

Original Article

ADULT EDUCATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE OPTION FOR ACCELERATED SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Ali, Matthew Ayogu (Ph.D.)

Department Of Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu-Nigeria.

Email: *alicayou@yahoo.com;*
+2348036872213

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to establish Adult Education as an Alternative Option for Accelerated socio-economic development of Nigeria. Adult education helps people to understand their own realities. The goal of Adult education is to facilitate radical transformation of the social structure being a tool for emancipation, mobilization and sensitization to free the oppressed by awakening their critical consciousness. Adult education is a fundamental human right for the achievement of equality and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies stated by UNESCO in 2011. The reason of this paper is to x-rayed Adult education as a vital means to achieve social justice and educational equality while its contribution to economic and social development remains a vital crucial consideration for Nigeria development and peace building for humanity. The objectives of this paper are to develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility there by reinforcing the capacity to deal with and shape the development taking place in the economy and the world of work. Contribution to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development process and enhance solidarity of people and communities remains the justification of this paper. The greater purpose of this paper focuses on promoting peaceful coexistence and human rights to foster resilience in young and older adults to enhance awareness for socio-economic development and protection of the environment in Nigeria. This paper comprehensively discussed the meaning of socio-economic development, components of socio-economic development, state of socio-economic development and the challenges of socio-economic development in Nigeria. Also brief description of adult education in terms of definitions, aims and objectives are stated and how adult education can help in addressing the challenges of socio-economic development in Nigeria. The paper recommended what the Nigerian government and the education planners need to do to be more involved in the promotion of adult education in Nigerian for socio-economic development achievement, and what the policy advocates, scholars, researchers and practitioners in adult education need to do to improve the technical expertise with knowledge – gained and demonstrate this to students for their improved academic performance in adult education courses for socio-economic development. Adult education as an alternative

options for accelerated socio-economic development of Nigeria clearly indicates that adult education is linked with sustainable and equitable human development, job creation, income generation, democracy and the overall goals of the social development agenda. This is clearly noted from the potential contribution of adult education to the creation of an informed and tolerant citizenry, economic and social development, literacy promotion, poverty alleviation and the preservation of the environment for the interest of human existence which forms the conclusion of this paper.

Keyword: Adult Education, Alternation Option, Accelerated, Socio-Economic, Development.

Introduction

The concept of socio-economic development grew out of arguments that any growth in the economy must reflect on the well-being of the people if such growth must be appreciated, Mbalisi, Onyeka and Morufu Oyebanji (2015) observed with dismay that many developing countries including Nigeria normally develop without growth due to overemphasis on economic growth as a yard stick for measuring development. This has resulted in what Mbalisi Onyeka and Morufu Oyebanji (2015) described as growth in economic terms without development in the sense of improved conditions of living for the majority of the people. Here development was achieved at the expense of the other needs of the people for whom development was meant. Mbalisi and Morufu Oyebanji (2015) buttressed this vital point by lamenting over the concentration of development by planners on the establishment of infrastructure such as power plants, steel mills, refineries, railways, bridges, roads etc to the extent that they give an ominously low priority to the welfare of the under-privileged (masses) population whose hopes and fears, satisfaction and frustration are keys not only to political stability but to the development process itself.

It is against this background that socio-economic development is defined as economic growth accompanied by social transformation of human

beings and society. It is a growth in the economy which leads to the satisfaction of human needs for improved well-being of the people. This implies efficient and effective application of economic benefits of any growth to establish structures and institutions that enable human being to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills required to boost their self-confidence, creativity and readiness to participate in all issues involving their personal development and that of their society. Socio-economic development as it applies to rural dwellers means a process of positive social and economic change aimed at raising the standard of living, quality of life and the dignity of rural dwellers.

