

ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: FROM ACCESS TO QUALITY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Adult and non-formal education occupies a pride of place in the National Policy on Education (2004) which describes adult and non-formal education as all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school. In order to cater to the needs of this varied categories of clientele, adult and non-formal education programmes generally on offer are: Basic Literacy, Post Literacy, Women Education, Functional Literacy, Nomadic Education, Continuing Education, etc. Despite the awareness occasioned by the massive mobilization efforts of National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and its state agencies, it has been discovered that there is lack of access to adult education programmes for many adults in Nigeria. Based on this, the paper will look at some of the problems of adult and non-formal education, prospects of adult and non-formal education and its contribution to national development.

Keywords: Adult Education, Access, Prospects, National Development, Quality.

Adult education in Nigeria is presently geared towards national development (Ewuzie, 2012). The objective of the process of adult education and national development is to get the adults, either as individuals or as a group, to learn and through learning to change their attitude and behaviour.

What is Adult and Non-Formal Education

Adult and non-formal education programmes generally provide basic literacy, functional literacy, post-literacy, literacy for the blind, literacy for the disabled,

women's education, nomadic education, continuing education, quranic integrated education, workers' education, vocational education, and prison education. These programmes are offered in the various states under the supervision of the state agencies for public education. The open apprenticeship scheme, operating in the informal sector, can complement these programmes with income-generating vocational skills targeted at eradicating poverty (Aderinoye, 2008). Given the lifelong learning objectives of adult education, most third world countries use adult education to improve literacy, to upgrade occupational competencies, and for community development (Hiemstra, 2003).

Goals/Objectives of Non-Formal Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has outlined the goals of mass literacy, and adult and non-formal education as that which shall:

- Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have not had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. This may include nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, particularly young girls and women;
- Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education;
- Provide education for different categories of graduates of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- Provide in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- Give the adult citizens of the country the necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FRN, 2004, p. 25; NMEC & UNICEF, 2008b, p. 1).

Adult Education and National Development

The role of adult education in national development is multi-dimensional. Indeed, as are of the building blocks of human development, and not just a basic right, education, including adult education, is a foundation for progress in areas such as human capital, health, nutrition and the development of institutions and democracy. Therefore, the role of adult education in development can be appreciated through the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, political, social and cultural determinant factors of Nigerian development in particular and Africa as a whole. The economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It is now well established that, alongside health care, sanitation, and nutrition that improve people's standard of living and productivity by reducing sickness and mortality rates and by increasing life expectancy, adult basic education, by equipping recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills, yields high rates on investment, thereby enhancing labour productivity. An educated population also provides a more attractive investment climate. Thus, investment in the development of human capital, through adult education, is crucial for developing a

labour force and managerial know-how, able to compete in today's global economy (Seya, 2014).

Formal education alone is not sufficient for playing this role as even those categories of the population who have had formal education and training might need to be updated and reskilled through adult education, mainly because today's knowledge society tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skills inappropriate and obsolete. Adult education is also instrumental in familiarising the active population of Nigeria with Information Communication Technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of Nigerian economies in the global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasised as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge-based economy as structures and information societies that comprise networks of individuals, firms, and countries linked electronically in inter-dependent and interactive relationships.

Adult education also plays a major role in social development. It is now widely admitted that growth will not reduce poverty unless poor people are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education. Indeed, the African, and of course, Nigerian population will need some kind of formal and non-formal education and training to be able to benefit from basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services with the development of new medicines, and they will be in a position to free themselves from diseases that devastate poor people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other parasites. Adult education will also be needed to enable the Nigerian poor to really take advantage of programmes aimed at protecting orphans and vulnerable children or drastically reducing the number of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation.

The role of adult education in development is not limited only to economic and social spheres. It also has a political dimension. There is a strong link between adult learning and democracy. This is so because, as acknowledged at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997, "substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed" (UNESCO, 1997). For democracy to be achieved, adult education is needed so as to inform them of their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels. It is today admitted that the lack of recognition of the need to involve civil society, especially grassroot organisations, by giving them a voice in decision-making and the means to participate effectively in society is one of the major causes of development failure in many African countries. Abuse of human rights and social injustice leading to the exclusion of important segments of society, have also constituted stumbling blocks to economic and social progress on the continent and paved the way to violent conflicts (Seya, 2014).

Adult education may prove to be a powerful tool for favouring inclusive development through democracy, thereby ensuring peace and stability, as a number of studies have shown that prevention (through adult education) is much more effective

than intervention. Prevention of political disorders and civil unrest can be made possible through various adult education strategies. A number of adult education policies that will promote democracy and peace have been proposed during the Fifth International Conference on Adult education (UNESCO, 1997). They tend to attain their objectives through various strategies that promote an active civil society that will reinforce gender democracy and help to solve conflicts between different countries and groups to the extent that the world at large is experiencing the effects of multi-faceted globalization with varying degrees of impact on peoples and cultures. It is apparent from the foregoing that adult education is an indispensable vector for social, economic and political progress in any society.

