

Continuing Education Programmes for Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria: An Antidote for Mass Student Failure in COSC in Lesotho

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ABSTRACT

As a way of eradicating illiteracy globally, UNESCO declared 1990 as the International Literacy Year (ILY). This is because about 963 million adults are still illiterate all over the world and this colossal figure can inhibit development effort in each of the countries concerned.

Since most developing countries of Africa do not have less than a 60% illiteracy rate, efforts must be intensified to drastically reduce this figure. Education the world over is a strong weapon of social change, a bedrock of national socioeconomic development and an instrument for breaking the backdrop of oppression, ignorance, victimisation and perpetual dependence.

This paper analyses the roles which a Continuing Education Programme (CEP) could play in assisting with the individual's growth and development in any society. A general overview of the *modus operandi* of the CEP in Nigeria is made and used as a signpost for stimulating educational advancement in Lesotho. This is with a view to improve not only the failure rate of students at the COSC examinations but also as a means of adequately integrating the illiterate returning adult miners into society through the provision of viable functional and vocational education.

Recommendations are made as to the modalities of effectively conducting Continuing Education Programmes, in particular for the institutions that are supposedly charged with the responsibilities of organising non-formal education programmes in Lesotho. One hopes that the detailed analysis regarding the methodology of CEP could even be adopted and/or adapted by other developing countries of Africa as a way of stimulating educational development and thus eradicating illiteracy and ignorance.

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Introduction

The history of educational development in African countries is virtually the same whether such countries were originally under French, German or British colonial administrations. Education came with the advent of the white Christian missionaries who embarked on literacy education for the purpose of achieving the basic objective of spreading evangelism. They taught the people how to read and write in order to produce catechists and cooks whom they could communicate with and make use of as support staff in spreading their religious crusades.

Formal schools began to spring up in some parts of Africa only about the fifteenth century, and were directly controlled by the missionaries. Admission was restricted, perhaps to avoid the explosive benefit of education as a tool for liberation which might have led to agitation for independence.

Few schools and hardly any adult literacy classes were set up in the French-speaking countries (Oyedepi *et al.*, 1982). As African countries are experiencing a population explosion, so also illiteracy is thriving. Therefore, education should be seen as an essential weapon to fight against illiteracy, which has for long been regarded as an enemy of development and an evil that keeps people unaware of the changing environment and makes them resistant to change and new ideas.

Concept of Continuing Education

According to Anyanwu, *et al.* (1988), the primary concept of continuing education fosters the extension or provision of educational services to the non-traditional students. This concept points to any extension of opportunities for reading, studying and training to young people and adults after the completion of their fulltime programmes, or following their withdrawal from such programmes. It also refers to education for adult persons, provided by special schools, centres or institutes that emphasises flexible rather than traditional or rigorous academic programmes. Through such provisions, individuals may upgrade, retrain, or acquire for themselves new knowledge and skill in specific occupations.

In the opinion of Kidd (1962), continuing education is not a mirage in the desert; it is not the dream of a religious prophet. Hard-headed, unsentimental engineers, doctors, lawyers, manufacturers, among others, now understand that they must continue to study and learn, just to keep up with the demands of their callings, as well as accept the obligation of public responsibility because of the dynamic nature of the society in which we all live.

In modern Nigeria, according to Omolewa (1981), remedial education, which is often conceived in terms of extra-mural, continuing or life-long education, is usually provided by universities, voluntary agencies or individuals to workers, school dropouts and those who missed an earlier opportunity provided in the formal school system to obtain post-elementary qualification. In addition, such a programme aims at preparing private candidates for various examinations approved and recognised by government for purposes of employment and educational advancement.

Considering the socioeconomic, educational, scientific and technological advancement that permeate human development in modern society, one would see continuing education as very important to personal and national development and for economic survival.

As a corollary to the earlier views expressed by other authors, Stephens (1981) notes that continuing education is a type of post-experience vocational provision for those in employment in order to update them in specialist areas of theoretical knowledge, acquisition of skills, preparation for new responsibilities, improvement and enhanced communication and study skills.

