

**PERSPECTIVES IN CONTINUING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

**OJO RONKE CHRISTIANA (Ph.D)  
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS  
AKOKA-YABA  
LAGOS**

**AND**

**TAWAKALITU OJEMOAH (MRS)  
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS  
AKOKA-YABA  
LAGOS**

## **Abstract**

*This paper sets to examine continuous Education in Nigeria. The characteristics of continuing education appears ambiguous, in fact, its meaning is confusing. This paper will examine in detail various characteristics of continuing education. Again, it shall attempt a 'Pandora box' of the concept, that is, it shall attempt to bring up the relevancies of continuing education for a variety of people in Nigeria. The thrust of the paper is the analysis of the nature of continuing education practice in Nigeria, examination of its relevancies to different categories of people, like drop outs, those on the job and the adults among others. The paper also makes recommendations for goal oriented continuing education.*

## **Introduction**

In his bid to define the term continuing education, Akinpelu (2002:98) was quick to refer to continuing education as follows, "continuing education is a nebulous one which, if taken in its ordinary and literal sense can be said to cover any and all educational efforts beyond or after initial, formal education". Continuing education has several interpretations. According to Ojo (2010:7) continuing education can be defined as that general education that one is exposed to. It is a continuous type which includes all what one learns from birth, intentionally, casually and incidentally. It can also be referred to as further education after literacy education on continuous basis which lasts till death. All forms of adult education, like post-literacy, remedial education, workers in-service training and extra-mural among others. All forms of education that makes adult functional and useful to themselves in the society. The FGN (2004) addresses continuing education as,

that type of education for adults and youths who did not complete their primary education...secondary education and for different categories of completers of the formal education system, in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills; provide in-service, on-the-job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.(p24).

This definition has one main focus; the improvement of skill of those category of workers that are involved in continuing education. Again, it is a part-time programme

because of the category of people that are meant to benefit from it, (workers). In the opinion of Ojo-Igbinoba (1995:190), “Continuing Education is any kind of part-time or full-time extension education for young people and adults beyond first school leaving age”. This purports to explain the concept of continuing education as that structure of educational processes throughout an individual life. Nwaokola (1997) opined that continuing education is that type of education usually provided for the learners outside of the typical educational needs. He refers to it “as a kind of education for self-improvement based on identified needs of the learner. This submission brings up the characteristic feature of continuing education. Continuing education is characterized by need drive which can include self-improvement. Akinpelu (1986) defined continuing education as the ‘education that continues which a person has had before. He further stressed that continuing education includes all forms of education received by adults or youths after initial education. He asserts that continuing education ‘is essentially a part-time rather than a full-time learning activity’.

UNICEF report (1993:2) asserts that continuing education serves the benefits of both the adults and the youths, such that it includes all forms of continuing school programmes like; in-service training, up-grading and up-dating education. However, defining continuing education can generate controversies because of its multi interpretation and multi relevance nature. Even as continuing education is disposed to multi application. To avoid this disposition, therefore, Akinpelu (2002:89) suggests other criteria that can be used to demarcate continuing education from other educational or non-educational activities. He, however, cautioned that the criteria are neither definitive nor conclusive because they are not purely applicable to continuing education. The reasons he brought up are two; one, continuing education falls within the bigger concept of education and therefore obeying the major criteria that differentiate education from other ordinary social activities. Two, that when they are combined with other relevant criteria, a tolerable picture of continuing education will be obtained.

### **The criteria for continuing education**

Continuing education is perhaps the most confusing type of adult education. Most people confuse it with school learning that continue after the initial one. Yes, we can refer to it as that, but it is worthy of note that continuing education cannot be the same thing as the education of an individual after an initial stage. For instance, continuing education cannot be referred to as the movement of the completer of a level of education to the other; it cannot be the education of a completer of primary school or of secondary school. In other words, continuing education is not in tandem with the promo ability of students from a level of education to the other. When students completed primary education it is always expected that such student will move to the next level, which is secondary school or upper basic in Universal Basic Education (UBE). From the upper basic, that is, Junior Secondary School (JSS), the students are expected to move to the next level, which can be Technical Colleges, Senior Secondary School (SSS) and from there to the tertiary institutions which include mono-technics, colleges of education, polytechnics and/or Universities (FGN, 2004). These forms of upward movement in education is not continuing education, it is the hierarchical movement in the education system. Continuing education is normally conducted out of the school system. Citing RNCE 1993, Akinpelu (2002) opined that the criteria for identifying continuing education include that 'it is conducted outside of the formal/institutionalized school system, and hence it is being called 'Out-of School Education'. It covers all initial education and literacy efforts and other part-time rather than full-time education.

