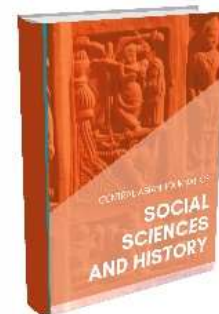




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Planning of Non-Formal Education Curriculum through Empirical Evidence in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Planning of non-formal education curriculum is one of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education's (NMEC) responsibilities. NMEC is faced with inadequate and unreliable statistics. This study is of the opinion that in view of the paucity of adequate and reliable statistics in Nigeria, the best option is to rely on empirical evidence for the planning of non-formal education curriculum. Such empirical evidence should emanate from qualitative rather than quantitative data. The paper discusses the methodology of measuring qualitative data, such as participant observation, in-depth-interviewing, field work, documentation, etc. Other important discussions include forms of non-formal education, its peculiarities and characteristics and its programmes and their components.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum planning is central to the achievement of educational objectives (Agina-Obu, 2005). Non formal education requires effective curriculum planning. National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC, 2010), opine that it is involved in developing appropriate curriculum and curriculum material for the diverse non formal education learners with assistance from UNICEF. In Nigeria, one major barrier to non-formal education curriculum planning is inadequate and unreliable statistics. This might be as a result of logistic or other problems associated with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) or other bodies engaged in statistics publishing.

Empirical evidence can be a veritable instrument addressing this challenge about planning of non-formal education curricular. Data based on empirical evidence are used in many policy circles public as well as private. It is predicated on this fact that this study examines planning of non-formal education curriculum through empirical evidence. The question addressed is what empirical evidence is and what methodology is adopted for the planning of non-formal curriculum?

The Problem of Inadequate and Unreliable Statistics

The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics periodically publishes statistics related to various sectors such as education, health, employment, sanitation, population, etc. Evidence indicates that these statistics are grossly inadequate and unreliable for effective planning of non-formal education curriculum. For example, the table below show that only the rates of unemployment are covered. Areas like barriers to employment, levels and adequacy of skills possessed by individuals are omitted. The same is true of statistics related to health. It indicates the level of health manpower, health care facilities and the number of persons suffering from particular diseases but says nothing regarding the quality of health services delivery, challenges facing health workers in delivery of health service or obstacles to health service delivery, health enlightenment level achieved and consumer response, etc.

In the area of education and human capital, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics shows the rates of literacy across the country, between men and women but omits barriers to literacy acquisition, importance of literacy to socio economic development, relationship between literacy and socio-economic development, impact of literacy, etc.

The table below shows the available statistics on the status of employment, though it focuses on unemployment rates. This information is inadequate for effective planning of non-formal education curriculum. This shows that we cannot rely on Nigerian Bureau of Statistics for planning of non-formal education curricular.

Unemployment Rates by State (2007-2011)

STATE	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Akwa-Ibom	18.0	11.1	34.1	27.7	18.4
Bayelsa	21.9	67.4	41.5	27.4	23.9
Cross Rivers	32.8	18.9	14.3	27.9	18.2

Edo	14.8	15.6	12.2	28	12.1
Rivers	66.4	12.1	27.9	27.8	25.5

Sources: General Household Survey Report/NBS/CBN Survey in NBS (2012)

Concept of Non-Formal Education

Non-formal, education attracts many definitions. Combs and Ahmed in Ezima, (2008) defines non formal education as the assortment of organized education activities outside the framework of the formal school system, targeted at different needs of sub groups in the population both children and adults. Imhabekhai cited in Ijah (2014:7) describes non formal education as follows:

As integral part of the entire system of education lying institutionally and significantly outside the formal school system of education and very much a supplement and complement to it. It is the product of change in the society and it covers a wide range of activities depending on the prevailing social, economic and political circumstances.

Defining non formal education somewhat more elaborately Ezima (2008) states that it is any intentional and systematic enterprise (usually outside of traditional schooling) in which content, media, time units, admission criteria, staff, facilities and other system components are selected and operated based on the needs of the particular group of learners involved. Obanya (2020) says that non formal education is learning in a more or less organized situation outside the formal establishments.

