

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education is a process whereby individuals are prepared to fit into the social system in which they live. Education is a vital instrument for social, economic, technological and political transformation and development of any society. It is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing one's self or others intellectually for mature life. Education, According to Majasan (1974): is the process by which all human beings acquire beliefs, knowledge, and skills as they go through life. It goes on perceptibly and imperceptibly, formally and informally and has been regarded as the main process of transmitting the dynamic culture and socializing individuals throughout the ages. On the other hand, adult and non-formal education provides opportunities to adults and youths to continue their education at any level and in various forms. This is in response to their individual needs and that of their society. These needs of man may require achieving new knowledge and skills for handling his life challenges. Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-education activities in order to gain knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values, Oduaran T. The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as adults' lives differ. Adult education faces challenges such as poor perception of adult education by the public, marginalization and lack of funding by the government of the day. This paper therefore looks at the concept of education, adult and non-formal education, contemporary issues in Nigerian educational system and proffers some solutions, viz: adequate awareness should be given to the general public to enable them to know the importance of adult education. Funds should be made readily available and recognition should be given to adult education.

Key words: Education, Adult and Non-formal Education, Instrument, Contemporary issues, Self-educating, Perception, Marginalization

Adult education discipline encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional or personal reasons. It includes general, vocational and enterprise based training within a lifelong perspective. It is quite unfortunate here in Nigeria that the philosophic procedure to teach adult education is not working. And in direction to resolve the course of sociological and economic issues in Nigeria, several organizations have contributed tremendously towards the recreation of adult learning, organization like Christian missionary in the colonial epoch as well as the colonial leaders are responsible for the ministry of education. The dynamics of social changes and the peculiarities of educational initiatives in different settings all over the world do call for reviews with a view to meeting the emerging needs and values of the society.

Arising from the need for relevance in form of education for functional living, self-sustenance, and self-reliance, in Nigeria case, irregular educational reviews which are indeed curriculum-based have been witnessed at various times. These have re-shaped educational thoughts

and practices in Nigeria. The reason being that the opinions and solutions that key stakeholder's purpose for society's requests and needs for productivity and progress often make some of the components of the existing curriculum either obsolete or out of tune with currency.

Whenever this happens, it sets pace for the country's review initiatives in value-orientation, poverty eradication, wealth creation and job creation among many other reasons. Furthermore, the present educational status-quo explain the deficiency of adult education in Nigeria to immediately affect the level of cultural orientation, poverty eradication, wealth creation as well as western education which as being engineering the socio-economic development in the country since the proper conquest of Europeans in 1861. Having pointed out some lapses, the main reason we are considering the contemporary trend of adult education in Nigeria is that some adults have missed the opportunity to acquire formal education due to poverty, inadequate counseling, the civil war (1966-1970), Illiteracy and other factors which lead to imbalance of their level of education.

In spite of the rich variety of natural resources in Nigeria, the country is still very much underdeveloped. Within and outside Nigeria, analysts are of the view that the country clearly has the potential to be prosperous. As Nigeria attempts without much success to pull itself out of the quagmire of underdevelopment, the inevitably persistent question has been: given the resources at its disposal, why has the country remained mired in poverty? This paper attempts to provide a partial answer by arguing that Nigeria's inadequate commitment, over the years, to pursue the development of adult education as a strategic objective, as well as an instrument for national development has been one of the major drawbacks to the country's efforts to pull itself out of poverty. Underscoring the role of education in contemporary society, the paper proposes an adult education agenda for Nigeria.

The Concept/Purpose of Adult and Non-formal Education

The purpose of adult and non-formal education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) includes:

- (i) To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or (dropouts). These include the nomads, migrant families, the disable, and the disadvantaged gender.
- (ii) To provide functional and remedial education for those who did not complete secondary education.
- (iii) To present education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- (iv) To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional trainings for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills, and
- (v) To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural, and civic education for public enlightenment.

In Nigeria as in other countries of the world, an adult is a man or woman that has achieved full physical development; one who takes full responsibility for his action and conducts his life within the laws of the society. In the context of adult education, it is the cultivation of the human mind. It is learning done by mature people and can also be an out-of-school activity. Thus while school is terminal, education is interminable. On the strength of this, Adult Education is defined as a process of learning for persons who no long attend school or those who never attended school. The basis is for the achievement of individual's self-fulfillment needs.

In terms of operation, it is carried on outside the formal school setting. Thus it has out-of-school feature. It is also flexible because it is less institutionalized and less formalized. More particularly, it adopts an interdisciplinary nature. This type of education is therefore need-oriented and problem-solving and the programme is not only flexible but voluntary. As Hornby (2000) puts it, the purpose of Adult Education is “to catch up, keep up and to forge ahead”. In agreement with this assertion, Fafunwa (1974) clearly stated that the term Adult Education could be interchanged with „staff development“, continuing education, lifelong education, in-service education“, manpower education and development education”. Fafunwa therefore regards Adult Education as part of lifelong education.

