



Institute of Education
OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY
Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

**DEVELOPMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY
IN NIGERIAN
EDUCATIONAL
SYSTEM**

**2nd National
Conference
Proceedings**

1. CURRICULUM REFORMS IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: HOW SUSTAINABLE - Professor AJEYALEMI, Duro
2. EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS- Prof. BABALOLA, Joel B
3. ICT IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM- Prof. ADEDOYIN, 'Fola.S
4. EMPOWERING TEACHERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ICT- ALEBIOSU, Kehinde A. (Ph.D) & IFAMUYIWA, Adebola S. (Ph.D)
5. BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - ~~TOSONIWA, Pool~~
6. HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION- OREDEIN, Afolakemi Olasumbo (Ph. D)
7. ICT FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT- AJAYI, Olusola Olajide
8. EFFECTIVE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE NIGERIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS- FAPOHUNDA, T.M (Ph.D)
9. HARMONIOUS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES- OLOYEDE, David Oluwatoyin (Ph.D)
- ✓ 10. WOMEN AND ADULT EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- GEORGE, T.O.
11. MANAGING LABOUR FOR IMPROVED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES - BABAJIDE, Elise Omolara (Ph.D)

WOMEN AND ADULT EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GEORGE, T.O.
tayo.george@yahoo.com
Department of Sociology
Covenant University, Ota
Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Adult literacy and adult education are necessary to ensure an enlightened government and citizenry, whose insights, activities and decisions are vital for the achievement of national goals and development. Education is one paramount yardstick often used to measure the development of any nation. Through education, relevant skills, knowledge and values are acquired by members of the society to enable them maximize their potentials in the ever changing world, but there is observed imbalance in the education of men and women in Nigeria. This is adduced to many reasons: cultural, economic, and religious factors among others. This paper therefore examines women in adult education from the point of view of the history, meaning, forms and objectives of adult education. The purpose of women's education and an assessment of their involvement in Adult education as a basis for Nigeria national development are equally examined and the paper concludes with suggestions for further study.

Key words: Education, Women Education, Sustainable Development,

Introduction

While addressing African Ministers of Education at Abidjan in March 1964, a representative of the United Nations Educational Socio-cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized the fact that adults have a major role to play in the destiny of our modern society. He observed that it is only by establishing an effective communication with the adult population, by helping them to adjust to a rapidly changing world that an immediate impact can be made on the urgent problems of society and essential progress be brought about. This emphasis on adult learning shows that effective mobilization of human resources in the society is vital for national development. Essentially, the education of women is one major avenue for harnessing the requisite human potential for optimal development of the society.

Adult education refers to education for adults with poor or no basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and other forms of skills and knowledge needed to cope with societal change. As an organized and sustained learning programme designed for and appropriate to the needs of adults, it aims at promoting changes among adult population and society and also assist members of the society to control change and the environment in which the change occur. Adult education is the education of adults. It is any activity or educational purpose, carried on by mature persons on a part-time basis, or any voluntary, purposeful effort made towards the self-development of adults conducted either by a public or private agency (Fafunwa, 1971). Overall, his conception of adult education is "Functional literacy"- which helps the adult through appropriate reading materials to become a better farmer, trader or craftsman. Like most developing nations, Nigeria's social and economic development depends largely on the ability to produce a skilled and informed adult population.

Writing on the type of education that Nigerians need, Enoh (1996) quoted the former Premier, of the Northern Nigeria Sir Ahmadu Bello: 'what we lack and what we must endeavour to build as quickly as possible, is a strong body of well informed public opinion which will not let

itself be fooled by any glib-soap box orator, but will examine each statement on its merit and single out what is false and worthless'. It is on account of this that he placed tremendous faith in adult education as a means of making every person participates in the developmental process.

History and Definition of Adult Education

Adult Education is any organized and sustained learning programme designed for and appropriate to the needs of adults. Usually, adults need to fit in study alongside other domestic and work responsibilities; they bring a diversity of experience to their studies; and they study voluntarily. Adult education is an inclusive term covering all types of education and training activities for adults formal and informal, whether offered by schools, colleges, universities, voluntary organizations, industry, or public service bodies. Adult education takes different forms in different places at different times, reflecting the different social functions given to adult learning, and the different groups with access to opportunities. Both public and private bodies are engaged in the organization of adult education programmes in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 1987).

