THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Community Development is an initiation put in place to develop an area or put those amenities that are lacking in place. Many communities lack ideas on how to go about this. This paper is of the opinion that re-engineering Adult Education that has been on ground for Community Development will go along way in this regard. Key words like re-engineering education, education, formal and non-formal education and community development were defined. Factors that motivate adults for education were explained. Benefits of Adult Education were enumerated. Hindrances to Adult Education were also discussed. Custom, traditions and interest of the community were considered in drawing the conclusion and recommendations were made in support of putting the interest of the recipients first and government was called upon to give their own encouragement.

Community needs are on the increase with little attention been received from the government. Members of any community need to strategize so that development will reach them without delay. Many programmes have been initiated for community development but these programmes end up not seeing the light of day. Education too has been the only avenue for community development, but many after obtaining their certificates will opt out to work outside their communities and in some instances never return. Education is the commonest avenue for giving a community better development using the members of the community – the adult. Adult Education has been in place to reach out to adult members but the need to re-engineer this form of education for better usage in the community is paramount. Blaisdell (1996) opined that re-engineering education is demonstration of the value which an educational promotion programme can add to a group of people or an area.

Education is a weapon of development of the people in a society. It helps to promote understanding and cooperation among a group of people for the present and the future. It helps to create peace through understanding and respect for individual differences. In the community, adult education is the most needed education for the fact that it helps communities to be mobilized for contributing towards their own development for their survival and their future generation. Education as an entity is classified into two: formal and non-formal education, (Ogwo and Oranu, 2006).

According to Smith (2004), formal education is the hierarchically structured chronologically graded education system running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training. In the same vein, National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) defined non-formal education as all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. Smith (2004) added that non-formal education is any organized educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives.

It is on the basis of National Policy on Education definition, where non-formal education includes adult education that this write-up will emphasize on. The same definition equally added that non-formal education is to cover literacy, post-literacy, continuing education, civic education, correspondence education and self-improvement classes outside formal education for anybody who can not have access to formal education system. Adult education is the education that is given to adults that are not opportuned to attend formal school system that will help them acquire knowledge and vocational skills so as to make them more productive in the society, (Ogwo, 2000).
Adult Education can not be worthy of acknowledgement without making mention of its positive impact on the community or involvement in community development in which an individual lives. According to Uwaka (1989), Community development is a term seen as the process by which efforts of the people themselves are united, with those of the government to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the people to integrate them into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.

Factors that Motivate Adult Learners

The factors that motivate adult learners must be taken into consideration when designing instructions for them. These also help to design relevant programmes that will get the learners committed to learning. Some of the conditions that motivate adults to learn effectively according to Ogwo and Oranu (2006) include:

Development of Need Oriented Programmes

Adults are motivated to learn effectively when programmes are need based. Adults enroll into programmes bearing in mind their various needs, goals and aspirations. It is essential for the programme planners to identify the needs and aspirations of the adult learners and design programmes that will help the learners achieve their goals and needs. Adults have societal roles they are expected to accomplish. Once they discover that an educational programme will offer them the opportunity to effectively perform these roles, they go all out to acquire the knowledge offered by such programmes.

Adaptable Environment

Adults learn better when they consider the environment conducive. A number of physiological changes occur during the process of aging. Some of these changes include decline in visual clarity, auditory problems, reduction of speed of reaction, etc. Furthermore, some sickness are associated with old age, such as arthritis, backache, waist pain, etc. These changes and sickness inhibit effective learning. Adult learn faster when the environment is structured to help reduce the effect of these physical changes. The environment according to Ogwo and Oranu (2006), where adult learners will seat to be taught should be well lit, as well as equipped with comfortable seats. Facilities should be audible and their writing of the facilitators/teachers legible.

Couple with the above, adults have feelings of self worth and these feeling must be respected. The learning environment should display gentleness, serenity, respect, freedom of expression and mutual understanding. This is very important in adult learning environment, since learning is both an emotional and intellectual process. Conducive environment raises morale and stimulate learning.

Relationship between Adult Education and Community Development

Education is an important tool for development and literacy is expected to be an instrument for better insight for both men and women to take advantage of development. Adult education is intended to help appreciate the need for better life in the various communities. Silkondze (2000) refers to community development as an integral part of Adult Education for the fact that it is used as a forum for acquiring knowledge through which adult members of the community will be exposed to the value – culture and norms-of that society through community development. Development can only be possible if made a human centred process and this can be achieved through adult education programmes.

This is based on the fact that literacy education is the development of human potentials, if an individual is educated, he is developed in intellect, in outlook, in skills and equipped to develop himself and others in economic and political spheres of life and community. The most common relationship is that community development serves as medium for teaching of adult education programmes for meaningful development to be achieved, as it is stated in the objectives of community development Olaitan (2008) outlined the objectives as follows:

- Provision of educational facilities
- Provision of essential amenities such as feeder roads, culverts, bridges, market, stalls etc.
The Role of Adult Education in Community Development

- Provision of cooperative organization
- Participation in environmental sanitation
- Construction of dams and sinking of wells to provide water for both human and animals
- Provision of health facilities such as dispensaries, maternities and leprosy clinic.

Benefits of Adult Education in the Community

Change in Behaviour of the Individuals

Adult education is an instrument for change. It helps to modify the behaviour of individuals in the community in many ways. It helps to improve the critical thinking quality of the individuals. It modifies behaviours of people towards production through acquisition of knowledge and skills in relevant occupations. It develops individuals respect for standard. It modifies individuals moral quality to an acceptable level by community members. It helps to reduce the menace or criminal behaviour of individuals resulting from ignorance and illiteracy. It also helps to develop individuals creativity and independent living. It makes individual to become an acceptable member of his community through systematic adjustment.

