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The Issues and Challenges in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) in Nigeria

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Abstract

A critical look at adult and non-formal education concerning the extent of achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainability in Nigeria, undoubtedly, reveals certain prevailing issues and challenges which the sector has to contend with in the country. This paper examines the issues and challenges in the intervention of Millennium Development Goals in adult and non-formal education as an important area of Nigerian educational sector. Essentially, enforcing Millennium Development Goal targets that are people-oriented is very critical for effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The paper identified such issues like improved funding of adult and non-formal education, advocating for relevant educational reforms in repositioning adult and non-formal education as well as the issue of human capital development as very critical for sustainability of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The challenges of poor funding, inadequacy of organizational support as well as lack of political will and commitment were highlighted in the paper. Some of the recommendations in the paper include improved funding, strong political will and strong MDG implementation team among others.

Fundamentally, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be described as global initiatives which are based on actions and specific targets of Millennium Declaration that was collectively endorsed by 189 member states of United Nations in special United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in September, 2000. Aliogo (2011)

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stated that Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are drawn from the actions and specific targets in the Millennium Declaration which was adopted by 189 member countries of United Nations during United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in September, 2000. Todaro and Smith (2009) rightly noted that 189 member states of United Nations as at the time under discussion adopted eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September, 2000. Indeed, Millennium Development Goals provided good focus to global development agenda in the contemporary world.

The collective endorsement of the Millennium Development Goals by the member states of United Nations was very critical for the effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals as global development initiatives and concerns to improve people's living conditions in the contemporary global environment. Van de Sand (2005), JDP Caritas Nigeria (2008), Aruma (2008), Todaro and Smith (2009) as well as Aruma (2010:46-48) stated that all the member countries of United Nations endorsed the eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with specific targets for achievement as follows:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - (i) Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar in a day.
 - (ii) Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2. Achieve universal basic education
 - (i) Ensure that all boys and girls of primary school age complete a full course of primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
 - (i) Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.
4. Reduce child mortality
 - (i) Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under the age of five years.
5. Improve maternal health
 - (i) Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
 - (i) Stop and begin to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.
 - (ii) Stop and begin to reduce the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
 - (i) Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes.
 - (ii) Stop loss of environmental resources.
 - (iii) Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
 - (iv) Achieve remarkable improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

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- (i) Develop further an open, rule based predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system.
- (ii) Promote commitment to good governance.
- (iii) Promote development and poverty reduction programmes at national and international levels.
- (iv) Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small Island developing states.
- (v) Address the special needs of the least developed countries.
- (vi) Promote tariff and quota free access for least developed countries exports.
- (vii) Promote programmes of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC).
- (viii) Promote cancellation of official bilateral debts.
- (ix) Promote more generous official development assistance (ODA) for countries committed to poverty reduction.
- (x) Deal very well with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt management sustainable in the long term.
- (xi) Partner with developing countries to develop and implement strategies for decent work for youth.
- (xii) Partner with the private sector of the economy in making available the benefits of new technological development, especially in the areas of information and communication technology (ICT).
- (xiii) Collaborate with pharmaceutical companies in widening people's access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries of the world.

Specifically, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on exploring possible ways of enhancing the living conditions of people in the world. Aruma (2010) noted with immense interest that the main concern of Millennium Development Goals is on promoting improved living conditions of people in the contemporary global environment by the year 2015. However, the achievement of the eight (8) Millennium Development Goals and the specific targets depend to a certain extent on the collaborative efforts of the member states of United Nations, availability of financial, human and material resources as well as political will to implement the global development agenda for improved living conditions of people in the world.

An Overview of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria

A critical look at adult and non-formal education in relation to the extent of achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainability in Nigeria reveals certain issues and challenges that confront the sector in the country. This situation, undoubtedly, denies both children and adults access to education as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guaranteed every person irrespective of age to have a right to education. Olakanmi (2007:22) asserted that section one (1) of article 26 of Declaration of Human Rights states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary (primary) and fundamental stages. Elementary (primary) education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Interesting, it was in an effort to achieve the global concern of various countries to achieve education for all as advocated by United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights that World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (1990) was held in Jomtien, Thailand from 5th-9th March, 1990.

