

ADULT EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Adult education which is often used interchangeably with other notions such as literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing education, fall under the umbrella of non-formal education provided as a second chance or opportunity to those that have earlier missed schooling. Apart from being a right of everyone to be educated, adult education paves way for people to contribute to the development of themselves and their society. It is on record that the present level of illiteracy is very high in Nigeria; this makes it difficult for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development. This paper therefore looks at various aspects of sustainable development and how adult education can serve as a tool for all the goals attainment. Using secondary instrument such as various documents and various scholars view, the paper established that there is high number of population of illiterates in Nigeria and the need to drastically reduce the challenges such as poor budgetary allocation, societal perception of adult education, unqualified facilitators among others so that multi-dimensional nature of sustainable development which includes changes in social structures, attitude and all conditions of life from undesirable to the desirable be achieved. The paper therefore recommended that a systematic adult education policy be adopted and compressive education and training opportunities for adults that would expose them to various professional, vocational and other programmes of interest be embraced in order to achieve SDGs and Agenda 2030 in Nigeria.

Keywords: Adult Education, Tool, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Adult education has been defined as the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development, adult education, however, must not be considered as an entity in itself, it is a sub-division, and an integral part of, a global scheme for life-long education and learning (UNESCO, 1976).

It can also be refer to any form of learning undertaken by those that have missed learning opportunity and would want to continue or those that dropped out of earlier school, hence, it is provided for youths and adults outside the formal school system. Although literacy education is the main focus, learning in adult education includes numeracy, problem-solving and life skills. Adult education is often used interchangeably with other notions such as literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing education, all of which fall under the umbrella of non-formal education. For the purpose of this presentation, adult education is understood as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, value and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view to remedying early educational inadequacies equipping the recipients with the knowledge and cultural elements required for self-fulfillment and active participation in the social economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2014).

Ewuzie (2012) is of the opinion that Adult Education in Nigeria is presently geared towards national development. 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. The National Policy on Education (2014) clearly states the objectives of adult education as.

1. To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the opportunity of any formal education.
2. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system.
3. To provide further education for different categories of completers of formal

- education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
4. To provide in-service and on-the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
 5. To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Monye (1981) opined that all these objectives have one end in view-to equip the adult with everything he needs for life in order to be relevant to his society by helping to solve some of its problem. We have to recognize that development is of man, by man and for man. Man is the master of his destiny and adult education serves to bring about a fundamental change in man's attitudes and lifestyle. To survive, people must have awareness and to become aware they must be literate.

Benefits of Adult Education

Over the last few years, political as well as scientific debates have stressed the growing importance of adult education. There prevails a consensus that adult education plays significant role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being, which has also long been recognised by Deutscher Volkshoch Schul-Verband (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. DVV international. There is a deep rooted belief that adult learning has the potential to create personal, economic and social value (Motschilnig, 2014). This paper argues that adult education affects people's lives in ways that go far beyond what can be measured by the labour market earnings and economic growth. Important as they are, the wider benefits of adult learning are neither currently well understood nor systematically measured.

Economic Benefit of Adult Education

Adult learning can improve employability and income, which is a key pathway to realizing a range of other benefit. For example, it enables people to some extent, choose and shape the context in which they live and work and even increase their social status.

Health Benefit of Adult Education

Empirical evidence has found that adult learning can have both transforming and sustaining effects on health. Transforming effects are when adult learning changes health behavior (for instance from smoking to non-smoking, child spacing for women and acceptance of family planning among couples) while sustaining effects are when health behavior is maintained, for example, the likelihood of remaining a non-smoker. Therefore people attending adult education course are more likely to have healthy lifestyles, and there is a body of literature which describe adult learning and its relation to mental

health. Also, Inter-generational effects of educated parent on the health of their children are very relevant (Manninen, 2008).

Civic and Social Engagement

Many countries share a concern about declining levels of voter participation and about the state of civic participation. It is possible that adult learning might inspire a change in attitude which in turn brings about a change in behavior. Several studies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2007), Desjardin & Schullar, 2006, Field, 2009), amongst others, show that learning can promote social cohesion and strengthen citizenship. Adult learning may support the development of shared norms, greater trust towards other individual and the government and move civic co-operation.

