

UTILIZING CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EXPANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the utilization of continuing education for expanding access to education in Nigeria. It employed a survey research design with a sample population of 262 respondents selected from continuing education centres in Benin metropolis through the simple random sampling procedure. Two research questions were raised and answered and one hypothesis tested in the course of investigation. A 20 items questionnaire was the instrument for the study. Data collected were analysed using statistical mean of decision criteria of 2.50 and chi-square for testing the hypothesis. The finding of the study revealed that continuing education is viable and can be effectively utilized for expanding access to education. It revealed that continuing education helps individuals to grow professionally with the latest technologies, knowledge and skills; promote knowledge and skill relevant to needs of participants; provide educational access to individual who desire it; provide educational success for drop out and starters to further their learning; enhance initiative, dynamism and proficiency of participants are major potentials of expanding access to education. In view of this, it was essentially recommended that efforts should be made to intensify the provision of continuing education in the country as it is the only viable alternative to formal education in expanding access to education.

Keywords: Education, Continuing Education, Access, Expansion

INTRODUCTION

The provision of educational opportunities has been a major concern of international communities owing to the valuable potentials of education in human society. Education is the industry that produces manpower for the development of nation; it enhances manpower development by improving the number and quality of human resources. This explains why human societies have sought the best means of expanding education in all its ramifications. Thus for such education to induce total development, it must be continuing.

Continuing education provides the opportunity to engage in recurrent training, lifelong learning, a way of compensating for the inadequacies of the formal education system through giving people a second chance, and also of ensuring a continual growth, upgrading and updating of human resources knowledge. Osuji (2001) opined that continuing education is strictly an adult education concept which stresses provision of educational opportunities for adults after cessation of formal schooling. He added that it means education and re-education, training or retraining opportunities made available to people out of schools such as young school leavers, the employed, and the unemployed and so on, in order to cope with new situations of life.

Akinpelu (2002) asserted that continuing education is not an initial education or beginning education; rather it is the education that extends or adds to whatever previous education that the individuals might have had. According to Egunyomi (1999) Continuing education refers

to educational activities deliberately designed and organised to meet needs which may range from occupational and professional competency to purely personal and leadership development. It leads to skills, academic and personal developments and at the same time responsive to needs and wants of individuals. Continuing education is a form of educational programme organized and undertaken outside the formal school system and at times parallel to it, but often times going beyond the purview of the school system". It is an ongoing education and learning, in formal and non-formal forms, from cradle to grave, making knowledge to improve quality of life.

Imhabekhai (2009) defined it as, the entire range of educational activities which are provided for all categories of learners whether children, youth or adults who have successfully completed one level of education but wants to further pursue education from where they had stopped earlier. He further posited that it is a life-long affairs and, that education is co-terminal with life and predicated upon two major assumption which are:

- i. "Those involved in the programmes have attended and completed one form or level of education earlier and had a break in their educational pursuit as a result of certain conditions, but now want to continue;
- ii. Changes in social, economic, political and technological situation now compelled the learners to enrol in continuing education programmes so that they can acquire new skills and competences to enable them perform their various function effectively".

Akinkugbe (1994) cited in Olomukoro (2014) asserts that continuing education is the education received in order to be able to continue the education one had received before, that is, education that helps the individual to go ahead with their abandoned or prior education and probably go further. Continuing education is lasting education, enduring education, persisting and prolonged education. It is needed to overcome some form of educational backwardness or to compensate for earlier inadequate learning and believes that continuing education is flexible and can operate in more than one static form (Egunyomi, 2001).

To Akinpelu (1988), it is a form of educational activity organised and run outside the formal school system and at times, parallel to it, but often time going beyond the purview of the school system. It is an educational activity fashioned out to help remove barriers from learning by making participants make up for lost grounds as well as for those who did not attend school at all or started but dropped out owing to some reasons.

Historically, the practice of continuing education in Nigeria is not entirely new. It is a concept within the wider scope of adult education as stated in the National Policy on Education, 2004 edition as revised. Its' origin in Nigeria could be traced to the trends higher educational development in Nigeria especially the University College of Ibadan in 1948, under the supervision of Oxford Extra-Mural delegacy. Based on Ashby commission report of 1945, the department of Extra-Mural studies (which cater for continuing education programme) was also established in the institution. The mission as stated by the report was "to provide opportunity for higher education to many persons in the country who would have benefited in a full-time university education and refreshers' courses for people who have already had a good general, specialised or professional education, so that they may keep abreast of new thought in their field of interest and work (Cited in Olomukoro 2014).

