



IMPROVING THE SYNERGY BETWEEN INFORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The interplay between informal and formal education in our society cannot be undermined as both play prominent roles in producing a complete person that is generally accepted in the society that can adequately contribute meaningful to the society and nations economic development. At the early life stage of a child, he starts to learn the ideals, customs, norms and values of his community and society through the support of his parents and other elders around him, that is why some academic scholars have agreed that education is the of transmission of values, cultures, norms and associated societal knowledge of certain group of people from generation to generation. Naturally, societies present to its people some inherent cultures, norms, values that need to be sustained through individual involvement in adherence and obedience to these societal demands, by doing so they internalize it and become well accepted as loyal citizens of the society. This process continues from childhood till adulthood when the child begins to take charge of certain aspects of his life. All these knowledge transmission, acquisition and transfer processes are done anywhere within the child's environment and also not planned or structured, rather through daily life activities and involvement. This approach to education was applied when the communities and its societies where yet not developed but primitive. However, as society became sophisticated and complex, the need to institutionalize knowledge transmission process was eminent as to meet with the contemporary societal demands and life generally. To this extent, schools began to be built, knowledge transmission became planned and curriculums development became obvious, learning became structured, teachers are trained in different field of endeavors to prepare the individuals in their various localities to meet with challenges of both developing and developed world and also contribute meaningfully to the society and nation at large. Hence the managers of this knowledge process are required to be conscious of the needs of the society and nation as to foster effective and efficient teaching and learning processes that take cognizance of all these societal needs, putting them in perspectives for effective knowledge transmission and delivery in schools. Hence this paper was necessitated to focus on the synergy between informal and formal education in education management. In pursuance of this, the importance of formal, informal education and educational management will be considered, ways of improving the synergy between formal and informal education will also be discussed herein.*

KEYWORDS: Informal education, Formal education, Education management.



INTRODUCTION

The term education in the early life of man's existence can be applied to mean enculturation, which is the process of cultural transmission which implies that individual learn the traditional content of his culture and assimilate its practices and values, it is done to sustain the culture of the people from generation to generation with little or no deviations, in other words, a process of fixed sense of cultural continuity, relatively static, absolute in nature and timeless too. It is done everywhere in the individual's environment, not planned or structured. These arose because of too many cultures which encumbered structural and standardized processes of acquiring the needed cultural knowledge. Therefore, people only acquire knowledge through participation in social processes of the society and observation of basic technical practice which was motivated by empathy and imitation.

The purpose of this was to guide children to become good members of their tribe or society as people were highly concerned with the growth of individuals as society members and a perfect acknowledgement of their ways of life from infant through adolescent.

In contrast to this informal process of education, as the society and world at large became seriously developed and sophisticated, reasoning and intelligence became broadened, the need to reorganize the system of knowledge acquisition became eminent. Educational provision and standard were changed to meet with contemporary challenges of the society globally, a new form of knowledge transmission was necessitated which was formal in nature and was considered to be an organized and regulated system of education, which follows a specific pattern with well-structured curriculum that recognized academic certificate award on completion at all levels. This type of knowledge acquisition was organized and transmitted in schools, colleges, official institutions and universities, either by a knowledgeable person in a classroom or through e-learning platforms.

In this form of education, students advance from one educational level to another by completing a certain number of years in the school and having successfully passed all necessary requirements. Primary, secondary, tertiary education are core examples of this form of education. Generally the main objective of both informal and formal education is to train and develop individuals in the society to be better people that will contribute meaningfully to both national and international economy in line with acceptable best practices.

