

Finding Solutions to Challenges Facing Adult Education in Nigeria

Adedokun Mary Olufunke
Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University
E-mail: funkadokun@yahoo.com
Tel: 234-8034-80-6200

Adeyemo, Comfort Wuraola

Accepted: August 06, 2013 Published: Sep 06, 2013

Doi:10.5296/ijld.v3i4.4241 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v3i4.4241>

Abstract

Education in any nation and to individuals within it is very important because education remains a valuable tool for fighting ignorance, disease, squalor and poverty. It is a means to raising enlightened citizenry who will help in bringing about a prosperous nation. Adult education is therefore not to be neglected as it had been in the past as its focus is to get adult (who had never been to school before or those who could not further their education because of one challenge or the other) to learn and through learning, change their attitudes and behaviours with the hope that this process of change will affect not only individuals positively but also the nation. It is in this light of the importance of adult education, that this paper gives an overview of the various challenges facing adult education and to seek solutions to such. Such challenges include long years of neglect by the government, perception of people about adult education, teaching methods and facilitators, funding and the problems facing adult learners themselves. The list cannot be exhausted.

Making frantic efforts to provide well equipped adult education centres, well trained facilitators, funding the programmes of adult education adequately and adult learner's willingness to participate in programmes that would develop them and the communities in which they live will definitely bring progress to adult education.

Keywords: Education, development, self-reliance, change, participate.

Introduction

The Federal and state government of Nigeria place high value on education because it is a weapon to fight ignorance, disease, squalor and poverty and it is a means of developing both individuals and the nation. Education is thus a human right to which none must be denied (Subrahmanian, 2002). Education is also important to national development and this is why every government all over the world has made commitments to citizens both young and old to have access to education. Adult education in its practice has the assumption and the affirmation that education is life and not a mere preparation for the unknown future. It is a type of education which leads to a satisfying end. It is however of note that in times past, much emphasis had always been placed on formal education at the expense of adult education. However, realizing the importance of Adult Education, the Federal Government had incorporated it into its educational policy. Adult education is important because it makes it possible for one to be able to cope with constant changes in one's environment and so adult education is rooted in lifelong education and so it has no limitations.

Adult education is not the type of education that relegates the learning process only to the period of youth and it is not so termed because it is confined to adults but because adulthood and maturity defines its limit and its concept is inclusive. The purpose of adult education is to put meaning into the whole of life. (Linderman, 1926) This paper thus examined some of the challenges facing adult education in Nigeria with the hope of proffering solution to such.

Adult Education

In the opinion of Okediran and Abidoye (2001) Adult education is a tool that frees people from poverty ridden situations and it is a tool through which individuals and nations rise above their challenges. Adedokun, (2008) expresses the view that adult and non-formal education has their aims in bringing about social transformation and reconstructing society to make it modernized, productive, participative and value oriented. This is why Omolewa (2006) in Adedokun (2008) sees it as an instrument for moving forward in that adult and non-formal education helps people and institutions to meet their challenges and provides opportunities for re-growth to happen by providing avenue for change in individuals, communities, societies and nations. The implication of this is that adult education assists its recipients to experience transformation and a change of circumstances and so it is a source of providing opportunities for people at various levels. Omolewa (1981) in Adedokun (2012), defines adult education as that education that redresses the imbalance between education received when one is young and that of later life. To 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 lives of individuals and the nation as a whole.

It is however discovered that despite the benefits of adult education to individuals, communities as well as nations, it is faced with myriads of challenges and unless solutions are found to these challenges, one might not be able to reap the good benefits of adult and non-formal education.

Challenges of Adult Education

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. As at now, the earmarked budget for education by the federal government is 8.5 percent while a huge amount of the nation's budget goes to salaries and allowances of political office holders (ERC 2013).

Education Rights Campaign, (ERC 2013) made an attempt to compare budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria with those of other countries. The result is as follows:

Budgetary Allocations on Education in some other countries:

Country	Percentage %
Ghana	31
Cote d' Ivoire	20
Kenya	23
Morocco	17.7
Botswana	19.0
Swaziland	24.6
Lesotho	17.0
Uganda	27.0
Burkina Faso	16.8

Source: Education Rights Campaign (2013)

Nigeria, when compared with the above countries, remains poor in matters of education funding. This poor funding of education has resulted in lack of adequate facilities for teaching, learning and research (www.educationrightscampaign.blogspot.com). This poor funding 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.

