



**ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

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Abstract

Adult and Non-formal Education is an instrument for knowledge and skills acquisition, which serves as an instrument for nation building. This paper examines the challenges and prospects of Adult and Non-formal Education. The paper also highlighted the aims and objectives of adult and non-formal education, the characteristics of adult and non-formal education and innovations in it. It recommended that qualified facilitators should be recruited and adequate funding provided.

Keywords: Adult and Non-formal Education, Innovation, education,

Introduction

Learning is a perpetually challenging enterprise, which has attracted and will continue to attract research, interest and scholarship. According to Oduaran (2000), “learning in adulthood continues to attract competing and contentious ideas because of the comparative ignorance surrounding it”. However, learning is a process through which an individual acquires knowledge, skills and attitude. This indicates that learning is a complex process of which adult learning is not an exception. Oduaran (2000) pointed out that “psychologist and adult educators are becoming increasingly interest in comprehending the factors influencing learning in adulthood”. Thus, the implication of this statement is that adults will commit themselves to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them.

The National Policy on Education (2004) stresses that adult and non-formal education include functional literacy, continuing education for adults and youth, the provision of knowledge and skill and in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and civic education for public enlightenment. Ugwuegbu (2003 in Abdullahi, 2015) stated that adult education in Nigeria is not just about literacy or remedial education but is wanted as long as individuals are alive. This position is in line with that of Dave (1973 in Abdullahi, 2015), who argued that adult education aims at providing

lifelong education that prepares an individual for change and creates a dynamic frame of mind in the individual.

The Concept of Adult Education

Adult education has been viewed in different ways by many people across nations and continents. Its advocates have always advanced meanings and explanations according to how they feel about the concept (Hanachor & Needom, 2014). Bryson (1936 in Oyebamiji and Hassan, 2012) viewed it as a discipline to have possessed the ability for enlightenment and that liberation of individual and communities. He further perceived it as any purposeful effort towards self-development carried out by an individual without direct legal compulsion and without becoming his major field of activity. Townsend-Cole (1978 in Hanachor & Needom 2014) viewed adult education as the education that embraces all forms of educational experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests, requirements and their differing levels of comprehension and ability and their changing roles, responsibilities throughout life.

Darkenwald & Mariam (1982) stated that adult education is concerned not only with preparing people for life, but rather helping people to live more successfully and assist them to solve community and personal problems. Similarly, Anyanwu (1981) presents it as all activities with an educational purpose that are carried out by people engaged in an ordinary business of life. More so, UNESCO (1997) in Adekola (2008) cited by Hanachor and Needom (2014) opined that adult basic education is all form

of organized education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge, life skills, values and attitudes that they required to survive and develop their capacity. Supporting this Nzeneri (2005) viewed it as “any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problem, to enable them adjust fully to change and challenges in their lives and society”. Going by all these definitions, one could conclude that adult education is an important tool for skills acquisition, adjustment, improvement, the conscientization of communities and nation in adult education.

The Aims of Adult Education

Adult education is necessary for every adult in the 21st century. The national policy on education (2004) provides for Adult and Non-formal education as an instrument par excellence for lifelong education. According to the policy, the goal of adult and non-formal education includes:

1. Provision functional literacy and continuing education for adults and the youth.
2. Provision education for different categories of completers of the formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
3. Provision of in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers

and give adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Fasokun (1994 cited by Anure, 2014) stated that Adult Education, especially in the developing countries like Nigeria, has the following aims:

1. To compensate for lack of formal education.
2. To serve as an initial access to primary education
3. To orient it around basic needs
4. To promote democratic culture in the people.
5. To sensitize adults toward social and political transformation.
6. To improve the living condition of the target group.
7. To enlighten society in the changes taking place in Economic and Social life.
8. To provide the target group with the necessary aesthetic, cultural, vocational and civic education for public enlightenment.
9. To offer people who have interrupted their school careers for whatever reasons the opportunity to finish their education.
10. To provide employment opportunities to the participants.
11. To provide further education and in-service training to the target group in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.

