



## Public Funding Mechanisms and Service Delivery Outcomes in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Adult and non-formal education are essential for promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and socio-economic development, especially in developing countries like Nigeria where many people lack access to formal schooling. However, the effectiveness of these programmes is significantly limited by inadequate and poorly structured public funding systems. This paper examines how public funding mechanisms influence service delivery in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria, using a conceptual and analytical approach based on existing literature and policy documents. It highlights the roles of federal, state, and local governments, along with international partners, in financing these programmes. The study finds that low budget allocations, delays in fund disbursement, weak accountability, and funding disparities hinder programme effectiveness. These issues lead to poor facilities, insufficient learning materials, unmotivated instructors, and limited access for learners. The paper concludes that stronger funding systems, better coordination, and improved financial management are crucial for enhancing adult education outcomes and supporting national development.*

**Keywords:** Adult education, non-formal education, public funding mechanisms, service delivery outcomes, literacy programmes.

Received: 10/02/2026  
 Accepted: 23/03/2026  
 Published: 31/03/2026

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for national development, social transformation, and economic growth across

societies. It plays a critical role in improving human capital, promoting democratic participation, and fostering socio-economic advancement (Aderinoye, 2015; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020; Schultz, 1961). Education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to participate meaningfully

in economic production, civic engagement, and sustainable development processes (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Consequently, governments and international organizations consistently emphasize the importance of investing in education as a strategy for achieving national development goals and improving the overall quality of life of citizens (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

While formal education continues to receive considerable attention in policy formulation and funding allocations, adult and non-formal education remains a critical component of lifelong learning systems, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria where a significant proportion of the population missed opportunities for formal schooling (Akinpelu, 2002; Omolewa, 2017). Lifelong learning emphasizes the continuous development of knowledge and skills throughout an individual's life, enabling adults to adapt to changing economic, technological, and social conditions (Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2014). In many developing nations, adult education programmes provide a second chance for individuals who were unable to complete formal education due to socio-economic constraints, cultural factors, or inadequate access to schooling facilities (Bhola, 1994; Rogers, 2014).

Adult and non-formal education programmes are designed to provide literacy skills, vocational training, civic education, and continuing education opportunities for adults and out-of-school youths. These programmes aim to enhance individuals' functional literacy, improve employability, and empower communities to participate actively in socio-economic development (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005; Duke, 2018). Research has shown that adult literacy and skills training programmes contribute significantly to poverty reduction, workforce development, community empowerment, and improved quality of life (UNESCO, 2020; Oxenham et al., 2002). In Nigeria, adult education initiatives are coordinated through agencies such as the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, which operates under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education. These programmes are implemented through a multi-tier administrative structure involving

federal, state, and local government institutions responsible for delivering literacy and continuing education programmes across the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; NMEC, 2018).

Despite the recognized importance of adult and non-formal education in national development, the sector continues to face serious challenges, particularly in the area of funding. Adequate financing is essential for the effective implementation and sustainability of adult education programmes. Financial resources are required to provide instructional materials, develop infrastructure, train facilitators, support programme monitoring and evaluation, and provide learner support services (Hanemann, 2018; McLean & Kearns, 2015). However, public funding for adult education in Nigeria has often been characterized by limited budgetary allocations, delays in fund disbursement, and inefficient financial management systems (Akinyemi & Bassey, 2012; Okedara & Omolewa, 2019). In many cases, adult education programmes receive lower priority in national education budgets compared to formal schooling sectors such as primary, secondary, and tertiary education (UNESCO, 2020).

Public funding mechanisms therefore play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of adult education programmes. These mechanisms include government budget allocations, intergovernmental transfers, donor funding, and educational intervention programmes designed to support literacy initiatives and lifelong learning systems (World Bank, 2021; Hanemann, 2018). When funding systems are weak, inconsistent, or poorly managed, programme implementation becomes severely constrained. Inadequate financial resources often lead to poor learning environments, insufficient instructional materials, limited training opportunities for facilitators, and inadequate learning centres (Omolewa, 2017; Rogers, 2014). As a result, the overall effectiveness of adult education programmes declines, thereby limiting their potential to achieve intended development outcomes.

