

RESTRUCTURING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**BY****Ajibola, Bolaji Christianah Ph.D.: Nigeria Army College of Education, Sobi, Ilorin.
E-mail: cbajibola@gmail.com****&****Saba, Mamman Daniel Ph.D.: Department of Educational Foundations, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State; E-mail: sabamammandaniel@yahoo.com****Abstract**

Education is an indispensable tool for individual and national development. It is mandatory for every nation to provide quality education at all levels of education for the citizens. Acquisition of quality basic education is supposed to be free and compulsory for all school aged children in a formal school setting. All attempts by the Nigerian government to achieve this goal has not yielded the expected results as there are over 10 million school aged children that were reported by UNICEF to be out of school in Nigeria. It is observed that the formal school system alone might not be able to meet up with the challenge of providing basic education for all out-of-school children and youths. Hence, the need to restructure the non-formal education to provide alternative learning activity that will complement the formal setting and lead to acquisition of basic education in order to achieve the 2030 target of sustainable development goal 4. This paper defined the concepts of basic education, non-formal education, restructuring and sustainable development. It looked at the areas of the non-formal education that need to be restructured and gave recommendations which include; restructuring the curriculum to lead to award of Basic Education Certificate instead of the Primary School Leaving Certificate; adequate funding to meet up with the provision of physical and material resources needed for quality teaching and learning; enough qualified facilitators school be recruited on permanent appointment and be well remunerated.

Keyword: Restructuring, Non-formal Education, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Education is a viable and an indispensable tool for all round development of individuals and society. It is the wheel on which economic, social and political development revolves. Education has the ability to transform and bring about positive changes in the lives of people and society. It has the capability of harnessing and developing the potentials and skills of individuals for self-fulfillment and general development of society. Nothing can be used to substitute for the role that education plays in individual and societal development. Education is globally acknowledged as a viable tool for the achievement of the sustainable development goals. It is the weapon that can be used by all nations of the world to combat illiteracy, ignorance, social vices, squalor, intolerance and a tool for improving the social, economic, political well-being of any society. It can also be used to solve societal challenges.

Education is a process that helps in transmitting relevant knowledge, skills, training, information, societal culture, values, norms and acceptable behaviour into individuals. It is identified as an aggregate tool of empowerment that is available for the poor, and the disadvantaged and socially marginalized groups in any society (National Policy on Education, NPE, 2013). Nigeria has the mandate of providing access to quality education that is capable of meeting individuals and national developmental needs. One of the goals of education in Nigeria as stipulated in the NPE (2013) is to provide equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside formal school system. This gives both the formal and informal education right to provide quality education for all. The Nigerian education system is structured into: Early Childcare and Development, Basic education, Post Basic education and Tertiary education.

Concept of Basic Education and Non-formal Education

The Basic education, according to NPE (2013), is ten years of formal schooling given to children of ages 5-15 years. It is comprises of 1 year of kindergarten, 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school education. Non-formal education is recognized as an integral part of the educational system in Nigeria. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education is also recognized as equivalent to basic education given to adults, youths and disadvantaged children of formal school age outside the formal school system. Basic education of quality is expected to be free, compulsory, universal, qualitative and accessible to school age children and to youths and adults who were unable to access basic education or those who dropped out of school before completing basic education and are willing to go back to learn, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background or any peculiar individual challenges (NPE, 2013).

The objectives of basic education as stated in Universal Basic Education Act include:

- i. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- ii. Provide free, universal basic education for all Nigerian child of school-going age;
- iii. Reduce drastically the incidence of drop out from formal school system (through improved relevancy, quality and efficiency);
- iv. Cater for learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling, through appropriate of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- v. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning (Centre for Public Impact, 2017).