Improving the Conditions and Quality of Adult Learning

The Federal, State and Local Governments of Nigeria have established Adult Learning Institutions of diverse magnitude, shapes and orientation that create increasing access and opportunities for adults to learn throughout life. Some of these institutions at the Federal level include; The National Commission for Mass Education, National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, Centre for Management Development (CMD) Lagos, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria and a host of other institutions of higher learning with their outreach educational programmes.

Each of these institutions adopts legislation and other appropriate means to ensure that potential adult learner enjoys their right to learn, through international, national and local conferences, seminars and workshops organized by various bodies. There is an enlarged vision and scope for adult learning. There is improved training through the trainer workshop. New instructional materials suitable to learners' socio-economic conditions are being developed and procured for use.

Ensuring Accessibility and Quality

The Federal, State and Local institutions providing adult learning opportunities are guided by legislative framework within which they function. The policy guidelines are adhered to as much as possible because there is a monitoring and evaluation outfit to ensure compliance. Adults have access to schools, colleges and universities. There is an open door policy already which enables literate adults to enter primary school, adults who have obtained the basic primary school leaving certificate can proceed to secondary school through the continuing education centres or an Adult Education Institute which runs parallel educational programmes with post primary schools. At the tertiary level, (university in particular) concession is being given to adults based on maturity and experience.

Hence the admission requirements are less stiff when compared with their youth counterparts. Adults have opportunity to undertake educational programmes on a part time basis. They, by this arrangement can undertake sub-degree and degree programmes at the same time retaining their jobs. This unique *flexibility* in the provision of *adult*

learning has been possible due to some deliberate policy and regulations in favour of those adults who cannot favourably compete for admission.

Improving the conditions for the professional development of adult educators and facilitators: Opportunities abound in the country to train and re-train adult educators and facilitators. University Departments of Adult Education offer excellent opportunities to develop middle manpower for adult education through their sub-degree programmes, (certificate & diploma). High-level manpower development is achieved through University degree programmes, leading to the award of B.A. Ed. (Adult Educ.), M.Ed. (Adult Educ.) and Ph.D. in Adult Education. With the increased number of University departments of Adult Education/Continuing Education and Extension Services, many Adult Educators and Facilitators are beginning to upgrade their knowledge and skills in the business of educating adults.

In addition, training programme for training officers is a regular event in the country, for example, UNICEF in collaboration with NGOs organised training workshop for instructors, staff of agencies for mass literacy and non-formal Adult Education. The Theme of the workshop in 2000 and 2002 were “Adapting Andragogical Principles for Teaching Children” and Enhancing Adult Learning Using Andragogical Approach respectively. Since 1997 to date literacy instructors, supervisors and other staff in Adult Education usually undergo in-service and refresher courses to enhance the quality of learning which takes place in adult classes.

Another example is the workshop titled “Enhancing Literacy in Africa” sponsored by the British Council. At this workshop, different methods of literacy and related issues featured prominently. There are many other training workshops for various categories of Adult Educators and Facilitators on an annual basis at the local level.

The following provisions have been elaborated through a new set of legal or policy framework to provide relevant professional Adult Education. These include:

- Open learning system, which is heavily subsidized by Government.
- Provision of education loan scheme for professionals.
- Improved learning conditions; better classroom with modern learning equipment and suitable instructional materials being provided.

Challenges of Accessing Quality Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria

There are lots of challenges facing Nigerian educational system making it difficult for good quality education that is empowering and capable of bringing about sustainable development to be provided. Statistics show that federal government expenditure on education between 1997 and 2000 has been below 10 percent of overall expenditure. As at now, the earmarked budget for education by the federal government is 8.5 percent while a huge amount of the nation’s budget goes to salaries and allowances of political office holders (ERC 2013).

Education Rights Campaign, (ERC 2013) made an attempt to compare budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria with those of other countries. The result is as follows:

Budgetary Allocations on Education in Some Other Countries:

| Country | Percentage % |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Ghana | 31 |
| Cote d' Ivoire | 20 |
| Kenya | 23 |
| Morocco | 17.7 |
| Botswana | 19.0 |
| Swaziland | 24.6 |
| Lesotho | 17.0 |
| Uganda | 27.0 |
| Burkina Faso | 16.8 |
| Nigeria | 8.5 |

Source: Education Rights Campaign (2013)

Nigeria, when compared with the above countries, remains poor in matters of education funding. This poor funding of education has resulted in lack of adequate facilities for teaching, learning and research (www.educationrightscampaign.blogspot.com). This poor funding does not only affect formal education but all types of education including adult education. The problem of lack of adequate funding has led to the problem of low quality adult education especially in connection with poor centres not conducive for learning, lack of motivated and qualified staff. For Nigeria to achieve the level of economic growth required to tackle poverty and make sustainable development a reality, adult education must be improved upon. The relationship between education and development is an important one in the sense that education is a key index of development as education improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour as well as bringing about empowerment (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2002). In this light, adult education which covers all areas of human endeavour must not be neglected.

