European Journal of Social Sciences
ISSN 1450-2267 Vol.28 No.3 (2012), pp. 377-382
© EuroJournals Publishing, Inc. 2012
http://www.europeanjournalofsocialsciences.com

Teaching the Informal Education Skills as Catalyst for Achieving the Millennium Development Goal of Eradicating Poverty in Nigeria

Alice Arinlade Jekayinfa
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Ilorin, Nigeria
E-mail: aajekayinfa@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348033893206

Abstract

Despite the resource endowment of Nigeria, many of her citizens are living in abject poverty. Many graduates of higher institutions are roaming about the streets of the country because of unemployment and this has resulted in cheating, corruption, and highway and daylight robberies. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was adopted in 2000 by all governments of the world to achieve significant and measurable improvements in people's lives. One of the goals of the MDGs is targeted at poverty eradication in all forms. This paper stressed the fact that Western education system, rather than reducing poverty in Nigeria, has deepened it. The paper pointed at the potentials of informal education as being functional, self developing and making individuals to be employers of labour rather than making them go about looking for jobs. The paper also highlighted some of the informal education skills listed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's National Policy on Education(2004), under the Vocational Enterprise Institutions which, if properly implemented and taught, can serve as catalyst for achieving the MDG's goal of eradicating poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: Implementation, informal education skills, catalyst, poverty eradication.

Introduction

The Western education, otherwise known as schooling was introduced by the missionaries in the mid-19th century and accepted by most Nigerians. The general acceptance of the Western system of education led to the gradual decline of informal education and its benefits. The Western education however, has its shortcomings, some of which are massive unemployment, under- employment, poverty, high illiteracy and general economic backwardness (Akande, 2007).

To redress these shortcomings of Western education, there was a craving for a system of education that would relate knowledge and community needs together. This brought about informal education to the fore as a recipe for learning in the society. Informal education is a process where learning is used for individual, community, and global betterment. It is characterised by the integrated involvement of people of all ages, use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change and recognition that people can learn through, with and from each other to create a better world. It is an approach that enables individuals and groups to develop their capabilities for a full and rich personal life. The informal education is locally based and relates to people in their local

community. There are many problems militating against informal education in Nigeria such as: being too rigid and not easily adaptable to change; it tends to be a closed system; anti-scientific; and the vocational training component is time wasting because it takes unnecessarily long time to learn a particular trade like dyeing and drumming (Jekayinfa, 2008). Notwithstanding these problems, informal education has many prospects. One of this is that it can be used as a catalyst for creating employments, thus it can be a panacea for achieving the seven of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are mutually reinforcing and are directed at reducing poverty in all its forms(Onike, 2007).

If informal education skills are properly developed, they will promote the apprenticeship system which will in turn reduce the age- long problem of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, robbery and corruption in Nigeria. It will thus be a panacea for achieving some of the MDGs (Akande, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

It is a known fact that unemployment and under-employment are prevalent in Nigeria and these have deepened poverty in the country. Though, some people like Amali (1996), Mabogunje (1975) and Onimode (1996), have written extensively on the issue of poverty in Nigeria, no paper known to the author of this paper has been written to indicate that formal education system, is one of the causes of unemployment and that informal education skills could be used to eradicate poverty and thereby achieve the objectives of the MDGs in Nigeria This paper did this and discussed that the informal education skills can eradicate poverty if properly implemented as enumerated in the National Policy of Education (2004).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this paper was to express that the implementation of informal education skills can eradicate poverty and thereby achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Specifically, this paper highlighted the following:

a) The importance of education and the purpose of the Millennium Development Goals.
b) The objectives and strength of informal education skills.
c) Identification of some informal education skills highlighted in the National Policy of Education(2004)
d) Implementation of informal education skills to serve as catalyst to achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating poverty

Research Questions

This paper provided answers to the following questions:

1. What are the Importance of education and the purpose of the Millennium Development Goals?
2. What are the strengths of informal education skills?
3. What are informal education skills enumerated for implementation in the National Policy on Education?
4. How can the informal education skills enumerated in the National Policy on Education eradicate poverty in Nigeria?

Education and the Millennium Development Goals

Education is generally seen as a necessary investment and an enabling factor opening up many vistas of personal, community and national development. It is very necessary for human in order to articulate

self and achieve fullness. For the survival of human in any nation, education is a necessity. Education suggests development of valuable knowledge and skills in a society. This is why the educational system of any society has been seen as an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society (O'connor, 1957).

However, the formal system of education which was imported, is elitist, discriminatory, and cannot alone provide all the education one needs for self fulfillment. It is therefore necessary to heighten and support the Nigerian government in her efforts to develop some of the informal education skills in order to enable citizens achieve fulfillment and fullness during the twenty first century. The early philosophers like Plato, Comenius and Dewey, recognising the importance of education wrote on how to attain it to the fullest. Plato for example, believed that education transforms a ruler and makes him/her to be himself/herself and be able to perceive clearly and rule wisely. This was why Plato prescribes an elaborate system of education for his philosopher kings in order for peace and stability to prevail while misjudgment will be prevented.

