
Planning Learning Experiences And Life Long Learning: Paradigms For National Development In Nigeria

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Abstract

A nation's growth and development are subject to the investment made in people through the roles of education as a tool and beneficial educational policies. Creating learning experiences and impressing lifelong learning in learners is beneficial in capacity building of Nigeria's labor market and work efficiency because individuals will adapt more easily to changes in the labour market and ready to face strong competition from the global economy. However, there is a need for intentional planning to infuse learning experiences and lifelong learning into education delivery. Therefore, this study examines planning strategies for the development of appropriate learning experiences and lifelong learning in order to produce manpower needed for national development in Nigeria. It also provides evidence that lifelong learning and learning experiences development would have a specific contribution to the goals of increase in educational level, promotion of research and development, reducing poverty and uneven development of urban and rural areas. The paper concludes that development and infusion of learning experiences and lifelong learning programs into Nigeria's educational systems is important because of the opportunities they provide for assuring employment, higher quality of life and social inclusion, as well as for economic growth and community development as a whole. It was suggested that Ministry of Education should develop clear policies that support planning of learning experiences and lifelong learning and see to it that stakeholders of education readily adopt and implement them.

Keywords: learning experiences, lifelong learning, planning, national development

Introduction

Education is an important instrument for growth and development in any nation. In Nigeria, the economic growth, development and progress of her economy is subject to investment in human capital development that will yield long-term productivity and growth at any level, to the increased role of education, to the effect of learning experiences and lifelong learning in students and to the improving educational and employment policies. Education is said to be efficient when learning has taken place.

A student who has not learnt correctly cannot be developed and consequently cannot contribute to the development of the nation. The effect of developing learning experiences and lifelong learning on the labor market is evident in the increase of work efficiency because individuals who gained learning experiences and lifelong learning adapt more easily to changes in the labor market and better face strong competition from the global economy. These advantages on individual level births advantages on organization and even national level, by the fact that well prepared people are always a long-term investment of society, becoming the support of economic growth and development (Lonela, 2012a).

Significantly, education systems at all level in Nigeria can contribute meaningfully to national development by addressing strategic goals of education summed up in a singular sentence, which is to produce students who are worthy in learning (academic performance) and in character (life or behavioural performance). Learning experiences and lifelong learning revolves around the experience of the learner which should be intentionally designed and carefully crafted to help the learner achieve a meaningful learning outcome that is (mostly) predefined. Lifelong learning requires the ability to learn from one's experience, however, learning experience can take place in the school, on the job, outdoor, home or any other place one can imagine (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Teachers are important stakeholder whose responsibility is to create learning experiences and lifelong learning that are practical, endearing and lasting on the minds of students. For a teacher to create learning experience in students, he or she must intentionally create it and would require that teachers determine the learning outcome in advance in order to create enabling and supportive physical and emotional climates that make such experiences possible. Teachers' skills to create learning experiences and lifelong learning such as cognitive skills, self-esteem, problem solving, application of modern ICT, information, mathematical and language literacy, ability of empirical research and planning skills are much needed in all the levels of education in the nation (Lonela, 2012a)

It is popularly believed and true, too, that proper planning is an important secret of impressive performance in any life endeavour. Educational planning shows intentionality in getting a desired goal, Adiele et al(2021), asserted that educational planning is the process of deciding ahead of time how given educational resources are to be maximally applied in achieving defined educational objectives most effectively. Teachers' instructional effectiveness can therefore not be severed from their ability to properly plan their instruction at every point in time. Planning of instruction would require that teachers determine in advance what to teach students, how to teach students and the expected outcome of the instructional process. In other words, they must not only plan for what students learn, but must also necessarily plan for how students learn and the type of experiences that students must have on the course of learning. Such planning takes into consideration the three learning domains of students – the affective (emotional), cognitive (mental) and psychomotor (physical) domains of students. Effective creation of students' learning experiences and lifelong learning must therefore take these domains into consideration, but one yet wonders whether teachers are really doing the needful in this regard. Experiential evidences seem to point to the fact that teachers in all levels of the educational system in Nigeria are mostly interested in what they teach the students (or rather about dishing out the lesson contents to the students) and are rarely deliberate about planning for how students learn or the learning experiences of students which are to bring about effective learning. Even when teachers

