

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND EQUITY IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

National policy on education states that access to education is a legitimate right of every Nigerian citizen, but the issue of unreached millions of Nigerian youths who are missing out on education which formal system lack the capacity to absorb, including youths and adults who never attended school have been the focus of this paper. This paper also clarified some key concepts, which entails definition of non-formal education, access and equity to education through Non-Formal Education (NFE) roles and challenges of NFE, programmes and beneficiaries. It also discusses curriculum and teaching materials in NFE. It also concludes that for Nigeria education system to achieve its aims and objectives, government and educational stakeholders must pay due attention to non-formal education throughout the country. The paper recommended that government at all levels, educational stakeholder and civil society organization should invest more on non-formal education in order to achieve equity in Nigeria Educational System

Keywords: Non -formal education, equity and Nigeria education system

Introduction

Education is seen as an imperative instrument for personal and societal development. Education is a universal right of everyone. The universality right of education is enunciated in the article 26 of the United State (UN) in 1948. The article stressed that access to education is a legitimate right of everyone. At least elementary and basic education shall be made free and compulsory.

According to Okugbeni, (2013), education enhances the capabilities of the individual. Therefore, education is a mechanism for enabling active citizenship. On no account should anyone be denied education opportunities. Those denied the right to education faces the possibilities of limited chances in the future.

Non formal education is the response to questions raised by the underperformance of formal education system and its fills the gaps created by such system. The Federal Government of Nigeria has invested enormous resources in the provision of Basic Education (BE), especially at the levels of primary and junior secondary education. Ignoring vast number of children, youths and adults who have missed out on the formal system, and who still have a right to literacy, good health, social and economic opportunities including political participation which literacy can unlock for them.

It is in view of the importance of education to individual and societal development that the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended, provides that Government of Federation shall direct its policy towards ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels to eradicate all forms of educational deficiency through non-formal education as a strategy for achieving national development. National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC, 2012).

As long as there is inequity of access to education, non-formal education will continue to be germane in the provision of alternative path to education. (Omolewa, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the studies are as follows:

1. Provide functional basic education for adult and youth who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early.
2. To ensure proportionate distribution of adult and non-formal education opportunities and resources across the country.
3. Ensure mass education for Nigerian people to significantly increase literacies in all its forms.
4. Provide public enlightenment programme in tone with contemporary times, popular demand/needs and circumstance
5. Provide non-formal education programme specific to the need of women and parent, so that they can be effective mothers and members of the society in which they contribute and from which should drive optimum equal social, economic and political benefits.

Non-Formal Education

For clarity of purpose, there is need to examine some definitions of non-formal education given by scholars. Practitioners of non-formal education define the term in various ways depending on their ideological and intellectual disposition or depending on their research and academic discipline orientation. This implies that there is no single and acceptable definition of non-formal education for the purpose of various and variety of programmes.

NFE according to the coombs and Ahmed (1973) is “any organized educational activity outside the established formal system of education (whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity) that is intended to serve identifiable clienteles and learning objective.”

The above definition indicates that NFE is part of education process outside institutionalized education system which learning is organized and planned toward achieving stated learning objective. It also clarified that NFE encompasses all educational processes outside the formal school system whatever its purpose, target group and source (provider). It clearly shows that NFE is out of school education where both the learner and source has the intention to promote learning. It also merely distinguished non formal education from formal education.

Another definition by Evan (1971). He defined NFE as education that is generally seen as need oriented Utilitarian.... and cheaper than the formal system. Often it is tied to some productive activity.... and is characterized by.... peer learning.... and flexibility. Students, if the ward be trained, generally enroll in non-formal education courses because they are interested in what can be learned not because it counts for a degree (Certificate).

The above definition clearly spells out another dimension of NFE programs and highlight the need for its recognition in policy guidelines as integral aspect of overall educational process. And it also shows the nature of NFE as a learning process with an orientation toward vocational training, liberal education and economic productivity.

All of the above definition and meaning of NFE point out that NFE is an educational process outside institutionalized education system designed to meet the learning needs of all, irrespective of age, sex and status either in service or on the job, illiterate, drop-out, less privilege or disadvantaged group in the society and for the national development.

NFE as described in this paper, point out that the programs of NFE is flexible in terms of organization, time and place; it covers basic and continuing education programs to impact basic literacy, including life skills, work skills and facilitate lifelong learning and it also ensure equity in access to education.

Role of Non-Formal Education

NFE is the only practical means of skills and knowledge development. It offers an alternative and often a more effective one to education and training than formal school.