Understandably, about 155 countries promised to commence the provision of basic education to all children in the world in 2000. Sadly enough, that promise to enhance the opportunity for people both children and adults to receive good quality education was broken in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Consequently, many people were intentionally or unintentionally denied access to good quality education in various countries including Nigeria in Africa. ActionAid/Oxfam (2000) rightly noted that more children are now out of school in Africa than there were in 1990 while the educational gap between the boys and girls remains the same. ActionAid/Oxfam (2000) predicted that if this development continues that there will be about 57 million African children of primary school age who will be out of school in 2015 as the target year for achievement of the specific target of universal basic education of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the world.

Essentially, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as global initiatives of United Nations in September, 2000 became imperative in order to address certain development challenges in the contemporary global environment. Specifically, with regards to education in Nigeria as a developing economy, the issues of poor access to educational opportunity both to children and adult population, poor infrastructural provisions, poor quality of education and poor human capital development among others were apparently identified as major challenges that required urgent intervention of United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. Regrettably, if adequate care is not taking with adequate involvement of all relevant stakeholders, the intervention of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in educational sector will be an exercise in futility in Nigeria. ActionAid/Oxfam (2000) asserted that there is, of course, a real danger that the opportunity will certainly be wasted in concerted efforts to achieve education for all. It is pertinent to remark that the three tiers of government in Nigeria have failed to ensure a good plan of action for providing strong political will and financial resources as well as active participation of all relevant stakeholders including adult educators and adult learners among others that are required to deliver on the promise of providing basic education to all and sundry in Nigeria. It is appropriate to caution that delivering on the promise of providing basic education for all by the year 2015 will be an exercise in futility in setting unrealistic targets for attainment.

The Issues in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria

The issues in adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria are as follows:

1. The Issue of Improved Funding of Adult and Non-Formal Education

The issue of poor funding of adult and non-formal education is a serious problem that hinders the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. It has been overtly observed that the issue of poor funding of Millennium Development Goals remains a serious challenge to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal targets of widening people's access to education and the quality of education, especially as it concerns adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Okediran (2006) rightly identified inadequate financial resources as part of the problems which militate against the achievement of (MDGs) in Nigeria. Indeed, mobilization of financial resources by all the relevant stakeholders is critical to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal targets in adult and non-formal education sector.

Aruma (2011) advocated that adequate funds should be provided by all relevant stakeholders to promote effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. He, however, warned against mismanagement of resources and high rate of corruption which hinder achievement in development initiatives such as Millennium Development Goals in the country. It has become imperative that good reforms in educational sector are urgently needed to stimulate effective teaching and learning in Nigeria. ActionAid/Oxfam (2000) asserted that achieving good quality and free basic education is just more than financial resource mobilization in the society. The organizations noted that far-reaching national reforms are very critical to overcome problems in access, equity as well as the quality of education in the country. Essentially, good reforms in educational sector will obviously create enabling environment for sustainability of achievement of (MDGs) in Nigeria.

2. The Issue of Relevant Educational Reforms

The issue of advocating for relevant educational reforms in educational sector, especially in repositioning adult and non-formal education for sustainability of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) initiatives is vital for Nigerian developing economy. ActionAid/Oxfam (2000) noted that national reforms are very important in order to overcome problems in access, equity and quality of education that is provided to people in the contemporary society. Okeke (2006) stated that the government embarked on reform programmes of the whole educational system in order to enhance people's access to education and provision of quality of education in Nigeria. Apparently, appropriate mechanism and measures should be put in place to guarantee quality delivery in education in the country.

