

EFFECTIVE ADULT BASIC LITERACY EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINING THE FUTURE

Shuaibu Stephen

Abstract

The level of development of any nation is highly connected to the level of literacy of her citizens. Adult education is one of the most veritable and potent instruments which mankind can adopt in fighting against the menace of the society such as unemployment, poverty, ignorance and high level of illiteracy. This paper x-rays the objectives of Adult literacy education in Nigeria as a means of sustaining the future. The paper examines the challenges being faced by implementers of adult education such as inadequate funding. It concludes with a number of recommendations which if consciously adhered to will go a long way in sustaining the future; e.g. poverty alleviation should be given special attention by the government in providing job opportunities for the teeming youth population, adult education in Nigeria should adequately and consciously planned for; are among such recommendations made.

Education is the acquisition of ideas, knowledge, skills, valuable experiences and expertise. It is an asset. Education is the process of teaching, training and especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills. It is a particular kind of teaching or training. It is an interesting experience that teaches something. (Hornby, 2002)

According to Braheem, (2008) Education is not literacy or ability to speak English, French or Yoruba languages. But that education is the training and instruction given to the child in order to prepare him to live a useful life in his home, village, or country. Education is

the all round development of the body, mind and soul in a socially acceptable form beneficial to the trained and the community to which he lives. That education is the understanding of our immediate environment and the world outside. It is the ability of living usefully, speaking wisely, and feeling correctly and thinking rationally. Education comprises the physical, spiritual and mental development of a person. Education is a process through which one generation passes on to the oncoming generation, knowledge of skills values and opinions necessary to ensure the survival of the tribe, clan or nation with certain degrees of improvement.

In a broader sense, education is simply one aspect of specialization; it involves the acquisition of knowledge and the learning of skills. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, education often also helps to shape beliefs and moral values, (Haralambus, 2004).

The world is growing at the rate that has begun to baffle mankind. The rapid growth can be observed in number of dimensions: population growth, National growth, knowledge explosion, high standard of living and uncontrolled pattern of economic growth. With these developments mankind is faced daily with the problem of harmonious co-existence with nature to save the future.

Adult education is not only meant for eradicating illiteracy but a potent instrument adopted to fight the menace of the society e.g. poverty. Poverty has led many youths to societal vices, a danger signal to the future. Despite the

fact that Nigeria is noted for being the giant of Africa, it has suffered a lot of image problems home and abroad. These are revealed in the following context: in terms of corruption; Nigeria corruption perception index 2003 score was 1.4 (132nd out of 133 countries) as cited by transparency international (2004). In the area of trafficking, the United Nations Educational scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006) posited that Nigeria has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with cross-border and intral trafficking.

UNESCO maintains that human trafficking is the third largest crime after economic fraud and drug trade. Nigeria and Nigerians are also feared for 'Advance fee' frauds commonly known as 4.1.9 in Nigeria (Ngor Ngor, 2004).

Poverty in Nigeria has led to Ethno – religious crises as a re-occurring decimal. According to Abdullahi & Saka, (2007), it is incontrovertible that ethno-religious and political crises have strong implications for socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. This is captured by the comments made by the former President of this country when he asserted that:

Violence has reached unprecedented level and hundreds have been killed with many wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their ethnic or religious identification. Schooling for children has been disrupted and interrupted, business have lost billions of naira and properties worth much more destroyed (Obasanjo, 2004).

Aside these, the President observed that these violent outbursts have made investors to flee the nation's troubled spots particularly, Bauchi, Jos and the volatile Niger Delta region. Also, neighbouring states have had their economic and social life disrupted by the influx of internally

displaced persons generated by the conflicts especially in Jos Plateau.

Although figures disclosed may be misleading, between 1999 and 2004, no fewer than 100 conflicts were recorded in the country (Elaiwu, 2005 and Abraham 2006). This has resulted in the death of at least 10,000 people and the displacement of about 800,000 people (Global project, 2005; Nwabufo, 2005). In February, 2006, as many as 50,000 people were internally displaced and about 150 killed in a wave of violence across the country sparked off by protests against the caricatures of prophet Muhammed by a Danish Newspaper.

Descriptive reports about Nigeria have been negative considering for instance, the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) 2005 Annual report introductory description of Nigeria. Nigeria is unique; it is the tenth largest country in the world and among the very poorest. It possesses significant oil reserves which generate revenues that are large in the aggregate, but amount to just 100 U.S dollars a year on a per capital basis. It is beset by problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and corruption.

