

## ADULT EDUCATION AS A KEY FACTOR TO SOCIAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA.

*Odenigbo, V.N (Ph.D.)*

Department of Continuing  
Education and Development  
Studies, Enugu State University of  
Science and Technology  
*Odenigbo.veronica@esut.edu.ng*

### Abstract

Education is perceived as the most relevant tool or instrument for change, development and progress by all societies. Education remains the most important agent of social conservation and transformation. It is indeed the most significant means by which the experiences, the totality and cultural disposition of all human societies are transmitted from generation to generation. Essentially, the education system of a society evolved from within values, need and aspiration of such society. Adult education in this instance can be explained to mean educational programmes designed for individuals of various ages to enhance their abilities and potentials through diverse modes of formal, informal and non-formal education. This education is based on the peoples' social, economic, political and cultural needs which further enhance their scope of adapting to societal immediate needs as well as facing future challenge. This study explains that adult education is a need-oriented and learner-centred field that has always been associated with social change. Social change cannot be achieved without reasonable and active involvement of the majority of the populace. This populace which involves adults need to be motivated to participate in adult Education Programmes so as to achieve social change and development. Social change can be achieved when the adult populace is equipped through Adult Education programmes. One of the suggestions is that Adult Educators, facilitators should endeavour to provide learning materials (that is instructional materials) in the learning centres

**Keywords:** Education, Adult Education, Social change, motivation.

### Introduction

Adult Education is education meant for adults who were not able to attend normal school system. It is concentrating more on programmes and strategies that will help to reduce illiteracy, poverty and facilitate social development. Educational process like adult education are geared to strengthen organization, citizenship and support development programmes in the society. Samuel, Helen, Laura, Anne, & Edouard (2023) stated that adult education is any kind of education for adults who are mature enough to be able to be a father or mother, those mature enough to vote or be voted so that they can use the education for their own wellbeing. The role of adult education is to

empower people for change and social development. This is why social development roles of adult education according to (Obidiegwu and Obiozor 2014) incorporate anything that enlarges man's understanding, activate them, and help them to make their own decision and to implement those decisions for themselves. Adult education according to Fafurwa cited in Odenigbo (2017) includes the social development of practical skills, character training, teaching respect for elders, teaching the values of honest labour, inculcating a sense of belonging and community spirit and promoting cultural heritage. Adult Education is a form of practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-education

activities so as to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitude, and values. This can be inform of any learning an adult participate that are not the normal formal education system in order to acquire basic literacy and become fulfilled as a lifelong learning (Starford 2013, &Obidiegwu, 2011)

Nigerian government in recent times has made huge investments in education. However, it is disheartening that these investments are mainly in the areas of formal education neglecting the area of adult and non-formal education. There has been progressive decline in Nigerian government's capacity to implement projects that respond to the needs of adult education in terms of personnel, funding, collaboration and methodology. Here, neglecting Adult Education by the government is contributing seriously to the under development that Nigerians are experiencing .Adult education and its practice in Nigeria has a long history which could be traced to colonial government. The initial focus during this period was on literacy teaching. Through several constitutional changes, government embarked on policies aimed at developing education in general including adult education. A post independent national curriculum conference to improve all forms of education was held in 1964. A follow-up national conference on education was held in 1973. The aftermath of that conference gave birth to the first draft of the policy on education. The draft policy underwent several changes and finally was approved to be printed as a public document by Federal Ministry of Education in 1977. The education policy has been revised several times in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2013 and 2014 which is still currently in use. The national policy on education has section 6 devoted to Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education. (Obi, 2015).

Specific adult education programmes such as mass literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education were identified in the national policy on education (NPE)(2014).These programmes are major components of adult education in Nigeria even though there are other activities and practices that are within the framework of adult Education in Nigeria. Fasokun(2010) posited that this section of the NPE continues to provide the minimum standard guiding the provision of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria . Fasokun (2010) added

that the various states and local governments have their own adult education policies which are consistent with the national policy on education, but may be peculiar to local conditions based on the principle of federalism in Nigeria.

There is also Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE). This body is mainly for academics and professionals in the practice of adult education since 1971. The establishment of NNCAE was to coordinate the various forms of adult education. Hence, the body has worked in collaboration with government and non-government agencies to achieve many feats which have helped the development and practice of adult education in Nigeria.

It has to be noted also that both federal and state governments set up various adult education agencies during the 1980s with a view to improving the literacy status of the adults to gain education in Nigeria, including adult education is on the concurrent legislative list of the constitution. By this all tiers of government, private organizations and individuals have the powers to provide adult education in Nigeria. In terms of funding adult education in Nigeria, Fasokun (2010) stated that between 1997 and 2008, the percentage allocation ranged between 0.65% and 8.94% of the total allocation of funds available to education in general.

