

Moving towards Mastery in Universe of Opportunities: The Role of Adult and Non Formal Education

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Abstract

There are lots of opportunities in the world today, but these opportunities are hardly noticed by the people, talk-less of moving towards mastery. There are many poor people in the world today because they lack the capacity to maintain at least basic level of decent living. Many countries of the world, most especially African countries have initiated programmes and policies aimed at combating these conditions but these policies and programmes are not yielding the desired results. This paper examined the role of Adult and Non-Formal Education in a universe of opportunities, as well as, helping to show the act of moving towards mastering them. Adult and Non-Formal Education is a programme designed to provide education for all men and women who are aged twenty-one (21) and above years as well as for those who are though adults but are in vocational disciplines so as to improve on their trade. This study that is purely descriptive has essentially analyzed relevant documents relating to Adult and Non- Formal Education in terms of opportunities that are available to all and how they can move towards mastering these opportunities for their own good, the paper has therefore recommended among others: that for discovered opportunities to be mastered in the universe, the place of Adult and Non-Formal Education should not be taken for granted.

Keywords: *Universe, Opportunities, Mastery, Adult and Non-Formal Education*

Introduction

There are avalanche of opportunities that encompass our society today both in the rural and the urban centres. The funny aspect is that these opportunities are hardly noticed by the citizens, and the resultant effect is conspicuous economic challenge due to the unpreparedness of the populace to face future economic changes. It will not be an over-statement to say that the nation depends greatly on the youth because they are the pillars of our society and also comprises the greatest and major work force of any nation.

The big question is that the type of education acquired by these youths does not give them the room and opportunities to explore their environment without being aided. There is no quality skills acquisition during learning or in the course of their study which will improve both the individual and societal economic status. Without skillful abilities there will be no significant opportunities for empowerment.

The backwardness this has created in the developmental stride of the nation has provided us with ample evidence on the need for a rethink on the re-invention of adult and non-formal education into the society. The perspective of adult and non-formal education as a panacea to bring the masses close to reducing economic inequality reflects on how efficient and effective the programme can help point people to see the universe of opportunities surrounding them. Adult and non-formal education are more or less activities that are designed to capture the provision of education, skills and training for people who are excluded from the formal school system or are above the formal school age, the non-literate and those in need of specific knowledge (Obashoro-John & Oni 2016). The crux of this paper is to show how adult and non-formal education can become an integral part of the society for acceleration of the development which explains why the National Policy on Education accorded it priority in the education system. The underlying motive is to achieve accelerated socio-economic and political development.

Adult and Non-formal Education

It is important for one to understand the meaning of adult and non-formal education so as to determine whether it can be used as a viable tool for pointing the populace to the universe of opportunities surrounding them. Adult and non-formal education is a package of educational programmes for adults and youths outside the formal educational system aimed at providing more information and better knowledge and skills for improving their lifestyle and also their earning capacity. The concept means different things to different scholars, people, communities, or nations. According to Nzeneri (2002) it is any education given to adults based on their social, economic, political and cultural needs, so as to enable them fully adjust to life and societal changes and challenges.

Adult and non-formal education refers to efforts at improving the provision and implementation of development programmes which have a basic education or training component. Such programme provision usually takes place outside the formal educational system. When the educational process is non-formal, it means that the rigid forms of traditional schooling such as regimented curricula classroom arrangements and set syllabus are not strictly maintained. The education programme is more flexible and diverse, and is adapted to the particular needs and circumstances of learners (Onyishi 2004 as cited in Mbagwu & Nwakaire 2006). The definition above shows that adult and non-formal education can be a valuable tool

for combating ignorance, oppression, diseases, squalor and poverty. Most importantly, it is a means of raising a more enlightened individual regardless of the level of education already acquired. This type of programme is designed to encompass all educational and training activities undertaken by adult for professional growth. It involves itself in general education, vocational and enterprise based training within a life-long perspective.

