



NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

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Introduction:

The demands of a developing nation have in the last few decades given us a new appreciation of non-formal ways of providing education for adults, youths and children who either have not had access to formal schooling or whose formal education has proved inadequate or irrelevant. In developing countries of the world, where a new urge towards development demands the participation of millions of uneducated adults, the existing formal institutions, are incapable of undertaking a task of such magnitude. Even in the so-called advanced countries, large sections of the population are beginning to query the monopoly of the school-based system to education, partly because they have not given them the skills they need to compete successfully in technologically oriented societies.

At the same time, a radical change is taking place in our understanding of what education needs to provide. Development itself has come to be recognized as far more than an extrapolation, or even an adaptation of the Western industrialized model. Development as we now understand it, is concerned with the whole person and the relationship of that person to his or her environment. The problems of development and their solutions are both interlocking and interdependent. Environmental issues, problems of energy consumption, hunger and production cannot be separated from issues of individual human development.

The thrust of the paper is an investigation into the role of Non-Formal Education in the development process of individuals and nations. To explore this, the critical actors

promoting non-formal education for whatever it is worth will be examined. The paper assumes that non-formal education is a precursor to development and that Governmental agencies in collaboration with inter-governmental agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO have significant roles to play. Hence, a section of the paper will discuss their contributions to Non-Formal alternatives. The paper will attempt at the outset a clarification of the key concept.

Non-Formal Education: Some Definitions

A review of extant literature shows that the following views expressed by scholars have some similarities in content, coverage, and purpose yet some differences exist in terms of details and local examples.

Adewale (2002:8) views Non-formal education as any organized, systematic educational activity carried out outside the framework of the formal system (ranging from individualized apprenticeship to nation wide literacy programme) to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adults as well as children. Coombs & Ahmed (1974:8) thus defines, non-formal education to include, for example, agricultural extension and farm training programmes, adult literacy programmes, occupational skill training given outside the formal system of education youth clubs with substantial education purposes, and various community programmes of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives and the like. Again, Okedara (1981:17-18) says:

Non-formal connotes “alternative to schooling”- hence the term “out-of-school education.” The rubric of Non-Formal Education covers

training and instruction outside the formal education system and ranges from individualized apprenticeships to nationwide literacy. It may be vocational, such as craft training centers in Nigeria, designed to provide employment opportunities for young school leavers and for other unemployed persons or the girls' vocational centers established in many African countries, which train girls in vocational skills and prepare young women for marriage and business. Non-formal Education may be political and social education, such as that carried on in citizenship and leadership centers (e.g. the Nigerian centers in Plateau State and Lagos State). It may be the large-scale programmes of rural animation in many French-speaking African countries; these are an attempt at developing rural communities from within.

Non-Formal education is nothing more or less than adult education as it is widely known and interpreted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development(OECD) countries. The sole difference is that non-formal education applies as much to the intellectual and personality development of the young as it does to adults. In other words, adult education is an integral part of non-formal education.

Justification For Non-Formal Education In The Development Process In The 21st Century

Since its inception, the United Nations (UN) has emphasized creating educated citizenry. Beginning in 1948, the right to education was articulated clearly in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It recognized education as an "indispensable means of unlocking and protecting other human rights by providing the scaffolding that is required to secure good health, liberty, security, economic well-being, and participation in social and political activity." (UN, 2002). When the right to education is guaranteed, people's access to and enjoyment of other democratic rights are enhanced (UN, 2002). Nonetheless, despite the great increase in school enrollments in developing countries over the last 40 years, 875 million adults are still illiterate, over 100 million children have no access to school, and countless youth and adults who attend school and other education programmes fall short of the required level to be considered literate in today's complex world (UN, 2002).

In 1990, the world's most influential global education initiative, Education for All (EFA), was given birth to so as to educate the illiterate populations of impoverished nations. In doing this, the UN specified that there exists a priority to promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies. Initiatives must ensure the participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development. In the context of UN policy discourse since the EFA conference in Jomtien (1990), The Dakar Framework for Action (1999), and the Decade for Literacy (2003), the possibility

of non-formal basic education in sub-Saharan Africa has been debated by global education actors, policymakers, and grassroots advocacy networks because these actors, not the central government, have the onus for implementation of non-formal initiatives.

Undoubtedly, globalization has introduced financial strains to poorer nations' already overextended educational budgets. First, structural adjustment policies have redirected many governments' funds toward building communication, transport and technological infrastructures in order to ramp up for world trade to increase outputs of goods and services, ostensibly making them more viable competitors in the world's markets. Yet, according to the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) educated citizenry are also necessary for development (Mutume, 2003). This premise holds appeal for global education initiatives because less developed nations must develop the human capital needed to improve the quality of life and compete in the global markets. However, a clash in paradigms has arisen when globalization has come at the expense of not only a nations' most needy (Klees, 2001), but also health and human services' expenditures of many African governments (Mutume, 2003).

Second, the North/South divide resulting in the polarization of wealth and labor has never been greater. For example, a study covering 107 developing countries, of which forty-one were categorized as 'least developed countries', found that between 1980 and 1990 there were significant falls for most 'developing countries' in gross domestic product, public expenditure and private consumption per head (Graham-Green, 1991).The latter

decreased in 81 per cent of the least developed countries and in 64 per cent of other developing countries. All of these have implications for non-formal education.

Given the fact that, in general, central governments have less money to spend on education combined with structural adjustment policies, which have diverted funds elsewhere, one has to conclude that foreign investment and aid will be essential to expand education initiatives in developing nations.