On the strength of meaning and purpose of adult education, the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) also set out objectives for adult educators. The objectives include:

- i. Making the Nigerian citizens economically more efficient
- ii. Making the Nigerian citizens aware of their civic responsibilities to one another.
- iii. Making citizens have sense of responsibility and knowledge of how to adjust to home life, family and community relationship.
- iv. Insisting on fostering the objective of promoting good health and physical fitness of Nigerians.
- v. Promoting cultural development and appreciation of Arts among Nigerians
- vi. Supplementing and broadening the educational background of citizens as a tool to walk out of poverty, and
- vii. To provide for the development of vocational interest.

These objectives underscore the value of adult education and non-formal education. Today, we are faced with the challenges of school leavers searching for white collar jobs instead of acquiring technical or apprenticeship skills; many young and old people who sit at home without meaningful involvement in the production sector of the economy, children in schools living extravagant life and the abandonment of our cultural values with hunger and starvation, needless to talk about the dwindling revenue of the Federal Government occasioned by the oil glut. In correcting this menace bedeviling the nation, the Adult Educators have failed to properly utilize the mass media apparatus.

Education in Contemporary Society

There is hardly any industrialized country without a well-developed adult education and training system – a system that not only provides a rich variety of programs or courses that respond to both personal and national development needs, but also seeks to remove barriers to adult participation. The relatively routinely heavy investment industrialized countries make in adult education and training is informed by the critical role of knowledge and skills in modern economy. The economic productivity value of education generally is supported by human capital theory (Denison, 1962; Shultz, 1961). The theory considers human resources as a vital economic factor, it therefore, espouses the pursuit of education for economic productivity. Education directly contributes to the growth of national economy by improving the skills and productive capacity of workers. Conversely, the theory postulates that a lack of education keeps individuals and nations poor. The implication of human capital theory for the individual in the context of a modern economy which emphasizes knowledge, skills, and technology is that the acquisition and continual updating of knowledge and skills is imperative.

Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Educational System

The level at which adult education is being financed in Nigeria is not impressive, owing to the fact that the bodies in charge of formal and informal education in Nigeria are not fully implementing policies neither are they executing it. In the face of all this, adult education and its environment in this 21st century is generally faced with challenges. Adult education has been neglected by the government irrespective of the fact that it is the adult personnel of this country who are already at the production sectors and who will eventually transform this country from what it is today to achieve its developmental target of 7-point agenda of the late Umar Musa Yar'Adua. Seya (2005) makes the same observation. The objectives of Adult Education are not achievable in an environment where majority of the nation's population especially the adults who are in the production sectors of the economy are illiterates. Nzeneri (2006) observes that illiteracy is associated with underdevelopment, instability, low productivity, low income, poor health, and high poverty and mortality rates. It is the recognition of these ills that a onetime chairman of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria, Eke (1992) succinctly puts it that:

A cursory look at the political climate of the world shows clearly that regions of mass illiteracy are generally regions of instability, economic and political underdevelopment. Economically, an illiterate is on the periphery, politically he is completely in the dark. Education is a vibrant sector in economic development, with that fact we still need to consider the spread of education among dependent population, and how reliable the level of Nigeria formal education is affecting adult learner and question we mostly ask in regard to the population of adult that are undergraduate running part-time program in university, are they productive? In what level have they been able to affect the nation's productivity level?

These are issues generating dispute in contemporary trend of adult education. The definition of Adult Education at this point, becomes necessary to make this discussion intelligent, and clearly identify the basic issues that are examined in this discourse. Adult education as a concept is one most difficult to define. Yet we see people define it from different perspectives. Most writers seem to agree that adult education is the education geared towards the adult. This gives rise to the question "who is an adult".

An adult as a concept, just like adult education, has been defined by many different authors and writers from different perspectives. Some use the biological parameter in defining it, while others use the chronological, historical, economic, psychological, political and social parameters in defining who an adult is. One may ask "what then can be said about the concept of an adult"? Bown (1979) sees an adult as one who has achieved full physical development and is expected to have the right to participate as a responsible homemaker, worker and member of a society. As a matter of fact Adult Education cannot afford to be neglected in every society of the world, for the reason that adults are the people affecting the GDP in Nigeria most households depend and their parents to live.