The supposed target of every nation including Nigeria is to make life easy, cheap and comfortable for her citizens. It is this intention that drives Nigeria nation into embarking in socio-economic development activities in order to raise the capital base and social order of the nation. It is believed that increase in the capital base will empower Nigerian citizens to embark on development of infrastructure and production of goods and services that would make life easy and comfortable. Socio-economic development is the product of the application of the powers of mind to organize the physical materials, social activities and mental ideas of humanity to achieve greater material, social, mental and spiritual experiences. In the widest sense, it is referred to as an orderly arrangement of

human activities to achieve greater productivity, efficiency, innovation and creativity (Cleveland, 2014). For Nigeria to achieve social development, social services of basic education, functional healthcare, employment for youths, clean water, security of life and properties and access to quality infrastructure must be adequately taken care of. Thus, to achieve social development, Nigeria Government should adopt the followings:-

- Creation of new employment opportunities for the young school leavers, and rural dwellers through skill acquisition and vocational training,
- Strengthen institutions of governance at all levels including adequate attention to human right and conflict prevention and gender equality,
- Provision of basic social and functional education, good health cares, clean water etc, and
- Maintenance of existing structures and creation of new infrastructure where they are needed (Garry, 2013). Social development implies a system of social organization that alleviates poverty. Thus, the models of economic development which promote economic growth manifests in the following ways:-
- Improved production capacities,
- Transition from primary to secondary production,
- Good governance,
- Improved infrastructural base,
- Transformation of the basic production processes and
- Provision of basic industrial technology hubs, which will enable adult population to create wealth for socio-economic development of the society.

It has been noted that humans especially adults hold the destiny of any nation in their hands, because they are those who are already working and participating in development efforts. Adults have been considered both as assets and capital for productive efforts. It is therefore necessary to develop them for they are the procurers and the beneficiaries and protectors of economic growth (Robinson & Kahn, 2019).

Components of Socio-Economic Development

The parts of globalization incorporate gross domestic product (GDP) industrialization and the Human Development Index (HDI). The GDP is the business sector that measures a nation's general monetary yield. Industrialization is a procedure which, driven by mechanical advancement, effectuates social change and financial improvement by changing a nation into a modernized mechanical, or created country. The Human Development Index involves three segments:-

- A nation's populace's future
- Learning and
- Instruction measured by the grown-up education, and salary. The extent to which an association is globalized and enhanced has bearing on the techniques that it uses to seek after more prominent improvement and speculation opportunities ([https://pra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/66899/.](https://pra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/66899/))

The character of Socio-Economic Development

In principle, the concept of development rests on that of change. Change is a transition from one state of affairs to another. In this approach, development can be defined as a series of changes characterized by such properties as irreversibility, spontaneity, and a monotonic character as cited Husserl, (2019) a reference to the concept of structure, and directionality. Without going into the details of those properties, or formulating any basic (ontological) definition of development, I shall pass on to a characterization of socio-economic development, but still keeping in mind the fundamental sense of development. The definition of socio-economic development as a series of changes involves stating what characteristics those changes and what determines them. In other words, we have to determine what changes count as socio-economic development. To present the specific nature of socio-economic development, we must refer to character of processes and goals of changes making up this type of development. However, since there is much

arbitrariness in understanding and using them, I propose the adoption of the following assumptions:-

- The nature of socio-economic development is determined by development processes and/or development targets. Generally, those processes are internally ordered sequences of change in states of affairs, or stages in which some states determine other states that follow them. This determination assumes various forms, causal, stochastic etc.

From an activist point of view, two basic types of models of process can be distinguished:-

- Spontaneous process and
- Target – oriented processes

Spontaneous processes in a socio-economic system are not targeted on any final states as specified development goals resulting from people's intentional and rational activity. They are not intentionally activated and steered by people, being in principle of a self-organizing character. Their course and states regarded as final can be anticipated if one learns the mechanisms underlying them. It is said about their final state that it has appeared all by itself, or that it has evolved in a historic process.

In turn, target – oriented processes in a socio – economic system are guided by the activity and behaviour of people (steering, control) and designed to achieve certain specific final states that can be goals of this activity. What characterizes target – oriented processes, Zbyszko, (2010) claimed claims is “first, that no stage of a process is identical with any other stage (hence the process is irreversible), and that each later stage makes the state of the system closer (more similar) to some distinguished state, whether preferred, wished for, or just the opposite, perceived as undesirable, “hence to some target, standard, a sought ideal, or on the contrary, an unavoidable fatal end.”

The processes of socio-economic development are its dynamic components designed to achieve its target. According to Zbyszko, (2010) development processes “defer from other target oriented processes by two additional properties:

- The direction of a process is positive, i.e with time there is an increase in the level of a variable or a set of variables in terms of which we consider the process (e.g when the population number grows, we speak of demographic development, when there is a rise in the global product of a society, we speak of economic development) and

- A directional sequence of social changes is set in motion, driven intra-social mechanism (i.e immanent, endogenous, or included within the system in question)” it should be added that also exogenous factors are at work here because each system operates in an environment which affects the system through various external factors.

