

HISTORICAL APPROACH TO ENHANCEMENT AND INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS AS IT RELATES TO ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is undoubtedly, a major instrument for appropriate innovations and enhancement of societal development in any nation, Nigeria inclusive. Adult and non-formal education in Nigeria needs aggressive re-dress, refinement and re-tool if Nigeria as a nation must achieve the education for all (EFA) goals by 2015. The focus of this paper is on the concept of adult and non-formal education. Objectives of adult and non-formal education as enshrined in National Policy on education (2004). Innovative programmes of Adult and non-formal education i.e. literacy, continuing education, Universal Basic Education (UBE) and functional literacy, problems militating against adult and non-formal education. Recommendations and conclusion are equally made.

Educational innovations provide the bases for all social transformation in the society. Education of the girl child for instance, has removed the idea of a man being the sole provider of food and security, as women now are found in different professions just like men. Education has equally taught members of the society the need to cut down on the size of their families. Education is the anchor on which all forms of development depends. It provides the direction as well as addressing the needs of the society at each point in time. If education fails to provide innovation, then it has failed in one of its major functions. (Nwazuoke, Okediran and Maronkola 2007).

It have been established that adult and non-formal education is a programme that has been explored and is still being used to achieve sustainable national development in Nigeria. This affirmation is premised on numerous justifications and case studies as cited on how adult and non-formal education structures and methods have assisted in realizing sustainable national development in Nigeria. These justifications are that adult literacy in the context of lifelong learning – fostering social change – promotes poverty reduction, acceptance of new information, aids rural development and transformation. The relevance of adult education programmes, structures and methods as embedded in continuing and remedial programmes, democracy and good governance as well as civic education among others is also established (Sarumi, 2011).

Adult and non-formal education has been responsive to the societal needs of Nigerians Sarumi (2011).

Thus the discourse as contained in this paper are on the concepts of adult and non-formal education, objectives of adult and non-formal education as enshrined in national policy on education

(2004), enhancement and innovative programmes of adult and non-formal education, problems militating against adult and non-formal education, recommendations and conclusion.

Concept of Adult and Non-Formal Education

The ordinary meaning of adult education is the education of the adult which encompasses the process of learning by the adult persons. Adult education has often been defined as education provided out of schools. This is understandable as adult education had been available to man long before the formal school system. This portrays adult education as the oldest form of education in human history. Omolewa (1981) argues that following the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, Adam was the first client (student) of adult education and was instructed by his creator (God) outside the formal school system. Therefore, it is right to assert that adult education remains the least to be understood by the people.

Many scholars have shown that adult education varies from people to people, culture to culture, society to society etc. In short, this actually allow for various definitions as the way developed nations define adult education differ from that of developing nations, but the universally accepted definition was coined by UNESCO in 1976 as:

The entire body of organized educational processes whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two folds perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development

It is worth noting that various definitions of adult education aim at portraying the importance of adult education in development of individual and his environment. One common strand runs through all such definitions i.e. adult education encompasses all the activities with an educational purpose that are carried on by people engaged in the ordinary business of life. This focus of adult education has long permeated the policy for this branch of education in Nigeria. It is people-oriented, most importantly at the rural communities. Its primary goal has been to strengthen and improve the processes through which people strive to organize for the solution of their group problems (Sarumi, 2011).

It is not an act of over-flogging an issue to say that adult-education remains the ultimate factor in the improvement of personal, social, political and economic life. In a nut shell, it provides the type of learning that enables beneficiaries to cope successfully with current challenges since the world is not static but dynamic in nature.

On the other hand, Non formal education otherwise known as traditional or indigenous education started in Nigeria around 12th century via the activities of Islamic and Christian missionaries respectively with sole aim of winning converts. Basically, the government involvement in Non-formal

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education is believed to have started in 1944 while the first mass literacy campaign was officially launched in 1945.

In an attempt to review definitions, Non-formal Education (NFE) was viewed as any organized systematic educational activity carried out outside the frame work of the formal school system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population as well as children. It also means any organized educational or training activity for school drop-outs (early learners), for illiterate rural adults, youths, women or industrial workers, aimed at improving their employment and income earning potential, as giving them general education which in some cases, as designed, to help them re-enter the formal educational stream. This implies that most non-formal programmes cater for the same learning needs as formal schools. (NMEC & UNICEF, 2010). In effect, Non-formal Education is a substitute for formal schooling (UNESCO, 1994).