Purpose of Non-Formal Education

The purposes of non-formal education according to Amirinze (2007) and Oluwayemisi and Gbolabo (2016) are to:

1. Prepare and equip people for wage employment or self-employment.
2. Upgrade the knowledge and skills of those already engaged in employment.
3. Improve people's awareness of their political, social, cultural environment through conscientization.
4. Provide citizenship and leadership training opportunities for people.
5. Promote a healthy and responsible use of leisure.
6. Foster entrepreneurship and personal enablement through continual engagements.
7. Create job opportunities for rural dwellers especially youths,
8. Control population growth.
9. Reduce violence and insecurity in society.
10. Mitigate/reduce environmental pollution and degradation.

Peculiarities and Characteristics of Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education is more relevant to the needs of the population, especially the masses in rural areas. The major distinctive characteristic of non-formal education is that it encourages participation from initiation to implementation of its programmes. The content of non-formal education can be adapted to the needs and problems of the learner or community. It can be tailored toward learning which encompasses a wide range of activities including agriculture, family planning or child care, industrial

training, hair dressing and fashion designing arts, ceramic making, auto repairs, electrical and electronics repair, computer literate, computer hardware repair, etc. It has much wider content than what is covered in school type learning especially at primary and secondary levels.

Numerous groups outside the conventional education setting can benefit, both adults and children. It is flexible in terms of usability of media, time, units, admission criteria staff, facilities and other system components (Ezima, 2008). Non-formal education produces knowledge and skills which demand immediate application, and which are daily needed for a healthy living, income-generation and services delivery. Its methods emphasize flexibility (Oluwayemisi & Gbolaba, 2016). Non-formal education is often tied to some practical life activity. It encourages peer learning. It is relatively cheaper than the formal system. It can be developed in the context of liberal education or vocational education. It is complementary to the formal system education

Forms of Non-Formal Education

There are three types of non-formal education, which are complimentary non formal education, supplementary non formal education and replacement non formal educating.

Complementary non-formal education: This complements or completes the education obtained in the formal school system, complementary non formal education is geared toward augmenting what was learnt in the formal school system. For example, the graduate of education schemes which enables graduates in various fields to acquire vocational skills for employment purposes. Its curriculum is not pre-determined, rather is based on assessment of the needs of the participants.

Supplementary Non-Formal Education: It caters for drop outs from formal education as a result of which they are unable to enjoy the benefit of formal education. The educational activity may focus on skills, including reading, writing numeracy to enable function effectively in the society, it is compensatory in orientation. Examples include various skills acquisition programme offered to both adults and youths who have little formal education.

Replacement Non-Formal Education: Replacement non formal education is designed for those excluded from formal education based on socio-economic or other reasons. A typical example would be basic literacy courses which are often attended by both unschooled children and adults. The Almajiri schools in the northern part of Nigeria is an example of this type of non-formal education. Other examples are education of pastoralists in the north and migrant fishermen children's education in the south.

Non-Formal Education Programmes

Non-formal education has four major programmes which according to NMEC (2017) include:

Basic Literacy Education

Basic literacy education caters for illiterates to enable them possess the ability to read, write and manipulate numbers or do arithmetic. It is the foundation on which to build further learning skills. It comprises five programmes, including General Literacy Classes, out-of-school girls' education, out-of-school boys' education, prison education, basic literacy in Arabic/Ajami and integrated Quar'anic education. The duration is 9 to 12 months (NMEC, 2017).

Post Literacy Education

Post-literacy education is provided for those who have acquired basic literacy skills but need to be more grounded in their knowledge of literacy so as not to relapse back to illiteracy. UNESCO in Wyk and Frick (2014) affirms that post-literacy enables newly literate persons to retain, improve and apply their basic knowledge, skills and attitudes for satisfaction of their needs and continuity in self-directed process of improvement of quality of life.

NMEC (2017) stresses that this programme consists of the following: women education, post-literacy for out-of-school girls, post-literacy for out-of-school boys and liberal education. Duration of the programme is 24 months. A person who has gone through this programme is qualified to sit for the first school learning certificate examination.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is designed for those who have acquired formal education and have to remedy deficiencies in their knowledge or decides to learn new skills and acquire new abilities so as to improve the quality of their lives. The programme consists of remedial classes for General Certificate of Education and Senior Secondary School Certificate, JAMB Classes, Open and Distance Learning Training Programmes and Governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies' Non-Formal Vocational Education and Training.