According to Ngwu (2003), NFE can supplement, extend and improve the processes of formal education. In the same vein, Ezena (2008) and Evans (1981) stated that there are mainly three (3) types of NFE. These forms of NFE programmes are core areas for providing educational programme outside formal education process. The role of NFE will be discussed under these three forms of NFE. These include:

Replacement Education: This category of NFE activities includes those which, substitute or replace formal education. Replacement education is a process in which the earlier education acquired can no longer help the possessor in achieving his or her daily life activities and a new education replaces the formal education acquired earlier. This could be achieved through enrolment and completion of education programme which its completion would leads to acquisition of new skill, knowledge and attitude. For instance, the need for a former manual typist to learn the manipulation of computer. The new skills and knowledge learn from computer education is called replacement education.

In the area of health, NFE can organize training and workshop to improve public health services in the rural communities. Oyebamiji (2008) suggested that local birth attendant can be trained in basic health care services through NFE to help reducing child/mother mortality and morbidity.

Complementary Education: This category of NFE assist or promotes education offered by formal school system. It is a process which promote or improve formal education already acquired by individual or group of individuals. It emphasizes the secondary role which complementary education plays in the overall education process in the context of NFE programmes. Its emphasizing is on experience, which the individual may have acquired without necessarily attending formal schooling. Ezema, (2008) states that complementary education contributes directly to production.

NFE is complementary because it establishes one's educational attainment as it provides constant refinement of knowledge and skills which enhance productivity and develop people capacity for informed choices.

The third category of NFE: supplementary education, this usually come later in life, after whatever amount of formal education a person has completed, and serves to add on to the learning produced in school setting. It is also concerned with updating knowledge. Knowledge update is necessary because changes in the society, such as change in labour market, economic and political demand new knowledge.

The quest for new knowledge update according to Alani and Isola (2009) demand on the job training for workers to develop and improve their human capital. No matter the level of skills, knowledge and attitude inculcated in people through formal education, on the job training will still fill some gap in human capital development, especially where there is need for additional skills and knowledge to compare with job.

The context is normally linked to specific practical situations and it involves learners in developing skills, which will be immediately applied in their life situation.

The crucial role of NFE here is to ensure that education makes its contribution to improving the quality of life of citizens, fostering democratic and co-operative process for development of mutual self and self-reliance (Anyawu, 2002).

The contribution of NFE to Nigeria educational system are far reaching. In some cases, NFE is the only practical means of skills and knowledge development. In other word, it offers or provides an alternative and often a more effective one, to education and training than formal schooling.

NFE play a role of providing a wide range of learning services for workers in the informal, industrial, agricultural and manufacturing section. It may be an alternative or substitute to formal education for workers like electricians, bricklayers, carpenters, farmers who may be trained in employment under apprenticeship arrangement. Expanding of knowledge and skills gained in formal education for example, civil servants and small-scale entrepreneurs can update their skills through participation in self development programme.

NFE play a role of offering basic and remedial education for those adults and youth who have never had the advantage of formal education.

Challenges of Non-Formal Education

The major challenges in the NFE practice in Nigeria as stated by NFE practitioners have been identified as lack of trained personnel, inadequate resources and funding, poor understanding of the meaning and the absence of identifiable curriculum and institutional mechanism for the promotion of adult and non-formal education work (Nguwu, 2003).

Corruption is also one of the major constraints in NFE, as funds meant for the execution, promotion and development of NFE projects and also aimed at reducing poverty are systematically depleted. This manifest in the form of project substitution, misrepresentation of project finances, diversion of resources, and conversion of public funds to private uses (Okoye & Onyukuwu, 2007).

Access to Education

Access is the provision/creation of learning opportunity through employment of facilitators from within the immediate environment for familiarity of norms of the learning environment.

Proximity to learning centre. Meaning learning centres should be close to the learners.

Creation of learner-friendly environment, i.e., conducive and safe learning environments with adequate/suitable seats; adequate learning materials supplied promptly.

Creation of learning spaces in prisons, markets and other places where people in difficulty circumstances reside.

Establishment of continuing education learning centre, in each ward across the country, particularly where such does not exist, and

Put in place mechanism for promoting literacy, numeracy and vocational skills among women in purdah.

Equity in Education

Equity is the provisions of equal educational rights to everyone through:

Ensuring gender sensitivity-women and men should be given equal right to education and any form of discrimination based on gender should be prohibited.

Providing for Disadvantage/Vulnerable Groups (IDPs, People with special needs, etc.) to be protected through state legislation and education.

Ensuring that Prison Inmates also benefit from literacy, non-formal and continuing education provisions by creating and strengthening literacy/learning centres in correctional institutions

Reaching out to migrants and mobile communities to avail them with adult and non-formal education learning opportunities in their host communities, and

Ensuring that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the Almajiri, Child Labourers and Artisans/Apprentices have access to basic education.

