



A Critical Assessment of the Role/Importance of Non-Formal Education to Human and National Development in Nigeria: Future Trends

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Abstract

This study assesses the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development in three states (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. It measures six group dimensions to determine the impact of non-formal education in relation to adult, youth and out-of-school children's literacy, the provision of skills to enhance social development, the reduction of poverty, and re-skilling or up-skilling citizens for increased productivity and national development. This study uses a quantitative research design based on multiple statistical procedures for analysing data. The study reveals that there is a significant relationship between non-formal education and human and national development. Recommendations are offered regarding the need to empower a specialised agency to carry out the job of mass literacy, and adult and youth non-formal education. This paper is aimed at policy makers and governments in the third world who are struggling to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Keywords: Non-formal education, literacy, skills development, human development, national development, poverty, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly 3.5 billion people — more than half the world's population — live in nine highly populated developing countries (E-9) and together these countries represent tremendous challenges that weigh heavily on the global education agenda. The majority of the E-9 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) have not yet achieved universal primary education and all face major education quality deficits. Only two countries (Mexico and Brazil) have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. Of the world's 771 million adults who lack the basic learning tools to make informed decisions and participate fully in the development of their societies, nearly 70% live in these nine countries. Literacy remains a significant challenge in both Nigeria and Pakistan. Tackling the literacy gap is both a moral and developmental imperative for E-9 governments and donor countries. It requires strengthening efforts to expand education and significantly improving its quality (UNESCO, 2006b).

Nigeria's latest population figure of 167 million people (National Population Commission, 2011) makes Nigeria the seventh most populated nation in the world. It also has the lowest life expectancy among the E-9 countries (see Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2012). Any further increases in population represent serious pressure on the natural and financial resources of the country. The training or retraining of Nigerian citizens is fundamental to meeting the growing need for skilled human resources that will propel the economic and national development of the country. The scope and impact of the rapid changes now being experienced in Nigeria, do however, bear multiple dimensions and implications that transcend traditional social, political, economic and cultural borders.

Nigeria is currently facing a number of human security challenges — poverty, social unrest, hunger, disease, conflict, marginalisation, and need to meet targets for the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Ololube et al., 2012d). According to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994), in order to address these growing challenges, a new development paradigm is called for; one that will put people at the centre of development with regards to economic growth, protecting the life opportunities of future as well as current generations, and respecting the natural systems of which all life depends. To this end, education is one of the social institutions through which nations turn their population into assets and hence one of the institutions that contributes to the construction and maintenance of social order and progress (Ololube, Egbezor & Kpolovie, 2008).

Education is a process by which children and young adults develop the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour, which are of a positive value to the society in which they live (Egbezor & Okanezi, 2008). For this reason and in line with the declarations of other nations, Nigeria has identified education as a tool 'par excellence' for effecting national development. For this philosophy to be truly reflected in Nigeria's national policy on education, education must now take centre stage in the arenas of self-realization, improved human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, and social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004, p. 7).

Education can play a dominant role as an instrument for large-scale achievement and revolution in all spheres of human endeavour. Purposeful education enables the individual to understand and study real life situations and develop confidence. It also provides a strong base for rational value-oriented and nation-building progress (Rena, 2008a). Several authors have indeed identified the crucial role of human capital for growth and economic development (Cannon, 2000; Barro, 1998; Aghion & Howitt, 1998). While some have underlined the possibility of a negative relationship between education and growth (Self & Grabowski, 2004; Barro & Sala-i-Martin, 1996), most emphasized the importance of education to national development (Ololube, Egbezor & Kpolovie, 2008; Egbezor & Okanezi, 2008; Ololube, 2011; Ololube et al., 2012c; Rena, 2007, 2008a, b).

Types of Education

In Nigeria, there are four major types of education — indigenous (traditional) education, formal education, informal education, and non-formal and adult education. Indigenous or traditional education practiced within the African context generally includes the oral transmission of a people's beliefs, rules and customs from one generation to another (Egbezor & Okanezi, 2008). This type of education is central to the preservation and vitality of a diversity of cultures within a nation.

Formal education involves the training and developing of a population's knowledge, skills, and character in a structured and certified programme that take places in a school setting. Formal education is classroom-based and delivered by qualified teachers. Generally, it refers to the structured system administered by the state for children and youth. In most

countries, the formal education system is fully state-financed and operated. In some countries, the state allows and certifies private school systems to provide a comparable education alongside public institutions. Formal education includes elementary schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary schools (colleges, trades or technical schools, and universities) (Ololube, 2011).

Informal education happens outside of the classroom, at home, in after-school programmes, community-based organisations, museums, and libraries. Informal education is the learning that goes on in daily life. Parents and other caregivers, for example, may show children how to prepare family food or tie their shoe laces. This is informal education. Friends may encourage each other to talk about things that have happened in their lives through which they learn how to process their feelings and arrive at appropriate actions and reactions. Informal education can also include the learning that comes from being involved in youth and/or community groups. In some of these settings, there are trained workers/educators whose job it is to encourage people to think about experiences and situations. Like friends or parents, these workers may respond to what is going on, but as professionals they are able to illicit special insights and ways of working (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

Non-formal education (NFE) refers to structured education that take place outside of an organised school setting. Typically, non-formal education refers to adult literacy and continuing education programmes. It can also mean any organised and sustained educational activity that does not correspond to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education can therefore transpire both within and outside of formal educational institutions and can involve persons of diverse ages. Depending on the national context, it covers programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills programmes, work-skills programmes and general culture programmes. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow a ladder system of accomplishment and may be of different durations. They may or may not confer certification of learning achievement (UNESCO, 2006a).

The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) plays a significant role in the delivery of education to more than 70 million Nigerian youths, most of whom need skills to enhance social inclusion (NMEC & UNICEF, 2008a). This compares to just 21 million enrolled in basic education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). The NMEC aims to improve adult and youth literacy and reduce the high rates of poverty that are fast becoming a national crisis by re-skilling and up-skilling members of the population so as to enhance productivity. According to the UNESCO report on literacy indicators (2006b), there is an urgent need to increase youth and adult learning opportunities and to develop literate environments in the E-9 countries in particular as they continue to be characterized by extremely low educational attainment.

Objective/Purpose of the Study

The motivation to conduct this study stems from the fact that education is a basic human right. It provides children, youth and adults with the power to reflect, to make choices and to enjoy a better quality of life (Ololube, 2008). It has the power to break the cycle of poverty and is a key ingredient in both economic and social development (UNESCO, 2005a, b). The authors of this study have the utmost confidence in the value of the non-formal education, its importance to society, and its ability to achieve the aforementioned objectives. A desire to evaluate non-formal education competencies and the role of non-formal education in guaranteeing quality education for sustainable development propelled this study forward. This study also stemmed from a desire to assess the capacity of non-formal education to aid in adult, youth and out-of-school children's literacy, aid in the social and skill development of 70 million impoverished Nigerians, aid in the reduction of poverty, and aid in the re-skilling and up-skilling of members of the population for increased productivity aimed at national development (NMEC & UNICEF, 2008a, b).

This paper is not for the faint-hearted. It is addressed first and foremost to the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and other policy and decision makers seeking empirical evidence on non-formal education performance. It is also aimed at researchers, practitioners and education planners in developing countries, especially those in Africa, who seek to come to terms with reality of today's education, it's potential and it's chronic failings.

