

UTILIZATION OF ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this paper is to examine adult continuing education programmes for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The paper analyzes how adult continuing education programmes could be utilized for sustainable national development. In spite of Nigeria's affluence in human and material resources, it is still being classified among countries with high level of illiteracy and poverty; it is also being classified as a developing country. This paper x-rays sustainable national development and makes a case for adult continuing education as a veritable means for achieving it. The paper concludes with some far reaching recommendations as a way forward; one of which is that the three tiers of government – federal, state and local, should allocate appropriate funds to adult education and they should as well empower the poor masses at the grassroot because we cannot achieve sustainable development where we have a nation where majority of the adult population are illiterates.*

KEYWORDS: Utilization, Adult Continuing Education Programme, Sustainable Development, National development and Sustainable National Development.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains the only principal vehicle for achieving national development (Bock & Bock, (1989) and Egunyomi (2008). It is the key to human development and the backbone of any national development. At independence, most African countries pledged to develop their economies to democratize their political systems and to promote social justice among their peoples (Ihejirika 2013). These aims require among other things the broadening of educational opportunities especially adult continuing education, for their fulfillment because adults are the major occupants of the production sectors of the economy. Coombs (1989) and A' Aeth (1975) described the situation of African development as an educational dilemma. They have advocated the adoption of alternative approaches such as adult and non-formal education, which continuing education is a constituent component. Illich (1970) and Reime (1972) suggested the abolition of the formal school system due to its low absorptive capacity, low cost effectiveness and low capacity to develop the country's human and material resources.

Adult education, as an integral aspect of education is a learning process whether formal, informal and non-formal which the adult person engages in for better information, self and national development (Onyenemezu, 2012). Adult education emphasizes all forms of functional education programmes for youths and adults outside the formal school system. Such educational programmes include basic literacy programme, post literacy programme, continuing education programme and vocational education programme (F.R.N. 2008). These adult education programmes are geared towards human and national development. Onyenemezu (2012), submitted that adult education exerts enormous influence on the larger society in terms of national development. Fasokun (2006) observed that;

adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather, with helping/assigning people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies (P 36).

The benefits of adult education to individuals and nations cannot be over-emphasized. Adult education can be relied upon for sensitizing people to analytically assess the impact of government's economic, political, social environmental and general policies (Onyenemezu, 2013). Adult continuing education, as an aspect of adult education is for national development. it encompasses developing the human (adults) mind, knowledge, attitude, skills, behavioural pattern, physical and necessary ideas capable of solving human and societal problems in order to achieve sustainable national development. In line with the global trend, Nigeria needs an educational approach that can accommodate young and old adults (male, female, the poor and rich) and serve as empowerment tool for livelihood and national development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Adult Continuing Education:

Adult continuing education simply means an education that is added to previous or initial education by an adult person to complete, improve, remedy in order to adapt and meet with new challenges of life. Continuing education posits that education is a life-long affair, that is, that education is a co-terminal with life. Adishesiah (1981) submitted that continuing education reminds us that education is time-less throughout one's life and is open-ended in its local and can be acquired in any and many places – in the schools and colleges, in work, in play, in temple, church or mosque, in cultural manifestations and centres. In a similar view, Ihejirika (2012) observed that:

Continuing education covers the entire range of educational activities which are provided for all categories of learners, who have successfully or unsuccessfully completed one level of education but would want to continue the pursuit of education from where they had stopped earlier(P 45).

In tandem with the above, Imhabekhai (2009) equated continuing education to the “a la carte” system where everyone is free to take the dosage of education as he wants and when he wants it, and is free to come back at a later date for another dose. Continuing education can as well come in the form remedial education which gives extended opportunities for learners to make up inadequacies in their previous school experiences Ihejirika 2013). From the ongoing, it can be deduced that continuing education as the name implies means continuation of education from the cradle to the grave. It means that education is a continuum and life-long affair.

Forms of Continuing Education Programme

Egunyomi, (2008) enumerated the forms of continuing education programmes as academic. These include extra-mural, basic studies and professional courses, aesthetic such as fashion designing, and other skill training programmes and vocational/technical like secretarial/computer literacy programmes including automobile, carpentry and electrical electronics skill development training. Similarly, Ihejirika (2012) submitted that continuing education programmes involve distance education, extra-mural education, workers education, labour education, adult basic literacy education, functional literacy and extension education. Piontkowski (2000), informed that continuing education encompasses distance education, independent study, extension programmes, workshops, seminars, home-study on on-line courses, conferences or hands on training.

The above continuing education activities are laudable and open to universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and organized private sectors. They are all adult education programmes for development. M' David as cited in Nzeneri (2005) viewed that adult and non-formal education must be continuing as a means for each individual to improve the insufficient education received during his compulsory schooling for adaptation of the workers training to technological changes and the resultant increase in minimum of knowledge acquired.

The fact remains that minimum education required for an adult to be functional in his occupation increases with time due to acquired experiences and changes. Adult continuing education provides participants the opportunity to continue their education non-formally in less rigid and formal style; thereby making educational opportunities widely available to all categories of people in the society.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is one of the latest concepts that emerged in the literature and thinking of development policy. Sustainable development is an attempt to shape and secure a future. Nwaokugha (2006) viewed that sustainable development contemporarily, has become a password that cuts across all disciplines in today's knowledge industry. According to him, it is associated with "omnipotent capacities" of proffering solutions to all the problems of man and the society.