The consequences of weak funding mechanisms extend beyond programme implementation to

affect service delivery outcomes in adult and non-formal education. Service delivery outcomes include improvements in literacy acquisition, vocational skill development, learner retention, community participation, and socio-economic empowerment (Oxenham et al., 2002; Duke, 2018). When financial resources are insufficient or poorly managed, these outcomes become difficult to achieve. Learners may lack access to quality instruction, adequate learning materials, and conducive learning environments, thereby reducing programme effectiveness and limiting the impact of adult education on community development and poverty alleviation (Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2014).

Given these challenges, there is an increasing need to examine how public funding mechanisms influence service delivery outcomes in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Understanding the relationship between financing structures and programme effectiveness is essential for designing sustainable strategies that can strengthen adult education systems and improve learning opportunities for disadvantaged populations. This paper therefore examines public funding mechanisms in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria and evaluates their impact on service delivery outcomes. Specifically, the study highlights existing funding structures, identifies challenges affecting effective financing, and proposes strategies for strengthening financial support for adult education programmes in order to enhance programme effectiveness and contribute to national development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adult and non-formal education plays a significant role in promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and socio-economic development, particularly in developing countries where large segments of the population lack access to formal education. In Nigeria, adult education programmes are expected to address issues such as adult illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion by providing literacy skills, vocational training, and continuing education opportunities for adults and out-of-school youths. These programmes are coordinated by the National Commission for Mass

Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education. Despite these institutional structures, the effectiveness of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria has remained limited.

One of the major challenges affecting the delivery of adult education services in Nigeria is inadequate and poorly structured funding. Effective implementation of adult education programmes requires sufficient financial resources for the provision of learning materials, training of facilitators, establishment of literacy centres, monitoring of programmes, and provision of support services for learners. However, public funding for adult and non-formal education in Nigeria has often been characterized by low budgetary allocation, delayed release of funds, and weak financial management systems. As a result, many literacy centres lack basic instructional materials, qualified facilitators, and adequate infrastructure necessary for effective learning.

Furthermore, the inconsistency of funding mechanisms across federal, state, and local government levels has created disparities in programme implementation and service delivery outcomes across different regions of the country. In some communities, adult literacy centres operate irregularly or are completely inactive due to insufficient financial support. This situation undermines the ability of adult education programmes to achieve their primary objectives of reducing illiteracy and promoting lifelong learning.

In addition, limited financial investment in adult education has affected the quality of programme delivery, learner participation, and sustainability of literacy initiatives. Many facilitators receive inadequate remuneration and limited professional development opportunities, which negatively affects teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes. Consequently, adult education programmes have struggled to produce significant improvements in literacy levels, skills acquisition, and community empowerment.

Although several studies have examined adult education and literacy programmes in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to the relationship between public funding mechanisms and service delivery outcomes in adult and non-formal education. Understanding how funding structures influence programme effectiveness is essential for designing sustainable policies and strengthening adult education systems in Nigeria.

It is therefore necessary to investigate how public funding mechanisms influence service delivery outcomes in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Addressing this issue will provide insights into existing funding gaps and inform policy strategies that can enhance programme implementation, improve service delivery, and strengthen the role of adult education in national development.

## Conceptual Clarifications

### Adult and Non-Formal Education

Adult education refers to organized learning activities specifically designed to meet the educational needs of adults who are outside the formal school system. It encompasses a wide range of programmes aimed at improving literacy, vocational competence, civic awareness, and personal development among adult learners. According to scholars in adult learning, adult education includes literacy programmes, vocational and technical training, continuing education, community development education, and professional development initiatives intended to enhance individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies throughout their lives (Akinpelu, 2002; Omolewa, 2017; Rogers, 2014). Adult education is therefore considered a central component of lifelong learning because it provides opportunities for individuals who missed formal schooling or who seek to upgrade their skills in response to changing socio-economic conditions (Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2014).

Globally, adult education has gained increasing recognition as a tool for promoting human development, social inclusion, and economic empowerment. International organizations such as

UNESCO emphasize that adult learning and education are essential for achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty, and improving the quality of life of citizens (UNESCO, 2020). Through adult literacy programmes and skills development initiatives, individuals are able to acquire functional knowledge that enhances employability, improves productivity, and encourages active participation in civic and community life (Duke, 2018; Hanemann, 2018). In developing countries especially, adult education provides second-chance learning opportunities for individuals who were unable to complete formal schooling due to poverty, cultural barriers, or limited educational infrastructure (Bhola, 1994).

