

Adult Education Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Societal Change in Nigeria

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Abstract

Essentially, it is imperative for any group of people who want to stimulate sustainable societal change in their society to engage in adult education as an integral part of life-long education or learning in the society. Fundamentally, irrespective of people's educational attainment, there is still an urgent need to continue to learn in life. The guiding philosophy in such continued life-long engagement in life-long education or learning is that there must be obviously a lot of new things for people to learn that will be certainly rewarding in promoting meaningful societal change. This paper basically focused on examining certain strategies which adult education employs in promoting sustainable societal change in Nigeria. Based on the discussions on the identified strategies, such recommendations as the urgent need for regular workshops, seminars and conferences with a focus on goal setting for meaningful societal change in Nigeria as well as raising people's awareness and public enlightenment on the roles of adult education as a tool for stimulating social action for sustainable societal change in Nigeria among others were highlighted in the paper.

Key Words: Adult Education Strategies. Promoting. Sustainable Societal Change.

1.0 Introduction

Fundamentally, education as an important area of human activities continues through human life. Aruma (2011) noted that this type of education which, therefore, continues throughout human life is simply known as life-long education in the society. Indeed, life-long education obviously adds meaning to life in all areas of human endeavours in the society. The activities of human beings from the time of birth to death tend to prove beyond all reasonable doubts that life-long education which is anchored in adult and non-formal education has vital roles to play in stimulating sustainable societal change in the contemporary global environment. Nzeneri (2002) clearly stated that it is in adult education that emphasis is placed on life-long education in the society. Consequently, it can be conveniently said that adult and non-formal education is certainly the domain of life-long education in any human environment in the society.

The demands from local communities, governments, employers of labour and adult learners have, indeed, increasingly stimulated the demand for adult education for sustainable societal change in the society. This must be achieved through well articulated adult education programmes.

Fundamentally, the universal concept of adult education as the education of adults in the society has placed serious demands on it in its drive to stimulate sustainable societal change in Nigeria. Specifically, adult education has to take into consideration the specific cultural position of a particular society in order to make an appreciable impact in the lives of the people in the concerned society. Okeem (1991) rightly noted that if adult education is to be more meaningful that it has to be culture-bound or culture-specific in a particular community or society. He further classified societies at different levels of development as industrialized and agricultural societies, urban and rural including semi-urban societies where adult education is used to address specific issues in such a community and society. This tends to indicate the type of emphasis which adult education has to place on culture-specific environment for optimal services for actualizing societal change in the contemporary society.

Interestingly, adult education offers good opportunities for adults to learn whatever interests them in the contemporary global environment. Nyerere (1979) rightly noted that adult education simply means adults learning about the things which interest them. Consequently, adult education holds the key for societal change in the contemporary global environment. Essentially, no knowledge is a waste in today's global environment. In the words of Nyerere (1979) there is certainly no useless knowledge. Indeed, there is no learning that is useless in today's world. This, therefore, calls for an urgent need for life-long learning in the society. Nzeneri (2002) while quoting UNESCO (1976) remarked that adult education as an integral part of life-long education certainly contributes reasonably to economic and cultural development as well as social development and world peace including the development of educational system in the society. Therefore, adult education as part of life-long education process is an indispensable tool for liberation and mobilization of people which must involve pragmatic social change through effective teaching and learning process and action. The scope of adult education in this very circumstance is, indeed, as broad as life. There is obviously an urgent need to continue to make conscious efforts to stimulate sustainable societal change through effective teaching and learning in adult education, attitudinal change and re-orientation of the citizenry in Nigeria.

2.0 Adult Education Strategies for Promoting Societal Change in Nigeria

The strategies of adult education in promoting sustainable societal change in Nigeria are as follows:

2.1 Conscientisation Strategy

Essentially, conscientisation strategy is an important adult education strategy which is employed to stimulate consciousness in people to understand the realities of their environment with the ultimate purpose of promoting sustainable societal change in the society. Interestingly, conscientisation as a concept which was developed by Freire (1985) focuses immensely on using the acquired knowledge and skills from education for liberation in order to transform the participating recipients and communities in the societies. Consequently, conscientization is a development process of helping people to understand their predicaments through awareness creation which will lead to proper identification of their problems in their local environment with the aim of proffering possible solutions to the identified problems in order to enhance their poor living conditions in the society. Nzeneri (2002) rightly stated that the concept of conscientisation is just a process that helps people to develop themselves, their consciousness so as to be critically aware of their problems and their environment. Consequently, it becomes imperative to raise the consciousness of people in order to understand the problems that confront them in their locality.