### **Adult Education as an agent of Social change**

It is believed that social change is a legitimate and central aim of adult education. Social change must be totally repudiated as an educational aim The function of social change stem from the fact that there are unresolved social problems which are caused by constant changes in the social structure, social relationship and social institutions. (Solaja, 2020). Adult education is an agent of social change in the following ways:

Conscientistation Agent; conscientisation Agents is an important adult education agent which is employed to stimulate consciousness in people to understand the realities of their environment with the ultimate purpose of promoting sustainable societal change in the society. Interestingly, conscientisation as a concept which was developed by Freire (1970) focuses immensely on using the acquired knowledge and skills from education for liberation in order to

transform the participating recipients and communities in the societies. Consequently, conscientisation is a development process of helping people to understand their predicaments through awareness creation which will lead to proper identification of their problems in their local environment with the aim of proffering possible solutions to the identified problem in order to enhance their poor living conditions in the society. Freire (1972) rightly stated that the concept of conscientisation is just a process that helps people to develop themselves, their consciousness so as to be critically aware of their problems and their environment.

Consequently, it becomes imperative to raise the consciousness of people in order to understand the problems that confront them in their locality. Indeed, awareness creation is very vital in helping people to really understand the realities of the contemporary global environment. Adult and non-formal education focuses greatly on awareness creation or awareness education to enable people to understand the realities of life in the society. Conscientisation can be referred to as awareness education or awareness creation or as social awareness building where people at community level attend orientation seminars for proper briefing to understand the prevailing challenges of life in their local communities in Nigeria (Faskun 2010). The focus of social awareness building is to enable people identify the prevailing challenges of life in their local environment with a view to proffering possible solutions. Essentially, raising of people's consciousness in the society certainly helps them to know certain relevant issues and challenges and how to handle them. Apparently, this becomes obvious when the people who are ignorant of such issues and challenges are conscientised. When peoples' consciousness is raised they will be able to know and detect their felt needs and work towards getting solution to them (Thomas and Harries-Jenkins, 2023). Generally, these felt needs actually motivate adults into participating in adult education programmes to find solution to it. Hence there is the need to motivate the adults to participate in adult education programmes to achieve social change and development. As a matter of fact, man's need must be motivated so that one can be satisfied with oneself in

the job and the environment one lives. In order to achieve above statement, some psychologists identified some basic human needs as follows:

Maslow and Murray the two psychologists identified some basic human needs. Murray a cognitive theorist sees internal structure as the basis of human behavior. Thus, when the brain is internally instigated, it organizes other psychological processes. Murray classified motives into two major categories of primary needs and secondary needs. The primary needs in basic requirements for living / such as the need for intake of food, water, air, the need for excretion and exhalation and the need for withdrawal (for safety) when faced with anger. The secondary needs include the desire to control and influence others, desire to admire someone else, need for independence and need to fight. Murray postulated that needs come to the fore and express themselves with more urgency than others. Murray was the first need theorist of motivation (1988).

Maslow the second theorist propounded the principles of motivation which highlighted that human beings are active beings whose behaviours are agitated or propelled by some potent forces. Maslow calls the forces organismically based needs. Maslow postulated that unsatisfied need creates tension within an organism thereby serving as a force to direct behavior towards reduction of the tension. Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of need for foods, shelter, health, clothing, transportation and education. In the area of economic and physical need, motivation of the learner to participate in any of the functional literacy programmes will really be of great help because it will provide the knowledge for their need to be solved. The adult learners want to be economically balanced that is to upgrade their skills and employability (Maslow, 1954).

**Adult education is a key factor of social change because of the following:**

**Economic and Physiological Factor:** An adult learner who is gainfully employed in either public or private sector of the economy where they can utilize their skills, knowledge and potentials in the development of the nation sees a need to improve on the skills already acquired. Therefore, need to participate in any Adult Education programmes that will broaden and enhance more on the existing

knowledge or skill. Adult Education Programmes help adults to have the ability to read, write and compute numeracy in all areas of human endeavour and also ability to satisfy ones health and nutritional needs. In order to know how much food to consume what quantity of food to eat, the type of shelter and the type of clothes to put on and how to take care of the body, what exercise to partake in so as to maintain good health, once aware of the needs the adult will like to participate in Adult Education programmes so that these needs might be solved (European Association for Education of Adults, 2016)

**Educational Factors:** it is a need that motivates adult learner's participation in Adult Education programmes. Adults need skills that will enable them achieve their aim successfully and wish to improve on their learning capabilities. Adult learners who may have lost some educational opportunities in the past and may feel incomplete as persons unless they fill what they see as gaps in knowledge or education. Others may want to learn how to make meaningful use of their leisure time. Leisure education is provided for adults in the sense that it assists adults in making meaningful use of their leisure time so as to avoid boredom. They take part in order to improve their self and be a better-informed citizen as well as those who simply find a creative stimulus in the act of learning (Akinpelu, 2013)

**Physiological Factor:** It must be admitted that many adults attitude towards life is associated with what they might have experienced in life. They might have experienced painful memories of school, social interaction which was not rewarding. Adults with family members like the children, wife or husband, may worry about their work, health and how to cater for their families, they also worry about financial challenges that they might be facing. Thus, bringing emotional breakdown and instability due to this pressing need and how to remedy the situation, adult learners are motivated to take part in Adult Education programmes that will help improve their emotions reduce fears and help them to be aware of the dangers of being worried and how to cope with any situation Whether domestic situation or not (Obidiegwu, 2011). Some of the challenges of adult learner:

