

## Sustaining Adult Education And Social Change In Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Education is perceived as the most relevant tool or instrument for change, development and progress by all societies. Human history indicates that education remains the most important agent of social conservation and transformation. It is indeed the most significant means by which the experiences, the totality and cultural disposition of all human societies are transmitted from generation to generation. Essentially, the education system of a society evolved from within values, need and aspiration of such society. Adult education in this instance can be explained to mean educational programmes designed for individuals of various ages to enhance their abilities and potentials through diverse modes of formal, informal and non-formal education. This education is based on the peoples' social, economic, political and cultural needs which further enhance their scope of adapting to societal immediate needs as well as facing future challenges. It is also a means of providing the adult individuals in the society opportunity to be equipped with relevant literacy skills required for their day to day activities. Invariably, adult education is a need- orientated and learner – centred field that has always been associated with social change. It is a revolutionary process that ensures the participation of most people in societal affairs. Social change cannot be achieved without reasonable and active involvement of the majority of the populace. With most emerging economies desperately seeking for social change in its entire ramification, adult education could be utilised as the main tool to achieving this desired change. Social change therefore refers to a total transformation of peoples' orientation and living condition. This means that adult education needs to be reprogrammed in order to achieve that desirable change. Invariably, adult education should be such that can equip adult populace to participate and play vital roles in ensuring that the desired social change is achieved. However, researches from past studies have shown the existence of several situational, institutional and dispositional challenges to the effective implementation of adult education in emerging economies. Thus, the aim of this study was to identify challenges, appraise and determine how adult education can be sustained and enhance social change in emerging economies in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the study adopted an exploratory qualitative research method. Views of key adult education stakeholders and practitioners in Nigeria were the study population for the study. Out of this population was drawn a sample of 540 stakeholders and practitioners using purposive sampling technique to respond to the interview which was the data collecting instrument. Validity and reliability were achieved by first assessing the plausibility in terms of already existing knowledge on some of the sustainability drivers for adult education, a leading emerging economy in Africa. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to create a data set of qualitative accounts. The findings revealed the successes of current adult education initiatives in achieving the goal of equipping Nigerian adults with literacy skills. Findings further indicated that the main philosophical consideration of this research was linked to the essential requirement of examining challenges of adult education in emerging economies for the purpose of capturing lessons aimed at enhancing more sustainable social change. They concluded by articulating genetic recommendations about best practice.

**Keywords:** Adult education, Social change, Emerging economics, Nigeria, Sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

Adult education and its practice in Nigeria has a long history which could be traced to colonial government. The initial focus during this period was on literacy teaching. Through several constitutional changes, government embarked on policies aimed at developing education in general including adult education. Zuofa (2007) explained that a post independent national curriculum conference to improve all forms of education was held in 1964. A follow-up national conference on education was held in 1973. The aftermath of that conference gave birth to the first draft of the policy on education. The draft policy underwent several changes and finally was approved to be printed as a public document by Federal Ministry of Education in 1977. The education policy has been revised several times in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2013 and 2014 which is still currently in use. The 2004 edition of the national policy on education has section 6 devoted to Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education.

Specific adult education programmes such as mass literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education were identified by this edition of the national policy on education (NPE). These programmes are major components of adult education in Nigeria even though there are other activities and practices that are within the framework of adult Education in Nigeria. Fasokun (2008) posited that this section of the NPE continues to provide the minimum standard guiding the provision of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria at various levels of government. He added that the various states and local governments have their own adult education policies which are consistent with the national policy on education, but may be peculiar to local conditions based on the principle of federalism in Nigeria.

The incorporation of adult education in the national policy on education has made many scholars to identify various forms of adult education programmes. Fasokun (2001); Ezimah (2004) and Zuofa (2010) identified various forms of adult education which include but not limited to literacy education, remedial education, vocational education, civic and political education and community competencies and distance education.

Adult education practice in Nigeria has closely been monitored by the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE). This body is mainly for academics and professionals in the practice of adult education since inception in 1971. It further advocated the establishment of a national adult education agency to coordinate the various forms of adult education. Hence, the body has worked in collaboration with government and non-government agencies to achieve many feats which have helped the development and practice of adult education in Nigeria. Some of these achievements include:

- Establishment of Adult Education in the Federal Ministry of Education in 1974.
- Establishment of Adult Education Agencies in all the states of the federation from 1980.
- Establishment of the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) in 1991.
- The development of a Blueprint on Adult Education.
- Declaration of 1982-1992 as National mass literacy campaign.
- Establishment of departments of adult education in federal universities.
- Development of a human resource base of experts in adult and non-formal education.
- Document research funding through its journal, Adult Education in Nigeria.
- Conduct of annual national conference where adult education experts and practitioners meet to discuss issues.
- Partner with international agencies in the promotion of adult and non-formal education.