NMEC's Functions and Responsibilities

NMEC's functions and responsibilities according to NMEC (2017) include:

- a. Formulate and issue policy guidelines on all matters relating to adult and non-formal education activities in Nigeria.
- b. Co-ordinate and monitor the successful implementation of all adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.
- c. Receive funds from the Federal Government and allocate same to states and such other agencies that implement adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.
- d. Solicit, receive and disburse grants, endowments and gifts to agencies that implement adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.
- e. Undertake quality assurance activities in the implementation of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

- f. Motivate and mobilize people to participate in mass literacy, adult and non-formal education programmes through advocacy visits and the use of the mass media, especially the radio, television and mobile cinema.
- g. Conduct research on adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria
- h. Develop and disseminate curricula and instructional materials for adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

What is Curriculum?

The question of what curriculum is all about attracts different views. Following the latin word *curere*, it means a course of study (Jarvis, 2004). Many writers now conceive its meaning broadly, as the whole learning situation. It becomes the total programme of any educational institution (Jarvis, 2004). While this gained wider acceptance, some writers conceptualize curriculum in terms of what takes place in the school environment. The two most important variables affecting curriculum implementation are not limited to classroom learning, therefore curriculum should not be conceived in relation to a physical environment. Moreso, the revolution in information communication technology demands that we view it broadly as the entire range of educational practices or learning experiences (Jarvis, 2004).

Concept of Curriculum Planning

Curriculum planning is a dynamic process and a continuous activity that progresses in response to changes in the society (Fernandez & Ramos, n.d). It adapts to the current as well as future societal demands. It embraces all activities and strategies that can be used to help learners achieve desired outcomes (Stutt in Fernondez & Ramos, n.d). The purpose of curriculum planning is to design programmes of education for the society, which can reflect its values and ideals (Emeruroa, 1981).

What is Empirical Evidence?

By empirical evidence is meant information gathered directly or indirectly through observation that may be used to confirm or disconfirm scientific theory or to help justify or establish as reasonably as possible person's belief in a given position. It is a powerful means of justifying assumptions based on pre-determined objectives. Data is the materials the observer uses to plan the curriculum. It requires analysis to make it more meaningful. Examples of data are interview transcripts, participant observation, field notes, responses to a questionnaire, etc.

There are two types of empirical data. These are quantitative data and qualitative data. The former involves wards, images and physical objects (Gall, Gall & Borg 1971) while the latter is in written form but may involve numbers. Jarvis (2004) states that the quantitative data is obtained by measuring something while qualitative data is obtained to assess and understand something. The implication for planning of non-formal education is that what is needed is qualitative data.

Planning of Non-Formal Education Curriculum Based on Empirical Evidence

In the previous section, we identified two forms of empirical data: quantitative data and qualitative data. In planning of non-formal education curriculum, qualitative data is preferred to quantitative data. This is because the former mainly involves quantities which may not reflect reality of the phenomenon concerned. Therefore, the use of quantitative methodology may lead astray. Qualitative data represent

more the empirical social world. It is therefore the most appropriate in planning non-formal education curriculum.

Some advantages of qualitative data over quantitative data can be identified as follows:

1. Qualitative data lead to a more accurate generalization as well as conclusions.
2. It is all encompassing and comprehensive, in the sense that the reasons behind the way a particular group responded is not subject to the observer's opinion but is captured by the data itself.
3. Fairness and justice are entrenching in the data. Even a judge can use such data as a basis for a verdict.
4. Qualitative data can be turned into quantitative and analysed statistically.

Methodology of Measuring Qualitative Data

The methodology of measuring qualitative data include participant observation, in-depth-interviewing, field work, documentation focus group discussion and content analysis. Some of them are discussed below:

Participant Observation

Participant observation strategy allows the observer to be a part of the situation or setting in which the observation is taken place. He may be a regular member of the system or group being observed or he may become part of them for the purpose of conducting the observation. This is done in order that the individuals being observed do not know that they are being observed so as to avoid altering their normal behaviours. The observer shares the experiences of those he is observing experience (Ajoku, 2006).