**Institutional Factor and Participation:** Adult literacy programmes take place in various places which

include community centres, churches and mosques, that are often unsuitable for adult learning (Adekkanbi, 2012). Adult learning needs to be conducted in a supporting and conducive environment. In some cases, learning mainly took place in poorly ventilated and' poorly illuminated structures. Lack of toilets and travelling fairly long distances to the centres posed health problems causing low participation. The learning was mainly found to be teacher-centred leading to low motivation among learners as they could not open up to share experiences. Much as emphasis is placed on conducive learning venues, sometimes adults prefer to learn elsewhere regardless of the quality of physical facilities rather than in a formal school setting to avoid being teased or embarrassed by children or younger ones even if the physical facilities are user friendly.

**Teaching and Learning Materials factor:** most often there are no proper instructional materials in teaching and learning process of adult learner in most learning centres .The text books used in the teaching of functional literacy are called primers and the content covered should enable the learners to read passages fluently and with understanding in mother tongue language or in languages of the catchment area according the teaching and learning material used at the adult literacy Centre There should be adequate teaching and learning materials such as chalk board and other infrastructures as the people involved can provide (Ugwuogebu, 2012). UNESCO (2012) asserts that if suitable books and other materials are not available and the teacher resorts to using materials intended for children, most adult learners may feel disappointed.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, social change therefore refers to a total transformation of people's orientation and living condition. This means that adult education needs to be reprogrammed in order to achieve that desirable change. This means that adult Education should be such that can equip adult populace to participate and play vital roles in ensuring that desired social change is achieved, in order words teaching and learning in adult education programmes helps in bringing social change which will enhance people living together peaceful, have self-realization, self-actualization and self-esteem in the society



## SUGGESTIONS

1. The adult learners should be motivated since motivation is a critical variable in learning. The facilitators and the organizers should motivate them to attend learning programmes so as to achieve bringing social change in the society.
2. There should be a conducive learning environment where the adult can learn comfortably as they may not be able to endure hard way of learning.
3. The organizers should always provide good instructional materials where these adults learn so that they can easily understand what they are taught in adult learning centers.

## REFERENCE

- Adekanbi, G. (2012): Participation as a key factor in community Development Programmes in Nigeria. *Paper presented at the 1992 National Seminar on Community Development Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.*
- Akinpelu, J.A. (2013): Relevance of Education, An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1983.
- Ani R.O (2010). *An Introductory Approach to study of Adult Education.* Enugu Donsinbadcommunications Ltd.
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) (2016). Learning and skill for Adults in Europe, a policy paper. Mundo, J. Rue de l' Industrie 10, B-1000 Brussels.
- Fasokun, T.O (2010). *Status of adult education practice in Nigeria.* In Igbo, R.O. (Ed) contemporary adult education an inclusive cipp roach. CIDJAP printing press Nigeria.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: The Continuum.
- Freire, P.(1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Great Britain London, UK: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Federal Ministry of Education(FRN)(2014).National Policy on Education 6th ed.Lagos,Nigeria:NERDC
- Murray, H .(1988).Motivation theory
- Maslow,H.A . (1954).Maslows hierarchy of needs theory
- Obi, G.O (2015). *Understanding Adult Education and its Principles.* Nsukka. Great Ap Express Publishers Ltd.
- Obidiegwu, U. J (2011). Definition of Adult Education: Clearing some misconceptions. *International Journal of Education, Science and Public Policy in Africa.* Vol 1(1) 105 - 112.
- Obidiegwu, U.J. &Obiozor, W.E (2014). *Adult Learning: Towards human development throughout life span:* Anambra. Rex Charise Publisher Ltd.
- Omolewa, M.A (2006). *Issues in mass literacy and non-formal education in Nigeria* University of Ibadan University press ltd.
- Samuel G.H, Helen.K. Laura, D.B Anne Sullivan, and Edouard, (2023). Adult Education also known as Continuing Education. Available online @ <https://www.britannica.com>
- Solaja, M.O (2020) Social change in contemporary Nigeria. A theoretical discourses, RSC Journal 12(1) P57 – 82. Available online @ <https://www.fuds.si>
- Stafford, T. (2013). An examination of adult learning. Available online @ [http://www.academia.edu/350198/An Examination of Adult Learning](http://www.academia.edu/350198/An_Examination_of_Adult_Learning)
- Thomas, J.E and Harries – Jenkins, G(2023). Adult Education and Social change. Available online

@<http://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.1975.11730713>

Ugwuegbu, I.T (2012). Monitoring the Adult education Instructors in Nigeria. *Research Journal in Organisational psychology and educational studies*. Available online @ [www.emergingresource.org](http://www.emergingresource.org)

UNESCO (2012) Final Report: Third International Conference on Adult Education Paris, UNESCO (2012).