Attitudes Change

An individual who participate in adult learning may differ from the one who does not in terms of prior attitude. It was found, according to Feinstein, et. al (2003), that adult learning is associated with more "open-minded" perspectives on race and authority, greater understanding of people from different backgrounds, challenging previously held beliefs and with a sustaining effect on non-extremist view. Youths and adult exposed to learning would have an open mind to accept others in terms of race, colour and religion. Condemning each others would be a thing of the past as appreciating others view along with others show human can always disagree to agree.

Educational Progression

Progression into other learning is an important outcome of adult education. Given the opportunity to start from where one stops and wish to continue in order to achieve a dream is one of the benefits of adult education. There is clear evidence that successful engagement in learning provides incentive for further learning. Manninen (2010) found that 93 percent of course participants said that their participation has motivated them to learn more. Furthermore, learners described their progress by referring to real life activities they could now do in a wide variety of life context (every day and leisure practice, work) community and educational practice). Self-confidence, finding voice and giving one's time up to learning were identified by almost all learners and seemed central to their perspective on learning. These outcome provided improvement in the quality of their live and become part of their learner identity.

Poverty Reduction

Although inadequately understood, adult education has been cited as a key in

reducing poverty levels around the world (UNESCO- UIL, 2009 in EAFA, 2010) as it has the capacity to positively affect many dimensions of poverty. This means that adult education has a role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reducing the risk of poverty, and also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty inducing pressure. European Association for the Adult education (EAFA) (2010) underlines the empowering role that adult education can play in times of crises, providing a stable community, a chance for reorientation, a safe place and social recognition. Also, the United Kingdom, the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning (IFLL) (Sabates, 2008) concludes that participating in adult learning can help substantially to reduce poverty through enhancing employment prospects, improving health levels of poor people and giving better chances of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives. Therefore, it should be a part of any approach to reducing poverty, as multiple initiatives are needed to lift people out of poverty.

Challenges of Adult 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 and this has greatly affected the development of education especially adult education. Hence these challenges such as;

Poor Budgetary Allocation

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 education especially in connection with poor learning centers / schools not conducive for learning. For Nigeria to achieve the level of economic growth require 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 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 endeavors must not be neglected.

Societal Perception of Adult Education

The perception of adult education and its values has varied greatly among individual and groups. Some people view adult education only from the perspective of the old aged adult learning only to both read and write. Adult education is not perceived in terms of its varies and wide usefulness to young and middle aged adults. Adult sometime also perceives

learning from the point of how much time is left for them either to stay in their place of work or time to live (Claivy & O' Connor, 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 this related to the self-image of adult learners. Viewing themselves as still being able to learn in spite of the switch from being a full time learner to one that take on other responsibility becomes important for progress to be made in adult education. This, to Knowles (1980), creates more of self-direction of adult education programmes, if they are timely.

Inadequate and Unqualified Facilitators

Another major problem facing adult education delivery in Nigeria is appointment of those that are not well trained in the area of adult education. The service of trained personnel in adult education proves impossible due to the fact that there is poor recognition as well as inadequate 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 the 33 local government areas of the State, there were only seventy-seven (77) facilitators which proved inadequate. Nothing much can be achieved in that circumstance. There was also poor condition of service leading to late payment of honorarium of those employed (Oyo State Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education, AANFE 2012). This poor condition of service is revealed at the 2012 inter-ministerial briefing in Oyo State. For the achievement of SDGs as envisaged worldwide and especially in Nigeria, facilitators in all the State and FCT must be remunerated as at when due as been done to teachers in the formal school system.

Training and Re-Training of Instructors

Training and re-training programme which is also a programme of adult education is needed for effectiveness of job performance. It is necessary and must be taken seriously because it is about developing human resources. 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 youths and adult learners. Many people may not be engaged in this programme because of lack of support from the employers. There must be innovations in adult education programmes and every impediment to the success of adult education must be removed. Okofor (1991) sees adult education as the only profession that assists adult learners effectively in their effort to learn. It instills lost hope in people and liberates them from the prejudice of seeing themselves as people who cannot learn it awakens adult learners to become aware of their environment in terms of socio-economic cultural and political matters. Adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life but rather with assisting adult to live more

successfully as useful and acceptable number of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies.

Considering these importance of adult education, its challenges should be removed to pave way for effective practice of adult education. Adult education programmes 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 of making adult self-reliant is to be achieved.

Learning Centres

Unlike the formal learning environment where provision is made to create an enabling classroom, desks and benches which are been used to facilitate learning are not always comfortable for adults. The adult 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.