Agreeing to this, Emenike (2004) opined that education is the acquisition of knowledge that tends to train and develop individuals in the society. This process of knowledge acquisition requires monitoring and adequate management of the process to achieve the needed results, therefore those assigned the role of education managers should be competent in planning, organizing educational strategies, managing learning resources, following standard curriculum and guidelines. They should be able to coordinate teachers, instructors and other educational institutions to develop teaching practices and adjust curriculum objectives as required.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual review of this paper will be done on the following key elements:

- Informal education
- Formal education
- The difference between informal and formal education
- Interplay of informal and formal education
- Education management.
- Rationales for education management
- Improving synergy between informal and formal education

Informal Education

Some scholars believed that informal education describes learning about cultural values, norms, beliefs and expected behaviors through participating in society's activities and functions. This type of learning occurs at home where parents, other family members, and neighborhoods play a role. Through informal education, we learn how to dress for different occasions, prepare food, behave to others and learn the ethics of life which includes social, physical, emotional relationships with others in the society.

However informal education according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia is a concept that is generally believed to be an education process that can occur outside of the traditional lecture or school-based learning system. The term even includes customized learning, based on individual student interest within a curriculum inside a regular classroom, but not limited to that setting. It could work through conversation with others to explore and enlarge an individual's experiences. Sometimes there is a clear objective link to some broader plan, but not always. The goal is to provide learners with the tools they need to eventually reach more complex material. It could refer to various forms of alternative education, such as un-schooling or homeschooling, autodidacticism (self-teaching) and youth work.

Informal education can include accidental and purposeful ways of collaborating on new information. It can be discussion-based that focuses on bridging the gaps between traditional classroom settings and life outside of the classroom. Informal education is characterized by unorganized learning, unconventional teaching method, unorganized teaching environment, knowledge impacted are practical in nature, the learning process is conversational and observational through others experience. Informal knowledge is acquired within and around the society.

However, an informal form of education has tremendous advantages that makes learning interesting and fast, which includes focused learning, as the learner is the driving force. The exploration and control of the learning process is with the learner, as the learning happens in the learner's space based on his interest. Since there is no effective learning plan, therefore the learner is not under pressure for test to give feedback and no previous preparation for learning is required, rather learning occurs anywhere, any time within a space in the society and does



not require a huge amount of finance for learning to occur as no school plan is required for learning. However, it is imperative to conceptualize formal education to adequately note the differences.

Formal Education

Formal education is conceptualized to be a structured, well streamlined and a systematic form of learning with certain standards delivered to students by trained teachers. To make sure formal learning is standardized, all learning institutions as schools, colleges, universities etc. are constrained to comply with these standards. Formal education is classroom-based as students learn in an organized setting through books and other educational materials with the sole purpose of educating them to acquire the needed knowledge that will make them worthwhile in the society and country at large. All teachers in this form of education are trained and certified to positively relate with the students while impacting in them the required knowledge. Formal education in Nigeria is governed by organizations like the ministry of education and its education boards both at the state and federal level.

In Nigeria, this form of education is made compulsory to all children from age five when they commence pre- primary education till they complete and get certified at secondary levels, while tertiary education level is achieved according to individual's capacities in knowledge and finance. It is worthy to note that formal education is clearly a stratified system, ranging from pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. As a child completes the knowledge acquisition at the first level, it is expected that he proceeds to another level for knowledge extension and expansion, it continues like that until he or she completes tertiary level and gets certified to compete in the labor market.

Generally, formal education systems are built on a set of beliefs and ideas that enhances and guides all decisions in the system. These include curriculum structure and design, organizational structures, physical learning environments, student-teacher relationships, assessment systems, class size, and educational activities, among others. Formal system of education is characterized by deliberate planning, chronological grading system, school fees payment for private owned schools, its institutionalized and structured, subject oriented syllabus, and trained professionals who impact knowledge through teaching and learning processes. Also, students receive certified knowledge and have a streamlined methodology for knowledge transfer.

It is significant to state that the benefits of this form of education cannot be over-emphasized as it is well organized and structured, very systematic in nature (step by step), knowledge acquired is certified, render by professionals, skills acquired supports life, help discover ones dreams, supports personality growth, has various opportunity for advancement, improve self-confidence and discipline, performance and intelligence. It also sustains one's economic status through wages and salaries earned from skills and knowledge acquired in the process, and it improves and supports one's relevance in the community and country at large. Based on these axioms, the differences between these two forms of education will be elucidated.