Policy makers and the planners of adult education program in Nigeria need to incorporate into adult education those innovations which have made the 21st century unique. A fundamental requirement which adult education program planners need to incorporate into its schedule is the knowledge and practice of information and communication technology. The 21st century is characterized with exposition of knowledge and hi-technology which has aided development in different sectors. A century where communication and infrastructural facilities such as telephones fax and computer networking are tools that are turning the world into a global village. Virtually, all sectors of human endeavor in the 21st century have become technology driven. This has resulted in a

shift from “industrial era to information era”. Synonymous with the century is its ability to reach people irrespective of distance, introduce changes to human problems.

Adult education should not lag behind in this era of information and communication technology and knowledge exposition. A foundation value which adult education should incorporate and integrate in the 21st century program is adult education which is capable of educating the adult members of the Nigerian community a culture of peace and harmony. In recent past, events in some states show that educational institutions where we have our youths and young adults have turned out to be breeding grounds for violence and educated adult elites employ the services of these young adults to execute assassination of opponents, rig elections, rape, kidnap and lead rebellious gangs, commit fraud and pen robbery etc. These are some of the actions which adult education, which are purely for liberation, development and peace should challenge.

The challenge of poor public perception of adult education is considered another serious challenge of adult education in Nigeria. The poor public image of adult education field as an area of study for the old people is undoubtedly partly responsible for its low patronage as a discipline in Nigerians Universities (Umar, 2010). There must be adequate information about adult education in order to stimulate significant interests of people in the field as an important area of study that offers many opportunities to people.

Another issue of fundamental importance which needs to be addressed in the 21st century is that proper attention should be given to adult education by the three tiers of government in line with the global concern for suppression of illiteracy. There should be a holistic approach to adult education. The three tiers of government should allocate adequate finance to adult education program especially literacy and continuing education program because we cannot make progress in the 21st century where we have a nation where children and their adult parents are illiterate. We cannot achieve the objectives of Education for All (EFA) without having almost everyone especially the adult populace literate. Among this group are nomads and migrant fishermen etc.

Functional literacy may be organized for this people to enable them function properly in the society. Functional literacy programmes are usually directed towards people who cannot read, write and compute but need these skills for effective performance of their social and economic roles. According to Asiedu and Oyediji (1985), “functional literacy treats illiterates in a group context within a given environment or occupation with a view to satisfying the collective and individual needs of the group.”

The Way Forward

As laudable as the above can be, adult education has not succeeded in achieving the above objectives. Adult education should be re-positioned to excessively launch the present adults into the orbit where they can respond to the challenges of the 21st century and make meaningful contributions to national development.

From my point of view, the federal government needs to commercialize the education sector on individual per-capital income. Make a policy that can allow Nigerians to be educated even when they are not earning income, in anticipation to receive return when those citizens are yielding potential output, in other word are fully employed. Policy on adult education work in the same direction with economic growth, of country that has lesser percentage of illiteracy always yields productivity. Without proper implementation of policy that will affect the level, adult education spread positively, there will be a huge disequilibrium between the economic, social development and education in the

country. Government should know that the economic growth is disturbed when there is high level of illiteracy. However, if government is willing to affect the level of output, it needs to make education necessary for the society and follow up the program put in place to nurture educational development by the year.

Furthermore, the government of the day should provide adequate funding to enable adult and non-formal education to thrive. Awareness campaigns should be embarked upon by relevant agencies such as Agency for Mass and Literacy so as to enable the masses to know the importance of education. Adequate personnel should be trained to teach adult students. In the same vein, adequate structures should be put in place so as to create a conducive environment for learning. Finally, motivation should be given to the adult learners as well as the facilitators.

Conclusion

The 21st century has better prospects for adult education to move forward with globalization trends. This is true because the key to the development of any nation lies in the quality of adults that nation has. It is the adults who will transform the nation, not the children. Therefore, adult education must be a pacesetter to other professions in developmental drive of any nation. There should be a radical overhaul of adult education programs, which are committed with global trends. With enrolments of about 16,797,078 primary and 4,448,981 secondary students in 2001 and university enrolments of 411,347 in 1998 (UNESCO, 2004), Nigeria has made modest but significant progress in the development of formal and youth education. Nevertheless, a country that almost concentrates its educational investment on youth and formal education is unwittingly failing to develop and utilize its human resources optimally.

Furthermore, considering that knowledge and skills have become the means for individuals and nations to be competitive, the high rates of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, in spite of the country's natural resources, can be attributed, to a significant extent, to the lack of an education and training system committed to equipping adults to contribute more effectively to social, economic, political and cultural. Government should see adult population as a vital organ that can enhance economic productivity in as much as the categories of people belonging to the crops are within the age of 15-60 (according to the World Bank). Better policies and more inputs are needed to be input into the society to boost adult enthusiasm towards education, as well as is not necessary mandating them to go back to school but creation of alternative like work-shops that can help their efficiency, also creating a crimeless society, and making every possible provisions of vocational outlet to further engage adults will be better.

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