

CONTINUING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA (MEANING, OBJECTIVES, FORMS AND PROSPECTS)

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Abstract

The idea of Continuing education suggests that something is missing that ought to be filled in, therefore the contemporary notion of education goes beyond what only take place in the four walls of the classroom. Continuing education connotes that sub-set of adult education that seeks to positively link the needs and aspirations of individuals with educational activities, for development of their potentialities and for the socioeconomic and political development of a nation or state. The paper examined the concepts of continuing education, objectives, forms, contents and challenges of continuing education and also highlighted the prospects that a nation or individuals can derive or achieve through the sustained impact of continuing education.

Keywords: Education, Continuing education, Governmental, Non-governmental

Introduction

In defining continuing education, there are relatively few assertions that one can make without generating controversies and queries. I believe one can assert that, without disputation: that continuing education is within the bigger concept of education and therefore obeying the major criteria that differentiate education from other ordinary social activities; that it is not the initial or the beginning education for anybody undergoing such education; and that it is concluded outside of the formal / institutionalized school system and hence called out of school education (RNCE, 1993 cited in Akinpelu, 2002). The last named nomenclature is however, not exactly precise because then a child or youngster learning to read or write out-of –school would automatically be described as being engaged in continuing

education , simply because s/he is “learning out-of –school”. Out –of –school education appears to be wider in scope than continuing education, covering initial and literacy education in addition to purely continuing education (Akinpelu, 2002)

Perhaps it is worth cautioning from the onset to state that the contemporary notion of education has gone beyond what goes on inside the four walls of schools, since the total environment is perceived as a potential source of educational experience. Within this perspective, there exist a two way traffic between the formal educational institutions and the community in which members of the former are engaged in learning activities within the latter, and the formal educational institution in turn provides a pool of resource which members of the community could draw upon in the course of extending their educational experience (Mardock, 1974 cited in Tahir, 2000)

What is Continuing Education?

According to Tahir (2000) Continuing Education connotes that subset of adult education that seeks to positively link the needs and aspirations of individuals with educational activities, for development of their potentialities and for the socioeconomic and political development of a nation state. Furthermore it is a process of adoption of the worker training to technological changes and the resultant increase in the minimum knowledge required (David, 1992 cited in Tahir, 2000)

Akinpelu (1988) sees Continuing Education as a form of education activity organized and run outside the formal school system at times, parallel to it but often times go beyond the preview of the school system. It is an educational activity fashioned out to help beneficiaries or participants make up for or save lost ground as well as for those who did not attend school at all or started but dropped out owing to some reasons. Such education can be provided as part-time or full time and is often without limit (Egunyomi, 1999). Hence Akinpelu (2002) argues 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. Osuji (2001) opines that continuing education is strictly, an adult education concept which stresses the provision of educational opportunities for adults after cessation of formal schooling. He adds that it means education and re-education, training and re-training opportunities made available to people out-of –school such as young school leavers, the employed and the unemployed and so on in order to cope with new cope with new situations of life

It also implies that the learners have some contact with the school system and are striving to build into knowledge, skills and ideas already acquired (Tahir, 2000)

Continuing Education is essentially a part-time rather than a full time learning activity. The vast majority of programs of continuing education is organized for clients / learners who have some pre-occupation or jobs other than studying. Such participants attend evening, night week-end or summer –vacation classes, or even study on their own in their homesteads (as in distance education): but they normally have other occupational or professional duties which constitute their major pre-occupation.

Continuing Education programs are designed to meet identified or expressed adult learning needs. There is the tendency to associate continuing education with vocational, occupational or professional skills development, apparently because most of the continuing education centers are known to have something to do with such vocational or professional skills e.g. learning computer, remedial program for Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), attending conferences, seminars, workshops.

The major focus of continuing education is the provision of educational opportunities for all categories of individuals irrespective of whatever failure was earlier recorded thereby ensuring continuity in education, ensuring the continued relevance of the individuals in the society; ensuring the provision or access to education for all citizens; and helping retrieve the economic wastage that early –school learners would have constituted (Egunyomi, 2001).

In Nigeria presently, the practice of continuing education has been broadened to include the provision of educational activities that will meet the needs of illiterates, the drop-out, the underprivileged, educationally disadvantaged, the oppressed, the unserved, different categories of professionals, the down-trodden, and the back ward. Thus, continuing education offers a wide range of training or education meeting the needs of all shades of people; it therefore serves as the best means or instrument of democratizing education or equalizing access to education irrespective of age, sex or social affiliation.

Objectives of Continuing Education

All human actions to be described as praxis or rational or authentic must aim at some purpose; have some guiding objectives either, formally expressed or tacitly assumed. It's such objectives that constitute the motivation, the incentive and justification for undertaking such activities (Freire 1974 cited in Akinpelu 2002). Education and especially adult and continuing education are practical educational activities motivated by a variety of values. Thus all stakeholders with an interest in continuing education activity have their own respective objectives for engaging in the activity –the providers, the learners, their sponsors, the public

and the nation. Invariably, their objectives will overlap in many respects while distinct and peculiar only in a few.

