

## **ADULT EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE POVERTY REDUCTION IN ECONOMIC CHALLENGING TIMES IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:** The paper explores the concepts and meaning of adult education and poverty. It presents adult education as a field of study that offers great opportunities for individual development and social mobility for poverty reduction. It argues that the future prosperity of any country depends largely on its active human resource development. This paper recommended: the need to place less emphasis on paper qualification (certificates). It also advocated the need to re-introduce craft and handwork in all levels of education system to reduce poverty in the society.

**Keywords:** Adult Education, Poverty Reduction, Economic challenges.

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria the socio-economic situation is highly deteriorating given the present context of global rising unemployment, economic and security crises in Nigeria. The contributing decline in revenue generation is widening the gap between the haves and have not (rich and poor) in terms of quality education, adequate health care and other basic necessities for human comfort. It has become evidently clear that if the change mantra of this present government to reposition the economy in line with vision 20-20-20 agenda are to be achieved, Nigeria nation must embrace adult education as a panacea to produce active workforce who will drive the economy for holistic national development and poverty reduction.

All over the world, education is the single tool for developing human capital which in the long run attract development in every human society. It occupies a special place in human resource development. In Nigeria, education is recognized as an instrument “Par excellence” for effecting national development (FRN, 2014). The point is that adult education which is an aspect of education allow every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape the future for national and societal development. Adult education gives the opportunity to people to update their knowledge and

skills which will enable them to take care of their felt needs and solve their socio-economic problems in order to reduce poverty.

Poverty is a global phenomenon and has attracted much attention in recent years. About 1.2 billion people currently live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than one (1) dollar per day at purchasing power parity (Odekun, 2006). The situation in Sub-Saharan Africa has been the most deplorable, not only the incidence of extreme poverty is much higher in the region than elsewhere, but the region was also reported to have recorded about 100 million more extremely poor. Sub-Saharan Africa contributed more to the extreme poverty in the world more than any other region (MDGR, 2009). Nigerian is one of the most resource-endowed nations in the world but socio-economically, Nigerians are also among the poorest people in the world (Etim, 2009). Hence, there is a persisting paradox of a rich country inhabited by poor people.

In Nigeria a large proportion of the population is faced with poor health conditions, high infant and maternal mortality rate with mortality rate of 191 per 100 births (UNDP, 2010). Low life expectancy stood at 46 and 47 years for male and female. Nigeria ranked 155<sup>th</sup> out of the world's 177 countries with high rate of illiteracy among

**Ali, Matthew Ayogu**

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others (World Bank, 2008), (CIA, 2009). Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Nigeria 142 out of 169 countries in 2010 with estimated Gross National Income (GNI) per capital of \$2156 (dollar), life expectancy at birth of 48.4 years and multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.368 (UNDP, 2010).

The 2012 National Bureau of Statistics further revealed that average poverty rate of States in the North-West geopolitical zone remained highest at 71.4 percent followed by North-East at 69.1 percent North West at 59.4 and North central at 60.7 percent. Poverty, according to the National Bureau of statistics (NBS) (2012), was least prevalent in South-West, with an average of 49.8 percent, South-South with 55.5 percent and South-East with 59.5 percent. Poverty the above analysis is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living. It is a condition of living lack basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. Ezenwafor (2009) defined poverty as a condition of being in want. In support of this, Robinson (2006) defined the two sides of poverty as poverty of purpose (mind) and poverty of the purse (money and what it can buy). Aliyu (2003), stated that unemployment and, illiteracy are very obvious in Nigeria. Poverty has attained a very high level in Nigeria to the extent that International Community, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations engaged in different programmes in order to reduce poverty to the barest minimum. This paper highlights the concepts of Adult Education, Poverty, dimensions of poverty, manifestation of poverty, causes, conceptual clarification of poverty, adult education programmes, relevance of Adult Education to poverty reduction and challenges facing adult education in poverty reduction.

