

# REFOCUSING ADULT AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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## Abstract

One of the major distinguishing factors between the first world and the third world is the literacy level of former as against the latter. Education is generally seen as the key to the development of any nation. For the third world, the snail – speed development pace is attributed to the prevalence of high level illiteracy among the populace. This is certainly because a very largely illiterate populace is a huge burden or liability as they cannot be mobilized early for development purposes. This is the basis for which this paper examines adult and non formal education in Nigeria, its historical development, challenges and the need to repackage it through competence to make for a literate and mobilizable populace for development.

## KEYWORDS:

Adult Education, Non-Formal Education, Education, National Development

## Introduction

National development is an aspiration very close to the heart of virtually all the governments of the third world countries (or so it seems) if this is true, then it is one aspiration or goal that has been quite elusive. While nature might be said to be malevolent to some countries Africa like Chad, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, e.t.c., for the obvious reason that are land locked and bereft of natural resources, the same cannot be said of Nigeria that nature has graciously bestowed with both human and natural resources. Now, if the formal are underdeveloped. But the fact is, as valuable and essential as human and natural resources are, they do not in themselves develop a nation.

The point being made here is that, a people who are largely illiterate and without basic education cannot be vehicle for development and change. The four national development plans since independence hardly preceded beyond the length of board on which they were drawn because huge proportions of our adult population are ignorant, consequent upon their illiteracy and lack of basic education, such population cannot understand, interpret and accept government policies on development. This simply implies that they cannot be meaningfully mobilized for any development purpose. As Illiterates, they live in constant fear and suspicious of even genuine government project and policies. For instance, it is not uncommon for a stark illiterate to mistake the intension of government to conduct a census exercise for one singular aim of knowing the number of taxable adults within the community, or that the routine immunization exercise is a policy by government to reduce the population of the people. To some of them the vaccines are capable of making children sterile adults in the future. Worse still, it is among the illiterates and uneducated populace that unscrupulous politicians find almost a ready army they can easily manipulate to unleash terror and indeed even a liability to any nation. it is in realization of this that from colonial era to the present day that successive government (albeit half hearted commitment) established adult and non-formal education programme unity in the Ministry of Education.

**Conceptual clarification:** Adult education has been given different meaning and interpretations (Anyawu 1987) view it as education for adults, while Okedara (1989) it to be education for school dropouts. Other like Omolewa (1981) still takes it to mean adult literacy. However, adult education means more than these narrow definitions.

The common link for all conception and definition of adult education is simply adulthood. However, the definition of adult education depends on the use of such education in a society. The national policy on education (1981) states the adult and non-formal education consists of functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civil education for youths and adults outside the formal school system. Campbell (1980) defines adult education

as that education involving sequential and organized activities, which enable adult men and women to enlarge and interpret their own learning experience or made possible some change in their vocational future. Similarly, Omolewa, (1981) adult education as the education provided for men and women who for one reason or the other dropped out of the formal system, or those who for purpose of work and other engagement are enable to register for full-time course abandoning, in the process, their work and family. Clearly, this definition pays greater attention to education provided for workers and sees as an important aim of adult education. Adult Education is further defined by Hambeh (1998) as any kind of education for the people who are old enough to work or to marry and who have not completed the cycle of continuous education, if any commenced in childhood. According to the source, such adult learners may want to contribute maximally to the development of their communities, or to understand themselves and their world better. The concept, “non-formal education”, on its part, has no single and universally acceptable definition. This is because of the diversity and variety of programmes covered. Nevertheless, here are two of the most common definitions of the concept. Coombs (1973) defined non-formal education as any organized educational activities outside the established formal system whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning activities. Similarly, Harbinson (1973) in Okafor (1987) on his part defines non-formal education and the entire range of learning processes and experiences outside the regular, graded school system. According to the sources, it includes every form of learning and communication from parents and other learning experiences extending to formal training on-the-job, apprenticeship, etc., Adult Education and participation in organized out-of-school programmes such as youth brigades, extension services, community development projects, health and family education.

While marrying Adult Education to non-formal education, Okedara (1989) states that formal Adult Education leads someone to obtain a certificate, while non-formal Adult Education cover training and instruction outside the formal education system and maybe reorganized in the form of individualized apprenticeship, vocational training in craft centers and even as nationwide mass literacy campaign.

From the foregoing, it becomes clearer that adult and non-formal education is inseparable. In our local governments, tutorials and home coaching to adults are all geared towards overcoming this impediment to national development.

#### **The historical development of Adult Education in Nigeria.**

The history of Adult Education in Nigeria dates back to 1914. The outbreak of the second world war resulted in change attitude of the British government towards the extension of literacy education to a large number of Nigerians. Subsequently, the colonial secretary’s advisory committee on Education set up an advisory sub-committee with the following as its terms of reference:

- To consider the best approach to the problem of mass literacy and Adult Education, other than literacy in the more backward dependencies (Nigeria inclusive).