Criteria for Evaluating Participant Observation

The criteria used in evaluating participant observation (Borg & Gall, 1989) can be identified as follows:

- i. Unobtrusive measures: These are cues that provide insights into behavior being observed. Such cues may represent the clear picture of what is happening.
- ii. Triangulation: It involves using several instruments of measuring data – tests, direct observation, interviewing and content analysis.
- iii. Enough time: Much time is needed to increase the chances of a credible and valid observation.
- iv. Freedom of access without prior information: This is necessary to obtain unbiased picture of phenomenon in a natural setting.
- v. Quality of direct on-site-observation: This is a situation in which masking is reduced to the lowest degree or completely removed.

In-depth-Interviewing

Here the subject is given more freedom to direct the flow of information. He is not restricted to speak on the topic of discussion but speaks freely. The person involved in observing is part of the situation he is studying (Robin & Babbie, 2001).

There are three elements of in-depth-interviewing as noted in Walter et al (1989):

- i. **Explicit Purpose:** The observer should have a specific purpose and should make it clear to the respondents so the person knows where the interview is leading.
- ii. **Ethnographic Explanation:** The observer should explain to the respondent the reason for the interview politely.
- iii. **Ethnographic Cues:** The questions constructed and how they are posed. This determines the quality of field notes.

Fieldwork: Field work involves going to the subjects and spending time with them in their schools, homes, play grounds, hangs out, etc. It requires meeting them at the places where subjects do what they normally do. It needs a less formal relationship between subjects and observer and more time so they can relate with each other (Bogdom. & Biklen, n.d)

In order to ensure that subjects talk about what they normally talk about, the observer needs to comfort and encourage them and build trust by making it clear they will not use what they are finding to demean or laurite them. The observer is a part of the subjects' world but is also detached from it. Bogdon and Biklen (n.d) also comments on this strategy as follows:

The observer is (mine added) out in the subjects' world, in the way we have described – not as a person who knows everything, but as a person who has come to learn, but as a person who wants to know what it is like to be them. You work towards winning their acceptance, not as an end, but because it allows you to pursue goals.

This method helps to achieve individual reforms.

Titbits for Overcoming Field Work Challenges

The first days in the field are often difficult days for field observers. The following suggestions put forward by Bogdon and Biklen (n.d) may help you be successful:

1. Do not take what happens in the field as a personal matter.
2. Make sure there is someone to introduce you on your first days of visit.
3. Do not seek to accomplish much the first few days. Use it as a time to get a general introduction and overview.
4. Remain relatively passive. You do not need to ask many questions. Just show interest and be enthusiastic.
5. Be friendly. Show that you are delighted to meet your audience. Put up a smiling face and be polite.

Documentation

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines documentation as documents providing official information or evidence. Examples include copies of students' work and curriculum materials. They may include environmental assessment, need analysis, clientele analysis feasibility studies, etc. These provide data that may not be easily reached through other methods. It consists of qualitative data but not

limited to it. The observer may require permission in most cases to assess such data as they are found in important places such as offices, libraries and in the possession of those occupying leadership positions.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus group is a small group discussion directed by a trained leader. It is used to learn about opinions on a designated topic and to guide people towards achieving desirable outcomes in future. Focus groups discussion is used in measuring users' attitude and learning about their situation.

Content Analysis

Content analysis involves examination and qualifies the presence of certain characteristics of words, subjects and concepts displayed in texts, images and video or audio message.

Conclusion

One important conclusion is that qualitative methodology is the best alternative in non-formal education, curriculum planning. This is because the method helps to achieve individual reforms. Also, because the qualitative methodology enables the observer to interact intimately with the respondent and so he is able to come at the nitty gritty of what he wants to observe. This is in consonance with the core objectives of non-formal education.

Thus, statistics are useful but are not a sufficient condition for curriculum planning. However, planners must be aware of different ways of measuring qualitative data for effective planning of non-formal education curriculum. There might be the need to re-train curriculum planners or experts on the use of the qualitative methods of measuring data as this may not be part of what they already know.

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