

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION: WHAT RELATIONSHIP?

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ABSTRACT

The young and the old are expected to continue to learn through various means and this learning can be delivered formally, informally and non-formally. Adult and continuing education provide additional and better learning opportunities for the young and older adults. The dramatic changes in society and technology require constant enlargement of information and knowledge which adult and continuing education seek to foster. This paper examines the issue of adult and continuing education. It begins by taking a look at the meaning of adult education and continuing education. It then x-rays the objective of adult and continuing education and also takes a look at the differences and similarities between continuing education and adult education. The paper concludes with an exploration of the common core or relationship between adult education and continuing education.

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate interest or concern of every society, whether simple or complex, developing or developed is to promote its accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes from one generation to another as an important activity for sustainable community living. Hence Kedrayate (2002), observed that education is an infinite process that knows no barriers, age, creed, colour or race. The young and the old are expected to continue to learn and the learning can be through various means which can be delivered formally, informally and non-formally. For the young and older adults additional and better learning opportunities are needed for them. The dramatic changes in society and technology require constant enlargement of information and knowledge through education, learning and training at different levels, continuing and post-experience as well as basic (Duke and Huizen, 2006). The capacity of the individual to continue to learn is influenced greatly by earlier educational experiences and stages in life. It is now being stressed that we must avoid dichotomies and false assumptions and give new life to adult and continuing education. The integration of all adult education including continuing education is necessary to foster a new partnership and responsibility in promoting adult and continuing education. The point being made here is that we must find the necessary synergies, balance and connections. In pursuance of this goal, this paper assesses the relationship between adult education and continuing education. The first part of the paper discusses the concepts of adult education and continuing education. This is followed by a survey of the purpose of adult and continuing education. The final section of the paper shows the relationship between adult education and continuing education.

THE MEANING OF ADULT EDUCATION

The term 'adult education' has been variously defined and interpreted. Akinpelu (1997), defined it as: ... all and any deliberate and systematically planned educational activity that has the adult as its target, that is designed around the interest and self expressed concern of the adult, the intention of which is to solve his immediate problems, and finally, it is an activity that is usually part-time.

In the words of Bamisaiye (2001) the expression 'interest and self expressed concern of the adult as used in the above definition implies voluntariness and participation in adult education. In other words, adult education activity is not a benefactor to the adult the same way education is to the child. It is an activity in which the adult takes part. In this sense, adult education is conceived as a process that is suppose to bring a lot of benefits to the participants (adults).

However, apart from being a process adult education can be perceived as a programme of activities, a social movement or discipline for academic study (Bamisaiye 2001). Adult education therefore, comprises of literacy programme, continuing education, distance learning programme, skills development

programmes, poverty alleviation programmes and extension education programmes. As a social movement Bamisaiye (2001), observes that reference is made to the different efforts by government and various self-help efforts in rural and urban communities aimed at improving the quality of life of the people either through the provision of needed infrastructures or by setting up needed income generating ventures. As an academic discipline, adult education is usually located in the academic department of universities as a specialized field of study.

According to Popoola (1998), perhaps the best definition of adult education is that given by UNESCO in 1976 which defined it thus:

The term 'adult education' denotes the entire body of organized educational processes whatever the content, level and method, whether formal, non-formal or informal, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (UNESCON. 1976:1).

In this definition it could be seen that the focus of adult education is on meeting the educational needs of the adults. By this definition, adult education as aforementioned consists of literacy education, community development, extension education, distance learning, continuing education, National Open Apprenticeship of the National Directorate of employment programmes (National Policy on Education:2004, Popoola, 1997 and 1998, Anyanwu, 1992).

MEANING OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education like adult education is also a broad concept that is yet to have a precise definition. Thomas cited in Asojo (2001) opines that:

The envisaged function of continuing education is that of rounding off the individual education of providing further education or retraining so that for example, the individual can always meet increased or new professional demand. (quoted from Asojo, 2001).

This implies that continuing education is a system(s) of education which include formal and non-formal education. Here, it is conceived in terms of the various parts and agencies (i.e. elementary, secondary, college and university) and in terms of the specific educational objectives it is expected to achieve rather than in relation to age and circumstances of learners like adult education. The programme is available to persons of any age and it could be part-time or full-time, voluntary or compulsory, and financed by a mixture of both public and private resources (Asoja, 2001; Bamisaiye 2001 and Akinpelu1990).

