

Continuing Education: A Strategy for Achieving Educational Transformation for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Ifeanyi David Emeka, Ph.D.^{1*} and Edith Chin Thompson, Ph.D.²

¹Department of Education Foundation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

²Department of Education Foundation, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli, Anambra State, Nigeria

E-mail: id.emeka@unizik.edu.ng*
we.thompsonedii80@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Provision of affordable and quality education is important for facilitating and sustaining a nation's development, hence to improve individual learners' values, attitudes, behaviors, and skills, quality education is of paramount importance. Nigeria is still being classified among countries with high level of illiteracy and poverty despite massive human and material resources that reside in the country. It also continues to be classified as a developing country. This paper examined the concepts of continuing education and forms and challenges of continuing education as a strategy for achieving educational transformation for sustainable national development. This paper used secondary sources and personal observation to generate the required data. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were made relating to educational transformation. One of the recommendations is that governments, at all levels, should allocate appropriate funds to continuing education and empower the poor masses with adequate educational opportunities in order to achieve educational transformation for sustainable development in our nation.

(Keywords: education, continuing education, sustainable development, sustainable national development)

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most essential needs for the wellbeing of an individual and that of the nation. Education is a powerful instrument of social, political, and economic progress, without which, neither an individual nor a nation can attain growth and development (Yusuf, Afolabi, and Loto

2013). Also, education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self-sustaining growth and development (Todaro and Smith, 2009, Ilechukwu, Njoku, and Ugwuozor, 2014). Hence, education holds the master key that unlocks a country's potentials towards educational transformation, and sustainable national development.

Educational transformation remains the only principal vehicle for achieving national development. It is the key to human development and the backbone of any national development plan. These aims require, among other things, the broadening of educational opportunities, especially continuing education, for the productive sector of society who are mostly youths and younger adults (Onyenemezu and Aduvo, 2014).

Continuing education can be seen as any post-secondary learning or programs that people attend after formal education in order to increase their present knowledge or working capacity. This can vary from seminars or one-time classes to online courses and entire certificate or degree programs. Some professions require continuing education in a variety of ways such as advanced degrees, conferences, or lectures to help employees learn from other experts in their field. Some of these requirements come in the form of yearly classes or tests to keep skills current with changes in specific industries.

Continuing education can be relied upon for sensitizing people to analytically assess the impact of government's economic, political, social environmental and general policies (Onyenemezu, 2013). Continuing education, as an aspect of education, is geared towards

national development. It encompasses developing the mind, knowledge, attitude, skills, behavioral patterns, physical capabilities, and necessary ideas capable of solving human and societal problems in order to achieve sustainable national development through educational transformation.

In line with the global trend, Nigeria needs an educational approach that can accommodate the young and old irrespective of their socio-economic status and serve as empowerment tool for livelihood and sustainable national development (Onyenemezu and Aduvo, 2014).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Education

Education can be seen as a process of development which consists of the passage of human being from infancy to maturity; the process by which individuals adopt themselves gradually in various ways to their physical and spiritual environment. Education can be conceived as the development of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains and abilities of an individual for optimal function and performance in society (Ilechukwu, Njoku, and Ugwuozor, 2014). The individual has to be helped to maximize his mental, emotional, and psychological abilities which will be beneficial to him and the society in which he belongs.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines education as the process of teaching and learning usually at a school, college, or university (Longman, 2007). Implicit in this are the existence of teaching, learning, and training activities meant to impact information, knowledge, skills, and competences for individual and societal improvements and development.

Education is a life-long process which frees a person from ignorance and superstition (Ilechukwu, Njoku, and Ugwuozor, 2014). Education enhances the quality of an individual and enables them to build up their personality in such a way that they are able to play an effective role in the development of the society where they belong (Okecha, 2008; Emeka, and Onyebuchi, 2020). Education is the basis for development and empowerment for every nation. It plays a vital role in understanding and participating in day-to-day activities of today's world. It builds one's character and plays a significant role in transmitting one's

culture, beliefs, and values to others in society. It helps in creating innovations and meeting the growing needs of every nation.

The development of a nation is not measured through the buildings it has erected, the roads it has laid down, or the bridges it has constructed but by the human resources the nation has developed through a well-defined system of education. Although the physical facilities are usually important, they are perishable and valuable. In the absence of proper education, the nation can hardly develop these and maintain them (Ihejirika 2012). Education is therefore a more crucial factor, not only to equip new generations with skills so essential for earning a livelihood, but also to create among them an awareness to social and environmental realities and inculcate in them scientific temper, independence of mind and spirit which are of paramount importance for them to become responsible citizens. Therefore, education can be generally defined as the sum-total of the experiences (both formal and informal) one acquires on their journey of life.

There are three forms of education: formal education, which we receive in schools; non-formal education, obtained from a semi-formal setting such as being an apprentice in a carpentry workshop; and informal education obtained from the streets, church, mosque, farm, market, peer groups, and family (Ilechukwu, Njoku, and Ugwuozor, 2014). These forms of education are the contributory factors in an individual's overall personality and perception of the world around him.