The objectives make provision for basic education to take place in both formal and non-formal educational setting. Non-formal education is defined in Ajibola (2014) as an organized leaning activity outside the formal school system that has a specific objective and target specific group of people. It is an educational activity that is flexible in curriculum, organization, management, delivery method and in timing and location (Islam and Mai, 2007). The aim of non-formal education is to provide access to a lifelong learning opportunity that will improve quality of life, develop positive attitude towards life and sensitize the learners to ethnical, social and cultural values (Ajibola, 2014). Non-formal education has a very wide coverage but this paper focuses on the basic education that is received under the non-formal educational system in Nigeria which is tagged Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education.

Non-formal basic education is described by Federal Ministry of Education (2010) as an organized learning activity outside the formal school system that is aimed at enabling adults, youths and children who did not have opportunity of going through the formal education system, or those who dropped out of school to learn basic skills and achieve competency in literacy and numeracy. The target group of Non-formal basic education can be children, youths or adults who are educationally disadvantaged and marginalized as a result of socio-cultural, religious, political and economic challenges in the environment they are living and were unable to access at least basic education which is the least education level that any individual can acquire to become functional in society.

The basic education in the non-formal setting can be used as an alternative educational opportunity to compliment or supplement formal education for specific group of disadvantaged school aged children who are in vulnerable situations as a result of conflict, insurgences, internal displacement, poverty or bad family circumstances. It also includes orphans, abandoned children, street children, abused children, disabled children and children affected by HIV/AIDS who also have right to access quality basic education. It is also meant to give illiterate youths and adults the opportunity to acquire basic skills and achieve competence in literacy and numeracy. The Non-formal basic education, when used

as complement or supplement to formal basic education will help to universalize basic education and help to equip the recipients for economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance that will lead to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Sustainable Development (SD) is described as development that is capable of meeting the basic human needs of the present and future generations (Brundtland Commission Report, 1987). It is a global agenda that all United Nations member states are expected to achieve before or by 2030. It has 17 stated goals but the school is directly responsible for the implementation and the achievement of the sustainable development goal 4 because it is on education. The sustainable development goal 4 aims at “ensuring inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all.” The sustainable development goal 4 mandates the education system of every country to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys complete free, inclusive equitable and quality primary and secondary education that can lead to relevant effective outcome among other targets. Achieving this goal might be a mirage if urgent steps are not taken to involve both formal and non-formal educational system in the provision of basic education.

Studies and statistics have shown that there has not been a time when all children of school age all enrolled and stayed in school to complete basic education in formal education system globally. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2018) reported that 263 million children, adolescents and youths, which is one-fifth of the global population of the age group, were out of school by 2016. This population comprises of 63 (24%) million of primary school aged children between ages 6-11 years, 61 million (23%) adolescents of junior secondary ages between ages 12-14 years and 138 million (53%) youths of upper secondary school age between ages 15-17 years and majority are found in sub-Saharan Africa. A survey conducted by United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (n.d) also revealed that Nigeria has the highest out of school children in the world with 10.5 million primary school aged children who are out of school. The National Bureau of Statistics Report of 2016 also indicated that there are 7.2 million of primary school ages that are out-of-school in Nigeria.

Studies showed that Nigeria was unable to reach the deadline of 2015 set by Education for All (EFA) goal of ensuring that all children, youths and adults with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult situations and children from ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education by 2015, although there was significant improvement in both primary and secondary enrollment. Non-formal Education (NFE) needs to be restructure to provide an alternative educational arrangement to substitute or complement formal basic education in villages and communities where formal education are not accessible to ensure that all disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable school aged children in these hard to reach communities have access to basic education in a non-formal education setting to meet up with the 2030 mandate.

There are so many challenges that are hindering school aged children in different parts of Nigeria from having access to quality basic education. The challenges include the Boko Haram insurgence in the northern part of Nigeria, escalating communal clashes and religious conflict that have resulted in burning down of schools, kidnapping, maiming, killing of school children and burning down of houses that rendered many children homeless have continued to hinder enrolment and retention in schools. Some children lost their parent(s), sponsors and breadwinners to different attacks and counter attacks that took place in communities in the northern parts of Nigeria and this hindered many from going back to school to complete their education.

