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Role of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education to National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The National Policy on Education (2014) captures Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education as programmes equivalent to Basic Education for adults, youth and children of formal school age outside the conventional education system. The essence was to provide basic education to disadvantaged group of people who have dropped out of schools or never had the opportunity of schooling but wish to acquire basic literacy of reading, writing and arithmetic. The paper critically looked at the concepts and practices of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. It further examined the historical perspective and status of mass literacy in the country. It also highlighted on its key contributions to community and national development such as provision of needed manpower to enhance national productivity and acquisition of competencies needed for self-reliance as productive Nigeria citizens. It drew a conclusion that mass literacy campaign in Nigeria is gaining acceptance going by the literacy rate of 62.02% from the estimated population of 200 million Nigerians with 71.26% male literacy over and above 52.66% female literacy rate.

Keywords: Education, mass literacy, adult and non-formal education, national development.

Introduction

Education is inalienable right of individuals. Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) corroborated this assertion; stating that education is the right of every citizen. In the same vein, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended specified the right of all Nigerians to education. It states that education should be free and compulsory from primary to university level when it is practically possible. Similarly, the Millennium Development Goal (2000), Goal 2 and Sustainable Development Goal (2015), Goal 4 which Nigeria is signatories, addressed the issues of universality and equality of education. These legal frame works gave credence to importance of education to human race. It is on this premise that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) recognizes education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national

development. In realization of these efforts, Federal Government of Nigeria uses education as an instrument to realize national goals boarding on a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a great and dynamic economy, a united, strong and self-reliant nation and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

Pursuant to these goals, the National Policy on Education went further to state that all Nigerian citizens shall have the right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability. This vision led to the establishment of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education on 25th June, 1990. The Commission was charged with the responsibility of eradicating illiteracy and promoting mass literacy in Nigeria amongst other things. Since the establishment of the Commission, attempts have been made to provide functional education to adults and youth who are not opportune to complete their primary and secondary education. The agency of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education was replicated in all the States and domesticated in the States Ministry of Education throughout the federation for effective supervision. The essence was to provide basic education to disadvantaged group of people who have dropped out of schools or never had the opportunity of schooling but wish to acquire basic literacy of reading, writing and arithmetic. This move aligns with UNESCO (2007) which encapsulates that education is a primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Plato in Nwuzor & Ocho (1985) contends that man becomes perfect through education and the best state is one whose leaders are best qualified through capacity and education.

Concepts of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education

The concepts of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education are seen differently by authors. National Policy on Education (2014) sees Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education as equivalent to basic education given to adults, children and youth of formal school age outside the formal school system. For some authors, Adult and Non-Formal Education is an organized system of education carried out outside the frame work of the formal school system to provide some kind of learning to certain groups of the population referred to as adults. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education is also the kind of education given to people who are not privileged enough to benefit from the formal school system, offering opportunities of remedial training and education to school dropouts and others alike.

Who is an adult?

The status of an adult varies from one society to another. In Nigeria, an adult is a person who has attained the age of 18 and above. At this age, his franchise under the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is guaranteed. Nnamani (2014) was not comfortable with the use of chronological age as a measure of adulthood. This is because some countries peg adulthood at 13, 17, 19 and 20 respectively He argues that adulthood varies from country to country, time to time and even from age to age.

Convincingly, he maintains that adult is one who has attained a certain age of 18 to 21 years and above depending on the stipulations of the law. In the light of this, adult can be seen as a man or a woman who is up to 18 years, mature and prepared emotionally, spiritually and physically enough to maintain a family. Eya (2006) sees adult as persons who show a reasonable measure of moral and emotional maturity, prudent, patient and tolerant as well as socially responsible. It is important to note here that any acceptable definition of adult should be comprehensive enough to capture all the factors that give credence to adulthood. Such factors include; general criterion, age, social responsibilities, psychological criterion, biological criterion, political criterion and mental criterion.

General Criterion. An adult must be old enough to maintain a family, takes care of his or her aged parents and work out his or her destiny for his survival and that of the family.

Age. Age plays important role in emotional stability of individual adults. To a large extent, age depicts maturity. The official age of adulthood in Nigeria and most of OECD countries is 18. Some Asian and western countries maintain maturity age of their citizenry at 20 (Japan), 19 (Korea), 20 (New Zealand), 19 in Alabama, Nebraska, Puerto Rica and 21 in Mississippi all in United States of America (Wikipedia, 2021). Age is associated with experience and experience determines behaviour pattern of an adult.

Social Responsibilities. An adult is saddled with enormous responsibilities within his environments. As a citizen of the country, he has an obligation to pay his tax to the government, observe environmental sanitation, superintend over community social tasks entrusted on him/her to say the least. In most culture, marriage is used as a yardstick to determine adulthood.