Continuing education therefore has come to stay as a viable programme in the whole gamut of adult education as an academic and professional discipline, because education has been accepted as a life-long phenomenon, starting from cradle and perhaps transcending the grave. From the roles of an individual in the context of societal development, Shorey (1983) argues that continuing education helps to provide a society with thinking citizens as against robots. According to him, independence of thought is more valued than blind and unquestioning obedience, while critical and rational examination of issues must be accorded higher values than passive acquiescence. Therefore, by updating knowledge and experience through continuous learning, one would be able to broaden one's intellectual horizon, increase awareness and improve performance in one's chosen occupational career.

Scope and Objectives of Continuing Education Programme

Continuing education has limitless scope as it caters for both old and young, rich and poor. It combines the characteristics of formal and non-formal education systems and its activities are not in any way terminal but an open-ended process that may never be completed. This is because, no matter the age of an individual, the social status, the academic attainment or professional competence, learning continues, as we all live in a dynamic society where the moral, spiritual and mental development of the individual become essential in order to be able to socialise into and survive in the different environments in which we daily operate. There are very

many reasons why the continuing education programme thrives, particularly in developing countries of Africa and these include the following:

- (a) It is an avenue of keeping up with the new knowledge and techniques required for performing effectively and efficiently in any chosen career.
- (b) It is a process leading to the achievement of individual self-actualisation.
- (c) It is a source of economic reward, particularly the working adults who after their training would pass their external examinations, thus getting promoted to higher positions in their respective offices.
- (d) It is a means of providing necessary manpower resources – a capacity-building process. It is on record that beneficiaries of continuing education programmes of the Adult Education Department, University of Ibadan in Nigeria, who went into the programme as clerks or typists with the first school leaving certificate or modern 'three certificate' ultimately became Professors, Senior Lecturers and Accountants in some Nigerian Universities and Banking industries.
- (e) It is a useful complementary effort to the formal school system where there are problems of insufficient teaching staff, incompetent teachers in some subjects, insufficient time to cover necessary areas in the syllabuses as a result of unnecessary changes in the school calendar by the government or constant closure of schools due to student unrest or political upheaval.

To achieve the laudable benefits of continuing education programmes as are listed above, requires proper planning and adequate programme design by the organisers to assist individual clients to become better and useful citizens.

Programme Organisation: A Case of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria

The University of Ibadan was established in 1948 as the University College, Ibadan (UCT), an affiliate of the University of London. On October 1, 1949, the Department of Extra-Mural Studies (which later changed its name to Adult Education Department) was born. Its initial preoccupation was to offer non-credit programmes including functional literacy to civil servants and farmers respectively. In 1965, it introduced the Diploma in Adult Education and Community Development while it became the first establishment in Africa to introduce a Bachelor of

Education Degree course in Adult Education in 1971. By 1967, it had strengthened its activities to embrace a full examination-oriented continuing education programme.

Many people who were unable to enrol in formal educational institutions or those who became "drop-outs" for various socioeconomic reasons, were all catered for by the Continuing Education Programme, which not only became popular but was also largely embraced by many Adult Education Departments in most of the 32 Nigerian Universities. In addition, some private institutions and individuals now engage in continuing education programmes perhaps for more economic purposes than for commitment to enhancing the frontiers of knowledge.

Taking the University of Ibadan, Department of Adult Education as an example of popularity and acceptability of CEP by Nigerians, Table 3 shows students' enrolment by subject and centre for 1991/92 while Table 4 shows the centres and type of courses offered for the same year. Table 5 shows the comparative figures of the number of classes and students' enrolment for a period of five years, that is, 1987/88 - 1991/92.

Process of Programme Organisation

For effective and efficient programme coordination, the following are essential steps, and which were adopted by the University of Ibadan, Adult Education Department.

(a) Subject Selection:

Subjects offered reflected the requirements of West African School Certificate (WASC), General Certificate of Education, (ordinary and advanced levels) (GCE) as well as Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education entry requirements.

(b) Meeting Venue:

In all the centres in which the continuing education programme was conducted all over the country, written permission was sought from different state ministries of education to use the government-erected secondary school buildings to conduct classes in the evenings in return for an agreed annual rental fee.

