officers played the role of agents of change who identified agricultural needs in various communities and devised strategies to solve them by working in collaboration and partnership with farmers and cooperatives.

2. **Apprenticeship model:** As the oldest and universal approach to skill acquisition, various governments and employers of labor have used the apprenticeship system as a reliable and effective model of non-formal occupational education. Such programs in Nigeria included the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Skill Acquisition Program, School-to-Land and other vocational training and job improvement programs. This system is less expensive, practical, functional and pragmatic.

3. **Age-group model:** This is traditional African model of non-formal education whereby peer groups and youths of the same age range interact and engage in various community activities. This model promotes the understanding of social obligations and rules as well as the acquisition of basic skills, which would enable youths to function as responsible members of society.

4. **Self-help model:** This method does not only rely on local skills and materials, but it also promotes self-reliance and industry. Community leaders and chairmen of Community Development Committees (CDC) are usually facilitators in this model and their roles include helping and motivating the community through the youths, first to identify their needs and then mobilize and organize them to work in the project.

5. **Sunday school model:** The goal of this model of non-formal education goes beyond religion and moral instructions. Sometimes, instructions given and skills taught in Sunday school can include cookery and home management for girls and the theory of music and other trades for boys. Some churches train youths as organists, choirmasters and youth-leaders through the Sunday school.

6. **Training institute model:** This model of non-formal education is a kind of on-the-job training within places of work, meant to improve the occupational competence of the participants. They include farm training centers, management training and job orientation centres organized by industries, organizations or governments.

7. **Village craft centre model:** Sometimes initiated by local government authorities or community development agencies, this mode has two purposes namely: to impact some skills to youths in rural areas thus creating self-employment, and

discourages rural-urban migration among youths of both sexes. It encourages hard work, creativity and the dignity of labor by challenging villagers to shun idleness. Skills taught include masonry, sewing, weaving, dying, shoemaking, carpentry, painting, plumbing, etc. Facilitators play the role of teachers and entrepreneurs.

8. **Basic literacy education model:** This can also be organized by local government authorities or other voluntary agencies. The intention here is to teach basic literacy—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in the form of adult education classes or night school. Migrant Fishermen's and Nomadic Education programs aim at adopting this model.

9. **Community mobilization model:** This model can be described as a system of liberal education and counseling, aimed at rural communities, helping to transform the people by working in close relationship with them. The idea is not to impart literacy or skill but to liberate the minds of the people from debilitating conditions; a system of conscientization so as to enable the individuals and the community generally. Facilitators are community development experts.

10. **Enrichment-of-skill model:** This is a process of enablement of the individual through responsible and creative use of leisure, devoted to enriching the mind through creative and constructive engagements.

### **Concept of Women Education**

Women education, according to Ekoja (2005), is the training that women receive in order to improve the position of women in the society. Women education is also a super-key and open window to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. Similarly, Magnoli (2006) states that the first aim of every family and society should be to raise healthy and productive individuals who are educationally, physically, psychologically, socially and mentally, well developed and responsible. Women education is that education that empowers women folk and enables them take care of their children, family and contribute to national development.

According to UNICEF (2004), women education saves and improves the life of women. It however, gives women control over their lives and provides them with skills that enable them fit in the society. Ocho (2005) opines that every female child, irrespective of her age, class, race, background and religion, should be provided with education and skills that would make her a functional member of her society. Women education is that education given to the female children at different stages and ways (formal and non-formal). It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities to become effective participant of a given social group. It is the process that brings about self-esteem which helps in promoting participation of women in organisations and their community that reflect in the society at large.

### **Objectives of Women Education**

The objectives of women education include:

- To create awareness among women.
- To eradicate illiteracy among women.
- To improve the quality of women in society
- To ensure that the rights of and concerns of women are addressed to ensure successful and even developmental processes.
- To awaken consciousness of all women to the need for the development of a positive self image.
- To re-orientate the attitude of all females irrespective of age towards education.

### **Adult and Non-Formal Education and Empowering of Women: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**

If education would be a liberating force to individuals and society, it will have to challenge gender relations and as such will be aiming to alter structures, behaviours and ideologies. This will entail among others, the combination of both consciousness raising and action so that women and men not only understand their society and the place they currently have in it but are encouraged to undertake efforts to change social relations affecting gender. To have any meaningful effect, these efforts will most often need to be undertaken together with other social movements and organisations with similar goals (Aja-Okorie, 2013).

In the context of women and other disadvantaged groups, adult education should play a vital role so that the learners develop a critical consciousness of their situation and identify the source of the marginalization. Adult education is in a unique position to influence and transform individuals and society into more caring and equitable entities. The reasons behind learning or further learning are very pertinent ones. Why must the woman bother herself with adult education? Is it a necessity? The answers to these vital questions lie in the staggering threat to her continued welfare and economic empowerment. Social, political, economic, moral and intellectual decadence can overwhelm a woman who refuses to learn new things or improve on her knowledge. There is therefore the need to acknowledge the fact that society is never static but in a constant state of flux and complex dynamic growth. At the same time, changes in society pose various problems. For example, there are the increasing problems brought about by the growth in population, increasing unemployment, technological advancement, accommodation etc. It is therefore necessary for the woman to equip herself adequately to face successfully the hazards associated with these inevitable challenges (Uduigwomen, 2004).

