

THE ROLES OF ADULT EDUCATION IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND SELF RELIANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Poverty is a very big and complex obstacle to both the progress of an individual and a state. It is a cause as well as effect of under development. This paper therefore discusses the concept of Adult Education, poverty and poverty Alleviation, effect of poverty on people and strategies employed by Adult Education in poverty alleviation. Some recommendations include Nigeria education should be made functional to reduce unemployment and facilitate national development, Employment opportunities should be created so that thousands of Nigerian youths looking for jobs can be employed. Workers should be paid their salaries and allowance at the right time and retired civil servants should be paid their pension when they are supposed to receive it. There should be free education up to the last class of post primary and free medical care for citizen. If the recommendations made will be adopted, it will help to Alleviate poverty in Nigeria.

Adult Education is education which is concerned with the development of personal ability and the encouragement of social, moral and intellectual responsibility in relation to local, national and world citizenship. According to Eyibe (2005) Adult Education is any kind of education designed for the illiterate population, the formal school dropouts, and the unskilled and semi-skilled workers and carried on outside the formal school setting. This definition implies that Adult Education is

1. A literacy programme.
2. A remediation programme.

3. A skill training programme.
4. A retraining programme.

From my own point of view adult education is a continuous process that change for good the attitude of adult learners to become useful members of the society .Adult Education aims at helping Adults who didn't have the opportunity of attending formal school; dropout who because of one reason or the other did not complete the formal school, and the disabled to be useful to themselves and community in which they live.

Objective of Adult Education

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education; the goals of adult and non-formal education are;

- i. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, and the disabled and other categories of group, especially the disadvantaged gender.
- ii. Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- iii. Provide education for different categories in order to improve their basic knowledge and skill.
- iv. Provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills, and.
- v. Give the adult citizen of the country aesthetic, cultural and civil education for public enlightenment.

Adult Education should help an adult to understand himself, his talents, his potentials, his limitations, and his relationship with others and society. It must provide opportunities for intellectual enrichment.

Concept of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs-such as food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, asset and self esteem, and had limited social and economic infrastructure such as health potable water and sanitation and consequent has limited chances of advancing his or her welfare to the limits of his or her capabilities (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1997) poverty has been a serious challenge to governments in the World and Nigeria in particular. It is a snare, is dehumanizing and must be eradicated. (Obadan, 1996). The effect of poverty, which include lack and deprivation in the basic necessities of life, and worrisome.

Poverty Alleviation is a plan devised by authority in power to release its citizen from poverty and its attendant problems. Nigeria government introduced so many programmes in order to stop poverty in the country. They initiated and implemented many programmes for alleviating poverty. Among these programmes are 1972 General Gowon's national Accelerated Food Production programme, 1976 General Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation and 1979 Shagari's Green Revolution Programme. Mrs. Mariam Babangida brought women to the lime light when she introduced her Better Life for Rural Women Programme between 1985 and 1993. The programme was changed to Family Support

Programme during Abacha's regime which was a pet project of Mariam Abacha. This was hijacked by some educated and exposed women who pretended to be representing the rural women. Despite all these programmes by 1999 a World Bank report showed that Nigeria's Human Development Index (NHDI) was only 0.416 and that 70% of the population live below poverty line.

This alarming indicator prompted the formulations of National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) in January 2001 by president Obasanjo with the objective of alleviating poverty among Nigerians. In 2004 the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was set up. The strategy was to create wealth; create seven million new jobs, alleviate poverty and eliminate corruption between 2004 and 2007 which it has failed to achieve. Administration of late Umaru Musa Yaradua developed seven point Agenda which include power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform security, qualitative and functional education. If the above points will be achieved they will help to upgrade Nigerian standard and economy to meet with most developed countries by the year 2020.

It is glaring that all these programmes and reforms have not done much to alleviate poverty among Nigerians, this is because the poor for whom the programmes are initiated are not involved in their planning, implementation

and evaluation. The programmes are not tied to other programmes like education which can help to achieve success.

Effect of Poverty on People

One of the characteristics of third world country is poverty. The majority are so poor that they cannot feed well, live in good house, have good education, medical attention etc.

1. **Mental and physical ailments** children who grow up in poverty suffer more persistent, frequent and severe health problems than those who grow up under financial circumstances. Many of these children have low birth weight which is associate with many preventable mental and physical disabilities.
2. **Educational deprivation:** Parents who are poor find it very difficult to provide all the necessary learning materials needed by their children in school. At times due to hardship these children dropout of school. Some families will not have the money to send their wards to formal school. This does not mean that these children are not intelligent and the implication is that children who could have been brilliant doctors, lawyers, Accountants, University professors end up as stack illiterate without future.
3. **Child and women abuse:** Many families today due to poverty use

their children as sources of income for the family. A child of ten years will be sent to know while other children will be in school. Hawking many a times lead to death of such children through accident. Some children may enter into other dirty behaviours like prostitution, stealing, unwanted pregnancy etc. some parents will send their children to serve in hotels which will also lead into prostitution, contacting of sexually transmitted diseases which may leads to death of the child. Some mothers also engaged into prostitution due to poverty. Unlucky ones meet their death and that of their husband in this situation.

