EMERGING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIETY IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract
The stage of development of any nation depends to a great extent on the level of resourcefulness of her people, which in turn is a direct reflection of the quality of training and development in education in that society. In Nigerian society, some form of education predated the Western formal system of education. In this system of education unlike the formal that is broad, structured and classroom based, the training of the young ones was based on apprenticeship, one to one and the emphasis was to meet the needs of the immediate society. The purpose of this paper therefore is to highlight and drawing our attention to the role society is able to play as inter phase between non-formal education and academic qualification. The main content of this paper are the concept of education, status of non-formal system of education in pre-colonial Nigeria and its relevance to our contemporary society. Based on the findings, the conclusion is that non-formal system of education is still relevant as a transition phase to modern technology and for overall sustainable economic development in the 21st century Nigeria. The suggestion is that, if Nigeria must be one of the 20th economies in the world in 2020, she needs among other things, the modernization of her non-formal system of education.

Introduction
Today most, if not all the developed nations of the world had a breakthrough of technological development by modernizing and perfecting the non-formal educational system. Therefore there is need for Nigeria to revisit this institution of non-formal education that is creative in character. The secret of technological breakthrough hinges on this. Every technological break-through has its beginning, growth and development. This is contrary to our belief that technology can either be transferred or stolen, this illusionary. Technology is embedded in the culture of the people and their needs. (Ojo, 2004:12), explains that, “In fact in Britain, it is the road side mechanic, shoe makers and the like who made all the theories we are learning in textbooks. The artisans as they are, the core of social and economic development”. If a nation like Nigeria must make any meaningful
progress in the 21st century, greater attention must be given to technology induced-growth institution and in our case, indigenous non-formal education. That can only happen when there is a strong partnership between modern technology and the indigenous system. Fortunately, Nigeria is not only blessed with the natural resources but human resources as well.

Non-formal education can either provide the basis for or complement the modern technology or act as a transition phase. This has been demonstrated by the fast developing Asian countries as China, India and even the technologically developed Japan, therefore to neglect or abandon the traditional system of education in quest for modern science and technology is to frustrate the effort.

The role of Nigerian society in this effort is to serve as inter-phase between non-formal education on one hand and academic qualification on the other. Value system assigned a low status to manual activity and a high value to white-collar bureaucratic work. Even in Nigeria of contemporary society, manual skill learnt through non-formal system is still discriminated in wages. This step has a negative impact on the non-formal education no matter its advantage to the society, this attitude must be reversed. That is why the roles and responsibilities of society is crucial for enhancing and the promotion of the institution. However education either formal or non-formal is a powerful force, which can transform Nigeria from technologically dependent to technologically self-sufficient nation.

**Concept of Education**

The concept, education, appears difficult to have a common definition. The difficulty of precisely defining education may be due to its growing qualities and constant changes. Education, whether formal or non-formal is very crucial to any society for the preservation of the life of its members and the maintenance of social structure. F.R.N (1981), defines education as “the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in other to foster continuously. In this sense, education is a continuous process in lifetime. Education, according to (Yoloye, 1980:1) “is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the ability, attitude for further forms of behaviour which are positive to the society in which he lives. (Fafanwa, 1989:194), Broadly defines Education as the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops ability, skills and other forms of behaviour of (positive and ‘some times negative) value in the society in which he lives. By this definition, Education can be understood as the totality of experiences. In order words, education is not a single process but an aggregate of activities, which enables a person to grow in adaptive behaviour, in terms of knowledge, skills, that enables him contribute to the development of society. Education in this sense includes a preservation and transmition of culture, a
preparation for life and a continuous process of growth through life. Education can as well be defined as systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and skills in individuals. This definition seems to embrace formal and non-formal education.

This brings us to the terms, formal and non-formal education. Education is said to be formal if it is structured, classroom based and curriculum oriented. In this system, there is specific programme of activities to be carried out within a specified period of time and there is a conscious division between teachers and students.

