

# **IMPROVING THE SYNERGY BETWEEN FORMAL, INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN INFORMATION SERVICE IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION IN RIVERS STATE.**

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## **Abstract**

*The study examines synergy between formal, informal and non-formal education in Information Science in higher institutions in Rivers State. Three objective and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was (60) staff from three institutions of higher learning in Rivers State which are University of Port Harcourt, Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic Bori and Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. Census sampling technique was used for the study, in which the entire population was used as the sample size since the population was not large enough. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Synergy between Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Education (SFINE)". The instrument was validated by experts who affirm its validity. The reliability of the instrument was established through test re-test. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that: there is a strong positive relationship between formal, informal and Non-formal education, it is also revealed that low positive relationship exist between library services and formal and informal education., The study also reveal that job opportunities and enhance intelligence were some of the benefits of formal, informal and non-formal education. Based on the findings, the study recommended amongst others that; There should be an inclusion of informal education in to the curriculum of formal education as this will help in synergizing the relationship between formal and informal education. Libraries should be encouraged to provide information resources covering the three forms of education, institutions of higher learning should be well planned to marry the three forms of education as this will improve the synergy of the three forms of educations.*

**Keywords:** Synergy, Formal, Informal, Non-Formal Education, Information Services

## **Introduction**

Education is at the heart of sustainable development and the key to success of any society all over the world. Access to education is one of the fundamental rights of an individual, regardless of age, tribe, colour, status or social class. Education is no doubt an instrument for nation building and national development. According to the National Policy on

Education (2014), it is an instrument ‘par excellence’ which equips an individual with the right skills, knowledge, abilities, competence, attitudes, behavior and values in order to function effectively in the society as well as attain sustainable livelihoods. Education, literacy and knowledge are acquired through the various forms of education which includes: formal, informal education and non-formal education.

Formal education according International Standard Classification of Education (2011) is an education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and in their totality constitutes the formal education system of a country. It is a systematic and sequential way of acquiring education. Formal education is generally hierarchic; and it is based on learning objective that are organized into linear progressions. Institutions and educators have time-tabling responsibilities and employ direct teaching behaviors e.g., actions explicitly intended to instruct knowledge and skills and to manage a classroom, such as demonstrating, explaining, giving feedback, making corrections and setting goals (Jung & Choi, 2016). Informal education is a general term for education that can occur outside of a traditional lecture or school based learning systems. The term even include customized learning based on individual student interests within a curriculum inside a regular classroom but is not limited to that setting. Informal education is a process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from day to day experiences and exposure to the environment. Generally, it is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning including that of a highly schooled person. This definition implies that informal learning includes a number of elements. It includes tacit knowledge that is not specifically sought, and can remain unnoticed by the learner. (Allaste, Beilmann&Pirik, 2021).

Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programs and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum. Non-formal and informal forms of education have been put in place to substitute formal education in localities or communities where people are not opportune to acquire the formal education as a way of providing access to education. Non-formal education refers to a wide range of educational initiatives on the community, ranging from home-based learning to government scheme and community initiatives. It includes accredited courses run by well-established institution as well as locally based operations with little funding. (World Health Organization 2010).

Non-formal education is aimed at specific groups of learners, it is intentional from the learner’s perspective and the motivation for learning may intrinsic to the learner. This is because non-formal learning represents a shift from institutionalized control over knowledge (e.g. craft guilds schools etc.) towards individualized control and self-directed learning. It is also worthy to note that non-formal education is generally less credentials based than formal education which relies on formal qualification. (Lonescu 2020).

