

PLANNING AND FINANCING CONTINUING AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Literacy is a major component of human capital formation and fundamental to any programme of social and economic progress. While the importance of having a proper education is continually stressed by various governments and the society, yet the level of literacy still remains low in Nigeria. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in a paper 'Education for all' presented in Delhi on December 1993 suggests an 80% access to basic education in order to achieve a sustainable level of learning skills by the larger population. This set the human development landmark of the decade in Nigeria. An optimum level of education can only be sustained when there is a complete removal of illiteracy from among a country's citizens. This will require a major emphasis on character-building. In recent times, there has been an increasing realisation of the critical importance of adult education. Yet the determination and political will to promoting it has been hardly inadequate when compared to the immense enormity and urgency of the task. Despite the commendable work done by educational bodies, government and non-governmental organisations in Nigeria to bring education closer to its citizen, there are still troubling inefficiencies and problems in planning and implementation of policies. However, this paper seeks ways to improve on the situation and suggest ways of attaining optimum education and development for Nigeria.

Keywords: Planning, Financing, Continuing, Non-formal education

Introduction

In the world today, education and development are inseparable. It is a known fact that quality education enhances socio-economic development, while less emphasis and interest in education brings set-backs to the development of any nation. To this end, technological advancement and knowledge continue to be on the increase and become valued concepts, especially in Nigeria. Indigenous education in Nigeria co-exists with Western-orientated education. As a result, this creates a need to bridge the gap between the literate and the illiterate in the Western sense of literacy. There are several factors that operate as barriers to achieving greater levels of literacy in Nigeria. To change this will require a general modification of the educational system.

According to Reginald (2005), Nigeria's inadequate commitment over the years to pursue the development of adult education as a strategic objective, as well as an instrument of national development has been one of the major drawbacks of the country's efforts to pull itself out of poverty. In recent times, government and NGOs have been trying to create a national identity that will eradicate regional inequities, and eliminate parochial and inefficient indigenous educational practices. Several plans are being put in place to regulate indigenous private educational institutions and craft apprenticeship in order to achieve an optimum level of employment consistent with the number of persons searching for a good and quality education in Nigerian (Akinpelu, 2001).

The concept of continuing and non-formal education

The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has organized various campaigns so as to reach rural dwellers in a bid to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged groups and promote continuous and non-formal education. Continuing education is defined as any type of post-secondary education used to either obtain additional certificates to strengthen one's professionalism. This must be distinguished from continuous education which is a structured educational activity designed or intended to support the continuing development of individual or a group of individuals to maintain and enhance their competence. It promotes problem-solving and critical thinking (UNESCO, 2004).

According to Reginald (2005), "non-formal education encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional or personal reasons." It includes general, vocational and enterprise based training within a lifelong perspective (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003). Similarly, Akinpelu (2002) pointed out that continuing education is a post-initial education and observed that the word "continuing" can only mean a carrying forward or an extension of an activity rather than a

starting of it. The vast majority of continuing education services are organized for clients/learners who have some pre-occupation or jobs other than studying, either in the evening, weekend or summer-vacation classes or even study on their own in their various homesteads.

In contrast, non-formal education could be referred to as education that is carried out without structured formal setting. Thus, this type of education is spelt out in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) as that form of education that encompasses all forms of functional education given to youth and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, continuing and vocational education.

Akinpelu (2001) and Fabunmi (2004), point out that continuing education is an educational programme designed to educate an individual or group of individuals and give them further skill and knowledge to be applied in their activities or area of expertise. Despite the fact that continuing and non-formal education training programmes are designed for adults, they also enable young men and women in rural and semi-urban areas use their skills in contributing towards the development of the nation's economy. Whether in the form of seminars, home-study, on-line programmes, conferences, workshops, on-the-job etc, it is intended to educate persons on new advancement or to improve a person's expertise in a particular field of endeavour. Programmes under continuing education include non-degree career training, formal personal enrichment courses, workforce training, experimental learning and self-directed learning among others. In Nigeria, some universities like National Open University, University of Ibadan and University of Lagos among others have started offering courses where adult learners have the option of in-class learning and apprenticeship programmes.

Scope and forms of adult and non-formal education being financed in Nigeria

Adults and youths of different ages undertake various forms of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. These forms can be broadly categorized into two, namely: (a) adult basic education and extension, and (b) continuing and further education. All these forms of adult and non-formal education are financed either by the government or its agencies or by individuals and organizations. Adult and non-formal education in Nigeria is provided by the private individuals and organizations in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Specifically, the following are some of the organizations providing adult and non formal education in Nigeria:

- **Government:** The federal government creates a section in the Federal Ministry of Education to oversee adult education programme. Besides, the

National Commission for Adult and non-formal Education and other Ministries provide adult education for the people. A similar situation takes place at the state level. Apart from Education Ministries, others like local government, commerce, Industries, Agriculture and States Agencies provide adult education programmes for the people.

