

## **Dangers Associated with Commercial Motorcycle Transport Business: Implications for Adult Education in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Commercial motorcycle transport business as a mode public transportation has been widely embraced by many in Nigeria due to its perceived benefits. Its perceived benefits include its flexibility in taking people to the last bit of their destinations, quick generation of money to meet basic life needs as well as its characteristic of cheap and easy maintenance. Despite these perceived benefits, the paper identifies dangers associated with it and sees it as unsustainable. The paper also identifies adult education programmes that are relevant for the correction of the anomaly of accepting its perceived benefits without due consideration of its dangers. The paper concludes that despite the perceived benefits of commercial motorcycle transport business, the dangers associated with it outweigh its benefits. It therefore recommends that serious attention and recognition from the government and the general public in all ramifications should be given to adult education in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** commercial motorcycle, transportation, adult education

### **Introduction**

Transportation is the movement of people, animals and goods from one location to another. It aids trade between peoples which in turn leads to economic growth, globalization and civilization. On the other hand, public transportation is a shared passenger transport service which is available for use by the general public as distinct from modes such as taxicab, car pooling or hired buses which are not shared by strangers without private arrangement (Wikipedia, 2012). Among the modes of public transportation is motorcycle.

In Nigeria, commercial motorcycle used as a mode of public transportation is popularly known as Okada and operated mainly by young youths and a few middle aged men. This kind of business began in Nigeria in the 1980's when there was an economic crunch. Some youths who lost their jobs resorted to earning a living by the use of their motorcycles to convey passengers to and fro their destinations. This practice was found fashionable by both passengers and the operators because while the passengers are conveyed to the last point of their destinations, however remote it is, the operators found a new lease of life in it having lost their first jobs and businesses. It was also found useful as most Nigerian roads collapsed and became unmotorable thereby making it impossible for people to easily get to their destinations. Motorcycles became an alternative to cabs and buses that cannot ply on the collapsed roads. This made the business to enjoy acceptance by the public as a means of transportation and it boomed from then till date.

But as people join the trade, many issues began to arise as a result of the way and manner the operators ply it. The issue of impatience and recklessness of the operators leading to incessant crashes arose. This led to the increase in road accidents encountered daily in the country as well as the accompanying increase in the rate of deaths due to road accidents. The issues of its usage to fast track armed robbery and kidnapping in many cities and villages also arose. This calls for a concern about the usefulness of commercial motorcycle transport business in Nigeria, hence, the emergence of this paper to promote the relevance of adult education in exposing the dangers associated with commercial motorcycle transport business as well as discouraging the use of it in Nigeria.

### **Contributions of Commercial motorcycle transport Business to Nigeria's Economy**

Commercial motorcycle business like every other mode of public transportation has impacted significantly on the Nigerian economy and society. According to Abdulkareem (nd), economic activities are primarily concerned with the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Any raw material that is not moved to where it will be processed cannot be processed and any raw material that is not processed into finished product cannot be consumed and any goods not consumed cannot yield its full benefits to the economy of the nation. This involves conveyance of raw materials from their point of production to the point where they will be processed into finished products and conveyance of finished products from their point of production to the point of consumption. This movement sometimes is made possible by commercial motorcycle especially in moving the goods to and fro the remote villages with collapsed roads where vehicles cannot enter.

One important positive contribution commercial motorcycle transport business has done to Nigeria's

economy is the provision of employment for millions of unemployed people. Okada business has empowered many Nigerians economically. Indeed many unemployed youths and retired people have found gainful engagement in the commercial motorcycle business.

Some state governments in the country anchored on these perceived benefits to incorporate it into their poverty alleviation scheme by procuring and distributing motorcycles to the unemployed in their states as part of poverty eradication programme. Apart from those directly engaged in the riding of motorcycle for a commercial purpose, many people are into the sale of different brands of motorcycles and motorcycle spare parts. In addition to this, we have a good number of people engaged in the business of motorcycle repairs and maintenance. When considered together, it will be discovered that the economic impact of commercial motorcycle business on the society cannot be overemphasized. Commercial motorcycle operators have also contributed to the government revenue generation. Government derives a lot of revenue from money paid for plate numbers and licenses by motorcycle operators.

Furthermore, the operation of this group of transporters has eased the transport difficulties encountered by the people. Thus we can say that the Okada transport business have filled a big gap in the public transport system in Nigeria. With the operation of commercial motorcycles, people can now go to areas previously impenetrable by conventional means of transportation. For example, there were some rural suburbs and streets in Lagos that conventional commercial buses and taxis cannot reach, such as Ayobo, in Ipasa area of Alimoso Local Government Area, Asara area in Badagry and Aboru Area in Iyana Ipasa, to mention just a few. The Okada has now provided a means of transportation to commuters in the areas. In Ogun State, the interior of mowe Ibafo town has been opened up by the use of Okada (Usuwah, 2012).

