

## Reforms In Adult And Non-Formal Education In Nigeria For Quality Assurance

<sup>1</sup>Okemakinde, Sunday O. Ph. D & <sup>2</sup>Olajide, Muili F. Ph.D

<sup>1</sup> Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education  
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Education and Arts, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University

**E-mail address:**

<sup>1</sup>sunmankind2020@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup>muiliolajide@gmail.com

**Telephone Number:**

<sup>1</sup>08034660474

ABSTRACT

Adult and non-formal education plays a major role in the transformation of any society from illiterate to literate society. This makes the programme one of the most important factors to be reckoned with in the educational system in Nigeria. Policies were formulated and programmes like Basic literacy education, Mass literacy campaigns and so on were put in place by government to enable people contribute their quota to the nation's growth positively. However, high illiteracy rate still persists because most of these programmes were unsuccessful due to some challenges facing the programmes ranging from poor policy implementation to inadequate funding just to mention but a few. This paper has identified some reforms put in place by government in order to enable Nigerians have access to basic education in the country. Full implementation of the programmes would go a long way in making it possible for Nigeria to be in the league of the development economy with a mass level of literacy. These include: Out-of-school Boy's Education; Girl-child Education; Each-One-Teach-One or Fund-the-Teaching-of-One and Literacy by Radio. Recommendations are provided to ease the challenges facing adult and non-formal education programmes for quality assurance in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Adult and Non- Formal Education, Literacy Education, Reforms, Quality Assurance.

### Introduction

The origin of the term 'reform' can be traced to the Latin word 'reformare' which means 'to shape'. Reform of any form usually involves a long and complex set of steps, discovering problems, devising remedies, adopting new policies and bringing about institutional change. There had been different terms used in referring to education reforms. These include: change, innovation, transformation, modernization, renewal, restructuring, realignment and reinventing. Education reforms can be referred to as planned efforts to change educational system or programmes in order to correct perceived social and educational problems (Alabi, 2010; Okemakinde and Ogunyinka, 2018). In line with this definition, Adeniyi (2010), quoting Yusuff and Yusuff (2009) and Hans-Joachim (2022), defined education reforms as programmes of educational change that are government directed and initiated based on an overtly political analysis (that is, one driven by the political apparatus of government

rather than by educators or bureaucrats), and justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial break from current practice. In this study, adult and non-formal education reforms refer to any attempt to change and improve the current practices in adult and non-formal education programmes by correcting faults, removing inconsistencies, anomalies as well as introducing modern methods or values into the system.

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2014), is a document that sets out the principles that guide government actions with relation to all educational issues in Nigeria. The policy was first issued in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2014. There is a unit in the National Policy that focuses on adult and non-formal education.

The National Policy on Education (2014), states in section 6 Article 32 that mass literacy, adult and non-formal education encourages all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal education system such as

functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. It goes further to highlight the objectives of adult and continuing education as follows:

- (a) To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education or who did not complete their primary education;
- (b) To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- (c) To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- (d) To provide in-service, on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- (e) To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

In line with the above stated objectives of adult and non-formal education, some of the objectives of Adult and non-formal education according to Bello (2016), quoting Tanshi (2014), include:

- (a) Helping individuals to solve problems of everyday life: Adult and non-formal education is designed to help individuals solve problems or challenges of everyday life. This is because without education, man cannot identify the problems that are within his or her society, through education; it is easier to address the problem of everyday living.
- (b) Promoting participation in development processes: An adult man is a wise and dedicated person that is expected to be responsible for leadership, so as to be able to achieve certain goals toward national unity, integration and development.
- (c) Helping individuals and citizen to take their rightful places in the society. As we know, an individual has vital roles to play towards sustainable development and nation building.

Through Adult and non-formal education, a citizen should be able to know and understand the kind of functions or roles he or she has to play in his/her community.

- (d) Ensuring the survival of democracy: In every society, an adult man or person is regarded as a reasonable, responsibility, dependable individual that can enhance development process as a result of experience previously acquired.
- (e) Promoting peace, international understanding and co-operation: Through Adult and non-formal education, an adult person can be able to maintain peace within the society and the world at large (pg.62).

To achieve the lofty objectives above, government put in place programmes like basic literacy education, mass literacy campaigns, launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE), in 1999, primarily intended to enhance life-long education for millions of Nigerian children from the age of six years, who had no access to early schooling.

