

UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND QUALITATIVE ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY: CURRICULUM AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPERATIVES

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Abstract

Adult education, as the educational process outside the formal school system, consists of functional literacy, continuing, vocational... education for youths and adults. Since one of the objectives of Universal Basic Education is to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills needed for leaving the foundation for life-long education, it is considered a *sine qua non* programme for the realization of the objectives of adult education as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) for Nigeria, particularly in the areas of vocational education. For the Universal Basic Education scheme to achieve its objectives, certain curriculum and administrative needs are considered the desiderata. Such needs have been identified, discussed and their implications for the teacher, the administrator, the government and programme client highlighted. It is the position of this paper that if such needs are met, an assuring adult education delivery system in Nigeria will be realized with regard to acquiring life-long and manipulative skills.

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme was introduced formally in Nigeria in 1999 even though the concept held earlier been mooted in the earlier published National Policy on Education in 1981. The meaning and scope of the scheme got an elaboration thus:

Basic education is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy. In the Nigerian context, basic education includes primary, junior secondary and nomadic education as well as adult literacy.

Some of the objectives of UBE include:

- (i) To cater for drop-outs and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and problem of basic education; and
- (ii) To ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning.

It is on the basis of these two provisions, among others, that I consider this topic apart. Since UBE covers adult and functional literacy, and seeks to cater for school drop-outs as well as equipping its clientele with manipulative and life-long skills, its direct relevance to adult education delivery is glaringly incontrovertible. The crux of the question, therefore, lies not on the provisions but on their actualization. This calls for an adult education and continuing education system that takes due cognisance of the individuals and the society in terms of:

- (i) Needs analysis;
- (ii) Goals analysis; and

- (iii) Behavioural objectives, taxonomy.

These three considerations, it is hoped, will provide result-oriented programme of adult education in Nigeria.

Adult Education Defined

While the basic philosophy of adult education is the improvement of nature of man, its definition tends to vary slightly from culture to culture or from country to country. At times, the definition could be tilted to national needs. Some examples of definitions of adult education here will suffice.

Smith tailored his definition to the improvement of the individual and the society through adult education when he said:

Adult education is the process by which men and women (alone, in groups or in instructional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skills, their knowledge or their sensitiveness; any process by which individuals, groups or institutions try to help men and women in these ways.

Tugbiyele has provided the definition of adult education to show its encompassing nature thus:

By adult education, we do not mean literacy education alone. Adult education is more than literacy or remedial education to "fill the gap". It is something people need and want as long as they are alive, and regardless of the amount of previous education. It must, therefore, be an integral part of a modern country's educational system.

Julius K, Nyerere explained that:

Adult education applies to every one of us, without exception. We can all learn more. Those who have never been to school, those we have just attended primary school, and those who have attended secondary school or university - there is much more that everyone can learn about their work and ideas of knowledge that were not taught when they were at school.

The definitions by Nyerere and Tugbiyele show that adult education is a life-long learning. From this stand point, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. in part, constitute adult education activities since their primary thrust is the improvement and updating of learning and information. UNESCO has provided a comprehensive definition of adult education thus:

Adult education is 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 adults 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-fold perspective of personal development and participation in balanced and independent, social, economic and cultural development.

The major tenet of adult education is adult improvement as well as societal improvement. A society in need for special qualities or categories of manpower could sponsor the training of staff from its labour force to provide the needed manpower. Such training is adult education, pure and simple,

The life-long learning which typifies adult education stems from the rationale that human beings are adaptable as well as educable. Therefore, human beings can respond to change in the society through learning provided that such changes have functional utility. Through such life-long learning, man can progressively acquire more and better skills and become an improved lot because he naturally possesses the propensity for self-improvement. The philosophy of equality of educational opportunity justifies the need for adult education because an adult could still acquire those skills which he had no previous opportunity of learning. Since education is a life-long process, adult education seeks to provide the opportunity and afford the individual avenues for diversifying his knowledge, attitude and skills.

Based on the strengths of adult education towards the improvement of individuals and the society, the use of adult education as an instrument for the overall growth and development of the society has been advocated. Related to this is the concept of "conscientization" which emphasises the need for adult education to be used as an instrument for getting the masses aware of their needs through sensitization, thus making them find solutions to their problems.

Generally, the objectives of adult education include:

- (i) To help the individual find meaning and happiness in life;
- (ii) To aid and reinforce the civilizing process of improving the human condition;
- (iii) To help the individual discover himself and know himself;
- (iv) To help individuals solve problems of everyday life;
- (v) To enable the individual live a full life;
- (vi) To help the individual in his physical, psychological and spiritual maturation processes;
- (vii) To ensure survival of democracy;
- (viii) To help forge national unity, national integration and economic development;
- (ix) To help the individual citizen take his rightful place in society.

The above general objectives transcend adult literacy to include other areas such as equipping the individual to live a full life, ensure his survival in a democratic society and to foster self-actualization as well as sense of patriotism, among others.

The Nigerian Situation

Education is usually susceptible to time, place and circumstance. Therefore, the objectives of adult education in Nigeria should be tailored to suit our circumstances, particularly as a developing country.

Consequently, adult education in Nigeria seeks to:

- (i) Provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of formal education;
- (ii) Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- (iii) Provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- (iv) To provide in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills;
- (v) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for - public enlightenment.