1. To keep with the new knowledge required to perform responsibly in a chosen career.
2. To master new conceptions of the career itself.
3. To keep with changes in the relevant fields
4. To prepare for changes in the personal career line.
5. To maintain freshness of outlook on the work done
6. To continue to grow as well as rounded person
7. To retain the power to learn
8. To discharge effectively the social role imposed by membership in a profession
(Akinpelu, 2002)

Forms of Continuing Education

The continuing education programs in Nigeria are as varied as their providers. However the main forms include the following:

- Remedial or Second Chance Education: this is the most common and traditional form of continuing education. They are often called extra-mural or evening classes, it is very easy to set up and very widespread and loosely organized. They most offer general education curriculum and are very flexible in operations and normally teach the same subjects like the formal schools. The contact hours are mostly in the evening or night and charge fees and more or less Non-governmental that is either individual, Groups, associations and so on. They employ their teachers mostly called Tutors and usually prepare their students for external examinations like West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), and the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN) amongst others.
- Vocational and career schools/centers/institutes: this is also another form of continuing education. They almost have the same characteristics except that their curricula are basically occupational and skills oriented. There are some instances where they prepare their students for external occupational and professional examinations; but most offer their own certificates whose standard, validity, for obtaining jobs are anything but guaranteed e.g. computer literacy, Hotels and catering management, Sales and Marketing and Tourist and Travel management.

- In-service training units of Government and Business Enterprises : many governmental and private organizations establish training units in order to provide in-house training, induction courses for the enhancement of their staff. Most banks and large industrial enterprises organize on a permanent or ad hoc basis such training for their staff.
- Distance Education /Correspondence colleges: this unit exists either as an institution or a department in government organizations e.g. like in some universities or colleges you will have Centre for Continuing Education or Directorate of Continuing Education.
- Professional Continuing Education: this is type of continuing education offered by professional organizations and bodied aimed at up-dating or topping up the knowledge, skills, and expertise of practicing members of the concerned professions, with a view to improve the quality of their service delivery. Typical examples are the Medical, Engineering, Nursing, Accounting, Teaching professions to mention but few. They offer this education through their association meetings, organize ad-hoc seminars, workshops, and lectures and other more systematic and more organized training schemes (Akinpelu, 2002)

The Content of Continuing Education

Continuing Education offers a wide range of educational activities thereby ensuring access to education for all citizens. Education remains a major tool for the advancement of human and societal development. This explains why every human society has continued to seek the best means of promoting in all its ramifications. According to David cited in Okedara (1981) for education to bring development it has to be continuing.

According to Tahir (2000) the content of continuing education could take several forms and shapes as well. It could be remedial, developmental or based on contemporary issues and concerns to various clienteles that would desire educational opportunities for self improvement or increase in professional capacity and competence. Continuing education may be focused on examination or other learning outcomes and assessment. A significant mark of continuing education is the flexibility and diversity (Fasokun, 1983 cited in Tahir 2000).

This form of education can be provided by organized educational institutions, professional bodies or associations, industry, armed forces, Governmental and Non-governmental agencies and organizations. The typical Continuing Education is drawn up around some clients needs, whether felt, expressed or identified in any other way. The most

fundamental characteristic of Continuing education is multi-variety and flexibility. Continuing education is designed to meet the identified or expressed adult learning needs. The adult learner determine what forms of educational program(s) will take, its contents and duration and length of time, venue. It is said to be situational relevant and problem solving, because they are usually initiated, organized or participated in, to solve specific problems or meet identified or expressed needs of individuals and groups

Challenges

1. No clear goals as what constitutes continuing education with the National Policy on Education: according to Tahir (2000) the document has some lapses, it had not provided in clear terms what continuing education is expected to achieve. This is even more glaring in the section on technical education, should continuing education be remedial, developmental or cultural? Or should it be both of them and at what point in time could it be provided?
2. Roles of various agencies not defined : specific roles between various government and non-governmental agencies need to be defined to avoid confusions and overlapping of duties like what are the roles of National Board for Technical Education (NABTEB), the National Teachers Institute (NTI), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), The National Universities Commission, Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the private organizations in the accreditation of the continuing education.
3. Funding: is a serious issue when it comes to continuing education because even the governments higher institutions that are supposed to carry the mandate of are relatively poor funded to cope with the ever increasing demand of continuing education of the present times? It is said that workers education is better funded in the private sector than in the public sector.
4. Lacks regulatory body to protect the interest of the learner: However the costs of such programs keep on increasing which ordinarily affect the learners, therefore the call for the establishment of a regulatory body that will reasonably protect the interest of the learners is imperative.

Prospects

- The development of the individual as an autonomous person who bear responsibilities in the public domain.

- There will be improved human resources development.
- To keep with the new knowledge required to perform responsibly in a chosen carrier.
- To master new conception in the carrier itself.
- To keep with the changes in the relevant fields.
- To prepare for changes in the personal life.
- To retain the power to learn.
- To discharge effectively the social role imposed by membership in a profession
- To satisfy the human curiosity and propensity to wan to knowledge.
- To equip citizens with competence and self –confidence for participation in the cultural, social and political governance of their community.

Conclusion

The paper examined the concepts of continuing education and it argued that Nigeria deserves to have a comprehensive policy on continuing education and highlighted the objectives of continuing education which is to take adequate care of the needs and aspirations of people regardless of their class or status. It was evident that there are many organizations that are doing in one way or the other continuing education activities but there is no synergy among the organizations. The prospects of continuing education in the nation and individuals were also pointed out. Based on the above conclusions the following suggestions were made:

1. The provision of continuing education in the National Policy on Education need thorough re-examination with the view to clarifying its purpose and evolving concrete goals with a definite schedule of responsibilities and action, which at the moment is ambiguous.
2. Continuing education for leisure as well as for academic purposes should be the responsibility of Agencies for Mass Education.
3. More attention should be given to the continuing education of worker's in industries in order to improve the productive capacities of their workers (Tahir, 1994)

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