Adult education taken by the Nigerians society to be a low cost area of educational 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 in the national policy on Education will be realized. It is a fact that where majority of people has no proper type of education or where 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 good as formal education is, it is not known to bring immediate solution to problems facing individuals and nations. The federal government must vote in funds for the running and administration of its programmes because adult education is the hope of millions. Adult education enhances literacy and employability skills (www.acutla.netdocs-14/4/13).

Traditionally, adult education is seen as providing educational services mainly to the society but the direction of its services is not really stated. Seeing adult education in this light will make it difficult to define goals, establish consistent priorities and demonstrate successful programme outcome. This presupposes the fact that the stated priorities for adult education should be made explicit. What each programme of adult education should accomplish should be stated clearly as this will make adult education evade the "Gabbage" perception. Adult education programmes should be well designed and delivered to provide quality services that focus on the serious needs of the country and also meet clear and measurable objectives.

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 (Lowy & O'Conor, 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, relevant and innovative and If these programmes reflect practical/real life situation. The negative perception will change to positive one, when there is effective management and administration of adult education programmes. When there is the opposite of these stated facts which in most cases are major challenges faced in adult education in Nigeria, the perception is thus negative (Christine H, Lewis, Catherine & Dunlop assessed 28/4/13).

The Management and Administration of Adult Education Constitute another major challenge to adult education practices. Okafor and Onah (2002) defined administration as the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goal. Nwachuku (1988) sees management as the coordination of all the resources of organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. The question that readily comes to mind is how well is adult education managed and administered? Majorly, conferences and seminars have always been used as means of administration of adult and non-formal education.

However, such conferences, seminars and workshops are of little benefit to the target audience as such are held in Hotels and Universities outside the areas where majority of target audience live (Online Researchers, 2010). The mass media is supposed to be a good means of administration of adult education because of its wide coverage and its high ability to keep people adequately informed of the world in which they live and so it should be a vital instrument of adult education. However, much is still desired in this area in adult education practice in Nigeria.

The challenge of teaching is another problem being faced by adult education and this is in addition with 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 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.

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 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 is another point to be considered. 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.

Training and re-training programme (which is also a programme of adult education) for effectiveness of on the job performance must also be taken seriously because it is about developing human resources to its fullest potential. However one manifestation of this is the amount of resources allocated to training and retraining that will determine how effective the programme will be for the participants. In the words of Minister Lee Kuan Yew, “technology is changing so fast that if we don’t get the workers up to mark, they may be out of jobs because they cannot work the new machines that may come in”(Training and retraining programme, the Singaporean experience-www.eaea.org>eaea>library>adult education resources>adult learning in the world). He concludes ‘I’m doing it in my 70s’. Many people may not be engaged in this programme because of lack of support from the employers.

Efforts must be made to look into these challenges with a view to finding solutions to them as in the words of Ewuzie (www.eaea.org 15-3-13) “we cannot afford to wait for the children. First we must educate the adults, our children will not have an impact on our economic development for five, ten or even twenty years adults have an impact now”. There must be innovations in adult education programmes and every impediment to the success of adult education must be removed.

Okafor (1991) sees adult education as the only profession that assists adult learners effectively in their efforts to learn. It instills lost hope in people and liberates them from the prejudice of seeing themselves as people who cannot learn. It awakens adult learners to become aware of their environment in terms of socio-economic, cultural and political matters (Onyenemezu, 2012). FAsokun (2006) in Onyenemezu (2012) states that adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life but rather with assisting adults to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies: considering these importance of Adult education, its challenges should be removed to pave way for effective practice of adult education.

Adult education programmes to Nnazor (2005) operate mainly as disparate, peace meal activities that are not integrated into coherent and purposeful strategy in the pursuit of a relatively development mission. The planners of adult education need to be coherent in the planning of programmes of adult education and policies on adult education should be followed to the letter if the dream of adult education of making adults self-reliant is to be achieved.

