CHALLENGES AND EMERGING PERSPECTIVES IN ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Adult education aims at improving the situation of people by increasing their skills, knowledge and awareness. It is the adult that could transform the nations not children. Adult education brings a great sense of dignity and self-esteem, enhanced respect of others, an ability to take control of one's life and a greater desire to participate in society. The paper examined challenges facing adult education delivery in Nigeria which include failure of the Universal Basic Education act to give adequate recognition of Adult education as a key sector in Basic education, accessibility, under funding and lack or inadequate number of qualified facilitators amongst others. The emerging perspectives are on HIV/AIDs, mainstreaming, inter-sectoral linkages and information and communication technology. The paper finally proffers suggestions as review of the Universal Basic Education act to accommodate Adult and Non-formal education, increase in funding, establishment of more centres and make them affordable, upward review of facilitators' honorarium amongst others.

Keywords: Adult education, Non-formal education, Information and Communication Technology, Challenges, Emerging Perspectives, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Introduction

The right to education is recognized by most state constitutions and national laws and is inherent in the right to education and is reflected in the various international declarations and treaties, these include the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCO, 2008 cited in Umar, Eshak, Bichi, & Aujara, 2010). The United Nations conventions on the rights of children, women, minorities, indigenous people, and people with disabilities also have proclaimed the right to education of the target group of these international laws.

Adult education is one of the fields of academic endevour that is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems. There is positive association between adult education programmes and increased levels of self-esteem and high levels of knowledge and skills which thereby encourage positive and active engagement of people in their own development (Umar, Eshak, Bichi, & Aujara, 2010). Adult education is narrowly interpreted as literacy only.

From 1960-1980 movements and campaigns on adult education were largely confined to literacy the results were very discouraging because the programmes were too prescriptive in their content, structure and duration and insufficient resources and efforts were put into their design and implementation. Hence with some exceptions, large proportion of those who participated in the literacy campaigns dropped out and up to half of the participants who passed the test relapsed into illiteracy (Aderinoye, 2004).

The concept of Adult Education

The concept of adult education is difficult to define because people define it from different perspectives. However, scholars agreed that it is an education that has adults as its clientele. This also brings us to another concept of who is an adult? Different parameters are used in defining an adulthood amongst which are Biological, Chronological, historical, psychological, economical, political and social amongst others. Nzeneri (2002) defines an adult as one who is physically and psychologically matured and is socially, economically and politically responsible. According to Adesanya (2005) the term adult is difficult to define because it varies from one society to another and has changed over time. The boundaries that determine who is considered an adult can depend on actions (i.e. legal age to fight war, drive a car and vote amongst others), activities (i.e., age that one can begin to work) and /or responsibilities (i.e., marriage age, age to begin supporting family). UNESCO (1976) gives a recommendation of who an adult is: it is a person regarded by the as such by the society to which he /she belongs.

As articulated in the CONFINTEA V documents adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, where by people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society (UNESCO, 2009 cited in Umar, Eshak, Bichi, & Aujara, 2010:131)

UNESCO (1976) cited in Nzeneri (2010:10) defines adult education as: The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or

otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, universities as well as in apprenticeship, where by persons regarded as adults 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 perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

The above definitions is encompassing in the sense that it has not only define adult education, but has gone to the extent of talking about its scope and content. Adult education is usually refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal schooling system (Seya, 2005). The main targets are specifically defined as youths (girls and boys over 15 years of age, but sometimes younger) as well as women and men, generally poor or socially disadvantaged.

According to Seya (2005:97) adult education is seen as: a transmission of process of general, technical or vocational knowledge as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view of remedying early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with knowledge and cultural elements required for their self –fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies.

