

# **Non-Formal Educational Empowerment of Nigeria Youths for Entrepreneurial Development**

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## **Abstract**

*The various educational planning and development strategies adopted, particularly in developing countries in the decades of the "60s and 70s" and the resultant unsatisfactory social, political, and economic effects they engendered lead to the emergency of an innovative and flexible educational concept: non-formal education. Non-formal education opens one's intellectual capacity in the acquisition of competences and skills necessary to handle effectively the forces of nature. It arouses and empowers the spirits of research and entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths that engender self-reliance. This paper, therefore, discussed the concept of non-formal education, entrepreneurship and development, non-formal educational empowerment of youths for entrepreneurship, and then made some recommendations that will help the youths acquire the desired entrepreneurial skills for self and national development.*

## **Introduction**

Over the years, empowering youths for entrepreneurial development has been a burning concern in Nigeria especially as it relates to unemployment and out of school youths. Observations have shown that most of these youths found around the park as touts, street hawkers, armed robbers, kidnapers, cyber criminals, thugs, among others, most often are school drop-outs. These groups of people are easily used by politicians to cause one havoc or the other in the society thereby denting our national image.

In the light of this, successive governments have made efforts to curb the menace of these vices in the society by introducing some developmental programmes such as poverty alleviation programmes, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Directorate for Employment (NDE), among others. Despite these efforts to reverse the ugly situations, the youths appear not to be fully engaged in meaningful ventures especially entrepreneurship. The indications are that substantial numbers who are supposed to be in school are not there, hence the need for non-formal education and out-of-school education programme (Ngwu, 2006). Non-formal education is planned with a specific target group in mind such as the drop-outs, rural men and women, farmers, and other disadvantaged groups. It is,

therefore, essentially a child of necessity as a result of the short comings and failure of the formal school system which has been criticized as being inadequate for development in the third world countries.

In the same vein, Ani (2002) opined that Nigeria should embark more on training and education of her citizens outside the formal school system if it is to achieve rapid economic and national development. This will depend on her ability to produce skilled youths capable of understanding problems and needs of the society and be able to direct activities towards the fulfillment of national goals.

In addition, if one adopts a process frame work for effecting positive changes in our society today, non-formal educational empowerment of the youths becomes a child of necessity. Madu (2010) corroborates the above when he opined that educational empowerment forms the theoretical tool, which, when translated into positive action would undoubtedly produce the required positive results. This is where virtue counts, unlike vice or vicious intentions which would result to negative results. This type of education arouses the spirit of research and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship requires acquisition of intellectual competencies and skills which man can utilize in the building of industries that will absorb human capital to create wealth for the nation, to raise both her Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income.

In this paper, the writers intend to define the key terms and sought how non-formal education empowers youths for entrepreneurship.

### **Non-Formal Education:**

Practitioners of non-formal education define the term in various ways, depending on their ideological and intellectual dispositions or their research and academic disciplines and orientations. Hence, there is no one acceptable and adequate definition of non formal education because of the diversity and variety of programmes usually covered. One of the most generally accepted definitions is by Philip Coombs (1973). He posits that:

Non-formal education is any organized educational activity 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 objectives (P.11)

Mbagwu and Nwakire (2005) define non-formal education as

any organized educational activity or training activity for school dropout, for illiterate rural and urban adults, for youths, women, or individual workers aimed at improving their employment and income earning potentials, or giving them general education, which, in some cases, as desired may help them re-enter the formal system (p.184).

### **Entrepreneurship and Development.**

Entrepreneurship and development are terms likened to the two sides of a coin. They cohere to each other. They are intricately connected. One leads to the achievement of the other. That is to say, there is a connecting link between entrepreneurship and development. Engagement in entrepreneurial activities is the bedrock of any nation's industrialization and development. According to Trevor in Fasua (2006), Africa's transformation will be found on the enterprise of individual household. Most of the developed nations are developed because the citizens are entrepreneurially minded.

Azikiwe (1992) opined that development could be interpreted to mean all-round positive change. Development includes political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life such as physical, moral and intellectual growth of human beings. Development focuses on human beings and implies a better quality of life for all people irrespective of sex, age, status, political and religious affiliations. If development focuses on human beings who inhabit an area, then, it should harness and utilize the inherent potentials of every person.

