

ADULT EDUCATION AS PANACEA FOR POWER AND EMPLOYMENT FOR CHANGING COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Education is summarily defined as the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of society from generation to another. Thus education is regarded as an instrument for the expansion of human culture through formal, non-formal and inform education programmes' and activities. This paper examined adult education as panacea for power and employment for changing communities in Nigeria. A focus on concept of adult education, functional adult literacy and its objectives; importance of functional adult literacy and its objectives, importance of functional adult literacy; recommendations and conclusion were the discourse.

It becomes imperative to note that the world is not static but dynamic; hence the saying, time changes and man must change with time. Change is a phenomenon which every human race found difficult to adopt as it becomes an uphill task to do away with tight held behaviors or attitudes. Education has been found to be an instrument that brings about behavioral change in individual so as to adjust to the changing situation in the society.

Education in general form, is not only a social service but a transformative act which is fundamental to social, economic and political development because where there is access to education, there will be an increase in social, economic and political awareness which will equally heightened aspirations, self assurance and self assertiveness. It will not be out of place to say that education in man's life is to expand people's knowledge base thereby assisting in shaping destinies and moving us towards desirable goals and better living.

However, adult education unlike other disciplines has a limitless scope. It has the potential of reinforcing the capacity of transforming positively the individual, community, state and national development adult education promotes co-existence, tolerance as well as inform and creative participation of citizens in their communities. In short, to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society in order to face the challenges ahead. UNESCO, (1997).

According to Hassan, and Oyebamiji (2012) the general objectives of adult education is to serve as an instrument per-excellence for the re-awakening of the dampened hope of individual adults who might have in one way or the other missed the first opportunity of being educated in the four walls of the classroom in life or who, may due to family background unable to develop themselves in a formal school.

Illiteracy must be wiped out in Nigeria, realizing that its persistence which is a consequence of under development, power and employment; makes it impossible for millions of men and women to play an effective part in the shaping of their own destinies. Therefore, efforts must be made to wage battle against poverty, and the elimination of inequalities and attempts must be made to establish relations of equity between both individuals and nations, UNESCO (1980).

Thus, this paper looks at adult education as panacea for power and employment for changing communities in

Nigeria. This will be examined under the following components of adult education:-

- a. Concept of adult education.
- b. Functional adult literacy and its objectives in Nigeria.
- c. Importance of functioning adult literacy.
- d. Recommendation and conclusion.

Concept of Adult Education

Defining adult education is a difficult task because it is variously defined by individuals, scholars, and societies/nations and from generation to generation. This is due to established fact that the way developing nations will define it differ from developed nations.

Adult education is ordinarily taken to mean education of the adult which encompasses the processes of learning by the adult person. Adult education has equally been defined as education provided out of schools. The implication of this, is a that adult education had been made available to man long before the formal school system. This actually qualified adult education to be the oldest form of education in human history.

To support the above view, Omolewa (1981) argues that following the Bible story of the garden of Eden, Adam was the first student/client of adult education and was instructed by his creator (God) outside the formal school system. However, it is right to assert that adult education remains the least to be understood. Ironically many adult educators do not recognize themselves as such, because they do not know their work is a form of adult education. For example, many a training manager in industries, agricultural extension officer, health visitor, community development officer, social welfare officer and even a tailor with apprentice etc are ignorant of the fact that they are adult educators.

However, there are catalogues of adult education definitions but a few will be stated for the purpose of this paper. These include:

Okeem (1982) defined adult education as a process by which men and women attempt to improve themselves by increasing their skills or knowledge, developing their insights or appreciations of changing their attitudes or the process by which individuals or agencies attempt to change men and women on these ways.

According Nzereri (2005) adult education is any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural, and economic needs or probably to enable them to adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. This means that adult education is any instruction, activities or an educational values given to adults to improve their status-quo in life.

In order to summaries all definitions of adult education and to provide an internationally acceptable definitions, United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO 1976) at its general conference defines it as:

The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in school, colleges and universities, as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or turn them in new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behavior in the two folds perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Based on the various definitions of adult education, it means that adult education denotes change. The change needed in the communities of the modern world is change for better living in these communities. In this process, it is out to seek answers to the question of whether adult education being utilized to

achieve what ought to be in the socio-cultural development of society. Adult education is generally regarded as a major premise for national development planning, and as an important subject by which the value of democratic institutions may be appreciated.

Furthermore, the exploration of the varying definitions of adult education, it is that form of education meant for a set of learner to become pragmatically oriented towards improving themselves and their society socially, economically, politically, religiously and culturally for sustainable peaceful co-existence and development.

Functional Adult Literacy and its Objective in Nigeria

Literacy to a layman is just the ability to read, write and possibly to do simple calculation. This is not far from the fact but it should be noted that literacy has gone beyond activities designed to teach adults to read and write simple sentences. This is because such restricted skills are of little utility (Titmus, 1989). The much needed literacy campaign now is functional literacy, which is focused on the achievement of a level of reading, writing and numeracy adequate for effective participation in the life of one's community.