Continuing Education

Continuing education can simply be defined as any education that is added to previous or initial education by an adult person to complete, improve, or remedy their knowledge in order to adapt and meet with new challenges of life (Onyenemezu and Aduvo, 2014). According to Tahir (2000) in Muhammad, Abdullahi and Isah, (2013), continuing education connotes that subset of adult education that seeks to positively link the needs and aspirations of individuals with educational activities, for development of their potentialities and for the socioeconomic and political development of a nation state. Continuing education can also be seen as an educational activity fashioned out to help

beneficiaries or participants make up for or save lost ground as well as for those who did not attend school at all or started but dropped out owing to some reasons.

Continuing education can be seen as any post-secondary learning or programs that people attend after formal education, in order to increase their present knowledge or working capacity. Ihejirika (2012) noted that continuing education covers the entire range of educational activities which are provided for all categories of learners, who have, successfully or unsuccessfully, completed one level of education, but would want to continue the pursuit of education from where they had stopped earlier. Akinpelu (1988) sees Continuing Education as a form of education activity organized and run outside the formal school system at times, parallel to it but often times goes beyond the preview of the school system.

Continuing education can be provided part-time or full time and is often without limit (Iwuji, 2011). Osuji (2001) in Muhammad, Abdullahi & Isah, (2013) is of the view that continuing education is strictly, an adult education concept which stresses the provision of educational opportunities for adults after cessation of formal schooling. Hence, it can be said that continuing education as the name implies means continuation of education from the birth to old age and death at last.

In Nigeria today, continuing education has been broadened to include the provision of educational activities that will meet the needs of illiterates, the drop-out, the underprivileged, educationally disadvantaged, the oppressed, different categories of professionals, the down-trodden, and the disenfranchised (Muhammad, Abdullahi and Isah, 2013). Thus, continuing education offers a wide range of training or education which is targeted towards meeting the needs of the people, it therefore serves as the best means or instrument of educational transformation which in turn leads to sustainable national development.

Forms of Continuing Education

Forms of continuing education as highlighted Akinpelu, (2002) in Muhammad, Abdullahi and Isah, (2013) include the following:

1. In-service training units of Government and Business Enterprises: many governmental

and private organizations establish training units to provide in-house training, induction courses for the enhancement of their staff. Most banks and large industrial enterprises organize on a permanent or *ad hoc* basis such training for their staff.

2. Distance Education or Correspondence Colleges: this unit exists either as an institution or a department in government organizations (e.g., like in some universities or colleges you will have Centre for Continuing Education or Directorate of Continuing Education).
3. Professional Continuing Education: this is a type of continuing education offered by professional organizations and bodies aimed at up-dating or refreshing the knowledge, skills, and expertise of practicing members of the concerned professions, with a view to improve the quality of their service delivery. Typical examples are the Medical, Engineering, Nursing, Accounting, Teaching professions, to mention but few.
4. Remedial or Second Chance Education: this is the most common and traditional form of continuing education. They are often called extra-mural or evening classes, are very easy to set up and are very widespread and loosely organized. They mostly offer general education curriculum and are very flexible in operations and normally teach the same subjects as formal schools. The contact hours are mostly in the evening or night, they charge fees, and more or less offered by non-governmental organizations, that is either individual, Groups, or associations. They employ their teachers, mostly called Tutors, and usually prepare their students for external examinations like West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), and the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN) amongst others.

It has been observed that the major characteristic of continuing education is multi-variety and flexibility. This implies that continuing education is designed to meet the learning or educational needs of the people. The learners determine the forms of educational program(s) they will take, its contents, duration, time and

possibly venue. It is said to be situational relevant and problem solving, because they are usually initiated, organized or participated in, to solve specific problems or meet identified or expressed needs of individuals and groups.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is another important concept to be briefly discussed; it is all about stability (Yusuf, 2013). Development is the general improvement in the well being of all citizens of a country which is measured by the unhindered access to all availability of the convenience of life for the greatest number in nation-state (Haruna, and Jumba, 2011). The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Onyenemezu and Aduvo, (2014) conceived sustainable development to mean environment, economic, and social well-being for today and tomorrow.

Abraham (2012) submitted that sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a systematic approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced, and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations – a system that connects space; and a system that connect time. The issues at stake in sustainable development are economic growth, human development, and environmental protection and conservation. In other words, sustainable development is about Economic, Social and Economic Sustainability (ESES). The objective of sustainability requires the protection of the natural resources upon which future development depends (Ilechukwu, Njoku, and Ugwuozor, 2014).

Sustainable National Development

National development can also be referred to as national growth which include all facet of endeavor such as political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental. It involves all the activities which a nation engages in to achieve a good standard of living for her citizens. Economic, political, social, cultural, physical, spiritual, material and moral development of a nation is inevitable for freedom and dignity of man (Agboeze, 2011). Supporting the above view, Aggarwal (2008) in Onyenemezu and Aduvo, (2014) perceived national development to include all aspects of the life of an individual and the

nation's cultural, democratic, emotional, economic, intellectual, material, moral, physical, spiritual, and social.