Prior to this it was recorded that about 1906, there was different continuing education programmes in Nigeria. For instance, at King's College, Lagos there was extra mural classes in Arts and Science organized mainly to equip Nigerians with various literacy skills and knowledge in other to improve their living standard. The Elliot Commission of 1943 and

Ashby Commission of 1957 also gave rise to continuing education centre in Kano, Jos, and Ibadan. One significant event worth mentioning is the establishment of University of Lagos, Akoka in 1962. This institution aside her primary assignment of providing courses in humanities, social sciences, medicine, law, engineering degree programmes, she also laid emphasis on promoting part-time courses through her correspondent department. It was specially designed to enable workers to obtain degrees relevant to their occupation while at work (Osuji, 2001).

In modern Nigeria, Continuing education covers remedial or extral mural education provided by universities to workers, school drop-out and those who missed opportunities to attend formal education system for their elementary education or qualification. The major focus of continuing education is the provision of access to education opportunities for all categories of individual, 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 of access to education for all citizens; and helping to retrieve the economic wastage that early-school leavers would have constituted (Egunyomi 2001).

Presently in Nigeria, the practice of continuing education has been broadened to include the provision of educational opportunities to meet the need of the illiterates, the drop-outs, the underprivileged, educationally disadvantaged, the oppressed, the professional and the backward. It could be reasonably inferred that continuing education would be best utilized for expanding access to education as it offers a wide range of training or education, meeting the needs of all and sundry. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the utilization of continuing education for expanding access to education in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As part of obligation to its citizens, Nigeria government is expected to provide education for all and sundry irrespective of their gender, location and belief. This has explains the current expansion in school system in the nation and the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 2001, to provide uninterrupted basic education for all. To further achieve this obligation, the situation demands that all forms of education including available alternatives must be strengthened to ensure that access to education is not only expanded but assured. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the utilization of continuing education as a viable alternative for promotion of access to education in Nigeria.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What are the major potentials of continuing education in expanding access to education in Nigeria?
- ii. What major problems are militating against the utilization of continuing education for expanding access to education in Nigeria?

HYPOTHESIS

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: The relationship between continuing education and expansion of access to education in Nigeria is not significant

Hi: The relationship between continuing education and expansion of access to education in Nigeria is significant

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research survey was used in conducting this study. The survey research design was used because it is considered as the most reliable means of describing the occurrence and frequency of a phenomenon based on people’s opinion and idea. However, the study was carried out in Edo state and was delimited to Continuing Education Centres in Benin Metropolis. The population of the study consisted of 930 students in continuing education centre (Field Survey, 2016). From the population, a sample of 262 respondents was used through the random sampling procedure. A 20 items Likert scale structured questionnaire titled Continuing Education and Educational Access Questionnaire’’ (CEEAQ) was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was established with the aid of colleagues in the department of Adult Education University of Benin, who helped to scrutinize the items to ensure relevant items are raised. A pilot testing was conducted with 20 respondents outside the population to test the reliability of the instrument. Using the person Moment Correlation statistics, a coefficient of 0.79 was derived indicating a strong reliability index of the instrument. Data collection was through direct personal administration of the questionnaire to the respondents in their various centres and which were also collected from them, the same day. Data analysis was done using statistical mean, simple ranking and chi square for testing the null hypothesis. A criterion mean of 2.50 bench mark were adopted for purpose of decision making.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of responses on major potentials of continuing education in expanding access to education in Nigeria

S/N	Variables/potentials	Means score	Ranking	Decision
1	Promote knowledge and skills relevant to needs of participants	3.16	2 nd	Accepted
2	Provide educational access to individual who desire it	3.02	3 rd	Accepted
3	Continuing education helps individuals to grow professionally with the latest technologies, knowledge and skills	3.32	1 st	Accepted
4	Enhance initiative, dynamism and proficiency of participants	2.85	5 th	Accepted
5	Provide educational success for drop-out and starters to further their learning	2.99	4 th	Accepted

The results in table 1 above showed that the items raised were considered major potentials of continuing education in expanding access to education in Nigeria. All items raised met the criterion mean standard of 2.50. This means that continuing education helps individuals to grow professionally with the latest technologies, knowledge and skills; Promote knowledge and skill relevant to needs of participants; Provide educational access to individual who desire it; Provide educational success for drop out and starters to further their learning; enhance initiative, dynamism and proficiency of participants are major potentials of expanding access to education. They however ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th respectively.

