Adult Education a Tool for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Development can be seen as a multi-dimensional process which includes changes in social structures, attitudes and all conditions of life from undesirable to the desirable. Education being the only vehicle to drive home the expected change and growth. This means that it should be affordable and available for people to access. It is on record that the present level of illiteracy is very high in Nigeria and as such, for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development. The population of illiterate in Nigeria needed to be reduced drastically. The challenges as discussed ranged from poor budgetary allocation, societal perception of adult education, hiring the services of trained adult educators, the teaching centre and training and retraining of instructors. Hence this paper proffered solutions on how Nigeria as a nation could achieve sustainable development using adult education as a tool. It is argued that adult education should be a tool that could be utilized to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria and ensure sustainable development. It is therefore recommended that a systematic adult education policy be adopted and comprehensive education and training opportunities for adults that would expose themselves to various professional, vocational and other programmes of interest be embraced.

Introduction

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. The policy on education 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 problems. 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.

Adult Education usually refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal school system. The main targets are specifically defined as youth (girls and boys over 15 years of age, but sometime younger) as well as women and men, generally poor or socially disadvantaged. Although literacy continues to be at its heart, adult education also includes “numeracy”, problem-solving and life skills, and other knowledge. The notion of adult education is often used interchangeably with other notions such as literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing, adult basic end non-formal education, and etcetera. For the purpose of this presentation, adult education is understood as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view to remedying early educational inadequacies of matured people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2014). The concept of development is complex as it has several connotations. However, Allen (2013) has identified three main meanings in which development is generally used, namely:

(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 organizations and social movements. For the purpose of this presentation, development will be referred to as a process of economic, social, political and cultural change engineered in a given society by the efforts 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. Implicit in these definitions is the assumption that development requires, interalia, the formation of human capital and social capital, some of the main factors of production required for a broad-based economic growth that provides the ground for sustainable poverty reduction.

Adult Education and 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 apprehended 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).

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 Nigerian economies in the global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge-based economic 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, the development of new medicines, and thus 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 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 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 grassroots organizations, 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 promote democracy and peace has 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, 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 multifaceted 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.

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. 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 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.

Societal Perception of Adult Education
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 aged adult learning only to both 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 (Lawy & 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 thus related to the self-image of 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 responsibility 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.

**Hiring the Services of Trained Adult Educators**

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 can be achieved by these facilitators given their poor condition of service. They are not usually paid in time and the remuneration is very poor, (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. It is revealed that the agency is currently running very limited number of adult (education) literacy classes making use of local adult Education offices 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**

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 of Instructors**

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. 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. Okafor (1991) sees adult education as the only profession that assists adult learners effectively in their efforts 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 adults to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members 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 adults self-reliant is to be achieved.

**Poor Supervision**

The role of monitoring and supervision 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 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.

**The Problem of Management and Administration**

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. 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 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 other 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.

**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 a
significant role in promoting personal, social and economic well-being, which has also long been recognized by Deutscher Volkshochschul-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 for 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 Benefits of Adult Education**

Adult learning can improve employability and income, which is a key pathway to realizing a range of other benefits. 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**

Empirical evidence has found that adult learning can have both transforming and sustaining effect on health. Transforming effects are when adult learning changes health behaviour (for instance from smoking to non-smoking) while sustaining effects are when health behaviour is maintained, for example, the likelihood of remaining a non-smoker. Therefore, people attending Adult education courses are more likely to have healthy lifestyles, and there is a body of literature which describes adult learning and its relation to mental health. Also, inter-generational effects of educated parents 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 behaviour. Several studies (OECD, 2007; Desjardins & Schuller, 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 individuals and the government and more civic cooperation.

**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, Hammond, Woods, Preston and Bynner (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 nonextremist views. Especially academic oriented courses are most suited for opening minds and generally link adult learning to increased racial tolerance, a reduction in political cynicism and a higher inclination towards democratic attitudes.
Educational Progression
Progression into other learning is an important outcome 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. Further, learners described their progress by referring to real life activities they could now do in a wide variety of life contexts (everyday and leisure practice, work) community and educational practice). Self-confidence, finding voice and opening up to learning were identified by almost all learners and seemed central to their perspective on learning. These outcomes provided improvement in the quality of their lives 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 EAEA, 2010) as it has the capacity to positively affect many dimensions of poverty. Results show that adult education has a role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reducing the risk of poverty, but also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressures. European Association for the Adult Education (EAEA) (2010) underlines the empowering role that adult education can have 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.

The way forward
A systematic Adult education policy should be 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 Edwards (1997) would evolve. 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 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 literacy programmes 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 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 is illiterate. The political will to encourage adult education especially in areas of policies and funding would afford more adults opportunities to be educated as well as creating a well articulated and purpose driven route for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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