### **Some samples of continuing education programmes in Nigeria**

The following are some of the continuing education programmes in Nigeria

- (i) University Distance Learning programmes
- (ii) Correspondence Institutes
- (iii) Sandwich programmes
- (iv) Degree awarding satellite institutions and others for the award of National Certificate in Education, Diploma certificates of the Polytechnics and so on
- (v) Extra-mural institutes
- (vi) Professional examination bodies

(vii) Advanced studies institutes etc

### **Nature/ Characteristics of Continuing Education**

Continuing education is essentially a part-time activity. Continuing education is usually organized for learners who have some jobs other than study. For instance, at a time in Nigeria when the minimum teaching certificate was upgraded to National Certificate Education (NCE), all GradeII certificate holders, especially in the primary schools were mandated to go for part-time National Certificate Education (NCE) programme. The participants, because of the full-time jobs they were involved in, had to attend the programme in the evenings, weekends and vacations.

Again, continuing education is flexible, situational-relevant and problem solving. The fact that one can participate in the continuing education on part-time, in the evening, at the weekends and holiday time indicates that there is no stringent rule as in the formal education programme which must necessarily come up on a full time basis. It is situational relevant to the categories of people who participate in it and problem-solving because it is to equip the categories of teacher with additional required certificate. At the completion of the programme a need has been met. Meanwhile, we can not rule out the possibility of having those who may not have been on any job participating in the part-time continuing education programme. Those, who may have been holders of GradeII certificate but have not been on any job may decide to benefit from continuing education programme. To this category of people the supposed part-time continuing education programme becomes their own full-time education. These are odd and minor cases but it exists.

Continuing education programmes are need determined. Many centres, either those that are privately owned or those run by government institutions are need determined the Extra-mural study centres at University of Ibadan, DiplomaII programme of the University of Lagos and National Teachers Institute's Post Graduate Diploma in Education readily come to mind here. The University of Ibadan Extra-mural classes run in the evening time are designed to prepare the Senior Secondary Students who are either

preparing for Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) or those who need to retake because of past failure and for other set of clients who are preparing to write Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). They attend classes in the evenings bearing in mind that the clients are external students.

The Diploma II of the University of Lagos is designed for the SSCE holders who may not need to come to the University through UTME but who spend 18 months of academic tutelage on part-time evening basis. After completion, the clients (if able to meet up with certain score in the overall score aggregate) move to 200 level of the University. The programme is run by the University ventures. The National Teachers' Institute runs PGDE programme of one calendar year on weekend basis. The programme is meant to prepare the crop of people who are referred to as cheaters by Okafor (2004:17). These are those categories of people who found themselves in the classrooms without requisite teaching qualifications and such suffer several setbacks like non-promotability and duty post denial among others in their teaching jobs. These programme are need determined and after completion the needs are met.

### **The role that continuing education plays in equalization of education in Nigeria**

The role that continuing education play in making education equal in Nigeria is multifaceted. In the first instance, education wastages include the out-of-school boys and girls or early school leavers, those that are already to 'drop back' to school among others. The categories of these people were dropped out of school for diverse reasons which include:

- (i) Some boys are out of school as a result of poverty, ignorance, lack of interest, inability to cope in school, unbridled quest for money to mention just a few
- (ii) Parents who are illiterate or even not sufficiently literate and greedy often do not recognize their responsibility to send their boys to school
- (iii) Undue peer influence affects boys' participation in school
- (iv) Poor school environment inadequate facilities leading to education of poor quality
- (v) Teachers/Facilitators who are poorly trained and poorly motivated with high teacher/pupil ratio often lead to their poor performance thereby discouraging learners from attending school

