

# THE ROLE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (NFE) IN MAXIMIZING HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT (HCD)

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined the concepts of human capital development and non-formal education. It identified the human capital theory of education and the role played by non-formal education in maximizing human capital development. It also examined the constraints to human capital development through non-formal education and recommended ways of maximizing human capital development (HCD) through non-formal education.*

## **Introduction**

A major setback in our match to improve our critical infrastructure base, jump start the small and medium enterprise sector activity, reduce our dependence on expatriate labour inflow and import- dependence in goods and services stems from deficiency inherent in our educational system. A large percentage of Nigerian youths are unemployed partly because most are without any learned skills. Oyebamiji (2006) stated that the Nigerian populace is unable to participate effectively in development process due to the failure to equip them with the appropriate skills and knowledge. Constant changes in our society makes it necessary that Nigerian education system should aim at a better country concerning itself with the development of its human capital. Human capital means human beings who have acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes which/are needed to achieve national development. This can be achieved through education and training. In Nigeria today, emphasis has been laid on formal education which produces people who lack practical skills which is the major reason for in competencies and unemployment in our society.

The failure of formal education has resulted to the search for an alternative which is non- formal education (NFE). NFE according to Coombs and Ahmed (1997) are all education provided outside the formal school system whatever its purpose, target group and provider. As an alternative education system, it is often seen to be a radical alternative to formal education. NFE is characterized as follows;

1. Open to anyone irrespective of age
2. Its content is more concrete, life centered, constantly changing to meet new needs to deal with new issues of current pressing concern.

### 3. It is a continuous process.

This implies that the development and utilization of NFE can enhance the knowledge and skills of Nigerian citizens at all level. The problem is that NFE has not been given due attention in the Nigerian educational system.

The disregard of NFE has made it impossible to utilize effectively the programme in enhancing human capital development (HCD), thus implying that NFE has not been appreciated as a tool for HCD in Nigeria. Peoples ignorance of the aims and objectives of NFE is on the increase. It is yet to be regarded as an essential to development and this according to Fafunwa (1974) has led to growth without real development. The result been that after many decades of independence, Nigeria still depends on the outside world in respect of skilled manpower, entrepreneurial resources, capital, goods and service (Anyanwu, 2002). The problem posed by poverty, unemployment, lack of skilled manpower made it imperative for Nigeria to seek alternative ways to development. This paper therefore seeks to examine the concepts of human capital development (HCD) and non-formal education (NFE). It also focuses on the role of NFE in maximizing HCD and constraints to HCD through NFE in Nigeria.

### **Human Capital Development**

Most discussions about human capital development generally centre around knowledge, skills, competencies and innovative abilities possessed by the population. Among the most important changes that characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are the increasing importance of knowledge as a driver of economic growth, the information and communication revolution, the advent of a worldwide labour market and global socio-political transformation (World Bank, 2002). Human capital means human beings who have acquired skills, knowledge and attitude which are needed to achieve national development. Human capital has become the most prized asset of a nation because of the importance of human beings in the development process. A nation with abundant natural resources cannot achieve its potentials without skilled human resources. Beckers (1993) asserts that human capital is a stock of competencies, knowledge, skills and personal attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. Human capital is an attribute gained by a worker through her training, learning, experience and development. In the same vein, Huzz (1998) defined human capital to mean time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual household or a generation which can be used in the production process. Many early economic theories refer to it simply as work force, one of the three factors of production and consider it to be an important resource.

The rationality in investing in human capital according to Babalola (2003) is based on three arguments:

1. That the new generation must be given appropriate part of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generations.
2. That the new generation should be taught on how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products to introduce processes and production method and

social services.

3. That people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches.

The ideas raised in this argument can be successfully achieved through education and training. Human capital theory views education as a productive investment which is considered as equally or even equally more worthwhile than physical capital. The proponent of this theory, Schultz (1971), argues that education does not only improve the individual choices available to him; but that an educated population provides the type of labour force necessary for industrial development and economic growth. In this case, it is established that the cause of the underdevelopment or stagnation in any country are factors within and non external to it. Ihumade (2008) supporting the human capital theory, said that this theory laid emphasis on investing on people through educational activities for skills acquisition which will ultimately lead to capacity building and skills utilization. Without investing in human capital skills cannot be acquired and there cannot be self development and socio-economic capacitation.