However, as a result of these problems, a lot of untold hardships have been caused to Nigerian citizens particularly in a bid to travel abroad or in issues involving credibility of the citizens concerned.

The critical role of Adult literacy education in attaining sustainable future for Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. It is evident that as a result of negligence in the educational sector, there is a crippling criminal neglect and pervasive decay in values and standards (Akinkugbe, 1991). There are also educational issues thrown up which if unresolved would ensure that Nigeria's dream of becoming one of the twenty advanced countries of the world by 2020 would continue to be a mirage. Other social

groups such as Almajiris and children with learning disabilities have continued to be almost excluded from education in Nigeria (Iyela, 2011).

Education is an indispensable means of unlocking the human mind and protecting his personality. This assertion is justified on the ground that education provides the scaffolding that is required to secure the future of the country health wise, politically & economically.

Thus, the paper focus on what education is, examines quality and quantity of adult education and its' role to sustain the future.

Objectives

The following objectives are stated for the paper.

1. To define the concept of quality and quality Adult education.
2. To discuss quality Adult education.
3. To discuss the role of Adult education as a vehicle to sustain the future.
4. To highlight problems faced by the implementation of quality Adult education.
5. To draw conclusion and recommendations

Justification

The essence of any government spending money in the educational sector is to yield positive results. In the context of quality education, measures are being taken to expand and enhance quality education globally such as the introduction of basic education, adult education distance learning and to a large extent the use of telecommunications to enhance access and quality education globally. The unique role of adult literacy education will stimulate awareness and enhance a quality education that will sustain the future.

The Concept of Quality

Quality implies perfection, excellence, sophistication; quality ensures continuity, i.e. it never depreciates but improves and in the context of this work, continuity of learners to

posterity. Quality comes from a well planned conceptual framework which does not exclude adult literacy education.

In other words, when the right to education is guaranteed, access to and enjoyment of these rights are enhanced. Government therefore, needs to translate their international commitment on education into their citizens' legal right to qualitative education.

But then millions of people are added each year to the list of those who are illiterate. This makes the pursuit of literacy to remain part of the unfinished business of our time. In Nigeria for example, adequate attention is not paid to the educational sector thereby making the education for all victim of mockery (Odebiyi, and Ayodele, 2008). At any rate, education for all should not just be a slogan because Nigeria cannot achieve the millennium development goals (United Nations, 2002) that among other priorities envisage the attainment of universal enrolment in primary education.

Alikali, (2002) defined quality Adult education "as the kind of learning that is expected to be undertaken by those who need to catch up on their formal education or who need to use their leisure purposefully or who need to up grade their skill and knowledge in the face of changing technology".

A process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis, undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intension of bringing about changes in information, knowledge or skills, appreciation and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal, community and National problems.

Quality education begins with basic education which is a nine years programme comprising of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education which in the Nigerian context is free and compulsory. It

also includes Adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary level for the Adults and out of school youths bearing in mind the specific goal of basic literacy education which comprises (the goals of primary education, junior secondary education and Adult and non formal education as stipulated in the national policy on education, (2004).

However, to Brunner, (1980) the concept of basic literacy education originates as an American enterprise designated for the purpose of building a total individual from the grass roots level so as to make him functional as a result of exposure to the school curriculum. It is a key or essential knowledge without which higher forms of knowledge cannot be understood or that form of education, which is essential in life. it helps the individual to cope adequately with the problem of meeting the basic needs. It also equips the individual with such skills and attitude that will enable him live a meaningful life, contribute to the development of the society, derive maximum social economic and cultural benefits from the society and discharge his civic obligations competently to sustain the future.

Consequently, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards including the values as follows: -

- i. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- ii. Faith in man's ability to make rational decision;
- iii. Moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations;
- iv. Shared responsibility for the common good of the society;
- v. Promotion of the physical, emotional, and psychological development of all children and
- vi. Acquisition of competencies necessary for self reliance.

To ensure quality education, the desired objective or level of quality began must be sustained for sustaining the future.

For Yanda, (2006) sustainable educational future embodies the principles, ideas and values seen as desirable and necessary if Nigeria is to deal with current global problems of development process, that education must be understood as entailing a life-long formal and informal process of equipping an individual to be fully aware of his environment and to exploit, manage and dominate same for the benefit of himself and the society at large, adding that education for sustainable future should not be constructed as mere acquisition of literacy or other skills or the preparation of individuals for the employment market but it must be seen as a process in which an individual is engaged virtually from cradle to the grave.