According to Kempe (1996), the concept of sustainable development was brought into common usage by the World Commission on Environment and development in its 1987 report. The report conceptualized sustainable development as human progress that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Ugwu & Ijah 2011).

According to Oyebamiji & Adekola (2008), sustainable development means conservation, reservation, usage and management of resources so that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of such resources and improvement in the quality of life for all the people.

Currently, sustainable development is one concept that has become so popular and has attracted attention across disciplines and scholars of various dispositions. In the 1987, the United Nations (UN) released Brunt Land Commission report which offered the most widely recognized definition of sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (Wikipedia, 2009). It contains within it two key concepts; namely;

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and
- The idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

Also, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) conceived sustainable development to mean environment, economic and social well-being for today and tomorrow. Abraham (2012) submitted that sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a systematic approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations – a system that connects space; and a system that connect time.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

National development could simply be defined as national growth in all ramifications (economic, social, cultural, political and environmental). It involves all the activities which a nation engages in to achieve a good standard of living for her citizens. The main purpose of national development is to liberate citizens from the shackles of poverty. Nyerere (1976) posited that development is of man, by man and for man. Hence economic, political, social, cultural, physical, spiritual, material and moral development of a nation is inevitable for freedom and dignity of man (Agboeze, 2011). Supporting the above view, Aggarwal (2008) perceived national development to include all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation’s cultural, democratic, emotional, economic, intellectual, material, moral, physical, spiritual and social. It should be noted that national development does not concern only economic development even though it is a crucial factor of it.

SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Abraham (2012), viewed sustainable national development as the capability of a particular nation or country to achieve comprehensive improvements or refinement in all ramifications of its existence (economic, political, cultural, religious etc). This simply means the ability of a particular country to plan and achieve betterment and improvements in its socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental lives both now and in the future. Sustainable development ties together the carrying capacity of national systems with the social challenges confronting humanity. Abraham (2012) submitted that in the early 1970s, sustainability was used to describe an economy in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems. Sustainable development helps us to understand ourselves and our nation which is faced with numerous socio-economic, political and environmental problems which can be addressed.

Adult continuing education can be used to address these national problems to ensure sustainable national development and secure the future. Future security is certainly guaranteed where adults who are the major occupants of the nation's production sector are able to continue their education in order to acquire new knowledge and skills to produce products for socio-economic, political and environmental development within the limits of present and necessary infrastructure.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abraham (2012) outlined the following as some principles of sustainable development.

- **Equity.** Equity is essential for a sustainable development. This concept promotes equity between ages, genders, classes, races, countries and continents.
- **Social Development:** The concept of sustainable development emphasizes on not only economic development, but also on social development and the need to conserve our environment and natural resources too.
- **Inclusive approach:** Sustainable development has to be inclusive. It is based on the improved quality of life for everyone. Mainly the deprived and the poor people of the world.
- **Human-Environment Harmony:** This understands that the needs of human beings and the requirements of the environment are interdependent and acknowledges this fact.
- **Co-operation:** Sustainable development is possible only if the developed world and the developing countries co-operate and the former supports the latter in their endeavors whenever they can, through subsidiaries, for instance looking at these principles, it becomes obvious that sustainable development does not mean only a future related concept but also requires a lot of understanding and appreciation which adult continuing education can offer for national progress.

UTILIZATION OF ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Obviously, no one or society can ignore the powers of education in transforming man and the society towards national development. This is why education is generally regarded as the back bone (bed rock) of any meaningful national development. Sustainable development is fundamentally seen as an education concept. Innovations in adult continuing education for achieving sustainable national development can strive to enforce socio-economic, political and environment changes. Adult continuing education can develop in people the ability to participate and explore the entire development processes towards national development. As government initiates development programmes, it can initiate innovation of adult education programmes which can bring about changes in the body polity with a mandate to accommodate the grass root decision making process especially on political, social, economic and environmental issues. The adult poor masses should be empowered to continue their education in order to acquire new skills and knowledge which can change our political system. Focusing on the polity to achieve sustainable national development is important because it is the political system that determines the process of development and what happens to the people. These innovations of continuing education for sustainable national development can focus on creating a high level of political consciousness in the masses as well as conscientize them to guide against certain behaviours; realize their roles in environmental preservation thereby securing the future.

CONCLUSION

A conscious adult continuing education programme for achieving sustainable national development can be tailored towards equipping and empowering people (the adults). This should involve social, economic, political and cultural lives of the adult citizens. Adult continuing education can educate the masses not to consume out all the available resources in the name of development. The concept of sustainable development emphasizes not only on economic development, but also on social, political and cultural development and the need to conserve the environment and its natural resources. The three tiers of government – federal, state and local, should empower the poor adults in the grassroot communities to continue their education programme. They should as well allocate adequate funds to adult education programmes especially continuing education and literacy programmes because we cannot achieve sustainable development where we have a nation where majority of the adults are illiterates and poor.

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