- **Quasi government:** These include universities, parastatal organization, information services, service and goods-producing industries.
- **Non-governmental:** These are voluntary organizations, mosques, churches, workers' organization, employing bodies, political organization and foreign agencies.

Importance of continuing and non-formal education

Continuing education is an adult education. The programme is flexible and adaptable to meet specific needs and requirements; hence it is relevant and problem-solving. Adult education can be in form of non-formal education, literacy education and continuing education among others. Adult or non-formal education emphasizes on knowledge, skills and technology and the acquisition of continual update of knowledge and skills is imperative. Planning and financing continuing and non-formal education in Nigeria contributes to the growth of national economy by improving the skills and productive capacity of its citizenry. There is hardly any industrialized country without a well-developed education and training system – a system that not only provides a rich variety of programs or courses that respond to both personal and national development needs, but also seeks to remove barriers to adult participation. The importance of continuing education as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (2004) includes:

- i. **Ensures a productive future:** Adult literacy promises a good future as it provides a good character to a person. It enables one to make best use of one's skills and talent and help in fetching the most competitive jobs. Importance of continuing education can be realized in the height achieved by great and famous personalities in different fields of education.
- ii. **Opens new vistas:** The magnitude of education lies in its ability to broaden the mental scope and open new vistas that are inaccessible otherwise. It enables one to understand different dimensions of a particular point-of-view, which an uneducated person cannot. It helps in making a person tolerant and humble, and at the same time removes the darkness of ignorance. This is the ultimate goal of education
- iii. **Helps in decision-making:** Education broadens the framework of the mind and enables us to take the right decisions at right times. In every

sphere of life, we are supposed to take right decisions that might be very wrong and thereby preventing grave losses.

- iv. **Bolsters confidence:** Self-brief is the most important trait in making a good human being and education helps in augmenting the self-confidence, fostering positive outlook and allowing us to rely on ourselves.
- v. **Spreads awareness:** Education spreads awareness about right and wrong. It informs us about our rights and the services we can access; at the same time emphasizing on the duties entrusted upon us by the society.
- vi. **Makes better citizens:** Education that opens our mind and expands our horizons, which plays a crucial role in shaping us to be good and responsible citizens. Education helps us to learn about our culture and our history, and subsequently imbibe those values to become better.

Problems of financing continuing and non-formal education in Nigeria

A number of problems are involved in having access to information on financing of adult education in Nigeria. One of the difficulties is on having access to adult and non-formal education programmes which may be due to the complexity of activities that constitute adult education (Hasaan, 2009; Okech, 2004). The diversity of provision, without focus or co-ordination, complicated the effort to identify the budgets or expenditure dedicated to adult education. In many cases, budgets that serve adult education are not in budget line explicitly designed as adult education. Not until recent years, for example, that local government councils in Nigeria now has vote for community development programmes; this made the department of community development become functional in the local government administration. Also, the Federal and States Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Commerce, Industry and Cooperative carry out adult and non-formal education activities. The budget in these Ministries is not clearly dedicated to adult education. Even some civil society organizations involved in adult education often have adult education as part of other activities and may not necessarily have a distinct budget for it. When these organizations do have distinct budget for adult education, it is often more specifically for adult literacy. One other difficulty is that both government and non-governmental organizations are usually reluctant to reveal information on their finances. The consequence of this problem is that there may be the lack of researched information on the economics and financing of adult education and related activities (Gbadamosi et al, 2013).

Financing Adult and Non-formal Education: The Way Out

- i. Efforts should be made by the policy makers to fund adult and non formal education for the benefit of the masses.
- ii. Other sources of fund should be explored in order to realize the potency of adult and non-formal education.
- iii. Apart from literacy and basic education, efforts should be made by government at all levels to fund other forms of adult and non-formal education for the benefit of the people.
- iv. It is enjoined on all the stakeholders of adult and non-formal education to provide clear and distinct information on funding of adult education.
- v. It is suggested that all agencies providing adult education related programmes should coordinate their efforts in order to avoid duplication of records on financing adult and non-formal education.

Conclusion

Continuing and non-formal system of education is multi-dimensional. It is a form of education that starts where literacy education ends. It includes all forms of education received by adults (or youths) after foundation education. The non-formal education programmes are supposed to offer a flexible opportunity of receiving basic education to disadvantaged children, youths and adults who could not participate in formal schooling either due to poverty, cultural or other or other social barriers. The non-formal education approach permits mainstreaming of learners into the formal system at different levels. The integration of the non-formal education as a component of the basic education system therefore requires that quality standards must be maintained at all levels of the literacy programmes to mainstreaming of learners possible.

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