

ACTUALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA DURING COVID-19: ADULT EDUCATION AS A PILOT

Obata, Rita Obiageli (Ph.D.)

Department of Educational Management And Foundations,

Delta State University, Abraka

Email: obataritaobiageli@gmail.com

Phone: 08035754371

ABSTRACT

This paper examined actualization of sustainable growth and development in Nigeria, during COVID-19, using adult education as a pilot. The paper perceived development as a multidimensional process which encompasses changes in social structures, attitudes and all conditions of life from undesirable to the desirable; with education being the only vehicle to drive home the expected change and growth. The implication here is that it should be affordable and available for people to access. It is on record that the present level of illiteracy is very high in Nigeria and as such, for Nigeria to achieve sustainable growth and development. The population of illiterate in Nigeria needed to be reduced drastically. The challenges as discussed ranged from poor budgetary allocation, societal perception of adult education, hiring the services of trained adult educators, the teaching centre and training and retraining of instructors. Hence this paper proffered solutions on how Nigeria as a nation could achieve sustainable development using adult education as a tool. It is argued that adult education should be a tool that could be utilized to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria and ensure sustainable development. It is therefore recommended that a systematic adult education policy be adopted and comprehensive education and training opportunities for adults that would expose themselves to various professional, vocational and other programmes of interest be embraced.

Keywords: Education, Adult Education, Sustainable Growth, Development, COVID-19

Introduction

The role of adult education in promoting national development can be apprehended through the complex relationships existing between all its forms and social, economic, political and social development. The economic role of adult education in promoting national development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It also renders a significant contribution in improving livelihoods opportunities, leading to decline in mortality rates, promoting skills development opportunities, providing basic literacy skills, and enhancing labour productivity. The investment made in the progression of human resources through adult education is crucial for the overall development of individuals, communities and nation (Jinna and Maikano, 2014). Thus, the role of adult

education in national development is multi-dimensional. In order to promote national development, it is essential to eradicate the societal problems of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and homelessness. In addition, it is vital to formulate measures that bring about improvements in the living conditions of the individuals. Adult education lays the foundation for the progression of various aspects. These include, human capital, health, nutrition, infrastructure, environment, welfare, organizations, educational institutions, communities and nation as a whole.

In the course of adult education, individuals are acquiring an efficient understanding of technologies and other factors that are necessary to promote effective communications. Apart from recognizing the significance of education, apart from identifying the facts that through acquisition of education, individuals will be able to bring about improvements in their overall quality of lives, it is necessary to promote socialization. Living in seclusion and backwardness would cause barriers within the course of progression. Hence, adult education promotes social development of the individuals. Furthermore, the individuals, belonging to all categories and backgrounds are able to effectively participate in social, economic, political, cultural and religious activities, which would be advantageous to them in enriching their livelihoods opportunities. Adult education has proved to be a strong instrument for promoting development through democracy. It puts emphasis on peace and stability. There have been formulation of policies that focus upon elimination of barriers that may arise within the course of development (Jinna, and Maikano, 2014).

Adult education in Nigeria is presently geared towards national development (Ewuzie, 2012). The objective of the process of adult education and national development is to get the adults, either as individuals or as a group, to learn and through learning to change their attitude and behaviour. According to the FRN (2013), in her policy on education states the objectives of adult education amongst others to include:

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

Adult Education usually refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal school system. The main targets are specifically defined as youth (girls and boys over 15 years of age, but sometime younger) as well as

women and men, generally poor or socially disadvantaged. Although literacy continues to be at its heart,

adult education also includes “numeracy”, problem-solving and life skills, and other knowledge. The notion of adult education is often used interchangeably with other notions such as literacy,

adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing, adult basic and non-formal education, amongst others.

Adult education is perceived as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view to remedying early educational inadequacies of matured people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2014). The concept of development is complex as it has several connotations. However, Allen (2013) has identified three main meanings in which growth and development is generally used, namely:

- As a vision, description or measure of the state of being of a desirable society;
- As an historical process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods; and
- As consisting of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various agencies, including governments, all kinds of organizations and social movements.

Consequently, growth and development will be seen as a process of economic, social, political and cultural change engineered in a given society by the efforts of all stakeholders, both internal and external – including the local communities, the Government, the private sector, the civil society organizations, the NGOs and the technical and financial development partners-with a view to improving the conditions of the life of the population in a sustainable way. Implicit in these definitions is the assumption that development requires, inter alia, the formation of human capital and social capital, some of the main factors of production required for a broad-based economic growth that provides the ground for sustainable poverty reduction.

