

The Role of Adult Education as a Catalyst for Social change in Nigeria

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Accepted 16th February, 2016

This study intends to investigate the role of adult education as a catalyst for social change in Nigeria using the Lagos State as a study. The aim of the research is to empirically find out whether adult education has had significant impact on social change in Lagos State. It will also discuss the importance of adult education as well as the challenges facing adult education in Nigeria. The research adopts descriptive research survey with a focus on adult students, offering various courses at Lagos State University and the instrument used for the study was a questionnaire developed to cover the research questions and hypotheses. One hundred respondents comprising of adult learners were randomly selected from Lagos State University in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and Chi-square. It was suggested in the paper that adult education programs are veritable tools designed to equip adults who are the economically productive and active citizens with required knowledge, attitudes, skills and commitment needed for meaningful social change.

Key words: Adult, Adult education, Development, Social Change.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria like most developing countries has placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult education. The present economic development in the African Region compares very unfavorably with levels already attained by developed countries as well as by a number of developing countries in other regions. This is because 65% of the African populations are illiterates. Adult Education, though taken by the Nigerian society to be a low-cost area of the educational system, but from the point of view of return on investment, it is the most immediately productive and profitable for the national economy. What seems to be needed more in Nigeria today is a development-oriented, non-formal education to ensure the principle of self-reliance both in national and individual terms.

Adult Education

Adult education usually refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal school system. It 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, etc.

For the purpose of this presentation, adult education is understood 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 mature 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). Adult education, according to Mbalisi (2010) is “any educative and purposeful learning activity organized for adults to initiate them into a new way of life by providing them with relevant skills, competencies, knowledge, information and attitudes required to excel in that aspect of life”. Sociologically, Dumazedier in Ezimah (2004) defines adult education as an action for the cultural development of the society or its component groups; consciously directed towards the development of the economy of society and of the human personality, by means of a system of continuous or recurrent learning which brings the culture and cultural levels which are mostly capable of encouraging such development.

Adedokun (2012) defined adult education as that education that redresses the imbalance between the education received when one is young and that of later life. For him the earlier education is not adequate to save one from professional

as well as cultural obsolescence during the later period of life. This implies that adult education produces a type of satisfying continuing effect for all levels of school leavers, in order to make them stand the test of time in their various professions. It is therefore important that the nation cannot afford to neglect, adult education because it is through it that innovations are supported and brought into the lives of individuals and the nation as a whole. The definitions above reflect an inclination of adult education towards solving societal problems, and hence, fostering necessary social change.

Challenges of Adult Education in Nigeria

Adult education taken by the Nigerians society to be a low cost area of the education system (which is not usually funded adequately) if viewed from the point of view of return on investment is the most immediately productive and profitable for the national economy. The need of Nigeria today is a development –oriented education which is provided by adult and non formal education. When adult and non formal education is emphasized, the much emphasized self reliance on the national policy on Education will be realized. It is a fact that where the majority of people has no proper type of education or where the majority are illiterate a nation cannot be strong. Change is manifesting in adult education in many ways and this is why adult education must be well funded and administered. Ewuzie (2012) also stressed that in Nigeria high premium is placed on formal education. Formal education had always been emphasized from time immemorial and this is at the expense of adult and non-formal education. As well as formal education is, it is not known to bring immediate solution to problems facing individuals and nations. Government must vote in funds for the running and administration of its programs because adult education is the hope of millions.

The challenge of teaching is another problem being faced by adult education and this is in addition to the problem of facilitator. Imhabekhei (2009) is of the opinion that a person that is not a trained adult educator, may not be able to function as expected in terms of teaching the adult and he thus posited that there is a need to differentiate between the method for teaching the young ones (Pedagogy) and the method for teaching adults (andragogy). Facilitators should learn to incorporate methods of learning that prove effective in every learning situation. Combining methods will help both facilitators and learners to achieve. Doing this may however be difficult for an untrained facilitator on whom the effectiveness of adult education lies. The facilitator who is not a trained adult educator may not be conversant with the nature and characteristics of adult learner and may not really understand that adults achieve less when the learning tasks involve too much theory and memorization. It is therefore important for trained adult educators to be employed for the purpose of effective adult education.

Adult Education and Social Change in Nigeria

Adult education plays a major role in social change. 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 Nigerian poor to really take advantage of programs 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 is 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 in 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, has 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 favoring 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 multi-faceted 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.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's economy has been bedeviled by poor infrastructural facility development and maintenance, depending on imported goods and services, reliance on a single economic sector, weak industrial capacity, inefficient and ineffective public utilities and low literacy level. These problems constitute a cog in the wheel of Nigeria's economic growth and development and as a result hinder human growth and development and improved human well-being. Adult education is very vital to addressing these problems because it provides adult with the necessary skills, attitudes, knowledge, values, beliefs required to trigger social and economic development of any society.

Purpose of the Study

- I. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- II. To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;

- III. 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;
- IV. To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Research Questions

This research was carried out to provide answers to the following research questions:

- I. Does adult education have a significant role in reducing poverty level?
- II. In what capacity can adult education, improve the economic benefits of individuals?
- III. Is there any attitudinal change between individual who participate in adult learning and from one who does not?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between adult education and reducing poverty levels in the society.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between adult education and economic benefits to the nation.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between adult education and attitudinal changes of individuals in the society.

Significance of the Study

The study's finding is to state the role of adult education in development and its contribution to human capital formation. More importantly, adult education yields high rates on investments and enhances labor productivity by equipping various categories of recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills alongside health care, sanitation and nutrition knowledge that improves the peoples' standard of living; as well as relevant skills to improve productivity.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the geographical area of Lagos State. It covers specifically adult learners of Lagos State University in Ojo Local Government Area of the State.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The researcher therefore considered this design appropriate, since the study involves determination of the factors motivating female adult learners' enrollment in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in the Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. There are six autonomous communities that make up the local government area. Geographically, the Ojo Local Government Area has an area of 158km² with administrative capital in Ojo town and a population of 598,071.