Human capital development is when the creative potentials of the people are developed and their ability to participate in development process enhanced. Human capital development (HCD) according to Huzz (1998) has to do with the concept of human capital or education, skill level and problem solving abilities that will enable an individual to be a productive worker in the global economy of the 21st century. It has become a core element in the development effort of developing countries in the knowledge society of the 21st century. The emphasis here is learning to learn, learning to transform information into new knowledge and learning to transform new knowledge into application (World Bank, 2002). Although human capital development focuses on personal development the key objective is to transform the social, political, economic and technological life of the society. Human capital development therefore focuses on all activities directed towards producing people with appropriate skills, knowledge, attitude, motivation and job related experience which are required for national development. In Nigeria today, according to Ogbimi (1999), more emphasis is laid on formal education system which produces mediocre with facts and theoretical knowledge and no practical skills which is the major reason for incompetencies and unemployment in our society. These problems can be remedied through effective non-formal education programme for both adults and young people in our society to maximize human capital development. Investing in non-formal education (NFE) improves capabilities of human beings and are avenues for promoting human capital development.

### **Non-Formal Education (NFE)**

The aim of adult and non-formal education and mass literacy as stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) is to:

1. Provide functional and remedial education for those adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education.
2. Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not

- complete secondary school.
3. Provide education for different categories of completers of formal education in order to improve their basic knowledge and skill.
4. Provide in-service training on the job and vocational and professional training for various categories of workers and professionals.
5. Give adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics and cultural and civic education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013).

NFE emerged as a result of the failure of various educational planning and development strategies adapted particularly in developing countries in the late 60's and early 70's. It was conceived in search of alternative to the seeming inadequacies of formal education system. As an alternative education system, it is often seen to be a radical alternative to formal education system in at least two ways: organization and methods (Iyunade, 2008). It consists, mainly of the numerous activities and projects having knowledge and skill components that are targeted at the out-of-school adult population. NFE is that type of education that is indigenous to the people. It usually focuses on skill acquisition for economic empowerment. It has no beginning and has no end (Asojo, 2001). He states further that NFE brings about change in information, knowledge, understanding or skill acquisition and attitude. Hence, it is regarded as all-round development of an individual, aimed at making a person more than simply an independent person, but also useful socially, economically and politically in the society. Non-formal education is designed to meet the learning needs of all, irrespective of age, sex and status. It is flexible in terms of organization, time and place; may cover basic and continuing education programmes to impact basic literacy, including life skills, work skills and facilitates lifelong learning. It ensures equity in access and human resources development (Bureau of non-formal education 2006). NFE is known as out-of-school education and perceived as any non-school learning where both the source and the learner have conscious intent to promote learning.

In pursuance of the clarification of the definition of NFE, Ngwu (2003) added a dimension of NFE as any planned and consciously organized general education and or training activity outside the formal school, in a particular society for illiterates, school-leavers. Dropouts or other adults as individuals or a group for the purpose of raising consciousness, of improving their individual or collective efficiency in their jobs or preparing them for self employment, wage employment or further training with the existing educational system. All the educational activities that fall within the scope of these definitions are classified as NFE. Such activities according to Oyebamiji (2006) include continuous education, agricultural extension services, functional literacy, distance education, vocational training apprenticeship, among others. Ngwu (2003) in affirmation to the above statement listed NFE programmers as literacy, community development, agricultural extension, nutrition education, trade and labour union, family planning, religious education, vocational training, health and sanitation, co-operatives, small scale industries, industrial training. The above listed activities and programmes are called NFE because they are not

compulsory, do not lead to formal certification and may not be supported by state. NFE is open to everyone, has a concrete and life related content, is for immediate application to the day to day life and as a continuous process. Ukwuaba (2008) pointed out that NFE is essential to economic, political, social, technological and human capital development.