Poverty is one important reason why many school aged children are not in school. Inability of parents to provide school materials, pay school fees and other hidden charges of the school make many children not to enroll or withdraw from school. Ignorance, socio-cultural and religious practices,

natural disasters and disability also hinder parents from enrolling or allowing their children and wards from persisting and completing school. All attempts by government to ensure that all school aged children get access to quality basic education in a formal school setting in Nigeria and in many countries of the world has not yielded the expected results because of these challenges.

Non-formal basic education needs to be restructured, funded appropriately, made available, accessible and used as complement or alternative educational opportunity for accessing basic education for people of all ages. This will help to eradicate illiteracy and poverty in Nigeria and help Nigeria to meet the 2030 deadline of achieving the sustainable development goal4.

Aspects of Non-formal education to be restructured

Collins (2018) defined restructuring as an attempt to change the way an organization or a system is organized in order to make the organization or system to be profitable or work more effectively. It is also a process of effecting a fundamental changes or alterations in an organization or system in order to make such organization or system more focused, more effective, more efficient, more functional and profitable. Restructuring non-formal education therefore, is the process of effecting changes in non-formal education system in order for it to be more effective, more efficient, more functional and profitable. The present Adult literacy and non-formal education need to be restructured in order to make the education more inclusive, effective and profitable to individuals and society. There is the need for it to get more involved in the education of the over 7 million out-of- school children in different parts of Nigeria in order to eradicate vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty and achieve sustainable development goal 4.

There is the need for more attention and funding to ensure that all categories of the target population benefit maximally in the learning activities. The target population for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria stated in Federal Ministry of Education (2010) include;

1. Adult and adolescent (15 years and above) who are above have never been to school and cannot read or write;
2. Adult and adolescent (15 years and above) who are above school age going but have not achieve competence in reading, writing and numeracy;
3. Early school leavers who could not stay to achieve permanent literacy for effective work;
4. Adults and youths known as 'yandaba' in the north, 'Area boys' in the south -west and out of school boys in the South-eastern and South-south of Nigeria and the prison inmates requiring rehabilitative education;
5. School aged children and youth aged 6-14 years who are not enrolled in formal school system.

There is the need to ensure that the last category of the target population for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education which are the school aged children and youths aged 6-14 who are not enrolled in formal school system are adequately captured and provided for in the programme. It is observed that children of this category that are either out of school or unable to enroll in formal school are not adequately provided for in Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education like youths and adults. This category of population are present in urban cities, urban slum and in rural areas in all part of the Nigeria and account for the 10.5 million and 7.2 million Nigeria out-of-school children reported by UNICEF (n.d) and National Bureau of Statistics (2016) respectively.

The goal of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education in Nigeria stated in the National Policy on Education (2013) which include;

- a. Provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include migrant folks, Almagiri pupils, illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths, and adolescent; persons who left formal school

system early and are willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories of disadvantaged groups; who are unable to have access to the conventional educational system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances;

b. Provide remedial and life-long learning for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; and

c. Provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professional in order to improve their skills.

It can be observed that the goals did not distinctively include children below the age of 15 years who for one reason or the other are unable to access basic education in a conventional school system. The goal and objectives of Mass, Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education should be made to cover all age groups so that everybody, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, family background, home location and circumstances so that everyone can have access to basic education. It should be captured in the goal so that adequate provisions in terms of funding that will cater for physical, material and human resources can be allocated to it during budgeting.

There is the need to restructure the present curriculum of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education in Nigeria so that it can actually lead to acquisition of basic education. The present curriculum is divided into Basic Literacy and Post Literacy. The Basic Literacy programme is a nine months programme that is designed for people who have never had the opportunity to go to school to receive formal education. It is equivalent to primary 1-3 of the formal school setting. While the Post Literacy is a three years programme that is designed for the neo-literate to follow up the knowledge they have acquired and use it to achieve and retain a high level of permanent literacy.