From the foregoing objectives, it could be observed that, in addition to the adult education centres set-up by government, such institutions and agencies as formal colleges, universities the National Orientation Agency, Mass-Media and the like carry out adult education activities as well. Sandwich courses, conferences, workshops, etc all constitute adult education activities because they provide on-the-job training which culminates in the acquisition of improved skills and knowledge. Impliedly, industries could equally carry out such activities through training and retraining of their workers for skills improvement.

Based on the objectives of adult education, we shall examine the objectives of Universal Basic Education to explore the ways adult education delivery could be improved through the UBE scheme. The UBE objectives include:

- (i) To develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (ii) To provide free, compulsory Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
- (iii) To reduce drastically, drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;
- (iv) To cater for drop-outs and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- (v) To ensure acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral, civic value) needed for laying the foundation for lifelong education.

In furtherance of the above objectives the UBE scheme seeks to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria. Statistically, the country's literacy rate is estimated to be 52%. Completion rate of primary education stood at 64%. Worse still, the transition rate of this percentage (64%) to junior secondary school stood at 43.5%. The implication of the statistics is that there are many people in the society who badly need adult education.

The need for adult education in the Nigerian society suggests that UBE scheme should evolve qualitatively appropriate programmes to ameliorate the situation in terms of functional literacy and vocational education. Such programmes have curriculum and administrative implications.

The Curriculum

The variegated objectives of adult education suggests that it has many ramifications and each aspect has to be provided for. For instance, adult education is composed of functional literacy, community development, political education and civics, cultural and aesthetic education, home management and consumer education, labour activities/workers education (Trade Unionism), driving and safety education, cooperative activities, remedial education, extra-mural studies, distance education, conferences, workshops, seminars, (recurrent education). Correspondingly, these areas require competent staff (educators) to impart the requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills. Appropriate methodologies have to be applied and this underscores the need to have professionally trained adult educators; it also suggests team teaching approach since some aspects of general education in communication, social and adult psychology have to be included. Instructional materials have to be provided to concretize the teaching-learning process. Since the acquisition of manipulative The competencies and the strategies listed are considered curriculum imperatives or desiderata for successful adult education delivery in Nigeria.

Administration

The UBE has many stakeholders including the federal government, state governments, local government, local communities, parents, individuals, non-governmental, organizations and some international bodies.

At the federal level, legislation, as appropriate, should be enacted, coordination of the activities, supervision and monitoring of the implementation should be carried out. Fund should be adequately provided for infrastructure, for staff recruitment and salary, for sensitization and mobilization activities and for research activities. It should also negotiate for international cooperation to ensure the success of the scheme.

State governments should complement the efforts of the federal government in their respective states and liaise with the federal government to ensure that funds are prudently and judiciously managed. Furthermore, periodic reports based on supervisory and monitoring activities carried out by each state should be made to the federal government to facilitate and enhance national evaluation of the scheme. Adult education centres comprising different occupational areas should be established.

At local government level, some aspects of infra structural development should be earned out, Coordination and supervision of UBE activities within the local government should be undertaken, activities of the vocational and adult education centres within its areas of jurisdiction should be effectively coordinated, supervised and monitored. The local government should ensure that it makes financial grants to the centres, ensures that the staffs are paid and that funds so provided are prudentially managed.

The local communities are required to provide logistic support and enabling environment for the success of the scheme in their respective areas. They should provide security in order to safe guard the school property. Often times, some school equipment are stolen or willfully damaged. This negatively impacts on the instructional programme and stifles teaching and learning. It is the responsibility of the community to ensure that such centres enjoy total community support-through increased enrolment, maintenance of school property, as well as the security of such property.

The individuals could make financial contributions for the success of the scheme in terms of infrastructural development, maintenance and staff welfare. Non-governmental organizations could provide funds as well for infrastructural development and maintenance.

They could assist in enrolment through mobilization and sensitization of the public. The international organizations that are interested in the scheme could provide funds, design specific projects,

provide expertise in the areas of need, provide advisory and consultancy services and collaborate with the different tiers of government to ensure the total success of the scheme.

Summarily, planning, organization, funding, staffing, supervision, evaluation and research are some administrative imperatives as regards the successful implementation of the scheme. It is our contention here that if qualitative curriculum and administrative arrangements are visited on the scheme, the scheme's objectives will be realized and correspondingly, the aspect of the scheme that relates to adult education will be qualitatively achieved. To ensure that the arrangements are properly made, it is strongly suggested that the federal, state and local governments should play their respective assigned roles. For instance, it is the joint responsibility of the federal, state and local governments to provide funds for training of teachers, teachers' recruitment and remuneration, infrastructural provisions, instructional and learning materials for adult education under the UBE scheme, even though the percentage of responsibility in this regard differs.

Conclusion

Attainment of the UBE objectives with regard to adult education could be realized if all hands are on desk. In other words, there is the dire need for all the stakeholders to be accountable. In addition to designated adult education centres, existing community resources could be utilized, through cooperation with the government, to provide the learners the requisite skills they require. Furthermore, such public schools as technical schools, trade schools, commercial schools and skill acquisition centres could be utilized to provide adult learning as well, making use of the facilities in such institutions for the enrichment of learning. It is strongly believed that if adults including school drop-outs acquire functional literacy and manipulative skills, they will become employable and self-supporting, and correspondingly stem the high incidence of unemployment in the Nigerian society. Further, such efforts will facilitate the emergence and sustenance of self-employment and productive culture which is very much needed for the country's technological and economic emancipation. Since the personnel make the system, it is very imperative that any worthwhile administrative arrangement should take due cognisance of the quality and quality of personnel to implement the scheme.

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