

The place of Adult Education and Community Development in Nation Building

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Abstract

The need to introduce change at individual, community and national level is always a burning desire in the minds of development stake-holders. Practitioners have always looked out to discovering and exploring ways of achieving these desires. The paper focused on the ways human needs and problems irrespective of the level (individual, community or national) are addressed. Adult education and community development have been identified as veritable tools for the development of nations. The paper further points out that, through adult education and community development, citizens acquire knowledge, attitude, skill and ability to participate both meaningfully and productively in national development. This paper therefore projects these concepts as complementary tools in the task of nation building.

1. Introduction

The education of adults is a must, if our communities and nations must be developed. This is because virtually every sector of the economy is manned by adults, so it becomes suicidal to leave the adults upon whose shoulders rest the responsibilities of the running our communities and national unenlightened.

An enlightened adult force, will lead to the achievement of a stable patriotic, self-reliant citizenry, with zeal and ability to mobilize local and national resources for both economic and social development of a nation.

This view is in line with the contribution of Osuji (2001:158) that:

A significant proportion of opinion contends that people are the foundation of national development, while the government care, facilitate, energize and create conducive policy and programme environment for nation building and development. The people are the real foundation, builders and transformers of the society. With their creative energy and labour, the people constitute the real engine for the social, economic, political and cultural development in a nation.

From the contributions of Osuji (2001), it is clear that adults are the one's operational in the world of works, hence the recommended educational pattern is adult education. Adult education in inculcates in adults, the sense of patriotism and builds in them the required manpower skills for development, which will enable them perform their roles in the society. The development of skills, knowledge and attitude for productive participation in the development of communities and nation is the specialty of Adult Education.

1.2 Concept of Adult Education

Adult education as a concept has been viewed in different ways by so many people across nations and continents. Advocates of the concept have always advance meanings and explanation according to how they feel about the concept. Some attach the meaning of the concept to the characteristics of the adult, such as age, maturity, his roles in society etc. Among the early advocates of Adult Education who pictured the discipline to have possessed the ability for enlightenment, liberation of individuals and communities, is Bryson (1936). Oyebamiji and Hassan (2012) citing Bryson perceived adult education 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 (1977) in his contribution presented Adult Education as the education that embraces all forms of educational experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements and their deferring levels of comprehension and ability, and in their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life.

Oyebamiji and Hassan (2012) citing Proser defines it as

The force which by all intents and purposes can bring about conscientization and mobilization of the society in determining its ends by bringing into focus a maximum re-orientation and re-adjustment of value system, attitudes and behaviour to any new and changed situation within a limited period of time.

Darkenwald and Mariam (1982) said "adult education is concerned not only with preparing people for life, but rather with helping people to live more successful and assist them to solve personal and community problems".

Anyanwu (1981) presents Adult education as all activities with an educational purpose that are carried out by people engaged in ordinary business of life.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1976 defined adult education as:

The entire body of organized educational processes whatever the content, level, and method; whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, or universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about change in their attitude or behaviour in the two-folds perspectives of personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

UNESCO (1997) in Adekola (2008) introduced what is regarded as adult basic education as all form of organized

education and training that meet the basic learning needs of the adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and life-skill, and values and attitudes that they require to survive, develop their capacity, live and work in dignity, improve quality of their lives and make informal decisions and continue to learn.

In our contemporary time, Nzeneri (2005) presents the concepts as “any education given to adults based on their social, political cultural and economic needs or problems, to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society”.

From these definitions, it is clear that the only instrument for the acquisition of the life-skills, values, attitude, adjustment, change, improvement, conscientization and mobilization of people (adults) for the development of our communities and nation is adult education.

1.3 Concept of Community Development

Community development as a concept had been viewed in several ways by those who use the concept. Contemporary advocates of the concept handle it as if it is entirely a new concept, but the practice of the concept dated back to pre-advent of Western education in Africa.

Fafunwa (1974) contributing to the above said, Nigerian traditional society has the practice of meeting the social and economic needs of members. Communal work had been a common practice in the African society. It is common to find social groups, ages and women organizations embark on communal works for the benefit of members. Sometimes such services are extended to chiefs, traditional rulers and heads of their groups at no financial cost. The beneficiary of the service may only need to provide food and drink. Sometimes members of the groups embark on what the Ikwerre people call “Ngweta” while Ognois called it “Bonatom” in the Rivers State of Nigeria. This is a practice were two or three or more persons agree to work together for one person in day one, and in day, two, they work for another until they had turned all the members of the group. By so doing, they attract to themselves the benefit and strength of team work. Communal works takes place where the task in questions would be difficult for an individual alone to carryout. In the African society such jobs as planting, harvesting, weeding of pounds, farm roads and stream are good examples of it in recent times.