In spite of the efforts of government in the area of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria, the problem of high illiteracy rate in the country still persists. As succinctly remarked by Oduoye (2019), more than 60 million illiterate youths and adults live with us especially in the rural areas as majority dominate the informal sector of the economy that produce food eat by people and raw materials for industries, while 10.3 million children are out-of-school. It should be noted that, inability of the necessary literacy skills has made it impossible for them to tackle their socio-economic problems and have access to necessary information, knowledge, attitudes, and may impedes people from contributing to the nation's growth positively. Acquisition of literacy skills will enable them to increase their productivity, sell more, and improve their living standards. It is noteworthy at this juncture that, most of the adult and non-formal education programmes put in place by government failed to achieve the set objectives due to the fact that its delivery especially, literacy education in Nigeria has suffered years of neglect facilitated by inadequate attention to policy framework and other challenges. These inadequacies and challenges could be addressed

through effective quality assurance and reforms in Adult Education.

### **Quality Assurance and Reforms in Adult and Non-formal Education**

Quality assurance is process oriented. It is the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially by means of attention to every stage of delivery. It is a way of preventing mistakes or defects and avoiding problems when delivering solutions to the clients. It focuses on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. It makes sure one is doing the right thing, the right way. To see that standards, processes, and policies are in place and carried out; to recommend and implement improvements to them, and to ensure that the clients that need to know about them know about them, and when they fail to perform as expected one has a way to correct, adjust, or escalate the programme or problem until it is resolved to everyone's satisfaction (Adeniyi, 2010; Aaron, Catherine and Heribert, 2022).

According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008), Adamu and Adu (2014), quality assurance in the education system can be looked at from two perspectives: the internal perspective (within the system) and the external perspective (checks and balances by the regulatory agencies). There is no gainsaying the fact that most of the outputs in the educational sector in Nigeria are not up to the standard due to poor processing.

To researchers in the field of adult and non-formal education: Aderinoye, (1997) Olayemi, Aromolaran, Ajayi, Okemakinde, and Gbenro (2016), Adult and non-formal education is any organized and sequential learning experience designed to meet the felt needs of adults. It is the type of education that provides educational opportunities for adults and helps them to acquire the skills they need to survive and perform day-to-day activities; it provides knowledge and resources that hold potentials for economic empowerment for better livelihood and societal development.

Adult and non-formal education as a discipline has undergone significant transformation. It has moved away from a narrow and pedantic discipline to bring into being vigorously active components like: Out-of-school Boy's Education; Girl-child Education in Nigeria; Each-One-Teach-One or Fund the Teaching of

One; Literacy by Radio; and other notable programmes and schemes.

### **Out-of-School Boys' Education**

The idea of out-of-school boys' education was designed by National Commission for Adult and Non-Formal Education for non-completion of formal education system among school boys technically referred to as drop-outs. Now, it is however, referred to as early school leavers or out-of-school boys. The programme is one of the strategies of eradicating illiteracy among early school leavers. The effects of school drop-outs on the individual and the society at large range from crime to economic losses and their multiplier effects (Iyanda, Olufayo and Savage, 2018).

### **Objectives of Out-of-Boys' Education**

The objectives of the Out-of-Boys' Education according to National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non- Formal Education (NMEC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2010), are aptly highlighted as follows:

- (a) To contribute to increasing access to and retention in Basic Education for Out-of-School Boys in the South-Eastern States.
- (b) To provide opportunities in Basic Education for about 50,000 out-of-School boys each year in the South-Eastern States through the establishment of up to 1,000 Non-Formal Education Centres.
- (c) To contribute to increasing the completion rates for boys in the South-Eastern States with the highest dropout rates to at least 80 percent.
- (d) To contribute to reducing the gender gap nationally to less than 10 percent.

Introduction of Out-of-Boys' Education led to increase in political will on the part of State Governors and Local Government Chairmen, which manifested through the payment of counterpart funding for UNICEF assistance by the various levels of government. In addition, the intervention according to NMEC/UNICEF (2010), Odiaka (2018), during the course of their investigation to the effect of the programme on the beneficiaries noticed the increase in enrolment, retention and completion rates of out-of-school boys. This led to increase in the establishment of Non-Formal Education Centres for the out-of-school boys in the country.