Research Questions

To give focus and direction to the study, the following research questions were formulated:

- What is the role of non-formal education in fostering adult and youth literacy?
- What is the role of non-formal education in fostering the literacy of out-of-school children?
- What is the role of non-formal education in fostering skills and social development in the more than 70 million Nigerian youth in-need of such skills and development?
- What is the role of non-formal education in fostering the reduction of poverty?
- What is the role of non-formal education in re-skilling and up-skilling members of the population so as to create increased productivity?
- What is the role of government in overseeing the quality of non-formal education?

Research Hypotheses

To further direct our analysis and research, the following hypothesis were put forward:

- There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and adult and youth literacy
- There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy.
- There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and the skills and social development for more than 70 million Nigerian youths.
- There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and the reduction of poverty.
- There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and re-skilling/up-skilling members of the population for increased productivity
- There is no significant relationship between the role of government and the quality of non-formal education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework (Functionalism)

Functionalism, as developed by Emile Durkheim [1858-1917] (1956), is the oldest and still most dominant theoretical perspective in sociology and other social sciences, including education. This perspective rests on two main premises: the application of the scientific method to the objective social world and the use of analogy between the individual 'organism' and 'society' (Hurn, 1995). Functionalists thus assume that the different parts of a society each have their own role to play (their own function), and that they work together to form a harmonious whole. Sociologists often use the metaphor of the body to describe functionalism – society is viewed as a body with the different parts of society — government, media, religion, the family, and of course, education — being like the different organs in a body, each contributing in a different way to keeping the whole healthy.

Functionalism assumes that the various institutions in a society always operate so as to support that society as it is. If these institutions do not operate as such, the society will perish. Functionalists thus believe that in order for a society to remain viable (with all components functioning together) a society must instil similar beliefs and values in each member and each new generation. Education is a component part of any given society and tends to maintain that society in a steady state. A steady state occurs when a constant ratio is maintained among the components of the system, given continuous input to the system. A burning candle is one example of a steady state – once lit the flame is small, but it rapidly grows to its optimal size and maintains this size as long as the candle and its environment exist. A steady state is also self-regulating. In the above illustration, a sudden draft will cause the flame to flicker, but with the ceasing of the draft, the flame regains its normal characteristics (Whawo, 1993).

Durkheim (1956) believed that education existed to instil morals and skills in children, youths and adults. The conveyed morals are those that society has deemed desirable and seeks to have inculcated in all members. As such, it is important that these morals and skills are taught in both formal and non-formal settings to ensure consistency in their teaching and application. In teaching morals and skills, schools are teaching children, youths and adults that they must become a part of society and maintain ties to society or both the individual and society will break down. Durkheim concluded that a sense of belonging to a larger society was the most important lesson that education could teach learners. Likewise Parson (1959) contends that a school's main function is to socialise children by using the idea of commitments.

There are two types of commitments: commitment to the implementation of the broad values of society and commitment to the performance of a specific type of role within the social structure.

When applied to the context of this research, it becomes obvious that non-formal education has a role to play in creating a just and egalitarian society because it provides functional education to youth and adults outside the formal education system, including functional literacy, and remedial and vocational education (FRN, 2004, p. 25), all of which are essential to human and national development.

What is Education?

What is the purpose of education? In answering this question, one must evaluate the diverse functions of education with reference to recent changes in educational policies around the world. Principally, education functions as a means of socialisation and social control. It helps to encourage the young to develop into “good citizens” and prepares people for employment and productive contributions to society (Quartey, n.d). While it can be a way of reducing or reproducing social inequalities, when executed with excellence, it benefits the individual, society and the economy (Ololube et al., 2012c). Excellence in this paradigm is a generally accepted best way of doing things in education in search of distinction. It is an essential component of best practice, which creates quality strategies that produce improved scholarship (Ololube & Ubogu, 2008).

Education, in its broadest sense, is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual. It is the entire range of experiences in life through which an individual learns something new via formal, informal and non-formal learning. In a technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next through institutions and instruction (formal, informal and non-formal). Instruction, in turn, is the intentional facilitation of learning towards identified objectives, delivered by an instructor/teacher or similar person. Teachers in institutional settings direct the learning of students and convey many competencies including reading, writing, mathematics, science and history. While such teaching refers to the actions of an instructor positioned to impart knowledge to the learner (Ololube, 2009), learning refers to a process that equips students with definite knowledge, skills and abilities that can be rendered functional upon completion. In the context of the compulsory education of youth, this technical process is sometimes called schooling (Ololube, 2011).

What is Non-Formal Education?

Adult and non-formal education programmes generally provide basic literacy, functional literacy, post-literacy, literacy for the blind, literacy for the disabled, women’s education, nomadic education, continuing education, quranic integrated education, workers’ education, vocational education, and prison education. These programmes are offered in the various states under the supervision of the state agencies for public education. The open apprenticeship scheme, operating in the informal sector, can complement these programmes with income-generating vocational skills targeted at eradicating poverty (Aderinoye, 2008). Given the lifelong learning objectives of adult education, most third world countries use adult education to improve literacy, to upgrade occupational competencies, and for community development (Hiemstra, 2003).

Non-formal education is any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system to provide a selected type of learning to particular sub-group in the population (adults, youth or children) (Ihejirika, 2000). It includes adult education, the apprenticeship system, continuing education, in-service programmes, on-the-job training programmes, personnel and professional development, refresher courses, staff development programmes, and worker and student industrial training. Extension education, as an aspect of non-formal education, includes co-operative programmes, extramural classes, external and extension degree programmes, and out-reach and off-campus programmes such as weekend sandwich courses. Non-formal education also includes community development education such as rural development training, manpower resource training, youth camps, holiday programmes, mass mobilization campaigns and community health education (Amirize, 2001; Egbezor & Okanezi, 2008).

A definition commonly preferred today involves the inclusion of an educational specialist (like the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education) who facilitates, directs, or provides resources to adults in the pursuit of learning (NMEC & UNICEF, 2008a, b). The term “adult” in this paradigm refers to someone having assumed financial and social responsibility for self and often for others. This emphasis on adult education specialists has resulted from a move to professionalize the field. However, an increase in topical research activities has prompted the

need for another look at the concept as these activities highlight the potential of and preference for considerable self-directed study. The exact meaning of “adult education” thus continues to change and grow (Hiemstra, 2003, p. 1).

Goals/Objectives of Non-Formal Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has outlined the goals of mass literacy, and adult and non-formal education as that which shall:

- Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have not had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. This may include nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, particularly young girls and women;
- Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education;
- Provide education for different categories of graduates of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- Provide in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- Give the adult citizens of the country the necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FRN, 2004, p. 25; NMEC & UNICEF, 2008b, p. 1).

According to section 36A of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004, p. 27), the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education shall:

- Co-ordinate mass literacy, adult education and non-formal education programmes nation-wide;
- Ensure uniform standards and quality control nation-wide;
- Liaise with national non-governmental organizations and corporate bodies for the implementation of mass literacy programmes;
- Train the workers needed by the state agencies;
- Develop curriculum and didactic materials for mass literacy, and adult and non-formal education; and
- Provide nationally recognised basic education certificates

Section 37B states that the State Agencies for Mass Education shall:

- Implement national policies on mass literacy, and adult and non-formal education ;
- Plan, research, organize, develop and manage mass literacy, and adult and non-formal education programmes within the state;
- Monitor and ensure the quality control of state programmes;
- Set-up and supervise the activities of the Literacy Network Commission in the state;
- Liaise with state non-governmental organizations for the implementation of mass education programmes;
- Train grassroots personnel; and
- Provide support services for adult and non-formal education including curriculum development, mobile and rural libraries, television-viewing and audio-listening centres, and studio-visual teaching and learning aids

At the local level, section 38C dictates that Local Government Councils shall be responsible for:

- Day-to-day control and administration of local mass literacy and adult education programmes;
- The recruitment of part-time instructors and learners for functional literacy and post-literacy programmes;
- The provision of feedback to State and Federal Ministries of Education with regards to curriculum and materials development, techniques of teaching, evaluation procedures and the collection of data;

- Ensuring that the Literacy Network Committees in local government districts, villages, wards and centres are operating efficiently and effectively; and
- The provision of physical facilities for rural libraries, reading rooms, television viewing centres and radio listeners clubs.

