

## **Non-Formal Education and Workplace: a Strategy for Higher Productivity Achievement in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The workplace in Nigeria faces new challenges and opportunities. As a matter of fact, the relationship between labour and management on industrial harmony is noted to be at low ebb for the lack of adequate skills and knowledge. Erroneously, it is believed that such skills and knowledge could only be offered the parties at workplaces through the means of conventional schooling system only. Therefore, the study investigated the application of the various non-formal education strategies for empowering the parties at workplaces towards high productivity. A 35-item questionnaire was drawn from 120 respondents randomly selected from the 5 units that formed the Petroleum Product Marketing Board (PPMB) at Ore Depot of NNPC. The instrument was validated using test-retest method. The coefficient of reliability was  $r=0.86$ . Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. The result revealed that non-formal education's strategies were appropriate and effective for workers at workplaces to acquire skills, training and knowledge towards quality human resources. There is the need for adequate funds for the non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.*

### **Background to the Study**

Non-formal education encompasses all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education, community education and workers education (Craltan, 1955; Kelly, 1970; Benavot, 2008). For the needed day-to-day knowledge and the ability to increase

the frontiers of knowledge, there is no way a man could achieve the optimum feat in this day-to-day pursuit of knowledge if he has to limit his experience on what he did achieve during his past activities within the four corners of a school. For the fact that many industrial workers joined the service with little or no education (Townsend & Coles; 1988; UNESCO, 2006; UNESCO, 2007)

In the course of this study, the extent to which the Non-formal education strategies such as constant workshops, seminars, on-the-job, career trainings and short-time trainings have been employed towards capacity building and acquisition of skills for workers at the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) at Ore Deport, Ore to be looked into. It was assumed that many of the NNPC's workers joined the service with little training and education; and that there was an assumption that many of them would not have flair for further studies through the formal schooling system. In this case, the workers with the little knowledge and skills would be needed to be provided with functional education in order to assist them towards high productivity. Hence, such workers require constant training through the means and strategies of non-formal education such as in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training so as to improve upon their skills. Omole (1999), quoting to Yoder (1958) and Allen and Silverzweig (1976), was of the view that most organizations needed training programmes to identify and correct the deficiencies of the products of the formal school system. Apart from such deficiencies, Omole and Yoder noted that workers trained through the higher institutions of learning such as University or Polytechnic might not be skillfully adequate to meet the ever-rising demands of organizations. Omole emphasized that in correcting such shortage, some companies embark on training programmes for their employees right there in the factory or company to meet their specific needs.

Supporting Omole (1999), Chatter (2007) was of the opinion that the adult workers at workplaces needed opportunities for various forms of technical and professional trainings in order to increase their productivity. In this view, Beach (1980) pointed out that non-formal education, if constantly undergo, would always assist in promoting industrial harmony at workplace. Chatters (2007) was of the opinion that non-formal education strategies were all embracing in training and educating not only workers but also the management at workplace

towards industrial harmony and higher productivity. As revealed by Beach (Beach, 1980), neither the management nor the union would in most cases take ill steps when they are constantly trained at their various workplaces. The management, for example, embarks on wrong actions such as lock-out action, those that are not only justifiable but also morally wrong at the detriment of productivity at workplace, for lack of constant training.

It is on this note that the study is based, to find out how the application of non-formal strategies such as training, career opportunity, on-the-job could be employed in providing equal access to educational opportunities for workers as citizens of the country (NPE, 2004, 1(5) (C)). Similarly, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1973 opined that:

*Non-formal education is the only tool that can guarantee equal educational opportunity for the citizenry. It shows well that the education, if properly managed will bring oriented result in any nation's educational policies because of its flexible choices and training facilities, maximum self-development and fulfillment (pg.24).*

Buttressing further the advantages of the non-formal education, the Exeter paper of Liverright and Haygood (1968) in Omolewa (1981) submitted that non-formal education/adult education:

*is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis (unless special full time), undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, acquisition of new skills, changes of appreciation and attitude for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems (pg.53).*

The above signifies that non-formal education methods of giving knowledge and training are much needed tools towards the growth and sustainability of industries in Nigeria. Furthermore, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), Section 6 (32) (iv), states one of the responsibilities of non-formal education as to:

*provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.*

The section 6 (35)(iv) further revealed that non-formal education has a special objective of “*training the required manpower for the state agencies*”. The section 6 (35)(iv) could be simplified as referring to the issue of capacity development both at government and private levels, which could only be attained by making use of the means of non-formal education strategies towards the improvement of teeming workers by any nation.