4. **Hunger and malnutrition:** In Nigeria today mass poverty has taken deep root in society. That is, there are many people who live below the poverty line who cannot provide themselves with basic needs of life such as food, house and clothes etc. talk less of maintaining their children socially. Because of these reasons many Nigeria die of malnutrition and diseases.
5. **Increase in crime:** The organized system of production and distribution of available goods and services in the society does not favour the majority of the society members. The production and distribution network is controlled and directed by a class of elite that posses selfish and greedy tendencies

(Ezeh, 2001). The increase of poverty and unemployment results in high rate of crime in the society. Many Nigerian men and women engaged in armed robbery, kidnapping, drug addition, prostitution and corrupt practices in public offices. High crime rate has in turn introduced insecurity. Insecurity is negative to development because it lowers people's capacity to produce and also discourage investment which is one incentive for National Development.

6. Many poor people mainly do not have shelter over their head. Many of them live under the bridges, flyovers, street corners, market places, etc. Few lucky ones sleep under uncompleted and dilapidated buildings. The outcome of the above is that they are prone to insecurity and dangers inform of ritualist, rapist, kidnappers murderers, hit and run or reckless drivers, effect of adverse weather and sudden death caused by fall of dilapidated building.

Strategies Employed by Adult Education in Poverty Alleviation

Adult Education plays a vital role in the reduction of poverty in the society.

1. Adult Education offers opportunities to all categories of adults to acquire literacy and numeracy skills, new knowledge, new competencies and new abilities in problem solving. These new knowledge and skills

help the individual to be useful to himself and the nation at large, thereby reducing poverty.

2. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger will also be achieved through skill development in adult especially in women (house wives) and youth who are dropout of formal schools because the skills they learnt in classes are easily put into use in the learners activities outside the classroom. If Nigeria adults are helped to be independent in wealth creation, there will be increase in the standard of living of many families and there will be reduction in child mortality.
 3. According to Obi (2006), a functional adult literacy project for nursing mothers, which aims at teaching them experiences for the tasks of effective mother- craft, will include knowledge of common food items for children that helps them to grow well, knowledge of common sickness that afflict children, consumer education and family budget. With this there will be increase maternal health and also promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women will be achieved. Therefore, the education of adult men and women in Nigeria will help to achieve poverty alleviation. There are different functional adult learner projects for different group of adult learners.
- Take for instance, farmers, commercial cyclist, nursing mothers, house wives, traditional rulers, etc have each a specific functional literacy project tailored to its needs like local drinks (beverages), soap making, crafts e.t.c. Functional adult literacy curriculum planning is highly specialized and skillful activities. It is one of the best ways of imparting skills to illiterate adults. When this is implemented very well, it will be a way of achieving the eradication of poverty in our society.
4. Many families cannot apply new scientific methods of farming and new technique of farming because they are illiterates and poor. Adult education has the power to put poor illiterate farmers in line with the new technique and new scientific method of farming.
 5. Adult Education not only increases the flow of skills but assists people to destroy the traditional attitude that impede progress and at the same time it links knowledge with methods of production. It helps to strengthen the economy fact that it is an investment in manpower development.
 6. There are many school leavers who are adults, who roam about the streets looking for white collar job but without skills needed by industries where they could work.

Adult Education helps these groups of people by developing them in such skills as poultry, farming, soap making, furniture, craft, mother craft, rice farming, dress making, soya bean preparation etc. Development of such skills will help them to be self reliant.

7. Most people did not receive full training, because of this, there is need for more training to increase effectiveness, these groups of adult may not want to go through formal education gain.

Adult Vocational Education can lead people through in service or on-the-job training or follow up courses to improve their efficiency and productivity while still holding their job.

Conclusion

Adult education must be properly channeled to achieve the required objectives in the learners. It must also be relevant and beneficial to the society at large by training adult learners to be useful member of the society. The need then arises to focus development of practical potentials that will make them financially self-reliant which will by no means alleviate poverty level and bring advancement to national development.

Recommendation

In order to alleviate poverty in Nigeria the paper recommends the following:

1. Government should come out with functional agricultural policies and Promote this sector of the economy so that the country can once more produce enough food and cash crops.
2. Nigerian education should made functional to reduce unemployment And facilitate national development.
3. Employment opportunities should be created so that thousands of Nigerian youths looking for jobs can be employed.
4. They should be free education up to the last class of post primary schools, and free medical care for citizens.
5. Workers should be paid their salaries and allowances at the right time and retired civil servants should be paid their pension when they are supposed to receive it.

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