

Literacy and Lifelong Learning: Means Of Eradicating unemployment and Poverty among Adults and Youths In Ekiti State.

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Abstract,

This paper is set to examine the trend of unemployment and poverty among adults and youths in Ekiti State with a bid to tackle this problems through the programmes of literacy education and lifelong learning skills. It particularly discussed the issue of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty as they affect adults and youths in rural communities. The paper defines the concept and programmes of literacy education. It also examines lifelong learning skills that can empower adults and youths in Ekiti State. The paper considered the potentials of literacy education and lifelong skills in empowering adults and youths as means of eradicating unemployment, poverty and dependency in its totality. The paper concludes that, engaging adult and youths in programmes of literacy and lifelong skills will empower adults and youths educationally, socially and economically, make them become self-reliance, employable and employer of labour, thereby contributing significantly to the development of their communities and the nation at large. The paper encouraged government and stakeholders to make education and lifelong skills a matter of importance, particularly for adult and youths who are unemployed in the state, so as to eradicate unemployment, dependency and poverty in the society.

Key Words: *Unemployment, poverty, Literacy, lifelong-skills, self-reliance and societal development.*

Date of Submission: 14-10-2022

Date of Acceptance: 29-10-2022

I. Introduction

Education whether formal or informal is germane to the development of individuals, the society and the nation at large. It is an undeniable fact that education liberates people from illiteracy, unemployment and poverty as it enhances individuals and nation's development, resulting from a strong correlation between literacy and socio-economic development (Nkamnebe and Nkamnebe, 2016). Education is particularly important in building individual's career and skills development. It is an anchor, through which an individual who is educated is socially and economically empowered to develop himself and contribute meaningfully to the development of his community. Education is also considered an important tool in shaping the life of individuals in the society, through it, knowledge is imparted, faculties are trained and skills are developed, which at the end produces citizens that are dynamics, self-sufficient, effective and exhibits civic responsibilities, (FRN 2007). In his own submission, Idowu (2020) posits that education is identified as the most powerful instrument for social reform, as it impacts knowledge, skills and character to the individuals through teaching and learning and experimental activities.

However, as important as education is to the development of individuals, communities and the nation at large, no meaningful development can take place except the individual is equipped with necessary education needed for development in this competitive world. Literacy education, however, from the onset have tend to provide an individuals with all-encompassing educational development and enhances lifelong changing and improvement in the areas of learning and skills development, income generation, socio-economic empowerment as well as in the area of political engagements. In other word, literacy education seems to be the best medium through which adequate education for all can be achieved and ways by which a society can develop qualitatively.

The State of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment as they affect adults and youths.

The state of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, as they affect adults and youths, particularly in Ekiti State have continue a major problem by the day without any concerted effort to tackle them. These issues of have remained the most intractable and uncontrollable problems that Nigeria is facing till date without solution at site. Studies have indicated that there are more than 900 million illiterates globally, out of which half of them are adults, including youths, who cannot cope with the development of the daily life because

of their illiteracy status, (Ifeanacho, Ochim, & Okengwu 2019). The illiteracy rates has been confirmed to be on the increase in Nigeria, with 65 to 75 million Nigerians illiterates (AdamuAdamu, 2017). Research also declared that there are about 70 million citizens of Nigeria who cannot read and write or who lack basic skills for modern living, while the out-of-school children are put at 11 million (Vanguardngr, 2018). It is therefore disheartening that every day population keep increasing with the people devoid of the ingredients of developments. The dangers in illiteracy is that it is associated with poverty, unemployment and under-employment, low life expectancy, oppression and under-development among adults and youths in the rural communities (UNESCO 2017). The problem is particularly worrisome when it come to the use of technological based literacy to perform certain tasks pertaining to effective functioning of individual and the community. Moreover, it is difficult for the non-literates to operate ICT based information successfully because of their inability to read and write. Studies also revealed that many of them finds it difficult to operate the easiest mobile phones successfully, either for sending (SMS) messages or emailing. Not these alone, they also find it difficult to do banking transactions successfully, which account for why majority of them have fallen victims to fraudulent individuals in an attempt to assists them in operating the automated teller machine (ATM). The non-literates therefore seems to suffer social exclusion and are compelled to live their lives as though they are in a separate world (Ifeanacho, Ochim, & Okengwu 2019).