As the global and national discussions of education development slowly move away from the question of how to get more children into traditional classrooms towards how to enable more children (and adults) to achieve agreed upon learning outcomes, the face of educational initiatives has been remaking itself. For example, the Decade for Literacy -- spearheaded by UNESCO -- stressed that non-formal education must supplement formal schooling because non-formal education teaches life skills, reflects community values and emphasizes learning by doing. Non-formal education, according to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), provides an excellent means to reach girls in indigenous and disadvantaged groups and improve their quality of life.

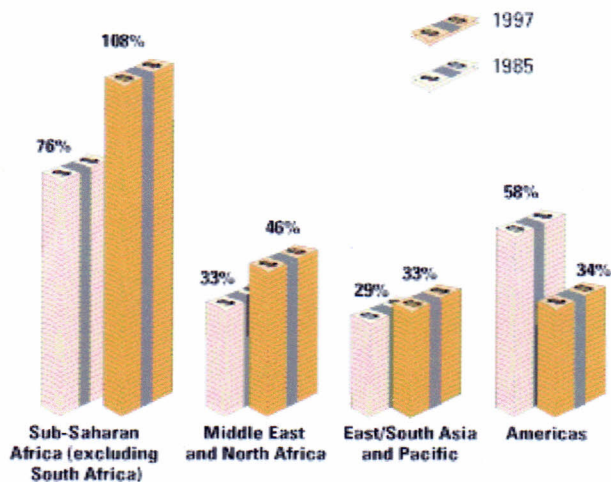
Not surprisingly, UNESCO (2003) has clearly articulated the growing need for project partnerships to fund non-formal initiatives because of inadequate national or local resources. Yet, in procuring funds elsewhere, many local projects have been burdened with managing numerous outside stakeholders. However, this partnership should not lead to a loss of regional autonomy, which borders on neo-colonialism.

OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION GOALS

Despite numerous discussions concerned with the *Non-Formal Education*, NFE agenda and goals, there exists little in-depth information detailing the actual experiences and sustained efforts of these initiatives in the non-formal education sector. Against the background of UN meetings and the demand for education in Africa, we are obligated as policy shapers and analysts to improve our research and our understanding of such programs, specifically as they impact the social development of local communities.

The United Nations (2000) reports that more than 2.8 billion people, close to half the world's population, live on less than the equivalent of \$2/day. More than 1.2 billion people, or about 20 per cent of the world population, live on less than the equivalent of \$1/day. South Asia has the largest number of poor people (522 million of whom live on less than the equivalent of \$1/day). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of people who are poor, with poverty affecting 46.3 per cent or close to half of the regions' population (United Nations Briefing). So poverty is an obstacle to education in general and NFE in particular.

Debt service (the amount of money paid in interest and other charges on loans) increased to claim a greater share of export earnings in 87 per cent of the least developed countries and in 84 per cent of the other developing countries during the 1980s. For a number of states in Latin America, and for some in Africa, difficulties in repaying international loans had already started in the 1970s, with the 1973 oil price rises bringing the first major shock to more fragile economies.



Sub-Saharan Africa: For every \$1 received in aid grants in 1999, the countries in the region paid back \$1.51 in debt service. They owe \$231 billion to creditors, that is \$406 for every man, woman and child in Africa. Sub-Saharan countries spend over twice as much on debt service as on basic health care. They spend 6.1 % of GNP on education and spent 5.0 % of GNP on debt service. If Africa's debt were cancelled it could almost double its spending on education. (from Jubilee 2000: The Eye of the Needle)

By inference, poverty (which is an inhibitor to non-formal education has identified earlier) is created by ex-colonialist so neo-colonialism is at work because it further impoverishes African countries

Acknowledging the Contribution of International Agencies to Development

Specific mention would be made in respect of UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF as international agencies who have wielded tremendous influence on the development of literacy education through various strategies. Amongst such strategies was the 1994-1996 FGN/UNDP mass literacy campaign in Nigeria. Under this collaboration, production and

procurement of literacy instructional materials were achieved, train the trainers' workshops were sponsored and payment of honoraria to supervisors, instructors, monitoring and evaluation teams were made. Above all, in this collaboration, literacy awareness was raised among the citizenry and therefore literacy rate was raised to an appreciable rate of 51% for men and about 43% for the female folks.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, UNESCO in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) came up with a programme tagged Education Sector Analysis. The scheme examines all the components of Education ranging from formal, ***non-formal*** cum informal education. A lot of resources, human and material were committed to this study. Every aspect of life of the citizenry has been touched, for example, UNICEF and polio eradication scheme, provision of portable water, facilitating instruction in health, nutrition and family planning in Sub-Saharan African. The veritable tool for reaching out to the citizenry is through Non-formal Education, NFE, which have been subscribed to by donor agencies.

Conclusion

Education is not politically neutral. It is an active supporter and faithful reflector of the status quo in society. If the status quo is predominantly unequal and unjust, and it is increasingly so, education will be increasingly unequal and unjust and there will be no place for non-formal education to improve the conditions of the poor. If, however, society is moving in an ***egalitarian*** direction, then non-formal education can and will flourish.

(Adiseshiah in Fordham 1980: 21)

From the foregoing, it is apparent that there is a need for truly collaborative efforts to achieve NFE goals in any nation. One that is attainable only via ongoing dialogue between policymakers, implementers, and grassroots organizations in which long-term local reforms are more equitably decided. A more holistic approach has the potential to create more than local, uniform and sustainable initiatives.

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