Adult education, as an academic discipline has its roots in administration as a science of human behaviour. Before the nineteenth century, every activity in a learning situation which was capable of increasing human knowledge formed part of the general field of philosophy, which has been translated as "love of knowledge". Adult education itself branched off from administration as a result of the industrial revolution. The system advocated aimed at achieving greater productivity from the human labour. Its procedure was to train, teach, and develop the working man. It was from such beginnings that adult education arose, and from the very beginning, has had definite leanings towards functionality.

In ancient Greece, Athenian society was organized to enable a small class of people to pursue learning as the central vocation of their adult lives. However, adult learning was not then seen to be universally useful. In Denmark, adult education was central to the regeneration of a poor agrarian economy, inspired in the 19th century by the Danish Poet and Educator N. F. S. Grundtvig, and built on the development of and support for active and participative democracy. That commitment to popular participation and social justice remains central to adult education in the Nordic countries. In Britain, "adult education" has often been taken to mean part-time studies that do not lead to certification; in the United States, it is seen as a generic, all-inclusive term. However, in more than half the world, it is synonymous with adult literacy, with programmes of reading and writing for people with no initial schooling.

As far back as 1945, Oxford University England was involved in the development of adult education in Nigeria. Up to 1955, few Africans such as this Ghanaian K.A. Korsah and Rev. Ransome-Kuti a Nigerian participated in the process of establishing adult education. The urgency of developing adult education in Nigeria arose from the conditions which existed before the Second World War. The most universal factor has been the acceleration of social change: In March 1971, the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) was formed. Its primary aim was to strengthen adult education in all its aspects, so that it can better serve the needs of the people of Nigeria, and play a positive role in the development of the country.

Adult education is the process by which men and women seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skills, their knowledge or their sensitiveness. Prosser (1967) defined adult education as the force which in its ideal application helps the society to determine its ends, bringing about a maximum readjustment of attitude within a society to any new and changed situation in the shortest time possible and which helps to initiate change

which involves and imparts new skills and techniques required and made necessary by the change.

Adult education is a lifelong phenomenon as it can be undertaken at any age and for different purposes, deliberately for individuals, community, state or national progress and development. Adult education is not only designed for the achievement of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to develop people to be functionally alert in order to contribute to the national goals and aspiration.

Forms of Adult Education

1. **Fundamental Adult Education:** A form of adult education concerned with teaching the fundamental techniques of life. It assumes increasing importance in developing countries in view of rapidity of social changes, and the consequent necessity for adaptation to change. It deals with the introduction of new ideas, skills and techniques, new ways of thinking, new methods of organization. For example, in the field of agriculture, fundamental adult education seeks to introduce better methods of soil conservation, better care of livestock. In the health sector, it seeks to promote better sanitation, better water supplies etc. In the economic field, it seeks to introduce new productive skills, better forms of trading and marketing and more productive methods of business organization. In the political field, it promotes new thinking and new orientation in such basic things as national consciousness and importance of national unity. In education it promotes the spread of literacy and adult education as well as the extension and improvement of schools for children.
2. **Liberal Adult Education:** is a type of education which strikes a balance of harmony between man and his environment. It tends to increase the opportunity for the formation of steadfast character and the security of an upright and useful life. It helps to train the intellect and aid people in their adjustment to their changing environment. It encourages self development and the full use of people's talents and faculties. It is in these ways that such activities help to promote the desire of individuals for self-fulfilment and to enrich the communities to which they belong.
3. **Occupational Adult Education:** This type of Adult Education aims primarily at upgrading those in regular employment and those who wish to become more proficient in their vocations. The objective is to make people more skilled in the basic methods of their own special craft, trade or industry. As a form of continuing education for workers, this type of adult education very often takes the form of in-service training programmes to update the skill of its recipients and to increase their efficiency on the job and to prepare them for their next higher level of employment.