Adult education is one of the major ways of successfully harnessing the human potential. Adult education gives the woman the tool with which to tackle problems as they emerge. That is, she learns to live in the present, re-orientate and adjust her life to

ensure a balance in the ever-changing environment. The experience of sharing life with companions, of serving known purposes and of choosing and enjoying is promoted by well planned programmes of adult education. Adult education underlines the urgent need for the development of adult potentialities especially the women folk. Adult education helps the woman to develop her innate abilities in such ways that life becomes more fulfilling or satisfying to the individual. It develops the spiritual and intellectual resources adequate for the solution of man's numerous problems and thus the community is enriched by such display of increased skills and knowledge. Adult education is important, as it increases the knowledge of the individual and gives the adult the opportunities to self actualize, think positively, and apply the knowledge gained in tackling real life problems and other emerging societal problems. Through adult education, illiterate adults learn to read and write, especially in their local languages. It helps make drop outs productive participants by exposing the learners to adult education, there is the encouragement for such responsibilities adequately, because they have been made to rediscover themselves. In addition, the programme assist adults especially women to usefully employ their leisure and recreation for worthwhile and rewarding activities rather than involving in gossip and related unprofitable activities (Agboeze, 2011).

### **Women Education and Gender Role**

Women education is undoubtedly a must; but the one million dollar questions are: which type of education will be considered a must for them to acquire and which type of career or empowerment can be considered suitable for them –as mothers of all– and the overall positive growth and development of a society? Can the education be acquired and job is secured at all costs, and for the mere sake of paper qualification objective? And for how long can the women continue to tolerate being sexually exploited or harassed or aggressively de-womanized in the process of schooling and working in the office?

Further questionably significant issues are; can women education be acquired without jeopardizing the fundamental role of the women in the perpetual growth and smooth development, as well as the positive progress of the nation? In other words, can women's education go side-by-side with a successful family life and the up-bringing of psychologically, socially and morally healthy children? For obvious reasons, there is the dire need to counsel women to take up professions and office works which are in conformity with their natural disposition. Life between male and female members of the society should have to be based on the principle of complimenting each other's efforts, rather than be based on cut-throat competition, mutual antagonism and sexual anarchy. The education of women which is undoubtedly role-oriented and is geared towards both personal and societal development in a positive sense, is that type of education which equips the women with all the necessary tools needed for the effective discharge of their own peculiar roles in the service of the nation. Depriving children of parental care and

particularly motherly affection, love and training, will invariably produce socially and psychologically imbalanced children who will grow up to be angry with almost everyone, and therefore become destroyers rather than builders of the nation (Dauda, 2010).

Dauda (2010) suggests that if women want monetary reward, they should force the government to pay them for undertaking that most important national assignment - child rearing and upbringing, which goes beyond natural role. This is because no matter how much men and women collectively combine their efforts to develop the nation politically, economically, socially and otherwise, disgruntled elements, socially maladjusted children, delinquents and hooligans, as well as other social misfits, who have been deprived of parental and especially maternal affection during childhood, will turn against the whole society and destroy everything in order to revenge the injustice done to them.

### **Factors Militating Against Women Education**

With education as an instrument of propagating the values of the society and with relative success of some women in almost all profession and government positions, parents have not completely changes their attitudes towards education of their female children. According to Jatua (2009), some of these factors are:

- Women being perceived as house wives performing strictly domestic job (childbearing and housekeeping);
- Cultural and religious factors;
- Early marriage;
- Parents favoring investment in the education males who will take over their families' name rather than their daughters;
- Poverty

### **Way Forward Towards Enhancing Women Education**

These are many ways to encourage the education of women. First of all, the home has a big role to play when considering education of women. It is said that “charity begins at home”. This adage is more than appropriate when considering the education and development of a woman who would form the base and the bedrock upon which the greater tomorrow would be built. There is no exaggeration in saying that the generality of the people are becoming conscious of the importance of women’s education, and of the importance of women in the education of our children.

- To attain any meaningful results in women participation in adult education, its scope must be limitless. It should be re-designed to make Nigerians, especially the women to be more productive citizens, reduce poverty and raise their standard of living in its totality. Anything short of this is as good as living in a fool’s paradise.

Universal literacy where every woman is able to read at least a local newspaper as well as write a simple letter should be included in the programme.

- Government in appreciation of the role of women as nation-builders, over the past years, has taken giant steps towards the improvement of women education, but more recognition should be accorded to women education by building more Federal Girls Colleges so as to give more opportunity to girls seeking admission to secondary schools.
- Again, with regards to early marriage, opportunity should be given to married women to further their education, through in-service training and necessary financial support from the government. Such candidates may also be given study leave with pay. The greater percentages of mothers today are illiterates. They are too old for formal education system. They should be encouraged to enroll into Adult and Non-formal literacy programmes.
- Adult education should be strategically located in a particular place which belongs to the people and is run by them if the lessons they bring are to be followed.
- Well equipped libraries and up-to-date teaching aids generally suited for spreading progressive ideas should be available at all centres.
- Finally, the mass media has an invaluable role to play, especially in the cities and the rural areas. The media houses are quite handy. The radio, television and the daily newspapers have editions in some Nigerian languages which can be effectively utilized in educating our women.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has tried to examine quality Adult and Non-formal as a requisite for Nigerian women: yesterday, today and tomorrow. If adult education is to be able to contribute to the transformation rather than to the perpetuation of women's marginalized position, the training of adult education becomes crucial issue. Adult educators who are centrally involved in the designing and facilitation of programmes and projects will need very specific training, if they are to be able to analyse and understand the position of women and the strategies which will help to change that position. More funds should be given to the planners of adult educators to enable them plan properly. Also, recognition should be given to women education by the federal, state and local government.

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