Adult education deals with adult human materials and it gives joy, fascination and enthusiasm. However, working with adults establishes confidence and impressions which allows the learners to realize their dreams. The fact that formal schooling is an unquestionable priority in the education sector does not justify adult education being left out. To make children compete with their parents in the education process is dangerous as it make create a break between two entities that are mutually dependent. A child's schooling performance is largely determined by the level of education of his or her parents. Therefore trying to achieve primary education at the expense of adult education defeats it own purpose. As long as poverty remains a distinctive feature in Nigeria, adult education will impose itself as an unavoidable ingredient of development process (Seya, 2005).

The challenges.

The following are the major challenges facing adult education delivery in Nigeria according to policy issues and practice (2010):

1.   Failures of the UBE act to give adequate recognition to Adult and Non-Formal Education as a key sector of basic education.

2.   Accessibility: in the world of rapid changes, adult education should be established at the door steps of all the interested adult learners so as to avail the opportunity for learning. However, all citizens should have the opportunity to develop themselves throughout their life at whatever age, to acquire knowledge and know-how to better pilot their life transition, to improve their quality of life, to develop their potential, to experience the joy of learning. In that perspective, no area should be left. In that context, the rise of fees to attend evening courses is becoming a huge issue all over the country.

3.   Inadequate funding: the budgetary allocation to adult education at all levels of government is grossly inadequate especially when compared to the formal education sector. More importantly Non-Formal Education is excluded in the share of two percent Consolidated Fund meant for Basic Education in spite of policy provision. However, it is noted that there is problem of accountability and transparency in the management of funds allocated to Non-formal education sector.

4.   Lack of mobilization: many interesting learners are not aware of the existence of the adult education centres and even the programmes they are supposed to enroll. This affects seriously efforts to achieve Education for All. Even there are some philanthropists who are willing to contribute their own quota but due to lack of advocacy and mobilization they cannot do so.

5.   Lack or inadequate number of literacy instructors or personnel who posses Information and Communication Technology skills is a serious challenge to Nigeria's desire of becoming a key player in the information age. Lack of personnel with Information and Communication Technology skills across the Non-Formal Education centres inhibits the effective use of Information and Communication Technology for Non-formal Education delivery in the country.

6.   There is the dearth of skilled manpower in the area of monitoring and evaluation: lack of trained monitoring and evaluation personnel in the Non-formal education sector is a serious problem to the development of the sector since monitoring is a sine qua non to a successful adult and Non-formal education programmes. It involves the management of a large database. Monitoring is vital ingredient for successful implementation of NFE as such it should be integrated in the programme action plan. Adequate funds are not provided and required information about the status of the programmes is not available. Due to lack of proper monitoring and evaluation in the Non-formal education has resulted in variations in the types of programmes available and offered across the states of the federation.

7.   Poor remuneration of facilitators: most states and Local Government Areas do not pay the facilitators regularly; the 7500 naira stipulated in the benchmark meant for the remuneration of the facilitators cannot be paid by almost all the states. In some cases even facilitators are not being paid for so many months.

8.   Inadequate number of qualified facilitators: appointment of non-professionals and untrained facilitators who do not understand the use of andragogical techniques, primary school teachers and even school certificate holders are usually appointed as facilitators. According to NMEC (2008) Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) should be the minimum teaching qualification in compliance with the provision of National Policy on Education to ensure the quality delivery in Adult and Non-Formal Education. Statistics revealed that there are still Grade II teachers and even less qualified personnel teaching in the Non-Formal Education centres and are not fully trained in the andragogical methods.

9.   Poor record keeping: there is a problem of record keeping in NFE. This has seriously affected the database needed for adequate planning and implementation of Non-Formal Education intervention programmes. This also affects the tracking of learner's performance and transition from one level to the other.

10.   Poor attitude of the target group: yearly statistics of NMEC have shown that most of the targeted groups have not really embraced the NFE programme. It is on record that an average of 1.7 million learners out of over 44million projected learners had only embraced the programme.

11.   There should be proper mobilization of all stakeholders to come and embrace adult education programmes so as to achieve the desired results.

