

ADULT EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF ERADICATING FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN RURAL AREAS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines adult education as an important tool to be used to eradicate the level of functional illiteracy and transform adults in rural areas for sustainable development in African countries. Adult education has the potentials that can turn around the fortunes of illiterate in Africa. The survival and sustainable development of African nations depends largely on its citizens. This means that no country can sustain its development when illiteracy is floating. African's are faced with high illiteracy population which has resulted to insecure economy, high mortality, unemployment both youths and adults etc. African's cannot realize her dreams of sustainable development in Africa countries without the intervention of adult education.

This paper briefly looks into the concept of adult education, functional illiteracy, sustainable development and how adult education can eradicate functional illiteracy in rural areas of Africa for a sustainable development in Africa countries.

Key words: Adult, Education, Illiteracy, Sustainable, Development.

African countries for example Nigeria is a country with vast, fertile and arable land, abundant mineral resources, intellectual vocational creativity, scientific and technical talents citizens yet, Africans wallow in extreme irritative hunger and poverty. This paper discusses the problems of functional illiteracy among citizens of Africa and how adult education can help eradicate it for a sustainable development 2030.

The primitive nature of illiterates dwelling in rural areas of African countries calls for great concern. By observation, illiteracy can be seen as the root cause of low productivity in rural areas. Education does not constitute the process of learning the skills of reading and writing alone but the total liberation and development of rural adults educationally, economically, socially, politically, culturally, mentally, etc. It is only when adults are liberated that full potentials can be exhibited and exploited to contribute meaningfully, to a sustainable development. No country has succeeded if it has not educated its people (UNESCO, 2001). So the need for the role of adult education in eradicating functional illiteracy among citizens of Africa in rural area is important.

Meaning of Adult Education

The concept of adult education has been discussed in various ways by different scholars in the field. National (Nigeria) commission for mass literacy adult and non-formal education (NMEC) (2010), defined it as any organized learning activity for people considered to be adults by the society. The learning activity gives priority to age or adulthood but the teaching-learning activity may be for literacy acquisition, skill acquisition or information dissemination in form of workshops, seminars, or conferences.

In order words, adult education helps individual to acquire, and update knowledge and competencies which will help him or her to be self employed, self reliant, adapt and cope with the changes taking place in the society and environment today.

Looking at another definition of adult education by UNESCO, (2001), adult education as an entire body or organized educational process, whatever the content level and methods, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges, or universities as well as in apprenticeship whereby persons regarded as an adult by the society in which they belong develop their abilities,

enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualification and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two fold perspective in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development. Meaning that both formal, informal and non-formal type of adult education creates a great positive impact on citizens of the society.

Adult education according to William E, Obiozor, and Uche J. Obidiegw (2015) is used by nations, societies and communities to develop the type of human resources which the society deems fit for their economic, political, cultural, educational and social progress. Therefore adult education will help to develop human resources which is the key to sustainable development.

Functional Illiteracy

The free dictionary (2010) says illiteracy is lack of knowledge or education. An illiterate person is someone who never attended formal school on the other hand, functional illiteracy as according to the United States Department of Education (2005) is being incompetent in basic functions as reading, writing and calculation (mathematics). In the words of Wikipedia (2010), functional illiteracy is the inability to read or write simple sentences in any language, to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level. Based on the above definitions, functional illiterate adults or citizens can be referred to people who have never had the opportunity of going to school.

Sustainable Development Concept

According to Akpama (2017), a sustainable development is reviewed on twin issues of environmental protection and economic development. Therefore world commission on environment and development report OUR COMMON FUTURE defines sustainable development as that development which meet the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. It is a process which involves human's intelligence decision making, efficiency planning and management skills, power of imagination, entrepreneurship, development and production with environmental safety. Adult education form one of the fundamental education to achieve sustainable development. In order word, adult education can be able to make a part for sustainable development to be achieved in rural areas of African countries.