According to Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008), community development has gone beyond the traditional practices of physical, economic and social conditions of the people and is extended to emotions and psychological development. This involves not only the efforts and initiatives of the people of the community, but the unification of the desires, thoughts and plans of all stake holders in community development. In this direction, Barikor (1984) defined community development as “an amalgam of many dynamic and complementary factors involving education, economic, socio-political, cultural efforts to emancipate the community from retrogressive tradition, poverty, ignorance and diseases” The united nations organization in 1963 in attempt to give a definition that will capture the effort of all stakeholders defined community development.

as a processed by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of community, to integrate those communities into the life of the Nation and enable them contribute fully to National progress.

The emphasis here is that the community members need not wait for the government for the initiation and planning of programmes and projects that will improve the social, economic, psychological and emotional development of the members of the community. The government and non-governmental agencies should see community initiated programmes and projects as clear invitation and indication of community needs and aspiration for improvement, and collaborate with them.

1.4 Activity areas of Adult Education and Community development in nation building.

Adult education and community development are complementary social processes of education, and shares the same social functions towards nation building. According to Okedara (1974) in Wordu (2006) the concept of adult education and community development are prominent in the “development of personal qualities and the encouragement of social, moral and intellectual responsibility in relation to local, nation and world citizenship”. This agree with the views of Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) that these concepts have gone beyond mere traditional practices as earlier mentioned to include several other components (emotional and psychological). In recent time, adult education has expanded to include, workers education, mass education, long life learning. Distance education, prison education, Remedial education, vocational education, community education, leadership education and labour education, all of which agree with the submission of Okedara (1974) that the concepts of adult education and community development are prominent in the development of personal qualities.

1.5 The Interplay of Adult Education and Community Development in nation building.

Adult education and community development as complementary social processes of education complements each other in the process of developing man for himself and for his nation. According to Wordu (2006) while adult education is positioned to check the changing needs and organizational flexibility associated with community development, community development provides the organizational structure required for effective functioning of adult education roles in the community. Such structures as women groups, co-operative, youths, religious and cultural organizations, non governmental organizations etc are structures upon which these concepts operate.

Practically, adult education and community development are joint mechanisms for the mobilization of people. Virtually all programmes of development, be it in the community or at national level requires mobilization. Mobilization is a joint mechanism for the creation of awareness for adult education programmes and community development projects geared toward national development or nation building.

The process of adult education and community development leads to social change which in turns aids the process of nation building.

Adult education and community development provides a reliable and comfortable platform for detailed plan, test and analysis of development programmes and projects before implementation.

Adult education creates awareness of local problems and needs. This is done through community self-study (adult education) and leads to identification of specific needs in the community or nation which is the starting point of any effective community development and nation building.

The interplay of adult education and community development is further elaborated in Wordu (2006). To him, specific areas and activities of adult education that aids community development and nation building include:

1. Improvement of individuals ability to think and apply his critical skills for full realization of his potentials.
2. Improvement of productivity: Adult education through agriculture extension workers teach farmers new ways of farming to enhance productivity, which results to community development and nation building.
3. Change is synonymous with community development, inability or unwillingness to accept change hinders community development practices. Through adult education activities, this problem is surmounted by way of encouraging people and preparing their minds to welcome innovations and adjusts to change.
4. Adult education provides opportunities for training in socio-economic skills and vocational education which results to empowerment of members of the community and aids their active participation in self help development projects.
5. Community development depends on mobilization of participants and mobilization is a major tool of Adult education.
6. Adult education through awaking of the mind (conscientization) create opportunity for reactivation of dormant human resources in the community and country to development.

1.6 Adult Education Programmes for Community Development

There are several adult education programmes that aid community development practices, these includes;

1. Adult basic programme or general education, comprising of literacy. Numeracy and non-formal activities or elementary understanding of science.
2. Family improvement education, health and nutrition, home making and child care.
3. Community improvement education, involving knowledge and skills, associated with various economic activities useful for effective living and meaningful contribution to the development of the community and the nation.

1.7 Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the activity areas of adult education and community development. As pointed out, the rate of development of a nation is directly proportional to the development of its citizens. Since adult education provides the framework for individual development and by extension, the community and nation, its programmes and activity areas remain indispensable in the quest for nation building.

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