The Role/Importance of Non-Formal Education

Education plays an important role in development. Out-of-school programmes, in particular, are central to providing adaptable learning opportunities, and new skills and knowledge to, a large percentage of people outside the reach of formal education (Vermaak, 1985). Non-formal education (as one type of out-of-school programme) began to appear in international discourse on education in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this context it referred to any organised educational activity outside the formal system, whether operating independently or as a feature of some broader activity intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives. Non-formal education today should be seen as related to the concepts of recurrent and lifelong learning. Fordham (1993) suggests four characteristics associated with non-formal education:

- Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups;
- Concern with specific categories of person;
- A focus on clearly defined purposes; and
- Flexibility in organization and methods.

In addition to what has already been mentioned about non-formal education and national progress, it should be noted that adult literacy is particularly relevant to development and to reducing gender inequality. Adult literacy increases women's participation in both private and public activities, i.e. in house hold decision-making and as active citizens in community affairs and national development. Adult literacy programmes have a dramatic impact on women's self-esteem because they unleash their potential in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. According to the UNESCO (2010), non-formal education in particular helps to: ensure equal access to education, eradicate illiteracy among women, and improve women's access to vocational training, science, technology, and continuing education. It also encourages the development of non-discriminatory education and training, allocates sufficient resources for and monitors the implementation of educational reforms, and promotes women's and girl's life-long education and training. There are a number of other impacts and facets of literacy and education, especially as they pertain to women and girls that are worth consideration:

Healthy development: Adult literacy and the education of young women are critical for healthy physical and intellectual development. The effectiveness of such literacy and non-formal education programmes are bolstered by family, community and parental involvement (Russell, 2001).

Education of parents: The education of parents, particularly mothers, is associated with significant reductions in infant mortality and improved child health care. In addition, the better educated parents are, the more likely it is that they will raise literate children. Children whose parents can read and write tend to stay in school longer and achieve more than children of illiterate parents. Likewise, the foremost reason for low school enrolment in pastoral communities is parental fear that education will lead children away from their traditional way of life. Non-formal and distance education for parents can help to reduce these fears (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2006).

Human and economic development: Improved literacy levels deliver economic benefits to individuals, communities and the nation. Studies, in fact, show that there is a connection between literacy levels and per capita economic growth and hence the reduction of poverty. Bangladesh, one of the E-9 countries, is home to the most recent non-formal education initiative, the post-literacy and continuing education for human development project, which focuses on skills training and income generation for poverty alleviation. There all sectors concerned with human development and economic growth have been encouraged to recognize the importance of and need to support non-formal education in the national interest (Islam & Mia, 2007). Nigeria can emulate this by urging key stakeholders to buy into the non-formal education agenda so as to enhance economic development – the mass education of people undoubtedly stands to bring about a significant and positive change in individual and community quality of life and in the pace of national development.

Preventing HIV/AIDS: Adult literacy programmes can play a central role in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS. According to Bakilana et al. (2005), adult literacy is essential for communicating many of the key HIV/AIDS prevention messages. Bakilana and her colleagues found that Uganda has reduced the prevalence of HIV/AIDS from 14% in the early 1990s to about 4.1% in 2003; the only country in Africa to achieve such a drastic reduction. An important part of this success was the use of information campaigns to educate Ugandans about the existence of HIV/AIDS and means of self-protection (p. 4).

Many African communities require some kind of formal and/or non-formal education and training to be able to benefit from basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services and the development of new medicines, and thus free themselves from the diseases that devastate the poor (Seya, 2005). Interestingly, adult education programmes tend to build on the expressed needs of clients and thus can link adult literacy content with HIV/AIDS awareness. In this context, according to Schenker (2006), adult literacy programmes:

- Create an understanding of STDs and HIV/AIDS and their methods of transmission;
- Provide women with information on how to protect themselves, their partners and their children;
- Empower women and enable them to discuss issues surrounding HIV/AIDS despite the associated stigma;
- Empower women to negotiate safe sex with their husbands despite traditional gender-related constraints;
- Encourage women to demonstrate leadership through community responses to HIV/AIDS; and
- Expand the use of Appreciative Planning and Action (APA), an adaptation of Appreciative Inquiry (p. 48).

The promotion of democracy: A well-managed adult literacy education programme can increase the drive for the development of democracy. Indeed, adult education is indeed one of the basic building blocks of the development of democracy and democratic institutions (Seya, 2005). Adult education sustains development, which in turn fosters hope and participation in democracy, justice and active citizenship. Likewise, democracy and active citizenship require new skills and competencies along with the capacities for institution-building. Participatory education programmes empowering rural communities have been invaluable in cementing human rights, raising gender awareness and enhancing the income-generating skills needed to fight poverty (Synthesis Report, 2004).

Knowledge and skills: Adult literacy programmes have created opportunities for adult learners to acquire and apply the knowledge and skills needed to propel economic development. The role of adult education in economic development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It is now well established that, alongside health care, sanitation, and nutrition, which improve standards of living and productivity by reducing sickness and mortality rates, basic adult education equips recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills that yield high rates on investment through enhanced labour productivity (Seya, 2005).

Cultivation of good reading and writing habits: Adult literacy programmes motivate learners to develop interest in reading and writing and a positive attitude to the effective use of ICT and media within the context of life-long learning. Literacy helps people to move around independently, read their own personal and leisure documents, and seek employment in large firms without fear. The confidence gained from literacy extends to many other spheres of daily life as well (Openjuru, 2004). According to Seya (2005), adult education has been instrumental in familiarizing the active population of Africa with Information Communication Technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of African economies into the global economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

This study assessed the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development in Nigeria, in particular the power it can bestow on children, youth and adults to make choices and enjoy a better life (c.f., Ololube, 2008). It further looks at how non-formal education breaks the cycle of poverty – a key ingredient in economic and social development (UNESCO, 2005a, b). It assessed non-formal education *vis-à-vis* adult, youth and out-of-school children's literacy programmes and the affect that these have on increased productivity that will guaranty human and national development.

This study adopted a survey research design with a logical sequence that connects the study's empirical data to its research questions and hypotheses, and ultimately its conclusions. This study included specific design features from broad empirical and theoretical perspectives to help address the aforementioned research questions and hypotheses. Figure 1 summarizes the research design of this study.

Simple random sampling was chosen over other sampling methods. Simple random sampling is by far the easiest and most basic probability sampling technique in terms of conceptualization and application. For this study, only knowledge of the respondents (and friends and family of respondents) who have benefited from non-formal education programmes was required. This technique allowed us to access relevant perceptions, descriptions, reflections and experiences that would deepen our understanding of the role of non-formal education in human and national development.

Three research assistants were engaged to assist in administering the questionnaires, with the objective of retrieving 500 questionnaires from each of the purposefully selected States. The number of questionnaires successfully completed and returned was actually: 491 from Bayelsa, 512 from Delta and 498 from Rivers for a total of 1501 questionnaires. The research assistants who administered the questionnaires were present as they were being filled out so as to retrieve them as soon as they were completed.