Psychological criterion. Balanced behaviour and emotional stability give credence to adulthood. An adult must be confident and courageous in tackling all odds in the interests of himself, family and society in general. Adults who shy away from wounding-off their internal and external aggressors fall short of adulthood.

Biological criterion. Before adulthood, an individual will begin to manifest some biological signs; signaling maturity. Such signs include; change in shape and structure (men and women), Breast enlargement (women), Menses (women), appearance of pubic hairs (men and women), bald and grey hairs (mostly men), grey hairs (men and women), sexual relationship/urge (men and women), deep and crack voice (men) etc.

Political criterion. Adults under the law are free to exercise their franchise of voting and to be voted for. Recently, the 'Not Too Young to Rule Bill' was passed by two houses of National Assembly and signed into law by President Mohammad Buhari on 31st March, 2018 to take care of young Nigerian adults in political contexts. The bill was initiated by young Nigerian adults, sponsored by Hon Tony Nwulu, member, Federal House of Representative and Senator AbdulAziz Nyako of Red Chamber, reducing the age qualification of the President from 40–30; Senate from 35–30; House of Representative from 30–25; Governors from 35–25 and State Houses of Assembly from 30–25.

Mental Criterion. An adult must be mentally sound and reasonable to dispense

good judgment. It is important to note that the definition of an adult is a combination of many factors. Therefore, an adult is a person who is of age, emotionally mature, sound and responsible enough to superintend over social tasks entrusted on him/her within his community.

Adult Education

Adult education is broad in context and meaning. It is a process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustainable learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (Merriam, Sharau, Brockett & Ralph, 2007). It can also be viewed as a process whereby persons who were not opportune to attain regular schooling or dropped out from school engage in an organized learning to improve him or herself socially, academically, culturally, morally and emotionally. This system of education is remedial in outlook and it is aimed at improving; developing and empowering individuals (knowledge, skills, and competencies) to enable them become more productive in the society. Anowor, Ezema & Umezulike (2001) in Ukwuaba (2015) assert that adult education denotes the entire body of organized educational process, whatever the level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship. Adult education may be informal, formal and non-formal in nature. It is informal when an adult learns unintentionally and accidentally. Informal education is unorganized and could be taken at any place and moment. It is given without any form of formal structure such as teachers, curriculum outside the 4 walls of the school system. The traditional education offers a good example of informal education. Conversely, formal adult education is a systematic and planned learning activities carried out in an organized institution like Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Adult Education Centres across the country. Formal education is conducted by trained teachers in four walls of classrooms with planned curriculum to provide opportunity for students, while Non-formal Education involves learning through apprenticeship to develop skills of the trainees. Training offers good example of non-formal education system. It is learning by doing and does not require any form of academic qualification to enroll (Odo, 2020). Apart from formal, informal and non-formal education, its branches span from Continuing education, Distance, Remedial, Life Long, Sandwich/Part time, Liberal to Literacy Education.

Continuing Education aims at building upon the learners' expectations in a given field of endeavour. It boosts the skills and knowledge of the recipients by increasing his expertise whereas; distance education separates learners and teachers in space and time. Examples of distance education include; Correspondence courses, Open University, Internet, Radio and Television programmes. The remedial education is described as make up system of education which provides opportunities to school dropouts and others to remedy their deficiencies in educational attainment.

In the same manner, life Long education system starts from the cradle and stops at grave. Learning is a continuous process as long as one is alive. Sandwich/Part time Education are mainly undertaking by workers who are already in the service of their father land. It is an opportunity designed for workers who may

ordinarily not been able to jettison their means of livelihood for further studies exploit the opportunity to accomplish their desire. Similarly, Liberal education offers a broad range of knowledge, skills, sense of values and orientation to embrace change, accommodation and literacy education to be able to read, write and arithmetic.

Historical perspective and status of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

Literacy was identified as an important factor in the lives of human beings. Literacy is likened to light through which a country can develop. The campaign for mass literacy was vigorously pursued after the nation's independence in 1960. In the words of Omolewa, (2006), if you want to conquer poverty, ignorance and disease, you must first conquer illiteracy. To him illiteracy is the most handicap for economic, political, social and individual development that we know. With the advent of Islamic and Christian missionaries in 14th and 19th centuries, religious literacy was promoted in the territory known as Nigeria today. The introduction of 1882 Ordinance by British Colonial administrators changed the direction of literacy campaign. As at 1950 the estimated illiteracy rate in Nigeria was 84.4% (UNESCO, 2010). The Regional Governments led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr Nnamdi Azikwe leveraged on 1954 Constitution to launch Universal Primary Education in the West in 1955 and East in 1957 respectively. While the western and eastern regions provided for Universal primary education, the North opted for free primary and adult literacy. This set the tone for adult literacy development in the country in the post-independence era (Yusufi, Ladan, Idris & Halilu, 2013). These efforts received a boost when UNESCO supported the establishment of an Adult Literacy Institute in 1963 at Ibadan in the present Oyo State to train adult educators.

