Adult and Non-formal Education in the Global Context.

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Abstract

Adult and non-formal education is an integral component of poverty reduction, it has the potential of enabling creative and democratic citizenship, giving voice to women and men living in poverty as well as providing tools for improving their lives. The paper examined the concepts of adults using chronological, biological, cultural and historical parameters and as well as adult and non-formal education by different scholars. The paper also explored adult and non-formal education in the global context like the Dakar framework of action, the focus on gender equality, women and problems of HIV/AIDS pandemic and United Nations Literacy Decade amongst others. The paper went ahead and examined some international agencies in adult and non-formal education like UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, IZZDVV, amongst others and it is a position paper that finally suggests that developing countries should increase budgetary allocations to adult and non-formal education, there should be effective monitoring and evaluation by agencies in order to ascertain whether the objectives are achieved or not and global advocacy on support in adult and non-formal education should be ensured towards the attainment of Education For All (EFA).

Keywords: Adult and Non-formal education, global, poverty, international agencies.

1. Introduction

The amorphous nature and essence of adult and non-formal education is such that its boundaries cannot be easily demarcated. Many nations have attempted the eradication of illiteracy or its reduction to a tolerable barest minimum. This has become necessary since the industrial and technological take off countries requires literacy as a prerequisite for its attainment. The literate member of society is more likely to take an active and effective part in the development process (Indabawa, 1991).

The role of adult education in development is multidimensional, indeed, as one of the building blocks for human development, and not just a basic right, education is a foundation for progress in areas such as human capital, health, nutrition and the development of institutions and democracy. The economic role of adult education can be seen in its contribution towards human capital formation. It is widely agreed that an educated population provide more health care, sanitation and nutrition services that would improve the standard of living and yield higher productivity there by reducing mortality rates and increasing life expectancy.

Adult education provides more investment climate and it is very critical for labour force and providing managerial know-how, able to compete in today's global context and it also plays a major role in social development. It is now widely admitted that growth will not reduce poverty unless poor people are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education (Seya, 2005). The role of adult education is not limited to the economic and social spheres. It also has a political dimension. There should be a strong link between adult learning and democracy. This is so because, as acknowledge at the UNESCO fifth International conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997 "substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to constructed" (UNESCO, 1997 cited in Seya, 2005:106). For democracy to be achieved, adult education is needed to educate citizens on the democratic culture as well as inform them of their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels.

2. The concept of Adult Education.

Adult and Non-formal education in Africa began with the creation of man on the continent. It was imperative for those forebears in Africa to provide education for the adult population so as to ensure the survival and development of skills, integration, group cohesion, social values and acceptable attitudes (Omolewa, 2000). The concept of adult education is difficult to define because people define it from different perspectives. However, scholars agreed that it is an education that has adults as its clientele. This also brings us to another concept of who is an adult? Different parameters are used in defining an adulthood amongst which are Biological, Chronological, historical, psychological, economical, political and social amongst others. Nzeneri (2002) defines an adult as one who is physically and psychologically matured and is socially, economically and politically responsible. According to Adesanya (2005) the term adult is difficult to define because it varies from one society

to another and has changed over time. The boundaries that determine who is considered an adult can depend on actions (i.e. legal age to fight war, drive a car and vote amongst others), activities (i.e., age that one can begin to work) and /or responsibilities (i.e., marriage age, age to begin supporting family). UNESCO (1976) gives a recommendation of who an adult is: it is a person regarded by the as such by the society to which he /she belong. As articulated in the CONFINTEA V documents

> adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, where by people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society (UNESCO, 2009 cited in Umar, Eshak, Bichi, & Aujara, 2010:131)

UNESCO (1976) cited in Nzeneri (2010:10) defines adult education as:

> The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, universities as well as in apprenticeship, where by persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

The above definitions is encompassing in the sense that it has not only define adult education, but has gone to the extent of talking about its scope and content.

Adult education is usually refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal schooling system (Seya, 2005). The main targets are specifically defined as youths (girls and boys over 15 years of age, but sometimes younger) as well as women and men, generally poor or socially disadvantaged.

According to Seya (2005:97) adult education is seen as:

> a transmission of process of general, technical or vocational knowledge as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view of remedying early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with knowledge and cultural elements required for their self –fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies.

Adult education deals with adult human materials and it gives joy, fascination and enthusiasm. Working with adults establishes confidence and impressions which allows the learners to realize their dreams. The fact that formal schooling is an unquestionable priority in the education sector, does not justify adult education being left out. To make children compete with their parents in the education process is dangerous as it make create a break between two entities that are mutually dependent. A child's schooling performance is largely determined by the level of education of his or her parents. Therefore trying to achieve primary education at the expense of adult education defeats it own purpose. As long as poverty remains a distinctive feature in Nigeria, adult education will impose itself as an unavoidable ingredient of development process (Seya, 2005). The unsatisfactory performance of the formal system of education provides support to the argument that adult education is needed to remedy the situation.