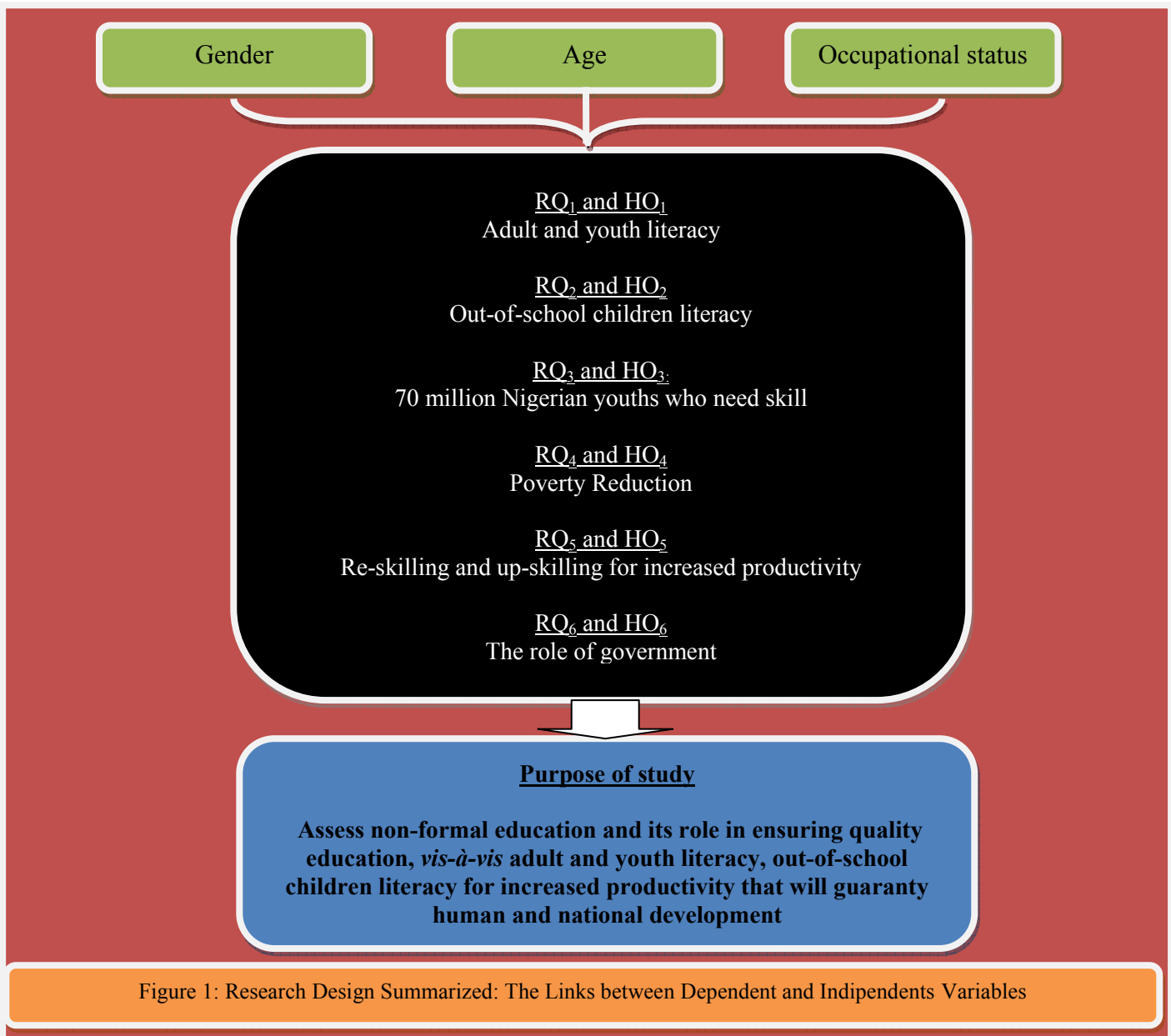


Figure 1: Research Design Summarized: The Links between Dependent and Independents Variables

Research Instrument (Questionnaire)

Data for this study was gathered using a questionnaire designed by the researchers on the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development. The survey was designed to reflect the principles of a good questionnaire as articulated by Nworgu (1991), Fowler (2008), Fink (2008) and Ololube et al. (2012a, b).

Participants from the three states in Nigeria's south-south geo-political zone responded to a two-section questionnaire that employed a six-point Likert-type scale. Section 'A' included questions pertaining to respondents' demographic information: gender, age, and occupational status. Section 'B' included questions about respondents' perception of the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development (see Table 1). In the answer scale, 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = partly disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = totally agree. Items in this rating scale were considered to be of approximately equal attitudinal value. Items in the questionnaire were triangulated to give better results.

Table 1: The Role and Importance of NFE to Human and National Development

Non-formal education and mass adult /youth literacy

- 1 Most families benefit from adult and youth literacy programmes
- 2 Most families believe in what adult/youth literacy offers
- 3 Most families enjoy communal interrelationships as a result of adult education or literacy programmes
- 4 Most individuals can read and write as a result of adult education or literacy programmes
- 5 Most disadvantaged adults and youth benefit from mass literacy programmes
- 6 Adult and youth literacy programmes have assisted in closing the literacy gender gap
- 7 Most of the problems of adult /youth literacy have been addressed
- 8 Literacy programmes have enlightened both adults and youths on the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy

- 9 NFE programmes provide functional education for out-of-school children
- 10 Through NFE programmes, out-of-school children can catch up to the learning levels of their peers
- 11 NFE programmes have qualified instructors/teachers
- 12 Out-of-school children are privileged by different education choices
- 13 Most out-of-school children can actually read and write
- 14 NFE programmes give out-of-school children a sense of belonging

Non-formal education and Nigerian adults/youths who require skill development

- 15 NFE provides functional literacy for adults/youths who require skill development
- 16 NFE provides functional and remedial education/skills for young people who did not complete school
- 17 NFE improves the knowledge and skills of those who complete such programmes
- 18 NFE provides both in-service and on-the-job training to improve skills
- 19 Those who have completed NFE skill programmes are useful to society
- 20 NFE motivates adult learners to develop an interest in acquiring skills

Non-formal education and poverty reduction

- 21 NFE equips participants with skills that enhance income generation
- 22 NFE helps to improve the self-reliance skills of participants
- 23 NFE skills development programmes reduce the burdens placed on family members
- 24 NFE helps participants to contribute meaningfully to society
- 25 NFE programmes reduce the poverty of participants
- 26 NFE programmes reduce unemployment of participants
- 27 NFE reduces poverty by developing other aspects of the individual

Non-formal education and the re-skilling and up-skilling of the population

- 28 NFE re-skills participants so as to be useful in society and thus enhances social inclusion
- 29 NFE up-skills the existing skills of participants and thus enhances productivity
- 30 NFE re-skilled participants are satisfied with the programmes
- 31 NFE up-skilled participants are satisfied with the programmes

The role of government and the quality of non-formal education

- 32 Government's inability to improve facilities in the NFE sector is a major problem
 - 33 Government's inability to properly fund the NFE sector is a major problem
 - 34 Government's inability to properly evaluate, monitor and control the quality of the NFE sector is a major problem
 - 35 Government's failure to enact laws that will make it compulsory for adults and youths who need skills to attend NFE programmes is a major problem
 - 36 The government has failed to seriously address problems in education so as to meet MDG goals in 2015
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Validity of Instrument

The items included in the questionnaire used for this study were drawn from both literature and the input of senior faculty colleagues. The instrument was pre-tested with 30 respondents outside the study sample. Their responses were used to improve on the items and to ensure that respondents would have no difficulty understanding the precise meaning of the constructs and grammar used. In the questionnaire, expressions were used in a fairly straightforward or commonsense manner. We believe that this commonsense use of expressions is consistent with the way they are generally used by other social science researchers and does not pose any serious philosophical problems (Ololube, 2009).