Synergy is the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substance, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separates effects. **Oxford dictionary. According to (EC, 2003)** it is a number of initiatives that have been taken at national and international levels in supporting the development of new approaches to validate informal and non-formal education. Under the objective work program, ways are being developed for the official validation of non-formal education experiences which has been identified as a key issue in making learning more attractive and relevant for the

individual. By providing an overview of the different approaches, systems and methodologies, the European inventory will be instrumental in monitoring how the overarching principles are actually followed up, as this will provide an important basis for cooperation at the political level, which necessarily has to follow an agreement on common European principles. Several types of synergistic relationships between formal, informal and non-formal education are thus emerging, with various degrees of domination, or centrality of the formal system. They can be found at all levels of education provision, from primary, secondary and vocational levels to higher education.

### **Synergy between formal, informal and non-formal education**

Prominent connections and relationships exist between the main pedagogical concepts, it allows education to be defined as the bearer of civilization sense of education and training. Its content will include these pedagogical activities, interactions, processes and systems that are directly related to the development of priority of the social spheres in the concrete context which could be Ideological, political, institutional, management, economic, scientific, technological, social, political and other. The specific rates of culturally, civilization development also determines the existence of educational standards and priorities. In formal, informal and non-formal education, the overarching objective is to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the quality of formal education. Such would be achieved through collaborating between formal, informal and non-formal method of education. (VaselaMareva 2018).

### **The Place of Libraries Services in Improving the Synergy between Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Education.**

Libraries serve as the bedrock of academic excellence. They provide the essential tools for students to excel in their studies, they offer access to wide range of information resources ranging from textbooks, reference materials and digital resources that align with curricular demands. Also, they cultivate the critical skill of information literacy, empowering learners to navigate the large network of information with discernment and wisdom. Simultaneously, libraries are dynamic hubs of informal and non-formal Education. They nurture a lifelong love for learning, offering an array of resources that transcend the boundaries of textbooks and syllabi. Libraries are cultural treasure troves, fostering enrichment through literature, art and history. They promote digital literacy in gathering spaces and ignite the spark of curiosity in the heart of young and old alike.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to improve the synergy between formal, informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State. Specific purposes are to:

1. Determine the relationship between formal informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State.
2. Find out the relationship between library services, formal and informal education in academic institution in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the benefits formal, informal and non-formal education in higher institution in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between formal informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between library services and formal and informal education in academic institution in Rivers State?
3. What are the benefits of Formal, Informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State?

### **Literature Review**

According to (Rogoff, Callanan, Gutierrez & Erickson 2016), Education consist of three forms: Formal, informal and non-formal. The classification of these three types of education are derived from different sources including historical documents, policy reports and current research (Aberg, 2016). To differentiate these three forms of education, scholars have recommended considering factors such as who determines the what, where, and when of learning. Although different definition exists for formal, informal and non-formal education, scholars and policy report documents provides the following definitions:

The first type of education is formal education, formal education is structured in terms of educational objectives, educational timing and educational support. Rogers (2019) defines formal education as structured, planned, proposed through national curriculum, and school-based education that takes place in a formal education system. Eaton (2010) defines formal education as continuous and intentional education that occurs within an organized and structured context, leading to recognized diplomas. Formal Education as organized and “worthwhile education” as in schools, secondary schools, academic colleges and universities are considered sites for formal education.

The second is informal education. Informal education can be intentional but, in most cases, it is described as unintentional and non-institutionalized education where learning can happen anywhere, by anyone and anytime, such education does not lead to recognized certifications or diplomas. Informal education is a process whereby a learner acquires values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and activities related to work, family or leisure (Gross & Rutland, 2017). Tough, was one of the first scholars in 1967 to begin using the notion of informal education while working with adults in Canada. Tough (2002) defines informal education as a “very normal, very natural human education activity... so invisible that people just do not seem to be aware of their own education.” Similarly, Aberg (2016) agreed with the above view as the author sees informal education as self-teaching or self-learning and self-directed learning, that places education decisions, such as what, when, and how to learn in the hand of learners. Eaton (2010) posited that informal education is a truly lifelong process whereby individuals acquire skills, attitudes and knowledge from daily experience and resources in their environment such as from friends, family, work, market place or the library.

