ADULT EDUCATION AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Education has been defined as a lifelong process which begins with (be child learning to talk and to relate with its peers, its elders and the community. The training and orientation offered through the various levels of education and through the adult education process equips the individual with new skills, ideas, visions and qualities that impact on the nation's manpower development'.

Introduction

Adult education, as a process or experience does not begin and end in an educational institution but the organised learning process or experience the individual is exposed to in the community, social groups, the mass media i.e. print and electronic, extra mural classes, evening schools, conferences, seminars, and workshops provides the individual additional mediums or opportunities through which to learn and acquire new knowledge, information, skills and new techniques for adapting to life, the work place and industry.

There is general acceptance among social scientists, economists and planners that education makes a significant contribution to national development through the development of a nation's human resources, Budd (1981). It is our desire in this study to assess the role and impact of adult education on manpower development. To achieve this, we would attempt to look at the profile and meaning of Adult education, the challenges and the convergence of adult education and manpower development.

We would also look at the inherent problems of adult education and manpower development and attempt solutions. In concluding we would proffer solutions and make appropriate recommendations to the problems highlighted.

Adult Education - Profile/Meaning

Tughiyelc (1981) succinctly explained that by Adult Education, we do not mean literacy education alone. Adult Education is more than literacy or remedial education to "fill the gap", it is something people need and want as long as they are alive and regardless of the amount of their previous education. It must therefore be an integral part of any modern country's educational system. \

Pricdman (1972) defines Adult Education as a process, which is part of cultural development, primarily the establishment of a means of communication between the cultural systems of the transmitters (inventors, research workers etc) and the cultural systems of receivers (i.e. groups for whom adult education is intended).

Robert Smith (1965), on the other hand refers to Adult Education as programmes providing learning activities organised by for example, universities, public schools, churches, labour and industry and other voluntary agencies.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (1975) final report on African Adult Education Association Seminar on structures of Adult Education in developing countries defines Adult Education as "all organised educational activities for people who are not in regular full-time attendance at school or other educational institutions in formal system of education. Included therefore, in this rubric arc young people who legally have not attained adult status, but for whom there is no further provision within the formal systems".

Adult Education by its various definitions has been given different names, to some it is out of school education, others see it as mass literacy education, to some popular education and others fundamental education and community education (Lowe, 1970). One distinguishing factor is that there are certain common shared characteristics of Adult Education from the various definitions, which makes it very relevant in skill acquisition, character formation and the development of the total personality of man.

The Challenges of Adult Education

The need for survival or the need to adopt to new developments within the society places a lot of demand on the individual and Adult Education experts to continue to learn and evolve new strategies through a formal school system or informally through organised programmes like conferences, workshop, research etc. Retraining programmes aim to assist displaced workers in making the transition to alternative jobs in growing sectors of the economy or in becoming self-employed. In some cases retraining programms have been developed explicitly for redundant state enterprise employees, (Kikeri ,1998).A review of twenty retraining programmes in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries covering both displaced workers retraining programmes resulted in modest gains in reemployment probabilities, but wage changes were negligible or negative (Dar Gill, 1995). The same review also found that the costs of retraining - usually the least analyzed aspect of the programmes - appear to be two to four times higher, though no more effective, than job search assistance in helping workers become employed. The findings of the study are consistent with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Employment Outlook (1993) which found that well targeted programmes can be beneficial, but broadly targeted programmes offered to all workers show less favourable results.Since the late seventies and early eighties, unemployment problem has assumed a very great proportion that the federal government started to show interest in the sponsoring and promotion of well targeted Adult Education programmes. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is the most spectacular of this effort. The Industrial Training Fund (1TF) is also aimed at developing employed youths and adults who need in-service and on - the job training to make them more adequate, up-to-date and more efficient on their jobs, fJNwagugo, Olateju and Anyikwa, 2001).One of the greatest challenges confronting the individual and educationists in particular are the rapid changes or the State of flux created by the revolution in the computer industry, telecommunications and the electronic media. This development has automatically exposed man to multiple sources of information and knowledge.

Adult Education experts have the major challenge of effectively exploiting and channeling these information and knowledge for the betterment and the development of our manpower resources. These mediums or channels arc mediums of mass information dissemination that touch the lives of Inillions of people across the nation and the world Perhaps the most thorough use of various combinations of media has been in the massive national dcliill education campaign, in such places as Cuba and China and to a more limited extent in Tanzania.

These very large national campaigns make use of national political mobilization and flood the nation with information and material through a large number of channels. (Bown and Okedara, 1981).

Adult Education And Manpower Development: Place of Convergence

If we are to look at manpower as the aggregate or the total available skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled human resource capital available to a corporate body or country, the quality, its quantity and its development would to a great extent be determined and influenced by its educational system and Adult Education is a very vital genre of education.

Development according to Amucheazi (1980), is a multidimensional process involving the totality of man in his political, economic, psychological, social relations among others, Adesina (1988) sees the concept as the gradual expansion of available facilities and resources both quantitatively and qualitatively so as to produce a better and greater state. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being (Rodney ,1972).

In looking at the convergence of Adult Education and manpower development therefore it may be necessary for us to look at some of the definitions and views of experts of adult education. Budd (1981:221) stated that "there is general acceptance among social scientists, economists and planners that education makes a significant contribution to national development through the development of a nation's human resources".