The Difference between Informal and Formal Education

Opinions differ in differentiating formal and informal learning environments. Some scholars find it cumbersome differentiating it because when learning takes place, elements of both informal and formal learning appear to be present. Cox (2013) states that the distinction between informal leisurely activities and formal homework is becoming blurred due to teachers' abundant web-based teaching materials. However, a critical review of these forms of education shows that numerous differences existed between them, significantly formal education occurs in an organized setting or training based organization, workplace, mobile devices, classrooms, online through internet and e-learning portals as informal education is based on practical and observations through lifelong learning process. Formal education is recognized and accepted by the state, federal government as those with formal education tend to secure job employment with it based on their levels, while informal education is not recognized nor accepted by the government, even for employment, it lacks that acceptance and recognition too. Those who impart knowledge in formal education are formally trained and certified as educational professionals before given responsibility to teach based on their competencies, this does not happen in informal system of education where the learner takes total control of what he learn base on interest, while formal education is structured, well planned and deliberately delivered, informal education occurs anywhere at any time, in fact it a lifelong activities that doesn't happen in a structured and organized manner. More so, there is a specially designed curriculum that guides the formal education process. This does not exist in informal education, as you only learn things that interest you.

Formal education is goal-oriented while informal education is not. Interestingly, formal education uses methods like face to face settings, direct coaching and training sessions to impart knowledge to its participants while knowledge is transferred informally through conversations, funny activities, and may be through online communities too. Oftentimes informal education comes free while a huge sum of money is expended to acquire formal skills, knowledge and intelligence. After all these discrepancies, it is pertinent to review areas of interplay between formal and informal education herein.

The Interplay of Informal and Formal System of Education

Every form of education, be it non-formal, informal and formal, plays a prominent role in a man's life and none of them can effectively function independently without others, because while you are acquiring formal knowledge, you are also acquiring a whole lot of informal knowledge in the process making formal knowledge acquisition seamless. For example, an individual may decide to study Marketing in the university, he is there to acquire formal knowledge about marketing principles and other elements that provide a good theoretical foundation of the subject matter. At the same time, the individual also plays around the local market in the village to observe, interact with people to know their opinions about a particular marketing issue. All this knowledge and experience gained from this process becomes the person's informal learning experience. While studying the course, you will know more about what theories stipulate and also have some of your own practical knowledge to reflect on, in the course of the study. In everything in life, there must be initial action that will propel further actions, therefore the interplays that exist between informal and formal education cannot be undermined. Informal education prepares a good take-off ground for effective formal education, informal education gives individuals from birth a general background information about his people, culture, religion, norms, and values, among others, preparing them to be a



better person for adulthood. All this knowledge acquired through these means is not structured, not organized, no curriculum design, not planned.

The individual learns at will, which could be spontaneous. In fact, you are the one who determines what to learn, when to learn, where to learn, how often and how long it should take you to learn a particular thing, the individual is completely in charge of his learning process at his own pace and space. To this extent, the individual has acquired enormous knowledge through this process but the knowledge is not certified and cannot compete favorably well in the contemporary labor market globally. Therefore, to enable him to be recognized and be accepted in the global labor market, all the knowledge he randomly acquired through informal education needs to be formalized through formal education, where all the knowledge will be systematically structured in line with specific standards, organized through curriculum provisions in an institutionalized manner and environment by professionals. After due diligence on the individual and good feedback received through tests and examinations, the individual will be certified in a specialized area to function globally.

Therefore, without informal education, the process of acquiring knowledge through formal education alone will be too cumbersome to both the learner and teacher who will be doing the professional restructuring of the individual to become a better person in the society. At this juncture, it is worthy of note that all these formal educational processes cannot be effectively and efficiently function without an educational manager who will be responsible for planning, coordinating, structuring the curriculum and direct its deliverables to actualize the educational sets goals, essentially making the individuals in the society better people that can contribute meaningfully to global economy. In line with the above, the concept of education management and its basic functions are considered thus.