Adult Education Role in Sustainable Growth and Development

The role of adult education in national growth and development is multi-dimensional. Indeed, as are of the building blocks of human development, and not just a basic right, education, including adult education, is a foundation for progress in areas such as human capital, health, nutrition and the development of institutions and democracy. Therefore, the role of adult education in development can be apprehended through the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, political, social and cultural determinant factors of Nigerian development in particular and Africa as a whole. The

economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It is now well established that, alongside health care, sanitation, and nutrition that improve people's standard of living and productivity by reducing sickness and mortality rates and by increasing life expectancy, adult basic education, by equipping recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills, yields high rates on investment, thereby enhancing labour productivity. An educated population also provides a more attractive investment climate. Thus, investment in the development of human capital, through adult education, is crucial for developing a labour force and managerial know-how, able to compete in today's global economy (Seya, 2014).

The population of who has had formal education and training might need to be updated through adult education, mainly because today's knowledge society tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skills inappropriate and obsolete. Adult education is also instrumental in familiarizing the active population of Nigeria with Information Communication Technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of Nigerian economies in the global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge-based economic structures and information societies that comprise networks of individuals, firms, and countries linked electronically in inter-dependent and interactive relationships. Adult education also plays a major role in social development. It is now widely admitted that growth will not reduce poverty unless poor people are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education. Indeed, the African, and of course, Nigerian population will need some kind of formal and non-formal education and training to be able to benefit from basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, the development of new medicines, and thus be in a position to free itself from diseases that devastate poor people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other parasites. Adult education will also be needed to enable the poor Nigerians to really take advantage of programmes aimed at protecting orphans and vulnerable children or drastically reducing the number of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation.

The role of adult education in development is not limited only to economic and social spheres. It also has a political dimension. There is a strong link between adult learning and democracy. This is so because, as acknowledged at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997, "substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed" (UNESCO, 1997). For democracy to be achieved, adult education is needed as to inform them of their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels. It is today admitted that the lack of recognition of the need to involve civil society, especially grassroots organizations, by giving them a voice in decision-making and the means to participate effectively in society is one of the major causes of

development failure in many African countries. Abuse of human rights and social injustice leading to the exclusion of important segments of society, have also constituted stumbling blocks to economic and social progress on the continent and paved the way to violent conflicts (Seya, 2014). Adult education may prove to be a powerful tool for favouring inclusive development through democracy, thereby ensuring peace and stability, as a number of studies have shown that prevention (through adult education) is much more effective than intervention.

Prevention of political disorders and civil unrest can be made possible through various adult education strategies. A number of adult education policies promote democracy and peace has been proposed during the Fifth International Conference on Adult education (UNESCO, 1997). They tend to attain their objectives through various strategies that promote an active civil society, reinforce gender democracy and help to solve conflicts between different countries and groups to the extent that the world at large is experiencing the effects of multifaceted globalization with varying degrees of impact on peoples and cultures. It is apparent from the foregoing that adult education is an indispensable vector for social, economic and political progress in any society.

Challenges of Adult Education in Nigeria

There are lots of challenges facing Nigerian educational system making it difficult for good quality education that is empowering and capable of bringing about sustainable development to be provided. Statistics show that federal government expenditure on education between 1997 and 2000 has been below 10 percent of overall expenditure. This has greatly affected the development of education especially adult education. Hence these challenges such as;

Hiring the Services of Trained Adult Educators - Hiring the services of trained adult educators proves impossible due to poor funding of adult education. For example, in Oyo State of Nigeria in the year 2012, when there was an enrolment of 37,249 adult learners in 33 local government areas of the state there were only seventy-seven (77) facilitators which proved inadequate. Not much can be achieved by these facilitators given their poor condition of service. They are not usually paid in time and the remuneration is very poor, (Oyo State Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education AANFE 2012). This poor condition of service is revealed at the 2012 Inter-ministerial Briefing in Oyo State. It is revealed that the agency is currently running very limited number of adult (education) literacy classes making use of local adult Education offices as facilitators pending the approval of payment of honorarium monthly stipends to the facilitators needed for the programme. Facilitators that are not motivated may not show any sign of commitment.

The Teaching Centre - Desks and benches which are not so comfortable for adults are mostly used at the centres, These may not encourage good teaching and learning. The adult

(literacy learners) were only supplied free exercise books (2A, 2B, 2D) and primers by the State government. All these are not adequate and unless a bold step is taken to improve the situation efforts on adult education will move down the drain.

Poor Budgetary Allocation - This poor funding especially in this era of COVID-19 with its attendant lockdown, does not only affect formal education but all types of education including adult education. The problem of lack of adequate funding has led to the problem of low quality adult education especially in connection with poor centres not conducive for learning, lack of motivated and qualified staff. For Nigeria to achieve the level of economic growth required to tackle poverty and make sustainable development a reality, adult education must be improved upon. The relationship between education and development is an important one in the sense that education is a key index of development as education improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour as well as bringing about empowerment (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2002). In this light, adult education which covers all areas of human endeavour must not be neglected.

