



**ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADULT
EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study focused on how sustainable development can be achieved through adult education in Nigeria. The study made some clarification on the concept of sustainable development pointing out its goals. 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 behavior. The paper discussed adult education as well as the redefined objectives and its relevance in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The study concludes that public awareness, education, capacity building and training are key to moving the society towards sustainability. Therefore, it was recommended that Functional literacy education should be considered by adult education providers as an instrument for creating awareness among people particularly in the rural communities

Keywords: *Adult Education, Development, Sustainable*

Introduction

Education is an instrument for nation-building and achieving national development. According to the National Policy on Education (2004) it is an

instrument of 'par excellence' which equips an individual with the right skills, knowledge, abilities, competence, attitudes, behaviour and values in order to function effectively in the society. Education is equally a means to an end which assist citizens of a nation to develop their full potentials and capacity to function effectively in their society as well as attain sustainable livelihoods. Education, literacy and knowledge are further acquired through the various forms of education that includes: formal learning, informal learning and non-formal learning. Itari and Ugbe (2018) defined education as a process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences. They further stressed that education is seen as all experience acquired in the process of living, acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitude and experiences in institutions of learning and as a relatively organized learning activity intended to make some persons (be they adults, youths or children) learn. This presupposes that the teacher/facilitator, learner/student, content/programme and method must be present in the learning situation.

To achieve a nation's national goal(s), build a world of true democracy, attain high level of sustenance/living for citizens of a country and develop all citizenry in various capacities; adult/non-formal education is imperative because formal education which is embedded within the principles of formal school system cannot achieve these alone.

According to Nzeneri (2008) adult and non-formal education accommodates all the forms of formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education given to men and women (alone, in groups or institutional settings) to improve them in their society by increasing their skills, their knowledge, understanding, attitudes and sensitiveness. Globally, the importance of Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE) has been identified in response to the societal challenges by helping individuals through providing education, literacy and training schemes that will aid them tackle these challenges. Therefore, countries deemed it necessary to incorporate this form of education in their system. Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE) is also a means in which the SDGs and EFA goals could be obtained.

On September 25, 2015, one hundred and ninety-four (194) member states of the United Nations including Nigeria, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development tagged; “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The campaign, known also as “Project Everyone”, is part of the United Nations’ efforts to build a comprehensive development plan aimed at completing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, and is intended to help communicate the agreed sustainable development goals to a wider constituency.

Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability is the ability to sustain, maintain, provide for or nourish something for an indefinite period without damaging or depleting it. In recent years, an understanding of the concept of sustainability has been firmly established by many scholars and researchers. Sustainability consists of three dimensions: the protection of natural environment, the maintenance of economic vitality and observance of specific social considerations about human development. The notion of sustainability can be understood in various meanings and is defined in many contexts as a technical term used in forestry; as an ecological term; as well as a new definition which refers to the development of humanity and of human societies (Itari & Ugbe, 2018).

Concept of Development

Over time, ‘development’ has carried quite a number of definitions. Too many works exists on the subject, from the writing of orthodox economist, modernization theorist of those of the Marxist and Neo Marxists. In the same vein, Oghator and Okoobo (2015) pointed out that development goes beyond the increase in per-capita income or economic growth, but also include sustainable improvements in the living standard of the people, which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures. On the other hand, Seers (2017) defined development by posing certain questions such as; what has been happening to poverty, unemployment

and inequality. To him, if all three indices (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at a relatively high rate, there is absence of development, and vice versa. It follows therefore that for a country to be classified as developed, there are parameters to look out for which are: the state of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

According to Agwu (2016), development can also said to simply mean providing qualitative improvement in the lives of people or providing greater quality of life for humans. Development also means the act or process of bringing to a more advanced state, growth or progress; or progressed state or form. Development according to Nyerere (2016) is the expansion of man's own consciousness and therefore of his own power over himself, his environment and his society.

Oguntimehin and Nwosu (2014) noted that the term "development" is employed, four distinct but interrelated processes are usually borne in mind, namely: a developing society is changing from simple and traditional techniques towards the application of scientific knowledge at the realm of technology; the developing society evolves from subsistence farming towards commercial production of agricultural goods; the developing society undergoes a transition from the use of human and animal power to industrialization; and the developing society moves from the farm and village towards urban concentrations. There are different forms of development which include: social, political, economic, educational, environmental, cultural, green development and so on. So development can also be described as: material progress or economic growth or reformation of social institutions and infrastructures.