### **Conceptual Clarification of Adult Education**

The meaning of adult education has changed from literacy and remedial education in the 1930's and 1940's to life-wide and lifelong education in the 1950's and 1960's, respectively (Mpofu & Amin, 2004). A definition of adult education that reflects the literacy and remedial view of adult education was provided by Morgan in the 1930's.

Adult education offers those who are not privileged a last chance to learn. (Okedera, 1981). In accordance with this perception, the focus of adult education at that time was to give second chances to those who, for some reason, had very little or no formal schooling at all. Adult Education is not literacy education alone. Adult education is more than literacy or reviewed education to "fill the gap". It is something people need and want as long as they are alive and regardless of the amount of their previous education (Okedara, 1981). Youngman (2000) saw adult education as a process whereby adults were helped to move from being less to more competent persons.

Adult education is also a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full-time basis under the sequential and organized activities with a conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding or skills, appreciation and attitude or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems (Nzeneri, 2010). Adult education is considered virtually as any activity for adults designed to bring about learning which encompasses a full continuum from basic literacy, post literacy, vocational and work-related education, distance learning, human resource development and continuing professional development, and whose major responsibility is to help adult to adapt to change and live productivity in the World of change (Obidaegwu, 2013).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2014) under section 6 of the National Policy on Education (NPE) document stated the objectives of adult education as:

- to provide functional literacy education for illiterate adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education such as the nomads, physically challenged and disadvantaged groups;
- to provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- to provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education

system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;

- to provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills, and
- to give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural, and civic education for public enlightenment (p.16).

With the above objectives, adult education scope covers educational programmes for illiterate populace, dropouts, categories of uncompleters, completers, workers (skilled and unskilled) and professionals, and likewise education for the entire citizenry. It provides education for the development of individual personality. Adult education which is also considered as a catalyst to accelerate second chance education has been conceived in the paper as a substitute to formal education which is necessary for improving people's competencies in the economic challenging times. In view of the changes and challenges in national and international scenes, adult education is perceived in this paper as all the educational programmes designed to meet the latent needs of individuals, communities as a result of social change through appropriate knowledge, skills, competencies and training to holistically reduce poverty within our society.

### **Conceptualization of poverty**

In a wider scope, poverty is an individual's inability to meet the basic needs for food, shelter, education and health. Poverty can be explained from two dimensions: namely, absolute deprivation and relative deprivation (Wallace & Wallace, 1985). From the dimension of absolute deprivation, poverty means the complete absence of basic needs of life such as food, shelter, cloth and health care. This shows the segment of people who do not know where their next meal is going to come from. These groups are said to be absolutely poor. From the dimension of relative deprivation, poverty is in a relative state in that it is based on what has been determined to be the normal

standard of living for a particular village rather than on the deprivation of essentials. Absolute deprivation is based on the essentials of life, while relative deprivation is based on an official poverty line that may be unrealistic for the community.

It is considered normal in city centres to own a car, or television sets among others. People who cannot afford car, or television sets would then be considered relatively poor. Yet these groups of people would not be considered absolutely poor because they have basic life-sustaining needs such as food, shelter and health care. In the relative sense, poverty is contextual in that a person who is poor in one setting maybe considered reasonably well-off in another. The poor of the urban areas could be considered affluent in the village (rural) areas (Udaba, 2008).

In Nigeria, majority of people lack the basic needs of life and are considered as poor people. These groups of people are hungry, lack shelter, and their children are unable to go to school, do not have job, are uncertain and fearful about the future, and lose their children to all sorts of illness due to unclean water, powerlessness and lack of freedom or representation (World Bank, 2001). The poor can hardly benefit from or contribute maximally to the development of the society in which they live (Udaba, 2008). They do not participate fully in the life of their societies. Poor people have been described as "all the losers of the world, who live in sub-human condition" (Udaba, 2008).

### **Dimensions of poverty**

Poverty can be examined from four dimensions namely:

- Monetary poverty
- Capability poverty
- Social Exclusion poverty and,
- Participatory poverty (Laderchi, Saith & Stewart, 2003)

### **Monetary dimension**

This places more emphasis on income as a measure of poverty. It links poverty with a 'shortfall in consumption (or income) from the poverty line (Laderchi, et al., 2003).

