

# Repositioning Adult and Formal Education for Nigerian Educational Development

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## Abstract

Adult education has evolved and is still metamorphosing over the years due to dynamic nature of its own existence. It has been eclipsed by formal education in many countries including Nigeria. This paper is an attempt to argue for the strengthening and the elevation of adult education in the country. Some of the problems militating against adult education in Nigeria are discussed and recommendations are proffered to help advance lifelong experiential learning activities in the country. It attempts to predict what the future holds for adult education and the implications of would be outcomes of not remedying the current slide of neglect.

**Keywords:** Adult Education; Lifelong experiential learning; non-formal education; curricular contents; collaborative linkages

## Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2004) delineates in Section 6 of the Policy the goals of adult and non-formal education to include providing functional literacy and continuing education for adults and the youths. It equally provides education for different categories of completers of the formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills, as well as provide 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.

Nigerian education and policy makers had made big strides in establishing more than 135 Universities both governmental and private after the national independence of 1960. The growth was in response to the yearnings of applicants, many who were left out from the old five generational universities whose capacities became grossly inadequate to the response of the national growth. The old five generational universities were as follows: University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Ahamadu Bello University in Zaria, and the University of Benin. Nigeria educational planners' support to the new generational universities may have lost favor to other areas of education endeavors as they failed in sustaining the modest gains that were made by the old generational universities. Sadly enough little has changed over the first inception of the Nigerian education except producing jobless graduates who has little to offer economically to the nation (Akubuilu, 2012). More effort is needed to sustain adult education offerings that have been the bedrock of lifelong learning, but sadly has taken a backseat in Nigerian education.

Adult education is free of yoke of subject tradition and is free to experiment boldly even in the sacrosanct spheres of pedagogical method (Linderman, 1989). It is obvious that adult education in Nigeria lost its standing in the nation. Nigeria may not be tapping the great benefits of which adult education has to offer. Such offerings could help address the various social issues such as massive unemployment, internal security, insurgencies, terrorism, environmental, and health. These problems are not youth problems but involve the entire population. Ugwuegbu (2003) argues that Nigeria has placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult and non-formal education concluding with the following observation:

*Adult literacy and adult education are necessary to ensure an enlightened government and citizenry, whose insights, activities and decisions are very vital to the cause of education and the achievement of national goals. What seems to be needed more in Nigeria today is a development-oriented non-formal education to ensure the principle of self-reliance both in national and individual Thus change in Adult Education in Nigeria is welcome.*

Afolabi (2012) is of the opinion that the purpose of adult literacy education is to help move people from whatever level of consciousness they currently operate to a level of critical consciousness, wherein they can ask questions about things around them, as well attain capacity to change their lives positively to the benefit of the society. Onyenemezu (2012) equally observed that that adult education is expected to address the socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems besieging humanity in their various societies observing further that, the goals of adult education as stated by the federal government in the National Policy on Education, have not been properly achieved.

## Definitions

The definitions of adult education are varied according to philosophical ideations of the authors. All philosophies

of adult education grapple with the important issues in the field of adult education that include the definition of adult education, the place, and needs of adults. There are, however, contrasting views on methods and dispensation of adult education offerings, as well as the curricular contents, concepts, relevance of adult development programs (Elias and Merriam, 1977). Chijioke (2010) explains adult education as follows:

*Adult education is the practice of teaching and educating adults. This often happens in the workplace, through 'extension' or 'continuing education' courses at secondary schools, at a college or university. Other learning places include folk high schools, community colleges, and lifelong learning centers. The practice is also often referred to as 'Training and Development.'*

A difference is made between vocational education, mostly undertaken in workplaces and frequently related to up-skilling, and non-formal adult education including learning skills or learning for personal development. Adult education includes functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youth and adults outside the formal school system. Historically, definitions to adult educations have added within the areas of global interconnectivity, competition, and technological advancements that forced individuals to continuously become involved in the lifelong learning pursuits. Adult education is the process by which men and women (alone, in groups, or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge, or sensitiveness; or it is any process by which individuals, groups, or institutions try to help men and women improve in these ways. The fundamental system of practice of the field, if it has one, must be discerned by probing beneath many different surface realities to identify a basic unity of process (Houle, 1996).