The primary objective of all types of development is to promote authentic human development. Catherine (2011) agreed with this by stating that development has recently shifted from economic progress towards a more humanistic view focused on the individual and the quality of life which is often referred to as "integral and sustainable human development". This focuses on the inter-connectedness of economics with political, socio-cultural and environmental spheres, as well as the necessities, capacities and potentialities of human beings.

Concept of Sustainable Development

There is no single definition for sustainable development but the key idea common to all definitions concerns resource exploitation at a rate that would not prove detrimental to future generations. For instance, according to Emeka-Nwobia (2015), sustainable development could probably be otherwise called “equitable and balanced”. This means that, in order for development to continue indefinitely, it should balance the interests of different groups of people, within the same generation and among generations and do so simultaneously in three major interrelated areas: economic, social, environmental and so on.

Nnabuo and Asodike (2012) described sustainable development as a construct, which envision development as meeting the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. It implies that while education meets the need of the present it does not compromise the ability of the future generations to meet own needs. Nevertheless, this ability to meet the needs is determined by human capital (through education, technology advance) and through physical capital (machine, tool among others). Akintoye and Opeyemi (2014) argued that continued sustainable development is only possible or assured when it is agreed and indeed concrete steps are taken to raise the level of literacy and numeracy in any society. Educational institutions and their programmes are therefore, the tools with which to achieve development and its sustainability.

Sustainable development has also been defined by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) as the development path along which maximization of human well-being for today’s generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. This definition suggests that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and current generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the well-being and welfare of the people.

Sustainable development is therefore concerned with the creation and sustenance of the conditions for current and future generations of human to live well on this planet. Hence, as noted by Sims and Falkenberg(2013), right from the beginning, a multi-prong approach to the idea of sustainable

society was taken that went beyond concerns for only the destruction of the national environment to include the concern for meeting the essential needs of all people and those needs are met in a sustainable way in consideration of the needs of future generations.

Therefore, for any meaningful development to take place and be sustained there must be a medium through which the members of the community or any nation can be made to participate in the programs which will bring positive results. Education is the only means by which people can be conscientized and positive attitudes inculcated into them. This is because education has a central and rather crucial role to play in the mobilization of the citizens for specific national development programs.

Sustainable Development Goals

The goals for sustainable development are made up of 17 items namely;

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Concept of Adult Education

Adult education in Nigeria is currently geared towards national development. 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 behavior (Ewuzie, 2012). Every government strives through investment to achieve development for the well being of her citizens. Adult education in Nigeria is presently geared towards national development (Ewuzie, 2012). 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. The policy on education states the objectives of adult education as:

- to provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the opportunity of any formal education;
- to provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- to provide further education for different categories of completers of formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- 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 and

- to give the adult citizens of the country aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

The main targets are specifically defined as youth (girls and boys over 15 years of age, but sometime younger) as well as women and men, generally poor or socially disadvantaged. Although literacy continues to be at its heart, adult education also includes “numeracy”, problem-solving and life skills, and other knowledge. The notion of adult education is often used interchangeably with other notions such as literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing, adult basic end non-formal education, and etcetera. For the purpose of this study, the researcher defined adult education is understood as 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 educational inadequacies of matured people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2014).

Ofuebe (2012) defined it as a phenomenon in which individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environment, transforming them for their own betterment and in the process, lesson that are learnt are passed on to future generation to enable them improve their capacity to make further valuable changes.

In the same vein the aim of education including adult education according to Fafunwa (2014) includes the development of practical skills, character training, teaching respect for elders, teaching the values of honest labour, inculcating a sense of belonging and community spirit and promoting cultural heritage.

Adult education in the view of Oghenekohwo (2017) means all learning practices or processes in which persons regarded as adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attributes or values. In other words, adult education means any form of learning that adults undertake or engage in beyond the traditional formal schooling, encompassing basic literacy to

personal fulfillment as a lifelong process. The learning domains in adult education are classified as formal, non-formal and informal.