Furthermore, the issue of poverty among adults and youths today has continue to be worrisome. The globally rate of poverty has fallen below the border line as a result of unemployment or under-employment. Research shows that 10% of the world's population lived on less than \$1.90 a day, meaning that 735.9 million people lived below the poverty threshold (Nigerian bulletin, 2018), and Nigeria was confirmed to be top among the top 10 African countries with an extreme poverty rate (Nigerian bulletin, 2018). In Ekiti State for instance, a recruitment exercise was conducted in 2018, it was confirmed that no fewer than 48,000 unemployed adults and youths sat for the examination meant for only 2,000 available spaces in the public services (News Agency of Nigeria, 2018). This problem was not unconnected with non-availability of jobs or lack of facilities that can enhance skills and job opportunities for adults and youths. Unemployment in Nigeria therefore, is at alarming rate and has become a treat to the economic development of the nation. Today, there are a lot of qualified youths and adults who are capable and willing to work, but could not get jobs due to lack of jobs and infrastructures that can cater for them (Longe 2017). In another dimension, the study also reveals that a lot of Nigerian graduates are not employable because they do not possess the skills needed by the employers because they lack entrepreneurial contents that could have enabled them become job creators rather than job seekers at the end of their study.

Consequently, Longe, (2017) decried that graduates unemployment is one of the most critical problems facing the contemporary Nigerians and that university graduates are facing serious unemployment challenges because of the imbalance in Nigeria's economic growth and slow development in nation's socio-economic transformation. The study confirms that the economic and social consequences of graduate unemployment as it is being experienced today in the developing countries like Nigeria, constitutes a peculiar problem to labour market and the general economy of the nation. The economic cost according to the study involves reduction in gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation and also reduces the output and erodes human capital. Unemployment has also forced majority of people, adults and youths, even teenagers to engage in assiduous jobs and crime related businesses, such as okada riding, wheel-barrow pushing, stealing, 419/yahoo-yahoo, kidnapping and terrorism. More still, poverty and unemployment have caused many youths and teenagers to lose interest in academic pursuit and have relapsed back into illiteracy. This situation is daily becoming chronic with no solution in sight, unless urgent intervention is sought through literacy education programmes and lifelong skills particularly in the rural communities. Moreover, to solve this problems, Longe(2017) recommends among others that government should undertake an effective reappraisal of her various public policies and programmes designed to generate adequate economic opportunities capable of creating jobs for the unemployed graduates, diversifying the economy with the aim of creating self-sustainable employment scheme and to provide supportive quality infrastructures to reduce cost of doing business, which this study is also clamoring for.

Concept of Literacy

Literacy education has continue to enjoy varieties of definitions from scholars all over. Generally, it is conceived as the ability to read, write and compute arithmetic (UNESCO 2004). It goes further to include the ability to understand and communicate in one's own native language, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Literacy specifically is designed to equip people with the skills of reading, writing, computation for effective functioning of such individual in his day today's activities. However, today the concepts of literacy has gone beyond reading, writing and computing and has been recognized as a human right for individuals and very crucial for the pursuits of other rights (Fasokun 2005). Literacy as a continuum of learning is the foundation of all meaningful learning and a gateway for individual's participation in social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life. Literacy has assisted individuals to function effectively in all activities in which learning is

