

Adult Literacy as a Valuable Tool for Sustainable Human Rights among Part-Time Students of Higher Institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises all higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select five (5) higher institutions in which thirty (30) Students from each of the selected higher institutions to make a total of one and fifty(150)respondents as sample for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in 2 Likert scale of Agreed and Disagreed. The instrument was moderated by experts who affirmed its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and standard deviation statistical tools. Findings revealed that adult literacy plays a key role in adult sustainable development, promotes economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It also creates favourable conditions for empowering global active citizens. Adult literacy is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing illiteracy in ensuring peace and democratic process. It is essential to social and human development in its ability to enhance standard of living. However, adult education promotes social, economic, cultural, and political benefits of literacy which provide the rationale for recognising equality in education as human right. It was therefore recommended that, to ensure sustainability of human right, government should take the lead in the responsibility of providing trained and qualified teachers/facilitators as well as other supporting staff in adult literacy programme.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, Sustainable, Human Rights, Valuable, Eradicating

Introduction

There has been an increasing awareness and emphasis on eradication of illiteracy since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10th December, 1945 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Article 26 of that document explicitly states that: “Everyone has the right to education” (Iwe, 2008). This statement is all inclusive – male and female, old and young. It implies that education is an inviolable right (and not a privilege) to be acquired and enjoyed by every citizen, irrespective of age, social status or sex. Education in this context therefore refers to formal education, which is rooted in literacy. The emphasis on education as a vehicle for socio-economic and political development *visa vis* well-being of the individuals continued to receive global attention at different times. In this regard, the Jomtien Conference of 1990 attended by 155 countries and 150 organisations gave birth to the global slogan, “Education for All” (EFA). The attendees pledged to make education accessible to all by the year 2000 (UNESCO, 2003). Apparently, this goal was not met within the stipulated time frame, hence according to Orukotan, Adediran and Adeyanju (2015) another World Education Forum took place in Dakar from 26th – 28th April 2000, and endorsed six goals with a view to, among other things;

- Ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes; and
- Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education (UNESCO, 2005). Since education in all its ramifications is the legal right of all citizens, it is therefore imperative that those, who for whatever reason(s) are educationally disadvantaged should not be denied their inalienable right to formal education, which begins with basic literacy.

The terms ‘literacy’ and ‘adult literacy’ have been variously defined by different scholars in different contexts. Hence conceptual clarification here is necessary. The key word here is “literacy” and as such

it deserves a brief analysis that would help to give a clearer understanding of the broader term “adult literacy”. In the simplest sense, literacy means “the ability to read and write” in a given language, but this definition appears very inadequate because it does not give a clear picture of the level of one’s “ability to read and write” (Hinzen, 2016). Adult literacy therefore has to do with the ability of an individual adult (man or woman) to read, write and communicate in known language(s), as well as the ability to do basic mathematical computations far beyond basic literacy level. In simple terms, adult literacy should be seen as a tool that can equip the individual to improve himself intellectually, to empower himself economically, and to make himself socially and politically relevant.

Adult literacy programme components according to Adediran and Onifade (2013) is to ensure: reading, that is ability to read up to a particular grade level the writing, that is ability to write clearly and reasonably in a particular language; mathematics: “numeracy” or the ability to perform basic mathematical operations needed in daily life. English as a second or other language (ESOL): The teaching of English speaking, listening, reading and writing skills to those for whom it not a native language. Cultural literacy: Familiarity with the background knowledge of the cultural heritage of one’s society. Adult literacy programme according to Ezimah (2004) can be categorized into two: basic adult literacy and functional adult literacy programmes. The Basic Adult Literacy Programme is mainly designed to arm or furnish the adult with the rudimentary skills of reading, writing and computation through the use of the local languages, especially in the mother tongue. The objective here is to equip the learners with basic skills of communication and understanding of their environment. On the other hand, functional adult literacy programmes combine both the teaching of literacy, numeracy and vocational skills. The objective is to equip recipients with skills and knowledge that could make them employable and useful in other spheres of life on completion of training.

Human Right Education is the knowledge, skill and values of human rights. The United Nation Decade for Human Right Education (1995-2004) according to Adebajo, Adediran and Adetunji (2014) has defined Human Rights Education as, “training, dissemination and information effort aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skill and the moulding of attitudes which are directed to:- a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity. c) The promotion of understanding respect gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous people and racial, national, ethic religious and linguistic group. d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a tree society. e) The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of Peace (Greenberg, 2007).