In a similar vein, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999:12) states that:

*Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate education opportunity at all levels.*

The policy interpretation of the above section does not refer to the conventional system of schooling as the only means of ensuring the “*equal and adequate educational opportunity*”. On this note, the application of non-formal strategies in response to Nigeria’s needs and priorities especially at the level of workplace development could be achieved by using non-formal strategies/programmes. As suggested by the UNESCO’s mandate to developing countries towards their workplaces development, the organization lays emphasis on:

- educating and training workers constantly towards building learning workplace community;
- training workers to develop competency for quality human resources for adults;
- strengthening institutional capacity for ownership and sustainability; and
- encouraging advocacy, development, coordination and mobilization towards sustainable development and productivity at workplace.

All told, the four points above could be easily attained at workplaces through the application of non-formal education strategies bearing in

mind the cost effective aspect of non-formal education while comparing to the formal education system.

**Statement of the Problem**

The UNESCO (2006) points to the fact that education has a role to play in the concept of the development such as receiving training and knowledge in schools, workplaces and private organizations. Benavot (2008) was of the opinion that to move forward at workplaces, the reach non-formal education, which involves less spending unlike the formal schooling system, needed to be employed for the successive socio-economic development in any country. Since the conventional schooling system could not hold 'all', for the lack of facilities – human and materials, therefore arrangements are needed in the course of building learning workplace; strengthening institutional capacity for ownership and sustainability; and ensuring advocacy towards workplaces' harmony. However, knowledge and training being obtained at formal school system could not be adequate for the needed human and material resources. It is on this note that other avenues such as non-formal means are needed for the necessary reinforcement.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study sets out to ascertain the extent to which the application of non-formal strategy could lead to higher productivity achievements in Nigeria. Precisely, the study was focused on the application of non-formal education strategies such as in-service training, careers' training, workshops and on-the-job as methods of training and re-training of the NNPC's workers towards industrial harmony and productivity achievements.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

- i. Could the non-formal programmes (strategies) be used to develop workers education workplaces?
- ii. Could the non-formal strategies be used to train workers towards skill acquisitions?
- iii. Could the non-formal education appropriate for achieving worker's and labour education towards industrial harmony at workplaces?

**Research Methodology**

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised the employees of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC).

The respondents were workers that had already put in five years and above. They were selected from the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), that is, from the Company's Petroleum Product Marketing Board (PPMB). One hundred and twenty PPMB's workers were randomly selected in the five units that formed the Board at Ore Depot. Among the 120 respondents, the information gathered through the questionnaire items revealed that 18 were degree and post degree holders, 36 respondents were HND and OND equivalent, others were school certificate holders and equivalent but with outstanding experience. The random selection was however purposeful in the sense that the questionnaire were administered on those respondents who had already put in five years and above; and that they had also undergone certain numbers of trainings as workers.

Questionnaire and interview were the main instruments. The researcher personally developed A-35 items questionnaire. It consisted of 3 sections. Section A consisted 10 items on sex, age, marital status, academic qualification, designation, year of experience, number of training and education received through non-formal arrangements. Section B consisted 25 items to ascertain the extent to which the non-formal strategies' application in training the workers in the organization (depot) has contributed towards higher productivity in the areas of the building learning workplace community, competence for quality human resources and strengthening workplace capacity for ownership, and sustainability (as suggested by the UNESCO's (2007).

The respondents were requested to rate their interest on the application of non-formal education strategies towards the achievement of industrial harmony by using a 2 points scale; that is Agreed and Disagreed. The instrument was validated using test-retest method. The result gave reliability co-efficient  $r=0.86$ . Simple Descriptive Analysis (Percentage) was used to interpret the data.

### Analysis, findings and discussions of findings

This section is discussed under the research questions.