In pursuit of literacy programme, the concept of mass literacy was captured in National Policy on Education. The vision of enhancing literacy rate culminated in National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education. The Commission maintained its presence in all the states of the federation and 774 Local Government Areas across the country with Local Education Authorities and States Ministry of Education providing staffing, monitoring and supervision. The core mandate of the Commission includes:

- To work with all concerned to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria
- To promote mass literacy campaign with Universities and Non-governmental organizations
- To organize in-service, on the job and professional training programmes for staff at various levels of government.
- Ensure standard of curriculum and instructions
- Provides functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youth who are not opportune to complete their primary and secondary education.
- Provides remedial education for these sets of people for further education.
- Give adults' citizenry the necessary education for public enlightenment (FRN, 2014).

At the states level and FCT, the Commission was to implement the policies of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, plan, research, regulate, and monitor to ensure quality control of all the continuing education centres and extra moral classes amongst others. In the local government levels, the agencies carry out day to day administration of the local mass literacy and adult education programmes. They also recruit at the local level, pay facilitators and part-time instructors and gives feedback to states, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and Federal Ministry of Education in respect of curriculum, materials and techniques adopted in teaching and learning (FRN, 2014). The launching of Universal Basic Education in 1999 further strengthened the opportunity of all Nigerians becoming literate in line with education for all United Nation's agenda.

Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education to Community and National Development

A Community is referred to a cultural settlement of a group of people of one decent with so many things in common. The settlement is made up of men, women and their offspring. The role of adult education to community development is majorly on human empowerment and development. The improvement in literacy level of individuals changes the fortune of the entire settlement in terms of reasoning and productivity. Illiteracy leads to underdevelopment with attendant poverty of mind and economy while education exits the community from the shackles of poverty, disease and superstition. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education plays the role of occupational development, improvement in the standard of living, accomplishment of rights and responsibilities, unity of purpose, knowledge of birth control, social responsibilities, quality lives (food, hygiene, health of the family) and the host of others.

National development

Development is critical and essential to the growth of individuals and nations. The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language Encyclopedic Edition defines development as the series of changes by which an individual, plant or animal passes from lower to high state of being or from embryonic condition to maturity. Development according to Osuji (1988) is the growth in quantitative and qualitative terms. In the words of Gboyega (2003) in Abioye (2020), development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. Similarly, Chrisman in Abioye (2020) is of the view that development is a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people is generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society.

In like manner, National development refers to a situation whereby a country grows socially, economically, politically and culturally for the wellbeing of its nationals. A country is said to be developed when it can provide for the well-being of its citizenry. The concept of national development is about positive change that

ushers in improvement in standard of living of people, creates employment opportunity, and reduces poverty amongst other things. It is the ability of a country to improve the social wellbeing of people. In doing this, social amenities, transportation, portable water, electricity, infrastructures, quality education, healthcare system must be available and provided to its citizenry. The development of a nation liberates its people from poverty, diseases, hunger, traditional forms of beliefs and superstitions. The development of an economy is measured in variety of ways; among them include: income per head, percentage of untapped resources or exploited, amount of savings, growth of the social system, degree of education of the populace, infrastructural development such as schools, roads, railways etc. The underdeveloped/Less developed/developing countries or emerging economics in this context refer to third world countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America. Examples of these countries include; Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, Mexico, Chile and the host of others. Some authors define less developed countries as one with per capita income of 700 dollars while others see it as a country with a substantive quantity of underdeveloped resources. Underdeveloped countries are characterized by huge external and internal indebtedness, Loans and trade imbalances, highly dependent on foreign economics for imports, corruption, breakdown of social amenities, healthcare failure, hunger and poverty, nepotism and ethnicity, religious bigotry etc. The Federal Government debt stock stands at N33.11trillion (external and internal). Upon disaggregation, N12.47 trillion representing 37.64% of the debt is external while N20.64 trillion representing 62.33% is domestic debt (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

The Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed confirmed the country's debt profile on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2020 during budget presentation to the Senate Committee on Foreign Debts stating that by December, 2021, the country's loan profile will hit to N38 trillion. Nigeria also sourced Sukuk fund of N162billion to repair 45 Roads across six (6) geo-political zones of the country regrettably after eleven years running, Lokoja–Abuja road awarded with a whopping sum of 4.6 million dollars is still under construction. African countries always scout for loan from the developed countries to execute projects. Unfortunately, these funds will always go the way of N36 million swallowed by mysterious snake from JAMB office vault (Vanguard, 2018).

A developed nation is described as a nation which their citizens have access to social amenities that would improve their wellbeing. It is exemplified by United States of America, Britain, France, Germany, and China. These nations are highly democratic, governed by rule of law, technologically above board, self-sufficient and manipulate third world countries to their advantage. The developed countries are characterized by high per capita income, high human development, high Gross Domestic Product (GDP), high energy consumption and literacy level.