### **Risks in Commercial Motorcycle Transport Business in Nigeria**

Despite the positive impacts of the use of motorcycles for commercial transportation in Nigeria, it also has some negative impacts as well. They are discussed below.

#### **Road Accidents**

Motorcycle transport business contributes immensely to the high rate of motorcycle-related accidents recorded daily across the country. High rate of accidents is attributable to lack of training and traffic education among motorcycle operators, impatience on the part of the bike riders, flagrant disregard for traffic rules and regulations, reckless riding by the operators. The factors mentioned above lead to loss of lives of either the operators or passengers.

#### **Crime**

Another negative effect of the use of motorcycle for commercial transportation is its use for criminal activities. It has been observed that increase in the number of motorcycles due to their use for commercial purpose aids a lot of criminal activities such as snatching of personal effects (like bags, money, phones), abduction, killing and raping. People of questionable character are among the bike operators. When an unsuspecting passenger stops a criminally-minded rider, he takes the passenger to spots where he/she could be robbed or raped. Such criminal activities are usually perpetrated in the early hours of the morning or late at night.

#### **Pollution**

Fumes and carbon monoxide emitted by motorcycles are on the increase due to increase in the use of motorcycles for commercial purpose. This contributes to increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide and fog in the atmosphere which results in global warming and climate change. The fumes also contaminate the atmospheric air making it impossible for people to always inhale clean air.

#### **Health Challenges**

Health risks are also involved in commercial motorcycle transport business. The negative health risks on both the operators and the passengers include among others pneumonia, cold, catarrh.

In recognition of the dangers associated with the business, most state governors who promoted the trade by incorporating it in their poverty alleviation programmes initially have also banned the use of motorcycle as a means of public transportation in their state capitals and other cities in their states. The states include Port Harcourt, Yenegoa, Calabar, Umuahia and Aba, Enugu, Owerri, Asaba and Warri in Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross River, Abia, Enugu, Imo and Delta states respectively. Commercial motorcycle transport business constitutes major traffic problems that were being encountered in these cities and cities of other states that are considering banning the business such as Lagos state. This is an indication that the dangers associated with the business outweigh the benefits in the business.

### **Unsustainability Nature of Commercial Motorcycle Transport Business in Nigeria**

Okada as commercial motorcycle transport business is popularly called in Nigeria is highly distracting. Young youths and adults who should have being in training for a skill in one profession or the other have found okada business as a cheap source of livelihood. This makes it difficult for them to enlist for training in specialized professional skills. A lot of people that should have been active in the productive sector of the economy are found in okada business. The implication is that the country will still find it difficult to attain her vision of becoming one of the most productive economies by the year 2020. The reason is because manpower needed to realize this vision is lacking. It is not that the population is not there, but a large number of the population is unskilled and are found doing okada business as a cheap source of livelihood. Another implication is that in time to come, people who are skilled in some technical vocations will be scarce because young people are no longer interested in learning the skills in those vocations. Such vocations include auto mechanic repairs, bricklaying, plumbing, carpentering, painting, welding, electrical installation and maintenance, agriculture, baking to mention a few. It is agreeable that these vocations contribute to a great extent to the growth of any nation's economy. The skills are lacking and the young people are no longer interested in them. How can our economy survive?

Furthermore, as a young single person, money made through okada business can sustain one on a daily basis. But as one grows old and gets married with children, there is no way one can comfortably sustain his family with the business. The implication is that his children will not be trained educationally at least up to a graduate level. This scenario leads to continuous increase in illiteracy with its associated increase in poverty level. This situation also hampers the growth and development of the country economically, socially, politically, religiously, technologically as no illiterate society experiences significant growth and development in these areas. This means that commercial motorcycle transport business can only comfortably sustain a single young man but cannot sustain a family. This is even worse than other dangers mentioned earlier as it affects both the operators and the economy

This calls for attitudinal re-orientation for the youths both those who are already trapped in the business and those who may join later in order to pull them out of this dungeon called okada business and discourage many who may wish to join later from engaging in it so that they will not be trapped. Adult education is a useful instrument for this attitudinal re-orientation.

### **Implications for Adult Education in Nigeria**

Adesanya (1998) notes that most of the persons involved in commercial motorcycle transport business are school dropouts, people who were retrenched, and those who have no job. This could be the reason why flagrant disregard for traffic rules and regulations is common among the operators of the business. This people need adult education for training on traffic laws.

