

# Sustainable National Development through Well Managed Adult Education

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on issues relating to sustainable national development through well managed adult education. The adults are the major occupants of the production sector of the economy. They manage and control the economy. The problems that confront the current generation are complex and serious. These problems can be addressed through well managed adult education. The concept of sustainable development which is an attempt to shape and secure a future generation has attracted attention across disciplines and scholars of various dispositions. Adult education is the key to unlock the understanding required in securing this future. This paper therefore makes a case that effective management of adult education is required in sustainable national development. The paper recommends the use of indigenous languages, establishment of adult education centres in every community, provision of appropriate infrastructural and instructional facilities as well as increased funding to enhance adult education for national development.

**Keywords:** Adult education, development, well managed, sustainable national development.

## 1. Introduction

Generally, education is regarded as the key to human development. It is the backbone of any national development. The goal of any educational system is to provide or develop a balanced individual capable of surviving in his environment and contributing meaningfully towards the survival of the society to which he belongs (Onyenemezu, 2012). Adult education has been described as one of the principal professions that can take adequate care of socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems of the adults.

Adult education as an integral part of education, refers to a learning process whether formal, informal and non-formal which the adult engages in for better information and development (Onyenemezu 2012). It emphasizes all forms of functional education programmes for youths and adults outside the formal school system. Such education programmes include basic literacy programme, post literacy programme, continuing education programme, and vocational education programme (FRN Blue Print 2008). These adult education programmes are geared towards human and national development. Onyenemezu (2012:1) observes that adult education exerts enormous influence on the larger society in terms of national development. Fasokun (2006) observes that:

*adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping/assigning people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies(p 6).*

The benefits of adult education both to the nation and individuals cannot be over-emphasized. This accounts for the increase in interests and investments in it by both the private and public sectors of the developing and developed nations. Adult education can be relied upon for sensitizing people to analytically assess the impact of government's economic, political, social, environmental and general policies. Contemporarily, sustainable development has become a password that cuts across all disciplines in today's knowledge industry. It is associated with "omnipotent capacities" of proffering solutions to all the problems of man and the society (Nwaokugha 2006). This paper intends to discuss sustainable national development and make a case for well managed adult education for achieving it.

## 2. Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is an amalgam of two component words; namely "sustainable" and "development". A clearer understanding of each of these two component words is necessary to make this discourse more meaningful.

## 2.1 Sustainable

The literary meaning of 'sustainable' is that 'which 'can continue or be continued for a long time; capable of being maintained at a set level, keep up assumed role competently' (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000; The 21<sup>st</sup> Chambers Dictionary, 2001; Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2003; Hornby, 2005; Global Warming 360 net) in Abraham (2012).

## 2.2 Development

Development as a concept, has been defined by authors from different perspectives and their various areas of specialization. Indabawa and Mpofu (2006) defined development as "transformation both socially and materially". Akinpelu (2002) in defining development focused on human beings whom he referred to as the target of development processes rather than material accumulations surrounding him nor of the economic progress and growth of any nation state. He conceived development as:

*a process of changing the personality, equipping it with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to conceive, design and carry out his/her own self development. it involves liberating him/her from all inhibitions (social, economic, political and cultural) that prevent him/her from realizing the best confidence, self-reliance, self pride, and poise to face the world, and of his/her creative potentials and sense of freedom and readiness to participate in any matters involving self/or the environment(p.80).*

Palam (1971) as cited in Onyeozu (2007:10) defined development from the point of view of its effect on peoples' life. He conceived development as a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of a person or group of persons.

Development is often measured in terms of improvements or refinements in certain parameters (housing conditions, road and railway networks, telecommunication, water, health and hygiene conditions, election and voting patterns, nutritional levels, etc) by which judgement is conferred on the state of affairs of an individual or a country (Abraham 2012).

Sustainable development therefore is one of the latest concepts that emerged in the literature and thinking of development policy. The concept was brought into common usage by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report (Kemp, 1996:193). The report conceptualized sustainable development as human progress that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Ugwu and Ijah 2011). This means conservation, reservation, usage and management of resources so that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of such resources and improvement in the quality of life for all the people (Oyebamiji & Adekola 2008:17).

