Developing Strategies for Promoting Non- Formal Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Federal Government of Nigeria is among the nation of the world aiming at achieving education for all (EFA) by 2015. But despite the effort put in place for the realization of this goal, social cultural attitudes, poverty and ignorance among its citizens stands as a major hindrance. This paper examines the alternative way (non- formal education) of combating these hindrances. In addition, strategies for the elimination of these hindrance and promotion of the non-formal education system are also highlighted. The paper concludes with appeal to the stake holders in non-formal education to make the potentials of the sector fully realized and utilized.

Introduction:

Nigeria, along with other developing countries of the world, have over the years invested large amount of their resources to attain the millennium development goal of education for all (EFA) especially in the formal sector. Despite these loadable efforts, large populations of their citizen are still not opportune to have access to formal education.

A number of reasons account for this ugly trend. In northern part of Nigeria, there are negative social/ cultural repulse to education, which forbids certain group of people from acquiring formal education. A contemporary example is the buku-haram which means "no formal school".

In other parts of the country, ignorance and poverty are part of the reasons why people are not able to access formal education. In parts of igbo land, the quest for acquisition of material possession (wealth) debar people to have access to formal education. Those in this category needs no formal education .In view of this, it becomes imperative to develop strategies that will help to promote non- formal education to provide for skills and knowledge for those who have passed the age for full time enrollment in formal school.

Developing strategies in this contex means man's ability to think and make conscious decisions about himself and his environment, reasoning out and charting a course for oneself, the country or group to follow. (Nwagwu (2001 33). This will involve the identification of the educational needs of the various segments and clusters, both as individuals and groups.

The concept of Non-formal education. Most people had limited non- formal education to what happens within the family setting involving the impartation of indigenous knowledge to young ones. Non-formal education goes beyond this in the views of combs (1973) non-formal education is any organized systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population.

According to Okpetu (1999) non-formal education is a term sometimes used by scholars to connote training and instructions delivered outside the formal education system or alternative to schooling.

Similarly, Aderinoye (2004) presented non-formal education as any organized educational activity for out of school youths and adults, outside the formal school system.

Non- formal education is more learner centered than the formal system. It includes a variety of practical and functional programmes as adult literacy, occupational skill, training, community health, nutrition and family planning education.

According to Okpetu (1999) the characteristics of non- formal education are:

i.   client centeredness, as against subject centeredness in formal education.
ii. fulfillment of immediate and practical needs.
iii. occurs outside school setting.
iv. Involve part time study
v.   Designed for voluntary students
vi. Local initiative, self help and encourages innovation
vii. Possibility of varying programmes to meet specific needs of different clients.
viii. Control and autonomy are at local level with little or no control from the top.
ix. Cost is less than in formal education.
x.   Flexible admission criteria.

The advocates of non-formal education insist on its continuity based on the following reasons

1. Non- formal education services as a means of reducing increasing gap of rural – urban socio-economics problems.
2. Non- formal education, through its diversified programme has been viewed as an effective means of poverty alleviation (mumba 2002 in Okandeji 2005)
3. Non –formal education equip participants to become more functional and responsible citizens of the nation.
4. Non-formal education develops personal, social and professional skills through experimenting in a relatively safe environment.
5. Non-formal education develops in the recipients such life sustaining qualities as self-confidence, respect, tolerance, intellectual awareness and independence, creativity empowerment, emancipation etc. (Dumitrescu 1999 in okandeji 2005)
6. Non-formal education focuses on teaching people to improve their basic level of subsistence, nutritional standard and general health practices

Hindrances to promotion of non formal education in Nigeria.

Despite the reasons advanced by the advocates of non-formal education, there are still hindrances to the effective promotion of the practice.