In the light of these, Toluhi, (2001) asserts that sustainable future seeks to meet the aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future, stressing that it is a process in which the exploitation of technological and institutional changes are all in harmony and enhanced both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspiration.

The Role of Adult Literacy Education to Sustain the Future

Ebireri, (2006) found out that adult basic literacy education promotes better citizenry, ability to identify symbols and read the names of political parties; provision of better leadership; improved participation in political activities in the community. Other benefits include making the adult learners understand the importance of living peacefully with others and promotion of participation in community development.

In spite of the high premium placed on the economic aspect of higher education, to secure the future of the nation, the gap between the world of work and quality of graduate is

widening daily. The picture of the sorry situation is presented in Oni (2005).

The socio-economic conditions of unemployed youths have assumed pathetic dimensions. These people, many of who are university graduates have been in the labour market for more than five years. Ironically many of them are still very optimistic of picking up a job by a mirage; the more the day evolves, the more elusive their dreams of securing Jobs become. The classification of the unemployment in the country (Oni, 2005) is still informative.

In essence, the blame is passed on education industry. The system is accepted to be dysfunctional in other words, if it were to be functional, graduates would be adequately prepared with the right attitude, sufficient knowledge and skill to create job(s) when they could not get public employment.

It is pertinent to note that adult education attempts to ameliorate the situation of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, etc to sustain the future. In Anyanwu, (1997) “Adult education denotes change. The change needed in the communities of the modern world is change for living in these communities. It is no longer necessarily the type of change that resulted from capability of the people to just work together to effect some improvement in their circumstance”.

Factors Hindering Implementers

While education remains a vital vehicle for meaningful development to sustain the future, the implementers of adult literacy programmes suffer some set backs such as:-

i. Poor funding of adult education in Nigeria is an unfortunate eye sore that education generally is under funded. Okereke, (1989) stressed that there has been a poor funding of literacy programmes in Nigeria despite repeated appeal by the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) to

provide meaningful sum of money in the state and national budget to this effect. It is equally sad to note that the meager money made available for the implementation of the programme was diverted for other purpose. For sure, governments’ non-challant attitude toward education has negatively influenced government investment in the education sector. For instance the table (1) below demonstrates governments attitude in funding education from 1994/2004

Federal Government Expenditure on Education as Share of Total Federal Expenditures (1994 – 2004) In Percentages

Table 1

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7.08	12.9	12.3	9.9	9.6	9.01	9.0	7.6	6.1	4.7	4.5

Source: Hinchliffe, K. (2002) Public expenditures on education in Nigeria.

- ii. One of the pertinent hindrances is that of ignorance of its meaning, tenants and purpose. Many scholars have shown that adult education varies from people, society or culture to another. This actually allowed for various definitions and lack of internal harmonization of adult education activities and its relationship with other forms of education i.e. formal, non-formal and informal.
- iii. Adult education as a discipline does not have enough qualified instructors (professionals) i.e. trained personnel; the instructors are in most cases teachers drawn from the regular schools while inappropriate method of teaching is used in teaching the adults.
- iv. However, poor participation attitude of adult learners towards the programme is

another set back for the implementers of the programme. Adults are not actually motivated to learn even while advancing in age, meanwhile the majority of the adults felt that learning at the age of 40 – 60 years is a mere waste of time.

- v. In most cases adult education curriculum is planned without reference to the learners. In other words learners do not take part in planning curriculum.

Oranu, (1989) identified non-involvement of learners in planning curriculum of adult education as being responsible for drop outs.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, considering the enormous roles which adult basic literacy education could play as a tool for training sustainable future, there is need to strengthen the delivery of adult basic literacy education for the achievement of sustainable future. This is because literacy promotes awareness; awareness promotes involvement and involvement brings about changes.

Recommendations

The bed rock of development and unity of any nation are achievable through adult education to sustain the future, hence:

For a sustainable future to be achieved in a developing country like Nigeria, the teeming youthful population must be provided with functional education for self reliance.

The provision of further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills must be encouraged at all levels.

To have a sustainable future the three tiers of government should create job opportunities to save the country from a state of collapse. National directorate for employment

(NDE) should be forth coming in training and granting loan facilities to young and promising entrepreneurs at a very low interest rate. This will preserve the future from total collapse by alleviating poverty.