### **Capability dimension**

This dimension consider poverty as ‘the failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities, where basic capabilities refers to the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functioning up to certain minimally adequate levels (Laderchi, et al 2003). Thus, a person should be capable of achieving a ‘good life’ otherwise that person is poor. Capability dimension faces the limitation of arriving at operational measures that generate an inordinate number of methodological choices and problems.

### **The Social exclusion**

The third dimension sees poverty as social exclusion of people who do not fit into the norms of industrial societies. They are unprotected by social insurance and are considered social misfits. The people in this groups includes;

- the handicapped
- drug users
- delinquents and
- the aged among others (Laderchi et al; 2003)

Social exclusion people are those people who are generally marginalized and deprived in society. The monetary and capability dimension of poverty are externally imposed, and as such do not take the views of the poor into consideration while social exclusion of the poor approach lacks a clear definition and acceptable scales of measuring exclusion.

### **The participation dimension**

This is built on the poor perspection of the meaning and magnitude of poverty. Poverty is viewed by Laderchi et al (2003) as what the poor feel and accept as their state of being and demands the participation of all to evolve and implement a poverty reduction strategy as initiated by the world Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The focal point here is the enhancement of material well-being, namely physical and social security, and freedom of choice and action.

### **Manifestation or Evidence of poverty**

Generally, poverty manifests itself in many forms. The poor are the weak, the hungry, the homeless, the beggar, the enslaved and the exiled in society. (Rahnema, 1993).

Poor people are characterized as:

*People who live without fundamental freedoms of action and choice. They often lack adequate food and shelter, education and health deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disaster. And they are often exposed to ill treatment by institutions of the state (or government) and society and are powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives (World Bank, 2001).*

Perceptions of poverty may differ across cultures or times, but its description seems to indicate the commonality of hopelessness. The poor live in abject conditions below the poverty line and are defined as those who spend less than one United State dollar per day’ (World Bank, 2008). On average, this amount cannot pay for one full plate of food for an adult anywhere in Nigeria. It is very common in Nigeria for a family of five (5) members to live on less than one dollar a day, a sum which is barely adequate for one meal. Though for people to function normally, it is expected that they should feed three times a day. However, some scholars feel that in fact, the amount of one dollar per day is inadequate to explain the poverty situation in Nigeria. In any case, opinion on the extent of poverty will always differ according to the perspective one takes (Reddy & Pogge, 2002).

### **Causes of poverty**

The causes of poverty and major contributing factors includes:

- lack of opportunity to participate in those institutions of state and society that make

decisions about the lives of people, leading to powerlessness.

- vulnerability to condition of shock or inability to cope with them. For example, uncertainty about rainfall, living in over-crowded environments that are prone to threat and dangers, precarious employment conditions, high risk of contact with preventable epidemic diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, arbitrary arrest or ill treatment by state agents, and violence, particularly against women.
- low productivity due to low capacity utilization of existing industrial or manufacturing companies, lack of local or foreign capital, political instability, breakdown of family or social values, and inability to harness local resources for development.
- unemployment due to lack of skills, inability to explore informal opportunities for self-employment, inappropriate skills generated from formal educational institutions and programmes. Retrenchment of workers due to rationalization and restructuring.
- high population growth which is overstressing the use of basic social and physical infrastructure, especially health and educational services.
- corruption, which increases nepotism in public service and massive misappropriation of state resources meant to be used to address the needs of people.
- unequal distribution of wealth. In Nigeria only a few people control resources and the means of generating wealth. This has created three broad classes in Nigeria, the rich, the middle class and the poor class. In Nigeria, (Aliyu, 2002) majority of the citizens have been denied access to wealth and resources.
- debt burden which is the major source where Nigeria diverts resources meant for development to the repayment and servicing of local and foreign

burden that deprives schools, hospitals and the transportation and power sectors among others of much-needed funds and thus contributes significantly to the worsening conditions of poverty in Nigeria (Aliyu, 2002).