Non-formal education, on the other hand, refers to organized and structured learning activities that occur outside the formal education system but are designed to serve specific groups of learners. Unlike formal education, which follows a rigid curriculum and age-based progression, non-formal education programmes are typically flexible, learner-centered, and adapted to the immediate needs of participants (Rogers, 2014; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). These programmes often focus on functional literacy, vocational skills, health education, agricultural training, entrepreneurship development, and civic awareness. Non-formal education programmes are particularly important for marginalized populations such as rural dwellers, women, nomadic groups, and out-of-school youths who may not have access to conventional schooling systems (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005; Oxenham et al., 2002).

The flexibility of non-formal education allows programmes to be tailored to the socio-economic realities of learners, making them highly relevant for community development and poverty alleviation. For instance, literacy programmes combined with vocational training have been shown to improve income-generating capacities and enhance economic participation among adult learners (Hanemann, 2018). In addition, non-formal education contributes significantly to community empowerment by promoting civic participation, social cohesion, and grassroots development initiatives (Omolewa, 2017; Duke, 2018).

In Nigeria, adult and non-formal education programmes are implemented within the broader national education framework established by the Federal Ministry of Education. Operational coordination and policy implementation are primarily carried out by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, which was established to promote literacy, continuing education, and lifelong learning opportunities across the country. The commission works in collaboration with state agencies for mass education, local government authorities, and community organizations to implement literacy programmes, establish learning centres, train facilitators, and develop instructional materials (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; NMEC, 2018).

Through these collaborative structures, adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria seek to reduce adult illiteracy, promote functional skills development, and enhance socio-economic empowerment among disadvantaged populations. These programmes include basic literacy programmes, post-literacy education, vocational and skills acquisition programmes, continuing education initiatives, and community development education programmes targeted at improving the living conditions of individuals and communities (Aderinoye, 2015). Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria continues to depend largely on adequate policy implementation, institutional support, and sustainable funding mechanisms.

### **Public Funding Mechanisms**

Public funding mechanisms refer to the financial structures and institutional arrangements through which government resources are mobilized, allocated, distributed, and managed to support educational programmes. These mechanisms determine how funds are generated, appropriated through national or subnational budgets, and utilized within the education sector to achieve policy objectives and programme outcomes (Bray, 2003; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Effective funding mechanisms are essential for ensuring the sustainability, accessibility, and quality of

education systems, particularly in developing countries where public resources often serve as the primary source of educational financing (Hanemann, 2018; UNESCO, 2020).

Education financing through public funding is a critical responsibility of governments because education is widely regarded as a public good that contributes to national development, social equity, and economic productivity (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Governments typically provide financial resources for education through budgetary allocations derived from public revenues such as taxation, natural resource earnings, and external development assistance (World Bank, 2021). These funds are used to support the development of educational infrastructure, recruitment and training of teachers, procurement of learning materials, programme administration, and monitoring and evaluation activities (Okedara & Omolewa, 2019). In the context of adult and non-formal education, public funding plays a particularly important role because many learners participating in these programmes often lack the financial capacity to pay for educational services (Hanemann, 2018).

In Nigeria, public funding for adult and non-formal education is derived from multiple government and institutional sources operating within the country's federal system of governance. The overall coordination of education financing is overseen by the Federal Ministry of Education, while specific literacy and adult education programmes are coordinated by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education. Funding flows through various administrative levels, including federal, state, and local governments, each of which has specific responsibilities for implementing educational programmes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; Aderinoye, 2015).

Public funding for adult education in Nigeria typically comes from several major sources. One of the most important sources is federal government budget allocations. The federal government provides financial support for adult education programmes through annual national budgets approved by the National Assembly.

These allocations are used to support national literacy campaigns, development of instructional materials, training of facilitators, and capacity-building programmes for adult education administrators (Omolewa, 2017). However, studies have indicated that budgetary allocations to adult and non-formal education remain relatively low compared to funding provided for formal education sectors such as primary, secondary, and tertiary education (UNESCO, 2020; Hanemann, 2018).