make attempts to plan their lessons through the popular lesson plan, it is difficult to say that learning experiences are part of the lesson plans. This could probably be one of the reasons for the declining quality of education at all levels of education in Nigeria has far reaching negative impact on a nation's moral, civic, cultural and economic sustainability.

At this point, it is important to realize that discussions on education and its reforms to make it contribute meaningfully to national development should gradually and systematically move away from a politicized to a more analytical approach that appreciates the complexities inherent in proffering genuine and workable solutions for revamping our educational system (Lohnan, 2019).

Learning Experiences

Human beings by nature through their senses gather information or knowledge. This could be done through seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, or touching. This knowledge or skill which an individual gets from seeing or doing something turns into your experience. Therefore, experience can be described as a process of observing, encountering, or undergoing something. In other words, experience can help a person gain knowledge or practical wisdom because of what has been observed, encountered, or undergone. So basically, what one does or live through is what is learnt from experience.

Learning on the other hand leads to permanent change or modification of behaviour as a result of practice or experience. Learning experience therefore refers to any experience a student has in the process of learning. This includes traditional methods of instruction as well as authentic learning. Learning experiences guide students towards engagement in content and help them learn new skills. Passarelli and Kolb (2012) referred learning experience to any interaction, course, programme, or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings (schools, classrooms) or nontraditional settings (outside-of-school locations, outdoor environments), or whether it includes traditional educational interactions (students learning from teachers and professors) or nontraditional interactions (students learning through games and interactive software applications).

Kolb's theory explains that concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation form a four-stage process (or cycle) transformed into effective learning. Kolb's experiential learning theory was proposed in 1984 by David Kolb, an American Psychologist (Reshmad'sa & Vijayakumari, 2017). The theory is about learning by doing which describes the learning process whereby knowledge is created through experience. This learning theory stresses how our experiences, including our thoughts, emotions and environment, impact the learning process.

The four stages of experiential learning as described by Kolb's theory are:

1. **Concrete learning:** This occurs when a learner has a new experience or interprets a previous experience in a new way. For example, a senior secondary school student has a new way of solving an algebraic problem in Mathematics.

2. Reflective observation: This occurs when the learner reflects on the new experience to understand what it means. In our example, the student might think about how they could arrive at the solution in an easier and faster manner.
3. Abstract conceptualization: Here the learner adapts their thinking or constructs new ideas based on experience and reflection. For example, the student realizes that he needs to have his writing and calculating materials ready in order to solve any uprising problems.
4. Active experimentation: The learner applies their new ideas to real-world situations to test whether they work and see if any changes need to be made. This process can happen quickly or over an extended time.

According to International Bureau of Education (Global centre of excellence in curriculum and related matters under UNESCO) learning experience is ‘a wide variety of experiences across different contexts and settings which transform the perceptions of the learner, facilitate conceptual understanding, yield emotional qualities, and nurture the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (IBE-UNESCO, 2013). It further added that in educational settings, learning experiences are ideally challenging, interesting, rich, engaging, meaningful, and appropriate to learner needs; and the previous learning experiences are considered as the key factors in predicting further learning. The concept of learning experiences is getting stronger in everyday classrooms. Numerous research and reflections by educators are clarifying the need and importance of pedagogical and technological shifts.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning also known as education from cradle to grave is a holistic approach having as its scope the generalization of the pre-school education in quantity and quality, constitution of real learning basis, progression from school to business life, adults’ motivation to learn, renewal of educational resources of the system (Demirel, 2009a). Smith (2001) in Kaplan (2016), explained that the concept of lifelong learning was first proposed by Basil Yeaxlee in 1929. Furthermore, the concept of lifelong learning was also adopted and discussed in detail by UNESCO in a conference organized in 1960 (Günü et al, 2012). The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), formerly UNESCO Institute for Education, is one of six educational institutes of UNESCO and a non-profit international research, training, information, documentation and publishing centre on literacy, non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning, the institute has in context that Lifelong learning is all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. It is usually considered learning that occurs after the formal education years of childhood and into adulthood. It is sought out naturally through life experiences as the learner seeks to gain knowledge for professional or personal reasons. These natural experiences can come about on purpose or accidentally in other words lifelong learning captures people learning in different contexts and environments which does not only include schools but also homes, workplaces, and locations where people pursue leisure activities. However, while the learning process can be applied to learners of all ages, there is a focus on adults who are returning to organized learning. There are programmes based on its framework that address the different needs of learners, such as United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the UNESCO Institute for