Programmes of NFE

NFE programmes enable youth and adult to acquire skills and knowledge and with the possibilities for mainstreaming into the formal sector.

The programmes encourage flexibility, inclusiveness and equity, greater problem-solving ability, self-reliance and community participation. These include:

1. Basic literacy: Reading, writing and numeracy for children, youth and adults hindered or not opportune for formal education.
2. Post literacy: Functional use of literacy skills for self-efficacy, lifelong learning and utility value of self and for society.
3. Continuing education: Remedial education, social/community education, extra mural education, and
4. Vocational education: Skills acquisition for trades, business and works in society

Beneficiaries of NFE

The following are categories of people to be served:

Adults and adolescent who have never been to school and cannot read or write and for whom basic literacy and numeracy skills can open a gate of lifelong learning.

Adults and adolescent who are above school-going age but have not achieved reading, writing and numeracy competencies.

Young adults who left school before acquiring basic education due to factors such as conflict, pregnancy, ill-health or death of parent, etc

Early school leavers who could not stay on to achieve permanent literacy for effective work.

School leavers with different educational attainments who are working in various government ministries and the private sector. Many young adults in this category may need to engage in professional training and education to improve themselves and update their skills and job performance.

Persons who are already engaged in economic activities but who require further learning (acquiring new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) to enable them to adapt to the needs of an ever-changing world of work.

Adults/youths who need rehabilitative education, including prison inmates, people with special needs, street children, out-of-school boys, and girls, migrants, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups.

School age children and youths (6-14 years) not enrolled in the formal school system.

Young persons who desire to acquire formal certificates that they had failed to acquire while still in school.

Vulnerable and constrained women and girls.

All literate youth and adults who need liberal education. (NMEC,2017)

Curriculum and Teaching Materials of NFE

Teaching and Learning materials are not limited to written or printed texts. It also includes non-text materials, like audio and video support materials and a full deployment of the limitless possibilities of ICT.

Curriculum of NFE

In the non-formal education (NFE) sector, the curriculum is structured to cover basic, post literacy, continuing and vocational education. Its structure is designed to facilitate articulation with the formal education system.

Basic Literacy: Symbols in the language of the immediate environment or mother tongue, learners should possess the ability to use them in their daily activities. It is composed of:

Reading, writing and numeracy

Post Literacy: These include English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Tourism, Health Education and Hygiene, basic science, life skills, citizenship education, introduction to computer education, home management plus nine (9) vocational skills of the learner's choice, religious, moral and civic studies and agriculture

Continuing Education

Junior secondary school, remedial education and distance learning, etc

All the subjects offered at the formal junior secondary school level; plus, vocational skill entrepreneurial education based on the needs of the learner.

All the subjects offered in remedial education and distance learning programmes.

Vocational Education Under this we have; arts and crafts, exterior and interior decoration, fashion design, cosmetology and beauty therapy, wood work technology, building technology, plumbing and pipe fitting, auto electricity, fabrication and welding, computer installation and maintenance, home economics, radio, television and GSM services, refrigeration and air conditioning, photography and video coverage, livestock management, motor mechanic, electrical installation and repairs, and filmmaking and cinematography. (NMEC, 2017)

Instructional Material for NFE Programmes

Primers for different subjects, facilitators guide and modules, learning materials specific to each core subject, exercise books, chalk/marker, chalkboards/white board, rulers, erasers, HB Pencils, sharpeners, appropriate materials and equipment for vocational, technical and entrepreneurial education, and ICT equipment and software.

Conclusion

It has been established in this presentation that education is the universal right of everyone. The universal right to education of everyone has been recognized by National Policy on Education to eradicate all traces of mass illiteracy in the country.

The central mission of NFE is to eradicate illiteracy and to satisfy the needs and goals of individuals, and society by providing them with knowledge at least elementary, basic education and competence that will help them perform more effectively in the society.

Recommendations

1. Government should provide adequate funds to agencies, parastatal and educational stakeholders particularly NFE to address children, youth and adult literacy including functional and continuing education programmes.
2. Government and international donor agencies should mobilize states, local government and educational stakeholders to adequately fund adult and non-formal education programmes in the country.
3. Government should initiate, organize, coordinate and monitor mass literacy education campaign and to develop partnership and collaboration on adult and non-formal education programmes with ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and International Development Partners (IDPs).
4. NFE programmes should be revitalized to cater for the out of school children, youths and adults who want to enhance their capacity. Ngwu, 2003

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