In summary to the above definition, non-formal education is any organized learning that takes place outside the formal school system for out-of-school children, youths and adults. Basically, one can infer from all the definitions above that adult and non-formal education is any type of education programme which is purposely designed for adult members of the society. This is to enable them acquire skills and competencies in different fields of human endeavour either on full time or part time bases and it has a short term duration. In most cases it lays more emphasis on acquisition of skills than the basic literacy of reading, writing and arithmetic (3^{RS}).

Objectives of Adult and Non-Formal Education As Enshrined in National Policy on Education (2004)

Adult and non-formal education by implication has catalogue of objectives but the Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (2004) itemized the following as its objectives:

1. Provision of 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 group especially the disadvantaged gender.
2. Provision of functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
3. Provision of education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
4. Provision of in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
5. give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Enhancement and Innovations Programmes in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

To realize the goals and objectives of adult and non-formal education, appropriate enhancement and innovative programmes to truly and meaningfully address immediate needs of the recipients is required.

In view of this, a few types of Adult and Non-formal Education programmes are briefly discussed below:

(a) Literacy

This is an educational programme that is organized for people that cannot read, write, count numbers or those who have never been to school at any point in time for the purpose of acquiring the skills of reading, writing and numeracy, global knowledge and in the context of lifelong learning.

This form of adult and non-formal education is equally referred to as the informal traditional literacy. It is associated with the teaching of the skill of reading, writing and simple arithmetic that is, the employing 3RS such as remedial measures and the evening classes for adult who have missed the opportunity of formal school. It is no gain saying that this aspect of adult and non-formal education still remains the core in most countries especially the developing countries. According to Omolewa (1981), the art of reading and writing was an innovation introduced by Muslim traders and teachers into parts of Northern Nigerian and by the Portuguese Priests into parts of Southern Nigeria during the fifteenth century. The literacy education in terms of reading, writing and teaching in either English or Arabic to both young and old were the target of both agencies. They worked in this direction with the belief that acquisition of the skills of reading and writing in these languages would help their converts who are largely illiterate to become literates.

In furtherance of literacy, post literacy is an all important segment of literacy. Programmes here are usually designed for those who have completed basic literacy programmes and want to acquire more knowledge. This stage of adult literacy programme is equivalent to elementary level of formal education system.

(b) Continuing Education

This form of adult and non-formal education is meant for all categories of learners especially individuals who want to remedy inadequacies in their educational pursuits. It covers a wide range of activities and its content is as wide as life itself which made it possible to be described as life-long education. Continuing education programmes presume that the recipients have had some previous formal education which they want to continue through this programme.

In a nut shell, these types of educational programmes usually assume the form of extramural studies, open and distance learning as well as remedial education.

(c) Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The universal basic education programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was formally launched by then President Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th September, 1989. The programme intended to be universal, free and compulsory. Adult literacy and nomadic education programme are also accommodated in the Universal Basic Education (UBE). Universal basic

education with its universal concept, implies that many citizens of the globe (world) should enjoy fundamental right to education. However, little success has been achieved but not good enough for a country like Nigeria that is in deer need of fast political, technological and economic development. This is not far from the fact that the present mass literacy campaign has achieved little because the targeted year 2000 for total illiteracy eradication has come and gone while the year 2010 was another anticipated year which equally failed but Nigerians are consciously anticipating year 2015.

(d) Functional literacy

Literacy is traditionally described as the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently and think critically. Literacy could be described as a lifelong intellectual process, in which everybody must be involved so as to be functional in all areas of human endeavor and subsequently, be able to overcome poverty. With increase in education, functional literacy level also increased (Ayodele & Oyedokun, 2013).

UNESCO (1963) sees literacy as “the ability to read and write, with understanding a short simple sentence about one’s everyday life. However, it becomes imperative to note that literacy has gone beyond activities designed to teach adults to read, write sentence and possibly simple calculation. This is due to the fact that such restricted skills are of little utility. A person is functionally literate only when he or she can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community, also to enable the recipient use reading, writing and calculation for his own and community development”.