Sustainable development is one concept that has become so popular and has attracted attention across disciplines and scholars of various dispositions. In the 1987, the United Nations (UN) released Brundtland Commission report which offered the most widely recognized definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" (Wikipedia, 2009). It contains within it two key concepts; namely

1. The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and
2. The idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Also, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) conceives sustainable development to mean environment, economic and social well-being for today and tomorrow.

Abraham (2012) submits that sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a systematic approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations – a system that connects space; and a system that connects time.

## 3. National Development

National development could simply be defined as national growth in all ramifications (economic, social, cultural, political and environmental). It involves all the activities which a nation engages in to achieve a good standard of living for her citizens. The main purpose of national development is to liberate citizens from the shackles of poverty. Nyerere once posits that development is of man, by man and for man. Hence economic, political, social, cultural, physical, spiritual, material and moral development of a nation is inevitable for freedom and dignity of man (Agboeze, 2011). Aggarwal (2008) perceives national development to include all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation's cultural, democratic, emotional, economic, intellectual, material, moral, physical, spiritual and social. It should be noted that national development does not concern only economic development even though it is a crucial factor of it.

Sustainable national development therefore can be seen as the capability of a particular nation or country to achieve comprehensive improvements or refinement in all ramifications of its existence (economic, political, cultural, religious etc) and set, maintain and continue affairs at that level for a long time (Abraham, 2012). This simply means the ability of a particular country to plan and achieve betterment and improvements in its socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental lives both now and in the future. Sustainable development tie together the carrying capacity of national systems with the social challenges confronting humanity. In the early 1970's, sustainability was used to describe an economy in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems (Abraham 2012). The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three component parts: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and socio-political sustainability (Bassey, Ekpah & Edeth, 2008) in (Abraham 2012:2). Economic sustainability clearly identifies information, integration and participation as key building blocks to support countries achieve development that recognizes these independent pillars. It emphasizes that in sustainable development, everyone is a user and producer of information. It stresses the need for change from old sector-centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross-sectional co-ordination and the integration of empowerment and social concerns into all development process.

Environmental sustainability is the process of making sure that current processes of interaction with the environment are pursued with the idea of keeping the environment as a pristine as naturally possible on ideal-seeking behaviour.

Contemporarily, sustainable development has become a password that resonates across all disciplines in today's knowledge industry. It is associated with "omnipotent capabilities" of proffering solutions to all problems of man and the society. It suggests harmonious living and quality growth among individuals in the society in order to secure the well being of future generations. In other words, the present generation should avoid practices and activities that can be harmful to future generations. Craven (2009) views that the concept of sustainable development is rooted in a system where quality of life is perceived and appreciated. It is good to be physically healthy, but what if an individual is poor and is unable to access education? It is good to secure a good income, but what if the air in your part of the world is not clean? The same is true about having freedom of political and religious expression, but what if an individual cannot feed his family?

The concept of sustainable development helps us to understand ourselves and our nation which is faced with numerous problems which can be addressed. This is why adult education can be used to address these national problems to ensure sustainable development and secure the future.

Future security is certainly guaranteed where adults who are the major occupants of the nation's production sectors are able to produce products for socio-economic development within the limits of present and necessary infrastructure.

#### **4. Ways of Implementing Sustainable Development**

In order to meet current needs as well as accommodating the needs of future generation, a proper and need-based, not green-based consumption pattern is required. (Abaraham 2012:45) Wikipedia outlined the following aspects to be considered:

##### **4.1 Sustainability**

This is a priority and nations should ensure that socio-economic activities are not mortgaging the choices of the future generations.

##### **4.2 Strengthening**

Here, there is need to build on human capacities that could develop and conserve simultaneously.

##### **4.3 Sharing**

For sustainable development to be achieved there should be equal distribution of wealth and resources. The basic needs should be ensured for all, without any discrimination.

##### **4.4 Social responsibility**

Our consumption patterns should be guided by a sense of social responsibility. People should strive for such a consumption that does not compromise the well-being of others by avoiding all such development patterns that will/ignite environmental degradation consequent upon current economic decisions that jeopardize the situation for posterity. The concept of sustainable development is the right way to go.

#### **5. Some Principles of Sustainable Development**

Abraham (2012:45) outlined the following as some principles of sustainable development.

- **Equity**  
Equity is essential for a sustainable development. This concept promotes equity between ages, genders, classes, races, countries and continents.