Societal Perception of Adult Education - The perception of adult education and its value has varied greatly among individuals and groups. Some people view Adult Education only from the perspective of the old aged adult learning only to both read and write. Adult Education is not perceived in terms of its varied and wide usefulness to young and middle aged adults. Adults sometimes also perceive learning from the point of how much time is left for them either to stay in their places of work or time to live (Lawy and O' Connor, 1986). This time perspective influences the educational goals of the older adults. There must be a great change in the perception of adult education by the generality of the people and this can be done by educating people on what adult education stands for. This issue of perception is thus related to the self-image of adult learner. Viewing themselves as still being able to learn in spite of the switch from being a full time learner to one that takes on other responsibility becomes important for progress to be made in adult education. This to Knowles (1980) creates more of self-directed personality. People will have good perception of adult education programmes, if they are timely.

Benefits of Adult Education in Nigeria

Over the last few years, political as well as scientific debates have stressed the growing importance of adult education. There is a deep rooted belief that adult learning has the potential to create personal, economic and social value (Motschilnig, 2014). This paper argues that adult education affects people's lives in ways that go far beyond what can be measured by the labour market earnings and economic growth. Important as they are the wider benefits of adult learning are neither currently well understood nor systematically measured.

Economic Benefits of Adult Education - Adult learning can improve employability and income, which is a key pathway to realizing a range of other benefits. For example, it enables people to some extent, choose and shape the context in which they live and work and even increase their social status.

Health - Empirical evidence has found that adult learning can have both transforming and sustaining effect on health. Transforming effects are when adult learning changes health behaviour (for instance from smoking to non-smoking) while sustaining effects are when health behaviour is maintained, for example, the likelihood of remaining a non-smoker. Therefore, people attending Adult education courses are more likely to have healthy lifestyles, and there is a body of literature which describes adult learning and its relation to mental health. Also, inter-generational effects of educated parents on the health of their children are very relevant Manninen (2008).

Civic and Social Engagement - Many countries share a concern about declining levels of voter participation and about the state of civic participation. It is possible that adult learning might inspire a change in attitude, which in turn brings about a change in behaviour. Several studies (OECD, 2007; Desjardins and Schuller, 2006, Field, 2009) amongst others show that learning can promote social cohesion and strengthen citizenship. Adult learning may support the development of shared norms, greater trust towards other individuals and the government and more civic co-operation.

Attitudes Change - An individual who participate in adult learning may differ from the one who does not in terms of prior attitude. It was found according to Feinstein, Hammond, Woods, Preston and Bynner (2003) that adult learning is associated with more “open-minded” perspectives on race and authority, greater understanding of people from different backgrounds, challenging previously held beliefs and with a sustaining effect on non-extremist views. Especially academic oriented courses are most suited for opening minds and generally link adult learning to increased racial tolerance, a reduction in political cynicism and a higher inclination towards democratic attitudes.

Educational Progression - Progression into other learning is an important outcome of adult education. There is clear a evidence that (successful) engagement in learning provides incentive for further learning. Manninen (2010) found that 93 percent of course participants said that their participation has motivated them to learn more. Further, learners described their progress by referring to real life activities they could now do in a wide variety of life contexts (everyday and leisure practice, work) community and educational practice). Self-confidence, finding voice and opening up to learning were identified by

almost all learners and seemed central to their perspective on learning. These outcomes provided improvement in the quality of their lives and become part of their learner identity.

Conclusion

This paper identified Adult education as a means that could be used in the actualization of sustainable growth and development in Nigeria. Through its programme the much needed technical and vocational knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed by the adult populace for sustainable development are achieved. In addition, it enables people to become well-informed, capable of thinking critically and owning their destiny through active participation. Successful and sustainable development cannot be achieved when the majority of the populace is illiterate. The political will to encourage adult education especially in areas of policies and funding would afford more adults opportunities to be educated as well as creating a well articulated and purpose driven route for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendation

A systematic Adult education policy should be adopted in Nigeria. This should be guided in both conception and implementation by a philosophy of continuing education or lifelong learning. Lifelong learning stresses the need for learning to be ongoing throughout life. This entails that a comprehensive adult education policy that would sustain a culture that would lead to the emergence of a learning society as observed by Edwards (1997) would evolve. Based on the importance of adult education, it should be based upon collaboration and learner's interest. Adult education practice should be reviewed constantly organized and systematized in order to develop a more coherent and useful agenda for adult education to give it the needed respect among other disciplines.

Adult education should also be made a relevant part of public policy because from the perspective of government judging by the poor funding, adult education continues to be poor education for poor people, an education reduced to temporary efforts at literacy. The government should therefore be pressurized to overcome their reductionist and limited vision of adult education.

Adult education has a clear focus set on affirming, promoting and defending human rights in all their expression; civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental. Adult education seeks to democratize access to knowledge; it seeks to activate capacities for production and employment, for political participation and for revaluing human identity and culture; it therefore clear that adult education cannot be relegated to the background. The discipline is a useful instrument for meeting the multiple needs of people, it should therefore be well funded, administered and its programmes well monitored. The Federal government in lieu of the importance of adult education should not reduce it to literacy programmes or basic education.

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