

MANAGING LIFELONG EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

The paper stressed lifelong education as a means of equipping the youths with the relevant skills, knowledge and attitude that would make them become self-reliant and self employed. Lifelong education would also guarantee sustainable development when effectively managed. The paper discussed the concept and objectives of lifelong education. Again, the concept of sustainable development and its relationship with Nigerian education was dealt within this paper. The relationship between lifelong education and sustainable development was x-rayed and the challenges of lifelong education were also discussed. Finally, the paper suggested how lifelong education would be effectively managed as to guarantee sustainable development in Nigeria, such as giving adequate awareness to the public of its relevance in making the youths self employed and provision of adequate learning/training facilities in the lifelong education centres.

Education is the most powerful instrument used to change the world and very importantly it is a vehicle that controls every other mechanism in bringing change in the ever changing world. That is why when people are denied of educational opportunities, they are at the same time excluded from the development process, this is because education opens the door for every individual to participate and contribute to the development activities for sustainability of the nation.

Etuk and Ekpo (2008) saw development as a human activity and a deliberate effort by man to improve his living condition through creative and intelligent use of

resources, be it human, material or financial to transform society from a state of backwardness to a better, prosperous condition of living. They opined that the educational level attained is one of the indices of the developmental level of any society, because education sustains as well as accelerate overall development. The level of education a country has attained determines the rate of its development in the scheme of things or in every human endeavour. This is why countries need total transformation of the educational system as to boost the economy of the country for sustainable development.

However, lifelong education is another dimension that covers the entire educational process from the point of view of the individual and the society, because it has the broad aim of laying the foundation of learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning to learn self-awareness, citizenship and life skills (Bozimo, in Ogiji, 2008). Lifelong education was designed to equip students with relevance skills and knowledge in useful occupation area. It is therefore believed that if Nigeria would implement the fundamental issues in lifelong education, the society will be a better place for us all in terms of sustainable development of the nation.

Sustainable development is a goal countries all over the world have been striving to achieve by instituting plans and actions to improve the way things are done, It calls for constant efforts to initiate programmes by executing them for the overall interest of the people, because sustainable development is that development which meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Akuogwu, 2014). This concept was adopted into all aspects of the education and learning. The idea is that such an input will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generation, hence the purpose is to provide a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society will be able to meet their needs and aspirations. Lifelong education is the kind of education that is geared towards self sustenance and that of the society.

Concepts of Life Long Education

Lifelong education seeks to view education in its totality. It is concerned with helping the child to live his own life as he deserves to do, but it is also desired to help the future adult prepare for various for is of autonomy and self-hearing (Faurd in Ogiji, 2008). This is the kind of education that covers formal, informal and non-formal educational activities. This is why Dave in Ogiji (2008) sees lifelong education as involving lifelong learning which begins and ends with life. it should be seen as both preparation for life and as integral point of life. therefore it has to be and aid to lifelong education, to traditional school leaving and vocational education as well as the learning that leads to self-development and self-actualization. Bozimo in Ogiji (2008) sees lifelong education to include:

- i. Programme or initiatives for early childhood care and socialization
- ii. Educational programme for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- iii. Out of schools, non-formal programme for up-dating the knowledge and skills.

Lifelong education is defined in this paper as all learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies with a personal, civic and employment related perspective.

Lifelong learning is a kind of independent and creative learning experience that help learners survive in a rapidly changing society. Three essential characteristics of lifelong education are that the learning is school, individually motivated and spanning across the life time.

Lifelong education is the wide, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for not only personal but for professional reasons as well. It does not only enhance social inclusion, active citizenship and individual development, but also increases competitiveness and employability. The importance of lifelong learning has been increasing for some important reasons. These are increase of life expectancy, increase of old age dependency ratio, to desire for increase in quality of life and trying to keep themselves in good physical and mental condition by humans.

Sustainable Development and Nigerian Educational System

No country can attain sustainable economic development without overhauling the educational system, because education is seen as the only key index for millennium development goals (MDGs) are targeted at addressing extreme poverty and sustainable development in the world. According to UNESCO (2008), it is based on the premise that poverty cannot be eradicated without addressing the basic human rights, health, education, shelter and security, which are crucial to the attainment of sustainable economic development.

Most African countries have made conscious efforts to achieve sustainable development but these have been hindered by extreme poverty which remains a major challenge (Bigsten&Shimeles, 2007). Poverty in Africa been attributed to a number of factors ranging from conflict, bad policies, low human capital, poor governance and weak institutions (Acernoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2003). To alleviate poverty and create better quality of life to all, the educational institution should be adequately funded, transformed and sustained so that the citizens can live above the poverty level that is ravaging, the continent called Africa, and Nigeria not an exception, as majority of Nigerians are still leaving below the poverty level.

Sustainable development is therefore seen as development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. (Akuegwu, 2014). However, Hasna, (2007) sees sustainability as the process which tells us of a government in all aspect of human life affecting

sustenance. It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals, and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity and social equity (Nwiyi and Osuji, 2011). Sustainable development emphasizes change from old sector-central ways of doing business to new approaches that evoke cross-sectoral co-ordination and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development process, some of the sustainable development goals include; to ensure environmental sustainability, promote social equity and develop a global partnership for development among developing nations and education is seen as a vehicle that will help to achieve all these. It therefore becomes pertinent, that educational institutions especially lifelong education be x-rayed so that individual can understand how this kind of education could help the country in achieving the goals of sustainable development and to help in eradicating poverty in the country especially among the youths.

Challenges of Life Long Education

There is no type of education that does not have its own challenges worldwide. Below are some of the challenges facing lifelong education in Nigeria.