Some scholars see continuing education as 'a second chance education' for the drop-out. It is in this light that Akinkugbe (1994) referred to continuing education as education meant for those who left early, the formal school system. He argues that the education is aimed at helping this set of people to continue their education in a less rigid form than what the formal school system can offer. This implies that continuing education helps individuals to go ahead with their abandoned education, and probably go further. Akinkugbe further observed that continuing education makes educational opportunities easily available to individuals who though might not have dropped out of formal school system but are nevertheless unable to continue their learning after their initial education on a full-time basis, that is, people who want to combine work and study.

In the same vein, Egunyomi (1988), observed that continuing education is a programme needed by learners to overcome some form of educational backwardness or to compensate for earlier inadequate learning. To her therefore, continuing education could take the form of extra mural, vocational, sandwich, open education or learning, distance education, correspondence education, independent study, external studies or extension education programmes. From the foregoing, it is clear that the characteristic feature, goals and objectives of continuing education include provision of educational opportunities for all categories of individuals, irrespective of whatever failure was earlier recorded, ensuring continuity and flexibility in education, to ensure the continued relevance of individuals in the society; assisting government to provide education for all citizens, and also helping to retrieve the economic wastages that early school leavers would have constituted. It appears that continuing education offers a wide spectrum

of learning activities covering all shades of educational provisions that are designed specially to help a person who have deficiency in their earlier education to remedy such deficiency.

To Oyinloye cited in Olomukoro (2005), continuing education is the education that adds to or prolongs the education already received. He adds that it is the education received in order to be able to continue the education one had received before. In this definition, continuing education is equated with remedial education.

Etymologically, the word 'continuing' is derived from the word 'continue'. This presupposes that continuing education is an educational activity which enables the individual prolong or extend the initial education acquired. In this regard, it is seemingly clear that education goes beyond what could be provided by formal education alone. It is complemented by some out-of-school activities. It goes on in a recurring manner in the face of change (Egunyomi, 2001).

From the foregoing it can be seen that continuing education is an integral part of adult education. Adult education is a generic word which subsumes continuing education. This explains why Osuji (2001) referred to continuing education as strictly an adult education concept which stress the provision of educational opportunity for adults after cessation of formal schooling, adding that it also mean re-education, training or retraining opportunities made available to people out-of-school, young school leavers, the employed and the unemployed, etc in order to cope with new situations of life. In this vein, continuing education seek to help the society accomplish one of the major aim of adult education which is 'the provision of further education for the different completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge'(National Policy on Education, 2004). This underscores the link between adult education and continuing education. This therefore, necessitate the examination of the purpose of adult education and continuing education. It is to this, we must now turn our attention.

PURPOSE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing Education has a very broad purpose or aim, this is because it serves a variety of interest. It caters for the old and the young, male and female, the rich and poor, the urban dwellers and rural people. According to Kedrayate (2002), quoting Manthoto, Braimoh and Adeola (2000), continuing education also cover cognitive domain as well as the psychomotor. It combines the characteristics of formal and non-formal education system and its activities are not in any way terminal but an open-ended process that may never be completed in one's life time. This is so because no matter the age of an individual, the social status, level or amount of academic attainment or competencies acquired, learning continues. The world we live in is a dynamic one. In the face of the changes taking place in society, the moral, spiritual and mental development as well as experiences of yesteryears become obsolete and inadequate to cope with the challenges of daily living or help individuals cope effectively with the task that may confront him/her. Continuing education is geared towards meeting a number of purposes.

These include the following:

- Providing avenue for people to keep up with new knowledge and techniques required for effective and efficient performance in any area through constant training and retraining process.
- Fostering human resource and capacity building process. The further training offered people enable them to attain higher heights, thereby enhancing their economic base and or rewards.
- It is also aimed at providing a second chance education there by complementing the formal education school education school system.

Continuing education programmes are therefore, expected to produce a variety of outcomes including the acquisition of new knowledge, skills values and attitudes, the ultimate goal of which is to promote development. The function and role of continuing education can be remedial, vocational, economic, liberal, humane citizenship and political development.