State government funding also represents a significant source of financial support for adult education programmes in Nigeria. State governments establish and manage State Agencies for Mass Education (SAMEs), which are responsible for implementing literacy programmes and continuing education initiatives within their respective jurisdictions (Okedara & Omolewa, 2019). These agencies receive funding through state government budgets to establish literacy centres, recruit facilitators, and provide instructional resources for adult learners. However, variations in financial capacity among states often lead to disparities in programme implementation and service delivery outcomes across different regions of the country (Akinyemi & Basse, 2012).

Local government authorities are also expected to contribute to the funding and implementation of adult and non-formal education programmes. Local governments often provide physical infrastructure such as community learning centres and may support literacy facilitators within their communities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Nevertheless, due to limited revenue bases and competing development priorities, the financial contributions of local governments to adult education programmes are often minimal or inconsistent (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005).

In addition to government funding, intervention funds from specialized education agencies also support adult and non-formal education programmes. One of such agencies is the Universal Basic Education Commission, which provides financial assistance to support basic education initiatives, including literacy

programmes that target out-of-school youths and adult learners. These intervention funds are designed to complement government budget allocations and strengthen educational access, infrastructure development, and teacher training programmes (UBEC, 2021).

International development partners also play a significant role in supporting adult education financing in Nigeria. Organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank provide financial assistance, technical expertise, and programme support aimed at improving literacy rates and expanding lifelong learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2021). These international partnerships often support initiatives such as community literacy programmes, capacity-building workshops, and educational policy reforms designed to strengthen adult education systems.

Overall, these public funding mechanisms are intended to support critical aspects of adult and non-formal education delivery, including programme development, production of learning materials, training and remuneration of facilitators, development of educational infrastructure, and monitoring and evaluation activities. Adequate and well-managed funding is therefore essential for ensuring that adult education programmes can effectively achieve their objectives of reducing illiteracy, promoting skills development, and enhancing socio-economic empowerment among adult learners (Hanemann, 2018; Duke, 2018). However, the effectiveness of these funding mechanisms largely depends on the level of government commitment, transparency in financial management, and coordination among stakeholders involved in adult education delivery.

### **Service Delivery Outcomes**

Service delivery outcomes refer to the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall impact of educational programmes in achieving their intended objectives and meeting the learning needs of targeted populations. In the context of education systems, service delivery involves the processes through which educational resources,

teaching services, learning materials, and institutional support are provided to learners in order to facilitate knowledge acquisition and skill development (World Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). The quality-of-service delivery therefore reflects how well educational programmes are implemented and how successfully they contribute to the attainment of educational and socio-economic development goals (Hanemann, 2018; Duke, 2018).

In adult and non-formal education, service delivery outcomes are particularly important because these programmes are designed to address the learning needs of populations that may have been excluded from formal schooling systems. Adult education programmes often target marginalized groups such as rural populations, women, unemployed youths, and individuals with limited access to formal education (Aderinoye, 2015; Rogers, 2014). Consequently, the effectiveness of these programmes is typically assessed based on their ability to improve literacy skills, enhance vocational competencies, promote social inclusion, and contribute to community development (Omolewa, 2017; Oxenham et al., 2002).

One of the primary indicators of service delivery outcomes in adult education is improvement in literacy rates. Literacy acquisition enables individuals to read, write, and perform basic numeracy tasks that are essential for everyday life, economic participation, and civic engagement (UNESCO, 2020). Adult literacy programmes have been widely recognized as powerful tools for reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, and promoting gender equality (Bhola, 1994; Hanemann, 2018). In Nigeria, adult literacy initiatives aim to reduce the high number of adults who lack basic reading and writing skills, thereby enabling them to participate more actively in economic and social activities (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005).

Another important outcome of effective service delivery in adult education is skill acquisition and employability. Many adult and non-formal education programmes integrate vocational and technical training components designed to equip

learners with practical skills for income generation and employment opportunities (Duke, 2018). These skills may include entrepreneurship, agricultural techniques, craft production, information technology skills, and other forms of vocational training that enhance productivity and economic independence (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Studies have shown that when adult education programmes successfully combine literacy education with vocational training, participants are more likely to experience improved livelihoods and economic empowerment (Oxenham et al., 2002; Rogers, 2014).