On the other hand, non-formal education is called with various names-informal, non-formal, vocational, apprenticeship, system; primarily because it is not a classroom based type of training. The apprentices are usually trained through several non-structured method as the case of the formal. Some merely by watching the senior apprentices and the master at work for example, the artisans, craftsmen, blacksmith, weaver etc.

Non-formal education involves the array of learning activities going on outside the formal school setting. These include programme for the youths and adults who have no formal schooling.

(Aderinto, 1984:2), according to him, Non-formal education, is a training institution that exists for the skills acquisition for the low level technological man-power, when well adequately trained will provide the technological base. For such development, there is need for the Nigerian society to create an enabling environment for technological culture of adaptation. As Ivwoi pointed out that, the society does not truly process modern, technology as part of its technological development from within through the traditional method of acquiring the relevant skills as basis for modern science and technology.

The Status of Non-formal Education in Pre-colonial Time

The centrality of agriculture in the economy of Nigeria of pre-colonial era cannot be over emphasised. It is also observed that a range of non-agricultural activities were pursued as well. These included metallurgy, textile, salt making, pottery, leather works, carving etc. The production of these items was not haphazard but well organised to pass through the necessary stages of production and of high standard. This has made the Nigerian pre-colonial economy to be characterised with self-reliance. Self-reliance in the sense that the production system was principally based on domestic resources and it was intended to meet the needs of the immediate society. It was out to satisfy national objectives. To satisfy national objective was intended to satisfy the internal economic needs and this encouraged the members of the society to provide incentives. There was a developed organic relationship between this institution and the whole society. This implies that “a nation ought to avoid the type of relation that is likely to severe such a relationship that derails the independent developments or distort this pattern of
socio-economic organisation” (Rodney, 1999). Nigerian unequal contact with the Europeans has frustrated that development of the local capacity to innovate technology. “It has alienated the majority of our people from the major segment of production process”, (Nnoli, 1981:11). The author went further to say that the colonial production process, by destroying the self-reliance of Nigeria’s pre-colonial economy introduced for the first time pervasive alienation in the people’s economic relations. The author still went further to say that in pre-colonial Nigeria, most of the items of consumption were created from local resources e.g. cotton that was grown locally was spun, hand woven, dyed, with colours obtained from local plants; provided most of the clothing of the Nigerian people. Likewise, pre-colonial Nigeria economy, such as iron, gold, salt and minerals were mined locally and used directly in various manufacturing industries. “These industries like iron manufacturing existed in various areas including the famous one at Awka, Bida, Ilorin and Ìjebu-odo”, (Nnoli, 1981:149). Discovery may start in one place and spread to other parts.

One important aspect of this indigenous enterprise is that, these industries serviced other related local industries such as spear manufacturing and arrows used for hunting and as weapons of warfare. Others were as household utensils and tools. To confirm thus, Penelope power, a German archaeologist observed that the locally manufactured iron used by the local farmers was of better quality than that later imported from Germany and sold cheaply to under cut the local industry, instead of supplementing it. “Despite this, Nigerian farmers continue to prefer and patronize the indigenous hoe” (Bower, 1947:25). It is an indication of Nigerian qualitative production of indigenous non-formal sectors before our contact with the Europeans. Today, what is the state of Nigerian Non-formal Industries, what we have now are just moribund and about to disappear in the face of foreign modern science and technology because of its inability to compete.

The local enterprise as seen above made major impact in other areas of our economy such as terracotta figures found in the tin field around Nok area. The brass figures and ornaments of Bida and Ife, the Bronze heads of Benin, the glass manufacturing and copper industry, we also have the timbers of Southern Nigeria were utilized in very sophisticated wood industry for wood carving for doors and decoration. In the north, there is history of long established leather industry that was based on the hides and skin from domesticated animals. These leather works were marketed, not only within the Nigerian market like Kano, Sokoto, but to far notable market centres such as North Africa and even as far as Europe. Imagine, if this local industries were to be improved upon and modernized, the story today would have been different unfortunately the skill is gradually dying out, it must be rescued.

