

ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: THE WAY FORWARD

Augustine Okereke Ogwudire; Daniel O. Ajaero and Asanya C. Nwoko

Abstract

There has been an increasing recognition of the critical role of education generally, for a sustainable future. This paper described adult education as that which assists people to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and to contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. The paper observed that the operational challenge of sustainable future will require sustainable future education at all levels and a major condition for initiating system changes is the availability of competent players capable of developing sustainable managing change process. The roles of Lecturers and institutions of adult education are not left out. The paper concluded that an integrated educational system would be an optimal approach to a sustainable future.

Education remains the key to human development. It is seen as the driving force for meaningful developments in every society. The goal of any educational system is to provide or develop a balanced individual capable of surviving in his environment and contributing meaningfully towards the survival of that society to which he belongs. Adult non-formal education is one of the most important professions that can take adequate care of socio-economic political, cultural and environmental problems of adults. The success of adult and non-formal education in terms of achieving its goals as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) cannot be over-emphasised. Adult and non-formal education changes the social and psychological minds of adults more than any other profession, it instills lost hope in them and liberates them

from their prejudice of seeing themselves as not humans that are capable of learning. Adult education continues from where the formal school system which rigorously inculcates in the individual the desire for knowledge, understanding and education stops. Fasokun (2006) observed that, Adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping or assisting adults to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies.

All men and women are part of development in their place and level in society. The process of sustainable future requires that each of them acquires the skills needed to handle the complex challenges of change and uncertainty, a large number of stakeholders, conflicting interests and rigid barriers of self-interest and short term thinking on every level (Weaver, 2001). Sustainable future does not come about on its own; rather it must be guided by long-term analyses and goals. This requires that adult education will play a double role: it must provide graduates with the attitude, knowledge and skills to lead this process, while also developing and delivering the knowledge to support research on sustainable future.

Wals (2007), observed that social learning is a framework for developing the necessary skills, as sustainable future is essentially a learning process on all levels. The characteristics of sustainable future demand long-

term integrated system changes. To gain broad support for these changes, all relevant parties must become involved. Sustainable future is a learning-by-doing process in which social challenges are met step-by-step by the social parties involved supported by science and technology disciplines in a cooperative effort. The cumulative effect of such interaction is change in different domains and at different levels (micro, macro etc), which may lead to a societal transition to sustainable future. Vegas(2000) argued that to achieve sustainable development, the reconciliation of competing cultures must be obtained. In particular, the midway between global competition, consumerism and strict environmental protection must be found. The issue of sustainable development requires a strong commitment from society and between generations beyond any political and economic time scales(Crafton, 2000; Jansen,2003).

The Operational Challenge of Sustainable Future

The main challenge of sustainable future is to initiate evolutionary change in an unstable world. This evolution involves renewing integrated system, making transitions and meeting the requirements of a growing population, with growing prosperity. This will require sustainable future education on all levels and in all modes of learning: formal, non-formal and informal (Dam-Micras and Rikers, 2005). This education should focus on teaching skills, developing sustainable future-oriented visions in civil society, integrating a future orientation in public policy making and in public debate, transforming structures of society for sustainable future, and breaking through barriers.

Systems renewal for sustainable future is a complex social process that encompass not only radical technological innovations but also changes in behaviour, organization, institutions, power relations and many other non-technical

aspects. Systems renewal requires long-term future orientation on the part of a variety of stakeholders with conflicting interests in an environment in which the level of uncertainty is high. As a societal transition process, sustainable future comprises numerous innovation projects and often unrelated on the micro and macro scales, but are inspired by general orientation. Transition is described as the result of developments in different domains, as a set of connead change which reinforces each other but takes place in several differenced areas such as "technology, the economic institutions, behaviour, culture, ecology and belief system" (Martens and Rotmans, 2002).

Demands on Adult and Non-formal Education in the Sustainable Future Process

A major condition for initiating system changes is the availability of complete players capable of developing sustainable future options and initiating and managing change processes. The development of this capacity must, as far as possible, be congruent with sustainability principles (Weaver and Jansen, 2000). Thus, any sustainable future programme depends on the extent of society's understanding of sustainable future and awareness of its urgency. Both understanding and awareness, and elements of education and research, are necessary but not sufficient conditions to initiate and execute sustainable future programmes. In research, design is dependent on context and outcomes are dependent on design. The outcome in turn influence, the context for further research.