Data Analysis Procedure

A number of statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 18. These include descriptive statistics (percentages, mean point value, and standard deviation), and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). ANOVA was used to find statistically significant relationships between non-formal education and human and national development. The statistical significance of this study was set at $p < 0.05$ to measure if the level of confidence observed in the sample also existed in the general population (Ololube, 2006; Kpolovie, 2010, 2011).

The reliability of the questionnaire was statistically evaluated to determine if respondents may have answered the questions randomly or to give certain perceptions to researchers because of their disinterest in or hostility to the subject of the study. The instrument was quantitatively analysed and received a cumulative Cronbach alpha coefficient of .813 (see Table 2). The research instrument was thus accepted as very reliable as it was able to extract the required information and certified the reliability or repeatability of what the researchers set out to measure (Ololube, 2009; Kpolovie, 2011). This reliability test was used to determine the percentages of variance in the distribution of scores obtained from test that can be attributed to the true scores, and to determine the standard error of measurement in the full range of scores (Cronbach et al. 1972; Render, Stair & Hannan, 2005; Kpolovie, 2010, 2011). The internal consistency of group dimensions was assessed by estimating scale reliabilities and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (see Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Analysis for Each of the Six Group Dimensions of the Dependent Variables of the Questionnaire

	<i>Dimensions (Variables)</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha for group variables</i>
1	Non-formal education and mass adult /youth literacy	8	.887
2	Non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy	6	.834
3	Non-formal education and Nigerian adults and youths who require skill development	6	.856
4	Non-formal education and poverty reduction	7	.825
5	Non-formal education and the re-skilling and up-skilling of the population	4	.832
6	The role of government and the quality of non-formal education	5	.649
	Cronbach's Alpha (Cummulative)	36	.813

RESULTS

The first set of data analyses that were conducted included descriptive statistics: frequency [N], percentage, mean and standard deviation. Data from section 'A' of the questionnaire yielded information about respondents' demographic information. The analysis revealed that the majority 756 (50.4%) of the respondents were male, while the only slightly smaller minority were female (745 or 49.6%). In terms of the age of respondents, the majority (652 or 43.4%) were aged 20-30 years, 595 (39.6%) were aged 31-40 years, and 254 (16.9%) were older than 41. With regards to occupational status, the analysis revealed that 993 (66.2%) were professionals, 398 (26.5%) were non-professionals, and 110 (7.3%) were unemployed (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Information

	Demographic Information	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	Male	756	50.4	3.0291	1.22088
	Female	745	49.6	3.1195	1.14322
Age	20-30 years	652	43.4	3.2209	1.29289
	31-40 years	595	39.6	2.8471	1.07707
	Oldrer than 41 years	254	16.9	3.2283	1.03831
Occupational Status	Professional	993	66.2	3.1178	1.23181
	Non-Professional	398	26.5	2.8945	1.05464
	Unemployed	110	7.3	3.3273	1.10137

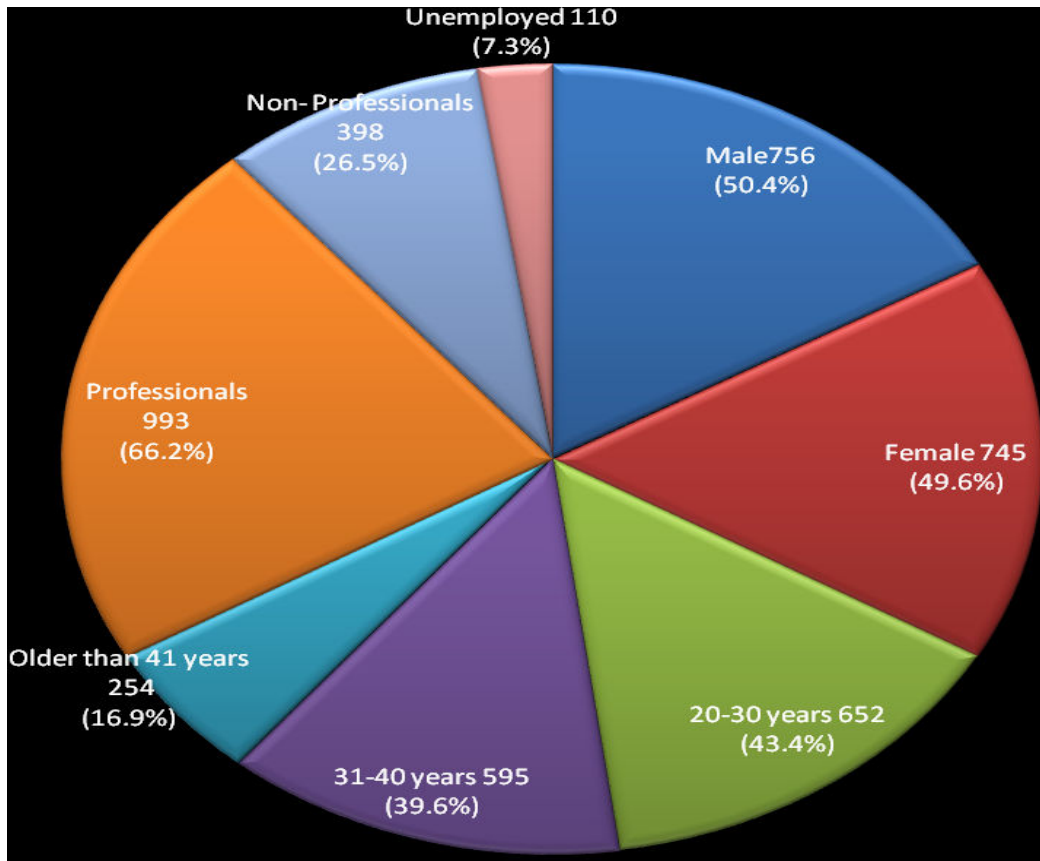


Figure 2: Pie Chart Representation of Respendents Demographic Information

Assessment of the Role and Importance of Non-formal Education to Human and National Development in Nigeria (Research Question 1-6)

The second assessment of the data for this study began with an analysis of respondents' answers using mean and standard deviation. These help to explain what respondents saw as the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development in Nigeria. Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents agreed that non-formal education

plays an effective role in, and is important to, both human and national development. An overwhelming number of respondents felt that non-formal education was highly beneficial to human and national development. Most respondents believed that non-formal education is effective in terms of adult and youth literacy (items 1-8) and out-of-school children's literacy (items 9-14). They are of the opinion that non-formal education will help the more than 70 million Nigerian youth who need new skills to enhance their social development (items 15-20). Respondents also agreed that non-formal education is essential in attempts to reduce poverty (items 21-27). They also believed it to be an effective means up re-skilling and up-skilling the population for increased productivity (items 28-31). While the majority of the respondents believed that government's inability to properly fund NFE (to enhance facilities in the non-formal education centres) was cause for concern, they saw its inability to effectively evaluate, monitor and control the quality of NFE centres as a major problem. The failure of government to enact laws that will make it compulsory for adults in need of new skills to attend NFE programmes is seen as a major setback, as is its failure to address education-related problems so as to meet the MDG goals by 2015 (items 32-36).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics (mean and standard deviation) of Dependents Variables

