

## **THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

**Kosioma Eli Owede**

Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

owedekosioma@gmail.com

**Key Words:**

Education, Non-Formal,  
Adult, lifelong, Perception.

**Abstract:** Education still remains the vehicle for proper understanding of the attributes of the world, the harnessing and its controls for the benefit of man and society. Education is lifelong and categorized into formal, informal and non-formal. The component of non-formal education by its scope constitute the pivot for the attainment of the goals of formal education, the bases for the functionality of the adult in the world of work, through the applications of the theories and principles of formal education. However the component of adult and Non-Formal education seems to be neglected. This paper examined the concept of adult and non- formal education, its scope, importance, relationship with sustainable development and the factors that hinders its effective implementation, such as misconception, usurpation of functions by non-professionals, funding, evaluation and dearth of manpower among others. The situation can still be redeemed through funding and sensitization for proper understanding and appreciation of adult and Non-Formal education as an important part of the education process for real sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Introduction.**

Education forms a holistic and significant part of any individual's life. It is the process of gaining or imparting knowledge that aids in building a proficient personality, ultimately improving the quality of life. Education is designed to guide individuals in learning a culture, molding their behaviour towards their functions of adulthood in society. One key characteristic of education is that it is a life-long process as learning continues to occur at every stage of a person's life. These learning stages is divided into pre-initial education/ pre - school stage(0yr to 5yrs), school age/initial education stage(6yrs to 25yrs) and post initial education/post school stage (26yrs to death). Each of these stage has its type of education, but informal and non-formal education occurs throughout life with adult and non-formal as the pivot of development owing to its core scope for adult who are involved in the world of work. Education transcend making a student literate but involves rationale thinking and self-dependent learning and also playing a remarkable role in the sustainable development of a country. (Hanushek, and Woessmann, 2012): The

Education 2030 Agenda stretches for early childhood learning to youth and adult education and training; Emphasis is on the acquisition of skills for work and aims to ensure quality learning outcomes for all, throughout life. Though education can be gained from schools, life experiences and extra-curricular activities, yet it has no specifications or boundaries but broadly classified into Formal Education, Informal Education and Non-formal Education, with all having a significant role to play towards role identification and functions in society. Though emphasis has been placed on formal over the years with the neglect of adult and non-formal, leading to societal malfunctioning among adults, majority of whom are not easily flexible to the dynamics of society.

Adult education is a field of academic endeavour saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems. Adult education offer opportunities that helps adult learners to acquire relevant knowledge and skills including information and attitudinal change for immediate application to address prevailing human and environmental problems. .Adult

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education can be used as a veritable instrument for transmitting knowledge, competences and skills, and then empowerment, i.e. the promotion of self-determined, bottom-up development of communities and individuals through active citizenship and social inclusion. (EAEA,2018). Adult education as an emerging field is faced with fundamental issues of acceptance and implementation, in Nigeria which is the nucleus of this paper.

### **Adult and Non- Formal Education; Meaning, Scope and Purpose**

Adult education comprises of all forms of education and learning to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes: formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies (UNESCO and UIL, 2016). Adult education also includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship, empowering people to actively engage in social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change. Adult education is an intentional, systematic process of teaching and learning by persons who occupy adult roles to acquire new values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and disciplines. Adult education consists of all form of schooling and learning programmes in which adults participate, aimed at improving self and by extension society. It is a transmission process of general technical or vocational knowledge, as well as acquisition of skills, values, attitudes, which takes place in and out of the formal education system with a view to catering for early education deficiencies of mature people and enhancing their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of the civil society (Igbo, 2008). Adult education is characterized with certain attributes including, flexibility of content and a continuous process. It considers both individual, groups and is remedial in nature, while its methodology recognizes human dignity and it is change oriented. Adult education is therefore, an educational activity which individuals undertake in order to improve their social and economic conditions for the overall benefits of society.

