

UNDERSTANDING ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

Essays in Honour of
Professor Kehinde Oluwaseun Kester

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Socio-Economic Development of Developing Countries: The Role of Adult Education

K. S. Adesokan and A. O. Olawuni

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with an estimated population of 174 million. The country is endowed with a variety of natural resources. Nigeria is a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and a leading producer of palm oil, cocoa, and rubber. Ironically, poverty continues to ravage the potentially wealthy country. Nigeria is ranked 152nd of 188 nations in the 2016 Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Between 66 to 70 percent of Nigerians are poor, and the rate of unemployment is about 15 percent (United Nations Development Programme, 2004b).

Socio-economic development of any nation depends basically on the development of man in the country. Human capital development is highly relevant and germane to all forms of development in the country either socially, economically or politically. Eze (1998) rightly notes that no society can develop unless there are efficient men and women who can operate its social institutions. Mbalisi and Oyebamiji (2015) submit that Nigeria's economy has been bedeviled with poor infrastructural facility development and maintenance, dependence on imported goods and services, reliance on a single economic sector, weak industrial capacity, inefficient and ineffective public utilities and low literacy level. This therefore shows that the country is experiencing low socio-economic development which improvement in the level of literacy will have positive effect on.

While emphasising the impact of education on national

development Njoku (2011) compares the development of developed countries to developing countries and submits that the experience of many developed countries has shown that there was a close relationship between literacy, educational growth, increased productivity and general development. Literacy is a form of adult education. Therefore, adult education in all its forms is capable of developing human being and can as well assist any country facing socio-economic problems. Literacy will help in the improvement of the eight ways by which socio-economic development manifests according to Mbalisi and Oyebamiji that is the improvement in standard of living; levels of awareness; infrastructural base; production capacities; basic amenities, improved social services, and so on transition from primary to secondary production; and good governance.

The objective of the process of adult education and national development is to get the adults, either as individuals or as a group, to learn and through learning to change their attitude and behaviour (Ewuzie, 2012; Jinna and Maikano, 2014). They therefore, submit that adult education all over the world is geared towards national development. Adult education programme is capable of addressing the problems and challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, hunger, disease, crises and so on that most developing countries including Nigeria are facing which hinders people's development economically, socially and educationally.

Shamsideen (2016) submit that Nigeria like most developing countries has placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult education. The salient question that needed to be raised at this juncture is that will adult education programmes promote the socio-economic development in Nigeria as well as in other developing countries? This chapter, therefore, set out to examine the role of adult education in promotion of socio-economic development in developing countries.

Socio-Economic Development: Conceptualisation and Measurement (Indices)

The conceptualisation of development has undergone metamorphosis since World War II ended in 1945 (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). The

meaning and the conceptualisation of development was greatly influenced by the ideological contradiction between the Socialist East and the Capitalist West. As a result of this, different authorities have defined development in line with their own ideological beliefs. Hall (1981) sees development as a steady overall economic growth of a nation together with the steady reduction of gap between the rich and the poor. He stressed that without the concept of equitable distribution of national wealth, economic expansion can only be called growth, not development. Chandler (2007) looks at the concept from a multifaceted perspective and man centred approach when he submitted that development is a broader concept that recognises psychological and material factors that measure human well-being.

Okeke in Okorosaye-Orubite (2005) sees development as “growth plus change”, while Okorosaye-Orubite (2005) understands development as “change in a desirable direction and encompassing many different dimensions”. Iyoha, Oyefusi and Oriakhi (2003) in Adesokan (2016) submit that the orthodox view of development assumes that growth in income will translate automatically to improvements in the welfare of the citizens of any given country. This is to say that development is multifaceted and it leads from one sector to the other.

The transformation of the society and the emergence of new social and economic organisations are critical indicators of development (Stiglitz cited in Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013). Economic, social and political developments are part of the dimensions of development from which the concept “Socio-Economic” was coined. Okowa (2005) refer to them as a tripod framework on which the socio-economic formation of any society rests. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) (2010) sees socio-economic development as the relationship between economic and social life. This definition implies that socio-economic development is the continuous improvement in the wellbeing and in the standard of living of the people. This includes access to quality education, better healthcare, decent housing, safe drinking water, good sanitation as well as equitable distribution of a nation’s wealth. Socio-economic development is measured with indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment.

