

ADULT AND NON- FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A MEANS OF EMPOWERING THE ADULT LEARNER IN A DEMOCRATIC ECONOMY

Sunday N. Nnamani

Dr. Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria,
sundaynnamani2010@yahoo.com

Abstract

Education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society (Ocho, 2005). It is a process through which the young, middle aged and adults acquire knowledge and realize their potentialities and use them for self – actualization and be useful to themselves and others. Adult education which is an aspect of education is specialized in educating those who didn't have the privilege of passing through any formal education, those who prematurely dropped out of school and those who have completed their school but wish to further improve on their knowledge. In Nigeria, the existing institutions are used as venues for adult education classes especially in the evenings. The objective of this research is to ascertain the extent to which adult learners who had been empowered through education will contribute their quota in the economic, social and political development of their country in a democratic era. In fact, the extent to which a society is democratic can be measured by the extent to which various groups in the society (men/women, employers/workers etc) are completely empowered. (Henkin and Dee 2001). Democracy on its part is defined as a form of government in which the people exercise their powers either directly or indirectly through their representatives. Democracy provides institutions for people to express their will on basic issues bordering on socio-political, economic and educational well being of the citizens. This research will be carried out by analyzing the data generated in six local government areas of Enugu state of Nigeria. The six local governments were randomly selected out of the three senatorial zones of the state. The performances of the adult learning centres were analyzed visa-viz the reports collated from the facilitators. The expected results were that more than sixty percent of the centres are not functioning well due to lack of adequate funding by the local government chairmen. Therefore, the Nigerian government cannot meet the MDG target of education for all by the year 2015.

Keywords: Adult education, Empowerment, Democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is fast becoming a middle-income country, yet the numbers of people living in poverty and inequality is rising (Africa Progress Report 2013). The 16.7 million men and 25 million women in Nigeria who do not have literacy skills are not able to fully participate in economic development and democratic processes.

2. Definition of concepts

2.1. Who is an adult?

An adult is one who has attained a certain age of 18 to 21 years and above depending on the stipulations of the law. The problem with using chronological age as a measure of adulthood is that it varies from country to country, from time to time and even from age to age. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) puts the adult age at 18 years. Certain characteristics can also be used to describe adulthood. These include

maturation, measuring adulthood in terms of the socio-economic status of the person and locally by the opportunity to be initiated into an age grade masquerade cults, puberty rites and initiation into manhood/womanhood. Simply put Eya (2006) says that “an adult is a person who shows a reasonable measure of moral and emotional maturity and prudent, patient and tolerant as well as socially responsible”.

2.2. Adult Education

Adult education is a very broad term which has been subjected to so many definitions and interpretations. Houle (1964) defines it as a process by which men or women either alone or in groups attempt to improve themselves by bringing about changes in their understanding, skills or sensitivities. In a more elaborate way, Liveright and Haygood (eds) (1969) said that adult education is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full-time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding, skill, appreciation and attitudes for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems. More expressively Greenough (1972) sees adult education as a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular of full-time basis can pursue organized studies or to develop their knowledge and skills and so become equipped to perform roles in their societies in more or less creative or critical fashion so that they can be of greater use to themselves, their families and to the community.

Adult education is the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. (Merriam, sharau & Brockett, 2007).

2.3. Empowerment

Empowerment is the encouragement and the development of skills for, self-sufficiency with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. It occurs through improvement of conditions, standards, events and on a global perspective of life. This process can be difficult to start and to implement effectively, but there are many examples of empowerment projects which have succeeded. (<http://sughoshim/Empowerment.html>, 2010).

2.4. Democracy

Democracy is a form of government in which the people exercise their governing power either directly or through representatives which are periodically elected by them. Therefore this informs us that democracy provides institutions for the expression and the supremacy of the popular will of the people on basic issues on socio-political decisions and policy-making.

3. THE SCOPE OF ADULT EDUCATION

In Nigeria, the scope of adult education can vividly be seen in the educational blueprint of the nation. The National Policy on Education (2004) section 6 contains the scope and objectives of adult and non-formal education. These items are divided into five areas as follows:

- 1 Functional literacy education
- 2 Remedial education
- 3 Further education
- 4 In-service or on-the-job education and vocational and professional training.
- 5 Aesthetic, cultural and civic education.

3.1. The objectives shall be to:

- (i) Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.