Programme accessibility is also a critical indicator of service delivery outcomes in adult education. Accessibility refers to the extent to which educational programmes are available and reachable to intended beneficiaries, particularly those in rural and underserved communities (UNESCO, 2020). Factors such as the number of literacy centres, availability of learning materials, proximity of educational facilities, and flexibility of learning schedules influence the level of access to adult education programmes (Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2014). When programmes are adequately funded and well managed, they can expand learning opportunities for disadvantaged populations and promote inclusive education.

The quality of instruction provided in adult education programmes is another essential determinant of service delivery outcomes. Quality instruction depends on the availability of trained facilitators, relevant teaching materials, supportive learning environments, and effective instructional methods that respond to the needs of adult learners (Rogers, 2014; Omolewa, 2017). Adult learners often have diverse educational backgrounds and life experiences, requiring facilitators to adopt participatory and learner-centered teaching approaches. Adequate training and professional development for facilitators therefore play a crucial role in improving instructional quality and enhancing learning outcomes (Hanemann, 2018).

Learner participation and retention also serve as key indicators of programme effectiveness in adult and non-formal education. High levels of participation and sustained attendance indicate

that educational programmes are meeting the needs and expectations of learners (Duke, 2018). However, adult learners often face multiple barriers to participation, including economic pressures, family responsibilities, and time constraints. Effective service delivery systems must therefore provide supportive learning environments, flexible schedules, and relevant curricula that encourage learners to remain engaged throughout the programme (Aderinoye, 2015; Jarvis, 2014).

Beyond individual learning outcomes, adult education programmes also contribute significantly to broader community development and social transformation. By improving literacy levels, vocational skills, and civic awareness, adult education programmes empower individuals to participate more actively in community decision-making, local governance, and development initiatives (Omolewa, 2017; Bhola, 1994). Communities with higher levels of literacy and skills development are often better equipped to address social challenges, promote economic growth, and improve overall living conditions (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

Adequate funding is therefore essential for achieving positive service delivery outcomes in adult and non-formal education programmes. Financial resources are required to establish literacy centres, develop instructional materials, train facilitators, provide learning infrastructure, and support programme monitoring and evaluation (Hanemann, 2018). Without sufficient funding, adult education programmes may experience shortages of teaching materials, poorly trained facilitators, inadequate learning environments, and limited programme coverage, all of which negatively affect service delivery outcomes (Akinyemi & Basse, 2012; Okedara & Omolewa, 2019). Consequently, strengthening public funding mechanisms remains a critical requirement for improving the effectiveness and impact of adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria.

## **Public Funding Structure for Adult Education in Nigeria**

### **1. Federal Government Funding**

The federal government constitutes the primary source of public financing for adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Funding is largely provided through annual budgetary allocations to the **Federal Ministry of Education** and the **National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC)**. These funds support the coordination and implementation of nationwide literacy campaigns, development of instructional materials, training of adult education facilitators, monitoring and evaluation activities, and policy implementation related to lifelong learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; NMEC, 2020).

The establishment of NMEC through Decree No. 17 of 1990 (now Act Cap N73, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004) institutionalized federal responsibility for mass literacy and non-formal education programmes. The commission is mandated to coordinate adult literacy programmes across the country, develop national curricula for non-formal education, and provide technical support to state and local governments (NMEC, 2017). Through federal funding channels, NMEC also supports initiatives such as basic literacy programmes, post-literacy programmes, vocational skills training, and continuing education for adults who were unable to complete formal schooling.

Despite these efforts, federal funding allocated to adult education remains relatively small compared to the resources devoted to formal education sectors such as primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Several studies have noted that adult and non-formal education programmes often receive limited attention in national education budgets, which constrains programme expansion, quality improvement, and effective monitoring (Aderinoye, 2015; Okedara & Omolewa, 2019). Consequently, many literacy centres operate with inadequate learning materials, insufficient trained facilitators, and limited infrastructural support.

### **2. State Government Contributions**

State governments play a critical role in the implementation and management of adult and non-formal education programmes across Nigeria.

Most states operate **State Agencies for Mass Education (SAMEs)**, which serve as implementing bodies responsible for organizing literacy programmes, establishing adult learning centres, recruiting and supervising facilitators, and mobilizing communities for participation in literacy initiatives (Federal Ministry of Education, 2018).