Adult education taken by the Nigerian society to be a low cost area of the educational system (which is not usually funded adequately), but if viewed from the point of view of return on investment, it is the most immediately productive and profitable for the national economy. The need of Nigeria today is a development – oriented education which is provided by adult and non formal education. When adult and non formal education is emphasized, the much emphasized self reliance in the national policy on Education will be realized. It is a fact that where majority of the people have no proper type of education or where majority are illiterate, a nation cannot

be strong. Change is manifesting in adult education in many ways and this is why adult education must be well funded and administered.

Ewuzie (2012) also stressed that in Nigeria high premium is placed on formal education. Formal education had always been emphasized from time immemorial and this is at the expense of adult and non-formal education. As good as formal education is, it is not known to bring immediate solution to problems facing individuals and nations. The federal government must provide funds for the running and administration of its programmes because adult education is the hope of millions. Adult education enhances literacy and employability skills.

Traditionally, adult education is seen as providing educational services mainly to the society but the direction of its services is not really stated. Seeing adult education in this light will make it difficult to define goals, establish consistent priorities and demonstrate successful programme outcome. This presupposes the fact that the stated priorities for adult education should be made explicit. What each programme of adult education should accomplish should be stated clearly as this will make adult education evade the “Gabbage” perception. Adult education programmes should be well designed and delivered to provide quality services that focus on the serious needs of the country and also meet clear and measurable objectives.

The perception of adult education and its value has varied greatly among individuals and groups. Some people view Adult Education only from the perspective of the old and aged adult, learning only to read and write. Adult Education is not perceived in terms of its varied and wide usefulness to young and middle aged adults. Adults sometimes also perceive learning from the point of how much time is left for them either to stay in their places of work or time to live (Lowy & O’Conor, 1986). This time perspective influences the educational goals of the older adults. There must be a great change in the perception of adult education by the generality of the people and this can be done by educating people on what adult education stands for. This issue of perception is thus related to the self-image of the adult learner. Viewing themselves as still being able to learn in spite of the switch from being a full time learner to one that takes on other responsibilities, it becomes important for progress to be made in adult education. This to Knowles (1980) creates more of self-directed personality.

People will have good perception of adult education programmes, if they are timely, relevant and innovative and if these programmes reflect practical/real life situation. The negative perception will change to positive one, when there is effective management and administration of adult education programmes. When there is the opposite of these stated facts which in most cases are major challenges faced in adult education in Nigeria, the perception is thus negative (Christine H, Lewis, Catherine & Dunlop assessed 28/4/13).

The Management and Administration of Adult Education Constitute another major challenge to adult education practices. Okafor and Onah (2002) defined administration as the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish a common goal.

Nwachuku (1988) sees management as the coordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. The question that readily comes to mind is how well is adult education managed and administered? Majorly, conferences and seminars have always been used as means of administration of adult and non-formal education. However, such conferences, seminars and workshops are of little benefit to the target audience as such are held in Hotels and Universities outside the areas where majority of the target audience live (Online Researchers, 2010). The mass media is supposed to be a good means of administration of adult education because of its wide coverage and its high ability to keep people adequately informed of the world in which they live and so it should be a vital instrument of adult education. However, much is still desired in this area in adult education practice in Nigeria.

The challenge of teaching is another problem being faced by adult education and this is in addition with the problem of facilitator. Imhabekhei (2009) is of the opinion that a person that is not a trained adult educator, may not be able to function as expected in terms of teaching the adult and he thus posited that there is need to differentiate between the method for teaching the young ones (Pedagogy) and the method for teaching adults (andragogy). Facilitators should learn to incorporate methods of learning that prove effective in every learning situation. Combining methods will help both facilitators and learners to achieve. Doing this may however be difficult for an untrained facilitator on whom the effectiveness of adult education lies. The facilitator who is not a trained adult educator may not be conversant with the nature and characteristics of adult learners and may not really understand that adults achieve less when the learning tasks involve too much theory and memorization. It is therefore important for trained adult educators to be employed for the purpose of effective adult education.