Poor Supervision

The role of monitoring and supervision cannot be over-emphasised 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. Bababola and Ajeni (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 individual citizen. Adult must therefore not be left out in the issue of personal growth and fulfillment and so adult education must be well planned. To make this happen, provision of adult education need to be regularly monitored and even documented. It is when this is done that the achievement of sustainable development would be better appreciated.

Problem of Management and Administration

Managing of adult education is crucial to its development, same goes to issue of administration. Unfortunately, this has not been so in Nigeria. When there is effective management and administration of adult education programmes, the idea of achieving SDG will be easier. When there is the opposite of these stated facts which is most cases are major challenges faced in adult education in Nigeria. Defining management and administration of adult education practice, Okafor and Onah (2002) were of the opinion that it is the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common

goal. Nwachuku (1988) sees management as the coordination of all the resources of 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? Majority of those in the helm of affairs of adult education in Nigeria are not professional. One can only give what they know. Many of the Agencies for adult education are been controlled by those that were not even professional in adult education (Olojede, 2012). Typically, Ministry of Education rules are been used to appoint Directors and Secretary to oversee adult education administration. This has overwhelming effect in delivery and management. 2030 is not far away and much effort should be put in place to see effective administration and management of adult education in Nigeria. A better option is the appointment of only that study adult education to steer the canoe and establishment of a separate Ministry for adult education as been done currently in Ondo State.

Development

For the purpose of this presentation, development will be referred to as a process of economic, social, political and culture change engineered in a given society by the effort of all stakeholders, both internal and external including the local communities, the government, the private sector, the civil society organizations, the NGOs and the technical and financial development partners with a view to improving the conditions of the life of the population in a sustainable way (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). Implicit in these definitions is the assumption that development requires the formation of human and social capital required for the promotion of factors of production required for a broad-based economic growth which provide a ground for sustainable poverty reduction.

Allen (2013) has identified three main meanings in which development is generally used:

- i. As a vision, description or measure of the state of being of a desirable society;
- ii. As an historical process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods; and
- iii. As consisting of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various agencies, including governments, all kinds of organization and social movements.

What is Sustainable Development?

The UN General Assembly (1987) defines sustainable development as type of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". To the World Bank (1992), sustainable

development is continuous and accelerated, human and economic development, which will in turn bring about improve environmental conditions. In other words, sustainable development to the World Bank is "development that continues" (World Bank, 1992). A further comprehensive definition that corroborates the World Bank's position on the concept is the one offered by the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992. According to the 'Declaration', sustainable development is a continuous development of the society in order to satisfy peoples' present and future needs, through judicious management and utilisation of natural resources. To Ciegis, Ramanauskiene, and Martinkus (2009), sustainable development embraces economic, environmental, and social developments, which they described as "interrelated and complementary". The overall goal of sustainable development according to Emas (2015) is for long-term stability of the economy and environment; which could only be achieved through a proactive governmental decision.

Nigeria's experience with development planning pre-dates her independence in 1960 with successive National Development Plans (NDPs) being developed in the post-independence era. Instructively, in the mid-1970s, at the peak of its relevance as a national economic barometer, Nigeria's National Development Plan ran parallel to a similar exercise in China which at that time was also trying to lay a solid foundation for its economy in many respects. Unfortunately, while China persevered on an upward trajectory and ended up as the go-to economy of the world today, Nigeria has not been so fortunate having moved from one planning framework to another, with varying degrees of implementation until the frames could not really be said to be impactful. As a consequence, and together with the inevitable impact of global economic downturns, we, as a nation, have had our fair share of economic development blights since then (Buari, 2017).

In September 2015, 190 UN Member countries adopted the Agenda 2030, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Agenda 2030 seeks to guide countries to end extreme poverty and hunger, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate change, among other things. In most countries, including Nigeria, the MDGs were only partially achieved, thus shifting a greater development burden to the future. The innovative idea of goal-oriented planning, pioneered by the MDGs, gained acceptance in Nigeria when the country used MDG Needs Assessment and Costing as a basis for a ten year development strategy (2006-2015). By 2015 when the SDGs were adopted, noticeable progress had been made in addressing global social and development issues following the implementation of actions relating to the MDGs. However, several challenges remained, which continued to affect the achievement of the goals

in many countries/regions. These challenges are prominent in the areas of eliminating poverty and hunger, ensuring good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, good jobs and economic growth, reducing inequalities, and achieving relief from climate change, among other things. Also, under the MDGs, development planners did not focus much attention on several issues that now feature in the SDGs. The combination of this unfinished business of the MDGs and previously unaddressed issues provided the context for the SDGs. Looking at all the goals listed in SDG, one would conclude that education is fundamental to the achievement of the goals but presently in Nigeria the level of illiteracy might not make expectation for the success possible, hence the need to address how adult education can be used as a factor of success to sustainable development.