Population of the Study

The population for the study was 100 adult learners selected from departments in the Faculty of Education of Lagos State University, Ojo in Ojo Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. It is designed and constructed by the researcher. The instrument is titled *Role of Adult Education as a catalyst for Social Change in Lagos State*.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established by giving the instrument to the experts in the field of adult education from faculty of Education at University of Lagos. Their criticisms and corrections led to the modification of the instrument before it was finally distributed to the respondents. Reliability of the instrument was done by administering the questionnaire to 20 adult learners in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education in Otto-Ijanikin in Otto-Awori Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. The co-efficient of internal consistency of the instrument was determined using a Cronbach Alpha method. It gave the following reliability co-efficient: 0.93, 0.72, 0.82 and 0.93 for clusters 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The grand reliability co-efficient is 0.76 which shows that the instrument is very reliable

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed both the descriptive and the inferential statistical methods. In this, the simple percentages and frequency table were used for descriptive inferences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analyses to the bio-data of the respondents were done on tables 1-3.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the respondents by Marital Status

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Single	16	16
Married	80	80
Divorced	4	4
Total	100	100

From the table above, the analyses revealed that majority of the respondents were married.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the respondents by Age

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
30-40 years	32	32
41-50 years	50	50
50 years and above	18	18
Total	100	100

From the table above, majority of the respondents were within the age of 41-50 years.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of the respondents by occupation

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Self- employed	18	18
Government employed	44	44
Private sectors	38	38
Total	100	100

The table above shows that majority of the respondents were government employers.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between adult education and reducing poverty level.

Table 4: Analysis showing the relationship between adult education and poverty level

Groups	A	D	U	Total	df	P	Cal X^2	Table X^2	Decision
Male Adult Learners	40	10	-	50	2	0.05	6.10	5.99	Reject
Female Adult Learners	29	20	1	50					
Total	80	19	2	100					

The table above shows that calculated value is greater than the table value, thus null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that adult education has a significant relationship with poverty level.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between adult education and economic benefits to the nation.

Table 5: Analysis showing the relationship between adult education and economic benefits of the nation

Groups	A	D	U	Total	df	P	Cal X^2	Table X^2	Decision
Male Adult Learners	41	6	3	50	2	0.05	7.28	5.99	Reject
Female Adult Learners	35	15	-	50					
Total	76	21	3	100					

Since the calculated value 7.28 is greater than the tabulated value 5.59, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between adult education and economic benefits of the nation.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between adult education and attitudinal changes of individuals in the society.

Table 6: Analysis showing the relationship between adult education and attitudinal changes of individuals in the society

Groups	A	D	U	Total	df	P	Cal X ²	Table X ²	Decision
Male Adult Learners	42	8	-	50	2	0.05	11.08	5.99	Reject
Female Adult Learners	27	21	2	50					
Total	72	19	9	100					

Since the calculated value 11.08 is greater than the tabulated value 5.99, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that adult education has a significant relationship with attitudinal changes of individuals in the society.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

From the result on table 4, it can be deduced that adult education has been cited as a key to reducing poverty levels around the world this is supported by (UNESCO-UIL, 2009 in EAEA, 2010) as it has the capacity to positively affect many dimensions of poverty. Results also show that adult education has a role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reducing the risk of poverty, but also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressures. Also, the United Kingdom, the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning (IFLL) (Sabates, 2008) concludes that participating in adult learning can help substantially to reduce poverty through enhancing employment prospects, improving health levels of poor people and giving better chances of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives. Therefore, it should be a part of any approach to reducing poverty, as multiple initiatives are needed to lift people out of poverty.

According to the result from table 5, it can be stated that 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. Result in table 6 supported that individuals who participate in adult learning may differ from the ones who do not in terms of prior attitude. This can be supported by Feinstein (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.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that adult education, referred to broadly as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes mean for mature people, is a powerful tool for development, including poverty reduction, civic and social engagement. Adult education has been often recognized, in theory, as necessary to enhance development, especially in an era of globalization, not only because it produces human capital, but also because it enables people to become well-informed citizens, capable of thinking critically and owning their destiny through active participation. Unfortunately, this recognition has not often been translated on the ground into substantial and relevant programs.

The low amounts of budgetary resources devoted to adult education by African countries reflected the low priority given to this education sub-system by the donor community, despite its inclusion in the global development initiatives adopted since the 90s. If this trend continues, Africa as a whole and Nigeria in

particular will be deprived again of a significant human resources so much needed to meet its development challenges. Such as scenario should not be allowed to happen, otherwise the ensuring social, economic and political consequences would be catastrophic for a continent that already represents the most impoverished part of the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Adequate funding: Since Adult Education is central to the individual's survival and contribution to the progress of the State and nation; it should be adequately funded by the government. It is worthy of note that the 26% budgetary allocation to education recommended by UNESCO has never been met;
- II. Reliable and available data are needed for proper planning and implementation. Data on the needs of learners, the number of those out of school, the required classrooms and instructors needed;
- III. Change in societal attitude: Society must ascribe value and prestige to this system of learning and appreciate it as needed for lifelong Education;
- IV. Counseling Programs: Just as in the formal system of education, counselors should be posted to the learning centers to assist the learners;
- V. Policy documents like the NPE and Nigerian Constitution should be clear as to what specific roles the different levels of Governments, Federal, State and Local Governments should play in the implementation of specific programs;
- VI. Males should be more enlightened on the importance of these centers in the delivery of lifelong education.

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