Lifelong Learning, which caters to the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalized learners.

Lifelong learning is far different from the concept of continuing education in the sense that it has a broader scope. Unlike the latter, which is oriented towards adult education developed for the needs of schools and industries, this type of learning is concerned with the development of human potential in individuals generally. Lifelong learning is lifewide, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons enhancing social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, competitiveness and employability. Life-long learning as deliberate, focused learning throughout a person's lifetime" is connected to student centered learning approaches. Lifelong learning includes all phases of learning at any level or scale, ranging from pre-school to post-retirement, and it covers the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning, in other word, it is a phenomenal adaptation of individuals to different stages of life not only to meet individual needs but foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfillment and that of the society they are part of (Venelin, 2019).

Planning learning experiences and Lifelong Learning: Paradigms for National Development in Nigeria

Educational decisions are regularly taken by nations of the world on the type of education, the curriculum base, and goals to be attained using education. All such actions leading to decision making in education approximate to educational planning. Educational planning is a conscious decision making process that covers wide range of areas. One of these areas is curriculum development planning whose planning process results in broad and specific curriculum plan that guides teaching and learning activities in order to facilitate the learning process (Adiele et al, 2021). . To create a pattern or model for national development in Nigeria, there is a need to imploy curriculum development planning to develop and select appropriate learning experiences and lifelong learning which are basic tools efficient to shape the learners who are the manpower needed to create growth, bring in progress and positive change in the nation.

Therefore, it is of great necessity to measure whether the current education delivered at all levels of education and different educational systems in Nigeria answers the needs of individuals and organizations, as well as cause improvements in qualifications and recognition of the country in the global world. Consequently, this understanding needs the educational planners in Nigeria to brace up efforts to undergo the four major stages as opined by Adiele et al(2021) which are interdependent and interrelated in the process of curriculum development planning namely ;

- The selection of aims, goals and objectives suitable for national development
- The selection of appropriate learning experiences and lifelong learning content for the achievement of the aims, goals and objectives.
- Organization of learning experiences and lifelong learning curriculum
- Evaluation of the extent to which the objectives identified have been achieved.

Life long learning intertwined with appropriate learning experiences encouraging "creativity, initiative and responsiveness in people thereby enabling them to show adaptability in post industrial society through enhancing skills to: manage uncertainty;

communicate across and within cultures, sub-cultures, families and communities; negotiate conflicts. Taking the basic differences between educational perspective of the 20th century and the concept of the lifelong learning in the 21st century, the changing function of educational institutions and the interaction between schools and lifelong learning is displayed underlining that schools in this twenty-first century should be restructured in a egalitarian system which allows for equal opportunities for all students without exception, which is production-based, suitable for the existing vocational standards, which allows horizontal/vertical transfers in all periods of education, and finally which teaches the ways and methods for obtaining knowledge with an approach of lifelong learning for all. The differences between the concept of 20th century education and the concept of 21st century lifelong learning as stated by Longworth (2003) cited in Venelin(2019), gives a comprehensive outlook on the indicators to consider in the planning of learning experiences and life long learning in order to exalt national development in Nigeria in this era.

