

Continuing Education and the Millenium Development Goals in Nigeria

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Abstract: As a change agent for socio-economic growth and sustainable development, continuing education plays a key role in Nigeria's plan for prosperity. The study identifies the several conceptual clarifications on the concept of continuing education and its relevance in contemporary Nigerian society. It further examines continuing education in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the role it plays in achieving the goals as universally projected. The study quintessentially canvasses better designed continuing education programmes that sufficiently orient beneficiaries with a development consciousness, empowering them to make it possible for Nigeria to actualize the development goals by 2015.

Key words: Continuing education, change agent, adult, millennium development goals, development consciousness, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Education is very essential for the existence of man; Otelaja (2008) had shown that no nation can develop above her educational system, that in order for man to create and recreate his social life and to also articulate himself and achieve fullness; the formal system of knowledge acquisition can not singularly provide all the educational opportunities for self-actualization. It is largely affirmed here that the expression Continuing education, recurrent education and lifelong education should be seen as co-terminous with life. Continuing education is basically defined as an educational programme designed for people regarded as adults, (Fadeyi and Folaranmi, 2002). It is designed for people, who are mentally matured and socially responsible. Continuing education aims at developing individuals mentally as well as increasing their technical and vocational capacities.

It is through adult education that the mental radiance of adults is purposefully harness thus, making them meaningful and useful parents and leaders in their different communities.

Continuing education is a necessity for the survival of man. Education in general term is an endeavour of inestimable value that drives the development of functional knowledge and skills in the society. Egunyomi (1999) had shown that the educational system in the Nigerian society has an elaborate social mechanism, designed to profitably empower beneficiaries with the right skills and attitude even during the colonial era. To

buttress the necessity and importance of education, it has been asserted that he, who ceases to learn, ceases to exist.

So far, continuing education should be seen as an appurtenance or as an integral part of Nigeria's development target aim at helping adult Nigerians to be useful to them selves and to society at large. It should not be only seen in terms of preparing and training adults for employment, but rather, training adults to be employers of labour, though this position was well articulated in the National policy on Education, (NPE, 1988) not many Nigerians have maximally appropriated the opportunities of continuing education programmes.

Continuing education could succinctly be described as playing a complementary or supplementary role; this could be seen in the light that it stabilizes one's educational attainment as it provides constant refinement of knowledge and skills, while on the other hand, it plays a supplementary role as it takes over from where formal system stops.

This study attempts to examine the role of this kind of education, continuing education, in facilitating and progressively guiding the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria, considering the functional position of educational institutions in a country's national development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collected for the study was through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Using a multi-stage sampling method or technique, respondents were selected from the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. In all, 220 questionnaires were administered, out of which 210 were finally returned for analysis. The qualitative data was analyzed using a manual content analysis, where interviews were critically examined; and responses relevant to the study objectives were purposefully applied on the basis of their merit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principally, the study revealed that continuing education stands in a strategic position as a change agent in superintending efforts of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainable development; thus, changing the socio-economic status of many Nigerians for the better. This therefore, implies that continuing education is significantly related to the actualization of the MDGs in Nigeria; by providing the appropriate mental and psychological preparation for Nigerians to acquire a consciousness that is not repugnant to progressive change and development.

The relevance of continuing education for adult learners in Nigeria: Continuing education has been seen to be influenced by cultural, political and social factors, which vary from nation to nation. The meaning and diverse concepts attributed to this field of study as practiced by various nations and practitioners confirm what J.A Akinpelu describes as a best truly situational activity in the realm of education, because as E.C Linderman describes it curriculum is built around students' needs and interest, around the situations of the adult learners and not around curricular subject and disciplines.

Fasokun (1999) had outlined the basic purpose of adult or continuing education to include the following:

- To facilitate change in a dynamic society
- To support and maintain the good social order
- To promote productivity and
- To enhance personal growth

Findings in the study revealed that the success or failure in achieving one of these purposes would surely affect the others, this further entrenched the relevance and importance of continuing education in the attainment of the MGDs in Nigeria.

In this context, continuing education can be regarded as a micro term, since it refers specifically to learning that takes place among adults, but it has measurable effects on

macro structures of society. Though, adult education can be defined as a process whereby persons, who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, skills and attitudes for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems. This definition exemplifies the way of looking at adult education by developed nations, where the society is literate it therefore, assumes that all adults have been to school at least for some period in their life time. But continuing education offers all the opportunities for empowerment and enlightenment of adequate skill to survive present day challenges.