### **Role of Non-Formal Education in Human Capital Development**

The contributions of NFE to human capital development are far reaching. It is the only practical means of skills and knowledge development. It offers an alternative and often a more effective one to education and training than formal school. In most cases, according to Ngwu (2003), NFE can supplement, extend and improve the processes of formal education. In the same vein, Ezema (2008) and Evans (1981) stated that NFE are carried out in three major forms for developing human capital. These forms are

- Replacement education
- Complementary education
- Supplementary education

These forms of NFE programmes are core areas for providing educational programme outside formal education process.

Replacement education is achieved by requiring a person to enroll for ad complete an educational programme which on completion leads to new skills, knowledge and attitudes (Ngwu, 2003). In this case, the early knowledge acquired, can no longer help the possessor in achieving his/her day to day life activities for instance, an urgent need for a manual typist to learn the manipulation of computers. This is a case in replacement education because the typist through the process of NFE has enhanced her skills in computer operation. In the area of health, for instance, through NFE, training and workshops could be organized to improve health services in the rural areas. Oyebamiji (2008) supported this when he suggested that local birth attendant can be trained in basic health care services through NFE to assist in reducing child/mother mortality and morbidity.

Complementary education assists or promotes formal education already acquired by an individual or group of individuals. Basic skills that will assist them to solve a present problem situation like day to day activities at home, society and the nation in general are acquired through complementary education. Ezema (2008) states that complementary education contributes directly to production. NFE is complementary because it stabilizes one's educational attainment as it provides constant refinement of knowledge and skills which enhances productivity and develop peoples capacity for informed choices.

The third form of NFE; supplementary education, is concerned mainly with updating of knowledge. This usually comes later in life (Ezema, 2008). Knowledge update is necessary because changes in the society, such as change in labour market, economy and politics demand new knowledge. The quest for new knowledge update according to Alani and Isola (2009) demands on- the-job training for workers to develop and improve their human capital. No matter

the level of skills, knowledge and attitude inculcated in people through formal education, on-the-job training will still fill some gaps in human capital development, especially where there is need for additional skills and knowledge to compare with the job.

Examining, the contributions of NFE in respect of HCD, Ngwu (2003) came up with three classes of NFE, these comprise of:

- a. Activities oriented primarily to the development of employed manpower.
- b. Activities designed to facilitate access to employment.
- c. Activities not specifically related to labour force participation.

The contributions of these activities to human capital development are far reaching. In some cases, NFE is the only practical means of skills and knowledge development. In others, it offers an alternative and often a more effective one to education and training than formal schooling. NFE operationalizes Haribison economic theory of HCD (Haribison, 1973). NFE to Haribison are learning experiences aimed at employment.

He further outlined some functions of NFE in relation to BCD as follows:

1. NFE provides a wide range of learning services for workers in the informal, industrial, agricultural and manufacturing section.
2. It may be an alternative or substitute to formal education for workers like electricians, bricklayers, carpenters, farmers who may be trained in employment under apprenticeship arrangement.
3. Expanding of knowledge and skills gained in formal education e.g. civil servants and small scale entrepreneurs can update their skills through participation in staff development programme.
4. Achievement oriented NFE programme provide means for competent but uncertified people to gain access to high level jobs in the economy, thereby de-emphasizing certification.

This implies that the skills and knowledge generating capacity of NFE is enormous and without such activities the production of goods and services would not be carried out effectively and efficiently. The crucial role of NFE here is to ensure that education makes its contribution to improving the quality of life of citizens, fostering democratic and co-operative processes for development of mutual self and self reliance (Anyawu, 2002).

There is no gainsaying the fact that we need to foster the cause of NFE in Nigeria to the level that it can encourage our citizens to acquire appropriate skills and knowledge to enhance human capital. This will help in inducing desirable change for a better living in our society.