There is certainly an urgent need to raise the literacy level in Nigeria as a developing economy if the country is really to catch up with the technologically developed countries of the world. It must be reiterated that adequate involvement of non-governmental organizations as donor agencies should always be sought to support

adult and non-formal education programmes with additional resources-financial, human and material resources in Nigeria.

3. The Issue of Human Capital Development

Essentially, the issue of human capital development is very critical for the sustainability of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. Human capital development is, indeed, a key element in promoting significant efforts in sustainability of (MDGs) in the country. The concept of human capital development simply focuses on enhancing the productive capabilities of people in order to enable them to improve their productivity, skills and abilities for effective service delivery in the society.

Todaro and Smith (2009) defined human capital development as productive investments in people through education and on-the-job training programmes which help them to acquire relevant skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance production of goods and services. Understandably, knowledge is power; and any person who really wants to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development initiatives must endeavour to acquire relevant knowledge in the society. This becomes obvious, especially in this very circumstance of achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Interestingly, education plays an important role in acquiring relevant knowledge in the society. Todaro and Smith (2009) stated that education is the key to ensure that creating, adapting and spreading knowledge is guaranteed in the society. Nwizu (2008) rightly remarked that lifelong education helps people in the training and retraining of manpower for adequate development in the society. Lack of adequate opportunities for human capital development certainly militates against the achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Hence, the urgent need for provision of adequate manpower cannot be overemphasized in the achievement of MDGs. Nwizu (2008) asserted that adequate manpower is needed in order to confront the challenges that militate against the achievement of MDGs in Nigeria. Indeed, human capital development is very critical for sustainability of any human endeavour in the society.

The Challenges of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainability in Nigeria

The challenges of adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainability in Nigeria are the followings:

1. The challenges of poor funding.
2. The challenges of inadequacy of organizational support.
3. The challenges of lack of political will and commitment.

1. The Challenges of Poor Funding

Inadequacy of funds is a serious problem that militates against effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals, particularly as it concerns adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Okediran (2006) observed that inadequate funding presents a serious challenge to effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Specifically, poor funding of adult and non-formal

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education in Millennium Development Goals, undoubtedly, limits the opportunities to widen people's access to education. It should be noted also that the quality of education being received by adult learners in adult and non-formal education in certain cases is poor in the country. It must be remarked that poorly run adult and non-formal educational programmes occasioned by poor funding of the sector does not promote effective teaching and learning in the system. Pratt and Boyden (1985) stated that poorly run and unprofessionally taught literacy education programmes are not effective in achieving meaningful results in teaching and learning process in the society. Indeed, provision of adequate funds certainly helps to guarantee the employment of professionally competent adult education workers who will be prepared to promote effective teaching and learning in adult and non-formal education for the benefit of adult learners in Nigeria.

Aruma (2010) asserted that sourcing for counterpart funds from participating local communities, local, state and federal governments in Millennium Development Goals remains a serious challenge to the stakeholders in this globally approved development initiative in Nigeria. The relevant stakeholders in both Millennium Development Goals as well as adult and non-formal education should be adequately involved in sourcing for adequate funds in order to achieve meaningful results in the sector in Nigeria.

2. The Challenges of Inadequacy of Organizational Support

It has been observed that inadequacy of organizational support presents another challenge to the promotion of sustainable achievement of Millennium Development Goals in the area of adult and non-formal education in the country. Pratt and Boyden (1985) noted that a good organization which is supported by an adequate budget to pay and train workers as well as to support learning groups with learning materials is very important in the society. Indeed, a reliable organizational support for adult and non-formal education is very critical if it is to record successful achievement in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Regrettably, poor organizational support for adult and non-formal education is a serious problem to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals in this sector of Nigerian educational system.

Aruma (2010) remarked that this poor institutional support to achieve certain specific targets of Millennium Development Goals hampers notable success in the global development initiatives in the relevant areas concerned in the country. Essentially, concerted efforts should be made to encourage the promotion of organizational support for adult and non-formal education at various levels notably national and international levels in Nigeria. Certainly, well co-ordinated national and international concerns will stimulate achieving effective implementation of Millennium Development Goals for sustainability in promoting enabling learning environment for adult learners in the country.