Education Management

There is no particular definition of educational management that is accepted by educational scholars, as it is a broad field of endeavor. It means different things to different people. Shelly Umana, an educational management scholar, saw educational management as an orderly way of thinking which describes in operational terms, what is to be done, how it should be done and how we know what we have to do (evaluation means) in teaching and learning process. To Peretomode (1999) it is a collection of activities associated with the planning, organizing, regulating, directing and staffing to adequately and effectively deliver educational aims and objectives. This was re-echoed by Ezeocha (2009) when he said that education management is a method of directing, leading and regulating group's behavior to the attainment of organizational goals.

For the purpose of this work, it is a complex human enterprise in which different resources are brought together and made available to accomplish desired and expected goals or objectives in the educational system. It also could be referred to as the administration of an educational system in which human and material resources are coordinated through strategic planning, supervision, and implementation of all education activities directed towards the actualization of educational goals.

Therefore, educational managers are critically involved in developing educational policies, conducting research, evaluating and developing ways of enriching and enhancing educational



systems at all levels in a way that meets the purpose for which it was established. Such people include trained and certified teachers, principals and other senior education professionals.

Education managers are expected to plan all education programs, organize and execute the structures and make sure that all planned actions are executed and actualized in educational organization. They also direct all material and human resources, coordinate, control and motivate all staff to achieve educational objectives. Significantly he must evaluate the level of educational achievement and consequently report adequately to the authority that established him. To this, he enjoys enormous powers and authority to function effectively and efficiently as a manager of education. Every education institution and system that has survived and sustained in its programs over time is as a result of efficient and effective management. Suffice it to note that without good management, educational programs will continue to struggle at all levels. Consequently some of its rationales are noted herein.

Rationales for Education Management

There are various rationales for managing the education system but not limited to the following.

Positive and objective planning: For every planning in organization to be effective and efficient devoid of wastages, it requires a professional who is knowledgeable in planning. In the school system, education managers take charge of this aspect of the job of planning, he monitors it till its execution, making sure that institutional aims and objectives are achieved as planned. Another rationale for education management is promotion and protection of an organization's image.

Promotion and protection of organizations image: Arising from the rapid increase in the number of both government and private schools, parents will always want their children to attend schools with a positive image and good reputation. This makes the job of education management very significant as he is charged with this responsibility of improving and sustaining a positive profile of the institution in a globally best practice.

Productive Cost: It is said that good planning begets good and timely products. The involvement of education managers in our various levels of education has increased cost efficiency in the systems. Undoubtedly, if a system is well-planned, organized, resources and materials are effectively and efficiently allocated, a lot of wastage in the system will be minimized. In the same vein, a good and clear vision of organizational objectives will limit mistakes in material and resources requirements of the organization, arising from this, the cost of teaching and learning becomes cost effective, basically directed towards the achievement of organizational aims and objectives.

Allocation of roles and responsibility: The aims and objectives of education are better achieved if square pegs are put in square holes and round pegs in round holes. Managers of education try to bridge this gap to make all pegs slotted in their right holes. Roles and responsibilities in education should be assigned according to capacity and capability. It is one of the actions of a responsible education manager to assign these roles to various individuals according to their abilities for better and seamless delivery in such roles and responsibilities as assigned. It is important to mention that adequate management of educational resources is also a rationale for education management. Resources here involve both human and material, as these need to be allocated rightly for smooth running of the system; if wrongly done, it becomes a show stopper and creates challenges and bottlenecks for seamless academic



delivery. Significantly, educational management strategies resolve all crises and quagmires that would have resulted from wrong placement of roles and responsibilities.

IMPROVING SYNERGY BETWEEN INFORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION:

In summary, formal education is mostly done within the classroom setting while informal education is achieved through day-to-day life activities. Today, a lot of classes for formal education are done online as well as in-person, so there's a lot of flexibility on how to access education be it formal or informal, these education types are important for all round knowledge acquisition. Informal education complements formal education to a huge extent, because in any successful formal learning, there is an informal process, which forms the base or stepping stone for formal knowledge acquisition. Formal education will not give you all the knowledge required to sustain you traditionally, socially, physically, mentally and otherwise. Therefore, it is significant to work towards improving the synergy between them to produce a complete and all round person in the society. It is obvious that individuals with formal knowledge without elements of informal education are incomplete and may not understand or fixture well in traditional things around him hence this synergy.

