

ADULT EDUCATION REFORMS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Adult education programme as a tool for development in Nigeria has been neglected by the government in her developmental programmes. This paper examined the importance of adult education in the National Development programmes in Nigeria, Using the various programmes and the policy guideline provided by the National policy on education, adult education will reform a lot in the National development plan. Most of the agencies should study the various policies and streamline it to favour adult education and avoid the multiplication of the agencies without achieving its goals to meet the target of the sustainable development goals. It has been recommended that for adult education to be reformed, there must be an improvement in the perception of Adult Education at all levels of the government and the society at large.

Keyword: Adult Education, Digital Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Education, particularly adult education, as a tool for development is reflected in the national policy on education. This policy sets three objectives of adult education which considered the necessary kinds of change required in individual adults that will translate into national development. Education being a formal means of acquiring knowledge, is a universal heritage of mankind. It is a basic factor for the accumulation of human capital and societal development.

Adult education process drives towards the achievement of the capability to individually use reason on the subject matter in question. Adult education is oriented at the use of any age, of attitudes and skills prone to clarifying any distributions in communication favouring; why, how, when and where; as well as the “what for” in all situations (UNESCO, 2006).

Adult education is a multidisciplinary process oriented to favour lifelong education for all, as well as efficient learning throughout life. It aims to provide the knowledge that improves professional qualifications and to achieve civic, social, moral and cultural attitudes and skills for performing responsibilities and for progress in all spheres of life. In a time of constant socio-economic changes and scientific advances, national development is vital. Adult education leads economic and social transformation. It creates an increase in the choices and it is related to problem-solving in everyday life (Escrigas, 2008). More emphasis is placed on human skills and abilities, where the involvement of adults in matters that confront them on a daily basis, as well as the existing learning opportunities lead them to greater personal, social and professional recognition (Human Development Report, 2016).

In the past decades, adult education has evolved at a rapid pace as a consequence of financial, technological, social and cultural changes and makes it essential for adults to have multiple knowledge and skills that are adapted to their environment (Osterhamme and Peterson, 2013). Generally, it is necessary for all adults, in every phase of their lives to have access to new knowledge and skills that would make it easier for them to integrate in the society in order to adapt to alternating conditions and to define themselves (UNESCO, 2015).

According to (UNESCO GRALE III, 2016: 32) the ecumenical political approach should include three fundamental aspects in order to be effective: □ Adult education as an integral part of lifelong learning in the framework of support and encouragement of a democratic political system. □ The impact of national policies for Adult education as a long-term approach, with frequent progressive evaluation and inclusion of political framework.

□ Diagnostic evaluation of national policies not only of the requirements of the job market but also of personal and social needs.

Adult education constitutes a motivating form for social protector. It helps the empowerment of all adults, solidarity and social justices. Adult Education in Nigeria is generally geared towards national development. The objective of the process of adult education and national development is to get the adults, both as individuals or groups to learn; and through learning to change their attitude and behaviour.

The National Policy on Education (2014), states the goals of adult and non-formal education as:

a. Provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include migrant folks, Almajiri pupils,

illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents; persons who left the formal school system early and are now willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories of disadvantaged groups; who are unable to have access to the conventional educational system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/ peculiar needs and circumstances;

b. Provide remedial and life-long education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education;

c. Provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

This policy guidelines is an attempt to harmonize the provisions of other statutory documents which stresses the elimination of mass illiteracy within the shortest possible time. These guidelines shall provide the much-needed driving force for the eradication of illiteracy towards achieving national development and producing neo-literates who are self-reliant through skill acquisition and functional literacy.

Adult Education in national development

Adult education as a field of study is indispensable in national development as its relevance cuts across all sectors. Adult education is a multidisciplinary process oriented to favour lifelong education for all, as well as efficient learning throughout life. It is based on justice, on the disposition to favour the understanding of cultural aspects in human evolution and the cooperation of international peace, carrying out process of teaching-learning (UNESCO, 2006). Adult education pursues improvement in education to provide knowledge and to favour training that guarantees equal opportunities to life, adapting to the needs of individuals of all ages, with the aim of arming

them with the capacity for a critical understanding of the world and its changes.

Adult education is not considered to be an entity by itself, it is regarded as an integral part of lifelong education. Lifelong education is a process aimed at effective learning throughout life that comprises all ages and all levels of teaching. It is oriented to achieve participation in reforms, educational measures and projects preparing the individual for their civic and social responsibilities and responding to their requirements, needs and aspirations, opportunities and ways to develop their personality, embracing individual, cultural, artistic creative and sensible development to dominate their changes.

Concept of Development

Todaro and Smith (2003), the term development may mean different things to different individual and may be defined from different perspectives. From the economic perspective, development means the capacity of a nation, whose initial economic status has been more or less static for a long time to improve. The social indicators of development do include gains in literacy, schooling, health conditions and services and provision of housing. Development has therefore been redefined in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality in income distribution and unemployment within the context of growing economy in order to improve the quality of people's lives.