Aims and Objectives of Adult and Non-formal Education

Nigeria like other developing nations of the world needs education for development. Changes come through acquisition of positive knowledge, attitudes, skills of production and management of new ways of organizing work and participating in the government of the day. The aim of adult and non-formal education is the attainment of knowledge in public participation, which is ideal in a democratic setting. Therefore this type of education is, for individual improvement, as it guarantees employment, puts food on the table and brings about individual fulfillment with regard to social and economic needs. Through non-formal education programmes that is enrolling them into skill acquisition programmes which provides skills in tailoring, hairdressing, welding , laying of tiles, painting, bricklaying, etc, which will lead to functional education. According to Okemakinde (2015) adult and non-formal education provides adults the opportunity to continue their education at all levels and in various forms.

No wonder the Nigerian Policy on Education (2014) states that adult and non-formal education consists of functional Literacy, remedial, continuing vocational aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youth and adults outside the formal school system. The policy states that the goals of mass literacy adult and non-formal education shall be to:

1. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education; these include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups especially the relatively disadvantaged gender.
2. Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary school.
3. Provide continuing educational opportunities for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
4. Provide in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skill.

5. Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

In essence, as shown above, adult and non-formal education is a process and agent of liberation, a tool for self and national development, adjustment for cultural awareness and integration and for conscientisation or animation and group dynamism. As laudable as these aims and objectives may be, it has been bedeviled by one constraint or the other which has made the achievement almost impossible. Adult and non-formal education in Nigeria has been conducted through the conventional (face-to-face) mode of education. There have been stories of success in literacy programmes, but the success rate is still below the anticipated rate (Nwizu, 2006).

Challenges of Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria

Here are some of the challenges bedeviling this programme in Nigeria. The first major challenge of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria is the government. Government is good and quick in policy formulation, but when it comes to implementation they develop "cold feet." Nigeria today has placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult and non-formal education programmes. These actions by the government have not helped matters. Hence, Shaibu (2005) observed that despite all efforts by government and non-government organizations in promoting literacy, it is becoming increasingly difficult for large number of people to have access to formal literacy and basic education.

There is the issue of funding. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education observed that only two percent of the total annual budgetary allocation to education as a major sector is commonly considered for adult education programme as a sub-sector for the past three decades. This fundamental issue is very important and as a result needs to be addressed in the 21st century for proper result oriented literacy and adult education programme by the three tiers of government in terms of recognition, funding and other related issues-associated with the challenges of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

Adult and non-formal education like most other disciplines is confronted with one problem or the other which in many ways mar its full success in Nigeria. Poor public perception of the discipline is considered another serious challenge. The poor public image of adult education field as an area of study for the old people is undoubtedly responsible for its low patronage and recognition even by highly placed academics and policy makers. Nzeneri (2002) is of the view that one major problem of adult education in Nigeria is that of poor conceptualization. To a number of people, adult education is seen as a kind of education designed for people from age of sixty years and above. In other words, some see it as a kind of

programme designed for people who are about to die, forgetting that constitutionally in Nigeria, anybody who has attained the age of eighteen years is regarded as an adult.

The global world of today is characterized with exposition of knowledge and high technology which aided development in different sectors. An era where communication and infrastructural facilities such as telephones, fax, and computer, internet networking are tools turning the world into a global village. Virtually, all sectors of human endeavour in this era has become technologically driven. This has resulted in a shift from industrial to information era. This has made communication easy with the ability to reach people irrespective of distance. Literacy adult and non-formal education centres in this age of information and communication technology and knowledge exposition are lagging behind.

The practitioners of adult and non-formal education centres are non-professionals who are not adequately trained in the discipline. It is observed that in most local government literacy centres majority of instructors and facilitators do not know what the activities of these centres entails. It therefore means that the progress and maximum success of the programme will not be considered. This is happening because experts in the field are not practicing and the programme is not receiving adequate monitoring when compared with the formal education programme.

Be that as it may, adult and non-formal education is a productive human development investment that grows the economy and socio-economic development of any society. Therefore, it must be adequately funded and regularly monitored. That is, centres created must be well equipped and have regular supervision by experts in each of the skills being provided for in the centres for these individuals to get proper training and retraining for more productive and effective results.

