

EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTIONS OF ADULT LEARNING: CAPACITY BUILDING IN ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The National Commission for Mass Literacy, adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) is the Federal Statutory Agency set up to co-ordinate all aspects of Non-Formal Education in Nigeria whether offered by government agencies or non-governmental organisations. This study looked at the existing Capacity Building Programme, the delivery methods, impact and achievement as well as the challenges. One of the challenges is lack of adequate, well trained and qualified personnel at the Federal, State and Local Government levels. NMEC should organise training for staff on Monitoring and Evaluation. The researcher also recommended that more facilitators should be recruited.

Keywords: Literacy, Development, Capacity building, Sustainability

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 to a tolerable barest minimum. This has become necessary since the industrial and technological take off, countries like Tanzania, Nigeria and South Korea and many others require 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 as one of the building blocks of 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. 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. 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 acknowledged 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 be constructed" (cited in Seya, 2005, p. 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 international levels.

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The Concept of Adult Education

Adult and non-formal education in Nigeria began with the creation of man on the planet earth. It was imperative for those forebearers in Nigeria 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 hence people define it from different perspectives. Scholars, have agreed, however, that it is an education that has adults as its clientele. Different parameters have been used in defining an adult among which are, biological, chronological, historical, psychological, economic, political and sociological among others. Nzeneri (2002) defines as adult as one who is physically and psychological matured and in 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 determines who is considered an adult can depend on actions, that is legal age to fight war, drive a car and vote among others; activities, that is age that one can begin to work, and/or responsibilities, that is marriage age, age to begin supporting family.

UNESCO (1976), cited in Nzeneri (2005, p. 10), defines adult education as

the entire body of organised educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, college, Universities as well as in apprenticeship whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich the 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 definition is encompassing in the sense that it has not only defined adult education, but has gone to the extent of talking about its scope and content.

Concepts of Capacity Building

There is growing recognition of the fact that adult education is of vital importance for the future of every democratic society particularly in developing economies. Capacity building is an important aspect of adult education to meet with the challenges of industrial and technologies of the world today. The improvement of adult learners, instructors/facilitators, infrastructure and management in adult education is of paramount importance to the stakeholders in the field. However, the development of capacity building in adult and non-formal education will bring about greater empowerment and goal-oriented results in individuals and communities.

According to Michelle (2005), capacity building is used in numerous contexts to describe a wide array of activities. In most general terms, capacity building consists of an organisations ability to solve its problems and achieve its stated objectives. This involves skills transfer, human resources management, organisational development and

strengthening of communities and social network. Michelle outlines the definition as follows:

- It is the process aimed at improving the skills of individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and communities for carrying out key functions, solving problems, defining and achieving objectives and understanding and dealing with the requirements needed to manage these matters sustainably.
- The process aimed at strengthening the skills of an organisation or group of organisations to improve their performance and functioning.

Phil (2007), explains capacity building as an increase in the ability of social organisations to the goals that are set by that organisation and also to improve the strength of the organisation which will impact on everyone's performance on the job.

Adult and Non-Formal Education

Adult and non-formal education is seen in the following ways globally:

1. The Dakar framework of action, which reaffirmed the Jomtien declaration (WCEFA, 1990), expanded the vision of basic 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 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 a 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 and many more
4. The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), 2003 – 2013, approved by the UN General Assembly in December, 2001, offered a cross-cutting platform for reviving Adult and Non-formal education. It proposed a renewed vision of literacy, in which creating literate environments and a literate society is seen as a goal. The Literacy Decade was launched for the following reasons: 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, p.212).

5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (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,p6), the Director General explains, while UNESCO will provide the overall framework of coordination, support and mobilization, LIFE operations will be country-led, respond to the country-specific needs and priorities, strengthen national capacities and be embedded 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.

Capacity Building Programmes in Adult and Non-Formal Education

The non-formal education intervention programmes involves capacity building in all technical aspects which include: apprenticeship training in trade and craft, mechanic, soap-making, tie and dye, carpentry, tailoring and agricultural practices such as animal husbandry, fish breeding and pig rearing to mention a few. These non-formal education programmes contribute positively to development of people in the form of acquired basic functional and vocational skills, self-reliant, improved socio-economic skills, integration into society and will eliminate poverty, precarious conditions and status.