Developmental strategies are aimed at increasing such things as rate of investment, labour productivity and technological growth. However, Nyerere, (1979) argues that quantitative changes in investment, labour productivity and increase in Gross National Product (GNP) without any corresponding improvement in the living standard of the populace is not development. Development therefore will be meaningful only when it corresponds with the quantitative changes in investment, labour productivity and increase in GNP

with improvement in the living standard of the populace. Rogers (1992) maintains that development is about education and training and that at the heart of it is changing attitudes. From this vintage point, the concept of development clarifies the meaning of national development as the development of human's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains geared towards the development of their physical environment and well-being.

National Development

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, to provide infrastructures such as good roads, functional hospitals, airport, schools and employment. Ume (1987) noted that most nations of the world aspire for development and that development is only meaningful when there is total participation in the socio-economic and political life of the population.

Adult education and national development The role of Adult education in any society is to provide an educational opportunity for people who want to upgrade their general education or learn specific skills that they did not learn before (Georgesson, 2018). Adult education is another word for high school upgrades; however, it can also be education for its own sake taken by adults. The role of adult development in any society is also instrumental for having a better informed citizenry. It empowers continual innovation. Adult education helps: □ to deliver lifelong learning to communities

- to encourage adults to think clearly
 - to inform the citizenry about current affairs
 - to attempt to create an informal and intelligent electorate.
 - to develop humanitarian attitudes and distinguish between ideology and reason .
- Adult education in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (FGN, 2014), provides three basic objectives directed towards the

education of young and adult population that can contribute to national development. These objectives are as follows:

- a. provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or left school too early;
- b. Provide remedial and lifelong education for youths and adults who did not complete their education;
- c. Provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills

These objectives when properly implemented will help to equip the adult and provide essential skills to be a well skilled citizen in the society.

Adult Education Reforms

Education, being a formal means of acquiring knowledge, is a universal heritage of mankind. It is a basic factor for the accumulation of human capital and societal development. Adult education is a veritable tool for change and development. Unfortunately, it has myriad of problems in Nigeria which evolve around the policy makers, government and other stakeholders.

Reformation has been an extraordinary force for global education and adult education in general. Gusau (2011) criticized the federal government for being inconsistent and confused in the nature of the Nigerian education reforms. Adult education means a series of activities aimed at cultural enrichment, requalification and professional mobility. The reformation therefore must be consistent, with the government sticking to any changes in policy not making a 360 degree U-turn. The adult educators/instructors and university dons are not involved in the policies and decision making. This results in breakdown in the manner the policies are implemented. The greatest problem in Nigeria

education reform is the implementation process. That is, the ideological decay and confusion over what to do in educational sector. From sustainable education to vocational, technical, science, functional to entrepreneurial studies, from 8:6:2:3 of pre-colonial period to 6:5:2:3 of post-colonial; the 6:3:3:4 of military era to 9:3:4 system of civil government. Imoke (2011) opined that education reforms are representatives of conscious evolution of policy regimes which are capable of bringing significant revolutionary change in the education sector. This also implies to adult education as part of education. The intent of these reforms is to make it more responsive to the needs of the people. Adult education reform has to do with changes in policy to make better by converting or making improvement from the deficiencies that are in previous policy. According to (Onuigbo, 2009), educational reform is a long process that begins with problem identification, studying, analysis of the existing structure and ending with the evaluation and termination of the programme. It also involves the development of an alternative policy, implementation and feedback. The basic requirement is to meet the needs and aspiration of the people.

UNESCO's Strategic objectives for 2014 – 2021 are in line with the educational reforms of adult education with the following objectives which will help in the reform process: -Strategic objective 1

- .Developing education systems to foster quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all, that is; (i). Supporting sector – wide planning, policies and reforms; (ii). Promoting literacy;
- (iii). Developing skills for the world of work;
- (iv). Supporting equitable access to higher education;
- (v). Addressing teacher issues and improving the quality of teaching;
- (vi). Improving learning process and outcomes; (vii). Expanding learning opportunities and the quality of

education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Strategic objective 2

-Empowering learners to be creative and responsive global citizens;

(i). Reinforcing global citizenship education;

(ii). Strengthening education for sustainable development;

(iii). Promoting health through education.

Strategic objective 3

- Shaping the future education for the future education agenda;

(i).rethinking education for the future: foresight and research.

(ii). Monitoring global education development, including through normative instruments/ (iii).

Building effective partnerships for education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper examined Adult education reforms and national development in Nigeria. The objective of this study is that the future reforms must include movement from theory into practice. Most of the agencies involved in adult education should study all the policies and broaden and sharpen adult education policies/programmes for national development. This will highlight other potential strategies and identify in particular where and why to increase education and improve learning for the most marginalised. The differences in policies in education development strategies partly contribute to the disparity in the educational reform outcomes in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In the reform of adult education the following are recommended;

1. Improve the perception of adult education in the society;
2. Replace “adult education” with another attractive or creative name;
3. Align vocational education with labour market;

4. Raise the quality, relevance and attractiveness of adult education programmes;
5. Equal opportunities – targeted at youths and adults with different disabilities;
6. National Universities Commission (NUC) as the umbrella body of higher institutions should provide uniformed policies.

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