Table 1: Difference between 20th century education and 21st century learning

Source: Jerald, 2009

Indicators	20th century education	21st century learning
Objectives	Education sets narrow academic objectives and targets and works to achieve these in the present.	The concept of lifelong learning not only works to achieve present targets but also to impart future long term values and attitudes to learning. For this purpose; it is necessary that curriculums deal with life skills more and the link between school and life and the community between industry and society have to be widener.
Curriculum	The curriculums are based on discrete subjects and they are assessed on memorizations of facts with fail pass philosophy.	. The curriculum is based on skills and knowledge, the enhancement of self-esteem and the acceptance of lifelong values. In this aspect the examinations are done as stocktaking part of the personal learning process. In order to change this concept, personal skills development has to be incorporated into the curriculum. Besides, the Notion of failure should be taken out of the system and replaced with the strategies for improving personal self-esteem.
Instructions, methods and techniques	Teacher has a role of passer of information through didactic teaching methods using chalk, talk and paper exercises	The teacher has a role of developer of learning skills using motivational power of the individualized active learning programmes like ICT, multimedia and Networks. With the aim of achieving this system the teachers should be trained in the many uses of technology as learning tools. ICT should be heavily invested thorough innovative programs with industry.

Role of the teacher	Teachers are the only human resource for curriculum delivery and other resources are supplied from local government and school events.	It is objected to add human resource by tapping into skills, talents and knowledge of governors, parents and everyone in the community by exploring funding. In order to do this, besides the human and other resources in the community it is necessary to use innovative strategies to involve the community in school development
Support services.	The teachers are overworked and sparse support service is given to identify and solve individual learning and social problems.	Guidance, support and counselling systems are available for all learners and their families. The social problems are identified rapidly and there are rapid solutions for learning and social problems. In order to eliminate this difference, it is necessary to introduce individual learning guidance systems for all pupils frequently and the resources like mentors should be used in the school and community. The families should be involved the system and rapid response system should be initiated
Evaluation.	The curriculum and schools are based on examination success. The social curriculum dealt with an ad hoc basis. There are some special and community programs.	It looks outward to the world and it learns by contributing to the community in which it exists. A strong social curriculum is created to promote a sense of tolerance and understanding of different races, creeds and cultures. In order to enhance the tolerance and understanding in and out of school, an active social curriculum should be introduced. Internet Networks should be used in projects to link pupils to other pupils throughout the world
In-service training of teachers	Some teachers go on educational courses according to their needs or desires and there are occasional seminars in schools only for teachers.	Every person in the school has a continuous improvement plan for academic and personal skill embedded into the management system and as a part they are related to the school development plan. For this purpose; it is necessary that not only students but also teachers and admin staff develop written continuous improvement plans for academic and personal development of pupils and it should be extended these to parents and community.
School activities	There is only one show or play once a year and the actives out of school are led by only enthusiastic teachers. Sometimes there are Annual School Fair and Presentation Days	It is possible to enhance the confidence, creativity and the cultural vision of staff, parents, children and community through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. For this reason, an impressive program of school societies, out of school activities, cultures, events should be established and

		involve the community where is appropriate.
Vision of school.	In some countries it is concentrated mainly on high academic achievers in order to enhance attractiveness to parents through position in league tables	It is concentrated on academic and personal success of all pupils as a means of enhancing the school's reputation and satisfying society's needs. Besides the public is invited to share it. For this reason the school should be marketed strongly. It is important to emphasize the positive learning opportunities for all children, staff and the community at large. The school should create its own league table of all round achievement.

