Misconstruing of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Contemporary Nigeria: The Challenges of the Mass Media

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ABSTRACT
This paper focused on addressing the challenges of adult and non-formal education practice in contemporary Nigerian society, through the elimination of misconstruing and better utilization of the mass media as sure way of proffering solutions to the subject matter under discussion. This is based on the fact that, the traditional heritage of adult and non-formal education have been outweighed by the educational content recognized in the National Policy on Education of 2004. Considering the globalization trend on the use of telecommunication gargets that has affected every discipline of learning, it has become very pertinent for adult and non-formal education to key into the technological changes as to erase the side effect of misconstruing amongst the populace in the society. This will go a long way in building personalities among the adult and non-formal education educators.

Keywords: Adult education, non-formal education, misconstrue, mass media, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION
Adult education and non-formal education in Nigeria are old in terms of concepts, form and practice. What is relatively new is its recognition as an academic discipline in schools, colleges/ universities. Despite the initial set back as an academic discipline the educational content of the programme has become relevant and generally acceptable. To this extent, the Federal Government enunciated the goals of adult and non-formal education in the national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004) to:

i. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education.
ii. Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
iii. Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
iv. Provide in-service, on the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills, and,
v. Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.
Considering the relevance of this aspect of education, the NPE further declares that the programme shall be provided free to all beneficiaries. The essence is to wipe out illiteracy in the country.

Going by these lofty objectives, adult and non-formal education is not limited to adults. It is for both. Secondly, the programme will help to remediate for the youth who have deficiency in their primary or secondary education. The programme target is to provide basic knowledge and skills particularly that of vocational for the purpose of self-reliance amongst others. Lofty as this may be, the practice of Adult and non-formal education have been bedeviled by the challenges of misconstruing and poor utilization of the media.

**The Concept/Purpose of Adult Education**

In Nigeria as in other countries of the world, an adult is a man or woman that has achieved full physical development; one who takes full responsibility for his action and conducts his life within the laws of the society. In the context of adult education, education is the cultivation of the human mind. It is learning done by mature people and can also be an out-of-school activity. Thus while school is terminal, education is interminable. On the strength of this, Adult Education is defined as a process of learning for persons who no longer attend school or those who never attended school. The basis is for the achievement of individual’s self-fulfillment needs.

In terms of operation, it is carried on outside the formal school setting. Thus it has out-of-school feature. It is also flexible because it is less institutionalized and less formalized. More particularly, it adopts and interdisciplinary nature. This type of education is therefore need-oriented and problem-solving and the programme is not only flexible but voluntary. As Hornby (2000) puts it, the purpose of Adult Education is “to catch up, keep up and to forge ahead”. In agreement with this assertion, Knowles (1982) clearly stated that the term Adult Education could be interchanged with ‘staff development’, continuing education, lifelong education, in-service education’, manpower education and development education”. Knowles therefore regards Adult Education as part of lifelong education.

On the strength of meaning and purpose of adult education, the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) also set out objectives for adult educators. The objectives include

1. Making the Nigerian citizens economically more efficient
2. Making the Nigerian citizens aware of their civic responsibilities to one another.
3. Making citizens have sense of responsibility and knowledge of how to adjust to home life, family and community relationship.
4. Insisting on fostering the objective of promoting good health and physical fitness of Nigerians.
5. Promoting cultural development and appreciation of Arts among Nigerians
6. Supplementing and broadening the educational background of citizens as a tool to walk out of poverty, and
7. To provide for the development of vocational interest.

These objectives underscore the value of adult education and non-formal education. Today, we are faced with the challenges of school leavers searching for white collar jobs instead of acquiring technical or apprenticeship skills; many young and old people who sit at home without meaningful involvement in the production sector of the economy, children in schools living extravagant life and the abandonment of our cultural values with hunger and starvation, needless to talk about the dwindling revenue of the Federal Government occasioned by the oil glut. In correcting this menace bedeviling the nation, the Adult Educators have failed to properly utilize the mass media apparatus.

**What then is Misconstruing?**

The term misconstrue means to have a wrong understanding and or to give a wrong interpretation of something or of somebody. This could be in words or actions. Hassan & Oyebamiji (2012) ascertain that in Nigeria, adult education is still being over shadowed by a common phenomenon of equating it with schooling of the young; that even in educational institutions and public agencies, adult education is misconstrued as education for the aged alone. Ezima (2004) adds that adult education is conceived as being synonymous with literacy education (reading, writing and numeracy). It is also regarded as a programme solely designed for the education of the old and aged adult illiterates.
Arising from this misnomer, adult education as a field of study has been adversely affected as discussed below:

i.) In most universities, parastatals and directorates, adult educators or specialists are not given the opportunity to serve as heads of the various departments.

ii.) Adult educators do not teach adult education courses especially when the department is domiciled in another umbrella department.

iii.) Adult educators are not employed in related organizations, for instance, National Orientation Agency.

iv.) Admission criteria is porous unlike other departments where certain subjects are made compulsory for the intakes. This widespread ignorance must be halted. It follows that more attention be paid to adult education to bring the subject back to life as a respected discipline. This requires high level of advertisement or sensitization to the public through the use of the Mass Media as a panacea. This must be done rigorously and perhaps promptly and aggressively.