Variables		Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-formal Education and Mass Adult and Youth Literacy			
Item 1	Most families benefit from adult and youth literacy programmes	3.0740	1.18344
Item 2	Most families believe in what adult/youth literacy offers	3.1099	.88501
Item 3	Most families enjoy communal interrelationships as a result of adult education or literacy programmes	3.1159	.89957
Item 4	Most individuals can read and write as a result of adult education or literacy programmes	3.0946	.88716
Item 5	Most disadvantaged adults and youth benefit from mass literacy programmes	3.8015	.39903
Item 6	Adult and youth literacy programmes have assisted in closing the literacy gender gap	3.1452	1.19285
Item 7	Most of the problems of adult /youth literacy have been addressed	3.0740	1.47892
Item 8	Literacy programmes have enlightened both adults and youths on the HIV/AIDS pandemic	3.1779	1.35388
Non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy			
Item 9	NFE programmes provide functional education for out-of-school children	3.0413	.58392
Item 10	Through NFE programmes, out-of-school children can catch up to the learning levels of their peers	3.8015	.50520
Item 11	NFE programmes have qualified instructors/teachers	3.2998	1.03508
Item 12	Out-of-school children are privileged by different education choices	3.3984	.59316
Item 13	Most out-of-school children can actually read and write	4.0127	.73971
Item 14	NFE programmes give out-of-school children a sense of belonging	3.3704	.57853
Non-formal Education and Nigerian Adults and Youths who Require Skill Development			
Item 15	NFE provides functional literacy for adults/youths who require skill development	3.3538	.47830
Item 16	NFE provides functional and remedial education/skills for young people who did not complete school	3.0280	.40400
Item 17	NFE improves the knowledge and skills of those who complete such programmes	3.5683	1.55783
Item 18	NFE provides both in-service and on-the-job training to improve skills	3.2918	.95575
Item 19	Those who have completed NFE skill programmes are useful to society	3.2478	.43190
Item 20	NFE motivates adult learners to develop an interest in acquiring skills	3.7042	.45655
Non-formal Education and Poverty Reduction			
Item 21	NFE equips participants with skills that enhance income generation	3.1626	.92964
Item 22	NFE helps to improve the self-reliance skills of participants	3.1372	.85078
Item 23	NFE skills development programmes reduce the burdens placed on family members	3.4124	.49243
Item 24	NFE helps participants to contribute meaningfully to society	3.6522	.47642
Item 25	NFE programmes reduce the poverty of participants	3.2918	.55749
Item 26	NFE programmes reduce unemployment of participants	3.0919	.43306
Item 27	NFE reduces poverty by developing other aspects of the individual	3.7602	.42713
Non-formal Education and the Re-skilling and Up-skilling of the Population			
Item 28	NFE re-skills participants so as to be useful in society and thus enhances social inclusion	3.6562	.47512
Item 29	NFE up-skills the existing skills of participants and thus enhances productivity	3.1439	.47674
Item 30	NFE re-skilled participants are satisfied with the programmes	3.4284	.73100
Item 31	NFE up-skilled participants are satisfied with the programmes	3.0779	.78820
The Role of Government and the Quality of Non-formal Education			

Item 32	Government's inability to improve facilities in the NFE sector is a major problem	4.2532	.95492
Item 33	Government's inability to properly fund the NFE sector is a major problem	3.8241	1.52437
Item 34	Government's inability to properly evaluate, monitor and control the quality of the NFE sector is a major problem	3.8734	.81074
Item 35	Government's failure to enact laws that will make it compulsory for adults and youths who need skills to attend NFE programmes is a major problem	4.1399	1.40632
Item 36	The government has failed to seriously address problems in education so as to meet MDG goals in 2015	4.1366	1.31174

Exploring the Relationship between the Role of Non-formal Education and Human and National Development.

To further verify our data, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to test if significant relationships existed in respondents replies to the variables and their perception of the role of non-formal education in human and national development. In analysis of variance, the observed variability in the sample is divided into two parts: variability of the observations within-groups mean and the variability of observation between-groups mean. These two estimates differ in a very important way: the between-groups variance will be correct only if the null hypothesis is true. If the null hypothesis is false, the between-groups estimates of variance will be too large. The within-group estimates of variability do not depend on the null hypothesis being true (Marija, 1997, pp. 284-285). We also assessed how much the observed sample means vary by comparing the between-group estimates and the within-group estimates of variability. Moreover, since the null hypothesis is true, one expects the ratio of the between-groups mean square to within-groups mean square to be close to 1, given that they are both estimates of the population variance (Ololube, 2006).

Hypothesis 1 states that "There is no significant relationship between non-formal education, in the form of adult and youth literacy, and human and national development." The results from analysis of variance (see Table 5) show that significant relationships were found in the group dimensions (items 1-8) on non-formal education and mass adult and youth literacy. The majority of respondents agreed that most families benefited from adult and youth literacy programmes at ($F = 7.851, p < .000$), and most families believe in what adult/youth literacy offers ($F = 7.899, p < .000$). In addition, the result revealed that most families enjoy communal interrelationships as a result of adult education programmes ($F = 81.407, p < .000$). Importantly, the perception of respondents was that most individuals can read and write because of adult education or literacy programmes ($F = 13.379, p < .000$). Respondents believed that most disadvantaged adults and youth benefit from mass literacy programmes ($F = 20.533, p < .000$) and that adult and youth literacy programmes have assisted in closing the literacy gender gap ($F = 6.474, p < .002$). Respondents also felt that most of the problems of adult /youth literacy have in fact been addressed through NFE ($F = 8.265, p < .000$). The analysis revealed that literacy programmes have enlightened both adults and youth on the HIV/AIDS pandemic ($F = 4.879, p < .015$).

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of Non-formal Education and Mass Adult and Youth Literacy

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Item 1	Between Groups	21.791	2	10.895	7.851	.000
	Within Groups	2079.001	1498	1.388		
	Total	2100.791	1500			
Item 2	Between Groups	12.261	2	6.131	7.899	.000
	Within Groups	1162.601	1498	.776		
	Total	1174.862	1500			
Item 3	Between Groups	118.995	2	59.497	81.407	.000
	Within Groups	1094.835	1498	.731		
	Total	1213.829	1500			
Item 4	Between Groups	20.718	2	10.359	13.379	.000
	Within Groups	1159.849	1498	.774		
	Total	1180.566	1500			
Item 5	Between Groups	6.373	2	3.186	20.533	.000
	Within Groups	232.464	1498	.155		
	Total	238.837	1500			
Item 6	Between Groups	18.289	2	9.144	6.474	.002

	Within Groups	2116.050	1498	1.413		
	Total	2134.338	1500			
Item 7	Between Groups	35.808	2	17.904	8.265	.000
	Within Groups	3244.983	1498	2.166		
	Total	3280.791	1500			
Item 8	Between Groups	6.881	2	3.441	4.879	.015
	Within Groups	2742.625	1498	1.831		
	Total	2749.506	1500			

Hypothesis 2 was aimed at determining if a significant relationship exists between non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy. The null hypothesis states, "There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy." The outcome of the analysis of variance on items 9-14 revealed significant relationship between non-formal education and out-of-school children's literacy. Respondents were of the view that NFE programmes provide functional education for out-of-school children ($F = 147.269, p < .000$). They opined that through NFE programmes, out-of-school children can catch up to the learning levels of their peers ($F = 200.741, p < .000$). They felt that NFE programmes have qualified instructors/teachers ($F = 4.206, p < .010$) and that out-of-school children are privileged with a number of different education choices ($F = 10.610, p < .000$). They also felt that most out-of-school children can actually read and write because of NFE ($F = 5.480, p < .004$) and that NFE programmes give out-of-school children a sense of belonging ($F = 3.301, p < .037$). See Table 6 for detail.