Nyerere (1979), advocated education for self- reliance and he was of the opinion that education develops human to transform the society. Formal education, according to Osuji (2006), should not be seen as a knowledge filling station to which the young come in order to get their supply of knowledge and skills which will serve them for the rest of their lives. Jones (1974) argued that knowledge is socially grounded and that a large part of it arises from the simple fact of living over a total lifetime, hence, emphasis should be placed on individual having full participation in knowledge process in the society.

Education should necessarily equip one to organise every reality into action and thought. It should make human acts and reflects over his/her environment. The British colonial government had no clearly defined policy on education for Nigeria before 1925. Educational activities in the colony were managed by the Christian missionaries and their home offices (Fafunwa, 1974). The Phelps-stokes fund set up to look into education in West Africa and Equatorial Africa reported utter neglect of the informal education and also emphasised that the continent needs this type of education alongside schooling. The commission stressed the need for the education of the entire community, if education was to result in meaningful development.

To educate children in school while majority of the community remained illiterate and untrained would amount to a grossly inadequate utilisation of education in development. However, the British colonial government's policies on education set out in form of ordinances in 1882, 1925, 1926 and even the education Memorandum of 1930 did not address the issue of non-formal community education. The MDGs were adopted in the year 2000 by all governments as a blue print for building a better world in the 21st century. The MDGs represent a global partnership, arising from commitment and targets set at the world summits of the 1990s. It consists internationally, of agreed framework of eight goals and 18 targets complemented by 48 technical indicators to measure progress towards the MDGs. The first seven goals are mutually reinforcing and directed at reducing poverty. The last goal which is global partnership for development is about the means to achieve the first seven goals. Nigeria was among the 189 countries that signed the MDGs in 2000. Up till now, the Nigerian government is yet to achieve the full implementation of the goals.

Despite the resources of Nigeria, many people are still suffering from hunger. The rate of poverty in Nigeria is a little above 70 per cent of the total population (Onike, 2007). The rate of unemployment too is alarming. These have resulted in various crimes as cheating, corruption and in recent times, highway and daylight robberies. If the informal education skills as highlighted in the National Policy on Education are properly implemented, most of the vices would be eradicated gradually because many people would be self employed instead of waiting for the government to employ them

The Objectives and Strengths of Informal Education Skills

Some of the informal education skills are categorised under mass literacy and adult education and it is defined by the Nigerian National Policy on Education, (2004) as the equivalent of basic education given to adults, children and youths of formal school age, outside the formal school system. The goals of informal education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria include :

(i) Providing basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups in Nigeria are migrant folks, illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents; persons who left 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 conventional educational system

(ii) Providing in-service, vocational and professional trainings for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

The objectives are to:

a) Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the entrepreneurship needs of the students in particular and that of the society in general;
b) Provide entrepreneurial and job-specific skills for self reliance and economic development;
c) Refocus education quality for the attainment of poverty eradication, wealth creation and employment generation; and
d) Providing training that enables the students acquire specialised craftsman skills that would empower them to compete globally.

Informal education goes beyond reading, writing and calculating. It touches all other areas of learning. It focuses on the adult as learner and the community as context. It is education for life in the society. It is education for people's empowerment to take control of their lives (Akande, 2007).

All the activities of informal education are carried on outside the framework of the school system to provide selected types of learning to a particular sub-group in the community. The communities are the roots of informal education and the activities are aimed at solving community's problems. Informal education has been part and parcel of Nigeria even before the introduction of Western education. Education by then was purely indigenous and very relevant to the needs of the people of the community. During this period, informal education was gender based. According to Fafunwa (1974), boys and girls were given the kind of vocational education that enabled them perform their masculine and feminine responsibilities respectively in the community. Therefore, vocations such as farming, blacksmithing, hunting and building are male-dominated while vocations like mat weaving, pottery, hair plaiting and dyeing were female-dominated.

Informal education was functional, collective, participatory and self developing but not formal. It places emphasis on self development and learning by doing profitable occupational activities. There was no room for unemployment and underemployment in the traditional society. It was a life-long process which gave individuals the opportunity to continue their education throughout life. This perhaps inform why Fafunwa(1974), declared that indigenous community education should be integrated into the present educational system because it is comprehensive, effective, work oriented and less expensive. If properly implemented, informal education skills will reduce cases of unemployment in Nigeria.