Ojokheta, (2019) summarized the scope or coverage areas of Adult Education to include, Literacy (a second-chance opportunity for illiterate adults to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skill (CONFINTEA VI: Mid-Term Review 2017). Poverty alleviation (UNESCO, 2011). Human rights education (UNESCO, 2011). Lifelong and life-wide learning (CONFINTEA VI: Mid-Term Review 2017). Social justice and educational equality ((UNESCO, 1985; Knoll, 2014). Continuing education, non-formal learning, informal and incidental learning (UNESCO/UIL, 1997). Peace education (CONFINTEA V, Hamburg Declaration paragraph 2, 1997). Sustainable learning and education (CONFINTEA V, Hamburg Declaration paragraph 2, 1997). Social development (job creation, income generation, democracy, CONFINTEA V, Hamburg Declaration). Equity and inclusive education (UNESCO, 2010, 2011). Labour/workers education (UNESCO, 2009). Cultural education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Family education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Community education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Citizenship education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Environmental protection and climate change education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Personal development and dignity education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Health and well-being education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Conflict management education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education). Gender education (2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education).

Adult education is to inspire a desire for change, motivate an understanding for change from inactiveness to an active position. The objective is to develop the autonomy and responsibility of individual singly and collectively by reinforcing the capacity to deal with the transformations process in all sectors of society. This will promote co-existence, tolerance and creative participation of citizens in their communities enabling people take control of their destiny and society. UNESCO (2009). Adult education changes the social and psychological minds of adults, instills hope and liberates thus creating capability of learning with an awareness of their environmental (social,

economic, cultural and political) and psychological potentials and hidden abilities.

### **Structure of Adult and Non Formal Education in Nigeria.**

The 2014 edition of the National Policy on Education and the National Blue Print for Adult and Non Formal Education in Nigeria provides for Adult and non-formal education as an instrument par excellence for lifelong education. The policy outlines the goals of adult and non-formal education to include providing functional literacy and continuing education for adults and the youths, provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills, provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers in order to improve their skills, give adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment and provide education for different categories of completers of formal school system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills on income generation activities like carpentry, tailoring, knitting, pomade and soap making and local craft.. Although there is a wide range of activities and practices which fall within the rubrics of Adult Education, the National Policy on Education identified mass literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education as the key components of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. But this fall short of the global perception and components of adult education. Mass literacy and mass education is given prominence perhaps due to the nation's high percentage of illiteracy. There is no doubt that the National Policy for Mass education and Literacy is anchored on the need to provide adult basic education for millions of Nigerian adults and youths in line with Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) goals. The Nigerian government operates and coordinates the activities of adult education through the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education established in 1991. It is also called National Mass Education Commission (NMEC). However the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), an association of mainly academics in the practice of Adult Education is also playing its advocacy role for improved policy formulation and implementation.

The components of mass education in Nigeria as outlined by the National Blue Print, (NMEC/UNICEF;2010) include:

- Adult Education: any learning or educational activity that occurs outside the formal school system, undertaken by people considered to be adults in their society.
- Non –Formal Education: any organized systematic educational activity carried outside the framework of the formal system aimed at providing selected types of training to particular sub-groups in the population (adults, youths and children)
- Literacy: the ability to read, write and compute for informed and organized competence in the subject area of activity/project towards the development of active citizens, improved health and livelihoods and gender inequality.
- Functional literacy: skills of reading, writing and computing tailored towards one's occupation for better economic productivity.
- Media literacy; ability to learn through the use of various instructional media such as radio, television, internet etc.

### **Adult Education and Sustainable Development.**

Adult education that targets adults involved in the world of work plays a key role in sustainable development and promotes economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development creating a favorable conditions for empowering global active citizens. The non-formal adult education component has other purposes besides providing skills, knowledge and competences such as social inclusion, the promotion of active citizenship, health and personal well-being are among the most prevalent objectives. (Aitchison; 2017) The functionality of adults as a managers of resources (human and material) is dependent on knowledge and skills, which can be properly provided by adult and non-formal education programmes. (Rogers,2016): Adult education is a trigger of sustainable development on any level. The transformative power of adult education was reflected in the Education For All (EFA) goals, same as the Millennium Development Goals that became effective in 2000. However in the United Nations (UN) approved Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adult education is to play a comparatively important role. This is seen in Goal 4 “*ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong*

*learning opportunities for all*” which is the trigger for inclusive participation of adults and others in the quest for improved sustainable society. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development to transform the World, includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated 169 targets. (UN.2015). The agenda is building on the principle of “leaving no one behind”, which emphasizes a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all in the spirit of SDG 4. The Education 2030 Agenda refers to the global commitment of the Education for All movement to ensure access to basic education for all. It is an essential part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roadmap to achieve the Agenda is the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action(UNESCO; 2017). The agenda has ten targets five of which directly or indirectly relate to adult education as shown below.

- Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
- Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

The SDGs is to tackle a large number of global challenges that were identified. Each of the SDGs has at least one target that implies education, learning or training, taking into account that learning activities are pivotal for achieving the goals. Non-formal adult education transmits

the knowledge that is required to gain a better understanding of the issues at hand, and it transfers the skills and competences needed to take action and to work on a solution. Therefore, adult education and lifelong learning are not only a transversal goal and method to achieving the SDGs, but also a specific goal. Adult education plays a twofold role in the attainment of SDGs and serving as a precondition for the achievement of the SDGs as well as a goal in itself. Adult learning contributes to the achievement of all SDGs by building the foundations of change in the social, political, economic, ecological and cultural spheres. (EAEA;2018). The attainment of all the 17 SDGs requires the active participation of adults, they hold and play a critical role as those in the world of work. The scope and content of adult education and lifelong learning correspond to the SDGs and include, among others, skills to lead a healthier life, knowledge about equitable and sustainable consumption, the promotion of gender equality, awareness about environmentally friendly transport and energy efficiency, as well as the promotion of sustainable, inclusive economic growth. Curricula in adult education can either have the promotion of these skills and competences as a primary target.

### **Challenges of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria.**

Relative to other areas in education, progress in adult education programmes and other opportunities for lifelong learning has languished in recent years due to

- **Perception.** The challenge of poor public perception of what constitute adult education is a serious challenge of adult education practice in Nigeria. Many see adult education as an area of study for the old people which has affected its patronage as a discipline in Nigeria schools (Aruma 2011). This perception has its root from policy makers who myopically see adult education as only literacy education or mass education as reflected in the National policy and the national blueprint operated by the National commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC). Adult education in Nigeria to Fasakun (2006) is just about literacy or remedial education to fill a gap. Many programmes universally classified as adult education programmes are not seen as such in the policy document of education in Nigeria. This significantly shows why adult



education continues to suffer in terms of quality, programme implementation, and budgetary allocation. Only one ministry and one agency are saddled with the responsibility of promoting adult education in Nigeria- the Ministry of Education and the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education. This essentially shows lack of knowledge and understanding of the comprehensiveness of the forms and components of adult education by the policy drafters. A detailed knowledge of the discipline would have shown that all government Ministries, Parastatals, and Agencies (MDAs) should have been involved in the promotion and practice adult education in Nigeria since the discipline covers the entire activities of mankind.

- **Funding.** One of the challenges of Adult Education in Nigeria is funding. Budgetary allocation for education generally is poor in Nigeria with yearly allocation less than the 26% recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for developing countries such as Nigeria and the 15-20% international benchmark. The highest budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is 11% in 2006 and 10.7% in 2015. For adult education, it is the worst with serious dearth in infrastructure (office space and furniture) to poor and non-payment of honorarium to facilitators with the attendant poor input. The financial framework for action developed at the International Conference on Financing Adult Education for Development in 2009 (UNESCO, 2009) recommended the allocation of a minimum of 6% is for Adult Education, reserving half of this for Adult Literacy Programmes. Unfortunately, this recommendation has not been implemented in Nigeria as Adult Education is still grossly under-financed with less than 1% of the GNP allocated to it.
- **Usurpation.** The practice of adult education in Nigeria is most often usurped right from planning to implementation and evaluation by non-adult educators as interlocutors. It has become an all comers affair where non adult educators are saddled with responsibility of planning and

implementation of adult education programmes. Adult education programme planning are to be based on felt needs, self -help and participation, however it is always influenced by the organizer and sponsors which negates the spirit of the practice. Adult education also uses andragogy as against pedagogy in instruction, but most adult education programmes are implemented using pedagogy because of the implementer who are non-adult educators. It is key to note that adults usually work better with a facilitator rather than a lecturer unless they are from academia, an overly formal setting can be somewhat intimidating.

