



Adult education: A desideratum for national development

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Abstract

This paper focused on adult education as a desideratum for national development. It described what adult education is and linked it to national development. The paper also explained what National development is and outlined the objectives of adult education as enshrined in NPE (2014). The contribution of adult education to national development in Nigeria was exhaustively discussed in the paper. The paper concluded and recommended among other that budgetary allocation of Nigeria to education should be increased.

Keywords: adult, education, desideratum, national development

Introduction

Adult education is multi-dimensional and so, an indispensable tool in national development. The authors defined adult education as a process by which individuals who are regarded as adults by their societies engage in a learning activity to gain new knowledge, attitudes, skills, values and behaviours that will help them to develop themselves and that of society where they live. Adult education is for self-development of an individual. Ani (2010) defined adult education as all planned processes of learning for adult participants. But, adult education is more than learning for adult participants. Adult education is for unemployed youths and uneducated youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system. Adult education has also programmes for children (hawkers), those children hawking during school hours. They had no advantage of attending formal school system; child abuse victims and other disadvantaged groups or gender (National Policy on Education, 2014).

Azeezat (2015) ^[3] lamented that the population of out-of-school children in Nigeria has risen from 10.5 million to 13.2 million. What is the hope of these children if all efforts to enroll them in the formal school system fails? The answer is adult education and non-formal education. Obiozor and Obidiegwu (2013) ^[17] added that adult education encompasses more than these. Continuing further, the authors regarded adult education as a full continuum on learning throughout life in order to maximize one's potential in life: Unesco (1976) in Obiozor and Obidiegwu (2013) ^[17] sees adult education as:

An activity forming part of life long education and learning. It has no specific theoretical boundaries and should meet the particular situation created by the specific needs of development of participation in community life and individual self-fulfillment, adult education activities cover all aspects of life and all fields of knowledge and are addressed to all people whatever their level of achievements. The definition given by Unesco, sees adult education as a programme designed to enable people uplift their lives and maximize their potentials in whatever profession of their choice, regardless of their ages, level of education, culture

and social status. It enables people to live effectively as individuals and members of their society. The major aim and responsibility of adult education is to help individuals to adapt to change and live a productive life in the world of change:

Nzeneri (2008) ^[16] has this to say about adult education:

Adult education in its ramifications, accommodates all of the forms-formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education. It is in adult education that greatest emphasis is placed on lifelong education, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment, for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization and group dynamism. In a nutshell, adult education covers but is not limited to civic education, trade union and cooperative education, technical and vocational education, literacy education which includes, basic, post basic and functional education, distance learning, human resource development, community development, continuing and professional education. All these different perspectives of adult education are geared towards individual, societal and national development.

Adult education in Nigeria is presently geared towards national development (Ewuzie, 2012) ^[7]. The objective of the process of adult education and national development is to get the adults, either as individual or as a group to learn and through learning to change attitude and behaviour (Jinna, Maikano, 2014) ^[9]. Interestingly, the National Policy on Education (2014) states the objectives of adult education as:

1. To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the opportunity of any formal education.
2. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system.
3. To provide further education for different categories of completers of formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
4. To provide in-service and on-the-job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

5. To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Monye (1981)^[11] in Jinna & Maikano (2014)^[9], opined that all these objectives have one end in view- to equip the adults with everything they need for life in order to be relevant to their society by helping to solve some of its problems. We have to recognize that development is of man, by man and for man. Man is fully developed when the functionalities of education are efficient in him. Man is the master of his destiny and adult education serves to bring about a fundamental change in man's attitude and lifestyle. To survive, people must have awareness and to become aware, they must be literate.

Furthermore, the objectives of adult education as contained in NPE (2014) reveals the need to eradicate adult illiteracy in the country. How can the country develop if the greater number of its adult population are illiterates? It is clear that no nation can rise above the education of its citizens. It is on record that out of 59% of adult population in Nigeria, 35% are illiterates. (National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) 2019& CIA world Facebook, 2020). Knoema (2013) stressed that adult illiteracy has increased from 24 million in 1991 to 41.3 million in 2015. This is a dangerous trend in the words of NCCE (2012), it is common knowledge that a good proportion of the Nigerian population is illiterate. This population is known to underutilize its talents and abilities. The nation cannot achieve its development aspirations if large group of her citizens remains illiterates. Consequently, there is the need for functional and responsive Adult and Non-formal education programmes and trained personnel to tap this latent human capital for national development.

National development is also seen as the ability of a country to improve the standards of living of its people, reduce unemployment, fight poverty and illiteracy, and provide social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructures, and medical care to its people. Aditya (2017) sees national development as a term that is very comprehensive. The author further noted that national development includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is holistic in approach and a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and development of individuals. Pelaez (2020) stated that national development is the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens which can be measured by increase in gross domestic product (GDP), high literacy rates, and increase in per capita income. Bose (2018) said that since GDP is a measure of consumption, a higher consumption means that the people of the country eat better food, live in better homes, live in better environment with clean and pure water and air. More importantly, they have an assurance of leading a better life in the future and this is what national development is all about. If a nation is developed, the GDP will be high, per capita income will be high, the standard of living of its people will also be high. The nation will be able to provide social amenities such as potable water, uninterrupted electricity, quality education, quality health care for its people, fight corruption, poverty and illiteracy to a standstill. The citizens will be able to protect and maintain government facilities within their domain.

