

COMPLEMENTING THE NEEDED LITERACY- NUMERACY FOR FUNCTIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Education is a fundamental right of every individual in any given society, adult education inclusive. Provisions for adult education, however, were succinctly made in the National Policy on Education. Adult education is an indispensable tool in the process of national development. It offers the adult members of the society opportunities to acquire skills, knowledge, competencies, attitudes, values etc., through one of its programme or the other. Adult education goes beyond traditional schooling bringing about basic literacy-numeracy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learning. This paper tries to identify the needed core subjects that the adult learner ought to offer and how they are administered, and as well examines how adult literacy-numeracy helps in bringing human development to the learner and society in general. Using the method of critical evaluation, the researchers find out that increase in human capital was identified as one of the basic benefits of adult education and inadequate training of adult educators is stated as one of the basic challenges of adult education. The researchers recommend that priority be placed on adult education to ensure active participation and effective productivity in adult education and workforce respectively.

Keywords: Identification, Administration, Education, Adult, Core Subjects.

Introduction

Education is an instrument for effecting realizable national development in any given society. It has witnessed active support and participation by non-governmental organization, individuals, communities and government. No country will ever rise above her educational level. Education is the best legacy a country can give to her citizens. Igbuzor (2006) in stressing the importance of education stated that Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. It has no restriction to gender, age or even socio-cultural or religious acclamation. Because of the constant need to acquire knowledge and maximize talents in man, education was introduced. Obani (1996) has earlier expressed his view that education improves the development of any society and the youths who occupy significant positions in that country should be properly educated in order to improve the society.

Therefore, schools at various levels are expected to educate future leaders and develop the high level technical capacities needed for economic growth and

development (Osokoya, 2008). And in cases where the adults still see a need to be educated, such people should be given all the necessary supports from individuals and the government.

Education has been at the top of the priority lists of some previous Nigerian governments yet the education system is still far from being ready for the challenges of the new century. Nigeria is not the only country whose education system is unprepared. A closer examination of many systems, especially in a developing context, indicate that most of the educational systems in developing countries are not yet ready to prepare students for the contemporary global world. The education needs of an emergent Nigeria are well articulated by Pai (1999) when he suggests that Nigerian education should be marked by a continuous search for excellence supported by the political will for good governance and transparency. Nigeria's "National Policy on Education," published in 1977 was revised in 1981 and 1990. The policy document has been revised to ensure that the policies address the perceived needs of the government in power and to try to ensure that the education sector is supportive of government development goals.

Zimah (2004) remarked that leading industrial nations have made adult education a cornerstone in their development agenda and have benefitted from it-dating back to the industrial revolution in England in 18th century. Any nation that is aiming at being developed should place a premium on adult education.

The onus of this paper is an attempt to discover how the identification and administration of core basic subjects in Adult education programmes will help to complement the needed literacy numeracy and further aid national development in Nigeria.

Adult Education in Nigeria

Akinpelu in Ojo (2011) remarked that for a person to be regarded as an adult, he/she must be certified qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitatively, he/she must have reached certain age like eighteen (18) years, marriageable and being able to exercise his/her franchise. Having satisfied these requirements, he must have been qualitatively certified as being matured psychologically, sociologically, and economically. Rogers (1986) in Ochoma (2010) noted as follows:

a wide range of concepts is involved when we use the term 'adult'. The word can refer to a stage in life cycle of the individual....It can refer to status.... It can refer to a social subset: adults as distinct from children. Or it can include a set of ideas and values: adulthood (p.3).

Adulthood as Ojo (2011) pointed out, is a stage of life where test of maturity and responsibility is ascertained. It is not only a test but also utility age. Besides being found to be matured and responsible, an adult is required to display inherent qualities before he can be referred to as an adult .The meaning of the term 'adult' is

vague, especially when it is used to identify the client of adult education. A person may be biologically an adult and have adult behavioural but still be treated as a child if he is under the legal age of maturity. On the other hand, one may legally be an adult but possess none of the maturity and responsibility that define adult character. The meaning of the term 'adult' as it is applicable in this context, is a person regarded as an adult by the society to which he belongs.

Adult education according to Ndubuaku (2013), is a type of education which accommodates all the forms of education: formal, informal and non-formal aspects of education. Adult education is an educational system that is geared towards self-improvement or development through educational activities in order to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. The Nigeria policy on education (2004) states the goals 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 or remedial education for these young people who have never had the opportunity of any formal education
- 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 professional training for different categories of warders 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

The general adult education programme aims to ensure education that will help young as well as mature adults to enhance their knowledge and skills within general subjects. According to Nzeneri cited in Okanume-onah and Ezeonwuka (2017), adult education is any education given to adults based on their social, political and cultural and economic needs or problems to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society.

The adult has many roles to play, ranging from social, economic, religious, political, community, parental, leadership, personal and all forms of developmental roles. It is in line with this that Malkano and Jinna (2014) state that:

development is of man, by man and for man. Man is the master of his destiny and adult education serves to bring about a fundamental change in man's attitudes and lifestyle. To survive, people must have awareness and to become aware, they must be literate.