**Research Q<sub>1</sub>:** Could the non-formal programmes (Strategies) be used to improve education at workplaces?

**Table 1: Percentage Rating of Respondents on Non-formal Strategies (NFS) of Effectiveness to Improve Education, at Workplace**

N=120

	Items	NFS Effective		NFS Non-Effective	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
1.	Using non-formal strategies to impart knowledge	68	56.7	52	43.3
2.	Workers preferred non-formal strategies to earn knowledge (cognitive) rather than going for conventional studies.	48	40.0	72	60.0

*NFS: Non-Formal Strategies*

Analysis of Table 1 reveals how effective the application of non-formal strategies towards educating the workers in the industry - the NNPC. However, the workers preferred conventional studies for earning more academic qualifications to only non-formal strategies, which may not lead to additional paper qualification. The result of the Key Informant Interview KII revealed that the majority of workers preferred to go on study leave but the organization would not in most cases dispose to this. Hence, the result, in Table 1, revealed 60% in favour of the preference for conventional studies by the workers to get cognitive knowledge.

**Research Q<sub>2</sub>:** Could the non-formal strategies be used to train workers towards skills acquisition?



**Table 2: Percentage Rating of Respondents on Non-formal Strategies (NFS) on Effectiveness towards Skills Acquisition**

**N=120**

	Items	NFS Effective		NFS Non-Effective	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
1.	Using non-formal strategies to train workers towards higher productivity	73	62.5	47	39.1
2.	Using non-formal strategies for developing competence for quality human resources	66	55.0	54	45.0

*NFS: Non-Formal Strategies*

Analysis of Table 2 reveals how effective the application of non-formal education strategies of on-the-job, in-service, careers' training, seminars, workshops, career training and symposia could be used to train workers (both union and management members) towards manpower development (competence and skills) at workplaces in Nigeria instead of the workers leaving their job for full time conventional schooling system. The result therefore shows that non-formal education could be acceptable in imparting technical know-how and training towards skills acquisition of the workers, and for competence for quality human at resources with 62.5% and 55% for the two areas respectively.

**Research Q<sub>3</sub>:** Could the non-formal strategies be appropriate for achieving workers and labour education towards industrial harmony at workplaces?

**Table 3: Percentage Rating of Respondents on Non-formal Strategies (NFS) on Effectiveness towards Achieving Harmony**

	Items Summary	NFS Effective		NFS Non-Effective	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
a.	Building learning workplace community	62	51.6	58	48.3
b.	Using non-formal strategies to train workers on managing industrial conflicts	68	56.7	52	43.3
c.	Strengthening institutional capacity for ownership and industrial democracy	48	40	72	60
d.	Developing and improving non-formal strategies as mechanism for resolving and managing conflicts at workplace	38	31.7	82	68.3

*NFS: Non-Formal Strategies*

Table 3 reveals that the building learning workplace community' which is similar to 'Industrial harmony' could be achieved through non-formal strategies. This agrees to the finding of Beach (1980) and Omole (1999). Also, the table reveals that non-formal strategies/programmes could be effectively employed towards the attainment and management of industrial conflicts. This therefore corroborates the findings of Townsend and Coles (1988), Kelly (1970) and Benavot (2008) that non-formal education is a reach education towards harmony at workplaces. However, the respondents' responses revealed that non-formal strategies could not be effective towards the attainment of the

strengthening institutional capacity for ownership. Key Information Interview (KII) carried out with some of the top management in the organization revealed that the issues of institutional capacity and ownership matters are those areas that are being determined by the government regulations and labour laws, and not through mere training of the workers at workplaces.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has provided that non-formal education is a tool towards development training and improving harmony at workplaces. Precisely, non-formal education's strategies such as workshops, seminars, careers' training and workshops are good alternative to giving skills and education to teeming industrial workers in Nigeria. In this vein, it is deemed pertinent to recommend the following among others:

- Adequate funds should be made available for non-formal education in Nigeria.
- There is the need for an overhaul of the strategies, organization and administration of non-formal education in Nigeria.
- There should be public enlightenment for workers at workplaces to appreciate the worth of non-formal education towards accelerated and sustainable development of the social, political and economic growth of our industries in Nigeria.
- There is the need for the Nigerian government to employ the service of the United Nations' Technical Committee in facilitating the workability of some industrial training mandate, especially in the areas of developing capacity for ownership and advocacy, industrial conflict management and technical know-how towards higher productivity at various levels of workplace in Nigeria.

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