Madu (2010) outlined the ideals or principles that engender development, to include:

- a. Principle of confidentiality: your level of self confidence determines your level of courage and pushfulness to achieve results.
- b. Principle of impartiality: This entails the endorsement of the golden rule. Do to others what you would like them do unto you.
- c. Principle of determination: This entails the spiritual will to succeed, to make things better.
- d. Principle of voluntary: This entails acting in love, rationality and freedom.
- e. Principle of investigation and researching spirit: This entails critical thinking, creative and innovative spirit. In fact in all nation states, especially in the western world researches or research findings are very crucial ingredients for national planning and budgeting for national developments.
- f. Principle of self-discipline: This entails setting reasonable goals and striving to realize them. It entails control of one's emotions and removal of distractions in one's life.

The writers are convinced that if the above principles outlined by Madu are purposefully harnessed and grown up with a good number of our youths, then when they become leaders of tomorrow, they can be very veritable tools to change our country to better. The above principles also seem to tally with Rodney's (1982) indicators of development. These are all fallouts of non-formal educational empowerment:

- a. One's increased skill and capacity to do things.
- b. Greater freedom and self-confidence.
- c. Creativity and self-discipline.
- d. Responsibility and material wellbeing.
- e. Regard for social justice and equity.
- f. Increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.

### **Non-Formal Educational Empowerment of Youths for Entrepreneurship**

Non-formal Education essentially makes one to know both his particulars and the universal. He then becomes a master who knows when he knows something and knows when he does not know. This makes him to be a master

craftsman and a creator of ideas. Non-formal educational empowerment forms the basic tool which when translated into positive action will undoubtedly produce the required positive results. Non-formal education opens ones intellectual capacity in the acquisition of competences and skills necessary to handle effectively the forces of nature. Man through his ingenuity and learning has conquered nature for his own advantage by recreating the world. Through non-formal education, man's creative and innovative potentialities are aroused to the extent that there is no limit to what man can do.

One aspect of empowering the youths for entrepreneurship is through non-formal education delivery. For Brailey (1992), empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. This control may be within the individual himself as a result of greater knowledge which he acquires covertly through inspiration/revelation or overtly through external agents such as schools, the churches, individuals, and other agencies. In this sense, an empowered person takes personal rational decisions voluntarily and deliberately in freedom without coercion because he knows the nitty-gritty of his actions and the consequences. This is where non-formal educational empowerment hinges.

Non-formal education arouses the spirit of research and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship according to Nwafor (2007) is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. Entrepreneurship requires acquisition of intellectual competences and skills which man can utilize in the building of industries to create wealth for the nation. Through entrepreneurship education which is an aspect of non-formal education, the youths acquire knowledge and skills that will make them become useful to them and promote national development. This education will give them the opportunity to harness their resources judiciously which will engender the achievement of self-reliance and independence.

According to the national policy on Education (2004), Non-formal education encourages all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. The goals of Non-Formal Education shall be to:

- (i) 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 group especially the disadvantaged gender.
- (ii) Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- (iii) Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- (iv) Provide in-service, on the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and
- (v) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Based on the above national goals, it is expedient to say that non-formal education engenders the spirit of one's acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the development of an individual and the nation in general.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it is evident that the education offered through the modern school system is well known to be most often divorced from the people's needs, aspirations, and desired future life situations and opportunity. Available evidence shows that drop-out and a good number of youths roam the streets in search of white collar jobs when they finish school. However, to revert this situation, non-formal education programmes become the *sine qua non* for empowering Nigerian youths for entrepreneurial development.

This will go a long way in providing the right and desired knowledge and skills that will engender positive situation results in the society.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

1. Government should mount campaign on the importance of non-formal education to different categories of youths. This is to enable them acquire different skills and knowledge to become useful to themselves and the society.
2. The youths should understand that self knowledge is the fruit of purposeful education which is the source of empowerment for work and action.
3. Entrepreneurship education centres should be established in educational institutions where both students and out-of-school youths will acquire the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that will make them self-reliant.

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