### **Adult Education and poverty reduction in economic challenging times in Nigeria.**

Adult education plays a crucial role as an empowerment strategy through which adults can uplift themselves socially and economically to enable them participate fully in the development of their communities. Adult education makes people to be creative to enable them meet the complex challenges of our time. The future of our societies especially at the time of economic meltdown rests above all on people's potential. Adults are endowed with a plethora of collective and individual experiences as well as abilities. What he needs, and must be provided with, is the voice and the opportunity to build on experiences, to construct himself intellectually and physically and to develop both himself and his community. The opportunity to learn enriches human life and allows people to unleash the forces of creativity and determination that so often lies dormant within them.

Adult education programme are activities geared towards educating adults in Nigeria. Its relevance in the economic challenging times cannot be overemphasized. It provides education for the semi-illiterates, neo-illiterates and dropouts in the society. A truly educated citizenry is one of the most powerful deterrents to dictatorship and oligarchy. Adult education liberates the people mentally to appreciate life, take interest and pride in one's culture, and recognize the relevance of economic recovery. Adult education is the answer for our national economic recovery because acquisition of formal education is seen by some people as an avenue for securing paid job with government establishment and private organizations (Chidi, 2013).

Adult education enables people to be self-reliant, having acquired knowledge and vocational skills through which the learner can establish small scale business on



their own. Adult education should be appreciated as aiding the development of character and mental power which liberate one from ignorance and mobilizes him towards self-employment. Adult education liberates the minds of the learners, thus these graduates of adult education programmes will be able to think meaningfully and act wisely in their civic right and responsible on their everyday life and living. By so doing, they will understand and appreciate their environment better, which makes them fit and productive in their operation in terms of efforts for entire development of their country (Chidi, 2013).

Learners of adult education programmes stands to gain by acquiring the necessary skills, up-to-date mental resources for development. The ability of man to effectively and efficiently apply his skills, knowledge and capabilities is determined to a large extent by education. Adult education is essential for nation building because all educated people will appreciate the introduction of new technology and use it to improve his or her economic challenging time to reduce poverty. The relevance of adult education as imperative for effective poverty reduction in economic challenging times lies under the fact that adult education provides one with the competencies and skills for one's redemption and self-improvement which makes one self-reliant. Adult education provides the needed education for the acquisition of skills, technological take-off, social regeneration and political redemption. It finds and solves people's immediate problems (Chidi, 2013).

Adult education programmes educates people in the society so that they will be able to face the challenges of their own time and forge ahead to promote the economic, social, cultural and political status of their state. Adult education is a vital tool for human development. Adult education as an imperative for effective poverty reduction has challenges militating its effectiveness in Nigeria (Chidi, 2013).

It is necessary to note that eradicating poverty is ethical, social, political and economic imperative to mankind. Nigeria as a nation has committed herself to

carrying out extensive economic return programmes to reduce poverty in the land (Kazeem & Aghedo, 2015). Nigeria Government had set up many poverty alleviating programmes in the past. Some of these programmes are: National Economic Empowerment and Development strategies (NEEDS), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Fadama 111 Rural Agricultural Project, N-power intervention programmes among others. The recent one by the Federal Government is advocating for entrepreneurial education in every higher institutions. Despite efforts by government to reduce poverty in Nigeria, there is still high rate of poverty which has resulted into kidnapping, abduction and robbery among others social vices.

### **Challenges Adult education faces in eradicating poverty in economic challenging times in Nigeria.**

Adult education in Nigeria is bedeviled by some challenges which has crippled the economic development. The situation affects governments responsibilities especially in adult education. The problems of adult education in these economic challenging times ranges from:

- Poor accessibility
- Inadequate funding
- Lack of mobilization
- Poor remuneration of facilitators
- Inadequate number of qualified facilitators

#### **Poor accessibility**

Poor accessibility to adult literacy centres and programmes is a serious problem facing adult education development in Nigeria. To achieve education for all, adult education should be established at the door steps of every household in Nigeria. Adult education programmes being an agent of change should be made accessible so that learners should improve their quality of life, develop their potential to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the society.