Ehezue (1998:4) notes that adult education in recent times has been misconceived to mean night school by many who lacked understanding of its meaning and nuances. This is the reason why it is important to clarify its meaning here in order to enable us delve comfortably into the roles it could play to pull our youths out of this dungeon called okada business and discourage many who may wish to join later from engaging in it so that they will not be trapped into it. In an effort to clear adult education of its misconception, UNESCO in its 1976 conference in Kenya came up with what is widely regarded by adult education scholars as a comprehensive definition of adult education. According to Bown and Tomori (1979:269), UNESCO sees adult education as:

The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and methods, whether formal or otherwise, whether they promote or replace initial education in the schools, colleges or universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as an adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

This definition formed the foundation on which various discrete definitions of adult education are being emanated. For instance, Ehezue (1998) sees it as "some specific functional training/vocational programmes required by adults (who now constitute the illiterate, unskilled, semi-skilled or semi-professional labour force) to remedy not only their educational deficiencies but also meet the needs of their various occupations whether as farmers, artisans or employees of corporate/private organizations". He went further to define adult education as "any form of alternative education that would re-orientate them and modify their attitudes in order that they embrace new and progressive ways and actions that would improve their income, living standard and contributions to societal development as well as bring about in them desired changes in their behaviour." Nzeneri (2008) defines adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs and problems to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. Adult education encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional or

personal reasons (Nnazor, 2005:530). According to Barikor (2002), adult education is:

any form of educative experience engaged in by people who are chronologically mature, socially responsible and mentally alert or deficient but eager to meet their specific needs. These may include intellectual need, occupational skills, socio-economic responsibilities, professional competencies and even self-fulfillment or self-actualizing needs, to improve themselves, by developing their knowledge, insights, tastes, attitudes and skills.

According to Mbalisi (2010) adult education is “any educative and purposeful learning activity organized for adults to initiate them into a new way of life by providing them with relevant skills, competences, knowledge, information and attitudes required to excel in that aspect of life”. Looking at the relevance of adult education from the national development perspective, Nzeneri (2002) maintains that adult education trains manpower at all levels in the areas of need, skills and knowledge to increase output, changes people’s behaviour and attitude towards work, productivity and profit making.

### **The Objectives and Programmes of Adult Education**

The objectives of adult education in Nigeria are contained in the National Policy on Education (2004:25) which when achieved would contribute to the transformation of the Nigerian economy as well as the citizenry. The objectives are to:

1. provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender;
2. provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education;
3. provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
4. provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
5. give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

### **Forms of Adult Education in Nigeria**

Adult education is organized in three forms of formal, informal and non-formal adult education. Nzeneri (2002) x-rays the content of the forms as follows:

#### **Formal Adult Education**

It is a consciously planned and systematically arranged programme of activities in which students are registered and they follow specified syllabuses/courses either on full-time or part-time basis. It is hierarchically organised and the programmes are usually provided within the walls of social agents of education such as schools, colleges and universities. It is characterised by registered enrolment, students follow series of lessons on set subjects and their achievement in these subjects/courses are measured from time to time by tests and examinations which lead to the award of some certificate. These programmes are usually parallel to the regular formal schools, colleges and university work/tasks.

#### **Non-Formal Adult Education**

This is any organized and systematic educational activity undertaken outside the framework of the formal school system to provide selected type of learning to particular sub-group of adults as well as children. It is also seen as a systematic enterprise that is usually outside the formal school system in which admission criteria, staff, content, media, time units and facilities are adapted for particular students so as to maximise the attainment of their learning objectives and to minimize their constraint (Nzeneri, 2002). Eheazu (1998) emphasizes that non-formal education covers training and instruction outside the formal school system and ranged from individualized apprenticeships to nationwide literacy. According to him, it may be vocational as provided in the 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. Bholia in Nzeneri (2002) indicates that it covers all out-of-school education programmes such as agricultural extension and cooperative education, political, community development and environmental education etc.

#### **Informal Adult Education**

This is incidental, accidental or unintentional learning gained in day-to-day life of adults as they encounter changes and challenges in their lives. It is gained through listening to music, conversations and the media (radio,

news paper and television), reading of books, ceremonies, rituals and other forms of recreations. Its characteristics according to Okedara (1981) include absence of any form of planning; absence of stated goals, purposes, or objectives; learning is accidental; it is a life-long experience and there is lack of awareness of what can bring rich experience of what is to be learnt on the part of the learner.