For all this, Nigeria did not have to wait or depend on the imported foreign raw materials in order to produce those
goods, it was an independent development. However, progress demands the modernisation of those enterprises, which Nigeria went through, rather it was abandoned. It is sad. Even in the area of food production, pre-colonial Nigeria, with indigenous technology was adequately provided for her needs. From the local surrounding were collected food items as palm oil and kernel, shea butter, cocoa beans, fish, honey; all for immediate use. The waste from some of these food items were converted to useful products used for building, fuel, animal feeds respectively.

To describe the efforts of our pre-colonial forefathers, as being primitive is to ignore the lessons we should have learnt from the experience of the ancestor that could form the basis of Nigerian technological breakthrough. No matter how limited their capacity to do this and whichever way it might appear in our contemporary perspectives, it is crucial for our progress. It was a creative achievement of utilising local resources to serve local needs. Up till now we still find it difficult to duplicate these achievements. It is a great challenge.

Therefore, the question of transcending this pre-colonial Nigerian genius and creativity cannot arise (Nnoli, 1981:113).

The Relevance of Non-formal Education in our Contemporary Society

To meet her basic economic needs the Nigerian people in pre-colonial time were involved in the production of objects having both practical use and cultural values. Certain individuals and families for example were famous for their skills in Iron smelting for weapons and for agricultural tools and canoe building for the people associated with the reverence areas. In educational terms, this meant not only a form of technical education with an apprenticeship system but a form of intrusion in the area of production.

Generally as described above were in several parts of Nigeria handicrafts of different types had made greater advances before colonialism and it was based on workshop. However, after the destruction of this enterprise by the colonial intrusion, thousands were thrown out of jobs. Meanwhile, similar thing happened in Europe when new machines had thrown artisans out of employment in places like Lancashire, but in that instance the new machines became the basis of the prevailing mode of production. The formerly independent artisans returned to factories to master different skills and expanded the productive capacity of their society. In the case of Nigerian society, it was simply destruction without redress. As Walter Rodney points out that, after political independence was achieved, surviving craftsmanship had been turned towards attracting tourists rather than meeting the real needs of Nigerian people. Experience abounds how colonialism induced the Nigerian iron workers to abandon the process of extracting iron from the soil and to concentrate instead on working scraps of metals imported from Europe.

The only compensation for that interruption would have been a provision for modern techniques in the extraction and processing of iron. It was a deliberate barring of transfer of machinery and skills,
which would have given competition to industry in Europe in that period.

A transition to new machineries is the most decisive factor in the growth of industry that is, a change over from domestic production to the factory system. This is the critical phase of which intermediate non-formal educational system is expected of marking of an intermediary stage to modern technology. That is ability to pass the acquired skills to the next phase of production system. This Vacuum is still yet to be filled in Nigerian Economy.

The breakthrough to a new stage of human development is dependent upon society’s technical capacity to deal with the environment. It was shown in this paper that, that stage had been attained in several aspects of technology in Nigerian area. Nigeria had many craftsmen and artisans; yet in the global competition Nigeria is still lagging behind others for her inability to transform her means of production where machines are the main means of producing wealth for the society. The explanation is not far fetched, Nigerian formal educational system mainly accounts for this among others. Our formal education system has failed to produce relevant skilled man-power to man our economy as the case of non-formal educational section in pre-colonial Nigerian society. As a result of this, Nigeria’s contribution to global knowledge seems to be minimal. Our non-formal education that would either enhance or complement modern science and technology has since been neglected. It is a waste of resource. Unless, there is reorganization, improvement and modernization of traditional education system, it might become adversely affected and irrelevant to our contemporary society that is dominated with modern science and technology. An example was given of a superior American technology coming in contact with the indigenous hunting society of Americas and Caribbeans, the latter was completely exterminated. The only way the Nigerian non-formal institution can survive the technological global race, is, if it can proceed to a higher level than that of the economy which it had previously served. This is the only way out in order not to be stunted beyond what it is currently.

It must be understood that borrowing technology can be possible and useful where such technology has chance of being adapted and adopted to the indigenous technology. The Asian Tigers were able to transform their economies by focusing and attracting foreign skills and investment while at the same time developing their local capability to build upon. Today, most, if not all the developed nations had a breakthrough of technology through the non-formal educational system.