OBJECTIVES OF ADULT EDUCATION

According to the National Policy on Education revised in 1981, 1991, 1998 and 2004, the objectives of adult education include:

- Provision of functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education.

- To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system.
- Provision of further education for different categories of completers of the formal school system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- Provision of in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- Giving the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Common to the first and second objectives is the issue of continuous improvement of whatever knowledge and skill one might have acquired (Osuji, 2001). Individual's existence is seen as an unending process of completion and learning by Faure (1972).

It is obvious, from the objectives that all the issues raised are related to continuing education. Throughout the section, the need and strategies for executing continuing education programmes are well enunciated. This underscores the linkage or relationship between continuing education and adult education. To this issue we must now turn our attention.

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CONTINUING EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION

Continuing education is often regarded as an adult education concept referring to educational provisions engaged in after initial formal schooling. This presupposes that continuing education can stand and infact do stand, for adult education. In this regard, all forms of skill acquisition, vocational education programme, educational programmes for the acquisition of knowledge attitude and value that will enable individuals cope with life challenges will be seen as continuing education (Omoruyi, 2008).

In contemporary times, continuing education emphasizes vocational/professional education, education through mass media such as television cable satellite, internet, radio and all types of waves audio cassette, community development education, audio-video cassette computerized learning, e-learning like C-D Rom computer teaching/learning assistance mode, internet learning among others. In this wise, professional training in which a newly trained professional is socialized into the role or responsibilities he/she is expected to perform like internship training programme becomes continuing education. In the same vein, lecturers go on sabbatical leave to upgrade their knowledge and skills as part of adult continuing education programme. Many institutions have been established and are offering continuing professional training to raise participants' competence through the provision of new knowledge and skills for the purpose of upgrading and updating the knowledge and attitudes, aptitudes and values acquired previously. On the other hand adult education takes a different value. Programmes like leisure education and the learned aristocrats will be regarded as adult education programmes (Omoruyi, 2008).

Basically, all education are continuing education in a way because all education seek to provide knowledge and skills that would further the future development of the individual in particular and society at large. For instance, a professional could guide those who are engaged in learning for facilitating adult education as an aspect of adult continuing education or even those who are engaged in continuing education programme as a means of raising their level of competence and efficiency in terms of performance.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION: THE COMMON CORE OR RELATIONSHIP THAT EXIST.

A number of linkages exist between continuing education and adult education. Both seek to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and the skill development programmes achieving self-actualisation and development for the individuals in particular and society at large. The first major linkage between continuing education and adult education arises from their objectives. They both aim at achieving the same function for individuals and society.

Besides, with regards to the relationship between adult education and continuing education a kind of balanced mixture of subjective and objective demand on learning is set-up since adult education is sometimes conceived as a sort of continuing education focusing on efficiency and employability capacity of its beneficiaries.

Adult and continuing education, no doubt, have the same focus and seeks to achieve the same end. Adult education encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal education or

learning and the spectrum of informal or accidental learning. This clearly demonstrate that adult education and continuing education are inseparable, since adult education has a broad and inclusive context which links continuing education to development and good citizenship.

CONCLUSION

This paper had examined the issue of adult education and continuing education. In the course of this, it had x-rayed the meaning of adult education and continuing education and their purposes or objectives. The paper observes that there is a symbolic relationship or link between both. Adult and continuing education are, therefore, inseparable concept because adult education links continuing education to societal and individual development. If adult education and continuing education are taken together, continuing education can stand, and does stand, for adult education. Viewed from this perspective, adult education programmes such as vocational education programme, professional development training programme aimed at skill acquisition and raising competence of beneficiaries will be regarded as continuing education. In this sense, it can be said that all education are continuing education in a way.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of this, I wish to offer the following recommendations in the first instance, there is need to strengthen adult education in all its ramifications. In this way the link between adult education and continuing education is consolidated. Besides, efforts must be made to evolve policies that can ensure that the complementary roles of both forms of education is strengthened. Furthermore, the available facilities and equipment for adult education programmes as a whole should be expanded. This would help guarantee that such programmes are provided on a continuous basis.

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