From the definitions of adult education, its objectives and forms in Nigeria given above, adult education is all that is needed to transform both the lives of okada operators and the economy of the country. Adult education is capable of moving a greater number of the Okada operators out of the business into the productive sector of the economy as a result of the skills that will be imparted in them through various adult education programmes. The objectives of adult education indicates that every category of okada operators can fit into any of the adult education programmes designed for imparting specialized skills in them. Adult education programmes can be executed to reach its target participants through various approaches such as workshops, conferences, seminars, on-the-job training, in-service training, public enlightenment campaign and so on.

### **Programmes of Adult Education for Commercial Motorcycle Business Operators (Okada Riders) in Nigeria**

The following programmes of adult education can be adapted for training of commercial motorcycle business operators in Nigeria. It is expected that at the end of the any of the programmes as may be undertaken by different participants at different times, skills that will lead to the movement of the operators from the business into other sectors of the economy will be imparted into them. The programmes include:

#### **Basic literacy**

This is an adult educational programme designed to equip the recipients with the basic skills of reading, writing and computation of figures. The commercial motorcycle business operators undertaking the programme will acquire the skills of reading and writing that will expose them to other businesses in other sectors of the economy which are attractive than the commercial motorcycle business. The skills they will acquire will also enable them to understand the dangers associated with commercial motorcycle transport business which always outweighs the benefits. This understanding will no doubt facilitate their movement out the business into other sectors of the economy.

#### **Functional Literacy**

This form of literacy education programme combines teaching of literacy and training in some vocational skills. The aim of this programme is to equip participants with skills that may provide them with some employment opportunities on completion of training. It is expected that the programme linked to economic needs will make the adult participants to preserve and learn what is potentially useful to their socio-economic life. People who have participated in skill acquisition programmes will think of practicing the skill they have acquired in the programme. This will invariably divert their attention from engaging in motorcycle transport business as a cheap source of livelihood.

#### **Remedial Education**

The remedial programmes are intended for people who prematurely terminated their education without acquiring skills that will guarantee permanent literacy. It is an education intended to make-up educational deficiencies of the participants which will enable them further their education in order to acquire the higher level skills. The higher level skills will enable the participants who acquired them to engage in high level tasks rather than commercial motorcycle transport business.

#### **Vocational Education**

This programme includes skills acquisition, professional training, in-service and on-the-job trainings. The establishment of such government agencies as the Directorate of Employment (NDE) is in furtherance of government's intention of providing vocational education to promote industrial and technological development. Since most of the commercial motorcycle business operators failed in their initial skills and some of them have not acquired any form of skills at all, vocational adult education is capable of imparting new skills in different trades in them which will usher them into a new way of life as rightly indicated in Mbalisi (2010's) definition of adult education. With these new skills, they will be moved from the okada business into the areas they have acquired new skills.

#### **Environmental Adult Education**

This is a form of adult education programme designed to impart the knowledge and understanding of the environment and factors that lead to its deterioration. It also develops in the participants skills for identifying and solving environmental problems. Commercial motorcycle transport business operators will be made to be aware

of the areas through which they impact negatively on the environment as well as ways by which they can contribute towards solving environmental problems through environmental adult education programmes. Furthermore, a sense of commitment and personal responsibility will be inculcated in them for taking personal or collective actions towards addressing environmental problems when they discover themselves that they contribute immensely to major environmental problems. A salient and possible action of them towards solving environmental problems could be leaving the okada business for other attractive and environmentally friendly businesses.

### Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it could be seen that despite the perceived benefits of commercial motorcycle business, the dangers associated with it outweigh its benefits. It is revealed here that the benefits are short term. That is, they can only sustain a single bachelor but cannot sustain a family. It is also revealed that the economy is adversely affected by it because of its tendency of distracting a large number of youths needed in the productive sector of the economy from acquiring skills needed for them to be employed in the sector. This makes the business unsustainable.

The paper indicated that adult education is what is needed to get these youths already in the business fixed back into the productive sector of the economy through its various programmes designed for skills acquisition. It therefore calls for the serious attention and recognition from the government and the general public in all ramifications to adult education in Nigeria. This attention could be in the forms of funding required to execute various adult education programmes, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities needed for its programmes as well as employment and giving of relevance to all graduates trained for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of adult education programmes. All qualified practitioners, instructors, facilitators, educators and professionals in the field of adult education in Nigeria must be given their rightful positions in the scheme of things in Nigerian society.

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## Appendix



Commercial motorcycle business operators (okada riders) waiting for passengers. This place is Aluu, Rivers State, Nigeria.



Commercial motorcycle business operators (okada riders) also waiting for passengers. This place is Aluu, Rivers State, Nigeria.



An okada operator with a passenger waiting to complete them two per bike. This constitutes part of the dangers lamented in this paper.



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