Indeed, awareness creation is very vital in helping people to really understand the realities of the contemporary global environment. Adult and non-formal education focuses greatly on awareness creation or awareness education to enable people to understand the realities of life in the society. Feuerstein (1988) simply referred to conscientisation, awareness education or awareness creation as social awareness building where people at community level attend orientation seminars for proper briefing to understand the prevailing challenges of life in their local communities in the society. The focus of social awareness building is to enable people identify the prevailing challenges of life in their local environment with a view to proffering possible solutions.

Essentially, raising of people's consciousness in the society certainly helps them to know certain relevant issues and challenges and how to handle them. Apparently, this becomes obvious when the people who are ignorant of such issues and challenges are conscientised in the society. Certainly, raising of the people's consciousness will, indeed, enable them to be properly aware of their rights and roles in identifying their problems and proffering possible solutions to such identified problems in promoting sustainable societal change in the society. Adeseshiah (1989) asserted that three interrelated components of adult education which include literacy education, professional skills formation and social awareness awakening are very vital to address the three freedoms which the poor majority are looking to: freedom from ignorance, freedom from inequality and injustice as well as freedom from low-wage employment. Apparently, consciousness-raising or awareness creation will help people to always fight for their rights in the society. It is strongly hoped that this consciousness raising will be very rewarding and beneficial to the members of the participating communities in the society. This gives meaning to societal change to a certain extent in the contemporary global environment.

Indeed, adult education tries to prepare people, especially the adult population for life challenges and productive services in the contemporary society. It is certain that adult and non-formal education will stimulate provision of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes through conscientisation strategy which will enable people to respond positively to societal change in the contemporary global environment. Fundamentally, adult education employs conscientization strategy to help people to understand the realities of life in the society. Nyerere (1979) remarked that adult education simply means adults learning about anything that is of interest to them. Indeed, adult education which specifically focuses on adult learning helps people to understand the environment they live in and the way in which they can use and change the environment in order to improve themselves in the society. This is with special focus to guarantee improved living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society.

Interestingly, conscientisation enables people to learn a lot directly from other people as well as from their own experiences of life in the society. The relevant knowledge, skills and experiences acquired through societal challenges stimulate people's consciousness to work together and co-operatively to improve the living conditions of members of the participating communities in the society.

2.2 Mass Mobilisation Strategy

The concept of mass mobilization strategy is a goal-driven strategy which adult and non-formal education employs in mobilizing people through awareness creation in order to enable them address prevailing social problems. Indeed, mass mobilization helps people to come together with the ultimate aim of working co-operatively to achieve a common goal-driven initiative for improvement of people's poor living conditions in the society. Amucheazi (1991) noted that mass mobilization focuses on raising the level of consciousness of the masses (people) in order to enable them to participate actively and effectively in addressing the political, social as well as economic problems in a developing country like Nigeria. It is pertinent to state that adult educators as

facilitators or animateurs should facilitate effective mass involvement of people in democratic government where mass political participation of people is strongly advocated to clearly demonstrate a true government of the people by the people for the people in Nigeria as a developing country.

Ultimately, through active and effective participation in managing the socio-economic affairs of the country, they will really understand the prevailing realities confronting members of various participating communities in the country. Indeed, mass mobilization of people becomes apparently very relevant in this current democratic dispensation in Nigeria where the thrust of national development agenda focuses immensely on transformation of both human and material resources for attainment of sustainable national development in the country. Amucheazi (1991) simply described mobilization as a process of raising the consciousness of people in order to help them understand their social realities of life in the society.

2.3 Group Action Strategy

Fundamentally, group action strategy is another important strategy which is used in adult and non-formal education to promote effective group action and democratic participation for societal change in the contemporary global environment. The concept of social action can simply be defined as social movement of an organized group to mobilize people for the purpose of addressing a common problem with the ultimate aim of improving the living conditions of people in the society. While describing group action as new social movements, Schaefer (2005) stated that the concept of new social movements means organized collective actions which help to address values and social identities of people with a view to enhancing the quality of life in the society. Ultimately, the focus of group action strategy of adult and non-formal education in promoting meaningful societal change is to stimulate group or collective consciousness among people in order to come together with a view to addressing common problems so as to seek possible ways of improving the poor living conditions of people in the society.

Essentially, group action strategy focuses greatly on goal-driven development initiatives in the society. Nwosu (1980) stated that it is a cooperative human action which is, indeed, marked by a high degree of rationality. Certainly, an action becomes goal-driven when it focuses on achieving the much desired objectives and goals in the society. Nwosu (1980) asserted that an action becomes rational when it is planned to achieve stated goals. This group action strategy can be best described as goal-centred action in societal concerns to promote societal change which, however, stimulates improved poor living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society.

While quoting Giddens (1989), Nwanna-Nzewunwa (2001) noted that Max Weber in his study of sociology focused greatly on social action which identified rational action that is goal-oriented and value-driven in the society. She went further to state that emotional action enables people to focus on their circumstances and traditional action which is determined by people's customs and traditions in the society. Essentially, social action, undoubtedly, encourages and challenges people in various social environments to focus on goal-driven and value-oriented societal change and initiatives which will usually be stimulated by emotional disposition of people of various social backgrounds in the contemporary society. Ultimately, the aim of this human concern is basically to improve people's poor living conditions in the society.