required for effective functioning in his/her group and within the community (UNESCO, 2010). Moreover, in this era technological advancements, literacy has been widely understood within the concept of technological advancements. In this context, literacy functions to improve knowledge and skills through technology, also, it equipped people with technological knowledge that can lead to personal development, assist in career and skill development, become employable, self-reliance and useful to the society. This supports Ayodele and Adedokun, (2012), which posits that literacy has gone beyond the ability of reading, writing and engaging in simple calculation, but has included the ability to apply ICT facilities to learning in order to achieve learning goals, to developing people's knowledge and enhanced individual with potentials to fully participate in developing the society and the nation. Literacy activities involve educating the people, making them literate and also ensuring they acquire the necessary knowledge. The programmes of literacy include acquisition of basic literacy, where people learn to read and write equivalent to primary three, then post literacy where people continue and learn to the level equivalent to primary education and there after continue in education programmes for completion of post literacy. It also offers opportunities for those who left early because of one reason or the other. It also include acquisition of vocational skills, entrepreneurial skills and life-long skills in general. In other words, literacy involves all activities and programmes put in place to educate and empowered individuals to improve himself, assist others and contribute significantly to the development of his community and the nation at large. Literacy, particularly in this era of technological advancements is significant and vital in changing the lives, orientations, attitudes, values, behaviours and beliefs of people. It is also important in building a healthy community in its totality. Literacy knowledge has been the major source of skills and career development, socio-economic empowerment, cultural and political engagements in rural communities. It has played significant roles in assisting people in communities to be empowered and also improved on the existing skills. For instance, knowledge of literacy has led to the improvement of agricultural production as a result of adjusting to new system and methods of farming activities. Not these alone, literacy knowledge has contributed greatly to the improvement of healthy living of people in communities, it has help to equip people on better ways of protecting themselves, their families and their environments from diseases and pollution. Literacy knowledge also has the potentials of enhancing people in the communities with adequate information to increase productivity and income earning, thereby creating employment opportunities as source of income for individuals and the community. Literacy education therefore, is very crucial in having improved standard of living, having self-esteem, empowered, being creative and having access to vital information needed for self-growth and community development, (Adedokun and Kayode 2019).

Types and Programmes of literacy Education.

There are various types and programmes of literacy education (Adeyemo C.W. 2009), but this paper will discuss the following literacy programmes in line with acquisition of literacy skills, employment opportunities and poverty reduction among adults and youths.

A. Traditional literacy: Traditional literacy is the ancient literacy activities, which is an end in itself and linked to the task or occupation of the learners. It is an education that has no ending, starting from cradle to death, and will still continue in the beyond (Omolewa 2001). It is a kind of learning in which the learners are thought by elders and from experiences of life. The program of traditional literacy comprised socio-cultural, political, economic, physical and spiritual orientations, ethical codes of conduct and social relationship in the society. Instructions in traditional literacy are usually transmitted through the clientele's mother tongue. The end product is to produce an all-round learning and skills development for the recipients. This enables the recipients of literacy programme to be involve in the socio-cultural, political, economic, political, physical and spiritual orientation of his community and have a better knowledge and understanding of the new literacy education and skill development needed for self- development.

B. Cultural Literacy. This is a form of literacy postulated by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian Adult Educator, who advocated for cultural transformation of the society through literacy and literacy through conscientization. Cultural literacy places much emphasis on learner's pride in his culture, enjoyment of culture and full participation in cultural values. Cultural literacy enables learners to learn and participate fully in the cultural activities of his/her community to understand his learning need and the learning environment.

C. Critical Literacy – This is another program of literacy education that enhances an individual to understand and know what is going on in his environment and to adapt to the dynamics of the changing world. It also enables individuals to gain the skills and knowledge needed to develop critical reasoning ability to take wise decision on what will help him to function effectively in the society, how to identify problems and being able to proffer solutions to such problem. With critical thinking skills, adults and youths will be conscious of their needs as well as the needs of his community in order to proffer solutions to such problems.

D. Functional literacy- Functional literacy is program of literacy education tailored toward a particular skill and taught within the content of vocational skills acquisition. It is the application of basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic skills. It is the ability to read, write and calculate meaningfully in the day to day occupational activities of the learners and to apply the skills to become empowered and function well in such

vocation or skills. It involves a continuum of learning that empowers an individuals to achieve his goals, develop his knowledge and potentials in order to contribute significantly to the development of the society. Through functional literacy, youths and adults would function economically, socially and culturally to develop his personality and at the same time bring measures of reputation to his society.

E. Civic literacy. This type of literacy is designed for good citizenship. It include teaching members on their duties and rights as members and having a clear understanding of the approach to life. It will allow adults and youths to know their civic responsibilities, how to be empowered educationally and economically to function effectively in these areas.