Thus, socio-economic development is made up of processes caused by exo - and endogenous factors which determine the course and direction of the development. It should also be noted that socio-economic processes do not work in isolation from other processes and that usually they are preceded by, or are consequences of, other processes. Factors of socio-economic development themselves cannot be described closer in general terms because they differ depending on the set of conditions produced by a concrete historical and geographical situation in which socio-economic changes take place. The zonal development factors of the present day socio-economic development of Nigeria has to include:

- The institutional sphere
- The business environment
- Innovativeness, social climate and
- Foreign investment Emmanuel, Aghedo & Caroline (2018).

A characterization of the goals of socio-economic development poses no less difficulties. It is generally assumed that we can talk about them in a situation to which it is possible to influence development processes in a purposeful and rational way, to steer or create them. The goals determine the character of measures taken to implement them. Hence, there arises the question of the relation between goals and values. If we accept the commonly held opinion that

values (evaluation, norms) are inseparable from human activity, that they stimulate it and give it a direction, then values set the goals of the activity that can be evaluated and described in normative terms. The same also refers to goals of socio-economic development.

State of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The level of moral decadence and normalization of crime in Nigeria is a slogan used to indicate the rate of underdevelopment in Nigeria nation. It is a situation whereby there is lack of interest in the production of goods and services by those entrusted to do so, but they would want to earn money to live without working for such money. When it becomes necessary that the services must be rendered, gifts of any sort must exchange hands before anything happens. It also indicates a situation of lack of interest in the provision and maintenance of public facilities and in most cases when funds are provided for them, the funds are diverted into private purses. Sometimes, some of the public facilities are either converted into private use or allowed to dilapidate because they belong to nobody and nobody would care to protect and maintain them Ezema, Ukwuaba & Ali (2017). A typical example in Nigeria is the local oil refineries that were allowed to decay so that few individuals can import refined oil product abroad and sell it at a high cost to Nigerians. "A barbaric neglect of the century".

This situation was borne from;

- Squandemia mentality,
- Poor and weak leadership selection process, and
- Contact and connection (who do you know and contract job padding) (Ezema, Ukwuaba & Ali, 2017).

Poor and weak leadership selection process

It is a public knowledge that politics is a process of selecting leaders. In Nigeria context, it is seen as a means of wealth accumulation. In Nigeria political power empowers the holders and their relatives to have social influence to them. This makes the political system in Nigeria to be fraught with a lot of

malpractices such as election rigging, violence, killings and rituals because when the political power/position is acquired, wealth accumulation is guaranteed. The wealth is acquired through looting, conversion of public property to a private one, appreciation and an understanding in the Nigerian context the ten (10) percent kickbacks on award of contracts inflation of contract worth etc. This happens in all sectors in Nigeria from federal, States to Local Government level which on the long run retard the nation's socio-economic development agenda. Context and connection (who do you know).

This is a condition where people are either holding a public position of trust. The result of this is people becoming billionaires overnight without pedigree, crude oil merchants, without oil companies, briefcase contractors and suppliers without cognate companies or even a room apartment as an operational office. These leads to low level of socio-economic development in a country where this is the norms (Ezema, Ukwuaba & Ali, 2017).

Nigeria's vision about socio-economic development in our nation could be said to have been encapsulated in her various socio-economic reforms agenda expressed in the forms of policies and development plans. These include projected socio-economic plans wrapped up in vision 2010, 20: 2020 and adapted to UNESCO's sustainable development goals (SGD's) targeted for achievement by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). The two visions and the 2030 UNESCO agenda were launched in November, 1996, May, 2010 and November, 2015 respectively. Over time, none of Nigeria's socio-economic development plans/agenda has achieved its cardinal objectives. For instance, the currently (2019) on going, vision 20:2020 agenda came to be on 18th May, 2010 when it was obvious that the dreams associated with its predecessor vision 2010, would not be achieved within the few months. Similarly, vision 20: 2020 itself has, at the moment, less than one year to achieve its critical assignment of launching Nigeria into the class of 20 most economically developed nations of the world by the

year 2020, till 2024 we are yet to get there indicating slow pace of economic development in the country.