Emerging perspectives

        According to the Policy Issues and Practice of Non-formal education (2010), the following are the emerging perspectives of adult education in Nigeria:

1.   HIV/AIDs: stake holders in literacy programmes are aware of the causes and prevention of HIV/AIDs. Therefore there is the need to design and implement HIV/AIDs educational programme for out-of-school boys, girls and adults and create support for the training of Non-formal education facilitators for effective delivery of the programme.

2.   Mainstreaming: after basic literacy the issue of post literacy and emerging opportunities for learners to mainstream to formal schools is yet to be fully accepted and implemented by all concerned. Some of school administrators have shown outright reluctance in admitting out-of-school boys desiring to mainstream. However, in some states approval has been secured by State Agencies of Mass Education Directors to conduct Junior

Secondary Schools Certificate Examination (JSSCE) and Senior Secondary Schools Examination (SSCE) for Non-Formal Education learners.

3.   Inter-sectoral linkages: Coordination, cooperation and collaboration between the agencies involved in Basic Education is lacking. There is the need to streamline activities and programmes of these agencies to avoid duplication of efforts. A practical example of this scenario is the existence of Non-Formal Education unit in the Federal Ministry of Education despite the existence of a full- pledged National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education Commission, charged with responsibility of over-seeing everything about Non-Formal Education in the country.

4.   Information and Communication Technology (ICT): given the importance and relevance of Information and Communication Technology in our society, therefore, the need to mobilize resources and manpower for inclusion of ICT in Non-Formal Education programmes. However, 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) radio stations should partner to State Agencies for Mass Education in Literacy by Radio programmes. This assist in mobilizing communities to accept Adult and Non-formal Education as a new and alternative form learning with which the nation and the people can address existing educational problems, but also, to promote literacy for the population.

Suggestions
In view of the foregoing the following suggestions are made.

1.   The Universal Basic Education act should be reviewed to accommodate Adult and Non-formal education as this would bring about the much desired changes in Adult and Non-formal education practice in Nigeria.

2.   Establishment more centres of adult education in the country should be embarked upon so that every body will have easy access to education and thus become more functional on the job performance and makes them affordable to all interesting adult learners or in some programmes like the Basic and Post literacy programmes be free at all the states of the Federation and the programmes should be based on the learners' needs and aspirations.

3.   Upward review of Facilitators' remuneration (allowance): payment of facilitators should be in accordance with the minimum benchmark as set by the Non-Formal Education blue print that facilitators should be paid minimum wage as their remuneration or allowances.

4.   Recruitment of adequate and qualified facilitators: persons with   Nigeria Certificate in Education and specialization in adult education should be employed as facilitators in the Non-Formal Education centres.

5.   There should be intensified and sustained advocacy, sensitization and mobilization of all stake holders to come and support Adult and Non-Formal Education in the country.

6.   More capacity building programmes (pre-service, in-service and on-the-job-training) for Adult and Non- Formal Education personnel at all levels should be put in place. Effective programming and implementation would require appropriately qualified personnel with definite schedules of duty.

7.   Employment of adequate number of staff at all levels to meet the ever increasing demand of Adult and Non-Formal Education in the country. Adult and Non-formal Education should be staffed with people with proven ability so as to strengthened the system and helps in the development of Adult and Non-formal Education in the country.

8.   Regular and effective monitoring of programmes at all levels. It is essential to train and re-train manpower to manage Monitoring and Evaluation activities in the Non-formal Education. There should be capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of officers through short, medium and long term training programmes, workshops, conferences amongst others.

Conclusion

   Adult education aims at improving the situation of people by increasing their skills, knowledge and awareness (kwapong, 2005). It is the adult that could transform the nations not children. The development of any nation depends on the quality of adults that the nation has.   Adult education brings a great sense of dignity and self-esteem, enhanced respect of others, an ability to take control of one's life and a greater desire to participate in society. Adult education should be vigorously pursued as through it there would be an all round development. Therefore adult education should be re-positioned to meet the ever increasing demand of its time and to enable the nation to achieve the Millennium Development and Education For All goals.

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