Objectives of Adult Education

Adult education is a lifelong phenomenon which can be undertaken at any age and for different purposes, deliberately for individuals, community, state or national progress and development. Adult education is not only designed for the achievement of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to develop people to be functionally alert in order to contribute to the national goals and aspiration. In addition to the fact that illiteracy of adults will adversely affect the education of children, the strongest argument for this form of education, Fafunwa (1971) admits is social and economic in nature. Socially, literacy will make the adults more receptive to changes and economically it will make them better producers and consumers.

As in most developing countries, adult education in Nigeria stemmed from a response to the challenge of change. This implies an improvement in knowledge about the world, an

improvement of existing skills, an ability to reason and to understand, an ability to participate and to lead, and the capacity to deal with the twin worlds of physical materials and of ideas. Anyanwu, (1987) explains that "the problem of widening and deepening the change absorption capacity of any people in a situation of social change is one which adult education must tackle.

Objectives of adult education can be viewed in two perspectives. In the first place, is the angle of the national objective while the other perspective is the learner's objective?

The National objective

- To provide increased knowledge of the Nigerian situation through a rear view mirror
- Based on the experiences of other developed and developing countries, Nigerians should be given the opportunity to self actualize, think positively and apply the knowledge gained in tackling Nigerians problem.
- To help the illiterate adults to learn to read and write, especially in their own languages, thus enriching their minds and thereby enabling them to take intelligent part in the school and political development of their nation.
- To enhance the frontiers of reading ability of adults through post literacy classes particularly in English and arithmetic as well as to make the school drop outs productive participants in baking the national cake.

The Learner's Objective

- Adult education is designed and is expected to assist individuals to develop some skills for technical goals with the aim of making learners economically viable.
- Not only is adult education capable of making individuals to be mentally and intellectually alert through exposure to relevant literature in order to avert the possibility of relapsing into illiteracy, it also enables individuals to usefully employ their leisure and recreation for worthwhile and rewarding activities.
- By exposing the learners to adult education, there is the encouragement for such responsibilities adequately because they have been made to rediscover themselves.

Stages of Adulthood

In examining the subject of adult education, it is pertinent to describe adulthood and its various stages. Adulthood is defined as the period immediately after adolescence and it is characterized as a decline in physical, intellectual, personality and social development, changes in the body and brain including sensory capacities, organs and nervous systems, health and fitness, and motor skills.

Adulthood is basically divided into three stages namely:

- Early or young adulthood (approximately ages 20 to 40).
- Middle adulthood (ages 40 to 65).
- Late or older adulthood (age 65 or more).

Early adulthood during these years, adults make career choices and form intimate relationships that may be life-long.

Middle adulthood here there is some form of decline in health and physical abilities but develop more mature patterns of thinking based on practical experience.

Late adulthood here memory may deteriorate due to disability or malfunctioning of certain vital organs in the body or disease occasioned by old age, it is not the same for all cases. However, this is a stage where most people have retired from the work force they try to cope with boredom, loneliness, personal losses and impending death.

It must be noted however, that irrespective of adulthood stage or age, there is no limit to education. The 89 years old American woman who recently obtained her first degree from Stanford University is one outstanding example.

Purpose of Women's Education

It is clear that a good education aims at overall development of persons be it physical, intellectual and moral well-being of individuals. It is in line with this perspective that Omololu (1972) points out seven different but related purposes which women's education ought to foster globally. They include:

1. **Social status** An educated woman can hold her own in any class or society, can express her opinion freely and can contribute her quota to the development of the social life in the community.
2. **Cultural Value** The educated woman is a cultured woman who knows how to behave in a proper and acceptable manner. She is gentle, polite and respectful. Can this be said of our educated women in Africa? Are there no cases of disrespectful and disobedient women who because of their educational achievement act otherwise?
3. **Economic Development-** An educated woman is better positioned for paid employment as well as fare well in her chosen business. Such a woman is in a vantage position to contribute toward the up-keep and education of her children, thereby raising their standard and conversely contributing to economic development of the country.
4. **Realization of the Importance of Child Development-** Education no doubt brings awareness especially to mothers in terms of their responsibility to their children. It is acknowledged that children thrive and learn quickly when their mothers are educated.
5. **Political Awareness-** with education, the Nigerian women who had no political rights before now have such rights. Today they can vote and be voted for.
6. **National Unity-** education has made educated Nigerian women to be aware of the importance of national unity. Today, there are women associations whose membership and activities cut across the entire country.
7. **National Reconstruction-** Today, in Nigeria, there are several women's voluntary organizations that contribute in various ways to national development.