Development of Economic Activities in the Community

Economic activities in certain communities are pluralistic and require certain level of knowledge and skill development for success. Pluralistic economic activities in a community involves many diverse skilled jobs for deriving wealth for living by individuals. Some of these are in form of business interest, that is, movement of goods and services from one community to another which involves mobility of people from one community to another for exchange of goods and services to sustain life. This mobility may involve clear understanding of needs of customers, pricing of commodities, effective bargaining to make profit, understanding of language of others, respect for others culture, traditions, privacy and other behaviour typical of community members. Ability to achieve success in business through overcoming difficulties in the above diversities require certain level of civilization resulting from education.

Effective Participation in Political and Economic Matters Affecting the Community

An educated individual is expected to exhibit the thinking habit, acceptable attitude, developed initiative, management skills towards decision-making in economic and political matters affecting his community and beyond (Oreh, 2001). The individual should be able to manage his own economy to reduce wastage and help to direct the thinking and behaviours of others towards political benefits of the community. He should be able to assist the community in planning for economic and political gains beyond his immediate environment. Adult education should be able to develop him to be sensitive to the economic needs of others and to help reduce poverty among the less privilege in his environment.

Maintenance of Good Understanding and Healthy Relationship with other Communities

Many communities are unique while some others are diverse in relation to language, culture, political interest, economic development, social and religious interest, members of a community, in most cases, interact with members of other communities in many diverse ideas, policies and cultures. In order to maintain these understandings and relationship among diverse groups of specific interest between one community and the relationships among diverse groups of specific interest between one community and the others, members of these communities must be provided with that level of education that could help foster cordial relationships, peace, unity and progress without much bias to diversity in principles and beliefs.

Recognition of Community Rights

Certain rural/suburb community members are deeply entrenched in their community culture to the extent that they believe that cultural rights are the only legacies they have. They guide jealously these cultural rights and behaviour and cannot develop interest in participating in anything else in the community (Olaitan, 2006). Such communities appear to be primitive and are left behind in development. Majority of their cultures and beliefs are relatively primitive and conservative.
is, they do not change and members of the community will resist any change in the culture and practices of their ancestral parents handed over to them and through many generation.

With increase in Adult Education of members of the community, some of these practices are now giving way to better understanding of relationships with other communities and benefits that should accrue to them from the government to which they belong. With education, members are more competitive in development, they are more jealous about what other communities possessed but they are denied. They now learn how to demand for their right from government. With education, they know how to communicate directly with their government for provision of basic needs. Educated adult members of the community are interested in demanding from the government either through individuals or delegation of members to government officials for provision of electricity, water, good roads, security, markets, housing, communication equipment, higher education, agricultural technologies among others as their right from government.

Moral and Spiritual development of Community Members

In many communities in the past, traditional religion was in vogue. This religion was associated with secret rituals and cultism. People’s freedoms were restricted at specific period of the year and time of the day when these rituals were to take place. Many people were afraid and fearful of ritual site. Some of which were desolate and decorated with embarrassing materials. In some places, traditional worshippers made people to take oath and upon the death of oath takers all their belongings including their wealth become the properties of the gods and goddesses (Olayitan, 2006). Such communities can become impoverished, underdeveloped and retrogressive in amenities. Visitors fear living in such places. The market places, roadsides are never spared as fearful ritual sites. Only members of that community that is traditionally involved that can stay near these ritual sites during market days or at festival.

Morally, in some traditional communities, it is a taboo for matured men to limit themselves to just one wife. The ideas of free friendship are very frequent. It is not regard as a moral problem to engage in illegal friendship with women that are married close to relations. With Education and Adult Education particularly in the community, these practices are influenced to produce more acceptable spiritual and moral behaviour. For instance, religious institutions develop their own education through the support of community facilities either through the church or the mosque. Young men and women started divorcing their traditional spiritual beliefs and becoming engaged in civilized religious faith and practices. Today, may community members have accepted good moral standards and are involved in domesticating them for the benefits of their families.

Hindrance to Adult Education

Low motivation hinders adult learners and it is a major cause of non-participation and high drop-out in adult education programmes. Motivation is a condition that energizes one into action in order to solve a pressing problem. Akinola, Sarumi and Majoyinola (2001) defined motivation as any condition, which initiates, guide and maintains a response. The voluntary nature of Adult Education requires that adults be adequately motivated to enable them enroll and sustain their participation in educational programmes will enable them satisfy their needs. An understanding of the needs of adult learners is vital too for effective motivation. Lieb (2005) in his study of what motivate adult learner identified the following; social relationship, external expectations, social welfare, personal advance, cognitive interest and escape/simulation. He went further to report that barriers to motivation include lack of time, money, confidence or interest, information about opportunities to learn, scheduling problems and problems with childcare and transportation.

Nwizu (2001) found out that some of the major factors that motivate men and women to participate in non-formal programmes include, certificate, effective communication, societal recognition, getting better job, income generation and performing of developmental task.
Conclusion

Both adult education and community development have common aims and goals. Programmes planning in both is similar and both are concerned with improving attitudes, aptitudes, interests, skills, understanding and appreciation. Though adult education seems more basic a prerequisite for community development i.e. with education, community members can plan, organize and execute programmes in the community.

Ultimately, form of adult education chosen whether vocational, technical, general, etc. should be geared towards enhancing the values, norms customs, traditions of the communities in the communities in the rightful or gainful direction such as expressing creativity, perfecting knowledge and skills, and interacting with others in the community.

Recommendations

No matter the form that Adult Education is taking:
- The interest of the recipients should be paramount
- The environment should be conducive because most of them come from better environment than the learning environment.
- The form of education should have the norms, tradition and culture of community at heart.
- Government of the day should encourage them by employing them into the system to render their service.

References