Table 6: ANOVA Analysis of Non-formal Education and Out-of-School Children's Literacy

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
item9	Between Groups	84.036	2	42.018	147.269	.000
	Within Groups	427.403	1498	.285		
	Total	511.439	1500			
item10	Between Groups	80.918	2	40.459	200.741	.000
	Within Groups	301.919	1498	.202		
	Total	382.837	1500			
item11	Between Groups	4.719	2	2.359	4.206	.010
	Within Groups	1602.371	1498	1.070		
	Total	1607.090	1500			
item12	Between Groups	7.371	2	3.686	10.610	.000
	Within Groups	520.385	1498	.347		
	Total	527.756	1500			
item13	Between Groups	5.961	2	2.981	5.480	.004
	Within Groups	814.798	1498	.544		
	Total	820.759	1500			
item14	Between Groups	2.203	2	1.102	3.301	.037
	Within Groups	499.843	1498	.334		
	Total	502.047	1500			

Hypothesis 3 pertains to whether or not a significant relationship exists between non-formal education and the more than 70 million Nigerian youth who need skills to enhance their social development. The null hypothesis states "There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and the more than 70 million Nigerian youths who need skills to enhance their social development." The results for items 15-20 show that a significant relationship exists between the services provided by NFE and the skills acquisition and social development of Nigerian youth (see Table 7). The opinions of respondents were that NFE provides functional literacy for adults/youths who require skill development ($F = 87.432, p < .000$), that NFE provides functional and remedial education/skills for young people who did not complete school ($F = 3.510, p < .030$), that NFE improves the knowledge and skills of those who complete such programmes ($F = 41.544, p < .000$), that NFE provides both in-service and on-the-job training to improve skills ($F = 4.961, p < .016$), that those who

complete NFE skill programmes are useful to society ($F = 3.016, p .028$), and that NFE motivates adult learners to develop an interest in acquiring new skills ($F = 3.256, p .026$).

Table 7: ANOVA Analysis of Non-formal Education and Nigerian Adults and Youths who Require Skill for Development

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
item15	Between Groups	35.869	2	17.935	87.432	.000
	Within Groups	307.282	1498	.205		
	Total	343.151	1500			
item16	Between Groups	1.142	2	.571	3.510	.030
	Within Groups	243.683	1498	.163		
	Total	244.825	1500			
item17	Between Groups	191.299	2	95.649	41.544	.000
	Within Groups	3448.952	1498	2.302		
	Total	3640.250	1500			
item18	Between Groups	3.579	2	1.789	4.961	.016
	Within Groups	1366.610	1498	.912		
	Total	1370.189	1500			
item19	Between Groups	.379	2	.190	3.016	.028
	Within Groups	279.426	1498	.187		
	Total	279.805	1500			
item20	Between Groups	.523	2	.262	3.256	.026
	Within Groups	312.140	1498	.208		
	Total	312.664	1500			

Hypothesis 4 sought to determine if a significant relationship exists between non-formal education and the reduction of poverty (see Table 8). The hypothesis used to test this states, “There is no significant relationship between non-formal education and the reduction of poverty.” The outcome from the analysis of variance for items 21-27 shows that a significant relationship exists between all the variables tested at $p < .000$, apart from item 22, which is significant at a value of $p < .027$.

Table 8: ANOVA Analysis of Non-formal Education and Poverty Reduction

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
item21	Between Groups	5.000	2	2.500	13.900	.000
	Within Groups	1291.336	1498	.862		
	Total	1296.336	1500			
item22	Between Groups	5.204	2	2.602	3.607	.027
	Within Groups	1080.524	1498	.721		
	Total	1085.728	1500			
item23	Between Groups	34.594	2	17.297	78.724	.000
	Within Groups	329.136	1498	.220		
	Total	363.730	1500			
item24	Between Groups	72.869	2	36.435	203.960	.000
	Within Groups	267.596	1498	.179		
	Total	340.465	1500			
item25	Between Groups	7.615	2	3.807	12.437	.000
	Within Groups	458.574	1498	.306		
	Total	466.189	1500			
item26	Between Groups	3.822	2	1.911	10.317	.000
	Within Groups	277.490	1498	.185		
	Total	281.312	1500			
item27	Between Groups	8.004	2	4.002	22.568	.000
	Within Groups	265.653	1498	.177		
	Total	273.658	1500			

An analysis was carried out on items 28-31 to test Hypothesis 5: whether or not there was a significant relationship between non-formal education and re-skilling/up-skilling members of the population for increased productivity. The analysis revealed that a significant relationship does exist (see Table 9). Respondents felt that NFE re-skilled participants so as to be useful in society and thus enhance social inclusion ($F = 3.823, p < .040$), and up-skilled the existing skills of participants and thus enhanced productivity ($F = 14.026, p < .000$). Additionally, they opined that NFE re-skilled ($F = 6.069, p < .002$) and up-skilled ($F = 13.723, p < .000$) participants are satisfied with the programmes.

Table 9: ANOVA Analysis of Non-formal Education and the Re-skilling and Up-skilling of the Population

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Item 28	Between Groups	1.271	2	.636	3.823	.040
	Within Groups	337.343	1498	.225		
	Total	338.614	1500			
Item 29	Between Groups	6.267	2	3.133	14.026	.000
	Within Groups	334.650	1498	.223		
	Total	340.917	1500			
Item 30	Between Groups	6.443	2	3.221	6.069	.002
	Within Groups	795.108	1498	.531		
	Total	801.551	1500			
Item 31	Between Groups	16.767	2	8.383	13.723	.000
	Within Groups	915.113	1498	.611		
	Total	931.880	1500			

Finally, *Hypothesis 6* was tested determined to ascertain if a significant relationship exists between the role of government and the quality of non-formal education (see Table 10). The sixth hypothesis states that “There is no significant relationship between the role of government and the quality of non-formal education.” The analysis performed on items 32-36 of the questionnaire revealed that a significant relationship exists and that the Nigerian government’s inability to improve facilities in the NFE sector is a major problem ($F = 6.376, p < .002$), and is the result of government’s failure to properly fund NFE ($F = 4.464, p < .012$). In addition, the respondents’ agreed that the government’s inability to properly evaluate, monitor and control the quality of the NFE sector is a major problem and hindrance to the proper functioning of the NFE sector ($F = 7.291, p < .001$). The Nigerian government’s failure to enact laws that make it compulsory for adults and youths who need skills to attend NFE programmes was likewise identified as a major problem ($F = 11.780, p < .000$), as was the government’s failure to seriously address problems in education so as to meet MDG goals in 2015 ($F = 2.858, p < .048$).

Table 10: ANOVA Analysis of the Role of Government and the Quality of Non-formal Education

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
item32	Between Groups	11.545	2	5.772	6.376	.002
	Within Groups	1356.253	1498	.905		
	Total	1367.797	1500			
item33	Between Groups	20.651	2	10.326	4.464	.012
	Within Groups	3464.916	1498	2.313		
	Total	3485.567	1500			
item34	Between Groups	.383	2	.191	7.291	.001
	Within Groups	985.567	1498	.658		
	Total	985.949	1500			
item35	Between Groups	7.035	2	3.518	11.780	.000
	Within Groups	2959.584	1498	1.976		
	Total	2966.620	1500			
item36	Between Groups	9.812	2	4.906	2.858	.048
	Within Groups	2571.190	1498	1.716		
	Total	2581.002	1500			

DISCUSSION

This study assessed the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development. The study showed that respondents have the potential to evaluate NFE and recognize the importance of participating in NFE programmes. The study supports the fact that NFE is relevant to human and national development and that participant and professional input is a significant step towards constructively improving the quality and role of non-formal education so as to propel economic growth and reduce poverty.