### **Girl-child Education programme in Nigeria**

Nigeria as one of the signatories to Conventions on the legal duties of government to women and children at national and international levels, embraces a number of conventions. These include: The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by the United Nations Assembly in 1989 and ratified by 192 countries. The Pan African Conference on the Education of Girl-child tagged the Ouagadougou Declaration in 1996 was also emphatic on the girl-child rights to education. In specific term, Nigeria has ratified CEDAW (Article 10), CRC (Article 15), the Jomtien World Conference on the Education for all (EFA), and 2000 (Article 10). A closer look at all the resolutions of the above Conventions and Conferences revealed that they were targeted at eliminating disparities in access to Basic Education, especially for the girl-child. (NPE, 2004)

The project was necessitated by the global concern to improve the Girl-child Education as a key to sustaining development. The major activities for Girl-Child education are jointly carried out by Federal and State Governments, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Department for International Development (DFID), ActionAid, and National based Non-Governmental and Civil Society organisations. The programme covers the nineteen (19) Northern States of Nigeria. This may not be unconnected with the dismal situation of the Girl-child Education in the Northern part of Nigeria.

### **Objectives of Girl-child Education**

According to Rogers (1979), the objectives of Girl-child education in Nigeria include:

- (a) Ensure increase in girl-child enrolment, retention and completion in the Basic Education.
- (b) Provide child-friendly school enrolment through the provision of infrastructure and sanitary facilities.
- (c) Train and deploy female teachers/instructors to serve as role models for girls in the rural areas.
- (d) Eliminate gender disparity in Basic Education, skills development and training.

- (e) Empower women economically so that they in turn would encourage their daughters to attain Basic Education.
- (f) Eliminate negative cultural attitudes/practices against girls.
- (g) Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potentials.
- (h) Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work and during schooling.
- (i) Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of girl-child.

A national Gender Policy in Basic Education was produced to address the cultural attitudes and practices hindering girls' participation in access to education. This was followed by the development of curriculum for the girl-child and adolescent's education in 2005; it serves as a guide for effective teaching and learning. Advocacy and sensitization were also conducted in Girls Education Project (GEP) States with low enrolment of girl-child in States like Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Katsina. Instructional materials like text-books, writing materials, and bags, were provided to the project States. Students' Tutoring, Mentoring and Counselling Services were also given priority attention by NMEC.

A report published in 2008 by the Gender Department of the Federal Ministry of Education reported a 30 percent increase of girl-child enrolment in 2007. In essence, there is an increase in the rate of girls' enrolment, retention, and completion in the participating states. Model centres were also established to cater for young girls who left schools early because of early marriage or unwanted pregnancies in order to enable mainstream to formal school system in the GEP States.

### **Each- One-Teach-One or Fund-the-Teaching-of-One (EOTO/FTO)**

The main purpose for the introduction of each-one teach-one or fund-the-teaching-of-one (EOTO/FTO) in Nigeria during the inauguration of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) in 1991 was to eradicate illiteracy rate in the country.

The main objective of each-one-teach-one or fund the teaching of one strategy is to personalize the literacy education with the view to



highlighting its importance for national development, with the aim of reducing the cost of provision of literacy and patriotism would have been enhanced among Nigerian at individual, community and association levels. The new policy of each one teach one or fund the teaching of one which has been adopted by the federal government as the inevitable strategies for the attainment of literate society. It ensures that illiterate citizens receive education, and to accommodate the creativity potential of ordinary men and women in the society

The programme succeeded in creating awareness among Nigerians on the mobilization strategies with the hope that if well implemented, it would reduce to barest minimum the level of illiteracy rate in Nigeria.

### **Literacy by Radio**

Literacy by Radio is a process of promoting the learning of reading, writing and computing through the use of radio. It is equally a strategy for effective delivery of Basic Education to a large number of learners scattered over a large geographical area (Aderinoye, 2004; Okemakinde, Okemakinde and Gbenro, 2007; NMEC/UNICEF, 2010). Through the radio, one single tutor can reach many learners at once. While the adult learners do not have to go anywhere since they can learn in their bedrooms using their own radio.

The general objective of Literacy by Radio project is to evolve a fast and effective approach to eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria. It is to increase access to adult learners to opportunities for basic literacy which in effect will increase the reading, numeracy and computing skills of all non-formal education learners irrespective of age, gender, socio-cultural and economic circumstances so as to improve human quality for development in Nigeria.

Activities carried out since inception include a baseline survey, identification of consultants, development of primer in different local languages for learners; development of production manual for radio producers; development of a facilitators' guide; training of facilitator and radio producers for the project; development of the radio programme in English will be adapted by participants in the States; airing of the radio programmes in the states; evaluation and scaling up the project to cover the 36 States of

Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory (NMEC/UNICEF,2010). However, 7 States including Federal Capital Territory are not currently operating the programme in the Country.