Assessment of Women and Adult education in Nigeria

Until about four decades ago, education in Nigeria was focused mainly on men, especially in the Northern part of the country. Erinsho (1997) identified reasons for unequal educational access to include: cultural beliefs and some religious practices which are retrogressive and discriminatory against women (early/ forced marriage) and the practice of purdah in Islamic religion. Education in its widest form has been identified as a tool for freeing women from ignorance and backwardness and bringing them to a position of liberty and awareness.

Plato, the great philosopher defines education as what turns the eyes of the mind to be face to face with reality and contends that women ought to share as far possible, in education and in other ways with men. He accordingly laments that the ideal state, instead of being a whole is reduced to a half. Nigeria makes a good study as we are all witnesses today to the development of a nation that has become sensitive to women's education in recent time.

Here are some of the ways in which women have influenced adult education in Nigeria:

- Women commission and adult education commission are involving disabled women who are ready to subject themselves to learning.
- Bursaries and scholarship are now being awarded to girls being admitted into schools at both the secondary and tertiary levels.
- Funding supports is given to Nigerian Association of Women in Science, Technology

and Mathematics (NAWSTEM) so as to be able to carry out any project they want to so as to develop them and to create room for other illiterate adults especially women who wish to thread similar path.

- More females are being admitted with the required minimum academic qualification in all the institutions of higher learning in the country.
- More girls' secondary boarding schools are being established with the emphasis on rural and riverine areas.
- Public enlightenment campaign are mounted on adults to give them equal opportunities as the youth e.g. such as the equal right of being exposed to the computers
- They also conduct a national literacy survey to produce definitive planning and re-launching of a new nationwide, mass literacy campaign, to see adults who are willing and ready to achieve education actualize their dreams. This is being carried out every 3 years to ensure complete eradication of illiteracy.
- At the local Government levels treatment of adults to mass literacy education as a compliment to its compulsory 9-year basic education for adults who are ready to be subjected to learning is a top priority.

Women, Adult Education and Social Change

The reasons behind learning or further learning are very pertinent ones. Why must the woman bother herself with adult education? Is it a necessity? The answers to these vital questions lie in the staggering threat to her continued welfare and economic empowerment. Social, political, economic, moral and intellectual decadence can overwhelm a woman who refuses to learn new things or improve on her knowledge. There is therefore the need to acknowledge the fact that society is never static but in a constant state of flux and complex dynamic growth. At the same time, changes in society pose various problems. For example, there are the increasing problems brought about by the growth in population, increasing unemployment, technological advancement, accommodation etc. It is therefore necessary for the woman to equip herself adequately to face successfully the hazards associated with these inevitable challenges. Adult education is one of the major ways of successfully harnessing the human potential.

Adult education gives the woman the tool with which to tackle problems as they emerge. That is, she learns to live in the present, re-orientate and adjust her life to ensure a balance in the ever-changing environment. The experience of sharing life with companions, of serving known purposes and of choosing and enjoying is promoted by well planned programmes of adult education. Adult education underlines the urgent need for the development of adult potentialities especially the women folk.