(c) Meeting Period:

In order to take care of the interest of adult workers who were interested in improving their academic standard either for further studies or for the purpose of promotion at their respective work places, as well as for those in

the regular formal school system to participate in the programme, classes were conducted from 5:00pm to 8:00pm daily, Mondays to Fridays.

(d) Part-time tutors:

Teachers for the various subjects run in the programme are usually recruited from among the University lecturers and secondary school teachers holding a minimum of a first degree in their respective subject specialisation areas. They are paid honoraria which are calculated on an hourly basis for the period of about nine months of the programme duration.

(e) Publicity:

The Department advertises its programme for prospective clients on an annual basis in about three national newspapers covering the North, Eastern and Western zones of the country in addition to the initial regular radio and television paid announcements. With that information, students then obtain admission forms for a particular fee from any of the designated administrative centres nearest to the student, throughout the country.

(f) Tuition:

To avoid heavy financial burden on the University while at the same time expanding learning facilities to many people in order to reduce the level of illiteracy, moderate fees are charged per subject per person through which all expenses for running the programme are met in order to sustain its continuity. From the proceeds of the programme, after the payment of all expenses, the Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, had impressive financial reserves through which the University provided capital projects on campus for the use of both full-time undergraduates and staff alike.

(g) Extra-mural organisers and supervisors:

The University recruits a few permanent extra-mural organisers who work at the headquarters of the states in which the continuing education programme is being conducted. In addition, extra-mural supervisors, who are usually retired or serving school principals or education officers in the state ministries of education are employed on part-time basis to monitor the effective operation of the programme at whatever centre they might be assigned.

(h) Part-time lecturers' responsibilities:

In addition to teaching and maintaining discipline in the classes, teachers are expected to mark attendance registers which are usually provided by the Department. They are also expected to individually write a comprehensive

report on the conduct of their classes at the end of the programme before the payment of the final half of their honoraria. These are not only meant to provide data for future researchers, but also to enable the Department to have information in order to improve any aspect of its programme.

Why Lessons for Lesotho?

Lesotho is a small country with about 1,7 million inhabitants; they speak a homogeneous language (Sesotho), thus making communication very easy. The rate of illiteracy is also high (65%) just like any other country in Africa, but the ratio of illiteracy is greater among the males than the females. The following points are possible reasons why the Basotho people should not only introduce but also embrace and actively participate in viable continuing education programmes (CEPs):

(a) The National University of Lesotho is as old if not older than the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, but its students' admission capacity is still very low. For instance, with six faculties in 1991/92 session, (ie Faculties of Education, Humanities, Science, Social Sciences, Law and Agriculture) it had a total student enrolment of 1,845 made up of regular full-time and part-time students, with a total of 237 local and non-local academic staff. The Institute of Extra-Mural Studies (IEMS) which normally is the only recognised academic body to conduct continuing education programmes in addition to the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) is not yet acting in that direction.

Although IEMS conducts part-time certificate and diploma credit courses in Business Studies and Adult Education, its success in meeting the needs and aspirations of the general public lies on how effective it is able to take University education to those who never had the opportunity for formal education, or those who "dropped-out" of the formal school system. In essence, how effectively is it performing one of its mission statements that it should strive through the introduction of many educational programmes to ensure the successful marriage of the "Gown with the Town"?

Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) is a government-owned institution charged with the responsibilities of conducting correspondence courses for the JC and COSC students who wish to improve their poor performances in previous examinations. The delivery system of its learning experiences include the radio lecture and printed materials. Some of the problems that one envisages with the use of these methods include the inability of those in far rural areas to benefit from the radio lectures as most rural areas are not electrified. Battery operated radios may

not be commonly used there by the individuals as a result of the low economic strength of the individual learner. Another problem is the distance created between the institutions and the learners who often are given study materials to read on their own, with occasional tutorial facility.