The concept of sustainable national development has remained the likely parameter of measuring development. Abubakar (2013) defined sustainable national development as a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social, and environmental systems. Abraham (2012), viewed sustainable national development as the capability of a particular nation or country to achieve comprehensive improvements or refinement in all ramifications of its existence (economic, political, cultural, religious, etc.).

Age (2005) in Abubakar (2013) listed increased capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, satisfying basic needs, and protecting the environment as some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize. This implies that the ability of any society or country to plan and achieve betterment and improvements in its socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental lives both now and in the future is geared towards national sustainable development. Sustainable development simply ties together the carrying capacity of national systems with the socio-economic challenges confronting its people.

Continuing education can be used to achieve educational transformation that will ensure sustainable national development and secure the future. Future security is certainly guaranteed where adults and youths who are the dominant population of the nation's production sector can continue their education in order to acquire new knowledge and skills for socio-economic, political, and environmental development of the nation.

Educational Transformation for Sustainable National Development

Education obviously has been seen as one of the greatest forces that can be used to bring about desired changes. The fact that education and sustainable development have been inseparable probably explains why scholars emphasize the

need for education for the purpose of achieving the desired sustainable national development. George and Ukpong (2013) defined education as a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture from one generation to another through formal and informal training of people in the society. They are of the view that education deals with mental, physical, psychological, and socio-economic development of the people. Ebong (1996) in Abubakar (2013) further stated that “the goal of education in manpower development is aimed at national growth and development”. For any country therefore, to attain sustainable national development there is need for skilled manpower and those skills required are basic ingredients for national development and can only be acquired through education (Ebong 1996 in Abubakar 2013).

Education, no doubt, provides technical skills, consciousness, awareness, and enlightenment to individuals in order to properly pursue their aspirations and yearnings. Folayan, Odetoynbo, Harrison, and Brown (2014) also believe that it is only educated population that can command skills necessary for sustainable economic development and a high standard of living. Therefore, sustainable national development can be seen as the target goal since it is meant for the society and its members; educational transformation however remains the instrument for achieving and attaining the target goal and objectives. In other words, education remains the determinant factor for sustainable national development. Hence, the need for a well-structured educational transformation system that will enhance the achievement of the national development.

CHALLENGES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

Challenges of continuing education programs in Nigeria as highlighted by Muhammad, Abdullahi, and Isah (2013) include the following:

1. No clear goals as to what constitutes continuing education within the National Policy on Education. The document has some lapses, and it has not provided in clear terms what continuing education is expected to achieve.
2. Roles of various agencies are not well defined. Specific roles between various

government and non-governmental agencies need to be defined to avoid confusion and overlapping duties like what are the roles of the National Board for Technical Education (NABTEB), the National Teachers Institute (NTI), the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), the National Universities Commission, the Centre for Management Development (CMD), the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), and the private organizations in the accreditation of the continuing education.

3. Funding is a serious issue when it comes to continuing education because even the government owned higher institutions that are supposed to carry the mandate, are underfunded to cope with the ever-increasing demand of continuing education of the present times.
4. There is a lack of regulatory bodies to protect the interests of the learner. However, the costs of such programs keep on increasing, which ordinarily affects the learners, therefore the call for the establishment of a regulatory body that will reasonably protect the interests of the learners is imperative.
5. There is inadequate continuing education infrastructure. This refers to the physical and spatial materials that are used for teaching and learning processes. They include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, athletic fields, school farms and gardens, as well as provisions of water and sanitation which are usually unavailable or in very bad conditions.

CONCLUSION

Continuing education is the cornerstone of achieving educational transformation for sustainable national development. There are no doubts achieving sustainable national development is the goal of all developing nations, as such, there is needs to invest, encourage, and enlighten people on education.

Continuing education programs for achieving educational transformation for sustainable national development can be directed towards

equipping and empowering people. This should involve the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of the citizens. The roles of government at all levels are to facilitate the achievement of any development. Government should continue the contribution towards achieving this sustainable development which entails the need for monitoring and supervision of all financial and other investments in education for the purpose of achieving sustainable national development are not diverted for other purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for a re-examination of continuing education in the National Policy on Education with the view to clarifying its purpose and goals with a definite schedule of responsibilities and action. Many scholars in the nation believes that its current contents are ambiguous.
2. More attention should be given to the continuing education of workers, both in the public and private sectors, in order to improve the productive capacities of the workers
3. Government at all levels, should allocate appropriate funds to continuing education and empower the poor masses with adequate educational opportunities in order to achieve educational transformation for sustainable development in our nation.
4. There are needs for teaching and learning processes to take place under a conducive environment. As such, dilapidated infrastructures and facilities in schools and colleges must be improved.
5. Motivation of the teachers, especially in the area of salary increments and better working conditions, will in turn motivate teachers to put in their best efforts.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emeka, Ifeanyi David, Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of Education Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. He holds a Master of Science (M.Ed.) and Ph.D. Degree in Education Foundations from the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. His research interests are in the psychology of learning, developmental psychology, and teacher education.

Thompson, Edith Chin Ph.D. holds a Ph.D. degree in Educational Foundations and a Masters (M.Ed.) degree in Educational Foundations from the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. Her research interests are in guidance and counseling, developmental psychology, teacher education, and adolescent studies.

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