According to the findings in this study some of the benefits of adult literacy or education programmes include: general benefits to families, better family communal relationships, individuals being able to better navigate the world around them after having learned to read and write, disadvantaged adults and youth being able to overcome earlier inequities in access to education, a closing of the literacy gender gap and the ability of these programmes to educate and inform adults and youth about the HIV/AIDS epidemic and best practices for personal protection. This is in line with UNESCO's (c.f., 2010) findings that non-formal education ensures equal access to education, eradicates illiteracy among women, improves women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education, encourages the development of non-discriminatory education and training practices, and promotes life-long education and training for girls and women.

In evaluating respondents' perceptions on non-formal education as it pertains to out-of-school children's literacy, this study revealed a significant relationship between the aforementioned variables. Depending on the national context, NFE programmes teach basic literacy to out-of-school children, help out-of-school children to be able to read and write, and provide them with other skills necessary for their development (UNESCO, 2006a). Questions in this study on this subject pertained to the provision of functional education for out-of-school children, the potential of their catching up to the learning levels of their peers, the qualification of instructors/teachers, out-of-school children being privileged by different education choices, and giving out-of-school children a sense of belonging (**RQ 2 and HO₂**).

In order to assess NFE and Nigerian adults and youths who require skill development, this study's questionnaire dealt with a number of facets and potential benefits of NFE: imparting functional literacy to adults/youths who require skill development; imparting functional and remedial education/skills to youth who did not complete school; improving the knowledge and skills of those who complete such programmes; providing both in-service and on-the-job training to improve skills; rendering those who have completed NFE skill programmes useful to society; and motivating adult learners to develop an interest in acquiring new skills (**RQ 3 and HO₃**). Adult literacy programmes have been found to motivate learners to develop an interest in acquiring reading and writing skills and help to form a positive attitude toward ICT and media use in a context of life-long learning. Literacy (traditional, ICT and media) helps a person to move around independently, understand his or her own personal documents and seek employment with large firms without fear (c.f., Openjuru, 2004).

This study assessed the role of non-formal education in poverty reduction (a facet of national development) through research question four and hypothesis four. This study has revealed a positive relationship between NFE and poverty reduction. In practical terms, NFE equips participants with skills that enhance income generation and improve self-reliance. NFE skills development programmes reduce burdens placed on family members, help participants to contribute meaningfully to the society, and reduce unemployment by developing the many aspects of the individual. Studies (c.f., Islam & Mia, 2007) have shown that there is a connection between literacy levels and per capita growth and ultimately a decrease in poverty.

The study also analyzed the extent to which respondents perceived a relationship between non-formal education and the re-skilling and up-skilling of the population (**RQ 5 and HO₅**). This section included questions pertaining to re-skilling and up-skilling participants so as to be useful to society, enhancing social inclusion, and the satisfaction of participants with the programmes. Results showed a positive relationship between NFE and re-skilling and up-skilling for national development. Adult literacy programmes have created opportunities for adult learners to acquire and apply the knowledge and skills that will propel their own economic development and that of their communities.

Finally, this study evaluated respondents' perception of the relationship between the role of government and the quality of non-formal education (**RQ 6 and HO₆**). Responses show that government's inability to improve facilities, poor funding, failure to properly evaluate, monitor and control the quality of NFE, failure to enact laws making it compulsory for adults and youths who need skills to attend NFE programmes, and failure to seriously address deficits in education so as to meet MDG goals in 2015 are major problems to the NFE sector. According to Wanjie (2011), the lack of clear

national policy framework to guide and regulate various players in the non-formal education sector is a major obstacle to goal achievement.

CONCLUSION

In conducting this study, there were a number of objectives, which the researchers sought to achieve. Foremost, they sought to assess the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development in Nigeria *vis-à-vis* what actually happens in practice in the NFE sector. The study was also aimed at enabling Nigerian education policy makers, administrators and management to identify ‘best practices’ and learn from what is obtainable in functioning educational systems around the world. Best practices encourage the use of common measures of improvement such as evaluations/assessment and feedback in order to produce a continuously more thorough and effective endeavour. This study is grounded in the functionalist conception of education and its affect on society in general (Ololube, 2006).

A far-reaching literature review was conducted as the basis for this study and for determining the components of sustainable excellence in non-formal education. The major findings from this study reveal a strong relationship between the basic programmes and functions of non-formal education and human and national development. To this end, we feel that the non-formal education best practices of other E-9 countries should be emulated by Nigeria. Along the same lines, respondents showed considerable positivity in their assessment of the ability of non-formal education to improve Nigeria’s development trajectory. In short, the data collected and its subsequent analysis showed:

- A significant relationship between non-formal education and adult and youth literacy.
- A significant relationship between non-formal education and out-of-school children’s literacy.
- A significant relationship between non-formal education and the more than 70 million Nigerian youth in need of skills to enhance social development.
- A significant relationship between non-formal education and the reduction of poverty.
- A significant relationship between non-formal education and re-skilling/up-skilling of members of the population for increased productivity.
- A significant relationship between the role of government and the quality of non-formal education.

The implication of the findings of this study suggest that non-formal education is indeed essential to national development

RECOMMENDATIONS/ THE WAY FORWARD

The authors of this academic exercise recommend the instantaneous revitalization of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC). Work towards this goal should be guided by the following:

- NFE programmes for the education of the nation’s masses must be viewed as a major responsibility of a specialized agency and must be adequately supported and promoted and vigorously advanced by policy makers in particular and governments in general.
- NFE programmes must enjoy parity with other education agencies.
- NFE programmes must be autonomous and secure in their borders, with clear organizational identity, constancy of budget and personnel, and decision-making authority similar to that enjoyed by similar agencies.

The future of mass literacy and adult and non-formal education in Nigeria are showing several trends with important implications.

The changing demographic profile of Nigeria’s population at 167 million (National Population Commission, 2011) requires commensurate and proactive measures to meet this challenge. For example, an average Nigerian newborn baby is estimated to live nearly 52.05 years. A male who is 49 today can expect to live to 60 years, while a female of 55.33 years is expected to live another 11 years (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2012). This means, for one, that many older people are expecting and will demand more education and employment opportunities. This emerging trend should not be left in the care of formal educational institutions alone if Nigeria as a nation wants to make great achievement in adult literacy programmes. The future of Nigeria, as deduced from this study, shows that Nigeria cannot

do without specialized agencies like NMEC, if it hopes to find the success that has been realized in with its use of a non-formal education project to transform its academic landscape through post-literacy and continuing education programmes.

In Nigeria, the gap between the rich and the poor has remained and will forever remain if adequate measures are not put in place to bridge this divide. The growing affluence of rich Nigerians in contrast with the declining purchasing power of the poor is exemplified in the illiteracy and unemployment that holds the potential for clashes of values and expectations. A potentially large task for near future may thus be to not only help with problems of skill training and illiteracy, but also with values clarification, communication, and the empowerment of people (Hiemstra, 2003) to reduce poverty and improve standards of living.

It was the researchers' desire, through this study, to contribute to shared knowledge through a comprehensive report regarding the role and importance of non-formal education to human and national development in Nigeria. The findings and recommendations from this investigation, if put into effect, will go a long way toward the standardization of non-formal education in Nigeria. At the same time, a lot of research has yet to be done. Similar studies on a broader scale that cover a greater number of states in the federation (Nigeria) should be conducted so as to offer an idea of what has been obtained in other states. We also recommend that further research be conducted using the research questions and hypotheses from this study; if possible the research design used in this investigation should be applied to verify if the results of this academic work are true or false.

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