Funding for these agencies is typically derived from state government budget allocations. These funds are used to support operational activities such as payment of facilitator stipends, provision of teaching and learning materials, organization of community outreach programmes, and maintenance of adult education centres. State governments also collaborate with NMEC to implement national literacy campaigns and special intervention programmes aimed at reducing adult illiteracy rates (Akinpelu, 2017).

However, the level of financial commitment to adult education varies widely across states due to differences in economic capacity, political priorities, and administrative efficiency. States with stronger revenue bases tend to allocate more resources to adult education programmes, while less financially stable states often struggle to maintain literacy centres and sustain programme delivery (UNESCO, 2020). This disparity results in uneven access to adult learning opportunities across the country, thereby affecting the overall effectiveness of national literacy initiatives.

### 3. Local Government Funding

Local governments are expected to provide grassroots support for adult and non-formal education programmes. Their responsibilities include establishing community learning centres, providing basic infrastructure such as classrooms and furniture, supporting literacy facilitators, and mobilizing community members to participate in adult education programmes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

In principle, local governments represent the closest administrative structure to local communities and are therefore well positioned to identify educational needs and facilitate

participation in literacy programmes. Community-based adult education initiatives such as functional literacy programmes, vocational training, and continuing education activities are often designed to operate within local government jurisdictions (Omolewa, 2018).

However, in practice, the financial contribution of local governments to adult education remains relatively limited. Many local government authorities face severe budgetary constraints, competing development priorities, and administrative challenges that restrict their ability to effectively support literacy programmes. As a result, many community learning centres experience inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and irregular programme implementation (Aderinoye, 2015). These limitations weaken the effectiveness of adult education service delivery at the grassroots level.

### 4. International Development Assistance

International development organizations have played an important role in supporting adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria. Agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank provide financial assistance, technical expertise, and policy support aimed at strengthening literacy and lifelong learning initiatives.

These international partners often collaborate with the Nigerian government to implement large-scale literacy and education programmes, particularly those targeting marginalized groups such as rural populations, women, and out-of-school youths. Their support may include funding for literacy campaigns, development of innovative teaching materials, capacity-building for facilitators, and research on adult learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2021).

International development assistance has also contributed to policy development and institutional strengthening within Nigeria's adult education sector. For example, UNESCO has supported the development of literacy frameworks, monitoring systems, and capacity-building initiatives designed to improve the

quality and accessibility of adult learning programmes. Similarly, UNICEF has supported community-based education projects and initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive learning opportunities (UNICEF, 2020).

Despite the contributions of international partners, scholars emphasize that sustainable development of adult education programmes requires stronger domestic funding commitments from federal, state, and local governments. Overreliance on external funding can lead to programme instability once donor support declines (Omolewa, 2018). Therefore, strengthening national funding mechanisms remains essential for ensuring long-term improvements in adult and non-formal education service delivery in Nigeria.

### **Impact of Public Funding on Service Delivery Outcomes**

Public funding plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness and sustainability of adult and non-formal education programmes. Adequate financial resources enable governments and implementing agencies to expand programme coverage, improve instructional quality, and provide supportive learning environments that enhance the overall effectiveness of literacy and skills acquisition initiatives. In the context of Nigeria, the level and efficiency of public funding directly influence the capacity of adult education programmes to achieve their intended outcomes, including literacy improvement, social inclusion, and community development (Aderinoye, 2015; Omolewa, 2018).

#### **1. Programme Accessibility**

Public funding significantly influences the accessibility of adult and non-formal education programmes. Adequate financial resources enable the establishment of more literacy centres, particularly in rural and underserved communities where access to formal schooling opportunities is often limited. Increased funding allows education authorities to expand outreach programmes, provide transportation support for facilitators, and establish mobile literacy centres that reach remote populations (UNESCO, 2020).

In Nigeria, adult education programmes are designed to address the educational needs of diverse populations, including women, rural dwellers, and out-of-school youths. However, many communities still lack functional literacy centres due to limited financial resources. When sufficient public funding is available, implementing agencies can establish additional centres, recruit facilitators, and provide learning materials that improve programme accessibility and participation (Akinpelu, 2017).