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Tugbiycle (1981:17) stated that "by Adult Education we do not mean literacy education alone. Adult Education is more than literacy or remedial education to fill the gap. It is something people need and want as long as (hey are alive and regardless of the amount of their previous education. It must, therefore be an integral part of any modern country's educational system".

Adult education which has been referred to as out of school education, nomadic education, community education, extension education and extra mural education etc is directed at developing the skills, the intellectual, the literary and the total abilities of man which invariably contributes immensely in increasing the number of available human resource capital of the country or the manpower base of the nation,

The underlying objective of adult education therefore is making the individual more self reliant, independent, and useful to his community or organization, since adult education as a process, produces men and women who by virtue of their training and orientation enhances the available manpower base of the country. For example products of United African Company (UAC) Training Centre, Financial Institutions Training Centre, Railway Training School, Extra Mural Schools come out of these institution belter trained and prepared to contribute towards the nation's manpower base as employers or employees.

Therefore, adult education as a process which is geared towards the transformation, the redirection of the energies of man,

motivating and creating a greater awareness of who he is, what his potentials are and developing his skills are conterminous with the goals and objectives of developing a nation's manpower which we had earlier said entailed developing the total aggregate of a nation's skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled human resource capital, so as to produce a better and greater state. (Adesina,1988).

Inherent Problems

One of the major problems of the adult education enterprise is that of poor funding. Many private organisations arc not willing to commit a substantial part of its funds to the training of its staff or the refraining of laid off staffs who would have formed a substantial part of a nation's manpower after (raining (Pnlel and Su/.uki, 1997).

Another problem is thai of the existence of a very large body of unemployed men and women. Sunnila Kikcri (1998) staicd that retraining and other support services such as job search assistance,' when properly (argetcd, can be beneficial and easier to implement in countries with well-functioning labour demand. But such programmes are less applicable and less effective in countries or regions with high unemployment and limited job alternatives outside the public sector.

Bown and Okedara (1981) also observed that, there is also the problem of lack of facilities and materials which is caused by the dearth of funds or the lack of political will on the part of government and private organizations to prosecute adult education projects and programmes. For example access to resource centres like computer centres, well equipped libraries, research centres, vocational centres, museums and galleries of modern art, music, architecture and recreational facilities in various Nigerian cities are very limited and far in between where they are even available.

The near absence of an orderly, decent, and sober environment also inhibits rather than promote an enabling and a learning environment which would have complemented the objectives of lifelong education. Government policies should be reordered to check and address these weaknesses within the system.

There is also the problem of dearth of information and poor research effort which has been compounded by the explosion in the mass communication industry, and the inability to effectively exploit same, to the advantage of the adult education enterprise, and manpower development in the long run. Underlining the above observation is the lack of political will, endemic corruption Jack'of continuity and poor policy formulation, in the developing world (Akinbi ,1999; Kikeri;]998) Nwagugo, 2001).

Attempted Solutions

In tackling some of the problems highlighted above some governments in the developing world created institutions charged with the responsibility of not only providing funds but they developed adult education programmes for their teeming unemployed men. For example Human Resource. Developers in Mexico and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Nigeria were established by their governments to retrain unemployed men and displaced workers for self employment and the industry (Revcnga, Ribound and Tan, 1994).

These institutions were able to contribute immensely in solving the problems of thousands of displaced workers and unemployed persons in their respective countries, except that their efforts have not been far reaching enough because of the level of unemployment facing some of these nations as earlier enunciated.

In 1990 another adult education programme took off with the establishment of Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Research (MAMSER). It failed without reducing the level of illiteracy in Nigeria. Bui in that same 1990,the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education was established. The commission has since been making efforts to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria. (Nwagugo, 2001).

Recommendations

(1) The Federal and State Governments should look at the possibility of expanding library facilities in the major Nigerian cities in addition to expanding the same~facilities in existing schools and organizations; the availability of books, and other educational aids would go a long way in facilitating learning and research for the adult learner.

(2) Governments should also look at the possibility of expanding and establishing various educational resource centres like computer centres, vocational centres, museums and galleries of modern art, music, architecture and recreational facilities which would not only provide avenues for learning and recreation but would stimulate and provoke adults and users of these facilities into reflecting, thinking and discussing.

(3) The decision to establish a National Open University should be fully implemented and funded in order to make University education accessible to a larger number of people, thereby increasing the nation's manpower resource base.

(4) Government and private institutions should endeavour to effectively fund various adult education
r: programmes and adult education experts should be encouraged to undertake continuous learning in order to effectively equip themselves as facilitators of knowledge and learning.

(5) Federal and State governments should establish research and training institutes in various fields of human endeavour and their findings and resources should be made available to as many adult learners as possible. For example, Agricultural Extension Officers, Health Officers and National Orientation Agents etc should be trained to exhibit more creativity and commitment in the discharge of their functions and duties as this will go a long way in enhancing the nation's manpower resource base in the long run.

Conclusion

In conclusion we would say that education and to be specific adult education has a very important role to play in developing the nation's manpower. This it can achieve through the development of well-defined policies and programmes, which arc directed at well-defined target groups. In addition the nation's leadership must be seen to be sincere and objective in the use of the nation's funds and resources towards the eradication of ignorance, illiteracy and the promotion of educational efforts, as a sine qua non. for the development of the nation's manpower. In addition the government and adult education agencies must evolve strategies and techniques for the effective exploitation of the mass media as a tool for the development of the nation's manpower using adult education techniques and methods.

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