Table 2. Distribution of responses on problems militating against the utilization of continuing education for expanding access to education in Nigeria

S/N	Variables/potentials	Means Score	Ranking	Decision
1	High rate of disengagement from centre	2.92	4th	Accepted
2	Poor facilities/ equipment	2.98	2 nd	Accepted
3	Poor organisation/ administration	2.96	3 rd	Accepted
4	Inconsistency in government policy	2.70	7 th	Accepted
5	Ineffective supervision	2.61	8 th	Accepted
6	Shortage of staff	2.89	5 th	Accepted
7	Inadequate funding	3.19	1st	Accepted
8	Lack of proper coordination	2.79	6th	Accepted

The result presented in the table revealed that the respondents agreed that all the items presented constitute problems militating against utilization of continuing education in expanding access to education in Nigeria. All items met the mean score standard of 2.50. The ranking of the responses showed that inadequate funding ranked first and was considered the highest of the problem. Poor facilities/equipment ranked 2nd. Poor organisation/administration, High rate of disengagement from centre, shortage of staff, Lack of proper coordination, Inconsistency in government policy, ineffective supervision ranked 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th respectively.

Table 3. Chi square test of relationship between continuing education and expansion of access to education

Item: Continuing Education in Nigeria provides access to education for all

Responses	Frequency Observed (fo)	Frequency Expected (fe)	fo-fe	fo-fe ²	$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$
Strongly Agree	101	65.5	35.5	1260.25	19.24
Agree	88	65.5	23.5	552.25	8.43
Disagree	44	65.5	-21.5	441.25	6.74
Strongly Disagree	29	65.5	-36.4	1296.25	19.79
					$\chi^2 = 54.2$

Data in table 3 revealed that at significant level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 3, the critical value is 7.82. Since the calculated value of 54.2 is greater than the critical value of 7.82, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. This means that there is a significant relationship between continuing education and expansion of access to education in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the data analysis has indicated strongly that continuing education can be effectively utilized to promote access to education in Nigeria. Research question one of the

study revealed the major potentials of continuing education in expanding access to education. Among these are that continuing education helps individuals to grow professionally with the latest technologies, knowledge and skills; Promote knowledge and skill relevant to needs of participants; Provide educational access to individual who desire it; Provide educational success for drop out and starters to further their learning; enhance initiative, dynamism and proficiency of participants are major potentials of expanding access to education. Corroborating this view Egunyomi (1999) asserted that Continuing education is deliberately designed and organised to meet needs which may range from occupational and professional competency to purely personal and leadership development. It leads to skills, academic and personal developments and at the same time responsive to needs and wants of individuals. Continuing education is a form of educational programme organized and undertaken outside the formal school system and at times parallel to it, but often times going beyond the purview of the school system'. It is an ongoing education and learning, in formal and non-formal forms, from cradle to grave, making knowledge to improve quality of life.

The results also revealed the problem militating against utilization of continuing education in expanding access to education in Nigeria. Amongst the problems are inadequate funding, Poor facilities/equipment, Poor organisation/administration, High rate of disengagement form centre, shortage of staff, lack of proper coordination, Inconsistency in government policy, and ineffective supervision. This finding is supported by osuji 2001 who revealed that the problems of continuing education in Nigeria includes poor teaching quality, lack of dynamic leadership, poor organisation/administration and coordination, finance, amongst others.

The study lastly revealed in the hypothesis tested that continuing education significantly promotes access to education in Nigeria by making learning available to all irrespective of age, sex nor location. Akinpelu cited in Olomukoro (2014) supported this findings when he revealed that continuing education programmes is an educational activity fashioned out to help remove barrier from learning by making participants make up for lost grounds as well as a for those who did not attend school at all or started but dropped out owing to some reasons.

CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have been informative and valuable to the store of knowledge. The need for utilizing continuing education for expanding access to education must be given the attention it deserves. Continuing education has the capability of strengthening the educational base of the country by providing access to knowledge and skill acquisition for all categories of persons irrespective of age, sex or location. It helps improve their initial education where it existed or to acquire fresh knowledge, skills and values.

Sequel to the findings of the study, it will be recommended seriously that, the provision of continuing education for the nation should be intensified, the identified problems should be corrected to enhance its effective utilization in expanding means of education in the nation. The potentials of continuing education programmes are vital in developing the nation, efforts may be made to revitalized the existing continuing education centers in the country to access to educational opportunity available for all people

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