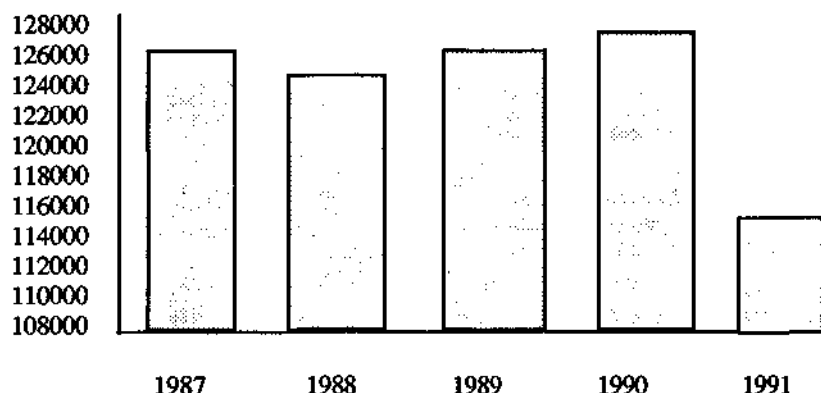
While one is not against this practice as a means of reaching out to greater proportions of clientele, one doubts if that could be effective in imparting knowledge to the young adults. If they could fail from the formal school system where they had the opportunity of face-to-face contacts with the teachers, it is doubtful, therefore, if radio lessons and printed course materials will be able to make them pass their examinations without the regular tutorials with the teachers: hence the recommendation for the introduction of the CEP.

IEMS and LDTC are independent institutions with collaborative rather than duplicative activities. The entire ten districts of Lesotho could be shared between the two institutions for the purpose of organising CEP so that many disadvantaged individuals will have the opportunity of benefiting from such a laudable programme.

(b) There have been very high rates of failure in the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examinations annually and thus leading to problem of occupational choice, when the opportunity of improving their academic deficiency is not readily available.

(c) Continuing education programmes will later pave way for the introduction of Functional Literacy and Vocational Education which may result into greater economic independence, thereby solving the current unemployment problem arising from the retrenchment of the Basotho migrant labour returning from the South African Mines.

From Figure 1 below which corroborates our claim of retrenchment in (c) above, one can see a sharp drop in the employment opportunities of Basotho people in the South African Mines. From close to 130,000 Basotho men employed in the Mines in 1990 dropping to 114,000 in 1991, one sees the need for a vocational and continuing education programme, otherwise, this situation could encourage the development of social vices in the country and this may be detrimental to national socioeconomic development. This is because the majority of Basotho men are not educated and they only look for jobs in the mines at an early age of 18 and spend their useful adult life in the mines, sometimes up to the age of 50 years before returning to Lesotho.

TABLE 1: Basotho Men Employed in South African Mines: 1987- 1991

SOURCE: Sets'abi, A M; Lesaoana, M A; Molefi, J J: "A Study of the Socio-Economic Situation of the Basotho Miners", National University of Lesotho, Roma, 1992, p 36.

Any type of employment that the affected Basotho returning miners could be engaged in requires a little bit of literacy. There is a high rate of illiteracy not only among the returning miners but also among the prospective miners who are mainly men. Continuing education programmes will facilitate opportunities for better career choice and independence through proper vocational education.

TABLE 2: Percentage Distribution of Miners' Literacy Level

MINERS	SESOTHO		ENGLISH	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
RETURNING	71.6	28.4	16.2	83.8
PROSPECTIVE	75.1	24.9	21.4	78.6

SOURCE: Sets'abi, A.M et al (op cit) 1992 p 43

From the above table, it is obvious that both returning and prospective Basotho miners are only literate in Sesotho but not in English.

(d) A continuing education programme will serve as a counselling forum for its Basotho clients and thus lead to efficient manpower planning and development activities with human resource diversification to relevant fields for the objective of achieving national socioeconomic growth.

Methods of Conducting the Continuing Education Programme (CEP) A Proposal for IEMS

According to the information contained in one of the March 1992 issues of *Lesotho Today*, the Minister for Education in Lesotho gave the statistics of those who failed in COSC examinations as 50%, particularly for the 1991/92 academic session. Many of the affected students had called several times at IEMS office to find whether they could enrol with a remedial programme. As a continuous educational activity, IEMS is supposed to be organising CEP on an annual basis, not only for those who fail the JC and COSC alone but also for those preparing to write JC or COSC or other examinations. The following are the likely operational modalities to be adopted by IEMS in establishing a flourishing CEP for the Basotho adult workers and students of junior and high schools.