It has to be noted also that both federal and state governments set up various adult education agencies during the 1980s with a view to improving the literacy status of the adults; Also education in Nigeria, including adult education is on the concurrent legislative list of the

constitution. By this all tiers of government, private organisations and individuals have the powers to provide adult education in Nigeria. In terms of funding adult education in Nigeria, Fasokun (2008) stated that between 1997 and 2008, the percentage allocation ranged between 0.65% and 8.94% of the total allocation of funds available to education in general.

The present Federal Government Administration in Nigeria led by President Muhammadu Buhari is determined to ensure that there is a total transformation of life and living condition. This brings to mind variety of questions which could emerge as a result of multifarious challenges identifiable in Nigeria society. Many Nigerians think that the Federal Government's desire is a dream that cannot be achieved. Re-orientating the teaming adults by utilising the appropriate tools would definitely make that possible. Key among the tools to be utilised is adult education which would equip the adult populace with the right skills to become part of the proposed change.

The change oriented adult education ascertains the provision of the necessary intellectual ability and systematic learning required for the actualisation of change. It dovetails all aspects of human endeavours cultural, economic, political, religious and social as observed by Avoseh (2011). The change-oriented adult education is programme-based and should be available to recognise the maturity, experience, responsibilities and self concepts of adults. This implies that where ever adult education is available, adults occupy themselves with activities that could improve their active participation in societal matters. Zuofa (2006) observed that adult education occurs where ever adults engage in the process of learning how to improve themselves and are able to expand the scope of being able to handle prevailing situations and future challenges. Fasokun (2008) and Aderinoye (2007) also noted that adult and non-formal education programmes remain relevant when integrated into them functional elements which go a long way in harnessing and employing the interest of learners and locally available capacities in the development of themselves and communities. Adult education in Nigeria should readily be available in all forms to all adults' accessibility especially in the rural communities, thereby democratising knowledge through their active participation. When more people are empowered to think and participate, have control over reality, truth and become self assertive which are basis for social change, development would have been achieved.

From the foregoing, adult education possesses all that is required to liberate the adults' mind from the shackles of fear, prejudice, ignorance, superstition and suspicion in order to develop into a free independent, responsible, active and positive participator in personal, local and national matters. The expansion in the scope of adult education practice is also very relevant in order to involve majority of the adults.

The issue of adult education practice in Nigeria requires attention. Already adult learning and teaching as well as the activities of the adult educators to facilitate adult learning and what they learn have been of several discourse and controversy. As a result, Encarta (2005) stated that the position adopted by them in carrying out these activities can be described as traditional on one hand or progressive on the other hand.

Traditional view is based on the premise that the purpose of teaching is to ensure that learners acquire prescribed body of knowledge and set values. Knowledge and values here reflect the societal selection of what it desires to transmit to the learners of the content and requires its workforce to be able to do what is already known and approved. It portrays the relationship between participants and programme givers. As giver- receiver relationship where the former receives what they have not yet achieved in terms of knowledge and values and later have both and own it as a duty to convey them. In effect the facilitator is obliged to transmit knowledge

and values to the learners in standardised and approved form in an organised environment bound by rules and regulations. Traditional teaching and learning are characterised by carefully designed programmes and prescribed curriculum content. Evaluation of what is taught and learned at every stage grooms both parties for the next stage in order to provide for multi-intelligence and various levels of achievements. Learners of similar abilities and interests are grouped taking cognisance that competition encourages improved performance and inter-relationship with one another.

The progressive view is learner-centred approach to adult teaching and learning. The process of learning in this approach starts from the learner rather than from a body of knowledge. In this instance, the facilitator's role is to understand the capacity of each learner and assist the learners to develop it maximally. In order to deliver the programme content, the focus is usually based on activity and experience instead of the knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored and be recalled as the need arises. This view assumes that disciplined environment is achievable through this learning and teaching process. This implies that social values, cooperation (instead of competition) and equal opportunities for the least and the most able are highly emphasised. The assumption here is that every learner succeeds at some level in some aspects of learning. The contents of adult education programme are delivered in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.

However, NMEC in order to ensure that adult education programmes remain relevant and well integrated in them functional elements, adopted a participatory Rural Appraisal/Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community (PRA/REFLECT) technique. The essence is to harness and employ the interest of learners and locally available capacities in the development of their communities. The commission also adopted the Basic Literacy by Radio. This choice was made because the commission through survey proved that the adult learners in Nigeria much preferred radio as a medium of learning basic literacy and more affordable to the targeted learners in communities. This commission has carried out this pilot test in many states of Nigeria.