### **Inadequate funding**

Budgetary allocation to adult education in Nigeria is grossly inadequate especially when compared to the formal education sector. Non-formal education is excluded in the share of two recent consolidated fund meant for basic education in spite of policy provision (Nzeneri, 2010). The problem of accountability and transparency in the management of funds allocated to adult education contributed to the poor implementation of the sector (Nzeneri, 2010).

### **Lack of mobilization**

In Nigeria many interested learners are not aware of the existence of adult education centres. This affects the achievement of education for all agenda. Many philanthropists who are willing to contribute their own quota but due to lack of advocacy and mobilization they cannot do so. There should be proper mobilization of all stakeholders to come and embrace adult education programmes so as to achieve the desired results.

### **Poor remuneration to facilitators**

In Nigeria, most states and local government areas do not pay their facilitators regularly (Nzeneri, 2010). In some cases, facilitators are not paid for many months and this result into long strike actions which affect the effective operation of teaching and learning in adult education centres (Nzeneri., 2010).

### **Inadequate numbers of qualified change agent/facilitators**

In Nigeria, primary and secondary school teachers who do not understand the use of andragogical techniques are appointed as facilitators and change agents. According to NMEC (2008) Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) should be the minimum teaching qualification in compliance with the provision of National Policy on Education (NPE) to ensure quality delivery in adult education setting. In Nigeria, the Grade II Teachers and even less qualified personnel still teach in adult education centres. These

groups of facilitators are not fully trained in andragogical method of adult learning.

The effect of all these are: that adult education had suffered serious devaluation which makes people to develop a low sense of esteem especially when compared with other professions like medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy among others. Another serious challenge facing adult education is government failure to show priority interest and concern towards it. Onyenemezu (2012) opined that adult education has been neglected by the government irrespective of the fact that it is the adult personnel of this great country who are already at the production sectors and who will eventually transform this country from what it is today to achieve its developmental targets and vision 20-20-20.

Nzeneri (2010) observes that illiteracy is associated with underdevelopment, instability, low productivity, low income, poor health, high poverty and mortality rates among others. Looking at the above challenges affecting adult education in Nigeria especially in this economic challenging time, makes it impossible and difficult for government intentions and objectives of adult education to be actualized. In this regard, all governments, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations must device possible means to improve adult education in the country to a great height of quality and high standards by providing advocacy and learning needs. Adult education can stand the test of being imperative for poverty reduction when all these challenges facing it has been holistically eradicated.

### **Conclusion**

This paper discussed adult education as imperative for effective poverty reduction in economic challenging times in Nigeria. It sees adult education as a second chance education which provides varieties of programmes in the economic challenging times. Adult education faces a lot of challenges in Nigeria. Failure of the various levels of government in Nigeria to recognize the relevance of adult education has great consequences on the economy because

adults as independent human beings are the ones that can effectively contribute towards national development and not children. All problems bedeviling adult education must be resolved and its programmes given recognition by all stakeholders including the government.

This paper discussed the disturbing poverty level in Nigeria as a result of increased level of unemployment. Different adult education programmes to poverty reduction were highlighted. The relevance of adult education were buttressed in support of the call to pursue an effective implementation of adult education programmes nationwide through equipping facilitators among others. It is the view of the writers that if adequate measures are taken as recommended to effectively implement adult education programme, a greater number of Nigerian youths will become gainfully employed and this will holistically result in poverty reduction in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The policy on adult education should effectively be implemented at all levels of government in order to achieve the Education for All agenda in Nigeria.

Facilitators remunerations and regular training and retraining should be encouraged at all levels by government

Adult education centres should be supported, equipped and sponsored by government, non-governmental organizations through facility provision and proper maintenance.

Government at all levels should pay greater attention to adult education by providing necessary support to ensure its effective implementation to reduce poverty and grow the economy.

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**Ali, Matthew Ayogu**

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