UNESCO (2005) identified the following programmes as areas of concentration in capacity building activities;

- Planning and management
- Curriculum development and designing materials (promoting quality contents)
- Training of trainers and facilitators
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Promoting local community responsibility
- Creating rich relevant literate environment with respect to gender, linguistic and cultural diversity through modes of delivery including information communication technology (ICT) and community learning centres.
- Linking formal and non-formal adult education.

The proactiveness of adult and non-formal education in the development of human and material resources cannot be over emphasised. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) is the federal statutory Agency set up to coordinate all aspects of Non-formal Education in Nigeria. This feat involves the coordination and monitoring of government agencies, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations participating in NFE programmes. Its establishment was predicated upon the National policy thrust and the need to eradicate illiteracy amongst the citizenry. It is also designated to carryout research and training in relevant fields for NFE personnel in order to enhance their output. This initiative was further reinforced by the Jomtien and Delhi Declarations where member nations of the United Nations accepted to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000 to facilitate development. The commission was formally launched on 25th June, 1991 with the basic responsibility of eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria. In discharging the responsibility, different categories of personnel involved in the NFE programmes must be empowered continually. These personnel include facilitators, change agents, organisers, supervisor, administrators, policy makers and researchers. As of 2007, there were 150 professional staff members in NMEC Headquarters, the six zonal offices and the National Centre in Kano that is coordinating the work of less than 22,946 (2010 staff census) staff of the thirty-six states and the Federal Territory Capital (FCT) agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria.

The related capacity- building of the commission includes the following:

- Organise in-service professional training courses for senior staff and operate training seminars for various levels of staff from government and non-government organisations;
- Conduct research in various fields such as curriculum development, learning and teaching methodologies, appropriate educational technologies, motivation of learners and instructional materials and needs assessment;
- Organise annual conferences of Heads of Adult Education Departments in State Ministries, Agencies and Institutions of higher learning.
- Organise writers' workshops in order to develop and promote teaching and learning materials in various languages, especially for primers, graded readers, including follow-up reading materials, posters, audio-visual materials and flash cards.
- Run national and international training workshop and seminars and also act as a coordinating and clearing house for national training for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education; and

- Organise conference, workshops, symposia, lectures and seminars on topical issues related to Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education on a regular basis.

Besides NMEC, there are a number of Universities, Polytechnics, and Institutes that provide initial training, in-service training and re-training opportunities for Adult and Non-Formal Education personnel in the country. They run certificate and Diploma courses and Undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in Adult and Non-formal education. Staff members are also provided with opportunities to attend short courses, workshop, seminars and conferences on Adult and Non-formal Education at the National and International levels with the assistance of development partners such as the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, JICA, BRITISH COUNCIL ACTIONAID and ILO.

Objectives

The Objectives of capacity building are to ensure that:

- Well trained and qualified Adult and Non-Formal Education personnel are available at Federal, state, local Government and learning centre levels.
- Adult and Non-formal education personnel have opportunities for pre-service and in-service training.
- Adult and Non-formal education establishment and organisations have adequate infrastructures, equipment and instructional materials.

In focusing on the objectives and goals why the NMEC was established, the Department of Planning Research, and Statistics, of NMEC Abuja Office organised a programme in 2012 tagged, The Literacy by Radio vision document and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to underline the importance of literacy as a vehicle of both individual empowerment and national development. National Literacy Survey (2010), conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria estimates the adult literacy rate as 71.6% with huge variations between states, regions and sex (male 79.3% and female 63.7%).