Role of Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education to National Development

1. Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education is a sub set of conventional education system which promotes a progressive and united country through physical, emotional and psychological development of all citizens through acquisition of competencies needed for self-reliance (FRN, 2014).
2. Provision of needed manpower. People embrace Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education to acquire reading, writing and arithmetic skills to effectively participate and contribute to the development of the nation. The knowledge and moral development gotten through this level of educational programme are developmental ingredients of an economy.
3. Instrument for meeting political, economic, cultural and technological national aspirations. The importance ascribed to education has made the government to be committed to its provision. According to National Policy on Education (2014), education is an instrument for national development and social change. Through and by it, the country's nationals are empowered to exit from poverty, superstitious beliefs and religious bigotry.
4. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education permits a flexible social group relationship and interactions, exchange of ideas, materials and assistance within and outside the shores of the country's territorial borders.
5. Enhancement of national productivity. Adult education develops a sense of creativity and increases the value of labour efficiency and by so doing, improves the quality of lives.
6. Inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the survival of individual and Nigerian nation (FRN, 2014).

Problems and prospects of Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

A number of challenges have been confronting Mass Literacy, Adults and Non-Formal Education programme in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include but not limited to the following.

Demographic Diversity. Nigeria is a diverse nation with multiple ethnicity, languages and culture. It is the most populated country in Africa with amazing land mass. Effective coverage of the nooks and crannies of the territory becomes a herculean task in terms of funding, staffing, supervision and all the rest. This implies that the national diversity which ought to form parts of the country's strength turns to weaken the successful implementation of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education programme in Nigeria.

Poverty. The concern of most Nigerian is how to put meal on the table. As a poverty ridden country, its citizens are poor and would want to quench the pangs of hunger instead of education. It is said that a hungry man is an angry man. The Senate President, Ahmad Lawan confirms that Nigeria is poor, only option is to borrow (Tribune, 2021).

Time factor. For adults, time is of essence. Finding time to engage in any forms of education amongst other life sustaining events constitute the problem.

Qualified teachers. Unavailability of qualified teaching personnel for adequate coverage of all the Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education centres in the 774 Local Government Areas constitute the problem to the success of the scheme.

Culture. The cultural practices of some ethnic groups in the country tend to work against adult education programme. Many inhabitants prefer their traditional ways of life to modern education. The migrant herders and fishermen are yet to come in term with national campaign for mass literacy.

Inappropriate methodology and insufficient materials. Teaching methodology is not yet streamlined amongst the educators of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education programme whereas; teaching materials are either not available or insufficient.

Political will. Another problem bedeviling this country is lack of political will on the part of the leaders. The success of any programme hinges on the willingness of the political leaders to adequately provide funds for training of teachers, provision of equipment and facilities for programme implementation.

Corruption. Nigeria corruption index has risen to 149/180 countries of the world, 32/49 (2nd) in Africa and 1st in West Africa (Transparency International, 2020). A country where rule of law is selective, where the rich and powerful do not play by the rules can never achieve the envisaged goals of education.

Prospects

Irrespective of all these bottlenecks, there is still hope for Adult Education programme in Nigeria. Going by Federal Government interest and massive campaign against illiteracy, Adult Education programme is succeeding in achieving basic literacy for all. Currently, there is increase in awareness creation leading to increase in enrollment of learners into the programme across the country. The literacy rate of Nigeria from 2018 to 2021 is 62.02%, 51.08% in 2008, 70.20% in 2006, 54.77% in 2003 and 55.45% in 1991 whereas male literacy was 71.26% over and above 52.66% female literacy rate (World Bank, 2021). From these ratings, it was observed that Nigeria recorded a decline of 19.12% from 2006 and an increase of 15.45% from 2003. Majority of Nigerians are embracing the campaign. When this happens, Nigerians will have peace, leave in harmony, and tolerate one and other within the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Education is a veritable good; whichever manner it was acquired. In Nigeria, education is a priority sector and thus placed on the concurrent legislative list. In the year 2000, the International Communities reaffirmed its commitment to education for all in a meeting held in Dakar, Senegal. Nigeria also adopted Dakar frame work for action and now emphasizing on basic education for all. In order to achieve this feat, the conventional educational system obviously cannot guarantee the desired role of education for all. Consequently, other forms of education evolved including Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education programme. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, like other forms of education influences peoples' lives

in expanding self-knowledge, stratification in the society and finding work (Ackerman & Lohman, 2003). This means that education empowers, and empowerment gives people and communities powers and capacities to influence their destiny and change their own lives (UNICEF, 2007). In conclusion, the future of the society depends on the style and the form of education provided for the younger generation (Hanum (1992).

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