A number of functional literacy initiatives in the country (Nigeria) reveal that people enroll because they wish to learn for livelihood. Thus, skills in such vocation as hair dressing, laundry, soap production, clothing and textiles production (batik, tie and dye) sewing and dress making, vegetable gardening, food processing and preservation combined with literacy numeracy skills will be acquired within three to nine months (Olive, 2013). This will actually enable the learners (recipients) to enter the job market or set up their own businesses.

Functional literacy which goes beyond the ability to read and write is a continuous process of training, retraining and reinventing oneself in order to sharpen one’s attitudes and interest, so as to be able to come to terms with one, think critically, identify problems and take realistic measures to solve problems (Muodumogu, 2012). In other words, functional literacy ensures that individuals are sufficiently motivated to achieve development that will enable them live functionally in the society and consequently achieve economic emancipation. Succinctly put, it bestows on the recipients the ability and willingness to make right choices, face the demands and challenges of everyday life and achieve higher level of self-control. However, functional literacy is a powerful tool for empowering the less privileged in communities especially if they are able to apply their new learnt skills.

Problems Militating Against Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

Without an iota of doubt, every innovation has been characterized with problems, most importantly where proper planning and implementation have not been taken into adequate

consideration. Adult and non-formal education as a discipline is faced by a catalogue of problems which affect its functionalities/effectiveness. These problems include:

Ignorance of its meaning, tenets and purpose especially in developing countries (Nigeria) where many people do not know the importance of the discipline in enabling personal, community and national development. Many scholars have shown that adult education varies from people to people, society to society.

It is unfortunate that adult and non-formal education is poorly funded in Nigeria as many governments fail to provide enough funds for the programmes. It is equally sad to note that in most cases, much fund voted for adult and non-formal education programmes were diverted for other purposes and possibly to personal purse due to Nigerian factor of corruption. Therefore, effectiveness of the programmes cannot be fulfilled.

Another ugly situation hindering the effective and efficient innovative programmes of adult and non-formal education is that of inadequate supervision. This could be associated with “I don’t care” on the part of adult education practitioner. The worst of it all are that the instructors are not trained and the qualified ones are not well remunerated.

Poor participation attitude of adults have been a set-back in adult education programmes as they advance in age. They believe learning to read and write at this stage is a waste of time. Little do they know that one who is tired of learning is tired of life.

It is not an act of over flogging an issue in saying that adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria lack political will and continuity. Political leaders pay lip services to adult education programmes which often led to pre-mature death of its most innovative programmes i.e.

1. The Directorate of Mass Mobilization, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER);
2. The Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI);
3. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and
4. Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) etc.

Poor curriculum planning is a set-back to innovative programmes in adult and non-formal education as it is planned without adequately involving the adult learners. This is wrong due to the very fact that adult learners are characterized with problems. They therefore need to be referenced while planning the curriculum so as to circumvent drop-out cases.

There is grossly inadequate learning materials and in most cases non-existence. The implication of this is that adult facilitators would solely depend on “talk and chalk” method. These materials range from classroom equipment, light, tables, chairs, chalk/magnetic board, projected and non-projected audio-visual materials. There are no prescribed texts for adult learners instead primary school texts are used.

Also, the economic melt-down has greatly affected the effective participation of adults in literacy programmes.

Conclusion

Federal Ministries of Education, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education, State Agencies for Mass Education, Local Government Councils, Philanthropists, Education Trust Fund and other Non-Governmental Organizations should as matter of urgency work towards promoting adult and non-formal education for enhancement and innovations in higher education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The main essence of education is for the effective utilization of human and material resources for the benefit of man and the society. Educational innovations are needed for quick social transformation. Various Adult and Non-formal education problems have been highlighted and their prospects noted. Therefore, the following are recommended:

1. There is need for stronger policies; political will and commitment by all three tiers of government for adult and non-formal education as the majority of citizenry are illiterate.
2. Government at all levels should ensure adequate remuneration of facilitators as recommended in the national benchmark for facilitators and in line with the public service minimum wage.
3. Policy makers and managers of education should be acquainted with the realities of Adult and Non-formal education for purpose of advocacy leading to increased funding.

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