Hiring the services of trained adult educators proves impossible due to poor funding of adult education. For example, in Oyo State of Nigeria in the year 2012, when there was an enrolment of 37,249 adult learners in 33 local government areas of the state, there were only seventy-seven (77) facilitators which proved inadequate. Not much could be achieved by these facilitators given their poor condition of service. They were not usually paid on time and the remuneration was very poor, (Oyo State AANFE 2012). This poor condition of service is revealed at the 2012 Inter-ministerial Briefing in Oyo State. It is revealed that the agency is currently running very limited number of adult (education) literacy classes making use of local adult Education officers as facilitators pending the approval of payment of honorarium monthly stipends to the facilitators needed for the programme. Facilitators that are not motivated may not show any sign of commitment.

The teaching centre is another point to be considered. Desks and benches which are not so comfortable for adults are mostly used at the centres, These may not encourage good teaching and learning. The adult (literacy learners) were only supplied free exercise books (2A, 2B, 2D) and primers by the State government. All these are not

adequate and unless a bold step is taken to improve the situation, efforts on adult education will move down the drain.

Training and re-training programme (which is also a programme of adult education) for effectiveness of on the job performance must also be taken seriously because it is about developing human resources to its fullest potential. However one manifestation of this is the amount of resources allocated to training and retraining that will determine how effective the programme will be for the participants. In the words of Minister Lee Kuan Yew, “technology is changing so fast that if we don’t get the workers up to mark, they may be out of jobs because they cannot work the new machines that may come in”

Efforts must be made to look into these challenges with a view to finding solutions to them as in the words of Ewuzie “we cannot afford to wait for the children. First we must educate the adults, our children will not have an impact on our economic development for five, ten or even twenty years but adults have an impact now”. There must be innovations in adult education programmes and every impediment to the success of adult education must be removed.

Conclusion

When challenges facing adult education are properly tackled, the nation will record progress in its practice of adult education making it possible for its aims and objectives to be realized. Removing the obstacles to the practice of adult education shall enhance progress in the lives of individuals and the nation by helping individuals within the nation to understand themselves and their fellowmen, thus making him/her an asset to the nation. Adult education programmes should therefore be pursued vigorously so as to ensure an enlightened government and citizenry whose insights and decisions are vital to the development of the nation as well as individuals within it.

Examining the various benefits of adult education to an individual as well as to the nation, it is therefore important to remove barriers in accessing quality adult education in the nation.

Recommendations

Adult education programmes to Nnazor (2005), operate mainly as disparate, piece meal activities that are not integrated into coherent and purposeful strategy in the pursuit of a relatively development mission. The planners of adult education need to be coherent in the planning of programmes of adult education and policies on adult education should be followed to the letter if the dream of adult education making adults self-reliant is to be achieved. The role of monitoring cannot be over-emphasized in adult education as this boils down to quality control. Quality Control in education can only be guaranteed through regular and effective supervision. The issue of monitoring should therefore not be taken with levity if adult education is truly to help in creating a progressive society. Babalola and Ayeni (2009) see education as an investment and that

it is essential for the development of the nation and that it simultaneously contributes to personal fulfillment and the growth of an individual citizen. Adults must therefore not be left out in the issue of personal growth and fulfillment and so adult education must be planned well.

Adult education is suffering devaluation and this makes people develop a sense of low-esteem when compared with others in highly valued profession such as law and medicine. With good planning and management of adult education, the feeling of low esteem will give way and learners will value adult education programmes.

Finding solutions to challenges such as inadequate funding, neglect and poor professional development becomes imperative in the light of the statement of Omolewa (1985) that “It is not the children of today who hold the present destiny of Africa in their hands, it is the adults”. He therefore concludes that the adult must be helped to adjust to a rapidly changing world. This can be done by removing the challenges to adult education through proper planning of adult education, funding it adequately, training adult educators motivating facilitators and improving the monitoring of adult education programmes.

Based on the importance of adult education, it should be based upon collaboration and learner’s interest. Adult education practice should be reviewed constantly, organized and systematized in order to develop a more coherent and useful agenda for adult education to give it the needed respect among other disciplines. Adult education should also be made a relevant part of public policy because from the perspective of government judging by the poor funding, adult education continues to be poor education for poor people, an education reduced to temporary efforts at literacy. The government should therefore be pressurized to overcome their reductionist and limited vision of adult education. Adult education has a clear focus set on affirming, promoting and defending human rights in all their expression: civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental. Adult education seeks to democratize access to knowledge; it seeks to activate capacities for production and employment, for political participation and for revaluing human identity and culture; it is therefore clear that adult education cannot be relegated to the background. The discipline is a useful instrument for meeting the multiple needs of people, it should therefore be well funded, administered and its programmes well monitored. The Federal government in lieu of the importance of adult education should not reduce it to a literacy programme or basic education.

Universities should also generate useful knowledge concerning the practice of adult education and embark on more joint research on adult education. Training of adult facilitators must be improved and they must be well remunerated so that they feel fulfilled and their commitment shall thus be guaranteed.

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