1: Lack of literacy teachers. For there to be continuity in any profession or practice, there must be need for those who will pass across the demanded knowledge or skill for others. The lack of these caliber of persons will hinder the promotion or continuity of the practice. In the case of non-formal education, the lack of literacy teachers or instructors is a serious hindrance to the promotion of the discipline in Nigeria. The reason for this may not be unconnected to the low salary and low status of instructors, resulting to lack of motivation noticed among the instructors of non-formal education sector. The instructors are poorly paid, there position in the educational sectors in some parts of Nigeria is not recognized. The resultant effect is that those who feel they cannot contain drift to some other sectors.

2: Inadequate funding: in adequate funds to run non-formal education programmes in Nigeria seem to be one of the most pressing hindrance to the promotion of the sector. No matter how laudable an educational plan and objectives may appear, if there are no funds to carry out the programmes and project which will lead to achievement of the set objectives and plans, it will not see the light of the day.

In Nigeria, the government seem to pay more attention to formal education and less to non-formal education sector, even when the immediate and practical solutions to most of the nation's problems could be address through the sector. The problem of funding the non formal sector is further compounded by the fact that non-formal sector is not easily assessed in terms of the quality of activities carried out in sector, unlike the formal education sector which can be quantifiable. Hence insufficient financial allocation is a major hindrance to promotion of non-formal education in Nigeria.

3: Lack of recognition of non-formal education sector in Nigeria: There is little or no recognition given to graduates or practitioners in the non-formal education sector. The over emphasis on certificate as against practical work and skill had made the value of non-formal education not to be realized.

It is a known fact that most developed countries of the world (Japan) did not only depend on the formal educational system but used a merger of the formal and non-formal educational sectors. Since it is difficult to assess the non formal sector in Nigeria, recognizing and placing the products of the non-formal education becomes more difficult and a very major hindrance to the promotion of the sector.

4: Lack of trained or qualified practitioners: there is shortage of teachers or instructors in the non-formal sector, added to this is the fact that the few available are not trained or professionals. Since there is shortage, any person who shows some level of competence is taking to be a practitioner, even when such persons do not possess the required training. This is another hindrance to the non-formal education sector in Nigeria. In most cases, people who had no form of training in the methodology, principles and techniques of teaching adults are allowed into the sector.

> **5: Problem of underrating the sector:** the non-formal education sector in Nigeria is under rated and under valued compared to formal education sector. These perception makes the society to see the recipients of the non-formal education as second class citizen or people who are not educated. Most times, the recipients of the non-formal education are even forced to feel inferior before their formal education. This is a major challenge in the promotion of the sector as many who would have loved to be in the sector decline due to the let down.

Strategies for the promotion of non- formal education in Nigeria

The following strategies are suggested for the promotion of non-formal education sector in Nigeria

Strategy 1: Numeration of Non-formal education client:

Government at all levels should make effort to collect the statistics of non-formal education clients through census. This will enable them to know how to plan for non-formal education.

Strategy 2: Identification of non-formal education needs in Nigeria: Through the available information on the concentration or location, level and needs of the clients, appropriate programme could be mounted.

Strategy 3: Grass root information about non-formal education programms: Awareness campaign should not be in the urban centers only. Rural awareness campaign should begin from the families, then the villages and communities to give opportunity to rural dwellers.

Strategy 4: Government, private, and public, partnership.(G.P.P.P) on non-formal education programmes : Government should allow private partnership and the use of public building for non-formal education activities as against their ban in some states (e.g) River state.

Strategy 5: Tax rebates and grants: Reduction of taxes and allocation of grants to non-formal education operators, be it individuals or non-governmental organizations will go a long way to promote the sector.

Strategy 6: Regognition of non-formal education certificates: there should becertification of non-formal education activities and programmes as is done in the formal education.

Conclusion

There is an increasing awareness in the nation, that formal education sector alone cannot equip the citizen with all the knowledge, skills and competence needed for a balanced national development. There is the need to explore the potentials of the non formal sector.

The paper concludes that since the non-formal sector is a variable wheel for the development of individuals and nations at large, all stake holders, government and non governmental agencies should encourage the full realization and utilization of the non-formal education sector, for national development.

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