Sustainable Development Challenges in Africa

African countries continues to experience sustainable development challenges, they experience backwardness as a result of high rate of illiterate population. For example Nigeria, this statement is supported by Igbo (2008) who stated that Nigeria continues to experience development bottlenecks despite the considerable progress the country has made over the last ten years. These problems, according to him include

illiteracy, poor health conditions, religious conflicts, surge of HIV/AIDS and high incidence of poverty at a time when many parts of the world are enjoying economic opportunities resulting from globalization.

And also a similar report of the commission for Africa (2005) as cited by Ochim and Oko (2011) stated that although globalization has brought higher living standards of billions of men and women worldwide. Many Nigeria children and children of African countries are hungry, their bodies are needlessly ill, and they cannot read or write.

Large number of children still out of school in 2015 and a host of adults not developed in Nigeria (Igbo, 2008). The above report revealed that African countries are high with illiterate population with most of her manpower being unskilled or semi-skilled resulting from illiteracy. The few skilled and highly skilled adults are threatened by obsolesce due to fast technological changes in the world environment. With such problems, Africans, cannot realize to the fullest potentials and aspiration of a sustainable development 2030.

Adult Education as a Means of Eradicating Functional Illiteracy for Sustainable Development

What adult education can do in the case of functional illiterate citizens of Africans in rural areas is something to look at. A literate necessity for any nation wishing to take advantage of modern technological growth. Research has shown the importance of adult education in enabling the population of a nation to acquire social, civic and political skills (Bailey, 2006).

Adult education present programmes like literacy education, when emphasizes on functional literacy today. This programme is advocated to link learners to vocational skills, which include welding, tailoring, seam stressing, computer activities of photocopying, banking, fish farming etc. According to William E. & Uche J. (2015), the immediate needs of the rural communities are different from the urban communities. In the same way, the needs of capitalist economy are different from socialist economy, and in each of these societies, adult education is geared towards the efforts required for satisfaction of such peculiar needs and problems of such societies. Adult education helps learners tackle their problems rather than simple finding yourself in the solution Arikpo (2007:68), he further stated that assuming everybody arrives at the solution to their problems, then what role is left for the adult learner and adult education. Adult education is in the business of devising means through which challenges facing people can be resolved. Hence, eradication of illiteracy is one of the programmes of adult education which this paper advocates, that Africans should do thorough adult education for sustainable development.

Adult education is a liberation tool and can be employed to transform the rural citizens of African countries and inculcate desirable attitude and skills in them. It

prepares and enlightens the rural citizens, also assist them for effective participation in solving political and economic problems in their country.

Adult education as a means, help the rural citizen to acquire near technological skills for social, agricultural, health, educational, political and economic sustainable development. In this regards, the writer notes that education is power.

Conclusion

For a sustainable development to take place in a comprehensive approach, adult education becomes more prominent. Men and women i.e citizens of African countries are the rural economy of the nation, and educating them remains the development of the nation. Adult education should be looked upon as a means of eradicating illiteracy, mobilizing dormant human resources of African nations to improve socially, culturally, economically and politically. For the development of any country to be sustainable, the adults have to be functional, rational, participatory and product

Recommendations

Considering adult education as a means of eradicating functional illiteracy for a sustainable development, the writer recommends that:

- Non-governmental organizations should organize training in farming and other small-scale businesses for rural citizens in Africa to enable them acquire more skills to enhance their career.
- Government should provide skills acquisition training centers in all rural areas to improve upon their income generating activities.
- Government should establish and provide free functional literacy programmes centers in rural areas and also supervise it.
- Provision of vocational/technical education. The provision of vocational or technical education to adults and youths would help in preparing them to enhance their employability or updating them on new sustainable and development skills necessary in their chosen occupations. This component of adult education programme is the key to the production of skilled manpower that would be able to utilize the resources in the rural areas for sustainable development.

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