- (ii) Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
- (iii) Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- (iv) Provide in-service, on-the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and
- (v) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

By its nature, adult education covers a wide range of issues. It often focuses on all activities of adults aimed at self-awareness, wider process of life-long education, and general, vocational, professional, civic, cultural as well as recreational education of all adult stages. The span of adult education extend to all part-time activities, industrial training, professional refresher courses, informal and ad-hoc workshops and conferences. It entails a lot of learning by doing as is very much found in informal education. Adult education is better understood as a rich field of study, a practical activity full of varied experiences. The work of an agricultural specialist must be linked with that of the nutritionist, that of a car seller to a driver, mechanic etc. Hence, a better understanding of adult education is that which knot together, each level strengthening the order and each connected to the other to make a meaningful whole.

3.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Educating the adults differ from educating children in several ways. One of the most important differences is that adults have accumulated knowledge and work experiences which can add to their learning experiences. Another difference is that adult education is voluntary; therefore the participants are generally dependent on self-motivation. Adults frequently apply their knowledge in a practical way to learn effectively. They must have a reasonable expectation that the knowledge they have gained will help them in furthering their goals. For example, during the 1990's, many adults including mostly office workers enrolled into computer training courses. These courses thought them the basic use of the operating system or software. Due to the fact that the internet governing the user's interactions with ICT was new, many people who had been working in different establishments for ten years or more eventually took such training courses either on their own or sponsored by their managers. A working adult is unlikely to have the freedom to simply quit his or her job and go back to school on full-time. Many public schools in Nigeria usually offer evening or weekend classes and a lot of our adults have utilized these opportunities to improve their literacy level.

3.3. NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Presently, many adult men and women are uneducated and therefore, lack the requisite knowledge, skills and the right attitudes for a functional career in agriculture, technology and other vocational areas to enable them function effectively in a democratic society. This is due to the inability of the formal education system to provide these adults with the training they require. The formal education system in our country bewildered with multitude of problems that make it inaccessible to the adults. Nevertheless, a good number of development partners are supporting the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) in extending basic literacy learning opportunities to young people and adults through the Revitalizing Adult and Youth Literacy in Nigeria project. Such partners include UNESCO, institute for Life-long Learning (UIL) United Nations Organization (UNO) etc. Additionally, their support is to help build the capacities of Nigerian Adult educators and policymakers. The UIL hosted ten scholars from April to June 2013 to undertake desk research on priority action areas of the project. The scholarship is funded by a special grant from the Nigerian government.

3.4. Statement of the problem

Adult education is seen by many developing countries as an instrument for the promotion of the people's status politically, economically and socially. It therefore deserves as much attention as the formal system of education. Adult education centres in the state in question (Enugu) is faced with major challenges especially funding.

3.5. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the importance of establishing these centres in the lives of the citizens. The point in establishing them is to enable the less privileged members of the society acquire basic education and basic life skills to improve their lives.

4. Research Questions

The Following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the coverage or spread of the centres across the 17 local government areas?
2. Are there coordinators and facilitators to teach in these centres?
3. What is the level of funding of these centres by the local government chairmen?

4.1. Research Design

This study used a description survey research design. This design was adopted from information already documented by the coordinators and the facilitators.

4.2. Population of the study

The population of the study is the 412 adult education centres spread out across the 17 local government areas compressed into 3 senatorial zones of the state.

4.2.1. Selected Local Government Areas

The six selected local government areas are as follows;

- | | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Enugu East | } | Enugu-East senatorial zone |
| 2. Enugu South | | |
| 3. Igboeze-south | } | Enugu-North senatorial zone |
| 4. Uzo-uwani | | |
| 5. Agwu | } | Enugu-West senatorial zone |
| 6. Udi | | |

4.2.2. Sampling

Six local government area centres randomly selected were examined in terms of location, performance and funding.

4.2.3. Method of Data collection

The coordinators of the various local governments submitted situation reports to the agency for Mass literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education, Enugu state. The reports recorded under were expunged from their reports.

4.2.4. Method of data Analysis

The data collected were organized and analyzed using percentages. The acceptable level of percentage was 50% and above.

4. Research Question 1

What is the coverage or spread of the centres across the 17 local government areas?

Table 1

Questionnaire item		Total Response	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Is there an adult education centre in your village?	20	20	100	-	-
2.	How many centres are cited in your local government area?	20	15	75	5	25
3.	Do you think that they are adequate in number?	20	16	80	4	20

The data in table 1 above revealed that virtually all villages in the areas under consideration has at least a centre.