- **Social development**

The concept of sustainable development emphasizes on not only economic development, but also on social development and the need to conserve our environment and natural resources too.

- **Inclusive approach**

Sustainable development has to be inclusive. It is based on the improved quality of life for everyone; mainly the deprived and the poor people of the world.

- **Human-Environment Harmony**

This understands that the needs of human beings and the requirements of the environment are interdependent and acknowledges this fact.

- **Co-operation**

Sustainable development is possible only if the developed world and the developing countries co-operate and the former supports the latter in their endeavours whenever they can, through subsidies, for instance looking at these principles, it becomes obvious that sustainable development does not mean only a future related concept but also requires a lot of understanding and appreciation which adult education offers for national development to be attained.

## 6. **Adult Education for Sustainable National Development**

The purpose of adult and non-formal education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in Onyenemezu (2012:4) includes:

- i. To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or (dropouts)... These include the nomads, migrant families, the disable, and the disadvantaged gender.
- ii. To provide functional and remedial education for those who did not complete secondary education.
- iii. To provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- iv. To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional trainings for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills, and
- v. To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural, and civic education for public enlightenment.

The above purpose of adult education are laudable and commendable. They are geared towards national development and securing a future. Adult and non-formal education emphasizes all forms of functional programmes for youths and adults outside formal school system. Such education programme include basic literacy programme, post literacy programme, continuing education programme, and vocational education programme (FRN Blue Print, 2008).

Adult education as an aspect of national development encompasses; developing the human (adult) mind, knowledge, attitude, skills, behavioural pattern, physical and necessary ideas capable of solving human and societal problems in order to achieve sustainable national development. This is possible because adults are occupying the greater part of the production sector of the nation's economy. Obviously, no one or society can ignore the powers of education in transforming man and the society towards national development. This is why education is generally regarded as the back bone (bed rock) of any meaningful national development.

Sustainable development is fundamentally seen as an education concept. Innovations in adult education for achieving sustainable development can strive to enforce environmental changes. Curricular innovations in adult education for achieving sustainable development involve interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary measures. Most importantly, it can develop in people (adults) the ability to participate and explore the entire development processes towards national development.

As government initiates development programmes, it can initiate innovation through adult education which can bring about changes in the body polity with a mandate to accommodate the grass root or boom top decision making process especially on issues of environment and development. The adult poor masses should be empowered to change the political system. Focusing on the polity in achieving sustainable national development is important because it is the political system that determines the process of development and what happens to the people including the type and quality of relationships among people and their environment. These innovations through adult education for sustainable development can focus on creating a high level political consciousness in the masses. The sustenance of a culture where the masses genuinely influence their political system can have positive implications for sustainable development in both the social and natural environments. An innovation in adult education which upholds this can conscientize the masses to guide against certain behaviours, realize their roles in environmental preservation and destruction as well as act as a wake up call on the ruling class (national or international) to initiate environment friendly developments (Nwaokugha 2006:125).

A conscious adult education programme for achieving sustainable development can be tailored towards equipping and empowering people to handle their peculiar developmental and environmental problems without depending on other distant persons in another environment. The fundamental fact is that sustainable national

development cannot be achieved in a nation where the adults are illiterate. There is need to embrace adult education in its fullness for national development to be achieved.

## 7. Conclusion

What constitutes the key objectives of adult education as contained in the FRN (2004) and FBP (2008) have links with sustainable national development as x-rayed by Akinpelu (2002). Adult education in all its ramifications remains appropriate for sustainable national development. This should involve social, economic, political and cultural lives of adult citizens. Adult education can educate the masses not to consume out all the available resources, in the name of development. The concept of sustainable development emphasizes on not only economic development, but also on social, political and cultural development and the need to conserve the environment and its natural resources. Adult education should be given proper attention by the three tiers of government – federal, state and local, in line with the global concern for sustainable development. The three tiers of government should allocate adequate funds to adult education programmes especially the literacy and continuing education programmes because we cannot achieve sustainable development where we have a nation where majority of the adults are illiterates. Also, the issue of lack of instructional materials and qualified personnel to handle adult education programmes should be addressed. Adult education programmes therefore should instill harmony, love and discipline in the psyche of adults. Well managed adult education programmes are the most veritable tool for achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria.

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