The role of monitoring cannot be over-emphasized in adult education as this boils down to quality control. Quality Control in education can only be guaranteed through regular and effective supervision. The issue of monitoring should therefore not be taken with levity if adult education is truly to help in creating a progressive society. Babalola and Ayeni (2009) see education as an investment and that it is essential for the development of the nation and that it simultaneously contributes to personal fulfillment and the growth of individual citizen. Adults must therefore not be left out in the issue of personal growth and fulfillment and so adult education must be planned well.

Adult education is suffering devaluation and this makes people develop a sense of low-esteem when compared with others in highly valued profession such as law and medicine. With good planning and management of adult education, the feeling of low esteem will give way and learners will value adult education programmes.

Finding solutions to challenges such as inadequate funding, neglect and poor professional development becomes imperative in the light of the statement of Omolewa (1985) that “It is not the children of today who hold the present destiny of Africa in their hands, it is the adults”. He therefore concludes that adult must be helped to adjust to a rapidly changing world. This can be done by removing the challenges to adult education through proper planning of adult education, funding it adequately, training adult educators motivating facilitators and improving the monitoring of adult education programmes.

Solutions

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 (Reflections on Challenges Facing the Adult Education Movement; <http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php>). 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.

Universities should also generate useful knowledge concerning the practice of adult education and embark on more joint research on adult education. Training of adult facilitators must be improved and they must be well remunerated so that they feel fulfilled and commitment is thus guaranteed.

Conclusion

When challenges facing adult education are properly tackled, the nation will record progress in its practice of adult education making it possible for its aims and objectives to be realized. Removing the obstacles to the practice of adult education enhances progress in the lives of individuals and the nation by helping individuals within the nation to understand himself and his fellowmen thus making him/her an asset to the nation. Adult education programmes should therefore be pursued vigorously so as to ensure an enlightened government and citizenry whose insights and decisions are vital to the development of the nation as well as individuals within it.

Examining the various benefits of adult education to individual as well as the nation, it is therefore important to remove barriers to adult education in the nation.

References

- AANFE 2012. Inter-ministerial Briefing: Oyo State Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education.
- Administration of Management of Adult Education in Nigeria: <http://caponic.blogspot.com/2010/11/administration-andmanagement-of-adult>
- Adult Education: Will it meet the challenges of the future? <http://www.aeutla.net/docs/adult>
Education-Will it meet the challenges of the future.
- Babalola, J.B. and Ayeni, O.A. 2009. Educational Management: Theories Aid Tasks. Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Education Rights Campaign: www.educationrightscampaignblogspot.com
- EFA Global Monitoring Report (2002)
- Ewuzie, C. Change in Adult Education in Nigeria: <http://www.eara.org/15/3/12>.
- Imhabekhai, C.I. 2009. Programme Development and Management in Adult and Non-Formal Education.
- Knowles, M.S. 1980. The Modern Practice of Adult Education, Chicago: Follet Publishing Company in Crawford, L.D.: The Role of Ageing in Adult Learning: Implication for Instructors in Higher Education <http://education.jhu.edu/lifelonglearning/higher-education/implications>.
- Lawy, L. and O'Connor D. 1986. Why Education in the 'Later years Lexington, M.A: D.C. Health and Company.
- Nnazor 2005. Adult Education in Nigeria: The Consequence of Neglect and agenda for action. <http://i.e.cjb.net> (Retrieved August 4, 2011).
- Nwachukwu, C.C. 1988. Management Theory and Practice, Awoka. Africa-FEP Publishers Ltd.
- Okafo, F.C. 1991. Nigeria Teacher Education. Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Okafor, F.C. and Onah, F.O. 2002. Public Administration in Nigeria, Enugu, John Jacobs Classic Publishers Ltd. (1-3).
- Omolewa, M.A. 1985. Adult Education Practice in Nigeria Ibadan, Evans Brothers Ltd.
- Onyenemezu, E.C. 2012. Adult Education and the Challenges of the 21st Century in Nigeria: Journal of Education and Practice. 3(5)
- Reflections on Challenges Facing the Adult Education Movement; <http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php> 24/7/2013
- Training and retraining programme, the Singaporean experience-[www.eaea.org>eaea>library>adult education resources>adult learning in the world](http://www.eaea.org/eaea/library/adult%20education%20resources/adult%20learning%20in%20the%20world) 24/7/2013