Post Literacy is equivalent of primaries 4-6 in formal education setting. At the completion of Post Literacy programme Primary School Leaving Certificate is awarded to the graduates who are expected to mainstream into the formal basic education to continue and complete basic education and be awarded the Basic Education Certificate that is obtained after junior secondary school education in the formal education setting. Studies have shown that only very few percentages of adults and youths who completed Post Literacy programme mainstream into formal school setting to complete basic education. It is therefore suggested that the curriculum should be restructured to lead to the award of Basic Education Certificate (BECE) instead of Primary School Leaving certificate. The curriculum should be designed to be relevant to the learning needs and aspirations of each category of the clientele and to national development.

There is the need to restructure the criteria for recruitment, entry qualification and emolument of the facilitators who are engaged in teaching in Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education for effective and standardize teaching and learning to keep taking place in the educational setting. There is the need to make adequate provision that will allow for the recruitment of facilitators in Non-formal education on permanent appointment. This will allow for more commitment and dedication. The entry qualification of facilitator into teaching in Non-formal education is important. Teacher quality is a significant determinant of quality education. Teacher quality is determined by entry qualification, teacher's competence, level of content and pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience (Ajibola, 2014). Facilitators are expected to possess the minimum qualification for teaching in lower and upper basic education which is National Certificate in Education (NCE). Poor teacher quality will lead to poor teaching and uninteresting lesson which can negatively affect learning outcome.

Studies have revealed that most of the facilitators recruited to teach in Adult literacy classes are not on permanent appointment, many of them do not possess the required qualifications to teach in NFE classes and they are poorly remunerated. They also lack appropriate working tools for discharging

their duties as facilitators. This has led to poor service delivery on the part of most of the facilitators which have negative significant effect on teaching and learning in the centres. The poor working condition has continued to lead to poor commitment and hinder quality service delivery on the part of the facilitators. It has led to irregular attendance, late coming to classes, poor teaching and uninteresting lessons which made learners to drop out of the programme (Ajibola, 2014). Restructuring will include giving permanent appointment to facilitators, standardizing the entry qualification and improving the emolument packages of the facilitators. There should be proper monitoring of the centres to ensure quality delivery of teaching and quality learning.

Conducive and adequately equipped centres should be created in all looks and cranny of the nations where the services are needed so that all school aged children, youths and adults that are unable to access formal basic education can avail themselves the opportunity. Adequate funding is the wheel on which quality educational delivery in non-formal education revolves. It is the engine of quality education. Non-formal education in Nigeria needs more funding to be able to achieve its educational goals and objectives. Fund is needed to purchase all the materials needed to bring about effective teaching and learning. Fund is needed to regularly pay the facilitators and take care of other logistics. There is the need for provision of quantity of relevant textbooks for teachers and learners use. There is need for provision of instructional materials that facilitators can use to facilitate effective teaching.

Restructuring the non-formal to accommodate all age groups that are academically disadvantaged will help to curb vices that results from illiteracy, ignorance and poverty such as thuggery, armed robbery, terrorism, insurgence. Restructure the non-formal education will enable the education system to fully integrate basic education into its programme and provide inclusive basic education for disadvantaged children and youths who are unable to access basic education in a conventional school setting and those who dropped out before they could complete basic education.

Conclusion

The need to ensure that all school aged children acquire quality basic education cannot be overemphasized because it is the foundation for further education and the least education that individual can acquire to be functional member of the society. It is a fact that the formal education alone cannot provide basic education for all out of school aged children and youths. Hence, the need to restructure the non-formal education to complement the formal basic education so that the 2030 target of ensuring that all school aged children to be in school is achieved.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward:

1. The curriculum of Non-formal should be re-organized to lead to award of Basic Education Certificate instead of the Primary School Leaving Certificate;
2. Adequate funding to meet up with the provision of physical and material resources needed for quality teaching and learning;
3. Enough qualified facilitators should be recruited on permanent appointment and be well remunerated for quality teaching and learning in centres.

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