Thus, one could state that adult education is concerned with individual self empowerment. Therefore, the goal of adult and non-formal education is not only to eradicate illiteracy among community but also to empower individuals' character, abilities and capacities with a sense of verified personal meaning.

The Characteristics of Adult and Non-Formal Education

1. It is a goal and purpose oriented not certificate oriented.
2. It emphasizes on tackling specific physical problems rather than learning abstract subject matter.
3. It helps in initiating a program or project after an experimental phase.
4. It is flexible, learner centered and participatory.
5. It is more practical rather than theoretical.
6. Autonomy at the program level and less chance for external control.
7. More economical because it could use existing facilities.
8. It is continuing lifelong process.

The Adult Education Program

Barikor (1991:64 in Nwabuko & Okechukwu, 2006 cited by Abdullahi, 2015) stated that an adult education program must be non-formal and flexible and one that recognizes the learners' role as busy and responsible parents, workers, leaders and citizens. This means that it must accommodate the diversity of the learners' needs and learning forms. An adult education program must be geared towards giving the learner skills,

knowledge, understanding, attitude or appreciation oriented towards problem solving, self improvement and vocational competency.

However, Bergerin (1983 cited by Abdullahi 2015) stated that adult education may be applied to:

1. Acquire basic education tools.
2. Acquire skills and techniques for chosen occupations or professions to enable an individual to earn a living.
3. Acquire skills necessary to take the best advantage of one's physical community, civil and political environment.
4. Attain self-fulfillment and realize creativity.

Therefore, an effective adult education program should consider the needs, aspiration and related interests of the adult learner, as well as the needs of his/her social order so as to serve the whole society.

Innovations in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

Innovation is the act of introducing something new (Olayiwola, 2015). To meet the challenges of the modern world using adult and non-formal education, Nigeria came up with some programs in adult and non-formal education, as identified by Obire, Onajite and Agusiobo (2012), which includes:

1. Basic literacy program: This is a short time program aimed at providing basic education to clientele.
2. Post Literacy Program: This program is targeted for the completers of Basic Literacy and drop outs from formal primary schools to upgrade their knowledge.
3. Distance Education Program: This is designed for all those who because of the nature of their age are unable to enroll in the regular or formal educational system. The medium of instruction is by correspondence, radio or television.
4. Sandwich Program: This program is organized by various institution of higher education in the country for adults who are committed in other engagement and attend the program when they can.
5. Nomadic Education Program: this program is aimed at nomads who do not settle in one place because they have to follow their herds of cattle around in search of pasture.

Challenges

Adult and Non-formal Education is facing a lot of challenges in Nigeria because of issues and policy, issues and practice (2010) amongst which include:

1. Inadequate budgetary allocation at all levels of government, especially compared to the formal system of education.

2. In adequate/irregular monitoring of programs: For the successful implementation of programs, there should be adequate monitoring.
3. Inadequate qualified facilitators to handle the programs.
4. Poor remuneration of facilitators: There are irregularities in the payments of facilitators and sometimes facilitators spend a number of months without receiving their payments.
5. Poor record keeping which affect planning and implementation of the program.
6. Inadequate sensitization and mobilization of clientele/target group.
7. Inadequate facilitation materials in most of the centers.

The Prospects of Adult and Non-Formal Education

It is hoped that when an individual is equipped through adult and non-formal education, Nigeria's hope for achieving development that includes the eradication of poverty and improving the standard of life will be attained. Therefore, the following are some of the prospects of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria:

1. Increase in the literacy level of the labor force.
2. Change in social attitude: society will appreciate the need for lifelong education
3. More people will be enlightened on the importance of lifelong education.

4. Improving maternal health and reducing child mortality rate.
5. Improving environmental sustainability and development would be enhanced.
6. Establishment of adult and non-formal education departments in colleges of education in Nigeria.
7. Transformation individuals, communities, societies and the nation at large.

Conclusion

To overcome the challenges faced by Adult and Non-formal education, it is hoped that adequate funding, the motivation of facilitators, adequate facilities and qualified facilitators should be provided. Moreover, there should be political will on the part of local, state and federal government with proper implementation and monitoring of the program.

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