Rural socio-economic development, which has been a major focus of the socio-economic policy plans and various of Nigeria since her independence in 1960, has not experienced a boost as envisaged. Eneh (2011:26) has described the rural situation in the following words:

“The greater population of the country dwelling in the usually isolated and neglected rural areas is trapped in absolute poverty and misery; a condition characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy, clearly beneath any reasonable definition of human decency. Literacy rate is discouragingly low and health, income size and nutritional status are far from being encouraging. The vulnerable groups, especially women and children, continue to suffer extreme deprivations which severally limits their growth and fulfillment as well as optimal contributions to national development p.26.”

Eheazu and Akpabio (2018:54) have also presented the matter of poor rural socio-economic development in Nigeria more factually as follows;

“In most rural areas in Nigeria, basic infrastructure, where they exist at all, are too inadequate for meaningful development. The International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD) published in 2016 that the number of rural poor in Nigeria by 2014 was 50,010,836 out of a total rural population of 94,165,210. In other words, 53.1% of the total rural population in Nigeria was identified as poor. The situation hardly improved by 2018, in spite of national attempts at rural transformation through rural electrification schemes to encourage establishment of cottage industries, and credit schemes to small and medium enterprise (SME’s) for improved productivity in farming and other rural occupations. This can also be said to be true of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) initiated by the Nigeria Federal Government in 2003 with the aim to eradicate poverty and bring about sustainable

development through agencies such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) established in 2001.”

There is hardly any remarkable statistical difference in the socio-economic development indices of rural and urban dwellers in Nigeria since 2001 to date, instead the masses are more poorer than ever with the highest inflation rate since independence. For instance, the percentage of the population of Nigerians living below a poverty level of less than \$1.00 (one dollar) per day in the rural and urban areas in 2023 were recorded by Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to be 79.2% and 70.7% respectively (NBS, 2023). However, given the fact that the total population of Nigeria’s rural areas has always been higher than that of the urban areas as confirmed by World Bank Statistics (2016), the difference in poverty level may be appreciable in real terms, with more of the poverty syndrome still in the rural areas. All in all, the important fact revealed by the above statistics and references is that Nigeria’s efforts to eradicate poverty (which is the centre-point of the socio-economic development agenda in the country) have hardly achieved any significant positive result generally over the years. More recently also, it was documented that in 2018, eighty-seven (87) million Nigerians about half the population of the country then, were living in extreme poverty, below one dollar a day (the leadership Newspaper, July 4, 2018). These facts, and the most recent 2023 issue of subsidy removal on petrol products has worsen the socio-economic situation of Nigerian to the lowest level couple with the highest inflation rate in the history of the Nigeria, obviously demonstrate the distressful state of socio-economic development in Nigeria nation, over the years.

Challenges of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

There is fundamental factors responsible for the socio-economic challenges of development in Nigeria. These include;-

- Population explosion,

- Scarcity of resources
- Greed/corruption and
- Insecurity in Nigeria

These four (4) factors stated above have a linear relationship which has begotten other socio-economic challenges that are becoming overwhelming contemporary in Nigeria. The ability to curb these factors above earnestly is partially the way forward to achieving socio-economic development in Nigeria.

- **Population explosion**

Nigeria population has continually been on the increase despite the advocacy programme for family planning by civil society organizations. The culture and beliefs of the people have promoted increase in child birth. Poor birth control is a major challenge to socio-economic development in Nigeria. This results to a situation whereby an increase in the population of Nigeria does not translate to increase in productivity or Gross Domestic Products hence, implies no economic benefit but rather increase the level of dependence, illiteracy, poverty and mischiefs (NBS, 2023). The phenomenon has posed threat on Nigeria in diverse ways and has escalated the level of crime ravaging the nation. A nation like Nigeria that increases the number of uneducated people due to neglect of educational sector is an increment that is tantamount to destruction. As the Nigeria population keeps increasing without commensurate resources, accompanied by high level of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and lack of effective and efficient empowerment for the teaming redundant workforce, it increases the tendency for high crime rate “if the current population growth rate of 3.2 percent is sustained, Nigeria will double its population size in about 21 years. By 2050, it will become the third most populous country in the world” (Michael Ajeni Obute, 2021).