F. Women literacy. This is specifically designed for women with the aim of empowering women folks. It will introduced women to various activities that they need order to perform their functions at home, on training of their children, socio-economic and economic responsibilities to be able to develop themselves educationally along this line.

G. Computer literacy. Literacy on information and communication technology (ICT) involves the use of computer software and hardware, internet and other devices to search, collate, store, process and transmit information to accelerate literacy programme. ICT is the aggregate of the potentials in computing, micro-electronic communications, audio-visual, video cameras, digital cameras etc, to manage information or to communicate in digital form. The application of ICT skill by adults and youths will enable them function effectively in their various career and skills development as well as in their communities.

Thus, these programmes of literacy education as seen from above are designed to afford the non-literates adults and youths the opportunities of engaging in literacy programmes and lifelong skills to become economically empowered and socially responsible in the community, thereby, eradicating unemployment, dependency and poverty to its barest minimum in the society.

Lifelong skills Programmes

Lifelong skill is another major development program aims at developing individuals and the community. Lifelong skill is a subset of literacy education which involves training and learning experiences required by individuals, through formal and informal learning activities. Lifelong skill is a form of traditional apprenticeship training, with the aim of acquiring vocational skills and becoming expertise in different professions, for personal development, employability and for the development of the community. It is the ability of an individual to learn a skill that can empower him throughout his life time. Lifelong skills enhance individuals with skills on specific vocation that they are exposed to, from childhood to adulthood, and ends at death Omolewa, (2001). The system involves developing skills, knowledge and competency for productivity, to become employable to employer of labour rather than job seekers. Lifelong skills today have become widely accepted as something very crucial to the development of individuals and the community as a whole. The skills are basically functional in nature and are largely run on apprenticeship system of crafts/arts, and are capable of making people develop themselves and earn a living. The training and skills acquired are easily transferred to others and they provides immediate returns and useful for economic development of the nation.

By using lifelong skills as a way out of poverty and unemployment, Nigeria governments and educational planners have invested in vocational education programmes in informal education sector (NPE 2004). It was done with the aim of accelerating the process of vocational skills acquisition that are relevant to the individuals and for economic growths of the nation. The school curriculum was designed to ensure equitable quality education that provides opportunity for lifelong learning and giving priority to skills development through Entrepreneurial skills at all levels in order to combat the issue of unemployment, poverty and social vices in the country. Also in the informal sector, efforts have been made through series of programmes by Non-governmental organisations and Philanthropists in getting adults and youths to be empowered under the coverage of lifelong learning. Such programmes includes; conventional farming, clothe weaving, tie and dye, hair-dressing, soap making, fashion designed, cake and confectioneries, (Adeyemo 2014). Also, the importance of Governments and Non-governmental organisations in providing vocational skills for employment opportunities for the poor people in the society was emphasized by (Idowu 2020). The study emphasises that the more government is able to provide poor people with employment opportunity and affordable services, the greater their contributions to poverty reduction through creating small and medium sized enterprises business, which is the main source of generating income for the large sections of the population. Moreover, the introduction of information and technology makes acquisition of basic skills becomes popular. Computer and ICT have assisted individuals to cope with changes and development in various skills. ICT knowledge also assists individuals to develop himself and also participate in community development projects. ICT skills have equipped recipients with jobs and employment opportunities, poverty reduction to the barest minimum and also help curbing social vices in the society (Adeyemo.2014). Thus, lifelong skills do not only bring out the skills in an individual, but also develop their proficiency and productivity for self-development and the development of the community.