Mbalisi and Oyebamiji (2015) submit that the concept of socio-economic development grew out of arguments that any growth in the economy must reflect on the wellbeing of the masses if such growth must be appreciated. Socio-economic status is the position assigned to an individual on his social group as determined by his attitudes towards him and the other member of the group's socio-economic status (Ibrahim, Sani and Chinenye, 2012). Socio-economic status means class that an individual belong to in the social and economic situation of the society.

Development generally and national development in particular cannot be achieved without the active participation of the adult members of the society. Nyerere in his famous Arusha Declaration of 1968 as cited in Obi (1987) asserts that "the development of a country is brought about by people not by money. Money and wealth are the result and not the basis of development". Participation of people in development efforts is made possible only when people know what to do and how to do it and have the urge to do it. For the people to do these, they have to be equipped with adequate knowledge, skills, values, competencies which determine the number and quality of labour forces (indices of national development) available. Obi (1987) further opines that experiences of recent years have shown that no nation can develop beyond the level of education of its citizens.

Obi (1987) observes with dismay that many countries normally develop without growth due to overemphasis on economic growth as a yard stick for measuring development. This has resulted in what Callaway in Obi (1987) describes as "growth in economic terms without development in the sense of improved conditions of living for the majority of the people. Again, development was achieved at the expense of the other needs of the people for whom development was meant". Bowles in Obi (1987) buttress this point by lamenting over the concentration of planners on the establishment of infrastructure such as power plants, steel mills, refineries, railways, bridges, roads etc to the extent that they give an ominously low priority to the welfare of the underprivileged masses whose hopes and fears, satisfaction and frustration are keys not only to political stability but to the development process itself. Anyanwu (1987) joins to condemn developmental efforts from

this perspective by arguing that capital investment, by itself, would achieve nothing for national consolidation if it did not have behind it the force of human skills.

Concept of Adult Education

There is no general definition to the term adult education, different authors gives different meaning to the term. In understanding the term there is need to address the issue of who an adult is before attempting to explain what adult education is all about. In addressing who an adult is, certain parameters are used. From a general perspective, an adult could be considered especially by people outside the field of adult education, as a grown person; one who is legally of age, as opposed to a minor. Such a person is old enough to maintain a family.

The meaning of the term 'adult' is vague, especially when it is used to identify the client of adult education. A person may be an adult biologically and have adult behaviour but still be treated as a child if he is under the legal age of maturity. On the other hand, one may legally be an adult but possess none of the maturity and responsibility that define adult character (Braimoh, 1990). The meaning of the term 'adult' as it is applicable in this context, is a person regarded as an adult by the society to which he belongs. Therefore some term can be employed in defining who an adult is; the terms are biological, legal, social and economic.

What then is adult education? Adult education according to UNESCO (1994) is the entire body of organised educational activities provided for people who are not in the regular school and university system, generally fifteen years or older and are matured with some responsibilities. This UNESCO's definition is in line with Shamsideen (2016) who sees adult education as any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal school system. Adult education therefore is regarded as any education given to adult persons, men and women and any instruction that makes it possible for them to learn to read and write. Adult education gives opportunities to those who missed formal form of learning and empowers other categories. Anyanwu (1987) sees adult education as education which enables people to be aware of both individual and community needs

and provides the types of learning that enables recipients to cope successfully with current problems. This is to suffice that Adult Education is capable of integrating adult into the society by providing and empowering them with education. This is why Adedokun (2012) submits that adult education is a form of education that redresses the imbalance between the education received when one is young and that of later life.

Akinpelu (2002) in describing adult education notes that: Adult education as a social institution is a common feature of every society, even of the gerontocratic variety. African traditional society which loosely and imprecisely defined it as education of the adult, is an affirmation that nobody, however, old, is immune to new knowledge, new ideas and new skills, in whatever setting that may be; thus the saying that old dogs can learn new tricks. This Akinpelu's explanation emphasised that Adult Education is not meant for the aged but it is an inclusive education that helps and assists its patronage to develop their potential and enables them to contribute to the socio-economic transformation of their society. In line with the submission that Adult education is an inclusive education, Mbalisi (2010) defines Adult Education as "any educative and purposeful learning activity organised for adults to initiate them into a new way of life by providing them with relevant skills, competencies, knowledge, information and attitudes required to excel in that aspect of life".

Mbalisi's definition is buttressed by Olori (2012) who submits that adult education is concerned with preparing people for life, but more importantly with helping people to live more successfully. Different definitions of adult education show that Adult Education is to enhance, develop and integrate people to be productive in their society. This is in line with its objectives as contained in Nigeria policy on education:

- (1) To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the opportunity of any formal education.
- (2) To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system.

