

The Implication of Adult Education for National Development

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Abstract: *This paper reviews the issue of Adult Education and its linkage with National Development. The concept of adult education is analyzed in the context of non-formal education and lifelong learning. Adult education succinctly explained in tandem with National Development. The elements that should constitute adult education policy for Nigeria's development is outlined and elucidated upon.*

I. Introduction

Education has been identified as tool 'par excellence' for affecting national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). There exist four types of education namely: indigenous (traditional) education, formal education, informal education, adult and non-formal education. Indigenous education also referred to as traditional education as practiced within the African context is the oral transmission of the people's statement of beliefs, rules and customs from one generation to another. Formal education is a consciously planned instructional process based on a prescribed syllabus and carried on in the school. Informal education is education set-up not based on fixed or prescribed rules, it is determined by the prevailing nature and content of what is to be learned while adult and non-formal education is a remedial literacy programme carried out to impart the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic to adult. Adult education is particularly geared towards functional literacy, where the beneficiaries are expected to use the skills acquired to improve their daily living standards (Egbezor and Okanezi, 2008).

Educations over the years have been viewed as a critical driver of people's development. Development is not only guaranteed through formal education as believed in many quarters, adult education also holds a significant potential for impacting society positively on the nation's growth and development. Adult and non-formal educations are recognized in Nigerians third edition of the National Policy for Education(FRN, 2004).

With a population of about 60million, Nigeria remains the most populous country in Africa and the largest unit of people of African descent in the world. Although endowed with huge natural resources, ironically, poverty continues to ravage the potentially wealthy country. Nigeria has been ranked 151st of 177 nations in the 2004 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2004). In that same year UNDP had asserted that between 66 to 70 percent of Nigerians are poor, and the rate of unemployment is about 150% (UNDP, 2004).

This pervasive poverty can partly be attributed to unsustainable and inadequate commitment to the development of adult education. This paper therefore highlights the role and implications that adult education could have on national development in Nigeria.

II. Concept of Adult Education

Firstly, non-formal education is any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system to provide selected type of learning to particular subgroup in the population adult as well as children. Non-formal education includes many types of learning experiences. It is a life-long process of learning which include adult education, apprenticeship system, continuing education, in-service programmes, on-the job training programmes, personnel and professional development, refresher courses, staff development programmes, workers and students' industrial training (Egbezor and Okanezi, 2008). Non-formal education is designed to encourage all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school systems such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). From the foregoing, and in the context of this paper, adult education encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional or personal reasons. It includes general, vocational and enterprise based training within a lifelong perspective (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003).

III. The Issue of Development

The concept of development of the individual should be the primary purpose of education, which should involve the enablement and liberation of the individual from all forms of oppressions and inhibitions.

Article 2 of the International Bill of Human Rights states that “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human rights and fundamental freedoms...” It is generally viewed that development has a purpose which is the liberation of man. Education as an instrument of liberation brings about people’s empowerment and social transformation.

According to Egbezor and Okanezi (2008), genuine development and education involve the moral strength to expose and speak against oppressive forces and falsehood.

Duru (1998) opined that development is a process of socio-economic and political transformation of problems generating structure in such a way that it leads to improvement in the level of living of the people including income education, health and nutrition and other related social services, decreasing inequality in the distribution of income, urban-rural imbalances and political and economic opportunities. Furthermore, development is seen as the capacity of members of the society to actualize themselves by participating actually in the social engineering of their lives and destiny.

IV. Adult Education and Development

The United Nations Organization (1975) defined adult education as a component of life-long education which begins in the cradle and ends in the grave. The idea arises out of the awareness of rapid changes in technology and institutions which in turn require human beings to up-date their skills and knowledge in order to catch up with modern events of individual at childhood, youth and adulthood. Part of the goal of life-long education is therefore to reinforce and improve the education of the young as well as offer adults broad opportunities for self-renewal and social advancement. The French refer to it as “education permanent”, reinforcing the idea of its continuity and functionality, in developed countries of Europe and North America; it is designed as recurrent education (Egbezor and Okanezi, 2008).

There is hardly any industrialized country in our contemporary world without a well-developed adult education and training system — a system that not only provides a rich variety of programmes or courses that respond to both personal and national development needs, but also seeks to remove barriers to adult participation.