Moving Towards Mastery through Adults and Non-formal Education in a Universe of Opportunities

If the challenges of adult and non-formal education are properly and adequately addressed, the programme or discipline will become a tool for conscientisation and orientation of adult and youth to change in their behavior and/or attitude towards the society in which they live. It will help in conditioning them toward embracing new and improved techniques, progressive ways and actions for higher standards of living-socially and economically (Okemakinde 2015).

Adult and non-formal education can help the populace to identify the numerous opportunities around them and afterward educate them on how to master the trade they are into. This discipline is no doubt an inevitable tools/means of achieving mastery in whatever they do or participate in. No nation desiring a

rapid, social, economic, political and technological advancement can afford to neglect the provision of functional education to the citizenry. Education of whatever kind has been found to be a potent instrument for the development and transformation of any society. Adult and non-formal education is the only sine qua non for the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, abilities and competences required by the people for effective performance of their various social and economic roles.

When people are educated through whatever means, they become relevant to national development. If people are the subjects of development, if they are makers of their own destiny, then human capital development becomes more crucial (or at least primary) than economic and technological development. Once the creativity and energy of the people are unleashed; they can learn almost everything and tackle every problem (Bhasin, 1991). Realizing the goals and objectives of adult and non-formal education requires deliberate formulation of appropriate activities and programmes to truly and meaningfully address identified problems among the target groups.

Once opportunities are identified, it is the duty of the facilitators of adult and non-formal education to swing into action, because their form of discipline is to organize educational programme irrespective of age, regardless of the content, place of study, the form of study once the programme is flexible to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries and their community. What is important here is that action will lead to the creation of an enlightened community, which will have a sufficiently high level of self-reliance and a comparatively high standard of living. With awareness creation through adult and non-formal education programmes and activities, the people will be better equipped to fight poverty, disease, unemployment, discrimination and contribute maximally to sustainable economic development in their society.

The government at all levels place emphasis on the need for adult and non-formal education to be established in all communities, especially vocational education centres where adult men and women and even young school leavers and dropouts can learn various skills which include tailoring, hairdressing, weaving, soap making, pomade making, bakery, bag making, tie and dye etc. other community programmes of instruction, which fall under the non-formal category, such as health, nutrition, family planning and cooperatives. These will help to discover opportunities that will lead to mastering of most of the areas mentioned above. This will bring about the possibility of practicing that will snowball into perfection, thereby creating room for poverty alleviation.

Moving towards mastery in a universe of opportunities involves skill development. This is a process of identifying one skill gap and develops what has been acquired. Skill development has become even more important given the increasing pace of globalization and technological changes and challenges that are

taking place in the world today. The importance of providing skilled manpower is recognized in Nigeria and finds expression in the National Policy on Education (2014) in the following statements:

1. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commerce and economic development.
2. To give training and impart necessary skills leading to the provision of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel whom will be enterprising and self reliant.
3. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Adult and non-formal education should be repositioned to excessively launch the present adults and youths into the orbit where they can respond to the opportunities surrounding them and make meaningful contribution to nation building and development through the art of mastering what they are doing.

Conclusion

Nigeria today have millions of youth who are carrying certificates that cannot secure employment for them, hence the high rate of unemployment. These youths should be made to go through an effective and purposeful adult and non-formal education programmes, so that they will become profitable and productive to themselves and their society. This paper has shown that effective adult and non-formal education programme can help adults and youths in the society discover their talents and see job opportunities that are opened to them.

Recommendations

For adult and non-formal education to help the citizenry to move towards mastery in the universe of opportunities the researcher is suggesting the following recommendations:

- * The three tiers of government should adequately fund adult and non-formal education programmes for good results. This will also enable the management of these centres to pay facilitators as at when due. Other staff allowances should be paid too, as well as other incentives meant for them.
- * Adult and non-formal education is an all-embracing programme that will help to enlighten and conscientize the populace with regard to poverty alleviation which will enable every citizen to be meaningfully engaged in economic activities and other processes for nation-building. Government

should not only be committed to the rule of law but the behavior and conduct of the political class must also reflect commitment in the area of adult and non-formal education.

- * Workshops, seminars and programmes where instructors and facilitators will be trained and be retrained on modern facilities and new instructional materials to help them in the course of carrying out their assignment should be organized.

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