

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL STABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Practical experience from both developed and developing countries shows that effective development of a nation depends to a large extent, on political stability under democratically elected government where the people have a say rather than successive dictatorial military administration. This paper argues that sustainable democracy and political stability can best be achieved through effective Adult Education programme.

INTRODUCTION

Achieving sustainable democracy and political stability has been the most often yearning of patriotic Nigerians and all-round development minded nations and nationals all over the world. Western countries have been in the fore front as advocates and promoters of these ideals. The inability of a nation to achieve this status is usually attributed to the country's peculiar problems. Generally speaking, the problem which mostly hinders Nigeria from achieving sustainable democracy and political stability is constant changes in government emanating from military thirst for power, ethnic sentiment and sometimes religious intolerance. These problems are mostly found with adult population and not school age children. This paper argues that Nigeria can achieve this status by organising effective adult education programme which helps men and women (adults) by extension of resources to them, educating illiterate population, redressing imbalance in education, helping the school drop outs and retraining of workers. The paper concludes by philosophizing that adult education entails more than the learning of 3RS (Reading, writing and Arithmetic).

CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education has often been referred to as any voluntary or deliberate effort intended for development of adults, Daskum (1989). It can be conducted by public and private agencies like adult schools, extension centres, settlements, churches, clubs and other similar institutions. Adult education therefore includes series of activities with educational values purely meant "for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education and those young people who either prematurely dropped out of the formal system" Abdullahi, (1988).

Anyanwu, (1987), sees adult education to include "all the activities with educational purpose that are carried on by people engaged in the ordinary business of life". It is directed to people with major focus on the local community.

Eyibe, (1999) defined adult education as any kind of education designed for the illiterate population, the formal school drop-outs and the skilled and semi-skilled workers and carried on outside the formal school setting". Based on this definition, adult education encompasses literacy remedial, skill training and retraining programmes planned for adult population. Adult by Nigerian concept means any person from the age of 18 and above. Osinem defined adult education as a process by which men and women singly or in group attempt to improve themselves by developing their skills, knowledge, insights, appreciation or attitude, Eyibe (1999). It includes intellectual or catch up educational needs, occupational and professional competencies, family living, social and civil responsibilities and self-fulfillment needs. **ITS PLACE IN THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION**

The place of adult education in Nigeria is so vital that a whole section (seven) of the New National Policy on Education (Revised 1981) is devoted to it. The objectives of the

adult education as contained in this section read:

- (a) To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education;
- (b) To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of formal school system;
- (c) To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- (d) To provide in-service on the job, vocational, and professional training for different categories of workers and professional in order to improve their skills;
- (e) To give the adult citizens of this country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Traditional literacy concentrated on the teaching of three R.s (Reading, writing and Arithmetic). This method seems to take its "content from outside the learner's deep motivation, experience and environment and often, could not provide them with opportunity to practice what they learn" Robert (1980) in Daskum (1989). It has been realised that the skill acquired were not re-informed by providing the adults with materials to read after their course. As a result of this neglect a one time literate adult reverted to illiterate after a certain period.

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

Democracy is said to be the government of the people, for the people and by the people. This means that democracy calls for the people's participation in all its ramifications. Both individual and interest group must have a say and participate fully in matters of educational importance which eventually lead to the development of the country. Without education an individual in a modern society is unlikely to be able to proceed very far in developing the particular aspect of a worthwhile form of life which it is suited, Peters (1966). Since the educational system acts selectively in equipping citizens with skill and knowledge that are essential to the communities viability and development, effective programme for adult population is the quickest way which will sustain political stability in Nigeria.

Peters is of the opinion that as education involves a vast expenditure of public money, those who are responsible for managing educational institutions should have to consult those for whom they are run, and that they should be accountable to the public for the way in which they discharge their responsibilities. All democratic minded educationists would not dispute Peters' opinion in this regard. We want the majority of our citizens to share the same feeling for the sake of sustainable political stability and this we can achieve through widespread effective adult education programme.

HOW TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL STABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Sustainable democracy and political stability in Nigeria can best be achieved through well organised and effective adult education programme where skills required for handling the resources are extended to adult men and women, retraining of workers, education for literate population, programme to redress educational imbalance received during childhood and youth school dropouts.

EXTENSION OF RESOURCES TO ADULTS

Eyibe (1997) quoted Williams (1981) to have referred to adult education as an extension and dissemination of resources to adults to help them solve their problems as individuals through their various organisations and agencies. This means that as a voluntary out of school programme, adult education can employ teaching and learning principles that effect meaningful changes in the learner's life. Education for sustainable democracy and political stability must consider realistically what it can do to develop

democratically minded citizens. National Policy on Education (1981) states that one of the objectives of adult and continuing education is "to give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment".