The third type of education is non-formal education or education somewhere between formal and informal education. Non-formal education is planned and structured or organized in terms of learning times, objectives, support and sustained education activities embedded in and planned outside formal educational institutions but not leading to the award of certification, diploma or degree. These researchers additionally describe non-formal education as intentional, from the learner’s perspective as providing alternative learning

opportunities to those who have no access to formal education or who need specific life skills and knowledge to conquer different obstacles (Khaddage, Muller, & Flintoff, 2016). Non-formal education is organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system. In addition, non-formal education takes place in different situations, and environment, it is student centered, voluntary, purposeful, but more flexible and available for anyone.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a correlational research design. The Population comprises of 60 staff selected from three academic institutions in Rivers state which are: University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), Ken-SaroWiwa Polytechnic and Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku. A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. A self-structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was designed on Likert four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree(A)=3, Strongly Disagree (SD)=2, and Disagree (D)=1. The instrument used was face validation and was validated by experts who affirmed its validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test re test method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Thus  $4+3+2+1=10 = 2.5$

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Therefore, value of 2.5 was referred as mean criteria (mean cut-off point: decision point to accept or reject).

1) What is the relationship between formal, informal and non-formal Education in academic institutions in Rivers State?

| S/N | Items                                                                   | 4<br>SA | 3<br>A | 2<br>D | 1<br>SD | N  | Total | Mean | Std   | Remark   |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|----|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 1   | Development of specialized skill leads to interpersonal skills          | 25      | 14     | 11     | 10      | 60 | 174   | 2.9  | 13.88 | Accepted |
| 2   | Meeting job market employment standards leads to decision making skills | 31      | 15     | 7      | 7       | 60 | 190   | 3.2  | 16.7  | Accepted |
| 3   | Listening skills leads to organizational skills                         | 10      | 10     | 30     | 10      | 60 | 140   | 2.3  | 9.7   | Rejected |
| 4   | Attaining social status leads to level of patience evolves              | 35      | 10     | 10     | 5       | 60 | 195   | 3.75 | 18.27 | Accepted |
| 5   | improve the learners standard of living and community future            | 29      | 16     | 8      | 7       | 60 | 187   | 3.1  | 15.9  | Accepted |
|     | Average mean                                                            |         |        |        |         |    |       | 2.95 |       |          |

Table 1 reveals that items (1,2,4,5) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut off point for decision, while item (3) was rejected because of the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveal that item (4) has the highest mean score of (3.75) while item (3) has the lowest mean score of (2.3). Again, average mean of (2.95) was gotten which indicates that relationship exist between formal, informal and non- formal education in academic institution in Rivers State.

2) What is the relationship between Library services and formal and informal education in academic institution in Rivers State?

| S/N | Items for                                   | 4<br>SA | 3<br>A | 2<br>D | 1<br>SD | N  | Total | Mean | Std   | Remark   |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|----|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 1   | Libraries serve as knowledge repository     | 30      | 10     | 12     | 8       | 60 | 182   | 3.0  | 15.88 | Accepted |
| 2   | Libraries serve as research hub             | 20      | 18     | 15     | 7       | 60 | 171   | 2.85 | 12.57 | Accepted |
| 3   | Cultural enrichment                         | 28      | 17     | 10     | 5       | 60 | 185   | 3.1  | 15.6  | Accepted |
| 4   | Does not serve community engagement         | 10      | 8      | 22     | 20      | 60 | 128   | 2.1  | 8.2   | Rejected |
| 5   | Does not encouragedigital literacy advocacy | 15      | 5      | 25     | 15      | 60 | 140   | 2.3  | 10.0  | Rejected |
|     | Average mean                                |         |        |        |         |    |       | 2.67 |       |          |

Table 2 reveals that items (1,2,3) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut-off point for decision, while items (4,5) was rejected because of the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveals that item (3) has the highest mean score of (3.1) while, item (4) has the lowest mean score of (2.1). Again, an average mean of (2.67) was gotten, which indicates that relationship exist between library services and formal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State.