The report of the committee seriously indicated the colonial education policy, which it described as partial for targeting only the young population to the neglect of the adult population. It therefore, warned that the trend was dangerous and must be urgently corrected if the lives of people must improve. This warning was given sixty (60) years ago, but has not depreciated in value till today. Be that as it may, the effort yielded little result in the country particularly in the old Northern Region where only one adult literacy centre was established per province. Much later, with the structural change when regions transformed into state in 1967 and then 1976, the administration of Adult Education fell squarely on the shoulders of the third tier of government: the local government. In its over sixty years of existence, the achievement recorded so far is only a drop in ocean as the army of illiterate adults continue to grow unabated.

#### **Repackaging Adult and Non-Formal education sector for competence**

Earlier in this paper it was stated that the adult education programme in this country dates to 1941 when Nigerian was still a British colony. Successive government and hence no headway. This is in agreement with the key world in this topic, “Refocusing” a term presuppose that there has been something on ground which needs to be given proper attention for better result. For over 60 years this programme has been on but not properly ran as such has impacted positively on the populace.

**The way forward.**

One is inclined here to accept that there was general misdirection in the use of literacy education in Nigeria in the last decades for the purpose of national development. Most Nigerian citizens live in rural areas and have to make their living by farming. Unfortunately, the kind of education they were exposed to in primary schools could no longer equip them to be better farmers. This has led.

Many young adults to move into towns, seeking white other jobs, which are difficult to find. These maladjusted young adults who could not be provided with these jobs often later become a burden to the society. Leading to excessive unemployment it is unfortunate that the effect of giving people the wrong type of education is to ruin both the country side and towns. At this juncture, this paper strongly desires to propose the following:

1. The adult and non-formal education programme should provide the rural populace with agricultural education through the extension agents who will show the primary school leaver and illiterate farmer's new seeds and animals as well as new farming techniques to improve their agricultural production.
2. Adult and non-formal education programmes should design curriculum for the training and retraining of school dropouts, unemployment adults, skilled and semi-skilled workers in current job as well as in job that are likely to exist beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. The adult and non-formal education curriculum should be designed to develop the appropriate skill of adult students who would be better prepared to meet the challenge of the future. This means that adult learners should be taught the skills they need to anticipate and solve problems of the future.
4. Also, secondary school leavers and dropout should be exposed to adult education programmes where they can acquire skills and training to become agricultural agents, nurse, clerks, clerks and laboratory technicians.
  - i. Providing training for school leavers
  - ii. Providing training for agricultural improvement
  - iii. Keeping the highly educated up-to date; and
  - iv. Providing vocational and technical education

In the context of new development strategies, adult and non-formal education is also generally accepted as being more relevant to the need and aspiration of the populace as it attempts to focus on teaching people to improve their condition of living and general health. Again, given the myriad of austerity measure, introduced by government with attendant rise in prices of goods and service, attention is being shifted towards revamping the economy and to inculcating the spirit of productivity, self-realization in the populace adults and non-formal education appears to be only powerful instrument for the much needed socio-economic development. This is because in the past, a lot of emphasis was placed on the formal school system as powerful weapon to achieve positive socio-economic transformation and the overall development is on the increase and inflation has never abated.

Also Eyibe (1999) states that give the present needed literacy level for national development, people who have received some training but who needed more training for increased effectiveness, need to be assisted most of such people according to him are adults who would not want to go through formal education again. He further stressed that adult and non formal education can be made available to such people through in-serve, or the job training or follow-up course to improved their capacity and productivity while still holding their jobs. Supporting this view, Elias (1981) opines that for a person working in a factory, adult education is necessary to equip him to be better and more efficient and a skilled work that understanding his duties and responsibilities. He further suggest that factory worker should go on industrial training, while teacher, public servant and agricultural extension worker should go for in-serves training to make them contribute their quote to national development. Significantly, adult and non-formal education play the vital role of reducing the percentage of illiteracy among Nigerians in its social, economic and cultural environment. According the national policy on education (1998), the goals of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education includes the following among others:

- a. Provide functional literacy and counting education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not completed their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disable and other categories or group.
- b. Provide in-serve on-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professional order to improve their skills and
- c. Given the adult citizen of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civil education for public enlightenment.

These objectives clearly show that adult and non-formal education is meant to impact on all adult youth who were not privileged to attain formal education knowledge and skill to be employed, and those who have skills

expose to new skills depending on the demands of their work place or living environments. In this way they will all contribute to the Gross Domestic product (GDP) of the country.

**Biography**

Egena Obaje Innocent was born on 28th November 1960. He hails from Otukpa town in Ogbadibo local government area of Benue state and holds a Bachelors Degree in Education and a Masters Degree in Education. He currently serves as Principal Lecturer in the Department of Christian Religious Studies in the Benue state College of Education, Oju, Benue state, Nigeria. He is a Christian, married and is blessed with children.

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