This conceptualization of adult education implies activities concerned with assisting adults in their quest for a sense of control in their own lives, within their interpersonal relationships, and with regard to the social forms and structures within which they live without limitations and any form of exclusion.

Characteristics that subscribe to the above conceptualization of adult education are that adults need to be assisted through learning activities to have a sense of control in their own lives, within and outside their settings. In other words, within the andragogical model (Knowles, 2002), adults are prone to a sense of control because, they need to know, having self-concept, driven by experience, deliberately committed to learn, having orientation to learn, and intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn. Based on the functionality premise that support the practice of adult education, it is basic that, learning is problem and experience centered and the experiences are meaningful to the adult learners as adult learn best, when they feel the need to learn and when they have a sense of responsibility for what, why and how to they learn.

Objectives of Adult and Non-Formal Education Redefined

Adult education is all learning activities designed to assist any person and everybody who had deficiencies at the initial stage of learning due to circumstances beyond self-control in order to remediate such deficiencies for the purpose of social, economic, personal self-management or self-control and cultural adjustment to any environment.

Thus, adult education is all age lifelong learning process that has both general and specific objectives respectively. While the general objective of adult education is to produce and ensure an enlightened individual all through existence (lifelong), the specific objectives in the submission of Oghenekohwo, (2017) are to:

- i. Reduce drastically the level of illiteracy thereby promoting basic literacy that can assist adults to address all forms of poverty of knowledge and know-how;

- ii. Empower people through the creation of access to basic education without restriction.
- iii. Promote lifelong learning that makes everyone functionally inclined all through life;
- iv. Enhance learning orientation and opportunity among adults of all ages without barriers, limitations and restrictions;
- v. Mitigate all forms of social exclusions that are designed to limit access to lifelong learning opportunities; and
- vi. Engender learning opportunities to all person irrespective of age, sex, position, class, race and colour. (p.11)

Given these expectations of adults in their learning context, it becomes inevitable to articulate the sustainable development needs of adults in adult education investment particularly with reference to the sustainable development goals. Recalling that investment in adult education is a derived demand, it is obvious that investment decision on adult education is predicted by the variants of human capital development, social capital development, social demand satisfaction and internal rate of returns (Oghenekohwo, 2017).

Relationship between Adult Education and Sustainable Development

Development must be dedicated to the improvement of all round well being of people but it can only make meaning when the people for whom the development is meant for appreciate and understand the value of the services rendered. It is evident from the above that development is meaningful only when it is sustained. Hence sustainable developments are the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development must involve an all round development of the individual and the society. International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) (2016) notes that the essence of sustained and integrated balanced development is to achieve social, economic and political justice that leads to the liberation of mankind and in so doing eradicates such scourges as mass poverty and mass illiteracy. It can at this junction be referred to sustainable development as a process of improving the living conditions of

people to enable them contribute actively in decision making and policy implementation for the present generation without jeopardizing the opportunities for future generation. It is now be considered that every nation has the preoccupation of providing sustainable development for her citizens. Nigeria is one of the developing nations of the world with communities that are still highly underdeveloped.

Nzeneri (2017) opined that it is in adult education that emphasis is placed on lifelong learning, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment, for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization and group dynamism. He then defined adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. Adult Education is an empowerment strategy through which adults can uplift themselves socially and economically to enable them participate fully in the development of their communities.

In view of the Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria as a member nation of the United Nation Organisation requires urgent and concrete steps in areas such as: needs assessment, planning, policy framework in line with the goals, strategies of achieving them, allocating scarce resources and working out modalities for evaluating progress among others within the time frame of the programme. Besides, Nigeria also needs social education, enlightenment and reconstruction to drive home the necessary attitude, behaviour, change, knowledge and values among others for sustainable development. More so, educating the people will assist in developing a social capital that is cordial and germane to the realization of the goals. Education and particularly adult education remains an invaluable tool for development. To this end, Adekola & Abanum (2010) assert that no development is possible without education. Hence, education is an instrument per excellence. It is a vital instrument for liberating people from shackles of ignorance, poverty, and underdevelopment and for combating diseases. Therefore, sustainable development is not possible without adult education.