3. The Challenges of Lack of Political Will and Commitment

Another challenge of adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals for sustainability is lack of political will and commitment in Nigeria. The term political will is perceived to mean the concerns of people in governance who have the governmental authority to provide certain things which will certainly impact positively on people's lives through appropriate institutional reforms and policies in the country. Todaro (1982) defined political will as a determined and deliberate choice upon a course of action by people in the political authority to enhance people's living conditions through various reforms of social, economic as well as institutional structures. Consequently, political will is simply defined as deliberate choice of action by people in governance with vested political authority to improve the poor living conditions of people through the instrumentality of appropriate laws, reforms and policies in the society.

Indeed, the focus of political will and commitment is stimulating effective service delivery in improving socio-economic conditions of people through the use of appropriate laws, reforms and policies that are development-oriented in the society. In the words of Todaro and Smith (2009), the concept of political will means determined effort of people in political authority to see that certain socio-economic objectives and goals are achieved through reforms and policies. Aruma (2011b) remarked that the people in political authority must deliberately demonstrate strong political will and commitment in order to improve socio-economic living conditions of people through the instrumentality of appropriate institutional reforms, policies and framework in the society. Certainly, lack of political will and commitment presents a serious challenge to adult and non-formal education in achieving Millennium Development Goals for sustainability in Nigeria. There is, indeed, an urgent need for attitudinal change of people in political authority to develop a new course in ensuring that improved living conditions of people is achieved through the instrumentality of appropriate laws, reforms and policies that focus specifically on people-oriented development in the society. There is, of course, a serious need to mobilize actions and relevant human and material as well as financial resources to guarantee effective implementation of adult learning in adult and non-formal education in order to achieve meaningful results in Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Conclusions

Fundamentally, good reforms in educational sector which will certainly help to reposition adult and non-formal education will obviously create enabling environment for sustainability of achievement in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. There is therefore, an urgent need to explore the possibility of using appropriate national reforms as an important policy instrument of government in educational sector to overcome challenges in widening people's access to education and quality of effective service delivery in the country's educational sector.

Adult and non-formal education, indeed, deserves much more attention and action in order to promote sustainability of achieving Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. Adult and non-formal education should be repositioned to benefit

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tremendously from human capital development programmes, especially in this current age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) designed to prepare workers to acquire relevant knowledge and skills in line with the global best practices to enhance efficiency and productivity in the society.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the discussions on issues and challenges in adult and non-formal education in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria:

1. There should be incorporation of adult and non-formal education in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The idea for the integration of adult and non-formal education into Millennium Development Goal target areas will obviously help to widen access to learning opportunities of adult learners in the country.
2. There should be an improved funding of Millennium Development Goal targets which focus on widening access to learning opportunities of adult learners in the society. The relevant stakeholders should endeavour to release counterpart funds appropriately without delay to enable member states in Millennium Development Goals to address the development challenges focusing on adult and non-formal education in their respective countries.
3. There should be strong political will and commitment if an appreciable progress is to be recorded in the implementation of adult and non-formal education as a target area in Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The provision of strong political will is very vital for the success of MDG. Projects in the country.
4. There should be a strong Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Team with clearly stated mandates to promote effective teaching and learning in adult and non-formal education as a new target area in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The Millennium Development Goals Implementation Team should be supported very well by all the three tiers of government in Nigeria and other relevant stakeholders in this global development initiative.
5. There should be institutional framework and arrangement to ensure that Millennium Development Goals provide support to community development initiatives, especially to local communities in development areas that focus on wealth creation, employment generation and income generation among others which will impact positively on adult learners in the society. The sustainability of such community development endeavours should be explored extensively in the Millennium Development Goal target projects using adult and non-formal education to enhance the poor living conditions of people at the local community level in the country.

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