2.1 Adult and Non-formal education in the global context.

Adult and Non-formal education is seen in the global arena in the following ways:

1. The Dakar framework of action reaffirmed the Jomtien (WCEFA, 1990) expanded the vision of basic education and included Adult and Non-formal Education in two of its six goals:
   - Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills.
   - Goal 4: Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.
2. The focus on gender equality, women and the problems of HIV/AIDS pandemic within these frameworks implies, in principle, ample space for attention into the basic learning needs of adult women and men.
3. The Millennium Development Goals 3 "to promote to gender equality and empower women" literacy is

a fundamental skill to empower women to take control of their lives, to engage directly with authority and give them access to wider world of learning. Educating women and giving them equal rights is important for many reasons: it increases their productivity.., it promotes gender equality…., educated women do a better job caring for children…." (www.developmental goals.org/Gender_ Equality.htm, accessed 040829)

4. The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), 2003-2013, approved by the UN General Assembly in December, 2001, offers a cross-cutting platform for reviving Adult and Non-formal Education. It proposes a renewed vision of literacy, in which creating literate environments and a literate society is seen as a goal. The literacy Decade was launched because:

> Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all and creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development and democracy (United Nations, 2001 cited in Lind, 2007: 212).

5. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO): prepared a programme of action to increase literacy learning opportunities within the framework of UNLD called Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (LIFE). The plan is to assist 34 countries with a literacy rate of less than 50% or an illiterate population of more than 10 million. In the foreword of the LIFE vision and Strategy paper (UNESCO, 2005:6) the Director General explains:

"While UNESCO will provide the overall framework of coordination, support and mobilization, LIFE operations will be country –led, respond to country –specific needs and priorities, strengthen national capacities and be embedded in national development in national development frameworks. Care will be taken to build on existing national best practices and scale up on-going programmes of proven effectiveness. With UNESCO's assistance, each country participating in LIFE will take stock of its specific needs and develop a corresponding strategy".

2.2. Agencies promoting Adult Education at Global level

The following are the International agencies facilitating the international agenda on Adult Education:

1. United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO): are involved in capacity building of staff and provision of working materials in adult and non-formal education
2. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): capacity building of staff, developing monitoring tools.it also facilitated the development and distribution of teaching and learning materials in adult and non-formal Education.
3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): are also involved in technical assistance and financial support in adult and non-formal education.
4. The Global Campaign for Education and Action Aid International: these two agencies prepared the so-called benchmark statements on adult literacy programmes to serve as criteria for funding. These were developed through a survey of a number of current programmes, and consultations with specialist and stakeholders. For example state governments should use at least 3% of their national annual education –sector budgets for adult and non-formal education programmes and that when this is met; international funding agencies should fill any remaining resources gaps. If such "benchmarks" are flexibly applied they could hopefully contribute to the inclusion of adult literacy and literacy conducive environment in the sector wide programme funding frameworks.
5. International Institute for German Adult Education (*dvv*): this is an international Non-governmental organization specializing in adult and non-formal education; it promotes and supports adult and non-formal education globally and its institutional capacity in developing countries.
6. European Association for Education of Adults and International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) specialize in adult basic education and development, and reaches out widely in developing countries, as well as Eastern and Central Europe with capacity building, advocacy and information.

3. Suggestions

For adult and non-formal education programmes to be sustained and a wide range of life-long learning to be achieved the following suggestions are made.

- Developing countries should increase budgetary allocations to adult and non-formal education sector.
- The International agencies should promote Adult and Non-formal education within the global and national frameworks.
- There should be effective monitoring and evaluation by agencies in order to ascertain whether the stated objectives are achieved or not.

- Global advocacy on the support on adult and non-formal education should be ensured towards the attainment of Education For All
- To create a common platform for harmonized support for adult and non-formal education.
- Increase in funding and complementary support to build capacity and support .
- There should be increase in research in adult and non-formal education.

5. Conclusion

Adult and non-formal education is an integral component of poverty reduction, it has the potential of enabling creative and democratic citizenship, giving voice to women and men living in poverty as well as providing tools for improving their lives. The key to the development of any nation lies in the quality of adults the nation has. It is the adults that transform the nation not the children.

Adult education has better prospects to move the nation forward and it should meet with the global trends. Adult education should be re-positioned to meet the ever increase demand of the present time in order to contribute meaningfully to national development. In this paper an attempt was made to examine adult education in global context. It has been pointed out the agencies promoting adult and non-formal education globally. The paper also pointed out some suggestions that would further enhanced adult and non-formal education delivery in world.

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