The socio-economic challenges posed by this exponential population growth are enormous since there would be more pressure on existing infrastructure as well as environmental resources. The population explosion begets a lot of socio-economic

problems that if not properly managed could lead to a state of anarchy. It is imperative to control birth rate in Nigeria in a bid to curb this challenges that is like a time bomb. “Unchecked population growth would increase the youth population to unsustainable level. Already, more than half of the population is under the age of 19 years (United Nations, 2017). A demographic situation that puts the country at risk of wide-scale youth unemployment, civil instability, and slow development progress’ (Micheal Ajeni Obute, 2021).

- **Scarcity of resources**

The scarcity of resources in Nigeria is partly the function of a generational social structure engulfed in corruption to favour a few. This is a situation whereby the elite and leaders in power amass wealth for themselves, family and acquaintances via money laundering, privatization of public facilities to be procured by people in power, allocation of oil wells to a few elites and passing the wealth to their next generation. These have eventually led to income inequality amongst the populace and have created a huge financial gap between the elites and the masses. At very extreme point of scarcity it becomes the survival of the fittest, at this point the poor are very vulnerable while the rich can afford to sustain themselves for that period of economic hardship. The poor would bardy sit back and watch the rich prosper while they live in misery and in some cases loose their lives as a result of starvation and inability to afford quality healthcare services.

This can induce crime by highly significant level of extortion or coercion. Limited resources come with a tendency for crime in a bid to survive. The scarcity of resources in Nigeria can be described as corruption, low human capacity building, underutilization of natural resources and insufficient social investment programme. The nature of resource scarcity in Nigeria justifies one of Mahatma Gandhi’s best quotes which says’ “The world has enough for everyone’s needs but not for everyone’s greed. (Micheal, Ajeni Obute, 2021).

Greed/corruption

The misappropriation or ill-use of public funds is alarming. This has limited the level of socio-economic development in Nigeria. This phenomenon has been ascribed to poor governance in Nigeria over the years. This explains why infrastructural development has suffered a great set back due to the high level of corruption involved in the award and execution of contracts. The level of greed is so enormous and has caused inefficiency in the public and private sector as standard is compromised for kickbacks. The level of bribery is very alarming and this is the function of greed.

The major socio-economic problems that has bedeviled Nigeria is corruption at the helm of affairs which has a trickle-down effect on the ordinary citizens. Embezzlement or misappropriation of public treasury has unfortunately become a norm in Nigeria since this act is traceable to previous and present leadership of the country. Various administrations have devised strategies to milk the nation of its wealth and also have been accused of money laundry, collection of bribe, election fraud etc.

The aggregate of this laundered money after Nigeria's independence runs into billions of dollars which has created an unimaginable financial gap between the ruling class and the ordinary citizens. This financial inequality created by a social structure that is historic has deepened the level of impoverishment over time and have also facilitated grounded public facilities so to deregulate and privatize them by the same ruling class in a bid to enrich themselves and their acquaintances (www.iosrjournal.org).

The corruption in the Nigeria oil and gas sector in terms of foreign policies price control, award of exclusive rights (such as allocation of oil blocks to companies and individual), government policy, oil subsidy to petroleum marketers have greatly reduced the rate of revenue that would have been generated from the sector, hence enriching the ruling class and further increasing the level of financial inequality amongst the populace.

The corruption that has plagued the nation over the years and the failure to extensively build human capacity promptly to tackle the forecasted socio-economic menace has degenerated into a state of poverty. The place of Nigeria in poverty ranking is at the extreme as it recently overtook India with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty.

It is indeed an irony for Nigeria to be referred to as the giant of Africa with its robust economy and still has the highest number of IDPs (internally displaced persons) of about 1.6 million in West Africa in a data published in 2020 by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and also ranks number one poorest country in the world with about 40% of the total population, or almost 83 million people, living below the country's poverty line of 137,430 Naira (\$381.75) dollar per year according to "2019 poverty and inequality in Nigeria" report released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (www.iosrjournal.org). Nigeria is a very rich country but with huge amount of poor people which connotes that there is an enormous level of corruption in the political system.

Insecurity in Nigeria

The security challenges in Nigeria have emanated from different factors ranging from ethno-religious conflicts, political based violence, terrorism, kidnapping, banditry and killing of farmers by Fulani headmen. The activities of a terrorist group called "Boko Haram" camping and operating in the North Eastern region of Nigeria particularly, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa have caused serious humanitarian crises in the region and occasionally wreaking havoc on some other states across the country (www.iosrjournal.org).