- **Content selection and delivery.** Adult education programmes are targeted at adults in the world of work. Adults need skills and information in their learning that will be used now to solve immediate problems unlike the “Banking Concept” as described by Paulo Freire that is obtainable in formal education. Banking concept as propagated by Freire in formal education is the acquisition of skills, information and attitude that will be used in the future and not immediately. Content selection should not base on felt-need, which in most cases are selected by others (*assumed needs*) and imposed thus not evoking participation.
- **Lack of policy framework.** Though a national blue print exist with a commission (NMEC) saddled with the responsibility of adult education programmes in the country, but is restricted to basic literacy education. There are no guidelines to regulate the practice of Adult and Non-Formal education in Nigeria. The sector is not in the hand of the government as various Non- Governmental Organization (NGO’s), Community Base Organizations,(CBO’s) and Faith Base Organizations (FBO’s) are into various programmes that constitute adult and non-formal education and is not regulated. This also constitute a security threat to the country beside distortion of the culture by the imposition of alien culture and possible radicalization. There is no good governance framework established in Nigeria on Adult Education in line with the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education of 2015. The main challenges as regards

this include lack of multi-sectoral participation and engagement, low levels of accountability, low transparency, low levels of awareness of active citizenship, weak role of civil society, and lack of Open Government Partnership (OGP) on Adult Education which is a high-level good governance initiative promoting greater forms of transparency, accountability and supporting people empowerment.

- **Poor Monitoring.** Monitoring is a systematic way of keeping records of project or programme of activities in development process in the society. (Onah;2012) Poor monitoring is another challenge that militates against effective implementation of adult education projects and programmes for sustainability in Nigeria. Adult education projects and programmes have suffered from poor monitoring occasioned by lack of incentives to motivate workers' interest and commitment to work. There is no known institute or centre charged with coordinating or taking stock of the monitoring process at the national level and reporting periodically on progress in Adult Education in Nigeria. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) coordinates this monitoring process through the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). This type of institute is needed in Nigeria. The poor monitoring of adult education projects and programmes usually leads to their poor implementation in various parts of the country. There should be re-orientation of adult education workers on how to change their attitude to promote effective monitoring of adult education projects and programmes for sustainability in Nigeria.
- **Evaluation standard.** . Evaluation systematically assess an object's merit, worth, probity, feasibility, safety, significance, and/or equity. Quality is concerned with continuous analysis of the provision and outcomes of programs. The dynamics of participation in Adult Education in Nigeria is harmed by the inadequacy of information and statistics. This is because there has not been a well-developed knowledge-management system for the collection, analysis and dissemination of both quantitative and

qualitative data on participation as a national standards and benchmarks and internal control of quality. However the myopic definition of Adult education leading to poor funding and lack of policy frame work has also lead to poor evaluation standard. This means that adult education programmes cannot be regulated. This is evidence by the adult education programmes in Nigeria that is mainly organized by non- government players.

#### **Way forward.**

There is the urgent need for a new holistic and integrated policy, governance, financing/public investment, participation, inclusion and equity, as well as quality developments for Adult Education practice in Nigeria. This can be done by:-

- Professionalization of the practice of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. This will give room for proper regulation and practice in the field.
- The formulation of regulatory policy framework and checklist that will enhance the monitoring and evaluation of adult and non-formal education programmes with a benchmark in the country.
- Broad standard definition of adult learning and education to reflect international practice and guidelines.
- There should be collaborative efforts by all relevant stakeholders in adult education programmes to improve monitoring in view of the contemporary trends for sustainability. This will guarantee effective service delivery in repositioning monitoring of adult education programmes for sustainability and value for money in Nigeria.
- There is the urgent need for wider sensitization of all, especially policy makers for multi-sectoral, inter-ministerial, and inter-sectoral participation by all and cooperation of all stakeholders for a unified policy direction.

#### **Conclusion.**

Nigeria as a developing country have placed emphasis on formal education, though poorly funded while apparently neglecting adult and non-formal education. Adult education is clearly no longer a social activity marginal to schooling. The correct conceptualization of Adult Education in Nigeria in all ramifications is the strength of

the discipline and this determines the importance and the seriousness that the society will attach to it. It will not be out of place to state that the neglect suffers by Adult Education in Nigeria is as a result of the misconceptions associated with it. Many programmes universally classified as adult education programmes are not seen as such in the policy document on education in Nigeria. This significantly shows why adult education continues to suffer in terms of quality, programme implementation, manpower development and budgetary allocation. Finally an overhaul of adult education curriculum and programme in general is very essential for the generation and sustainability of new knowledge that can be in harmony with global trend to reflect societal needs.

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