Furthermore, the centres are considered to be adequate in the local governments with 75% and 80% respectively.

This is in line with the report of the interview conducted on 7th November, 2013 with the Deputy Director of Education in-charge of Adult and Non-formal Unit Enugu.

5.1. Research Question 2

Are there coordinators and facilitators to teach in these centres?

Table 2

Questionnaire item		Total Response	Yes	%	No	%
1.	How regular and effective are these facilitators?	20	5	25	15	75
2.	What is the degree of their commitment?	20	2	10	18	90
3.	How punctual are they?	20	5	25	15	75

Table 2 above revealed that the facilitators are neither regular nor effective with 75% on the negative while only 25% were on the affirmative. Also, their level of commitment and punctuality were decried by the adult learners. These were represented by No 90% Yes 10% and for punctuality No 75% and 25% respectively. Their lack of commitment may be connected to failure by the local government chairmen to take care of the centres.

5.2. Research Question 3

What is the level of funding of these centres by the local government chairmen?

Table 3

Questionnaire item		Total Response	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Are the facilitators paid regularly?	20	2	10	18	90
2.	Are there enough chairs and teaching facilities in your centre?	20	8	40	12	60
3.	Are the learning conditions at the centres conducive?	20	5	25	15	75

Source: Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education, Enugu.

Table 3 is on the extent to which these centres are funded. It revealed that the facilitators are not paid regularly.

Also, the teaching facilities and learning conditions are not conducive. These were represented by 10%, 40% and 25% respectively. From the above results, it is very clear that the operation of adult education is facing a lot of challenges.

5.3. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study have shown that Enugu state government is actually interested in the improvement of the life styles of their citizens through the provision of education. Nevertheless, their good intentions had been marred by lack of funding and inadequate facilities. According to the state Annual Education Sector (ESA) performance report (2010), it said "there are 412 adult education centres (with 7,169 students); more than two thirds of the centres are not functioning although attendance in functioning centres was about 70%".

There is the need to accelerate the level of commitment by the ruling class to the success of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. This is in a bid to the aims and objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in education.

5.4. Challenges/Barriers to Adult Education in Nigeria

The adult education programme in Nigeria is faced with various challenges and constraints. Some of them include;

1. Poor/inadequate facilities: Most centres are not properly equipped.
2. They lack adequate vocational/technical content making them mere catch-up centres for the General Certificate in Education and other certificates without useable, marketable or saleable skills.
3. Poor funding is a major problem.
4. Poor monitoring and supervision of adult education programmes In Nigeria by the relevant ministry.

5.5. Recommendations

In other to achieve the desired goals of adult education as stated in the National Policy on education, the researcher recommends as follows;

1. That teachers, employers and family members should all encourage the adult learner in achieving his desired professional development goals.
2. The centres should be well funded.
3. They should be motivated.
4. They should also reinforce positive self-esteem in them as this will allow them to develop into lifelong learners.

REFERENCE LIST

Africa Progress Report (2013). UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, August 11th p.1

Agency for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education, Enugu.

Annual Education Sector Performance Report (2010). Federal Republic of Nigeria, Enugu state, Ministry of Education

Eya, L.O. (2006). The Nature and scope of Adult Education. In L.O. Eya, J.C. Ugwu & B.E. Alu (eds) *Adult Education, its nature and purpose*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.

Greenough, R. (1972). You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks, *UNESCO Features*, No. 618

Houle, C.O. (1964). *The Inquiring Mind: A Study of the Adults Who Continues to Learn*: Madison. The University

ISBN: 978-605-64453-1-6

of Wisconsin Press.

Liveright, A.A. and Haygood, N. (eds) (1969). *Exeter Papwes*, Boston.

Merriam, Sharan, B. & Brockett, Ralph, G. (2007). *The profession and Practice of Adult Education: An Introduction*. Jossey–Bass p.7

National Policy on Education (2004). Federal Republic of Nigeria; Abuja NERDC.

Ocho, L. O (2005). *Issues and concerns in education and life*. Enugu: Institute of development studies University of Nigeria.

Sughosh India Foundation “Soghosh’s meaning of empowerment” (<http://sughoshinempowerment.html>) 2010, Nov. 8th.