These insurgents have terrorized Nigerians for over a decade now and have killed a large number of people. They had earlier made their stance known to the federal government of Nigeria and they have temporarily conquered territories in the North Eastern part of Nigeria which were later recovered by the Nigerian joint task force. The damage these terrorist

have caused to lives and livelihood over time has led to the spring up of camps for IDPs (internally displaced persons) in order to provide them with humanitarian aid. The number of IDPs in Nigeria is quite appalling of a country that is not at war. According to IOM round 33 report of Displaced Tracking Matrix presented the number of IDPs as 2,118,550. The report covers the period 27 July to 15 August 2020 and reflects inventory from the six most affected North-Eastern States of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. (Micheal Ajeni Obute, 2021).

The 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI) has ranked Nigeria 146 among 163 independence nation and territories, according to its low level of peacefulness. Nigeria moved one step from 147 in 2020, though it still ranked eight among the least peaceful country in Africa after South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Central African Republic, Sudan and Mali.

The kidnapping of people for ransom in virtually every state in Nigeria and the killing of farmers by Fulani herdsmen that have degenerated into issues that contemporary threatens the unity of the nation. This security challenges have truncated the peace of the nation which has limited its socio-economic development. The security agencies saddled with the responsibility of protecting lives and property in Nigeria have been working hard towards ensuring peace and stability but lack modern arms and ammunitions to withstand the non-state actors.

The proliferation of drugs and arms in the country has facilitated the increase in insecurity. This social menace has triggered crime and violence of various magnitude, thereby creating an insecure environment. A lot has to be done in the reorientation of the upcoming generation on the effect of drugs and the need to flee from it. Efforts have been made by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to break the supply chain of illicit drugs and apprehend the victims for the purpose of rehabilitation. This social menace which has a great

number of youth indulged in it is quite alarming since it implies an increase in the insecurity situation if the government does not takes drastic measure in curbing the challenges by reawaking the consciousness of these groups through promoting other forms of developmental programmes like adult and non-formal education. (www.isorjournal.org).

A Brief Description of Adult Education

Adult education involves people of all ages learning in a variety of contexts; in educational institutions, at work, at home, and through leisure activities. Adult education, through its various interventional programmes, is structured on the philosophy of liberating people who hitherto have limited or no access to learning opportunities. According to UNESCO, (2011). Adult education is a fundamental human right ‘for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies. The fourth UNESCO international conference on Adult education UNESCO held in Paris in 1985 perceived Adult education “as a means to achieve social justice and educational equality while its contribution to economic and social development was considered crucial (UNESC 1985, Knoll, 2014). From the above perception, Adult education was linked with sustainable and equitable human development, job creation, income generation, democracy and the overall goals of social development agenda. According to UNESCO/UII, (1997) the Paris and other vital conferences held concerning Adult Education especially the one held in Hamburg called the Hamburg Declaration, the potential contribution of adult and continuing education to the creation of an informed and tolerant citizenry, provided policy guideline for economic and social development, the promotion of literacy and the alleviation of poverty to enhance socio-economic wellbeing of the society.

Adult learning and education also includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship, variously known as community, popular or liberal education. It empowers people to actively engage

with social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change. It also helps people to lead a decent life, in terms of health, and well-being, culture, spirituality and in all other ways that contribute to personal development and dignity (2015 UNESCO Declaration).

The aim of Adult Education, as captured in the UNESCO, 2015 recommendation, include;

- To equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies,
- To promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and environments ,
- To fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects of individuals, and
- It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health care and well-being contributing to sustainable learning societies.

The objectives of Adult Education are to:-

- Develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility,
- Reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the developments taking place in the economy and the world of work,
- Contribute to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and enhance solidarity of people and communities,
- Promote peaceful coexistence and human rights, (ie) foster resilience in young and older adults, and
- Enhance awareness for the protection of the environment (UNESCO, 2015).

How Adult Education help in addressing the Challenges of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria.

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. European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) 2010, results showed that Adult Education has a role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary for both reducing the risk of poverty and also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressure. EAEA (2010) emphasized the empowering role that Adult learning and 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 (UK) inquiry into the future of lifelong learning, as reported by Emmanuel, Aghedo & Caroline (2018), concluded that participating in Adult learning and Education 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 through socio-economic development drive.