At the close of the colonial administration in Nigeria, the modern industrial sector was almost absent because the colonial authorities had made no attempt of the industrial development of the country. Following the political independence, Nigeria has accorded great priority to industrialisation. No wonder, all the National development plans especially from 1970s emphasised on the
need for rapid industrialisation of the country. A wide range of institutions, with the exception of indigenous institutions were established, which were shouldered with the responsibility to advance the cause of modern industrial enterprise, such as insurances and banks to provide loans to indigenous investors. Possibly to establishing small-scale industrial set up that would act as catalyst to industrial growth. But did this lead to the modernisation of our indigenous know-how? The answer is no, because informal sector was not considered in this effort. The aim among other things was to increase national self-reliance in the supply of industrial goods and on the long run and more importantly, the development of local industrial technology by technology transfer. It was expected that technical know-how would be acquired by Nigerians working in the industrial establishment through formal as well as on-the-job training i.e. through “learning by doing”. Lamentably after four decades of independence of industrial production, the imported technology of the manufacturing firms has not been able to nurture a viable domestic technical capability today.

Nigeria has not been able to either reproduce or improve upon or create a new machine as a result of the industrial experiences and knowledge, they have supposedly acquired. As Emmanuel Ikoku has warned that the fact that a new factory built in Nigeria does not necessarily mean that technology has been transferred to Nigerians. This is where indigenous skills to serve as a substratum would become necessary catalyst for technology transfer. One, technology is not environmentally neutral as plants that can be transplanted from one environment to another successfully. Imported technology must be modified or adapted and improved upon to innovate and develop new technology. That is, factories and machinery do not represent the sensitive stage or the peak of technology stage in industrial process but the routine stage --- the routine stage is the stage in which the Forman, Masons, Carpenters, Crane drivers and allied technicians, predominate under the supervision of supervisors.

Roles and Responsibilities of Society in Non-formal Education

Having discussed the status and the relevance of non-formal education in Nigerian society, both in pre-colonial and the contemporary society, it is imperative to see the roles and responsibilities Nigeria society is able to play in the development. The various peoples that made the Nigerian polity had developed various skills that are prerequisite to the production of craft objects, (Asikitikpi, 2002:3). This craft objects, was produced to meet the demands of the people of Nigeria in pre-colonial times. In contemporary time the demands have gone beyond the immediate society. That is why the growth and development of non-formal education should go beyond the scale it operated in the previous years.

Non-formal education today has not been encouraged to develop to the status it occupied in pre-colonial era. Crafts today are still in the hands of individuals and family members, which is
making any significance input in the society. Arts of traditional crafts have undergone a tremendous transformation in the developed nations in the contemporary time. The mass production as experienced by the developed nations are due to its transformation and modernization which is due to societal patronage as it affects the lives of the society at large.

Society has a great role and responsibilities to play in the area of non-formal education because of the benefits derived from its products. If that be the state of arts crafts why has its growth stunted through all these years in Nigeria. The abandonment of the traditional technologies of production in Nigerian society is probably the most important instance of technological regression. This is because development means the capacity for self-sustaining growth. It means the economy must register advances which in turn will promote further progress. This would make it possible to go to a further and higher stage of production. Nigeria has not experienced this all these years and it amounts to a loss of development opportunity. Nigeria has failed to set any standard and even lost full command of training young members of our society for that matter.

We are told that when England was called the world leading economic power, it used to be referred to as a nation of shopkeepers but most of the goods in their shops were produced by themselves. The importance of it all was that while grappling with the problems posed by the production that their engineers came up with so many inventions. The present Nigerian society that craves for foreign goods, such tasking problems to necessitate inventions is not there. Nigerian artisans make little or no contributions to the good number of goods produce that we consume on daily basis, this is a major step backward.