- **Lack of cognition:** Lifelong education in Nigeria is not well recognised and attended to by both the local, state and federal governments respectively. Much attention is not given to this type of education in terms of providing the necessary equipment for effective training of the youths to meet the challenges of the society.
- **Lack of awareness:** Now awareness is given to lifelong education in Nigeria. The policy is there in t paper, but its implementation is nothing to write home about, as people do not take such training serious, because of the importance attached to certificate qualification and not the acquisition of skills by the learner.
- **Lack of adequate funding:** Finance is very important in every educational sector. Lifelong education needs adequate funding in order to achieve its purpose. This to a very great extent is insufficient with regards to lifelong education in Nigeria.
- **Inadequate training facilities:** The availability of training facilities are very crucial, because the practical skills needed by the trainees is hereby made easy, but such facilities are not adequately provided and as such the basic practical skills are not acquired by the learners. Corruption in the education system also impedes effective management of lifelong education. Some managers in these centres embezzle funds meant to develop the system. Misappropriation of funds poses serious challenge as funds released to the centres are not accounted for, hence the purchase and maintenance of the existing facilities/machines becomes a mirage.

Life Long Education and Sustainable Development

The integration of lifelong education into Nigeria educational system would help in creating more jobs for the ever increasing population, which would lead to sustainable development in the country. It is important that the foundation of the

educational system be made strong so that the youths will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for self-reliant so as to contribute to the overall development of the nation. Lifelong learning skills include;

- **Search strategy skills:** This skill deals with defining a problem and setting location, selecting organizing, presenting and finally evaluating information.
- **Problem solving skills:** Learning how to go about solving problems and providing students the opportunities to brainstorm together and sort out different points to follow to get to the end of solution are important learning skills to incorporate into our everyday teaching.
- **Confidence building skills:** Developing our attitude and assertiveness is so important. Education must instill confidence in our students so that they become aware of the fact that they can learn, explore and achieve success with little or no supervision.
- **Self-directed learning skills:** By giving the trainee or students the opportunity to determine the pace of their own learning, so that they become active learners. This skill enables the trainees or students to learn at their own pace. They learn to discover new techniques to enhance their performance.
- **Project planning skills:** Being able to set parameters for the scope of a project as well as setting and sticking to a timeframe for the completion of a project is an imperative skill to ensure learning continues throughout a life time. Being able to self manage and set achievable task is something that follows us throughout life.
- **Interpersonal skill:** Appropriate verbal and non verbal communication plus listening and questioning skills, being responsible and accountable for actions, awareness of social etiquette and expectations alongside self management skills are essential for working as a member of a team. When one acquires these learning skills and puts them into practice aspect of human endeavour, the society will develop for the good of mankind.

Lifelong practical skills include among others woodwork and designs, ICT maintenance, artistic work and design, welding work just to mention but a few.

These are basic skills individuals, learn from the early childhood that would make them creative and independent even if they do not attend higher education. Lifelong education equips the youths with skills, knowledge and training in such a way that they develop themselves and the society. These kind of skills, knowledge and training remains with them for life time. There is also need for improvement as to sustain and maintain these skills for as long as the individuals live here on earth.

This is why entrepreneurs centres be well equipped as to give them the adequate knowledge and skills for life sustenance and for the development of the society. This is why Nwiyi and Osuji (2009) opined that the entrepreneurship centres in Nigeria be well funded, adequately equipped with both human and material resources, good and quality learning facilities so as to improve the trainee's skills and knowledge for the sustainable development of the country, since lifelong education encourages

voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge. Lifelong education need to be highly recognized and attended to in Nigeria educational system so that its objectives would be achieved which invariably would lead to sustainable development in the country.

A strong political will is very necessary in the management of lifelong education in Nigeria. The political class must demonstrate readiness to support it on non-partisan basis recognizing the fact that society is the ultimate beneficiary of this kind of education. Again the experienced personnel be posted or sent to the centres to manage them so that excellent performance will be guaranteed for its sustainability. Involvement of all stakeholders in education in the funding of lifelong education is very important as it involves all levels of government, NGOs, philanthropist and individuals. Clear sources of funding must be identified, diversified and participatory as to ensure that over-centralized and over bureaucratized funding structure is avoided for effective management of lifelong education.,

Good motivation mechanism is required by the management of the scheme, Teachers and trainers should be adequately motivated with good welfare packages to ensure quality output. The products of lifelong education should be people with those skills that could make them self employed or employers of labour. This will help un the sustainability of the scheme and the society at large.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of the program very necessary. Periodic assessment of actual practical skill experience with the trainees, identification of strengths, weakness and loopholes and how all these can be handled subsequently.

The authority in charge of lifelong education centres whether government or privately owned, should have every good reason for regular programme to ensure practical skills needed by the trainees sustainable development of the country.

The principle of flexibility and open door policy should be maintained among the education managers. Application of different approaches to a particular problem is definitely more result-oriented. As a result, educational managers of today should be liberal and open to accepting divergences in the way things are done. According to Kayde in Ominiyi&Opa (2008) gone are the days of top-down, hard-nosed directions, when education managers were closed to suggestions and want things done their own way. Demonstrating flexibility and empathy while remaining true to the core values of the organization and finding ways of circumvent unpredictable impediment, should be characteristics of today's educational managers.

Conclusion

Lifelong education is the kind of education that is geared towards equipping the youths with the basic skills, knowledge and attitude that would enable them be self-reliant and also to be employers of labour to effectively manage the system so that the objectives of lifelong education will be finally achieved hence leading to the sustainable development in the country.

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