The report concluded that Adult Education should be a part of any approach to reduce poverty through efficient implementation of socio-economic development drives as multiple – initiatives are needed to lift people out of poverty and challenges of socio-economic woes. This can be achieved through active participation in adult education programmes like vocational courses to drive socio-economic development efforts which improves peoples’ wealth base.

On democratic participation, Adult Education, through civic education programmes, has been shown to positively improve individuals’ political understanding, feelings of empowerment and levels of political participation (Finkel, 2014). These finding are based on a study assessing the impact of nine USAID – sponsored programmes relating to voter

education, local –level community problem solving, political engagement and rights awareness. It is on record that socio-economic development only thrives under conducive democratic space where majority participate.

Furthermore, a considerable body of recent research has explored the relationship between adult education and well-being (Jenkins, 2011). For example, the centre for research on the wider benefits of learning Niki, Philip, Katerina Kedraka and Anna (2016) provided some evidence of effects on subjective well-being and links Adult Education to increases in self-confidence and self worth. They reported that the direct effects of Adult Education relevant to well-being are self-efficacy, confidence or the ability to create support networks. According to Miotshchilnig (2011) Adult Education does address the challenges confronting socio-economic development projects in Nigeria due to the perceived benefits following participation in Adult Education programmes.

Thus:

- Adult Education helps in developing the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility,
- reinforces the capacity to deal with, and shape the development taking place in the economy and the world of work,
- contributes to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and enhance solidarity of people and communities,
- Promotes peaceful coexistence and human rights, ie foster resilience in young and older adults, and
- Enhances awareness for the protection of the environment.

The above is a clear indication that Adult Education’s dividends in promoting social cohesion, solidarity and development are immense, vast, immeasurable, and abundant. This is why, at the 6th International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg,

Germany in 1997, UNESCO’s member states, bi- and multilateral agencies, non-governmental and civil society organizations, social movements, and the private sector were called upon to “include adult education and learning in all development initiatives and social programmes as an essential contribution to economic prosperity, sustainable development, social cohesion and solidarity”. This is a clear indication that Adult Education can efficiently address the socio-economic development challenges in Nigeria effectively when fully utilized by the Nigeria Government policy planners.

Place of Adult Education in Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The place of relevance of Adult Education in/ to socio-economic development in Nigeria could be established with reference to three (3) main elements namely, social change (involving individual or group changes in social status and function), mobility of labour (due to improved access to quality education and acquisition of desirable skills and attitudes) and general socio-economic development (as a result of improve per capita income/Gross domestic product (GDP) and the concomitant reduction in poverty). The above can be explained in brief below:-

Adult Education and social change:

The role of Adult Education (AE) in promoting social change and its social incidentals could easily be seen from the comprehensive definition by UNESCO cited from the various human development programmes associated with both the divisions (vocational, life-long and so on) and mode/forms of Adult Education (formal, non-formal and informal). One indeed would readily agree with the significant role accorded Adult Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, September 2015) for the promotion of social development, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger which is an indication that the central responsibility of adult education is the

fostering of social change. This responsibility is discharged through adjustment of the adult population to change by equipping them with the necessary awareness of current and imminent changes in the community or city and the necessity for such changes, as well as the knowledge and skills development could come through any of the relevant components or forms of adult education x-rayed anywhere (Eheazu, 2019).

Adult Education, mobility of labour and improved Economy:

For adult education to bring about movement of labour within and across production sectors, it must be designed to make its beneficiaries more efficient and versatile within and outside their initial production sector. For example, adult agricultural extension programmes which provide farmers with instructions and demonstrations techniques on new methods of farming and crops for improved production, and basic industrial training on how to move from primary to secondary production (cottage industry), are good examples of the capability of adult education to promote mobility of labour and improved economy. Additionally, Adult education (AE) is also involved in promoting industrial training of workers – by providing pre-service basic orientation education to new hires or in-service (self-development) training for skilled workers to master new technologies and processes required of them by their employment. Such training programmes encourage versatility and mobility of labour, improved per capita income and the Gross Domestic Products (GDP), as well as the scaling down of the tempo of poverty (Eheazu, 2019).