Adult education helps the woman to develop her innate abilities in such ways that life becomes more fulfilling or satisfying to the individual. It develops the spiritual and intellectual resources adequate for the solution of man's numerous problems and thus the community is enriched by such display of increased skills and knowledge. Adult education is important, as it increases the knowledge of the individual and gives the adult the opportunities to self actualize, think positively, and apply the knowledge gained in tackling real life problems and other emerging societal problems

Through adult education, illiterate adults learn to read and write, especially in their local languages. It helps make drop outs productive participants by exposing the learners to adult education, there is the encouragement for such responsibilities adequately, because they have been made to rediscover themselves. In addition, the programme assist adults especially women to usefully employ their leisure and recreation for worthwhile and rewarding

activities rather than involving in gossip and related unprofitable activities.

Suggestions for further studies

- To attain any meaningful results in Nigeria and the desired national development, Adult Education must be limitless in scope. It should be re-designed to make Nigerians especially the women to be more productive citizens, reduce poverty and raise their standard of living in its totality. Anything short of this is as good as living in a fool's paradise.
- Universal literacy where every woman is able to read as least a local newspaper as well as write a simple letter should be included in the programme.
- Recognition of priorities for development must of necessity take into account the culture of the people, and operates within the possibilities of local communities.
- General knowledge with particular reference to the local environment, culture and values of the people should be taught and emphasized.
- Popular education in terms of technical instruction required to improve the local industries should be revisited while the relevant materials and human resource to drive this should to be made available.
- Adult education should be strategically located in a particular place which belongs to the people and is run by them if the lessons they bring are to be followed. Well equipped libraries and up-to-date teaching aids generally suited for spreading progressive ideas should be available at all centres.

Conclusion

In the past, our educational system openly discriminates against women education and girls in much the same way as against minorities. The traditional attitude held that it was far more important to educate sons who would have to go out and find jobs than daughters who are eventually married off to become wives and mothers, and our educational system clearly reflected this bias. Boys were given more and better education than girls, and many of the top universities at inception did not even admit women. Changing cultural expectations and new anti discriminating laws, broke most of these barriers and great progress has been made.

Today, harvests of Nigerian women are involved in enterprising occupations such as law, medicine, teaching, business, and politics. The increasing number of women's enrolment in tertiary institutions and of course Adult Education programmes, weekend part-time studies and evening classes attest to this upsurge. Similarly, more females now graduate from high schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities with good grades. It is against this background that one can state that Nigerian women of today are making frantic efforts to educate themselves so as to fill the already existing gaps and shoulder their responsibility in nation building and their involvement in adult education has been one of such avenues. For me, there's no doubt that an educated woman is a better housewife, mother, social mobilizer and citizen. The price to be paid for a women's education cannot be compared with the pay-off to the nation in tangible and intangible terms. As Uduigwomen (2004) notes, if the best and soundest education possible is given to these vulnerable group, the future generation of this country might have the very best foundation and background to sustain our fledging civilization.

References

Anyanwu, C. N. (1987). *Developing Adult Education in Nigeria: Definition and History of Adult Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University press limited.

- Erinosho, Y. (1997). Issues on Women Empowerment in Nigeria Departmental Seminar Paper, Faculty of Education, Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye.
- Enoh, A.O. (1996). *Main currents in Nigerian Educational Thought*. Jos: Midland Press.
- Fafunwa, B. (1971). *History of Nigerian Education*. London: Macmillian Publishers.
- Isiugo-Abanihe, I. (1996). Education and Women Empowerment" In L. Erinosho, B. Osototimehn, and J. Olawoye, (Eds.) *Women's Empowerment and, Reproductive Health*. Ibadan: (Bookcraft Ltd).
- NNCAE, Proposal for a National Adult Education Programme, Ogunsanya, M. (1988). *Foundation Courses in Education*. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers (Int) Ltd.
- Prosser, D. (1967). *Adult Education for Developing Countries*. Nairobi: East Publishing House.
- Uduigwomen, A.F. (1999). Philosophy of Education: An Overview. A. F Udiogwomen, A.F. & Ogbinaka, (Eds). *Philosophy and Education*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka publishers.
- Uduigwomen, A.F. (2004). A Philosophy of Education for Nigerian women: Problems and prospects. *The African Symposium*. 4 (1)
- Omololu, A.A. (1972). Education for women, In A. A. Adaralegbe (Ed), *A philosophy for Nigerian Education* Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria Limited.