Factors Challenging Planning, learning experiences, and Lifelong Learning in Nigeria

Planning learning experiences and lifelong Learning in Nigeria has series of challenges which include

1. **Economic disposition:** The economic disposition of Nigeria as an influencing factor in determining the direction and magnitude of her educational planning is multi-dimensional. It refers to the capacity and dynamics of nation's economy which is a function of the following: the level of economic development, the size of the economy, the occupational means, patterns of resource distribution and capital stock. The national economy provides frame work planning of education because it is the total picture that reflect all the strata of the nation, provides the road map for education in terms of the need and aspiration of the society. Such aspiration reflects on the curriculum content of the various levels and types of education. Poor economic condition makes education system backward in many respects because it negatively impact on the volume of education provided, the quality and quantity of human and material provisions used in education planning. On the other hand if the economy of a country is strong and buoyant, then educational aims and the curriculum are given special adequate attention.
2. **Socio-cultural milieu:** The relevance of any education system is significantly determined| by the extent to which it reflects the needs and aspirations of the society. A proper understanding of the society, people, their history, historical development, their values, culture, norm, occupation, religion and social stratification provide a vital pedestal for effective educational planning. The high heterogeneity of Nigeria society has made it difficult for education planners to provide for the educational, social and cultural needs of students from diverse social and cultural background. More so, planners' lack of sociologic knowledge poses difficulty in their ability to plan, however by the help of a sociologist working hand in hand with educational planners makes planning efficient.
3. **Political climate:** Another factor that challenges of planning of learning experiences and lifelong learning in Nigeria as well as any other sector is the over politicization of issues of national interest. This is a situation where issues rather than being subjected to rational considerations, needs and priority, are considered on the basis of political, religious or ethnic affiliation. In the same vain, political instability does not give room for quality and effective planning. It leads to policy inconsistency and poor policy implementation.

- 4. Demographic Factor:** It is clear that demography is critical to the planning process, because no meaningful planning can take place in any society without adequate understanding of the population structure and movement. The utilization of quality educational statistics provides impetus and rationality to educational planning. It ensures realistic planning, so there is the need for educational planners to have a good knowledge of demography. Rowland (2003) described demography as the scientific study of certain characteristics of human populations, specifically with respect to the magnitude, change overtime, size, development and structures with respect to sex, age, occupation, geographical location and other characteristics. Even though few population data are available from census and other mechanisms, they lack a level of authenticity and consistency required for an implementable planning.

Conclusion

Strategically planning learning experiences and lifelong learning is in the basis of the reforms on different levels of education because of its significance for assurance of quality of life and social security, the links to globalization and technological changes and economic opportunities. Policies that support planning of learning experiences and development of lifelong learning are needed because permanent trainings lead to acquisition of valuable skills providing competitive advantages of individuals on the labour market in conditions of globalization of economic and social life, fast technological changes and increase in the importance of knowledge in economy. Discussing concrete measures of support in lifelong learning in the country, some common aims could be identified concerning the national education and qualification system: improving communication and cooperation between state, educational institutions, business organizations and society; adaptation of training to labour market demand and improving training programmes on different levels and types; motivation for lifelong learning and career development. Educational measures should be connected to labour market measures, social and fiscal policies in order to increase employment, labour efficiency and motivation for self-improvement, providing solutions of the most topical problems concerning low economic development, lack of managerial and marketing skills, poverty and uneven development of urban and rural areas and thus contributing to more general points of improvement of living conditions, food and social security, etc.

Suggestions

Based on the literature reviewed, suggestions proposed for planning learning experiences and lifelong learning at all levels of education in Nigeria are:

1. Ministry of Education should develop clear policies that support planning of learning experiences and lifelong learning. These policies should provide guidelines for developing strategic plans, allocating resources, and monitoring progress.
2. Policy Makers in Nigeria should create an enabling environment for educational planners in Nigeria education system by enacting laws and policies that support transparency, accountability, and innovation.
3. Educational planners should embrace innovation in strategic planning by exploring new ideas and approaches to address challenges and seize opportunities.

4. Government Agencies such as the Federal Ministry of Finance should provide technical and financial assistance to educational planners in order to facilitate curriculum development planning processes, data analysis, research and implementation.

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