Integrating Non-Formal Education Approaches into Formal Schools' Curricular as a Viable Strategy for Effective Edupreneurship in Nigeria

Muhammad BABA
Department of Educational Foundations
Niger State College of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria
muhammadbaba740@gmail.com

Fatima JIYA
Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education
Niger State College of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria
fatitetengi1@gmail.com

Haruna IDRIS
Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education
Niger State College of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria
harunaidris0132@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper presents the vitality of blending non-formal education approaches with formal schools' curricular as a tool for entrepreneurship development in Nigerian educational system. In other words, it examines the policy of integrating non-formal educational approaches into the conventional or mainstream school curricular in Nigeria towards community and national development. The paper made some conceptual clarifications of formal and non-formal education for proper perspective. It identified those specific non-formal education programmmes that could serve as veritable alternative educational provisions for empowering the citizenry in a developing economy like Nigeria. This paper is based on the growing recognition among governments and stakeholders in third world countries that functional education for the generality of the people is unlikely to be achieved through emphasis on formal schooling alone. The paper further looked at specific challenges that could serve as obstacles to the implementation of a viable integration of non-formal approaches into formal education system. The paper concludes that, if the policy of integration of non-formal education into formal school system can be effectively implemented in Nigeria, it will contribute greatly to the realization of Nigerian national goals of becoming a self-reliant as well as a dynamic economy. Based on the challenges identified, the paper proffers some suggestions as ways forward. These include: need for policy review in the educational system, appropriate recognition of the non-formal system of education, attaching emphasis on functionality of products from formal schools rather than paper qualifications among others.

Key words: Formal education, Non-formal education, Integration, Edupreneurship

Introduction

Among the national goals of Nigeria as an independent state is to develop as a:

(i) united, strong and self-reliant nation, and (ii) a great and dynamic economy (FGN, 2014). In

addition, to this, Nigeria also hopes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the

year 2030. Apparently, a most potent instrument towards achieving these aspirations and visions is education-particularly skill based education. It is in this regard that educationists are currently focusing on the concept of "Eduprenurship". That is, turning the potential of an individual in terms of knowledge, skills, expertise and experiences into profitable learning outcomes beneficial to the individual and the community. However, emphasis seems to be placed more on the conventional formal, grammar system of education than the non-formal educational system. As opined by Agbo (2016) that people look down on non-formal system of education as if to say that investment in formal schooling yield more returns than investments in non-formal education. It is against this background that this paper tries to make a case for the integration of non-formal education approaches into formal schools' curricular as a viable strategy for effective eduprenurship in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

To properly establish the focus of this discussion, it is pertinent to clarify key concepts.

Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education covers training and instruction outside the formal school system which could be inform of individualized apprenticeships or outsides of school nationwide literacy. It may be vocational in nature for the purpose of imparting functional skills on to the individual towards raising their empowerment or potentialities. Baba (2022) defined non-formal education as comprising any organized education programme or training activity for wide range of clients such as school drop-outs, street children and youths, industrial workers and unemployed formal school graduates aimed at empowering them or raise their income earning potentials.

Non-formal education can simply be described as the education given to adults and youths outside the formal school system which enable them to acquire knowledge for effective functioning in their society. FGN (2014) spelt out the objectives of non-formal education as follows:

- To provide 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;
- To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;

- To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professional in order to improve their skills;
- To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Edupreneurship

Edupreneurship is a derivative concept from the term entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is the act or art of being able to create new innovations or introduce new things, finance and acquire business acumen in an effort to transform innovations and creativity into economic products or goods. The main emphasis of entrepreneurship is the ability to start a new business or venture towards making the individual independent or self-employed. This implies that Edupreneurship is a pragmatic approach to education which entails a significant shift in the way we view education. It involves combining schooling (conventional education) and entrepreneurship. It refers to the practice of using entrepreneurship skills and approaches to bring about positive and impactful change in the field of education. It is concerned with identifying opportunities, facing realities and creating innovative strategies to address the challenges faced by the education system.

Non-formal Education as a Veritable Approach for Empowerment: Justification for Integrating Non-Formal Approaches into Schools' Curricular

Non-formal education could serve as a viable tool for empowerment and entrepreneurship. This is because this system of education has certain key advantages in term of entrepreneurship development compare to contemporary formal school system. These advantages according to Baba & Wushishi (2017) include:

1. The cost of acquiring non-formal education programmes are on the average lower than the costs of undergoing formal education. Non-formal education programmes mostly used already existing facilities or local materials. Even an open space or a tree shade could be used as a centre for non-form education training.
2. The duration of training in non-formal education programmes is comparatively shorter than formal education system. This implies that acquisition of non-formal education trainings has the benefit of immediate satisfaction to the individual rather than deferred gratification of the formal schools. An individual could be trained non-formally within 6 months or 1year and such a person can start benefitting from the skills acquired. This is unlike formal

schooling where an individual may spend years before earning a livelihood from the knowledge acquired. Thus, trainees of non-formal education become more enthusiastic since they are conscious of the potentials of the immediate application of the skills being acquired.