3) What are the benefits of formal, informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State?

| S/N | Items                                   | 4<br>SA | 3<br>A | 2<br>D | 1<br>SD | N  | Total | Mean | Std  | Remark   |
|-----|-----------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|----|-------|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Jobs Opportunities                      | 30      | 15     | 10     | 5       | 60 | 190   | 3.1  | 16.3 | Accepted |
| 2   | Enhance intelligence                    | 20      | 25     | 8      | 7       | 60 | 178   | 2.9  | 13.8 | Accepted |
| 3   | Does not communicate effectively        | 10      | 15     | 25     | 10      | 60 | 145   | 2.4  | 9.7  | Rejected |
| 4   | Less stressful & more relaxing          | 25      | 20     | 10     | 5       | 60 | 185   | 3.0  | 14.8 | Accepted |
| 5   | Relevant & adapted to the needs of each | 33      | 17     | 7      | 3       | 60 | 200   | 3.3  | 17.9 | Accepted |

|  |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |      |  |  |
|--|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|------|--|--|
|  | person and society |  |  |  |  |  |  |      |  |  |
|  | Average mean       |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2.94 |  |  |

Table 3 reveals that item (1,2,4,5) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut-off point for decision, while item (3) was rejected because the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveals that item (5) has the highest mean score of (3.3) while item (3) has the lowest mean score of (2.4). Again, an average mean of (2.94) was gotten, which indicates that benefits exists between formal, informal and non-formal education in academic institution in Rivers State.

### Findings

The study reveals that there is a strong positive relationship between formal, informal and non-formal education in academic institution. Also, that the relationship between formal, informal and non-formal education improve learner's standard of living and community future. It also reveals the development of specialized skills that leads to interpersonal skills amongst others. This finding is in line with Khaddage, Muller, & Flintoff (2016) who pointed out non-formal education as intentional, from the learner's perspective as providing alternative learning opportunities to those who have no access to formal education or who need specific life skills and knowledge to conquer different obstacles.

The finding also revealed that there is a low positive relationship between library services and formal and informal education in academic institution in Rivers State. Also that the relationship between library and formal and informal education is that the library serves as a knowledge repository among others. This finding corroborates with Solabalaje and Ogunmodede (2015) who found out that academic libraries are established to take care of the information needs of students, lecturers, researchers and other community scholars. The authors went further to state that those libraries are mostly found in the Universities and other institutions of higher learning, play crucial roles towards the attainment of the overall objectives of their parent institutions.

The study reveals that job opportunities, enhance intelligence, less stressful & more relaxing, relevant & adapted to the needs of each person and society are some of the benefits of formal, informal and non-formal education amongst other in academic institution in Rivers state.

### Conclusion

Formal, Informal and non-formal are all important for the development of a being. Libraries and academic institution needs to adopt a broad concept of curriculum that will enable a better understanding while learning in schools and that will also help to leverage all types of education so that learners and society can maximize their full potentials. Consequently, it was noted that informal and non-formal education are more difficult to defines with clarity than formal education, and this is in part because they share some overlaps. This overlap carries implication, as it makes it more of a challenge to research non-formal and informal education. Also, it was noted that literatures do not clearly distinguish between informal and non-formal education, in many instances, the two phrases are used interchangeably. It is perhaps most useful when considering non-formal education as a hybrid

of the other forms of education, meaning that it is in the interaction of formal and informal elements that non-formal education attains its special character.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- 1) There should be an inclusion of informal and non-formal education into the curriculum of formal education as this will help in synergizing the relationship between formal and informal and non-formal education.
- 2) Libraries should be encouraged to provide information resources covering the three forms of education.
- 3) Institutions of higher learning should be planned to marry the three forms of education as this will improve the Synergy of three forms of education.

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