Writers and scholars from developing countries have also been influenced largely by culture in their conceptualizing and defining adult education. Okedara (1998) had shown that situational and cultural needs of developing countries in the context of adult education had offered some who were not privileged at least a chance to learn, since the whole essence of adult education and researches in this area is to stir continual change and progress in the lives of members of a given society. Osuji (2006) affirms that adult education as a discipline for the promotion of human values and sustainable development focuses on policies and programmes that stir development consciousness in the people in and out of schools. In stressing this stance, Soyinka (2004) argues that freedom and development means empowering the masses to have choices; continuing education in this light is the agency to empower the people for political activism.

Contributing to this position, findings confirmed that adult education does not mean literacy education alone; that adult education is more than literacy or remedial education designed only to fill the gap that adult education is needed by all kind of persons in society regardless of their previous educational attainment. That it is through continuing educational programmes that the goal for empowering people is achieved.

The conceptualization of adult education according to the study extends the concept or practice of adult education from literacy, to include life long education for the purpose of human and national development. It has also been viewed from a framework of a programme, a process, a social movement and a discipline. As a programme, it provides learning activities organized by adult for adult or educational institutions, churches, labours and other voluntary agencies for adult in school or out of school.

As a process, it refers to learning activities designed for adults. As a social movement, adult education refers to a mobilized action for a project or self-help projects such as construction of roads, bridges and political education for the purpose of community development by community people. As a professional discipline or field of study, it is an organized body of knowledge that is the art and science of helping adults to learn, which is also known as andragogy.

Continuing education is conceived in the following ways:

- Lifelong education
- Remedial education
- Vocational, technical and workers education
- Social education
- Community, civic and political education
- Liberal education

All these concepts may also be regarded as classifications for which continuing education programmes and activities can be categorized.

So far, it was revealed that continuing education is essentially necessary in the contemporary Nigerian nation; its importance cannot be over emphasized. Respondents opined that the following can be the ways in which adult education could help to engender development in present day Nigeria.

- Through, continuing education programmes, more people would have access to education thus, building a more literate society, where government developmental plans and projects could easily be understood by everybody in the nation
- To help in the democratic process of Nigeria hence, entrenching political participation among citizens
- To help in disabusing people from ethnic violence and strengthen national unity
- Continuing education can solve the problem of unemployment as it empowers people to be better skilled for better opportunities or to be employers themselves
- To help in the reduction of diseases through community awareness and enlightenment programmes
- To assist in fighting sex discrimination and man handling of mothers and their children; thereby promoting gender equity and equality
- Continuing education would help in educating farmers to use modern farming technology in order to bring about increased productivity

In sum, respondents upheld that continuing education is not only important in Nigeria but rather to the

whole world at large, as it is a multi-dimensional discipline, which covers the behavior of a man from the beginning of his life to the end of his life.

Continuing education and the millennium development goals: Continuing education and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are two different independent concepts; the study had demonstrated the nexus between education and the realization of the MDGs.

In the 1990s, various UN global conferences drew up a numbers of important global development goals and targets with the adoption of the millennium declaration by head of states and government.

Recently, the international development targets have been synthesized into goals and targets aimed at monitoring human development. They are:

- Eradicating poverty and hunger
- Achieving universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reducing child mortality
- Improving maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing global partnership for development

Respondents attested to the connection between continuing education and sustainable development that continuing education being a process for skill acquisition and capacity development is an ongoing process rather than a cognitive set of skills, which result in a state of permanent literacy. Thus, continuing education policy need to move beyond the acquisition of skills to supporting their sustainability and this is the core value of the MDGs sustainable human development.

CONCLUSION

The study had demonstrated that education is a necessity for man to attain self-fulfillment in order to articulate himself and achieve fullness; however, the formal system of education, which is elitist, discriminatory and instalmental cannot alone help man to attain all the education he needs for achievement of self-fulfillment and national development. The study had affirmed continuing or adult education, which is also referred as recurrent education, education permanente and lifelong education, need to be meaningfully employed and exhaustively utilized by both governmental and non-governmental bodies to stress that education should be co-terminous with life.

The continuing education as a discipline for the promotion of human values and sustainable development should be strategically positioned to focus on policies and programmes that are based on the development of a

consciousness among Nigerians that aid and engender the attainment of Millennium Development Goals across the country. Even though, there seem not to be clearly spelt out roles and functions of continuing education in the MDGs charter; nevertheless, continuing or adult education plays a pivotal role in actualizing the MDGs. The following roles are recommended here for continuing education programmes in attaining the MDGs in Nigeria:

- The enlightening of people about MDGs, particularly on ways to improve maternal health
- The organisation of health programmes, like family planning, HIV/AIDS seminars for the general public
- Organizing tutorial classes for those outside the formal educational system
- Enlightening the community on how to take good care of their environment

In a nut shell, continuing or adult education as a discipline is a sine quo non in attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

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