According to Bluemington (2018), the scope and different perspectives of national development include- poverty reduction, increase in national income and per capita income, quality

education, agricultural transformation, development of transport and communication, development of medical facilities, development of science and technology and development of stable impartial and well-organized political system. Bluemington equally, listed factors that affect national development to include: Economic, political, social, overpopulation and psychological conditions of citizens, among others.

1. **Economy:** An economy where the working population of a nation produces goods and services at higher rate would develop more rapidly than others.
2. **Politics:** Also, in a country with political stability and democratic rule, it will be easier to achieve the desired goals because the country is practicing representative democracy.
3. **Overpopulation:** Increasing population affects national development of a country. Overpopulated countries tend to suffer hunger, starvation and disease more than those countries that have controlled their population. Moreover, overpopulated countries are often deprived of provision of basic social amenities such as good roads, potable. Typical examples of overpopulated countries are India and Bangladesh.
4. **Psychological conditions:** Mental status of people of a nation, their mental health and hygiene also give directions to national development.

Adult Education and National Development

Adult education contributes to national development in various ways:

1. **Literacy Level:** Adult illiteracy in the country is high. According to the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) (2019), about 35% of adult population in Nigeria is illiterate. What is the hope of this greater number of adult illiterates in Nigeria to acquire literacy? The answer is adult and non-formal education programmes. Adult education offers many educational programmes that will help adult illiterates in Nigeria to increase their literacy levels. Such programmes include: Basic literacy, post basic literacy, continuing education programmes, functional literacy, among others. It is said that no nation in the world can develop above the literacy level of its citizens. It is when these adult illiterates are literate via the various educational programmes offered by adult education, that they effectively and positively contribute to the national development of Nigeria.
2. **Human Capital Development:** Adult education helps in the training and re-training of human capital through their various programmes such as workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia and literacy classes. Through these programmes, adults acquire new skills and knowledge which help them to increase productivity in their work places. According to Ani (2010), adult education helps to develop human resources of all nations. The skills and knowledge of the labour for both in public employment and self-employment need constant updating and improvement which comes only through adult education. The author emphasized that adults who are already on the job need to be trained as the quickest way of increasing productivity in developing countries such as Nigeria.

3. **Economic Development:** When adults improve themselves through adult education programmes, they get better jobs with better pay. This is to say that, they engage themselves with more lucrative jobs thereby improving their standard of living. This means that they feed well, clothe well, send their children to better schools, build their houses and have their cars, pay their house rents without headache. By this, they contribute to national development. This is because, national development is measured by standards of living of a people in a country and other variables (Pelaezi, 2020).
4. **Awareness Creation:** Adult education helps to create awareness in the minds of adult learners. They know better, understand their environments more and are better informed and abreast with current happenings in the society. Nzeneri (2007) ^[15] supported this view when he said that adult education is an instrument for awareness creation for enlightenment, alienation or motivation and for self-actualization. Education is the key that unlocks the door to modernization. It is an eye opener, it liberates individuals from darkness to the light. Darkness is equated with illiteracy.
5. **Child Education:** Adult education helps in child training and education, it is only the literate and enlightened parent that will know and appreciate the importance of education of their children. When these children are well-trained, they occupy high positions as Doctors, Lawyers, Senators, Ministers, Nurses, Lecturers etc and thus, contribute meaningfully to national development of their country.
6. **Political Development:** It is not only in socio-economic spheres that adult education is important, it also helps in the development of political system in a country. It teaches the adult populace of a country how to stand for election, vote and be voted for via civic and political education. It also helps adults to be educationally qualified to stand for elective posts in their country. Through many adult education programmes, they can enroll to update their knowledge and obtain necessary certificate that qualifies them for election. Literacy is the key to democratization and no democratic government can thrive in the midst of illiteracy. The role of adult education in reducing poverty, hunger and diseases cannot be overemphasized. Illiteracy and ignorant people only remember hospitals and doctors when it is too late. There is, therefore, no doubt about the notion that illiteracy is a disease. Equally, it takes a literate person nothing to be conscious of personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, nutrition and safety (Igbo, 2008). The importance of adult education to national development is endless. Adult education alters adult attitudes to work, their prejudices about savings and investment and insurance. It also changes attitudes of adult towards bribery and corruption, education of girls and women in traditional African society and narrow ethnic attachments. Adult education will help individuals to use and protect social amenities in their areas, such as electricity, potable water supply, telephones, roads, hospitals, among others. It takes

illiterates nothing to destroy and vandalize government facilities in one's community. Boko Haram, for example, destroy lives in the northern parts of Nigeria due to illiteracy. They are against western education and so, were not trained. Education helps to train peoples to know what is right to do and what is wrong to avoid.

Conclusion

The importance of adult education in developing countries like Nigeria cannot be under-emphasized. Illiteracy is a disease. So, illiteracy must be fought head-on through adult education to reduce its menace. This is because a literate society engages in development of individuals, society and nation as a whole. There is, therefore, the need to embrace adult education for its usefulness.

Recommendations

1. Adult education should be adequately funded by the government to help it tackle most of the challenges facing it, including eradication of adult illiteracy in Nigeria. Budget allocation to education should be increased to 20% of Unesco's benchmark (Qota, 2019).
2. To help adult education overcome its challenges, Ministry of Adult Education should be created in Nigeria, both at the federal, state and local government levels. Adult education should be separated from the federal ministry of education.
3. Adult education programmes at basic, post basic and continuing education in Nigeria should be free for adult learners. This is to encourage them to enroll into adult education classes in the country.
4. Adult educators/ facilitators should be developed by the government through seminars, workshops, conferences and short courses. This is to update them with new innovations on the theory and practice of adult education.

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