The relatively routinely heavy investment industrialized countries make in adult education and training is informed by the critical role of knowledge and skills in modern economy. The economic productivity value of education generally is supported by human capital theory (Shultz, 1961). The theory considers human resources as a vital economic factor. It therefore exposes the pursuit of education for economic productivity. Education directly contributes to the growth of national economy by improving the skills and productive capacity of workers. On the other hand, the theory postulates that a lack of education keeps individuals and nations poor. Therefore the implication of human capital theory for the individual in the context of a modern economy which emphasizes knowledge, skills and technology is that the acquisition and continual updating of knowledge and skills is imperative.

Intricately connected to the issue of economic productivity rationale for education is the rationale of professionalization of modern society (Eraut, 1994). Professionalization or occupational rationalization is driven by a number of factors. The complexity of modern society calls for the services of a multiplicity of diverse occupations which demands the preparation of large numbers of people for the different occupations.

Besides, modern society needs knowledge expert in diverse fields for knowledge generation. Systematic pursuit of knowledge about the physical and social world can best be handled by experts. Similarly, efficient and effective application of knowledge and skills to valued social purposes requires specialists.

Importantly, countries also invest in education because education facilitates personal and social development. According to Nnazor (2005), it is becoming increasingly limiting for everyone to function in modern society without a good measure of education. Even though Nigeria is not quite there yet, the imperatives of information and technology in society demands that individuals possess at least basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as general social knowledge. The rapid obsolete of knowledge and skills literally require individuals who need up-to-date knowledge and skills for personal development and occupational purposes to participate continually in education or life-long learning. With cognizance of the multiple social and economic roles of education in modern society, “institutionalists, believe that contemporary society has institutionalized education as a citizenship right, as a social virtue, as a public good and as a stratification process (Nnazor, 2005).

V. Adult Education in Nigeria

According to Nnazor (2005), adult education agenda for Nigeria should involve the development and implementation of a systemic adult education policy. Such a policy should be guided both in conception and implementation by a philosophy of continuing education or life-long learning. Life long learning as a philosophy and a way of life emphasizes that learning should be ongoing through life. According to Edwards

(1997), a responsively comprehensive adult education policy should seek to institute and sustain a culture of learning that will lead to the emergence of a learning society.

As Nigerian adults struggle with the problems and opportunities in their personal lives, they are simultaneously challenged to contribute to the development of their communities and society. Hence, lifelong learning becomes imperative, not only for the effective function of individuals at the workplace and in their own communities, but also for the renewal of society itself. To achieve our national agenda for adult education, a systemic and comprehensive adult education policy that have the following elements should be pursued;

1. **Provision of Incentives for Adult Participation**

In the face of pervasive poverty that faces the adults in Nigeria, motivating adults to participate in education and training programmes that are not employersponsored would require a variety of incentives such as subsidized child care service, flexible scheduling, and career and personal guidance services.

2. **Coherence of Programmes**

A coherent adult education policy should have a unifying mission, as well as organizational structural mechanisms for coordinating programmes and activities. Adult programmes should be integrated in such a way to ensure relationship among programmes and the needs of adult participants as well as the needs of the society.

3. **Comprehensiveness**

In order to harness the talents and abilities of adult population in national development, there must be comprehensive education and training opportunities for adults. Professional, vocational and general education programmes and courses must be available and affordable.

4. **Personal Development and Family Management**

Adult education should essentially provide learners guidance on how to access information regarding issues, such as health, nutrition, family planning, education and career opportunities for self and children.

5. **Civic and Peace Education**

This will ensure that citizens know how government functions and what their responsibilities and rights are.

6. **Entrepreneurship Education**

This would help to reduce the high rate of unemployment in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria by equipping adults with the knowledge and skills for setting up and running small business effectively. Other areas and elements to be explored and inculcated into adult literacy include: literacy which is said to be critical to the development of individual Nigerians and the country; content and pedagogy quality as well as research and evaluation for its continuing effectiveness and development.

VI. Conclusions/Recommendation

Nigeria has made modest but significant progress in the development of formal and youth education considering that knowledge and skills have been increasing by becoming relevant to global competitiveness, education and training system committed to equipping adults to contribute more effectively to social, economic, political and cultural development. Any national development without commitment to sustainable and coherent adult education policy will make such national development elusive.

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