Furthermore, increased funding enables the government to implement targeted interventions aimed at reducing gender disparities in education. For example, literacy programmes specifically designed for women and girls in rural communities can be expanded when adequate financial support is available. As a result, improved funding mechanisms contribute to greater inclusiveness and broader participation in adult education programmes (UNESCO, 2021).

#### **2. Quality of Instruction**

The quality of instruction in adult education programmes is strongly influenced by the level of financial investment in training, curriculum development, and instructional resources. Public funding supports the recruitment and professional development of adult education facilitators, who play a vital role in delivering effective literacy and skills training programmes. Continuous training programmes help facilitators adopt learner-centred teaching approaches that accommodate the diverse needs and experiences of adult learners (Aderinoye, 2015).

Funding also supports the development and distribution of appropriate instructional materials, including literacy primers, vocational training manuals, and digital learning resources. These materials are essential for enhancing learner engagement and improving comprehension among adult learners who may have limited prior educational experience (Federal Ministry of Education, 2018).

Additionally, modern learning technologies such as audio-visual aids, mobile learning platforms,

and community radio programmes can be integrated into adult education initiatives when adequate financial resources are available. Such innovations improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction and learning outcomes (Omolewa, 2018).

### **3. Infrastructure and Learning Facilities**

Public funding also plays an important role in the development and maintenance of infrastructure required for effective adult education delivery. Financial resources enable the construction, renovation, and maintenance of community learning centres that provide safe and conducive environments for adult learners. Adequate infrastructure typically includes classrooms, seating facilities, lighting, teaching aids, and storage spaces for instructional materials (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

In many parts of Nigeria, adult literacy classes are conducted in temporary or poorly equipped facilities such as community halls, religious buildings, or open spaces due to inadequate funding. These conditions often affect the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Increased financial investment can improve learning conditions by providing purpose-built facilities designed specifically for adult education activities (Akinpelu, 2017).

Improved infrastructure also enhances programme sustainability, as well-maintained learning centres serve as community hubs for literacy training, vocational education, and other lifelong learning activities. Consequently, investment in infrastructure contributes to more effective programme implementation and better service delivery outcomes.

### **4. Learner Participation and Retention**

Adequate funding contributes significantly to higher learner participation and retention rates in adult education programmes. When programmes receive sufficient financial support, implementing agencies can provide incentives that encourage adults to enroll and remain in learning activities.

Such incentives may include free learning materials, stipends for facilitators, vocational starter kits, or support for small-scale income-generating activities (UNESCO, 2020).

Many adult learners face economic pressures that compete with their educational aspirations. For individuals who must balance learning with work and family responsibilities, financial incentives and supportive programme structures can make participation more feasible. Well-funded programmes are better positioned to offer flexible learning schedules, childcare support, and community-based training opportunities that accommodate the realities of adult learners' lives (Omolewa, 2018).

Furthermore, adequate funding enables regular monitoring and evaluation of programmes, allowing education authorities to identify challenges affecting learner retention and develop strategies to address them. As a result, sustained financial investment in adult and non-formal education contributes to improved learner motivation, higher completion rates, and stronger educational outcomes (Aderinoye, 2015).

### **Challenges Affecting Public Funding of Adult Education in Nigeria**

Despite the recognized importance of adult and non-formal education in promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and socio-economic development, several challenges continue to undermine effective public funding and the successful delivery of adult education programmes in Nigeria. These challenges affect the availability, management, and sustainability of financial resources required to implement adult learning initiatives across the country. As a result, many literacy programmes struggle to achieve their intended objectives, particularly in rural and underserved communities (Aderinoye, 2015; Omolewa, 2018).

#### **1. Inadequate Budget Allocation**

One of the most significant challenges affecting adult education in Nigeria is the relatively low level of budgetary allocation to the sector. Within

the national education budget, priority is often given to formal education sectors such as primary, secondary, and tertiary education, while adult and non-formal education programmes receive comparatively minimal financial support (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

This limited funding affects the ability of implementing agencies to expand literacy centres, recruit qualified facilitators, provide adequate instructional materials, and sustain long-term programmes. In many cases, adult education initiatives operate with insufficient resources, leading to poorly equipped learning centres and irregular programme activities (Akinpelu, 2017).