1. Subject selection:

Since IEMS does not have science laboratories of its own, it could either limit its programme to subjects in arts and social sciences including mathematics, which will not require the use of laboratories, or it could liaise with the Faculty of Science of the National University of Lesotho, especially for courses in chemistry, physics and biology. These would require the use of laboratories if the JC and COSC examinations syllabi for science subjects require practicals.

2. Programme duration:

Based on an annual organisation of CEP, it should be run for a period of nine months, starting usually from the end of the academic school calendar. The range of programmes to be covered will include the following:

COSC Level	–	Coaching to last for 1 year.
JC	–	Coaching to last for 2 years.
Post Literacy	–	Coaching to last for 3 years.
Basic Literacy	–	Coaching to last for 4 years.

3. Venue:

IEMS premises cannot be convenient to run such programmes because of their part-time certificate and diploma programmes in business studies and adult education, including the Part-time B Ed Degree in Adult Education, which are usually conducted everyday of the week, fortnightly and monthly weekend classes, respectively. The NTTC classrooms and the secondary school buildings around the 'circle' in Maseru are central meeting places where CE classes can be conducted after the closing school periods – Monday to Friday. Maseru centre should be the experimental centre but the programme could later extend to such areas as Mafeteng, Leribe, Mophale's Hoek, etc where teachers can also be easily recruited to teach in the programme.

IEMS has Regional Centres in Mophale's Hoek, Mahabong and Thaba-Tseka which are three big districts out of the ten districts of Lesotho. Classroom facilities are available in these centres and personnel resources in terms of teachers will not pose any problem as high schools are available in all these regional centres.

4. Part-time teachers:

In order to maintain a high level of academic standard, graduate teachers teaching at the NTTC or graduate workers in private companies and government ministries in Maseru could be used for the initial take-off of the programme because of proximity to the suggested venues.

5. Lecture time-table:

Each subject should last for just one hour, featuring for two alternate periods in the week.

6. Staffing:

An administrative staff could be redeployed from NUL central administration to IEMS to serve as the extra-mural organiser, while one supervisor could be recruited on a part-time basis to service the programme during the evenings from 4:00pm to 7:00pm Monday to Friday.

7. Publicity:

Handbills could be printed and distributed to all Principals of junior and high schools in Maseru for the consumption of their students. Advertisement could be done over Radio Lesotho and also on the pages of newspapers for the advantage of the working class adults who may need a continuing education programme as an avenue for promotion in their respective offices and/or as a means of achieving their educational aspirations.

8. Funding:

The University is expected to provide the start-up cost and after a while, the programme will become self-sustaining from the fees students will be charged for obtaining admission forms as well as for the tuition per subject per person per month. The opportunity for large intake, provision of qualified teachers and facilities will encourage greater patronage and consequently lead to the reduction of overhead cost.

Finally, while trying to encourage literacy development and also improving the socioeconomic status of Basotho people, the programme will stabilise at a stage and thus be a viable source of income to supplement the finances of the University.

Conclusion

Continuing education programmes are now gaining recognition not only with the Adult Education Departments of many Universities in Africa, but also within industrial organisations who now see the need to train and retrain their staff in order to adjust to technological development and also to improve organisational productivity and workers' job performance. There are some noticeable barriers responsible for people's inability to participate in continuing education programmes. These include ignorance regarding the value of and advantages to be derived from attending continuing education programmes, particularly for adult workers. The other basic problems are lack of time and lack of money to pay for tuition, to buy some of the recommended books and for transport fare if they live far away from the continuing education centres. Some people also have problems with lack of confidence in their own ability and competence to maximally utilise the opportunity given by continuing education programme.