In the light of the existence of a large number of non-literate people in Nigeria, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education (NMEC) felt a need to seek other viable means of reaching the teeming population of non-literates. The selected medium to achieve this feat was the mass media. Consequently, with the assistance of UNESCO, UNICEF and other government agencies, the “Literacy by Radio” programme was launched in 2004. “Literacy by Radio” is a strategy for effective delivery of literacy and basic education to a large number of learners spread over a large location. The general objective of the Literacy by Radio project is to evolve a fast and effective approach to eradicating illiteracy in the country in furtherance of the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Specifically, the objective

of literacy by radio is to increase access for adult and non-formal education learners to opportunities for basic literacy, which will in effect increase the reading, writing and computing skills of all adult literacy learners--irrespective of age, gender, socio-cultural, and economic circumstance--in order to improve the quality of human life and national development.

Funding of the Literacy by Radio programme is provided by the National Mass Education Commission with financial support from UNESCO and UNICEF. The two organisations also assist NMEC with the necessary technical support in the implementation, management and coordination of the programme. A national task force was formed, comprising UBEC, NUNE, FRCN, FME, NATCOM non-formal education in Nigeria. The commission has, since 1992, championed the implementation of the 'Each-one-Teach-One' (EOTO) model of literacy delivery, supported NGOs in the implementation of literacy programmes, and provided training. UNESCO, UNICEF and NBC was also targeted to advise on the implementation of the project.

Developing Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes through Capacity Building

Some of the adult and non-formal education programmes include:

Functional literacy training, which is the combination of literacy education and socio-economic activities. It is selective and designed for a group of people within the same socio-economic activity. It is directed towards people who cannot write, read and compute, but need these skills for effective performance of their social and economic roles.

Functional literacy may be organised for a group of community leaders, rice sowers, cocoa farmers, market women, mechanics, furniture makers, panel-beaters, welders and many more. This program will develop their capacity skills in the profession.

- **Extension education:** universities are primarily set up for teaching and research programmes and to provide community services to the people through dissemination of new findings from research. Different ministries like health, agriculture, education, formulate policies that would help in the improvement of health, agriculture and education to boost the economic standard of the people.
- **Agricultural extension education:** innovations in both methods and techniques of production as well as a new improvement in agriculture are brought to the knowledge of the farmers through mass media.
- **Health education:** Training on health issues are also organised according to Lewis (as cited in Clement, 2009); the wealth of a nation does not depend on her wealth or her resources, but on the health and happiness of her people. Health extension education is an instrument for preventive health care. Some examples of such programmes are expanded programmes on immunization (EPI), Oral

Rehydration Therapy (ORT). The health awareness keeps the populace health in order to attain to the height of their potential skills.

- **Women education:** This programme exposes women to the happenings around them and helps them play their roles in the society more productively. The training of women helps them improve on their roles, develop their skills and empowers them to be self-reliant.
- **Retirement and pre-retirement education:** Clement (2009), expressed that this education empowers retirees to be productive even after their retirement at their different establishments, thus developing their capacity to be productive to themselves and the society.
- **Civic education:** This initiative involves programmes that are directed towards the improvement of the socio-cultural and political development of the people. It also involves the identification and mobilization of human and material resources available in the community and channelizing them for the development of betterment of the standard of living of the people.

Conclusion

Obviously, there are various non-formal education programmes used and adopted for self-reliant development, but what is lacking is contemporary capacity building strategies of non-formal education and the absence of a model that conceptualizes the skills acquisition process. Capacity building in adult and non-formal educational is aimed at improving adult education programmes to accommodate the changes and challenges facing adult and non-formal education through training and retraining facilitators and acquainting them with current issues that will empower and improve their productivity.

Recommendations

The stakeholders' intervening variables should involve motivation by government and non-governmental agencies through the provision of incentives, setting up of skills acquisition centres, mobilization through public enlightenment campaigns. Also included should be payments of allowances to trainees by support agents, such as individuals, multi-nationals; corporate bodies, community based organisation (CBO) and voluntary agencies.

- Creating conducive environments to enhance learning on the part of the trainers and trainee.
- Recruiting and training community facilitators at national, state and local levels.

Training of more staff in computer literacy to empower them to write some and share monitoring reports regularly.

- Organising by NMEC, of e-training for staff in monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis
- Recruiting more facilitators and adhering to minimum qualification.

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