Adult education programmes in Nigeria should be adequately and consciously planned for. Adult learners should be allowed to partake in the curriculum planning for effectiveness.

Adult education should be given a political will drive constitutionally and its programmes be aggressively approached e.g. using the local language of the dominant language of the immediate community as the take – off language of instruction to ease understanding for clients.

If adult literacy education is to sustain the future, adequate funds and teaching materials should be made available to enhance effective and efficient adult literacy programmes since adult education is a tool for consciousness raising.

References

- Abdullahi, A & Saka, L. (2007). Ethno-religious and Political Conflicts: threat to Nigeria nascent democracy *journal of sustainable development in Africa*. 9(3).
- Akinkugbe, O.O (1994). “Preface” in: O.O Akinkugbe (Eds) *Nigeria and Education: The challenges Ahead*. Ibadan: Spectrum books Ltd.
- Alkali, S.A (2002). The place of Basic Education in National Development in Adeleye, F.B (Ed) *Education in contemporary Nigeria. Implications for National Development* Lokoja. Jofoniy printers.
- Braheem, A.O. (2008). The meaning and purpose of Education: A concise Handbook on principles and practice of Education for

- primary and secondary school Teachers. 10 – 11.
- Ebireri, O.R. (2006). *The effects of Adult Basic Literacy Programme on Adult learners in Borno State*. An unpublished M.ed. dissertation submitted to the department of continuing education and extension services, university of Maiduguri, Maiduguri.
- Elaigwu, J.I. (2005). Crises and Conflicts Management in Nigeria since 1980. In A.M. Yakubu, R.T Adegboye, C.N. Ubah & B. Dogo (Eds). *Crises and conflicts Management in Nigeria since 1980; causes and dimension of conflict*. Kaduna, Nigeria Defence Academy; vol. 1.
- Hinchliffe, K. (2002). *Public expenditures on education in Nigeria. Issues, Estimates and some implications*, the World Bank, Washington; Federal Ministry of Finance, Abuja.
- Haralambus, Michael, Holborn, Martin, Heald, Robin, (2004). *Education: sociology: Themes and Perspectives 6th edition* London, Harper Collins P. 690.
- Hornby, A.S. (2001). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English 6th edition*. New special price edition. Oxford University Press. P. 371.
- Iyela, A. (2001). "Improving the quality of Human Capital infrastructure for sustainable Development in Nigeria: challenges and the way out". A paper presented during the 2010/2011. Engineering week of the Nigeria society of Engineers, Ajaokuta branch, Kogi State, February, 23rd.
- National Policy on Education (2004)*. Lagos. Nigerian Educational Research and Development council (NERDC).
- Ngor Ngor, A.D (2004). *Effective methods to combat transnational organized crime in criminal justice processes: The Nigerian perspective*, Resource material series 58: 172 – 175.
- Nwabufo, E.O (2005). The future of internal crisis and conflicts control in Nigeria: With or without the military? In A.M, Yakubu, R.T. Adegboye, C.N. Ubah and Dogo (Eds) *crisis and conflict management in Nigeria since 1980; causes and dimension of conflict*, Kaduna Defence Academy, vol. 1.
- Obasanjo, O. (2004). Text of broadcast to the Nation on the declaration of a state emergency in Plateau State on Tuesday, May 18th, 2004. In *daily trust Newspaper*, Abuja Wednesday May 19th.
- Oni, A. (1997). Sociological foundations of Adult Education. In Fajonyomi and Biao (Eds): *Policy & issues in Adult and community Education*, Maiduguri, Mainasara Publishing Co.
- Toluhi, J.O. (2001). Essentials of citizenship education. Ilorin; victory publications. In: *The Belt Journal of Education in Nigeria (BELJEN)* 1(1) 236.
- Transparency international, (2004). *Global corruption report*. 2004. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press.
- UNESCO, (2006). *Human trafficking in Nigeria: Root causes and Recommendations*. Policy paper Poverty series No. 14:2 Paris.

Shuaibu Stephen

Yanda, A. E. (2006). Poverty, Education and sustainable Educational Development in Nigeria. *The Belt Journal of Education in Nigeria*. (BELJEN).1(1) 236.

Shuaibu Stephen
Department of Educational Foundation,
Federal College of Education,
Okene,
Kogi State.

Journal of Qualitative Education, Volume 10 No. 1 May, 2014, ISSN: 0331 - 4790