Scholars have also noted that inadequate funding contributes to the slow progress in reducing adult illiteracy rates in Nigeria. Although various national literacy campaigns have been introduced over the years, limited financial commitment has restricted their impact and sustainability (UNESCO, 2020).

## 2. Delays in Fund Disbursement

Another major challenge affecting the funding of adult education programmes is the delay in the release of approved funds. Bureaucratic procedures within government financial management systems often slow down the disbursement process, causing significant delays in programme implementation.

Such delays can disrupt planned activities such as facilitator training, procurement of learning materials, and establishment of literacy centres. In some cases, funds may be released late in the fiscal year, leaving little time for implementing agencies to effectively utilize them (Federal Ministry of Education, 2018).

These delays can also negatively affect the motivation of programme facilitators and administrators. For instance, when facilitator stipends are not paid on time, many trained facilitators may abandon their roles, thereby affecting the continuity and quality of literacy programmes (Omolewa, 2018).

## 3. Weak Financial Accountability Systems

Weak financial management and accountability mechanisms also pose challenges to the effective utilization of funds allocated to adult education programmes. In some cases, inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems make it difficult to track how allocated funds are used across different levels of programme implementation.

Poor financial oversight can lead to inefficient use of resources, misallocation of funds, and lack of transparency in programme administration. When financial resources are not properly managed, the intended benefits of public funding may not reach the target learners or communities (Aderinoye, 2015).

Strengthening financial accountability systems—such as improved auditing procedures, transparent budgeting processes, and effective monitoring frameworks—is therefore essential for ensuring that available resources are used efficiently to improve literacy outcomes and programme performance.

## 4. Policy Inconsistency

Policy inconsistency is another factor that affects the sustainability of funding for adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria. Changes in political leadership and government priorities often lead to shifts in education policies and funding strategies.

When new administrations introduce different policy priorities, existing adult education programmes may experience reduced funding or even discontinuation. This lack of continuity disrupts long-term literacy initiatives and undermines the stability of programme implementation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Consistent policy frameworks and long-term national strategies are necessary to ensure sustained investment in adult education. Stable policy environments enable education agencies to plan and implement programmes more effectively

while ensuring continuity in funding and programme development (UNESCO, 2021).

### 5. Limited Community Participation

Limited involvement of local communities and private sector organizations also constrains the funding base for adult education programmes in Nigeria. While government funding remains the primary source of financial support, additional resources could be mobilized through stronger partnerships with community groups, non-governmental organizations, and private enterprises.

Community participation is particularly important in adult education because local communities are often best positioned to identify learning needs and support programme implementation. When communities actively participate in programme planning and management, they may also contribute resources such as learning spaces, volunteer facilitators, and local funding support (Omolewa, 2018).

However, in many cases, community engagement in adult education programmes remains weak due to limited awareness, insufficient advocacy, and lack of institutional frameworks that encourage stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening partnerships between government agencies, community organizations, and private sector actors could therefore enhance funding opportunities and improve programme sustainability.

### Strategies for Improving Public Funding Mechanisms

To enhance service delivery outcomes in adult education, the following strategies are recommended:

1. **Increase Government Budget Allocation:** Governments should allocate a larger percentage of education budgets to adult and non-formal education.
2. **Strengthen Financial Transparency and Accountability:** Establishing effective

monitoring systems will ensure proper utilization of funds.

3. **Promote Public–Private Partnerships:** Collaboration with private organizations and NGOs can provide additional funding sources.
4. **Encourage Community Participation:** Community involvement can enhance programme sustainability and local support.
5. **Adopt Innovative Funding Models:** Alternative funding strategies such as educational grants, endowment funds, and development partnerships should be explored.

### Conclusion

Adult and non-formal education remains a critical tool for promoting lifelong learning, reducing illiteracy, and fostering socio-economic development in Nigeria. However, the effectiveness of these programmes largely depends on the availability and efficient management of financial resources. Public funding mechanisms play a vital role in determining the quality and accessibility of adult education services.

The study reveals that while multiple funding sources exist, challenges such as inadequate budget allocations, delayed disbursement, and weak financial management continue to undermine service delivery outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires stronger financial commitment from government, improved accountability mechanisms, and increased collaboration with development partners and private sector stakeholders.

Strengthening public funding systems will not only improve programme implementation but also enhance the overall impact of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria's development agenda.

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