Adult Education and General Socio-Economic Development

In the technologically based global economy of the current 21st century, growing emphasis is being placed on the contribution made by people or what economists refer to as human capital, to economic growth and development. This situation is based on the theory that the contributions of individuals to economic growth depends on their human capital: that

is the knowledge, skills competencies and other attributes that are relevant to economic activity (Stephen, (2010)). Contemporary definitions and measurement of literacy as a major driver of human capital have also expanded the concept to involve literacy skills of a country's population broadly articulated to include prose (capacity to read and comprehend written passages), document (ability to present/communicate personal thoughts and feeling in writing) and quantitative literacy (ability to calculate/compute in words and numerals). Consequently, developing the literacy skills and knowledge of labour force is considered a key strategy for promoting national economic growth. This is in spite of the views of Nwachukwu & Jonny, (2016) on the problem of determining what exactly the contribution of education is (“the residual factor”) to economic growth when considered along with other growth factors.

This is in line with the global perception of Adult Education as a fundamental human right for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies, as well as the key to the twenty-first century and powerful concept for fostering sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice (UIL, 2016).

Conclusion

The summary of adult education as an alternative option for accelerated socio-economic development of Nigeria discussed in this paper, clearly shows that adult education has received wider, valuable, and impressive attention from the global community. This has reflected in the commitments of UNESCO member states to implement the collectively agreed frameworks for action on adult education adopted in the last three International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEAs 5 of 1997, 6 of 2009 and 7 of 2022) and the commitment to implement the

UNESCO (2015), recommendation on Adult learning and Education (RALE). Besides, the publication of the GRALE and that on wide-ranging issues in adult education must serve as rich resources for consultation by policy advocates, scholars, researchers, practitioners and students in adult education as well as education policy maker.

Adult Education has vital programmes designed for adults who contribute up to 60% of Nigerian population and who are economically productive and active citizens to bring positive growth and changes. The irony of it all is that majority of the illiterates in the country are located within this category of citizens. It is this group of citizens that relevant adult education programmes are designed for, to equip them with vital knowledge, skills, attitude and commitment required to drive socio-economic development in Nigeria Nation to a fruitful process.

It is on this vital background that adult education programmes are designed to identify and forestall problems which form a cog in the wheel of development by developing literate, informed, skilled and healthy adult masses which is a vital alternative option for accelerated socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested.

The education policy planners must develop, through expert consultation, a framework for action for effective promotion of adult education in Nigeria Nation based on the international agreements and commitment on Adult Education Learning (ALE) reached at the CONFINTEAs of 1997, 2009 and 2022 to accelerate socio-economic development in Nigeria. The framework should also contain competency parameters for professionalization of adult educators and parameters for recognition, validation and accreditation of non formal and informal learning. The developed framework should be presented to education policy makers so as to enhance their detailed knowledge of adult education, its aim and objectives as well as its scope. The essence of this is

to ensure that this detailed knowledge of adult education is appropriately captured in the Nigeria's National policy on Education for active socio-economic development drive for the interest of all citizens in Nigeria.

It is equally expected that adult education lecturers and researchers should expose adult education students and learners in Nigeria institutions to this discussed option particularly the CONFINTEAs recommendations and frameworks for action, the International recommendations for financing of adult education for development, the status of adult education regional reports, the regional conference on adult education, the existence of UIL Hub, the publications of GRALE, and other publications on wide-ranging issues on adult education so as to help them have detailed and comprehensive understanding and knowledge of adult education to achieve efficient socio-economic development in Nigeria Nation.

Government of Nigeria should promote wide range of campaign and enlightenment scheme on the concept, objectives and principles of adult education. This will make the citizens see adult education programmes as an amorphous field of study with wide scope and not education for the old people who are about to die. Adequate infrastructure in forms of building learning centres, and conducive seating arrangement for adult learners should be provided by both the government of the day and the Non-Governmental organization for efficient teaching and learning in classroom situation. Free functional instructional materials should be made available for adult learner's consumption for effective learning.

There should be stiff penalty for public treasury looters and the need for public private partnership in the development of National projects as this will boycott unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks that could delay development of projects for public benefits as it concerns adult education sector.

There should be a review of the monetary policy by Nigeria Government in consultation with financial experts that would allow borrowing by entrepreneurs

from commercial banks to be reduced to single digit figure. This will expand business and also increase Gross Domestic Product as well as provide more jobs that would increase per capita income and boost socio-economic status and development in the nation.

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