It is imperative to note that a person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life whereas an individual who is functionally literate is able to "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group of community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation, for his own and the community's development" (UNESCO, 1978). Functional literacy is more than a set of skills. It includes the ability to use those skills to solve problems in daily life.

The implication of the above is that functional adult literacy is that answer to people's plight of shaping their own destinies. With

functional adult literacy, people will have sufficient skills to function for their individual development as well as the development of their communities and Nigeria as a whole. This implies that every adult person in the community must be involved in a continuum of learning in order to enable them to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential to participate fully in their community and wider society.

With the attainment of literacy level that is functional people will be able to handle information, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems as individuals, family members, citizens of nations and as lifelong learners-because functional literacy is a lifelong process (adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland: www.Scotland.gov.UK/Resource/Doc 7-11-11).

However, it is good to note that Nigerian government realizing the place of functional adult literacy as a panacea for overall development of the society is making frantic efforts to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria.

To achieve this important goals, the Federal Government Established the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) in 1990. For this reason each state of the federation has Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education (AANFE). The responsibility of this agency is to eradicate and, or drastically reduce illiteracy within their areas of jurisdiction by providing functional adult literacy programmes that have in focus the economic, cultural, social and political needs of the people.

To equally facilitate the attainment of this goal, the Federal Government via National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has stipulated the establishment of Adult and Non-Formal Education Development in all Colleges of Education across the country, State Colleges of Education are inclusive.

To buttress the place of functional literacy, National Commission for Mass Literacy (NMCE) streamlines some objectives to include:

- To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education.
- Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- Provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professional in order to improve their skills.
- Provide education for different categories of completers of formal school system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills on income generation activities like carpentry, tailoring, knitting, pomade, soap making and local craft.

Without missing words, when these objectives are realized, development not only of individuals but of communities and the nation at large would emerge. This is because with exposure to adult functional literacy, people would have learnt to use their power to solve their problems with their wisdom, experiences and resources with a view to eliminating poverty, pestilence and starvation (Adedokun, 2011).

It implies that inherent in functional adult literacy is man's capacity to expand his own consciousness and therefore exercising his power over himself, his environment and his society.

Importance of Functional Adult Literacy

In making frantic efforts of achieve functional adult literacy in Nigeria, adult learners must be on the know of the importance of functional adult literacy in all their daily activities. This is sequel to the fact that only through adult education that people can be fulfilled as adult education is the last available options opportunity for learning.

It therefore becomes imperative for adult learners to know why they need to be functionally literate.

Functional adult literacy will surely bring about development of human beings who will remain central to all development efforts.

The Nigerian's major hindrances are hunger, poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. The solution lies in adult education since when people are functionally literate, they will think of being self-reliant and thus make a living that will lift them above poverty level as it is one of the major objectives of the Nigeria National Development plans to build a united, strong and self-reliant nation.

When functional adult literacy is entrenched in people, they can participate meaningfully at the political level and thus coming to self fulfillment. For Nigeria to move meaningfully towards its economic, social, cultural and political development, its adult population must not be neglected in educational matters. Functional adult literacy is a powerful tool/instrument for empowering the less privileged in our communities especially if they are able to apply their new learning skills.

Functional adult literacy is thus beneficial to the extent that it reduces ignorance and poverty and brings awareness to people which in no doubt will enhance their own development and the community.

Functional adult literacy will equally provide avenue for change in individuals, community, societies and nation at large.

In view of the importance of functional literacy the Federal Government of Nigeria plans a comprehensive mass education programme to achieve functional adult literacy. Mass education deals with the provision of fundamental education including the acquisition or reading, writing and numeracy skills which are to be applied for the development of the individual and the community.

Adult Education as Panacea for Power and Employment for Changing Communities in Nigeria.

Another programme of adult education that could be of benefit to adults is extension education. This can be categorized into agriculture extension service in which farmers are mobilized and educated on how to become better farmers. There is also the health extension service, where people are educated on how to maintain healthy living. When adult endeavor to take the pains to being literate, health issues and how to keep healthy become more meaningful thus wastage of human resources will be at a dead end.

Nigeria, whose mainstay economy is agriculture, needs to train enlightened farmers those whose literacy will transform them from subsistence farmers to large scales farmers. Therefore, functional literacy for farmers, they would easily grapple with the modern technology and equally improve on their farming. The importance of functional literacy through these programmes of adult education is that functional adult education would bring

✓ The future of functional adult literacy should be appropriately organized and fine-tune and the objectives should be followed to the logical conclusion to enhance greater achievement.

✓ There is need for stronger policies, political will and commitment by all tiers of government for functional adult literacy as the majority of citizenry are illiterates.

Conclusion

As it has been established from the discourse adult education has limitless scope and functional adult literacy has the potential of reinforcing capacity of transforming positively the individual, community, state, and national development. In making, frantic efforts towards achieving functional literacy in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck in order to make the dream of education for all (EFA) goals a reality. Therefore, all commitment should be given to adult education as a panacea for power and

employment for changing communities in Nigeria.

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