It must be realised however that the desire to improve oneself is an innate human attribute and a person who ceases to learn ultimately ceases to live as education is never terminal but a life-long activity. For this reason, one must accept that it is a challenge to undertake continuing education programmes if only to be able to attain a high level of proficiency in one's chosen career, improve one's living standard and also to continuously update one's knowledge in order to adequately cope with the unending demands of the dynamic social system that we all live in. Therefore, we must not be perturbed by the cost of education because if we think that education is expensive, perhaps we should be advised to try ignorance and see what dividends it would yield after a while. Education is not only a weapon of liberation but also an investment in human development in the form of an "industry" for future profit generation in all its ramifications.

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Table 3: Students Enrolment By Subjects and Centres

Subjects	UI Campus		Aperin Centre		Army Prog		Lagos (EB)		Lagos (Ikeja)		Total	
	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment	No. of Classes	Enrol- ment
1. Accounting	12	618	5	90	3	45	5	205	6	247	31	1205
2. Agricultural Science	5	240	1	23	-	-	-	-	1	15	7	278
3. Bible Knowledge	15	834	6	195	5	90	4	162	5	105	35	1386
4. Biology	17	915	4	144	-	-	-	-	2	58	23	1117
5. Business Methods & Management	8	420	4	162	2	60	6	213	1	32	21	887
6. Chemistry	9	511	5	153	-	-	2	41	5	198	21	903
7. Commerce	7	346	3	84	-	-	5	165	2	90	17	685
8. Economics	32	1486	8	232	4	140	12	504	10	460	66	2822
9. English Language & Literature	45	1719	8	192	5	180	9	171	9	387	76	2649
10. Geography	10	425	1	21	2	42	3	135	3	185	19	808
11. Government	15	632	7	220	4	75	6	350	5	200	37	1477
12. History	11	458	4	156	2	48	6	287	2	76	25	1025
13. Islamic Rel. Studies	3	48	2	30	-	-	2	44	1	28	8	150
14. Mathematics	40	1874	8	334	3	61	9	468	4	141	64	2878
15. Physics	9	360	3	135	-	-	2	52	2	65	16	612
16. Shorthand	3	94	1	15	-	-	1	28	1	21	6	158
17. Statistics	2	45	1	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	63
18. Yoruba	6	180	4	126	1	23	2	43	1	24	14	396
19 Adult Literacy Class	16	520	3	61	-	-	2	30	1	15	22	626
	265	11725	78	2391	31	764	76	2898	61	2347	511	20125

Source: Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Annual Report of Extra-Mural Studies 1991/2 Session

Table 4: Students Enrolment by Centres and Type of Courses

	Arts & Social Science			Science & Mathematics			Others			pre-GCE Courses	Grand Total
	O/L	A/L	Total	O/L	A/L	Total	O/L	A/L	Total		
Ibadan (Campus)	5492	945	6437	3410	520	3930	711	214	925	-	11292
Ibadan (Aperin)	754	149	903	615	45	660	240	-	240	34	1837
Ibadan (Army)	307	-	307	85	-	85	45	-	45	31	468
Lagos (EB)	668	841	1509	714	108	822	312	385	697	43	3071
Lagos (Ikeja)	813	635	1448	457	152	609	426	361	787	65	2909
Abadina & Agbowo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	548	548
	8034	2570	10604	5281	825	6106	1647	960	2607	721	20125

Source: Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Annual Report of Extra - Mural Studies, 1991/92 Session

Table 5: Comparative Figures for Five Year Period

Key: (a) No of classes
(b) No of students enrolled

	1987/88		1988/89		1989/90		1990/91		1991/92	
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b
Ibadan (Campus) Centre	82	6290	110	7530	145	8421	193	9865	249	11205
Ibadan (Aperin) Centre	20	613	31	750	42	914	58	1368	75	2330
Ibadan (Army Programme)	10	150	11	230	18	370	20	510	31	764
Ibadan (Literacy Classes)	5	80	8	140	11	270	13	364	19	581
Lagos (Ebute-Metta)	12	840	24	956	35	1024	48	1941	76	2898
Lagos (Ikeja)	10	956	14	1321	28	1654	37	2001	61	2347
	139	8929	198	10927	279	126654	369	16049	511	20125

Source: Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria Annual Report of Extra-Mural Studies, 1991/92 Session.