2.4 Mass Education Strategy

The concept of mass education simply means the type of education which focuses on educating large population of people in order to be able to read and write as well as compute figures which will enable them to function very well in the society. Indeed, mass education focuses on widening people's access to education that will help them to acquire relevant knowledge and skills which will improve their active participation in common issues that affect the public in the society with a view to addressing them very adequately. Essentially, mass education should focus strongly on widening people's access to education in order to enable them to improve people's participation in socio-economic transformation of their local communities in particular and national development in general in the contemporary society. Thomas (1989) stated that adult education for social action is directed towards increasing and improving the participation of people in public life of their local communities, societies and countries. Certainly, mass education is very rewarding to all the recipients in the society.

Fundamentally, mass education which advocates active participation of people in socio-economic development is, indeed, very educative for all the recipients in the society. Groombridge (1981) emphatically remarked that education is needed by participants in the society and they get education through participation in people-oriented issues. It must be stated that mass education will promote education which will enhance people's capabilities to address prevailing socio-economic problems through advocacy and awareness creation in the society. It is obvious that through well articulated mass education that people will be in a better position to use their votes very wisely in Nigeria's current political transformation drive to enhance the ways things should be done in order to guarantee a secured future for people and children yet unborn in the country.

Ultimately, education is very vital in achieving this mandate of helping people to acquire relevant knowledge and skills that will enable them to participate actively in socio-economic transformation of their communities in particular and country in general in the society. Goals Two of Millennium Development Goals of United Nations focuses on widening people's access to education. World Conference on Education for All (1990) and Goal Two of Millennium Development Goals of United Nations advocate in very strong terms the urgent need to widen people's access to education with the year 2015 as the target year for its attainment of education for all in the contemporary global environment. Sadly enough, the achievement of eight Millennium Development Goals of United Nations as adopted in September, 2000 may not be feasible for certain obvious reasons. Todaro and Smith (2009) clearly observed that achieving the Millennium Development Goals: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal basic education, promote gender equality and women empowerment, reduce infant mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, promote environmental sustainability and global partnership for development may not likely be achieved on schedule. This may, perhaps, pose a serious threat to the realization of adult education as a vital tool for societal change in Nigeria.

3.0 Conclusion

Indeed, the emerging adult and non-formal education that will stimulate developmental initiatives should focus greatly on repositioning the promotion of sustainable societal change for enhanced living conditions of people in the contemporary society. Essentially, adult and non-formal education will stimulate provision of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudinal change through conscientisation, awareness creation and social action which will help people to respond positively to societal change in Nigeria.

The knowledge and skills including experiences acquired by people through the intervention of adult and non-formal education will certainly stimulate consciousness among people of various communities in Nigeria to work together for common purpose of promoting sustainable societal change. This can be achieved through peaceful co-existence in the country.

Ultimately, the concern of this initiative of adult and non-formal education is to promote people's consciousness in order to achieve sustainable societal change that will impact positively on the lives of members of the participating communities in the contemporary global environment. This will enable people to depart gradually from the original concept of doing things on the premise of business as usual. The resolve for societal change will usually stimulate emerging new culture of doing things transparently in Nigeria for the ultimate benefit of all people in the country.

4.0 Recommendations

This paper presents the following recommendations:

1. There should be regular workshops, seminars and conferences that focus on goal setting for meaningful societal change in Nigeria. This will certainly strengthen people's solidarity in promoting well articulated development initiatives for societal change in the contemporary society.
2. There should also be regular workshops and conferences to raise people's awareness and public enlightenment on the roles of adult education as a tool for stimulating social action for sustainable societal change in Nigeria. This will obviously bring together experts in adult and non-formal education as well as development issues and concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including interest groups to continuously look into the possibility of using adult and non-formal education to promote sustainable societal change in Nigeria.
3. There is obviously an urgent need to embrace a new culture of attitudinal change in Nigeria. It is, indeed, hoped that people's behaviour and ways of life will change and be modeled by their new consciousness for societal change and transformation of the country.
4. The concern of adult and non-formal education for societal change must be productive if Nigeria is to achieve sustainable societal transformation of the country. As adult educators, it is appropriate to put necessary things in place in order to achieve sustainable societal change in Nigeria.
5. There is equally an urgent need to ensure that the three tiers of government in Nigeria demonstrate strong political will and commitment to make conscious efforts to stimulate sustainable societal change in the country. This will be achieved through pragmatic efforts to promote effective teaching and learning in adult education, attitudinal change and re-orientation of the people of Nigeria.

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