UNESCO (2009) defines education as a fundamental human right intrinsically important for human development, and acknowledges that literacy is an inextricable component of education, and an essential tool for pursuing other human rights. UNESCO (2016) states literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one’s health, one’s income, and one’s relationship with the world.

Sustainability of adult literacy is the knowledge, skills and mindsets that allow individuals to become deeply committed to building a sustainable future and assisting in making informed and effective decisions to this end. In regards to adult literacy for sustainable human rights, in 2003, the UN launched the United Nations Literacy Decade with the slogan ‘Literacy is Freedom’ to push the social, economic, cultural, and political benefits of literacy (Limage, 2009), which provide the rationale for recognising literacy as a human right. UNESCO (2010) also states that literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. Adult literacy is a key lever of change and a practical tool of adult empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection. As the foundation of learning throughout life, literacy is at the heart of sustainable human right.

Adult literacy is at the heart of adult education for all and essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace, and democracy. UNESCO (2006) identifies a multitude of interrelated benefits of literacy, which include social advantages such as better health and education outcomes, economic gains such as the potential to earn a higher income, and political benefits, which foster an ability to participate in local and national politics. Therefore, adult literacy contributes to the individual as well as collective development of societies in many ways. Non-formal and informal adult learning play a significant role for social inclusion, active citizenship as well as personal development and well-being, even though they are often not fully recognised as legitimate forms of education in that the ways and results of learning may be less tangible than in formal education and learning.

Adult literacy provides knowledge, competences and skills such as language skills, creative skills, etc. These can be used for both professional and private advancement and, in many cases, enable people to access the formal education system. Secondly, it promotes transversal skills that are social skills, communication skills, analytical and cognitive skills etc., sometimes also called “life skills”. All of these skills are vital for participating in the labour market and creating new jobs, engaging in democratic processes and becoming an active citizen. Furthermore, taking part in adult education has also very positive effects on the individual in terms of better health in the old age, better general wellbeing and inclusion in the community and society (Manninen, 2014).

Adult literacy plays a key role in adult sustainable development and promotes economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and creates favourable conditions for empowering global active citizens (World Literacy Foundation, 2015). It plays a significant role in economic growth and in social and personal development. Communities and societies develop as those that are part of them develop individually and collectively. Adult education creates social change through enhancing employment prospects, improving health levels and financial literacy of those from deprived backgrounds as well as offering them opportunities to acquire the tools needed to run their own lives. Lifelong learning is key for achieving social change and reducing poverty levels around the world. It has the capacity to positively affect many dimensions of poverty, peace, reconciliation as well as conflict prevention (World Literacy Foundation, 2015). Ultimately, this paper argues that adult literacy is a fundamental human right critical to accessing other human rights, and pivotal in fostering individual and collective self-determination for peoples in part-time schools. It is vital that adult literacy interventions, which aim to contribute to enhancing adult literacy development for adult learners, are grounded in adult epistemology, history and pedagogy. In doing so, these interventions serve to fulfil the human rights of adult and communities, which are provided for by international human rights instruments.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- i. Examine the components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State
- ii. Examine the roles of adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State

Research Questions

- i. What are the components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State?
- ii. What are the roles of adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select thirty(30) part-time students from the five (5) selected higher institutions in Oyo State to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents as sample for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in 2 Likert scale of Agreed and Disagreed. The instrument was moderated by experts who affirmed its validity. Test-re-test method of reliability was adopted to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. To test for the reliability of the research instrument, ten (10) students were selected randomly who are not a part of the sample population and the value of 0.77 was obtained which is reliable enough for this study. The method of data analysis is simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools.

Presentation of Data Analysis and Results

Research Question1: What are the components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State?

Table 1: The components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State

S/N	ITEMS	AGREED		DISAGREED		Mean (x̄)	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %		
1.	The Adult Literacy Programme is mainly designed to arm or furnish the adult with the rudimentary skills	160	80.0	40	20.0	3.25	0.996
2.	The ability of Adult to read up to a particular grade level will sustain their human right	160	80.0	40	20.0	3.30	1.008
3.	The ability of the Adult to write clearly and reasonably in a particular language is also a components for human right	150	75.0	50	25.0	3.13	1.056
4.	The ability to perform basic mathematical operations needed in adult daily life is another component of human right	140	70.0	60	30.0	3.13	1.147
5.	Familiarity with the background knowledge of the cultural heritage of one's society	165	82.5	35	17.5	3.28	0.924
Weighted Mean (x̄) = 3.215 and STD = 1.0261							