Some Informal Education Skills Highlighted in the Nigeria National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education (2004) listed some trade related subjects for the senior secondary education. Some of these subjects are informal skills that have been prevalent in the traditional society and learnt under the apprenticeship system. Some of these skills include carpentry and joinery, dyeing

and bleaching. Also, there is a section devoted to the Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) , to educate the students to think creatively and transform knowledge through technological processes into wealth and a broader economic base. Some of the goals of the VEIs according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004)are to :

a) train post Basic Education and Senior Secondary students who are desirous of obtaining some specific skills, knowledge and appropriate certification to pursue a chosen career or trade;
b) educate post basic education and senior secondary students to think creatively and transform knowledge through technological processes into wealth and a broader economic base;
c) provide technological based skill training that ensures that students understand how their expertise fits into improving the society and fulfilling national goals; and
d) provide training that enables students acquire the skills and competences to exploit life's opportunities.

It was further explained in the document that VEIs shall cover all vocational and craftsmanship areas such as Adire and other indigenous fabric making, craftsmanship, artisans, apprenticeship as follows:

i. Adire, Aso Oke, Akwaete; and other indigenous fabrics and products;
ii. Godo, Mats , Drums ;
iii. Hair Dressing and Beautification ; and
iv. All other vocational skills.

The above listed vocational skills are some of the skills that had been in the traditional society. Now that they are highlighted in the National Policy on Education, they should be properly implemented and if this is done, the MDGs of eradicating poverty would be achieved.

Implementation of Informal Education Skills to Eradicate Poverty

It is evidently clear that poverty is pronounced in Nigeria. Despite the resource endowment of Nigeria, many people are still suffering from hunger. It has been established by surveys of poverty profile that some 50% of Nigeria's rural population that accounts for some 70% of the total population live in poverty and that more than 50% of this crusted poverty is among women, (Onimode, 1996).

The rate of unemployment too is alarming. As the sixth largest exporter of oil, Nigeria is still hosting the third largest number of poor people after China and India. This has resulted in various crimes as cheating, corruption and in recent times, highway and daylight robberies.

The levels of achievement of the MDGs vary across the globe. Out of all the countries of the world, countries situated in Sub-Saharan Africa region have recorded least success in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. If the informal education skills are properly learnt and mastered, all the vices listed above would be drastically reduced, if not totally eliminated.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that efforts be made to properly implement the informal education skills listed under the trade related subjects for the senior secondary school students and those listed under the VEIs in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating poverty in Nigeria.

References

[1] Akande, J.O.2007 "The practice of community education in Nigeria. *Education Research and Review* Vol. 2 (10) pp.264 -270. Retrieved on 26/11/2008 from http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR.

[2] Amali, E. 1996. Poverty in Nigeria. Mimeograph from the Department of Economics, University of Jos.
[3] Comenius, A. 1957. *The Pampedia*. Paris. UNESCO.
[4] Dewey, J. 1916. *Democracy and education*. New York: The Free Press.
[5] Ezimah, M.O.A. (2004). *Knowing adult education: Its nature, scope and processes* Owenon, Springfield publishers Ltd.
[6] Fafunwa, A. Babs. 1974) *History of education in Nigeria*. London.
[7] George Allen & UNWIN Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education Abuja: FME publications
[8] Findsay, B. 2006. Access and participation issues in New Zealand adult , community and tertiary education as social justice in *Widening access to aducation as a social justice,* Akpovire, Oduaran and Harbans, S. Bhola (Eds.). The Netherlands.history of pottery and porcelain (n.d.).Retrieved. November, 26, 2008 from http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?history=ab98
[9] Jekayinfa, A.A. 2008. Indigenous African education in J.O.O.Abiri & A.A.Jekayinfa (Eds.) *Perspectives on the History of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Emola-Jay Communications Inc.
[10] Jones, K. 1974. Knowledge as power in V.Houghton and K. Richardson (Eds.). *Recurrent education: A plea for lifelong learning*. London: WardLock Educational pp.45-46.
[11] Mabogunje, Akin. 1975. Prolegomenon to urban poverty in Nigeria in the proceedings of the 1975 annual conference of the Nigerian economic society. Ibadan.
[12] Nyerere, J.K.1979. The overall educational conception in H. Hinzen and V.H.Hunds (Eds.) *Education for liberation and development*. Hamburg. UNESCO.
[13] O'Connor, D.J.1957. *An introduction to philosophy of education*. London; Routledge and Kegan Paul.
[14] Osuji, S.N.1984. Some thoughts on provisions for adult and non-formal education in the National policy on education. *Adult Education* p. 1-12.
[15] Onike, R. 2007. Millennium development goals and the Nigerian youths. Retrieved November, 24, 2008. from http://www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/
[16] Onimode, B. 1996. Mobilizing Women for Economic Empowerment. *Keynote Address* delivered at the South – West Zonal Workshop organized by Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development held in Lagos. May 8 – 10th.