Many people may be confused on how to improve this synergy. It is worthy to mention that parents' involvement in encouraging and educating children at home will make the children a better person at school since some rudiments of both formal and informal education have been handled at home. It is true that through electronic teaching and learning (E-learning) both in school and at home synergy between informal and formal education can be improved. While the children are at home studying through video games, watching national and international news channels, visual clues and even through social media they gain a lot of informal knowledge that will support them at school. Therefore, this should be encouraged and be provided for the children to make them a complete repertoire of knowledge.

In addition, encouraging positive social interactions amongst peers within school and at home will sustain the synergy between informal and formal education. Though this was discouraged by most parents before now, however, social interactions help people acquire different knowledge about things within them that will enhance their learning at school. For instance, through social interaction, a child can learn the rudiments of mathematical calculations that will support him in mathematics, physics and even chemistry at school.

Furthermore, to improve learning outcomes in school organization, it is important to synergize both formal and informal education through

- A. Building a learning communities:** Learning is often a social activity; to effectively and efficiently have maximum synergy of both formal and informal learning, it is important to provide opportunities for discussions outside of the classroom. This can be enhanced by a well-organized learning management system (LMS) that builds a learning community such as forums, online discussion boards, and chat functions to help learners interact and engage with training content.
- B. Assigning mentors and buddies:** To increase informal learning opportunities, pair learners with mentors or buddies to facilitate learning outside of the classroom that will provide a more dynamic learning experience. In the school, the teacher takes charge of the



teaching and learning process. After the official school hours, an academically strong person can support the weak ones at home. Through this process, a strong and well guided synergy can occur.

- C. Increased learning engagement:** Engaged learners are more likely to acquire better knowledge than the less engaged. Therefore, it is significant to encourage students to take part in both formal and informal learning. To this extent, it is very pertinent for the education professionals to structure learning and training opportunities in a way that can provide maximum engagement which could include adding videos, quizzes, games, and extra resources for additional learning beyond the course content and this can be done outside the school period. Generally, the essence of synergy between formal and in-formal education is to enhance the adaptability and potency of the quality of formal education, this can be achieved through collaborating formal and informal learning processes of education.

CONCLUSION

Instead of conflicting formal and informal education, it is important to recognize the complementary nature of both. These processes of learning elicit different purposes and enhance varied benefits to an individual's growth and development. Learners who acquire knowledge through these means can open an enormous synergy that exceeds academic proficiency that leads to holistic personal and professional proficiencies. Informal learning bridges the lacuna between theoretical knowledge acquired through formal education and its practical application in real-world framework. It supports and improves the concepts and ideas learned in the classroom, making them more real, visible and engaging.

Basically, in pursuance of standard education, we must acknowledge that formal and informal learning are complementary to each other. By this, we entrust in the learner the capacity of solving challenges of the real world with confidence and enthusiasm. Education should not be limited to classroom teaching and learning, it should explore the boundless macrocosm of knowledge and experiences that is available globally.

SUGGESTIONS

Arising from the discussions, the following are suggested.

1. Learning communities or groups should be structured in schools in Nigeria to effectively and efficiently harness the synergy of both formal and informal learning processes of education.
2. Mentors and buddies should be assigned to increase informal learning opportunities that are available to learners in Nigerian education systems.
3. Increased learning engagement should be encouraged in Nigerian education system, as learners who are engaged are more likely to acquire better knowledge than the less engaged.



4. Education should not be limited to classroom teaching and learning, it should explore the boundless macrocosm of knowledge and experiences that is available globally through formal and informal education collaborations. Obviously, if these are acknowledged and encouraged, the Nigerian educational system will have a new direction, a better academic performance and a new narrative.

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