Technological progress as well as growth of a nation creates a demand of skilled work force. Knowles (1977) observed that improvement have been made in the areas of transportation, mass communication and other amenities of life that broke the monopolies of big cities. There is a need accordingly to expand adult educational offerings to every citizen who may not have had the privilege of traditional schooling. The author further observed that adult education field is a highly interactive social system. Nigeria could do better when adult education offerings are provided outside the cities that bring education to the doors of many of the Nigerian population living in the rural communities.

### **The Problem**

About 40 million Nigerians need to acquire adult education for the nation to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 according to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan (Tayo, 2013). Ewuzie (2013) observed that adult and non-formal education in Nigeria has been apparently been neglected aspect of educational activities in the country. This according author is attributable to several factors that include funding, departure from missionaries and colonial rule that pioneered adult education in order to achieve some social reengineering of Nigerians then.

Adult Education Nigeria may not be keeping pace with dynamic social challenges embracing the nation. Although education in general is supposed to be responsive to social challenges, Nigerian education planners lack the conscientious effort of exposing the adult education potentials in a developing nation. There are myriads of adult educational issues in the country that are hydra headed. Such problems include but not limited to the challenges of creating community of learning targeting specific issues akin to a given locality. Egunyomi (2009) saw adult education as being subsumed in continuing education. The study concludes that continuing education is not only important in Nigeria but rather to the whole world at large, as it is a multi-dimensional discipline, which covers the behavior of a man from the beginning of his life to the end of his life.

Akparobore (2011) saw the decaying and dissipating Nigerian libraries as a contributing factor to the demise of adult education and sees the library as a major means of promoting literacy in Nigeria. The study concludes that continuing education is not only important in Nigeria but rather to the whole world at large, as it is a multi-dimensional discipline, which covers the behavior of a man from the beginning of his life to the end of his life. Nigerian educational curricula are morbid subscribing to old norms of behaviorists. Progressive educational planning that attempts to Nigerian issues are kept at the back burner. The lacks of research in education that attempt to address such indigenous issues are not encouraged. Further research and evaluation of Adult Education are needed to identify effective strategies and programs that would enhance the status of adult education in Nigeria (Mambula, 2002). Proactive education that ought to forestall new problems is none but existent.

The exodus of Nigerian teachers to greener pastures abroad where relevance of adult education is accepted and practiced could have contributed to the demise of Nigerian adult education. Nigerian Universities have offerings in adult education but where are the graduates employed after graduation is another question. Nigerian Open University System may be better positioned to rekindle the adult educational that could be targeted to specific geographical economies of Nigeria. Nigeria is still milling out graduates who are not really prepared for the workforce and those who graduate have little or opportunities to be employed in their field of learning. The country does not really encourage informal education that adult education attempts to address.

### **Dynamics of Adult Education**

The dynamics of adult education could provide greater opportunities to Nigerians and help arrest the staggering unemployment as well as help nurture and grow the national economy. Knowles (1977) delineates the characteristics of adult education to include the following:

1. Adult education field is highly expansive and flexible.
2. The adult educational field is taking the shape of multi-dimensional social systems.
3. Adult educational function has been much more highly developed and differentiated in some institutional categories, such as college and universities, libraries, and public schools, than others, such as, government agencies, mass media, and museums.
4. The topography of adult education include the following program areas: a) academic education; b) education for aging; c) community development; d) creative arts; e) economic education; f) fundamental and literal education; g) health education; h) home and family life education; i) human relations and leadership training; j) interpersonal group education; k) liberal adult education; l) public affairs education; m) adult recreational education; n) science education; and o) occupational education.