EDUCATION FOR ILLITERATE POPULATION

Hambrah (1988) sees adult education as any kind of education for people who are old enough to work, to vote, to fight and marry and who have completed the cycle of continuous education, if any, commenced in childhood. They want to make up for limited schooling, to learn the basic skills of passing the examinations, to learn new profession or to master new working methods. Their objectives could be to understand themselves better, their immediate and wider environment or the society at large. Literate adults are always conscious of their natural ideologies. They maintain their independence through participation in political issues and decision making of their society. This is because education is used as a weapon for freedom fighting and struggle for political stability. Eyibe (1999) opined that by developing their talents and skills in adult education programmes, the people may come to understand their civic rights and responsibilities. This point has also been supported by Abubakar (1999) who observed that by acquiring literacy education, the adult now realises the importance of being patriotic citizen, and he should vote for a candidate of his choice without the influence of money.

EDUCATION TO REDRESS IMBALANCE

Qualitative adult education seeks to redress the imbalance of education received during childhood and youth, Anyanwu (1974), in Eyibe (1999). In a situation where earlier education is grossly inadequate to enable the individual adjust properly to the professional and cultural environment in later life, adult education is necessary to liberate the mind and assure job mobility especially by adults who constitute the productive manpower.

Udoh (1999), observed that the survival of the nation owes much to the ability of the government to sensitise and educate its citizens to the issue of nation building. On the part of the citizenry, the demand for nation building include unalloyed loyalty, patriotism and commitment to the national goals so that the nation can take the path of progress with little hindrance. This can only be possible if all the citizens are properly guided from childhood to adulthood to cultivate the right values and attitudes, skills and knowledge which is geared towards achieving sustainable democracy and political stability.

Democracy is an extremely difficult way of life to sustain. The fundamental principles on which it rests, those of fairness, liberty, and consideration of interests are principles which are imposed on strong and primitive tendencies. It requires knowledge about and interest in public affairs on the part of its citizens, and widespread willingness to work its institutions, Peter (1966). It needs constant vigilance to prevent encroachments on the liberties of the individual, as well as institutional safeguards through which vigilance can find expression. In Peters' words, men did not spring up like mushrooms to run its institutions; they have to be trained.

ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE RETRAINING OF WORKERS

Eyibe, (1999) reported Edstrom (1970) to have described adult education as the quickest way to increase productivity in the less developed countries and this includes "retraining of the adults who are already on the job. Education for children, Edstrom said, is fine, but its potential contribution to output over ten years is small compared with the potential contribution of efforts devoted to improving adult skills.

In his paper 'Enhancing National Development Through Adult Education: Islamic Model', Olaoti (1999) argued vividly that all the prophets and messengers sent by God made use

of the elders in their various communities, to spread their missions. The enlightenment received by these disciples or the companions later led to positive development in their various communities and generations. This means that education given to adult learners spread faster and more goal-directed than those given to children as future leaders especially in critical need of sustainable democracy and political stability as in case of Nigeria. Bown and Okedara (1981) support this idea and add that education of children and youth can not but take their ages, interests and circumstances into account. Adult Education is to enable learners not only to acquire knowledge and skills, but also ideas and attitudes without which knowledge and skills cannot be put to good use for effective performance in whatever they are doing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Vigorous literacy campaign is needed to reawaken the adults on matters concerning their right to participate in the affairs of their motherland.
2. Political and citizenship education should be included in adult education programme.
3. Recognition should be given to certificates obtained from adult education to vie for both admission to schools and employment in government.
4. Financing of adult education programme should not be left to government alone. Non-governmental agencies and individuals should also assist.
5. Provide incentive such as loan and other gifts to both teachers and participants i.e. the adult learners.
6. Embark on proper training of adult education teachers.
7. Adult education teachers should be employed on permanent and pensionable basis like other civil servants.

CONCLUSION

With effective adult education programme, adult population in our country will know their rights as citizens of the country and the right of the government on them. They would be able to read what other people say or write in papers or over radio broadcast, analyse other people's ideas, tally them with their own ideas and come into a reasonable conclusion. They will know why they should fully participate in all the process of democracy right from formation of political parties, registration and voting without waiting for the money bag politicians to come and bribe them before they vote. Serving soldiers would also know their proper function and concentrate on their country's defence rather than administration or power position. By so doing, sustainable democracy and political stability would be achieved and the country be fully developed politically and economically.

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