- (3) To provide further education for different categories of completers of formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- (4) To provide in-service and on-the-job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- (5) To give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Forms of adult education which range from literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing education, adult, basic and non-formal education, vocational education, prison education and community development are capable of promoting and enhancing socio-economic development of the country. The wide scope of adult education according to Braimoh (1990) caters for a wide heterogeneous audience in terms of age, sex, profession, social status, ethnic diversity, religious denomination and political affinity.

Promoting Socio-Economic Development in Developing Countries Through Adult Education

Adult education is for all, learning is not confined to childhood, classroom but to everyone (Gerhard, 2000). The need to accelerate socio-economic development is vital. Poverty eradication may require actions to reduce the suffering of the poor and increase their access to social services. It also requires action to increase the poor's ability to generate an income in order to meet their needs. Adult education is a voluntary programme and not usually undertaken under any legal compulsion. It is undertaken at any age and for different purposes, deliberately or unconsciously for individual, group of people, community, state or for national progress. The flexible nature of adult education gives room for different categories of people to get involved. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) recognises the importance of education to societal development and submitted that, "education in Nigeria is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development".

It has been reinstated that no matter the forms of education (formal, informal and non-formal), there should be close link between any

education programme and socio-economic status. Fafunwa (1974), submits that socio-economic situation of the adult and rural populace correlates positively with their participation in educational programmes, be it formal, informal or adult education. Furthermore, adult and continuing education promote workers training, increases literacy level towards change and enhances the minimum knowledge required. Justifiably therefore, adult education, though strictly outside the formal school system has a great influence on the quality and development of the society. Adult education according to (Department of Education and Science, 2000) is rooted in lifelong learning which involves the pursuit of knowledge either for personal or professional reasons. Ouane (2009) emphasise the relevance of adult education as an ever emerging empowering tool which is capable of liberating and harnessing the creative forces of people, the potential of communities and the wealth of nations in a situation of global crisis. In the same vein USOE (2013) submits that adult education becomes a useful tool in freeing people from poverty-ridden situations when one understands the role of adult education in empowering individuals to become self-sufficient and self-reliant with skills necessary for future or present employment and personal successes.

According to Seya (2014) investment in the development of human capital, through adult education is crucial for developing a labour force and managerial know-how, ability to compete in today's global economy. Adult education programmes unlike education for children/youths, centre on the immediate needs and problems of the adults in their homes, social and occupational roles, civic and economic interests and therefore have immediate direct positive relationship with development objectives at any level – individual, community, or national. Without adult education at all levels for all citizens of a country, the objectives of national development plans cannot fully be achieved because majority of the productive manpower in a country will not be effectively mobilised for participation in the development plans (Ifeigh in Obi, 1987). This is why (Seya, 2005) submits that adult education is a transmission 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 to remedying early inadequacies of mature people or

equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfilment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies. The relevance of adult education in development is not limited to financial and vocational empowerment of people, but that it empowers people in acquiring relevant knowledge in form of sensitisation on democratic values and principles which includes rights, duties and obligations of citizens. This is why Seya (2005) submits that 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.

It has been submitted that (Adanek and Tiver, 2011 in Tambawal, 2012) many contemporary countries of the world have adult and non-formal education to bring about tremendous social, political and economical development of their societies. Some of these countries include the United States of America, Great Britain, Cuba and Tanzania. When the USA started, it was people who dreamt of building a socio-economic model similar to that of Europe who first chose it as their home. They grouped themselves into groups of workmen (farmers, miners, fishermen, mechanics, etc.) and within a short time, these groups grew in numbers and demanded skills for more efficient performance of their trades. This is to say that adult education did not fail developed countries, definitely if well utilised in developing countries, it will contribute to socio-economic development in the country most especially in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Development of the people precedes development of the nation. Adult education is a veritable tool for socio-economic development in Nigeria. Adult education is crucial to personal and national development as skills, knowledge, competencies, attitude, aptitudes, etc. are acquired through one programme of adult education or the other. Adult education is an instrument in boosting the image, self-esteem and confidence of an adult, thus enabling them to participate more actively in the national development effort.

Since adult education programmes has helped developed countries in human capacity development, government at all levels should create enabling environment through the provision of adequate funding, materials and facilities required to educate the adult members in order to contribute to the development in their immediate environment and country at large.

Contemporary world required necessary skill to enhance development, and also enables people to become well-informed citizens, capable of thinking critically and owning their destiny through active participation, therefore, government should carry out adequate sensitisation to get people aware of the importance of continuous learning.

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