Potentials of Literacy Education and Lifelong skills for adults and youths

The roles of literacy education and lifelong skills in the development of adults and youths in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Literacy and lifelong skills are fundamental to individuals' development and a gateway to full participation in social, cultural, economic and political life of the society, (Ekong, 2009). Literacy education and lifelong skills play significant roles in changing people's orientation and attitudes as well as assisting people to cope with socio-economic and psychological challenges in life. Being literate helps to add values to individual's personality and personal development. It is very clear that someone who is literate will have the understanding of developing himself, he will not only impact his life, but also affects his family and the communities positively. This corroborates Adeyemo (2019), which declares that literacy and lifelong skills are significantly important and needed for sustainability, employment purposes and improvement of one's community and the nation at large. Literacy and lifelong skills have also been found to solve individual and societal problems, by a way of passing the knowledge acquired to others for effective functioning of such individual and running of the community. Attesting to this, Cofi-Biney and Okai-Mensah (2017), reported that lifelong learning has the potentials of continuous learning, collaborative study, self-directed learning activities, positive and fulfilling learning and as well as having capability of impacting individual's life and profession. Supporting this, (Muibi 2019) posits that literacy and lifelong skills are crucial to be acquired by every child, youth and adult, and that they are essential skills that can enable them address the challenges faced in life. Also, in a study carried out on the potentials of lifelong skills for people with hearing impairment in Ondo and Ekiti States of Nigeria, it was found out that skills, such as carpentry/furniture making, fashion design/sewing, hair-dressing, hat making, wire works, conventional farming, art and craft/designs, computing/designing, photography and confectionary/baking were found to have great impacts, as they equip beneficiaries with specialized skills and techniques to independently engage in practical production to make them self-reliance and contribute positively to the development of the society, (Olofinloye and Adeyemo 2018)

On this note, much benefits can be achieved from literacy education and lifelong skills for individuals and the society at large. The fact is, there cannot be any specific or positive development for individual who is illiterate and poverty stricken, and neither can there be any sustainable development for any community or nation in which the population are illiterates and poverty stricken, unlike the developed countries of the world which rely on the status of their local literacy and vocational education at all times. Making literacy education and lifelong skills available to people generally will empower the citizenries. Also, such community and nation will get rid of its poverty and unemployment status, and they will look ahead for economic breakthrough in the nearest future. However, below are some of the benefits to be achieved from literacy and lifelong skills for adults and youths includes:

- Literacy and lifelong skills will help to equip adults and youths with qualitative education and skills needed to develop their critical thinking skills and to function effectively in their career development. Literacy for instance will provide opportunity for acquisition of knowledge, values and learning experiences needed by all in a rapid changing world for socio-cultural, political and economic empowerment. They will also provide the needed skills to enhance adults and youths' with employability and jobs mobility.
- Literacy and lifelong skills will make adults and youths become gainfully employed, they will become productive and earn better income to provide for themselves, take their families and develop the community.
- Literacy and lifelong skills will also increase the socio-cultural and economic status of adults and youths. It is the foundation of lifelong learning and a gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, and political life by individuals. Literacy and lifelong skills would be of great benefits to communities as they would help to tackle the issues of poverty, unemployment and dependency among adults and youths to the barest minimum.
- Other areas of benefits of literacy education and lifelong skills include wealth creation and poverty reduction for adults and youths in the society through the provision of employment opportunities that will help to develop and sustain them. This will provide them with regular income and improves their standards of living.
- Moreover, literacy and lifelong skills will transcend to healthy living conditions among adults and youths. This is because educated populace are prone to enjoy good health, have longer life expectancy and enjoy healthy environment. They are also better equipped and protected from diseases and environmental pollution.
- Literacy education and lifelong skills on the long run will stem down the rate of restfulness among youths and adult population in the community. It will also curb idleness and yield the anticipated dividends of self-reliance, poverty reduction, enhance employment opportunities and at the end bring development to the community and the nation.

II. Conclusion

This paper has discussed eradication of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty among adults and youths, particularly in Ekiti State, through engaging in literacy and lifelong skills. It discusses literacy and lifelong skills and their potentials in providing worthwhile education and career and skills development. The issue of unemployment and poverty as they affect adults and youths, particularly were also stressed in the paper. It also highlighted the benefits of literacy education and lifelong skills and how they will help to tackle illiteracy, unemployment and poverty among adults and youths. The paper concluded that engaging adults and youths in literacy and lifelong skills will make them become self-reliance, empowered as well as contributing significantly to the development of their community and the nation at large. The paper encouraged government and stakeholders to make literacy education and lifelong skills available to all to allow the citizenries become educated and economically empowered so as to contribute significantly to the development of the society.

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ADEYEMO COMFORT WURAOLA. "Literacy and Lifelong Learning: Means Of Eradicating unemployment and Poverty among Adults and Youths In Ekiti State.." *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 12(05), (2022): pp. 24-29.