Thus, if education is so relevant to achieving development in society, adult education which is relative to it, equally have some significant roles to play in achieving sustainability. This is because adult education is instrumental to sustainability.

Adult education, which is an aspect of education, is capable of paving the way for sustainable development. Adult education, according to Nzeneri (2008) lays greater emphases on lifelong learning, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization and group dynamism. Providing the right teaching and learning process is the prerequisite of adult education. Adult education as defined by Nyerere in Oyebamiji(2013) is the incorporation of anything that enlarges man's understanding, activate and implement those decisions for themselves. Therefore, there is a serious connection between adult education and sustainable social, economic development and environmental sustainability. It is also fundamental to achieving equity, inclusive poverty alleviation and the building of equitable, tolerant and sustainable knowledge base society (UNESCO, 2011). Adult education therefore offers the local actions required for the actualization of a viable development. In a general term, the roles of adult education in the society include human capacity development, developing the social and cultural abilities of individuals to enhance environmental integrity and stability.

According to Seya (2005) adult education can apprehend the complex relationship between all forms of education to achieve development. It involves general transmission of knowledge for self-fulfillment and active participation in social and economic lives of the people. In line with this position, Egunyomi(2009:341) established that adult education is capable of engendering sustainable development by creating more access to:

1. Education and a literate society where government development plans and projects could easily be understood by everybody in the nation
2. Help in entrenching democratic process and political participation among citizens
3. Help in disabusing people from ethnic violence and strengthens national unity

4. Solve the problem of unemployment as it empowers people to be better skilled for better opportunities or be employers of labour
5. Help in the Reduction of diseases through community awareness and enlightenment programmes
6. Assist in fighting against gender discrimination thereby promoting gender equity and equality
7. Help in education of farmers on modern farming technology in order to bring about increased productivity.

Accordingly, there is a general nexus between adult education and sustainability. Adult education is the reason for everyone in the world to become aware and knowledgeable about these goals in order to contribute adequately towards its attainment. This relationship is necessary because it facilitate a lasting skills and abilities in individuals for the overall betterment of all in the society. In order to also check the ironical low level of awareness of the dimensions of the sustainable development goals and to bring about a plausible awareness of the programme, there is the need for regular education, sensitization and advocacy on sustainable development goals activities to ensure right direction for the programme among the people (Akinloye, 2018).

The attainability of sustainable development cannot be possible without cogent adult education strategies. This is because adult education is strategic to educating, conscientizing and training of individuals towards the realization of sustainable development goals. Conscientizing the people will enables understanding of the best strategy to adopt in promoting sustainable development. Also, adult education provides the necessary information that is relative to sustainability. In conformity with the above view, Mckeown (2002) supports that public awareness, education, capacity building and training are key to moving the society towards sustainability. Haladu (2006) emphasizes on the important of the communication media in promoting effective public awareness of any programme in the society. This support led to the believe that adult education is instrumental to development. Hence, UNESCO (2001) suggests national and institutional commitments that allow learning opportunity for all individuals irrespective of class, gender, race or religion.

The following suggested strategies are very essential to sustainable development and are:

1. Community education, training, seminars and workshops
2. Collaborative research and development
3. Effective partnership and community participation
4. Literacy education
5. Prioritization of learning based on the goals
6. Provision of modern information communication technology (ICT) facilities.

Conclusion

Sustainable development is therefore concerned with the creation and sustenance of the conditions for current and future generations of human to live an improved life. Therefore, the concept of sustainable development was discussed. Furthermore, the concept of adult education was established involving the programmes and objectives of adult education. The paper further highlighted the relevance of adult education in achieving sustainable development. It was concluded that public awareness, education, capacity building and training are key to moving the society towards sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Governments at all levels should introduce community education programmes across various communities.
2. Government and Non-Governmental agencies should consider staff training, seminars and workshops as a tool for improving workers skills.
3. Collaborative research should be given more attention in searching for the possible ways of improving adult education programmes.
4. Private organizations should go into partnership government and community members to encourage active participation of people in adult education activities.

5. Functional literacy education should be considered by adult education providers as an instrument for creating awareness among people particularly in the rural communities.
6. Indigenous system of learning should also be adopted by adult education practitioners to encourage massive enrolment of people.

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