

ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: ACCESS TO QUALITY

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Abstract

Adult and Non-formal education is a tool that could be used to educate people and raise their level of awareness on issues related to the society and also a means for building the culture of democracy, and sustainable livelihood. It is an instrument that could be used to achieve national development, transparent and corruption free society. The paper examines the need for quality assurance in adult and non-formal education, discusses the concept of adult and non-formal education, objectives of adult and non-formal education, and concept of quality assurance. Suggestions were proffered such as the need for improvement in budgetary allocation, provision of adequate trained teachers and adequate facilitators and provision of guidance for accessing information such as carrier opportunities for the adults.

Key words: Education, Adult and Non-formal education, Quality Assurance Access.

Education is a vital tool for social, cultural and economic mobility at the personal level and an instrument for transforming community, society and the nation at large. According to Jaiyeoba (2007), education is a priority sector in every well-meaning society. She further stressed that education is a major force in economic, intellectual, social, and for cultural empowerment. Fafunwa (1974) in Ossai and Nwalado (2014) viewed education as a process by which a young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. This is in line with the national policy on education which identified education as a tool 'par excellence' for effecting national development (FRN, 2004). Education is an essential component of best practice that creates quality teaching strategies that produces improved scholarship (Ololube & Ubogu, 2008 in Ossai & Nwalado, 2014).

Moreover, education plays a dominant role in a society as tool for large scale achievement in all human endeavors. Education helps an individual to study and understand real life situations so as to develop confidence in him. Rena (2008) in Nwalado (2014) opined that education provides a strong base for national value-orientation and nation-building process. Amadi (2011) stated that education is a means of integrating people into the community, for upholding customs and tradition as well as for the modification or changing in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation. Hence, one can conclude that education is one of the social institutions that contributes to the construction and maintenance of social order and progress.

Adult and Non-Formal Education

Adult and Non-Formal education is viewed by many people in different ways across nations and continent. Its advocates have always advanced meanings and explanations according to how they feel about the concept. According to Folaranmi, Oladiran and Alfa (2013), adult and non-formal education and informal learning is all embracing. It is education that occurs in a formal learning environment, but that is not formally organized. It usually involves workshops, short courses or conferences and seminars. Anure (2014) viewed adult education as all forms of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements at their different levels of comprehensions and ability in their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life. He further stated that adult education incorporates anything that enlarges merits understanding, activates them; helps them to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves. Bryson (1936) in Oyebamiji and Hassan (2012) cited by Abdullahi (2015) posited that adult education as a discipline has the ability for enlightenment, liberation of individuals and communities. Furthermore, he perceived adult education as any purposeful effort towards self-development carried out by an individual without legal compulsion and without becoming his major field of activity.

Moreover, Nnazor (2005) stated that adult education is any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems to enable them adjust fully to change and challenges in their lives and society. Supporting this, Hanachor and Needom (2014) opined that adult basic education is all forms of organized education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge, life skills, values and attitudes that they require to survive and develop their capacity.

However, Coombs and Ahmed(2000) in Ihejirika, (2000) cited by Ossai and Nwalado (2014) stated that non-formal education is any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of formal school system to provide selected type of learning to particular sub-group in the population, adults as well as children. Non-formal education is designed to encourage all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education, (FRN, 2004).Therefore, one can conclude that adult and non-formal education is a process that adults engage in a systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain knowledge, skills, attitudes or values.

Objectives of Adult and Non-Formal Education

Adult education is officially recognized as one of the components of the education system in Nigeria in terms of policy statement and document. The 6th edition of the National Policy on Education, Section 4 (2004) clearly specified the conceptualization and goals of adult education as follows:

- i. Provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include migrant folks, Almajiri pupils, illiterates and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents; persons who left the formal school system early and are now willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories of disadvantaged groups who are unable to have access to the conventional education system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances.
- ii. Provide remedial and lifelong education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary school; and
- iii. Provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- iv. To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlighten.

Furthermore, the international encyclopedia of education (1985) in Ossai and Nwalado (2014) identified four major goals of non-formal education which include the following:

- i. Alternative Route to upward Mobility: Non-formal education afford alternative routes to cope with the required level of competence in the social education.
- ii. Training for modernizing the workforce: Non-formal education recognizes the need for adjusting the learning program to change condition in the society.
- iii. Rural Development: Non-formal education should cater for the whole population not just school age who because of the necessity of schooling migrates to the urban centres; thereby totally neglecting those in the rural areas where great measure of resources for development resides.
- iv. Political Incorporation: Non-formal education assists in the political facilitation of the individual to be conscious of himself as a citizen or as belonging to a political community.

Quality Assurance Concept

Quality assurance is viewed as the standard of excellence that should be in conformity to a given level of excellence which represents particular standards or specifications (Aworh, 2005, in Adewale, 2016). He further stressed that quality can only be achieved if those trusted with various functions perform them well. Thus, quality is usually specified with measurable indicators for comparative purpose. Moreover, quality assurance is viewed as the management of goods, services and activities from the input stage, through processes, to the output stage of production aim at preventing quality problems and ensuring that only conforming products reach the customer (UBEC, 2012). In addition to this, quality assurance is also viewed as a process which involves the process of monitoring, assessing and evaluating as objectively as possible all aspects of schools life and communicating the outcome to all concerned with the aim of improving standard (FME, 2010).