Demands on Lecturers of Adult Education

Many lecturers have not been trained to meet the demands of sustainable future. A minority have received education in this direction. Moreover, the career-development system and the disciplinary organization of science are hampering the development of scientific skills for sustainable future. Personnel managers at Adult Education institutions should

include these qualifications in the profiles for new appointments and career development and offer lecturers opportunities for them to gain sustainable future qualifications. Daniels (2006) observed Adult/Vocational Education lectureships involving knowledge circles of lecturers were established to enhance the quality of teaching, professionalise teaching staff, break through compartmentalization, strengthen capabilities for applied research and faster, the circulation of knowledge. Although some lectureships are more or less directly related to sustainable future, the skills acquired in these knowledge circles are also useful in education for sustainable future in general.

Demand on Institutions

In order to integrate sustainable future in Adult Education, the entire education system, as well as its values and norms, must be rethought. It is critical to address the need for example, to change mindsets, build a new vision of purpose, and inculcate new competences for training and research among the academic staff (Kibuike, 2006). Above all, the board of Adult Education Institutions must recognise the necessity and urgency of sustainable future, be convinced of the role of Adult Education in sustainable future and support initiatives to integrate sustainable future in Adult Education. The facilities and resources (funding, time, personnel, etc) required to meet these demands should be provided by developing a structure and attitude of leadership and coordination.

The new attitude towards Adult Education should be reflected in internal and external communication policies in student recruitment and in innovative forms and methods of transforming knowledge to the public, for example, distance education, participation in cultural events, and so on. Links with business and public organizations can be strengthened, without detriment to the principles of autonomy (Haddad, 2007). Standards, such as Auditing

Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education (AISHE) certificates (Roorda, 2001, 2004), can measure the comparative progress of integration in Adult Education Institutions.

Conclusion

The task of achieving sustainable future cannot be over emphasized. Formal education systems are very slow to change and their reorientation may take a long time to give results. An integrated educational system would be an optional approach to sustainable future. In as much as no public or private educational system can claim to possess that characteristic of sustainability. The lack of integration between the various levels of the educational system and the non-existence of a coherent and adequate approach to sustainable future are some of the main problems identified. Also a reorientation of the education system is needed.

The Way Forward

Some organizations are useful vehicles to bring parties that are involved in sustainable future together. Jansen (2010) cited KISSZ (knowledge in synergy for sustainable Zuid) initiative as an example of a knowledge network connecting people, teachers and carriers of knowledge in education with civil servants and careers of policy making of governmental institutions in a particular region. The KISSZ initiative was taken to connect individuals from higher education and civil servants to create solutions to achieve sustainable future; this could be applied to any other situation. The KISSZ initiative-group found that communication on societal problems within and among public authorities and knowledge institutes was often poor and that cooperation among different groups (each working on the same problems from their own perspectives) often fails. In this situation of severe sustainable challenges, unavailability of potential knowledge, poor communication and lack of cooperation, initiative should be taken to explore, with potential stakeholders and their

interests in a strategic network aimed at achieving greater “Synergy in knowledge” for sustainability. The crucial question in this exploration is whether such a knowledge network will generate added value in the midst of numerous specific networks and programmes.

References

- Crafton, F. S. (2003). *Educating for Sustainability: opportunities in undergraduate engineering*. J clean prod 8:397-405.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERC
- Jansen, L.(2003). *The Challenge of Sustainable Development*. J clean prod 11: 231-245.
- Jansen, L, Weaver, P. and Van, D. R. (2010). *Education to meet new challenges in a networked society*. Nova science publishers Inc. New York.
- Kibwika, P.(2006). *Learning to make change: Wageningen Academic publishers, The Netherlands*.
- Vegas, C. M.(2000). Sustainable development education: averting or miligating cultural collisn. *International Journal of Education Development*. 20: 377-396.
- Wals, A. E. J. (2007). *Social learning towards a sustainable world: Wageningen Academic publishers, The Netherlands*.
- Weaver, P. (2000). *Sustainable Technology Development: Greenleaf publishing, Sheffield, U K*.

*Augustine Okereke Ogwudire
Department of Educational Foundations,
Abia State College of Education (Technical),
Arochukwu.*

*Daniel O. Ajaero
Department o f Curriculum Studies,
Abia State College of Education (Technical),
Arochukwu.*

And

*Asanya C. Nwoko
Department of Agricultural Education,
Abia State College of Education (Technical),
Arochukwu.*