The process of educating adults is deferent from educating children in that adults already gained certain knowledge and experiences that can aid in learning. Adult education is mostly voluntary and self-motivated except in situations required by an

employer. The art of adult education is fashioned in such a way that it responds to the basic and pressing need of the adult learner.

Adult education is a voluntary programme. It is not usually undertaken under any legal compulsion. It is undertaken at any age and for different purposes, deliberately or unconsciously for individual, group of people, community, state or for national progress. The scope of adult education cannot be visibly demarcated as learning in whatever form is a lifelong phenomenon and a continuous process. According to Anyanwu (1987), adult education is a part of the wider process of lifelong education and includes fundamental, general, vocational, professional, civic, social, cultural and recreative education for adults of all ages.

Literacy and Community Education

The Federal Ministry of Education and the States have responsibility for literacy and community education. The new government has included literacy and community education on its priority list as part of a development strategy for poverty alleviation. Other role players are non-governmental organizations, governmental organizations at other levels, the formal education sector and international agencies. The establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education in 1990 was part of a national drive to eliminate illiteracy in Nigeria. The Commission is charged with the responsibility to develop strategies for the eradication of illiteracy, to coordinate programmes for the implementation of a National Mass Literacy Campaign, to monitor and promote literacy and post literacy programmes, to organize in-service training for staff, and to develop and disseminate teaching materials.

At the inception of the Commission, the national literacy rate was 51% with 39% for women and 62% for men. In 1995 the literacy rate was estimated to be about 56.1%. The functional literacy for women had risen to 47% and that for men to 67%. However, a survey on women's education conducted by the Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF in 1993 indicates a drop in the average rate of literacy to 27% from 29% in 1992. The survey revealed a high dropout rate (86%) at women's education centers. The situation has thus deteriorated over one year. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education submitted a proposal for UNESCO's assistance. The submission requested an increase over its existing funding to realize its objectives of making 150,000 learners per state per year functionally literate. The goal is to raise the literacy rate to 67% (estimated to be at the rate of 5.55 million people per year) within four years at a total cost of US\$31 million. A large proportion of the assistance needed is for training purposes. The delivery strategies in the submission are for basic literacy, functional literacy that will include skill acquisition and distance education for further education. The illiterate classification includes groups such as the Girl Child and Adolescent Girl, Adult Illiterates, Out of School Children and Youth, Nomadic Communities, Children on the Street, and School Dropouts. Within two years of establishing the Commission, 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory set up autonomous government agencies and increased the provision of non-formal education to address the problem of illiteracy and continuing education. The result has been a

need to increase funding to cover the costs for additional personnel in the field. The programme includes basic literacy, post literacy, woman education, nomadic education, continuing education, Arabic integrated literacy (Ajami), literacy for the blind, "Each One Teach One" (EOTO), worker education, functional literacy, vocational education and literacy for the disabled. The non-formal system is flexible, allowing for exit and re-entry points as well as movement between the formal and non-sector (as cited in Teboho, 2000). The Commission has succeeded in creating awareness through its sensitization and mobilization workshops at the national, state and local government levels. The 1995 data collected from about 50% of the states indicated that the total enrollment in the UNDP assisted mass literacy classes was 678,407, of whom 386,599 (57%) were females and 291,808 (43%) were males. It further indicated that a total of 15,505 instructors were trained across the nation, of whom 8,140 (52.50%) were males and 7,365 (47.50%) were females. Moreover, a total of 1,495 supervisors and organizers were trained, of whom 815 (45.52%) were females and 680 (45.48%) were males.

According to Teboho (2000), a National Center for Adult Education, established in Kano in 1985, and three institutes, established in Uyo (1952), Maiduguri (1976) and Bauchi (1978) are part of the resources available for literacy education. The Center serves as a national non-formal education library, documentation and resources development and production center. The institutes offer training courses for mass literacy personnel. In-service training for the staff involved at state agencies for mass literacy and NGO literacy programmes is conducted at the Center. In addition the Center carries out research on adult education and develops institutional and follow-up materials for nation-wide distribution.

There is a network of literacy committees, organized by the National Commission for Mass Education (NMEC), in conjunction with the state agencies. Participatory committees have been set up (at class/center, village/ward, local and state government levels) to coordinate activities and aid material distribution; disseminate information; and provide feedback to the agencies.

Learning centers have been established for the different categories of illiterates, such as:

- a) Centers for adult nomads and migrant fishermen which offer literacy programmes for them and their children, because they have been found not to make maximum use of the mobile school provided for them.
- b) The functional literacy centers for adult women have been established nationwide by the Federal, State and Local Governments, NGOs and philanthropic individuals. A survey conducted in 1995 indicated that there are 720 women's functional literacy centers all over the country with a total enrollment figure of 157,554 learners.
- c) Special schools for girls' literacy have been established with the goal of using the programmes as a bridge into formal schooling and as a strategy to increase girls' access to education.

- d) The educational needs of street children and other under-served children have attracted increasing attention from governmental organizations. As of 1995, the number of such children in Lagos was estimated to be at least 10,000.

