ACHIEVING QUALITY IN ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM

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Abstract

Adult and non-formal education occupies a pride of place in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria because it provides adults opportunities to continue their education at any level and in various forms with response to individual needs and that of the society. The decline in adult and non-formal education quality still defies solution in Nigeria. This paper identifies the indispensability of quality assurance mechanism as a tool for enhancing the quality of adult and non-formal education for the sustainability of high standards. The paper stresses that quality assurance mechanism is a catalyst for academic excellence. Recommendations were made that adult and non–formal education should institutionalize quality assurance for effective monitoring, evaluation, sustenance and improvement of the programmes and government at all levels should adequately fund adult and non-formal education programmes, especially provision of modern facilities and equipment that will ensure quality in the system.

Introduction

Education is considered to be a key for social, political and economic development. The invaluable roles and contributions of education to the development of an individual and the society are enormous. Education is seen in the modern world as being vital for the progress and survival of the state and a tool for the formulation of national policies. Therefore, it is important for a country like Nigeria to develop its human resources that can be used to achieve the said targets.

Nigeria is fast becoming a middle income country, yet the numbers of people living in poverty is rising (Africa Progress Report, 2013). The 16.7 million men and 25 million women in Nigeria who do not have literacy skills are not fully participating in economic development and democratic processes. Presently, many adult men and women are uneducated and therefore, lack the requisite knowledge, skills and the right attitudes for a functional career in agriculture, technology and other vocational areas to enable them to function effectively in a democratic society (Nnamani, 2014). This development led to the introduction of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria (EFA, 2006).

Adult and non–formal education, according to Nwakaire and Nnorom (2015), is defined as organised learning outside the formal school, for the purpose of raising awareness, acquisition of skills, improvement of efficiency and productivity in jobs, preparing for self employment or opportunities for further training in a specific field of endeavour, all for the purpose of enhancing the individuals standard of living and quality of life. Also, it includes any organised systematic

educational activity carried out outside the framework of the formal school system to provide selected type of learning to particular sub-group in the population, adults as well as children (Egbezor & Okanezi, 2008).

In recent times, studies revealed that adult and non-formal education in Nigeria has not been given its pride even when its importance to national development has not been acknowledged as contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). The practitioners in this area are facing difficult challenges in doing their jobs. For adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria to remain sustainably fit for their positions, the quality of their services and products must be taken with a high degree of seriousness. Quality education is very vital in every human existence and societal development. It facilitates the rate of development and increases the standard of living, paving way for national ability. An educated society is wealthy. When a man acquires quality education, he becomes a free thinker and creator of wealth, he understands the society he lives in better and becomes more useful to it (Jaiyeoba & Atanda, 2007).

Omoruyi (1996), Akinpelu (2002) and Ezele (2005) identified the following, among others, as impediments to adult and non-formal education in Nigeria: inadequate facilities, paucity of fund and motivation, inadequate awareness, problem of personnel growth and development. Addressing most of the aforementioned hitches is part of what mechanism called the quality assurance aims to achieve. Studies have not gone in-depth into the holistic influence of the quality assurance mechanism in improving quality in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.
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According to Nwakaire and Nnorom (2015), quality assurance refers to a process of defining and fulfilling a set of quality standards consistently and continuously with the goal of satisfying consumers, producers, and the other stakeholders. On this premise, this paper examined how quality assurance mechanism can be used in achieving quality in adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

Concept of Adult and Non-Formal Education

Nzeneri (2002) defines an adult as one who is physically and psychologically matured and is socially, economically and politically responsible. Also, Eya (2006) posits that an adult is a person who shows a reasonable measure of moral and emotional maturity and is prudent, patent and tolerant as well as socially responsible. According to Seya (2005), 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 to remedying early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfilment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies. Adult education is the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values, (Merriam, Sharau & Brockett, 2007). Adult and non-formal education includes all forms of formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education given to men and women (alone, in groups or institutional settings) to improve them in their society by increasing their skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and sensitiveness (Nzeneri, 2008).

The objectives of adult and non-formal education shall be to:

(i)   Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.

(ii)   Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.

(iii)   Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.

(iv)   Provide in-service, on-the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and

(v)   Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FRN, 2013).

Concept of Quality Education

Quality education is a multi-dimensional concept which should embrace all functions and activities such as teaching, and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building facilities, equipment, services to the community and academic environment, (Onuh, 2007). Ekhaguere (2005) opines that quality education may be characterised by any, and all, of the following:

• Fitness of purpose; measured by the extent to which an institution's provisions align with or fit national priorities, goals, objectives and aspiration;

• Fitness for purpose; measured by the extent to which each higher education's product fits its envisaged purpose;

• Value for money; measured by achieving more with less in an efficient manner;

• Transformation from one state to another with value-added

• Perfection; perceived as the attainment of a near flawless product;

• Excellence; viewed as the attainment of exceptionally high standards

Concept of Quality Assurance Mechanism

Joseph and Agih (2007) assert that academic quality assurance has to do with setting standards for the various processes and activities that lead to the production of graduates by the training institutions. These processes include; requirements for entry into educational programmes, programme duration, course content, quality of teachers, standard of instructional infrastructure and facilities, the school environment from a holistic perspective and examination, that is, quality of examination questions, supervision, moderation of results, grading system, among others.

In the opinion of Ayodele and Awe (2007), quality assurance in education ensures the quality of academic (teaching-learning process and curriculum) and structural (buildings and physical facilities) provisions of courses and allow for an objective review of their quality. Also, Oladosu (2012) views it as the process of monitoring quality and ensuring that

standards are not only continuously sustained but also improved upon. He stressed further that it implies constant evaluation, assessment, maintenance and improvement of quality by an institution, a programme or a higher education system.

Towards Enhancing Quality of Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes in Nigeria through Quality Assurance Mechanism

For quality of adult and non-formal education programmes to be sustainably guaranteed, quality assurance mechanism should be embraced. The following quality assurance practices can be adopted to enhance quality of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

The National Commission for Mass Literacy and Adult Education is performing well in the area of supervision and accreditation of academic programmes in adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria. Efforts should be improved in the area of monitoring the performance indicators of the programmes.

Periodic staff development programme should be put in place for facilitators so as to keep them abreast of new innovations and development in their respective fields.

Adequate provision of infrastructural facilities, modern instructional materials and information Communication Technologies should be integrated into the programmes

The Commission should streamline admission process so that students admitted into various courses are of high quality.

Conclusion

Improving quality in adult and non-formal education is imperative in Nigeria because when every individual in a nation is educationally developed, there is likely to be socio-political liberation, economic emancipation, religious tolerance and cultural transformation. Also, it is capable of being an instrument for the eradication of preventable diseases, social apathy, and social immobility and can as well enhance the human potential for greater economic productivity and reduction of human social inequality. All these can be achieved if quality assurance mechanism is well embraced in adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

· Adult and non–formal education should institutionalize quality assurance for effective monitoring, evaluation, sustenance and improvement of the programmes.

· Government at all levels should adequately fund adult and non formal education programmes, especially provision of modern facilities and equipment that will ensure quality in the system.

· Politicization of appointment into various positions in adult and non-formal education should be discouraged so as to facilitate internal efficiency in the system.

· The National Commission for Mass Literacy and Adult Education should endeavour to sanction any institution that flaunts regulation on quality assurance.

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