Adult Education and Sustainable Development

Adult and non-formal education is a productive human development investment. Ability of people to read and write has possessed a great significance and importance to the extent that literacy has become one of the fundamental requirements of modern civilization (Olojede, 2013). Various experts such as Olojede (2015), Olaye & Onajite (2015), Okpe (2013) and Ihejirika (2012) as well as organisations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2002) and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO, 2002) have all agreed that the higher the percentage of a functional literate people in a society, the much better are the opportunities for socio-economical, technological and cultural development. In agreement with the foregoing, and based on the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence."

The role of adult education in national development is multi-dimensional. Indeed, literacy could be said to be the bedrock of development. It is not just a basic right, 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 its provision and economic, political, social and cultural determinant in Nigeria. The economic role of adult education is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. 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 in today's global economy (Seya, 2004).

The population of who has had formal education and training might need to be updated 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 familiarizing the active population of Nigeria with information Communication Technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of Nigeria economics in the global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge based economics structures and information societies that comprise networks of individuals, firms and countries linked electronically in inter-dependent and interactive relationship. Adult education also plays a major role in social development.

Nigeria 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 service the development of new medicines, and this be in a position to free itself from diseases, that devastate poor people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other parasites. Adult education will also be needed to enable the poor Nigerians 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 Way Forward

Nigeria's commitment to adult education dated back to 1914 with efforts from people like A. J. Carpenter. Subsequent attempt after independence include establishment of Agencies for Adult Education in all the States in the country as well as in Federal Capital Territory. Apart from this, various Commission have been established on Primary Education, Nomadic Education as well as Universal Basic Education Commission. Also, Nigeria is privy to various International consensus on literacy delivery and promotion, one of these international treaty is the Sustainable Development Goals that replaced Millennium Development Goals. Examining various papers and scholars opinion of the issue of SDG and Agenda 2030, this paper has come up with various suggestions that if implemented, would make Nigeria achieve the goals in sustainable development.

The paper advocates for a systematic Adult education policy adopted in Nigeria. This should be guided in both conception and implementation by a philosophy of continuing education or lifelong learning. Lifelong learning stresses the need for learning to be ongoing throughout life. This entails that a comprehensive adult education policy that would sustain a culture that would lead to the emergence of a learning society as observed by Edward (1997) would evolve. Based on the importance of adult education especially for youths and adults and for the adequate planning for the implementation of SDGs, there should be effective collaboration among all stakeholders and learners' interest must be addressed. Adult education practice should be revived, constantly organised 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 poor funding, adult education continues to be poor education for poor people, even among the elite. It has always been seen as an education reduced to temporary effort aimed at literacy development. The government should therefore be ready to see adult education as part of education delivery that can help to achieve SDGs in Nigeria. Many of the goals in the SDG can only be achieved when youths and adults that have not literate are provided for. There must be an inclusive education for all so as to achieve the desired goals in SDGs and Agenda 2030. Sustained political government is desirable, but only those that trained and well equipped with knowledge and wisdom would vote and make peace, even where there is differences in opinion about elections and parties. Adult education seek 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 should not be relegated to the background.

The discipline is a useful instrument for meeting needs of people it should therefore be well funded, administered and its programmes well monitored. The Federal Government in view of the importance of adult education should not reduce it to literacy programmes or basic education. Nigerian 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 commitment is thus guaranteed.

Conclusion

This paper identified Adult Education as a tool that could be used in achieving human capacity for sustainable development in Nigeria. Through its programme, the much needed technical and vocational knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed by the adult populace for sustainable development are achieved. In addition, it enables people to become well-informed, capable of thinking critically and owning their destiny through active participation. Successful and sustainable development cannot be achieved when the majority of the populace are illiterates. The political will to encourage adult education especially in areas of policies implementation is necessary and should be implemented. The political will should be encouraged to develop adult education especially in areas of policies and funding that would afford the adults more opportunities to be educated as well as creating a well-articulated and purpose driven route for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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