**The concept of Mass Media**

Mass Media are multiple channels of communication which exist in the form of print (newspapers and other print materials) and electronic (Television, Radio etc.) media. There are many fundamental reasons why the mass media exist. More often than not, we hold unto the naive reason that the objective of the mass media is just the altruistic reason of informing, educating and entertaining. The fact is that the purpose of the mass media is both consummatory and instrumental.

Nzeneri (2002) defined Mass Media as “the technological services used or extended to share information and ideas with many people in many places”. He stressed that materials of mass media are regularly available on a large scale basis. Mass Media depend on the following principles:

i. Having a ‘Positive Communicator’ to accomplish more change by advocating a greater change.

ii. Stating conclusions in the messages is more effective in changing the opinion of the less intelligent members of the audience than the opinion of the more intelligent ones. This is an indication that the principal focus of adult education should be at the domain of the rural dwellers.

iii. Exhibition of good reputation.

iv. Ensuring to win over the audience on the major point.

That is, major points that need to improve the activities drawn from the scope and objectives of Adult education.

v. Use of persuasive speech containing sound evidence.

vi. Recipients of a communication should agree with the speaker or communicator.

vii. Come up with recent events, for remembrance.

viii. Arousing needs should be presented to the people

ix. Placing a message highly desirable to the recipient first

x. Message must be consistent, because subject matter is the chief determinant of the reader’s preference.

**Mass Media Strategies to be adopted**

i. Timeliness: it decides if the facts or events justify writing a news story for the media. It implies immediacy or nearness to present, as to avoid such event not to be a history or wild prediction. (Fredericks in Ojoko, 1994).

ii. Proximity. It determines nearest to the audience and point of publication. This is because nearness to the audience generally means greater audience interest, especially local stories.

iii. Policy is a medium’s attitude towards news worthy events. This is because mass media have editorial policies favouring ideas they feel are in the public interest (Ojoko, 1992).

The application of mass media is not out of place based on their effectiveness in the past. This is because it was used in the educational broadcast in Nigeria, for example in Ibadan 1957, Kaduna 1961 and Lagos 1965, as to upgrade instruction in primary, Secondary, Teacher Training and Universities. This is done to reach their scattered Youth and adult population and this calls for the effective use of the mass media in Adult and Non-formal education.
Need for Effective Utilization of Mass Media
The needs include:
i. To ensure self-evaluation of adult and non-formal education and feedback which will provide opportunities for improvement.
ii. To provide opportunities for remote adult educator’s families and others who have isolated themselves due to social economic or geographical factors. The use of Television and Radio can solve this problem. This is because many audience or groups view television and listen to Radio for hours.
iii. To attract the attention of the public to the activities of adult and non-formal education especially rural farmers, artisans and school leavers.
iv. To serve as mouth piece for the Government on issues that has to do with social change; e.g., Issue of Boko haram and militancy and other social vices through enlightenment campaigns.
v. To help strengthen education for change.
6. To serve as channel to foster a pluralist society that will accommodate large number of groups with diverse interest and
7. Motivating people, persuading public opinion, selling of ideas and proposals to the society.

CONCLUSION
The need to combat the challenges of Adult and non-formal education in the contemporary Nigerian society through the elimination of Misconstruing and better utilization of mass media is a welcome development. This will help the adult educators to reaffirm their level of individuality that would go a long way in developing new capacities in our social lives, especially our relationship with other members of the society. This process of reaffirmation will strengthen the publicizing of Adult and non-formal education programmes to the close doors of the participating members. Such publications on the need to attend conferences, meeting, seminar’s workshops, which are sometimes belated, requires wide publications and publicity to enable members acquaint themselves on the activities of the discipline.

Thus, it becomes imperative to say that the elimination of misconstruing and utilization of the mass media is a sure way to replace these indicators bedeviling the activities of Adult and non-formal education in the contemporary Nigerian society.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The following are recommendations made:
1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should fully implement the policies of adult and non-formal education for the benefit of her citizens.
2. Graduates of Adult Education should be given their rightful place of employment for the course to gain relevance
3. There should be effective mobilization of the tools of mass media in disseminating information on adult education programmes
4. Proper orientation should be given to the public as to actual programme participants of Adult Education and non-formal education.

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