Table 1: above, indicate the adult literacy programme is mainly designed to aim or furnish the adult with the rudimentary skills($\bar{x} = 3.25$, $SD = 0.996$), adult ability to read up to a particular grade level sustain their human right($\bar{x} = 3.30$, $SD = 1.008$), adult ability to write clearly and reasonably in a particular language also a components for human right ($\bar{x} = 3.13$, $SD = 1.056$), ability to perform basic mathematical operations needed in adult daily life another component of human right($\bar{x} = 3.13$, $SD = 1.147$) and familiarity with the background knowledge of the cultural heritage of one's society ($\bar{x} = 3.48$, $SD = 0.820$). From table 4.7 above, research question 4 has a weighted mean of 3.215 which is above the bench mark of 2.50. Thus, this shows the components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Question2: What are the roles of adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State?

Table 2: The roles of adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State

S/N	ITEMS	AGREED		DISAGREED		Mean (x̄)	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %		
1.	Adult literacy is at the heart of adult sustainable human right	150	75.0%	50	25.0%	3.15	1.016
2.	Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning.	166	83.0%	34	17.0%	3.43	0.954
3.	Adult literacy plays a key role in adult sustainable development and creates favorable conditions for empowering global active citizens	180	90.0%	20	10.0%	3.56	0.819
4.	Adult literacy contributes to the individual as well as collective development of societies in many ways	148	74.0%	52	26.0%	3.11	1.058
5.	Adult literacy is a practical tool of adult empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development.	160	80.0%	40	20.0%	3.30	1.008

Weighted Mean (x̄) = 3.308 and STD = 0.971

Table 2 above, shows adult literacy is at the heart of adult sustainable human right ($\bar{x} = 3.15$, $SD = 1.016$), literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning ($\bar{x} = 3.43$, $SD = 0.954$), adult literacy plays a key role in adult sustainable development and creates favourable conditions for empowering global active citizens ($\bar{x} = 3.56$, $SD = 0.819$), adult literacy contributes to the individual as well as collective development of societies in many ways ($\bar{x} = 3.11$, $SD = 1.058$) and Adult literacy is a practical tool of adult empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development ($\bar{x} = 3.30$, $SD = 1.008$). From table 2 above, research question 2 has a weighted mean of 3.308 which is above the bench mark of 2.50. It can be concluded that adult literacy play role as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 reveals the components of adult literacy programme for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State. It indicated that ability of the Adult ability to read up to a particular grade level will sustain their human right, ability to write clearly and reasonably in a particular language is a component for human right, ability to perform basic mathematical operations needed in adult daily life another component of human right. The findings agreed with Ezimah (2014) who stated that adult literacy programme components include: reading; writing; numeracy, English; cultural literacy. The objective here is to equip the learners with basic skills of communication and understanding of their environment. On the other hand, functional adult literacy programmes combine both the teaching of literacy, numeracy and vocational skills. The objective is to equip learner with basic skills and knowledge that could make them employable and useful in other spheres of life on completion of training.

Table 2 therefore shows the roles of adult literacy as a valuable tool for sustainable human rights among part-time students of higher institutions in Oyo State? It shows that adult literacy is at the heart of adult sustainable human right, a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning, Adult literacy contributes to the individual as well as collective development of societies in many ways. This finding echoes with that of UNESCO (2010) who also stated that literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. Adult literacy is a key lever of change and a practical tool of adult empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection. As the foundation of learning throughout life, literacy is at the heart of sustainable human right.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Adult literacy plays a key role in adult sustainable development and promotes environmental dimensions of sustainable development and creates favourable conditions for empowering global active citizens. Adult literacy essential for eradicating poverty, reduce child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable human right development. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. Adult education provides the rationale for recognising literacy as a human right.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. To ensure sustainability of human right, government should take the lead in the responsibility of providing trained and qualified teachers/facilitators as well as other supporting staff in adult literacy centre.
2. Adult Literacy centre should be properly backed up by government legislation and well formulated policy that would spell out in clear terms the roles and expectations of the institution. In addition, government should, as a matter of necessity, invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematisation and research.
3. Furthermore, teachers/facilitators, on the one hand, should be given substantial initial training and regular retraining courses, and be exposed to opportunities for professional development. On the other hand, learners should be actively motivated through the use of a wide range of participatory methods, and through addressing issues of relevance to their lives.

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