The practice of adult education in Nigeria as has been briefly discussed is not the only concern that could be raised if adult education should be utilised to achieve the desired social change. Rather other challenges for adult education and its professionals and practitioners must be comprehensively looked at in order to position it as a veritable tool for the achievement of social change in Nigeria. For instance, adult education has not been given its pride of place in terms of adequate funding, utilising only qualified personnel to handle adult education programmes, ensuring that adult education directives, issues and policies are handled by adult education experts and making adult education more available and functional to all adults especially in the rural areas. Relevant federal and state government agencies and ministries have not involved adult education experts in their programme planning in order to present relevant adult education programmes from the grassroots, state and the nation as whole.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine how sustenance of adult education could enhance the achievement of social change in an emerging economy like Nigeria specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify current adult education practice in Nigeria.
2. Identify how best adult education could be utilised to achieve social change in Nigeria.
3. Identify challenges that hinder adult education practice in Nigeria.

## Research Questions

The following Research Questions were developed to guide the study.

1. What is the current adult education practice in Nigeria?
2. What are the ways adult education could be utilised to achieve social change in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges that hinder adult education in Nigeria?

## METHODOLOGY

The exploratory qualitative research method was utilised in the study. This method provides a deeper comprehension of the key adult education stakeholders and practitioners toward inducing social change in Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 540 adult education stakeholders and practitioners across the country that make up the study population. This sampling technique involves the selection of specific units or cases based on specific purpose or objective of a study (Tashakkori and Teddie, 2003). An in-depth qualitative interview was the data collecting instrument that was validated with the aid of existing knowledge on issues of concern as relevant to the study. In the course of the interview, data were recorded and transcribed to provide basis on the sustainability of adult education and social change in Nigeria.

## RESULTS

From the interview on current adult education practice, it was established that the current adult education practice is on the right direction in Nigeria. The following were deciphered in affirming the positive impact of the practice with the interviewees:

1. The establishment of adult education department in the state.
2. The inclusion of adult education on the concurrent legislative list of the country.
3. Establishment of a body to monitor and supervise activities of adult education
4. Establishment of department of adult education in both federal and state tertiary institutions.
5. Conduct of annual conferences where practitioners and other stakeholders participate and discuss current issues on way forward.

These developments in adult education clearly demonstrate its positive trend in Nigeria, thus, collaborating with Fasokun (2008) that the inclusion of adult education in a section of the NPE has continued to provide the minimum standard guiding the provision of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria at various levels of government, which is in the right direction.

In research question two, interviewees affirmed that there are various ways adult education could be utilised in achieving social change in Nigeria. With the various adult education programmes enshrined in the National policy on education, it is quite obvious that receivers of the programmes will induce change in their communities as well as the larger society. Hence, the following were deduced from the interview:

1. Exposing the learners to aesthetic education will help in the promotion of beauty and the environment.
2. Acquisition of literacy skills will expose learners to easily accept and adapt to technological changes.
3. Provision of practical skills through vocation education will not only make the learners to be self-reliant, but employers of labour, which invariably will cushion the effect of poverty in the society.

These findings are in consonance with Aderinoye's (2007) that adult and non-formal education programmes remain relevant when integrated into them functional elements which go a long

way in harnessing and employing the interest of learners and locally available capacities in the development of themselves and that of the communities.

In research question three, findings revealed that despite the positive direction of current adult education practice in Nigeria, adult education is faced with several challenges. The interviewees identified these challenges as follow:

1. Lack of political will by most of the leaders.
2. Inadequate funding
3. Poor monitoring and supervision of adult education programmes
4. Involvement of unprofessional in the planning and implementation of the programmes
5. Poor synergy between the federal, state and local government in adult education programmes.
6. Poor infrastructural facilities
7. Lack of professionalism

These challenges have in no little way hindered the effective growth of adult education in Nigeria. Hence, Fasokun (2008) noted that between 1997 and 2008, the percentage allocation ranged between 0.65% and 8.94% of the total allocation of funds available to education in general. It is therefore not surprising that facilities and other resources needed to promote effective adult education delivery are inadequately provided.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should ensure that practitioners of adult education should actively be integrated into policy design and formulation of adult education.
2. Programmes of adult education should be monitored by the government through the designated agencies to ensure uniformity in curricula.
3. Government should liaise with non-governmental organisations in the provision of instructional facilities to promote effective delivery of adult education programmes.
4. Sensitisation programme through campaign in various media should be organised to educate the populace, even the acclaimed elites on the relevance of adult education in the society.

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