Identification-Administration of Core Subjects in Adult Education

Adult education has been described by scholars as all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, effective numeracy, remedial and vocational education. Through identification process, the need of the learner must be identified so as to place functional subjects that will address the need at once. Of course, most adult learners came back to school either to correct something or make up for a lack. To this extent adult education is more of problem solving and corrective in nature. The adult learner is the fulcrum of the actual identification. The need or necessities that actually saw the adult in question back to school is the identity one is looking for. Until there is proper identification, effective administration may not be possible and ad rem. Most of these basic identifications are within the boundaries of basic literacy and numeracy, remedial in-service training, mop-up learning, proper adaptation to new technology and methodological appreciations. Adult learning is affected by demographics, globalization and technology (Free Encyclopedia, 2017). Just as all adults' lives differ, adult learning happens in many ways and contexts. An adult readiness to learn is linked to their need to have the information.

The learning needs of the adult learner vary across individual's social and economic roles. Hence, the orientation of the adult learner to learn is problem centered rather than subject centered. Having this in mind, the education is given the room to select the most appropriate method to use when teaching. Some of the methods for teaching adult learners as outlined by Okejeme (2013) include; Problems solving method, discovery learning method, drill method, group work method, and speed lecture method, scaffolding, dialogue methods, synthetic method, and demonstration method. The method, however, depends largely on the disposition of the adult learner. The success of imparting knowledge to adult learners through the above listed methods is not in applying them alone. Some principles for selecting the appropriate methods are also to be considered. Apps cited in Okejeme (2013) enlisted some principles which includes but not limited to-

- The depth of learning to be achieved
- Age background, abilities, mental, physical and emotional health of the adult learners
- Availability of space and equipment
- The method has to be guided by a theory and definition of learning
- Adequate time to utilize such method

Also, instructional materials for teaching adult learners should be made available with respect to the dispositional effectiveness of the adult learner. This is because it helps to facilitate the attainment of educational goals (Okejeme, 2013). Learning will be easier and faster when appropriate instructional materials are used.

Other factors to be considered when selecting the best teaching methods for adult learners includes

- The type of lesson
- The personality of the learners
- The aim of the adult education programme
- Availability of books and other learning materials
- Maturity and learning capacity of learners

The Role of Adult Education in Human Development

The purpose of adult education is usually vocational, recreational, social or personal development and this makes it distinct and different from the formal education.

Adult education has been shown to have great positive impacts on individuals and society in general. Among the benefits of adult learning includes maintaining or upgrading certificates, staying up to date to new developments, and fulfilling job requirement (Free encyclopedia, 2017). Mannieme (2010) cited in Jinna and Malkano (2014) found that 93 percent of course participants stated that their participation to adult education has motivated them to learn more.

Furthermore, the courses and progression in adult learning does not only bring about human fulfillment but serves as a tool to national development. Research has it that adult education creates economic, social and personal value. The benefits of adult education as stated by Jinna and Malkano (2014) are:

- Attitude change
- Educational progression
- Economic progression- by improving employability, productivity and income
- Health benefits- by creating awareness and passing knowledge on some habits that reduce health or increases health-
- Ensure active civil and social engagement
- Poverty alleviation

Adult education in many diverse ways complements the needed literacy and numeracy for human development. One of its goals is to achieve professional needs, ensure productivity by effectively engaging the labour force, satisfy individual's needs, bring about social change and maintain peace and order- in the society.

The adult education programme is fashioned in a way that its learners are basically adults who may not have seen the four walls of a formal education institution but have gained experiences in life. These life experiences helps direct their purpose of learning thereby making the learning process easier.

Challenges and Shortcomings

The demands of learning can be high that the responsibilities of that adult learner may not balance well with it. Some of these shortcomings in adult learning include

- Personal barriers: This includes time balancing, family demands, finances, transportation, and lack of confidence
- There is a problem in determining which learning and teaching approach can bring the best result in adult learning
- There is little priority and budget placed on the adult educational system
- So far human capital theory has linked education to economic outcome, and still the emphasis very often lies on the economic benefits of learning (Jinna and Malkano, 2014).
- Inadequate training, for the adult educators

Conclusion

The goal of adult education is vocational, recreational and socially-centered. Adult education is goal oriented and motivational, therefore, it breeds life-long learners who already have a need to be met. The experiences of the learners in their day to day activities make it possible for them to practically apply what they learn. In other words, adult education is more in a practical form and not based on theories.

The philosophy of learning and teaching in adult education is reflected on the fact that the adult learner yearns for knowledge and is willing to take responsibility for learning. Adult education is influential in enhancing development.

However, some institutional, dispositional or situational barriers in adult learning can hinder the progress and effective outcome in human development. The little priority and low budget given for adult learning will bring about decreased human resources.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following:

1. The time for learning should be fixed in a way that it favours the adult learners' time frame.
2. Government, NGO's and individuals are advised to place priority on adult Education by creating multiple learning environments for adults.
3. Funds should be made available for the adult educational system and provision of adequate and appropriate tools for learning.
4. There should be special training for the adult educators to help facilitate learning.
5. There is need to invest in the quality of adult learning programme.

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