- (vi) The curriculum is sometimes overloaded and not relevant to the need of the child
- (vii) The community's failure to own educational programmes constitute a significant factor in school drop-out
- (viii) The value system that places too much emphasis on the acquisition of wealth to the detriment of other factors that make for good society such as honesty, steadfastness, integrity and so on is also responsible for school drop out

They are brought back to the front burner of education via various forms of continuing education programmes like Basic literacy (Ojo, 2010), Post-Basic literacy and so on. The other forms of continuing education programme that are relevant to these categories of people include remedial programme, extra-mural class and distance learning among others. It is note worthy that these categories of people would be made to compete favourably with others who may have not got their schooling terminated at any point in their schooling career.

According to Ojo (2001) the percentage of people who have benefitted from the continuing education programme can not be easily estimated as the programme remains the only ready made option for different categories of drop-outs, out-of-school boys and girls, street-children, workers and those wanting to improve learning among others. To say that continuing education is overwhelmingly advantageous is to say the least. Continuing education remains a pool for common achievement in further studies, correction for lapses in initial education and for 'dropping back to school'. The benefits that are derived from the continuing education programme like the Distance learning programmes of Nigerian University are overwhelming. For instance, at the University of Lagos (Unilag) Correspondence Study Institute (COSIT) now Distance Learning Institute (DLI) has the population of more than 10,000 students. At the University of Ibadan (UI) there are more than 9000 students (Olagoke 2006:23). This number is appreciating year in year out. The benefit that the institute offers the immediate community of the university is not in small measure. This is town-gown interrelationship and university environment is having more impact on the community around them. Besides that, the

provision of further studies for the category of people benefitting from the programme is multidimensional;

- (i) it provides avenue for further studies,
- (ii) it provides satisfaction for certificate acquisition,
- (iii) it encourages pursuance of university degree,
- (iv) it boosts on the job-schooling especially on part-time,
- (v) it encourages part-time schooling for those who are self-reliant and in need of university certificate to boost their trade
- (vi) it creates ample opportunity for those who could not continue their tertiary education at a stretch; they are able to 'drop back' to school.
- (vii) it is a need oriented; hence, it provide need satisfaction
- (viii) it is run at the convenient time of the students,; it allows participants to participate in it at the time most convenient for them, like holiday time etc.
- (ix) continuing education is that branch of adult education that spreads 'olive branch' to a large chunk of people. (Ojo:2001:12)

## **Conclusion**

Continuing education remains a veritable tool at removing barriers from the way of those aspiring to pursue formal education to a logical conclusion. There is no country of the world that does not require continuing education. Nigeria as nation needs this form of adult education to foster progress in the work place, to improve social relationship, to foster peace and unity in social relationship and to promote equal educational opportunity. Hence, if achievement of goal will form the focus of continuing education programme, there is need for government, education policy makers and implementers together with education service providers to handle continuing education the way it should be. First, all tertiary institutions must be mandated to provide continuing education. Second, there must be rule and regulation for the continuing education providers so as to prevent unwholesome and unacceptable practices. Again, adequate attention should be given to the practice of continuing education on sandwich basis, especially the non-campus centres. There are National Certificate in Education and degree awarding centres (affiliated to government Universities and Colleges of

Education) spread in almost all states in Nigeria. In Ibadan city alone, Ojo (2002) reveals that there are more than 50 sandwich colleges of education and more than 30 sandwich university centres while continuing education centres for secondary categories are more than 250. There are unwholesome practices in these centres. There is need for supervision and monitoring and if need be outright closure of many of these centre to prevent fall in standard of education and teachers' training.

On a final note, adequate infrastructural facilities need be provided for continuing education programme as its beneficiaries are part and parcel of the Nigerian teeming education populace. Going by the number of the continuing education programme in vogue in Nigeria, that is, distance learning courses, sandwich programmes, extra-mural programmes, part-time degree programmes and the degree awarding institutions among others, the number of people that are passing through this continuing education programme are more than the number that are benefitting from full-time tertiary education programme. This is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, but the world over, continuing education remains a veritable venture for private educational providers, as venture in government tertiary institutions and for bringing back to school those that may never be able to dream of moving from where they had dropped in education.

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