Similarly, Wilger (1997) in Adewale (2016) opined that quality assurance is a collective process by which an academic institution ensures that the quality of education process is maintained to the standard it has set itself. Therefore, one can conclude that quality assurance is an encompassing concept which includes all processes, policies and actions through which the quality of education is developed, improved and maintained.

Quality Assurance in Adult and Non-Formal Education

The term quality has no general accepted definition. According to Oduma (2013) quality refers to the standard of phenomenon when it is compared to other things like it. However, Ajayi and Akindure (2007) in Oduma (2013) noted that quality assurance is about consistently meeting product specifications or getting things right the first time, and every time. Okebukola(2012) cited by Abdullahi (2015) stated that quality assurance in the education system therefore, is an umbrella concept for a lot of activities that are designed to improve the systems input, process and output of education. Corroborating this, Ezeugo (2010) in Oduma (2013) opined that quality assurance in education entails the quality of teaching personnel, quality of available instructional/teaching materials, equipment and facilities, school environment and students, including quality of education delivery. Idirs (2012) in Oduma (2013) viewed quality assurance in education as the determination of standards, appropriate methods and quality requirements by an expert body, accompanied by a process of inspection or evaluation that examines the extent to which practice meets these standards.

Going by the above, quality assurance in adult and non-formal education system therefore, involves the process of monitoring, assessing and evaluating all aspects and activities involved and communicating the outcome to all concerned with a view of improving the products of the system. Thus, quality assurance in adult and non-formal education system implies the ability of the various arms to meet the expectations of the clientele and users of manpower in relation to the quality of skills required by their output. Supporting this, Oduma (2013) stated that quality assurance is the ability or degree with which a product, service or phenomenon conforms, to an established standard, and which makes it to be relatively superior to others. Hence, quality assurance in adult and non-formal education therefore, means the relevance and appropriateness of the program to the needs of the recipients and that of the nation in general.

Adult and Non-Formal Education Facilitator

Scholars have defined facilitators in many ways. Thus, Nzeneri (2008) sees facilitator as a person who consciously and systematically administers the facilitation-learning activities, programs and process with the primary aim of assisting others to learn. However, Reuben (2010) stated that an adult education facilitator is someone who is full time or part-time or even voluntary professional educator working exclusively with adults in different settings. He further viewed the role of adult education facilitator to include acting as a consultant, leader, community educator, or specialist who works with adults. Anurugwo, Alatare, and Mbara(2014) cited by Adewale (2016) stressed that facilitation connotes the idea of assisting, freeing, achieving, guiding and empowering learners in the learning process. He further identified some skills essential for facilitation which include:

- i. The development of a physical and psychological relationship where full attention is given to the learner.
- ii. Showing empathy, respect, likeness and correctness for the learner and the learner's need and
- iii. Understanding.

Thus, for quality assurance to be achieved in adult and non-formal education programs, facilitators must possess certain qualities which will enable them to effectively facilitate learning rather than content transmitters.

Challenges Facing Adult and Non-Formal Education towards Quality Assurance

Adult and Non-formal education is diverse in nature. This is because the exact and specific number of adult and non-formal education programs cannot be stated. According to Imhabekhai (2009) adult and non-formal education is voluntary and aims to satisfy the short and long term needs of its clientele. However, adult and non-formal education includes remedial education, continuing education, labor education, literacy education, functional literacy, extension education, retirement and pre-retirement education, civic education, nomadic education, environmental education, population

education etc. Looking at all these, the challenges faced by adult and non-formal education amongst others include the following:

- i. Public awareness of the program.
- ii. In sufficient literacy and numeracy facilitators.
- iii. Lack/ Inadequate facilitation facilities/ learning materials.
- iv. Lack of motivation/incentives of facilitators.
- v. Timing and location of the program and centers.
- vi. Lack of political will from the authorities.
- vii. Poor record keeping.
- viii. Inadequate mobilization of stakeholders.
- ix. Poor budgetary allocation

Strategies for Achieving Quality Assurance in Adult and Non-Formal Education

The need for quality assurance in adult and non-formal education cannot be over emphasized. In order to make the program more responsive, more meaningful and more functional to the clientele and the society in general, there is the need to redress the practices in the program especially now that the clientele are no longer finding it easy to cope with the economic circumstances of life. In order to ensure quality facilitation and learning, the following may be seen as the reasons for the desired attention to improve the quality of adult and non-formal education program:

- i. Staff quality is an important pre-requisite for ensuring quality assurance. Therefore, there is need for continue encouraging staff training and development strategies. Staff should continue be assisted to undergo workshops, seminars and conferences.
- ii. The curriculum should be reviewed to meet the clientele's and societal needs and aspirations.
- iii. There is need for proper and constant monitoring in order to obtain data about the ongoing program, facilitation and learning activities.
- iv. Mentoring: This should be focused on bringing about improvement in the quality of facilitation.
- v. Frequent assessment of the available facilities and resources for the program.

Conclusion

Adult and non-formal education plays vital roles in human development by eliminating illiteracy and serving both the youths and the elderly people. It is seen as an independently valuable pathway of acquiring knowledge and skills, an indispensable and powerful instrument that contribute towards the development of community, society and nation at large. Adult and Non-Formal education assists the populace in all ramification of life by creating more political awareness and educating society towards their fundamental right. Therefore, motivation and empowering adult and non-formal education facilitators, full implementation of its components (i.e quality policy, objective and management, functional and operational levels) are significant tools in achieving quality assurance.

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