3. Non-formal education is flexible in content, and time. Learning content and time are designed based on the need and aspirations of the participants.

The above key advantages placed non-formal education as a viable approach for effective edupreneurship in Nigeria. In addition, the present structure of formal education has been criticized as seriously deficient in terms of economic empowerment of the citizens. A clear case in point is the alarming level of graduate unemployment in Nigeria today. Unlike in the pre-independence and early after independence up to around 1980s, there was ready job opportunities for graduates at every level of educational system. These were the "good old days" that employers of labour 'begged' school leavers/graduates to consider their offer for employment in the midst of other opportunities.

A worrisome trend about education in Nigeria today is indeed the high rate of unemployment among school leavers and the negative consequences on the society. Ojokheita and Onioregie (2018) aptly opined that, for an educational system to meet the needs of a constantly changing society, graduates from the universities and other tertiary institutions must be (self) employable if not, the aspirations of such graduates may turn into frustration and aggression with devastating effects on the society. Scholars, have asserted that education is the cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, skills and attitudes and all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life in general. This implies that education should entails the acquisition of skills and knowledge that a person can use for self-sustenance and positive contributions to the development of one's society. That is education should produce practical action, disposition and attitude in the individual which is the vision behind the concept of edupreneurship.

A closer look at the present pattern of formal education system as practice in Nigeria seems to lay more emphasis on theory than practical skill acquisition. In other words, education just for acquisition of certificates. As argued by Aboki (2020) that formal schooling in Nigeria believed that academic education is superior to vocational skill instruction and thus less emphasis is given to utilitarian, vocational oriented curricular. Despite the existence of separate Technical Colleges,

Polytechnics and University of Technologies, the problem of graduate unemployment is still high. For pragmatic educational system, there is need to integrate practical skill training into Nigeria present school curricular. One of the avenues to realize this is by integrating non-formal education approaches into the conventional school curricular.

Agenda for Integration of Non-Formal Education Approaches into Formal Schooling Towards Effective Edupreneurship

Promoting entrepreneurship require urgent need to integrate non-formal vocational approaches into the curriculum of formal schools most especially in tertiary institutions. Aboki (2020) and Akinpelu (2005) both suggested an educational system that integrates the formal and non-formal approaches to reduce poverty in Nigeria.

A viable agenda for empowerment is for the two systems to usefully influence each other so that Nigeria can reap the full benefits of the intellectually oriented school education and pragmatics as well as functionally oriented non-formal training. Specific areas of integration are suggested below:

1. *Apprenticeship Scheme:* There is should be a close collaboration between the formal schools and traditional apprenticeship system. Several apprenticeship centres in various trades abound in every community. This includes skill training centres in auto mechanic, carpentry, soap making, bakery, tailoring, hair dressing and so on. Expertise of the master trainers of these centres could be used in training students in formal schools.

2. *Establishment of Vocational Training Centres:* These centres could be established in tertiary institutions so that a student while acquiring cognitive knowledge in his or her chosen discipline can acquire skills in one vocation by enrolling in the vocational centre. Master trainers here could also be drawn from non-formal training centres in the locality.

3. *Improved Community Participation in Education:* There is need for more improved community participation in education at various levels of Nigerian educational system-primary, secondary and tertiary. Through this, the school can benefit from human resources available in the communities such as traditional artisans. Cordial relationship between the school and the community can improve the 'donation' of these viable skills to the school.

Challenges

Possible challenges to the implementation of a viable programme of integration of non-formal approaches into formal school curricula include:

- Problem of image which influence the attitude of stakeholders in education towards non-formal system of education. The wrong notion of seeing non-formal system as inferior to formal system.
- Inadequate funding which is affecting virtually all aspects of Nigeria educational system.
- Closely related to the problem of funding may be that of inadequate facilities and consumables to be used in implementing the programmes.
- The challenge of reviewing the curriculum to accommodate this new approach.
- The problem of political-will on the part of the political leadership (government) to implement the policy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the position of this paper that non-formal education is a potent approach to effective edupreneurship in a developing country like Nigeria. Thus, integration of non-formal education approaches into the curricular of formal schools could play a complimentary role in evolving a sound and effective entrepreneurship in Nigeria towards the realization of Nigerian national goals of becoming a self-reliant and a dynamic economy.

Suggestions

Towards curtailing the challenges identified above, the following suggestions are made:

- There is need for vigorous sensitization and advocacy on stakeholders to improve the recognition of non-formal education as a veritable tool to promote entrepreneurship.
- There should be more budgetary allocation to education. In this regard, funding of skill acquisition should be given further emphasis in the TETFUND intervention program to tertiary institutions.
- There should be an urgent review of the curricular of the formal schools to accommodate this policy of integration.
- Government and other employers should prioritize functionality in education rather than education for certificates.

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