### **Constraints to Human Capital Development through Non-formal Education in Nigeria**

Some of the major constraints in adult and non-formal education practices in Nigeria as perceived by adult education organizers have been identified as lack of trained personnel, inadequate resources and funding, poor understanding of the meaning, nature and practices of

adult/non-formal education by potential clientele and policy makers and the absence of identifiable curriculum and institutional mechanism for the promotion of adult non-formal education work (Ngwu, 2003). Efforts made in the past by successive regimes in Nigeria to mount poverty alleviation programmes designed to develop capacities of rural dwellers through promoting skill acquisition, self employment and labour intensive potentials were bedeviled by corruption, poor funding and numerous other malpractices (Ugo and Ukpere, 2009). Such programmes included Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) (1977); Green Revolution (1980); National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Family Support Programme (FSP); Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP); Poverty Alleviation Programme PAP (2000).

1. A current attempt at tackling human capital development was the introduction of NAPEP in 2001. NAPEP was aimed at addressing aspects of absolute poverty by eradicating them. It was arranged into four schemes: Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
2. Rural Infrastructure Development (RVDS)
3. Social Welfare Schemes (SOWESS)
4. National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS)

The Youth Empowerment Scheme deals with skill acquisition, mandatory attachment, productivity improvement credit delivery, technology development and enterprise promotion. These no doubt are very appropriate steps towards human capital development, sorely needed for eradicating absolute poverty. Ugo and Ukpere (2009), in appraising the performance of NAPEP in the regard, observe some lacuna that already devalues the programme delivery. One significant flaw in NAPEP is lack of focus on community education. The authors posit that this is one area where adult education could have come as community education which is one of the important foci in poverty alleviation.

Inadequate funding of human capital development programmes is a major problem. Alani and Isola (2009) state that there is perennial complaint about insufficiency of funds to procure material and human resources and to construct physical facilities in education institutions. Oyebamiji (2008) emphasizing the peoples ignorance of the aims and objectives of adult and non-formal education as an instrument of skills and technological acquisition observes that ministry officials especially in the education industry actually lack the knowledge and capabilities of adult education as a tool to transform human being and society apart from promoting literacy Ngwu (2003) asserts that it is well known fact that employment-oriented adult and non-formal education programmes are virtually non-existent in Nigeria. This observation become incontrovertible as he recounts, when one compares our Nigeria's situation with well known programmes as the village polytechnics in Kenya, the Botswana Brigades, the mobile trade training schools in Thailand, the TRSEM project in India and the National Industrial training programme in many Latin American countries.

Corruption in Nigeria threatens any programme of government including human capital development as funds meant for executing projects aimed at reducing poverty are systematically

depleted. This manifests in the form of projects substitution, misrepresentation of project finances, diversion of resources, and conversion of public funds to private uses (Okoye and Onyukwu, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

It has been established in this presentation that NFE is an instrument per excellence for enhancing human capital and that human capital is a core element in the development effort of any nation. The uneducated, undereducated and educated through NFE are opportune to complement, supplement and replace their initial educational experience in order to advance their knowledge and skills to contribute effectively to the development of the nation.

NFE therefore should be used as an effective instrument for development of human capital in Nigeria.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations were made:

1. Federal Government of Nigeria should bear in mind that formal education should not be the only avenue for human capital development but non-formal which is an aggressive alternative to achieving human capital development.
2. NFE should be used to make continuous provision for all the people within a society to make them update their skills and-knowledge, refine their thoughts and make them understand issues and fully be in control of their desire.
3. Less emphasis should therefore be placed on education that provides more paper qualification but on that which will lead to creativity, innovation and skilled demonstration of knowledge.
4. We must advocate for a practical approach to education, one that has value to modern society and has the efficacy of promoting socio-economic growth through effective utilization of new skills, knowledge and approaches.
5. NFE programme should be revitalized to cater for the out-of-school children, adults and workers who wants to enhance their capacity.
6. NFE should also complement formal education in schools to inculcate practical skills on our younger generation to reduce unemployment and unskilled manpower in our society.

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