

Chapter 15

Envisioning K–20 Education: Refractioning K–20 Education in a Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT

Through a case study of the faculty of education of Obafemi Awolowo University, the authors argue that although the founders of the faculty envisioned, conceived, and attempted to build the faculty of education on the lifelong learning principles of the African traditional education system, envisioning far beyond K-20 Education, they developed and consolidated a single teacher education programme that was close to a K-20 Education programme in the late 1970s and in the early 80s. However, beginning from the mid-90s, the programme evolved in a fragmented way. The authors argue that the fragmentation is a result of felt and perceived needs, centralized control, and administration of university affairs by the Federal Government of Nigeria, and a large dosage of territorialism. They draw implications of this state of affairs for teaching-learning processes in the education programme and the capacity of the programme to serve and connect with the community.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today, formal education at pre-primary, primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, provided by government, private commercial outfits, and religious and secular not-for-profit organizations abound; just as there are many adult and non-formal educational programmes in formal work and educational settings. However, many Nigerians, old and young, still have problems accessing these formal and non-formal educational provisions for a variety of reasons. Non-formal

educational provisions outside of formal settings, especially in the informal economy do not abound, even if they are not in short supply; and they are usually uncoordinated. Also in Nigeria today, individuals, whether young or old, whether they are in formal education or out of it, whether they work in the informal or formal economy, are subjected to a wide variety of informal educative influences, in homes and schools, at work, during play, while participating in religious activities, from the old and new media, in market places, hospitals, and while participating in other socio-cultural activities. However, whereas participants in formal and adult and non-formal education provisions usu-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4249-2.ch015

ally have evidence of their participation in those activities, the evidence that individuals have of the influence of informal learning is the specific ways in which it has influenced their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior; the insight it has provided, and the application of knowledge gained and skills acquired to the resolution of particular problems, and towards the growth of the individual and her community.

In Nigeria, apart from sociologists, the other researchers, governments, and non-governmental organizations are not paying attention to what people learn in informal ways (Mejuni, 2012). Governments and employers are, instead, interested in the paper qualifications that individuals who have gone through formal and non-formal education can present, and the quality of such qualifications. Given these, formal education continues to be an attraction for Nigerians, young and old. Non-formal education is desired by persons already at work, those who need remedial education to be able to move further with their education and work, persons preparing for retirement, and those who cannot take advantage of formal education provisions for several reasons. However, whenever the word adult is added to non-formal education (adult and non-formal education) or whenever the term adult education is used to describe certain educational provisions, negative reactions are evoked, or at best, individuals are surprised at the use of the term adult education to describe the educational activities that they participate in. Eyes are rolled, there is vehement disagreement with the use of the term in the circumstance, and the individuals become defensive. Such individuals would rather describe the educational programmes they are participating in as: in-service training; training and development; 'course'; training; orientation, etc. Apparently, the term adult education evokes images of illiterate, mostly poor adults, who need basic literacy education to comprehend the holy books and for sustenance.

Whereas it is true that illiterates need to acquire literacy skills which they can apply to all aspects of their daily lives, the persistent apprehension of adult education as education for poor older people who suddenly got up to the idea of acquiring literacy skills late in the day, is a throwback to the beginning of the introduction of formal Western education into the space now called Nigeria. Before the arrival of Christian missionaries who brought literacy skills in the English script through the South of Nigeria, Nigerians learned about different aspects of life mostly in informal ways, through socialization, imitation and observation; and also in non-formal structures. Avoseh (2001, 2008, 2011) made the point that before the introduction of formal Western education, traditional African education was synonymous with life. However, the missionaries and the colonial administrators separated education from day to day living when they introduced schools, whether in mission houses or in buildings that were designated as schools. The missionaries encouraged adults to read and write the English script, not just so they could read the holy books, but as part of a grand plan to 'civilize' and 'modernize' Africans and also create a middle class that would be committed to the civilization agenda (Taiwo, 2010). Some of those adults acquired those skills in formal structures, however designated. They did not just read the Bible; they became useful to the colonial administrators, working first, as interpreters and clerks. So the view persists, even in faculties of education, that adult education is, solely, education of older persons, who need basic literacy education to comprehend the holy books and for sustenance. Clearly, this view persists in my own faculty. It therefore affects the relationship between faculty who teach aspects of formal education provisioning and those who teach adult and non-formal education. Often, they view their fields as parallels, instead of working to integrate the two aspects of the education system, and helping students to grasp the two as a continuum; as lifelong learning provisioning.

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