### **The future of Adult Education for Nigeria**

The future of Adult Education in Nigeria is enormous and posits the following extensions:

1. The numbers are enormous and include almost the young and the old of Nigeria's over increasing population of over 150 million. People are beginning to understand that education is a life-long process and adult education subscribes fully to this philosophy.
2. Explosion of knowledge and the expedient need of adult education services which can longer be accommodated in realm of traditional learning centers demand the attention of educational planners.
3. Technology advancements and the pace of inter-connectivity between learning providers and learning communities have made adult education very attractive. Nigeria's Open University is beginning to realize the vast opportunity that could be mined through distance educational offerings that are targeted to specific groups now prevalent for some law enforcement organizations. Learning could be accessed asynchronously irrespective of time and place. The number accessing learning through adult educational systems are likely to outnumber those in traditional class rooms.
4. There is a need to better educate the population on opportunities the adult education offering are capable of offering to the citizenry. Many Nigerians still believe that education is age specific. Nigeria should really look into American Educational System that brings learners together in informal learning centers both in the formal and informal settings such seen in the higher education and community learning centers.
5. The mode of educational delivery will continue to expand and differentiated according to its times and geographical placement. There is a need to deviate from Nigeria's fixed curricula to dynamic issues that embrace the country at large.

### **Implications**

There is a need to reengineer Nigerian workforce if the Country's Vision 20-20-20 is ever going to be actualized. The need to provide skilled workforce, and the teaching and re-teaching new attitudinal changes of workers, challenges of corrupt practices, and increasing competition that is no longer localized but global are on the burners of adult education. The demographic shifts in Nigeria need adult education accommodations.

Adult educational offerings could help solve the massive unemployment in Nigeria by providing opportunities for adults who would like to acquire new skills, change professions through the acquisition of new careers. It could help stem the tide of rural urban migration trends that bring people into cities in search of better living. The truth remains that the cities failed provide to answers to the lofty dreams of individuals, some who are now in desperation are contributing to high crime statistics now prevalent in many cities.

There could be collaborative linkages between adult education offering and vocational education which if well planned and administered to the local government centers might help fuel local productivity especially in the agro based settings. Local governments need to be proactive in providing specific training within their local contents that could enhance the productivity of its citizenry.

Many Nigerian roads are death traps with pot holes that are sometimes exposed to other hazards such as unlicensed drunken drivers, pollution, over loaded trucks, lawlessness, corrupt officials and other related nuances. The health issues such as drinking water, sanitation, flooding, and environment are also some of the Nigerian social issues that special adult education curricula could easily attempt to address. However, many of these curricular but very important issues are neglected in both formal and informal education

### **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that Nigerian educational policy makers should support adult educational offerings.

2. There is a need to adjust the educational curriculum to accommodate adult educational offerings.
3. Adult education need to be redefined to depart from colonial application of educating the adult, a physical separation of age groups in educational offerings.
4. There is a paradigm shift of providing educational needs of the society outside the old traditional educational setting.
5. Nigeria should be encouraged in understanding their fundamental rights to access to continuous learning irrespective of age or social dispensation.
6. Nigeria should expand adult educational centers and provide learning resources that are unique to specific areas of their placement.
7. Curriculum ought to be designed to provide adult educational subscribers with continuous lifelong learning experiences.
8. There should be a “czar” to coordinate adult education, distinct from formal educational offering in Nigeria.
9. Nigerian libraries ought to be given new lease of life to promote reading culture in the Nation irrespective of digital libraries or similar outfits.

### Conclusion

There is a need to redefine adult education in Nigeria that would encompass addressing the myriads of issues prevalent in the country’s stratified societies. It calls for delineation of functions between types of education that are being in the country. The different functions of adult and formal education need to be revisited and the grey areas redefined for clarity.

Nigeria’s potential to grow along with other world economies may not be realized without tapping into the benefits an organized adult educational system have to offer to Nigerian economic development. Adult education with Vocational Skills Education is twins that can help propel Nigeria along formal educational provisions.

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