Literacy by radio messages in health, nutrition, agriculture, vocational and life-skills were successful incorporated into each lesson of the primer. Primer in 19 local languages for learners have been developed; production manual for radio producers and facilitators guide have been done; training of facilitators and radio producers for the project has been done; radio programmes were developed in all the participating states. Airing of the radio programmes is currently taking place in 30 states of the federation (Adeniyi and Oke, 2018; Czech, 2022).

### **Challenges of reforms in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria**

Some of the challenges of these vital reforms in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria are aptly discussed as follows:

- (a) **Inadequate funding.** There is no gain saying the fact that the budgetary allocation to Adult and Non-Formal Education is grossly inadequate, especially when compared to formal educational sector. This factor has greatly affected the successful implementation of these laudable reforms in Nigeria.
- (b) **Inadequate political will.** There is the need for increase in political will on the part of government for proper representation of adult and non-formal education in National Education Policy Documents. According to NMEC and UNICEF (2010), NMEC was neither represented in the National Steering Committee nor the Implementation Task Team in the Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector (2009). It therefore implies that little or nothing was written about Adult and Non-Formal Education in the Roadmap and if it is going to serve as a pointer to events in Education Sector, then Adult and non-formal Education is already sidelined.
- (c) **Shortage of personnel:** There is shortage of professional practitioners on Adult and Non-formal education. This results to leaving the programmes to be handled by

people who are not professionals in the field.

- (d) **Poor and irregular remuneration of facilitators.** Most adult educators operate on voluntary basis has turned out to be problematic. In some cases, most States and Local Governments failed to pay regularly and the paltry sum being paid to the facilitators is owed for months. This situation no doubt is a threat to the success of the reforms of Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes as the facilitators are in the frontline in the implementation of the programmes.
- (e) **Poor attitudes of the target groups.** Most target groups do not attach the seriousness needed to Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes making them failed to enroll and few of them who enrolled may withdraw at the slightest excuses. To NMEC and UNICEF (2010), an average of 1.7million learners out of over 44million projected learners had only embraced Adult Education programmes.

#### **Remedies towards overcoming the challenges:**

The major remedies to ensure successful implementation of the above named reforms in Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes in Nigeria include:

Government at all levels should be more committed in implementation and funding of Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes. Most especially, they should match actions with necessary legislation.

Adult and non-formal education should be given a strong political will by the government for the programme to be successfully implemented.

There should be a change in behaviour and acquisition of problem solving skill by the people through Adult and non-formal education.

Both the electronics and print media should be used to reach to a large number of people on the relevance of Adult and non-formal education to the growth of individual and the society at large.

Value re-orientation and attitudinal change about Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes should be encouraged among the citizenry, particularly among the target groups.

Federal government should synergize all the stakeholders – Local and state governments, organized private sector, parents, and communities.

#### **Conclusion**

Out-of-school Boy's Education; Girl-child Education; Each-One-Teach-One or Fund-the-Teaching-of-One and Literacy by Radio as discussed in this paper, offer a powerful mix of literacy and learning reforms that re-define literacy in particular and adult and non-formal education in general as being more than the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills but also a necessary ingredient for the development of individual and the society at large. It does this by putting emphasis on the need for Nigerian to be literate, brings about lifelong learning, critical consciousness, understanding, and decision-making abilities that adults need to become active citizens in the society. However, for the nation to record expected achievements in the area of adult and non-formal education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2014), government at all levels should embark on more robust reform programmes that will meet the needs of individuals in particular and the society at large and there should be attitudinal change about Adult and Non-Formal Education among the citizenry, particularly among the target groups.

#### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are provided to ease the challenges facing adult and non-formal education programmes for quality assurance in Nigeria:

There should be intensified and sustained advocacy, sensitization and mobilization to increase adult and non-formal education programmes enrolment, retention and completion. Government should show more interest in the future of innovations and adult education that would be relevant and responsive to the needs of individuals and the society at large.

Government at all levels should be more committed in implementing and funding adult and non-formal education policies. It is necessary to have special incentives for tutors in difficult terrains and rural areas to attract and retain quality facilitators and scholarships and awards for facilitators and the learners in order to provide additional incentives for people who want to go into adult and non-formal education programmes.

Regular monitoring and evaluation should be integrated into the adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

The educational policy in the country should be flexible enough to accommodate the mainstreaming of adult and non-formal education clients into the regular school system.

Institutional facilities should be put in place for pre-service and in-service training of facilitators and government should invest more to improve the remuneration, working and living conditions of change agents so as to attract and retain better qualified and motivated adult educators.

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