Though Nigerian indigenous craft industries still had vitality at the start of the colonial period, they had not undergone any significance technological advance; therefore hand not expanded much but had survived till now. However, the mass production of the modern industrialisation has almost virtually obliterated Nigerian indigenous craft, such as cloth, soap, iron.

The roles of the society is indispensable for the growth of the institution of non-formal education in Nigeria. For example, the youths that form the great segment of Nigerian society is no longer picking interest in either the skill or the consumption of the products of traditional crafts. Every one aspires for western education with white-collar job. And they prefer foreign goods rather that locally manufactures even if our local goods are superior, durable and relevant to our immediate needs. (Asakitikpi, 2002; 194) That a society that disparages its own cultural materials is doomed to be enslaved by a society that appreciates its own product. Such craving by Nigerian for foreign goods does not impose any task on the individual to innovate in the production of cultural material. Thus, the patronage of society is greatly indispensable for the effective functioning of our non–formal education.
The Nigerian public can play its vital role in non-formal education, if it insists in its establishing or running in both private and public schools. School is a formal setting where the art of creativity can be imbibed by the children and the youths. The society thereby can help create an enabling environment for creativity. By this, non-formal education could go beyond cultural materials to meet the vital economic needs of the society. The society by this very act can command that aspect of human activity. As stated by (Asakitikpi, 2002:194), that, it is not so much a natural resources that amount for a national development but if its population is sensitized and mobilized. Thus, for non-formal education to be fully developed to its expected role play, it is important the society must appreciate its efforts. This is a call to control the crazy of Nigerian society for foreign goods especially among our educated elite and the youths which imposes a heavy burden on the development of our traditional industries. It is only the society that creates an enabling environment for the growth of non-formal education as this would help to give positive impact to other areas within the society.

A society full of resource persons could share their experiences and challenges to the youths into this institution. The resource persons can help to stimulate the potentials of the youths. The contribution of non-formal education in this case would have far reaching consequences, since its development has people as a target. The call is for the sensitization any modernisation of the institution and to encourage potential people to actively participate in the non-formal education, which will serve as basis for indigenous technological breakthrough

**Conclusion**

Central to the development of any country is conscious effort to develop the human resources, (John, 2007:18). It is obvious reality today to say that the only educated people either formal or non-formal equipped with relevant skills could propel the economy towards a sustainable growth. Any economy desirous of growth should be concerned with this, sadly Nigeria continues to pay lip service to human capital development. Though there is expansion of our educational development with mass graduate output, quality manpower is sorely disappointing. This accounts to Nigeria trailing behind other nations in the area of technology development. The crucial aspect of pre-colonial Nigeria non-formal education system was its relevance to Nigerian society, which is responsible for its progressive development. What is the stage of Nigerian non-formal education after 40 years of our independence. No doubt, non-formal education is becoming a victim of modern technology.

This trend can be reversed if the society can create an enabling environment of its creativity, transformation and modernisation through the societal patronage.

**Recommendations**

Experiences abound of technological break-through through the
modernization and perfecting of the non-formal system of education especially among the Asian countries; Nigeria should take this as a challenge. The secret of technological advancement hinges on this since the call for technological transfer is an illusion. Even borrowing technology can be possible and useful where such technology has chance of being adapted to indigenous technology.

To achieve this goal, Nigeria should encourage technology induced-growth, through non-formal system of education in strong partnership between modern science and technology and indigenous system.

Our system of education should de-emphasized on paper qualification for functional practical and skill acquisition which is why non-formal system of education has become relevant and urgent too. Nigeria government and the society in general should assign recognition and high value not only to white-collar job but to manual activity as well.

One unique thing about the non-formal system of education right through pre-colonial to contemporary Nigeria is characterized with self-reliance in the sense that production process has been based on domestic resources. It was intended to meet the needs of the immediate society which would reduce Nigeria’s dependence on imported goods and technology.

Our surviving craftsmanship should not be turned to produce cultural material to attract tourists alone, rather to meet the real needs of Nigerians. This goal can be achieved if the craving for foreign goods by Nigerians could be curtailed through public enlightenment, education and by making our local crafts competitive in an enabling environment.

References


