

## Meaning and Scope of Adult Education in Contemporary Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The relevance of Adult Education in a dynamic and continuously evolving society cannot be overemphasised. Its relevance is based on its capacity to empower individuals and provide solutions to a myriad of societal problems. Besides, the primary task of Adult Education is to ensure that human resources are developed, utilized and managed effectively for the betterment of the society. For proper understanding and comprehension of Adult Education in Nigeria, this paper discussed the meaning and scope of adult education in Nigeria in the present face of changing communities. It also analyzed relevant texts and documents relating to Adult Education in Nigeria. In view of this, the paper concluded that adult education is remains very relevant and can be relied upon to solve various challenges in contemporary Nigeria. Based on the conclusion, the paper recommended among others; that for Nigeria to be recognized in the global comity of nations, the attention of government at all levels should be focused on educational discipline that will help bring an end to the challenges that have bedeviled the nation in the recent past and present.*

**Keywords:** Scope, Adult Education, Contemporary Nigeria

## Introduction

For a system to develop, there are key instrument and factors that must be considered. In contemporary Nigerian society, until Adult Education is given its place, development goals or plans will never be delivered. In 1978, during the International Conference on Adults and Development, president Julius Nyerere of Tanzania while addressing participants stated that adult Education is not only something which is concerned with agriculture or health or Literacy or medical skills, but something much more than these. He emphasised that adult education is a lifelong learning process, which is a form of a self-initiated education that is focused on personal development.

Adult education in most cases, is referred to as the learning that occurs outside of a formal educational institutions such as a school, universities or corporate training. As it concerns understanding of the environment we live, the manner in which we can use the environment in order to improve life, adjustment and ourselves. This equally reveals that we are all illiterates on the areas we have no knowledge about that are relevant to us (Wichendu, 2019).

Goals, agendas or developmental plans, by nations, Africa Union or the United Nations (UN) are all attempts to shape and secure a future and it means conservation, reservation, usage and management of available resources to improve life and the living standard of the people without compromising the future use of such resources and improvement in the quality of life for the people.

Most worrisome is that African countries as part of the global entity, has shown clearly from the analysis of realities on the ground that it has become imperative that developmental target had remain elusive while some important projects and programmes are either unimplemented or they could not yield the anticipated outcomes. Going by this discourse, which involves the meaning and scope of adult education in contemporary Nigeria.

It becomes clear that adult education has been recognized as a strong discipline for the acquisition of knowledge and as a process by which individuals and society at large can attain their fullest potential. Moreover, adult education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. People around the world recognized that current economic development trends are not sustainable and that public awareness, education, train and retaining are means to moving the society towards sustainability. Therefore, adult

education as a discipline should be seen or used as a basis for sustainable development and should also be tailored towards achieving all sustainable development, plans and agendas in Nigeria.

### **Meaning and Scope of Adult Education**

Adult education is widely acknowledged as education and training provided specifically for adults outside the regular school system. Ngwu (2008), states that the definition of the term "adult education" varies from nations to nations and societies to societies. Not that alone, the definition depends on the use of such education in the society with other consideration. He iterates and opines that from the cultural standpoint in a society like Nigeria, where over 40 percent of the population is still illiterate, adult education may be concerned primarily with literacy and other related aspects as community development, extra-mural Studies or remedial education, distance education and extension education.

Ngwoegbu, (2003) described adult education as 'a problem-oriented programme which assist adults to function immediately and effectively in the society. Ebohon (2018) on the other hand defined adult education as the education that encourages individuals to enhance their abilities and potential through various forms of formal, informal and non-formal based on their needs which in turn promotes their scope of facing challenges.

Ugwu, (2016) further classified adult education into three modes: formal, non-formal and informal. In his opinion formal education usually involves remedial education or extra-mural classes and leads someone to obtain a certificate. Non-formal adult education covers training and instruction outside the formal education system and may be organized in form of individualized apprenticeship, vocational training in craft centers and even as a nationwide mass literacy campaign. Informal adult education presumes that learning may come unintentionally and accidentally through face-to-face groups, the media and through serendipity.

Whatever interpretation scholars give to adult education, the policy direction to the discipline is the provision of functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who never had the opportunity for early education or who dropped out before completing their primary education. These groups, who are considered educationally disadvantaged includes: nomads, migrant families, the disabled and all other categories or groups including the disadvantaged gender. The policy elaborates as follows:-

- Provision of functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete their early education;
- Provision of education for different categories of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- Provision of in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills;
- Giving the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment and
- The provision of functional and remedial education as well as in-service on-the-job, vocational and professional training which aimed at providing adults with lifelong skills that will enable them remain skilled and functional at all times.

### **Branches of Adult Education**

According to Anyanwu and Njoku (2019), Adult Education is made of up of several branches. These branches of Adult Education which expose its nature and scope are as follows;

**Adult Basic Education:** This is organized by government or religious bodies to eradicate illiteracy and to assist the disadvantaged groups to acquire skills to make them employable and to help them perform their social roles effectively, basic literacy involves the skills of reading, writing and computing figures (Anyanwu & Njoku, 2019). A person is literate if he uses these skills to solve his day-to-day life problems.

**Adult Extension Education:** Such agencies as government Ministries, Libraries and museums usually carry out extension education. According to Birhanu and Ayele (2020), agricultural extension education, for instance, is concerned with teaching farmer show to overcome plant and crop diseases. This is done by using disease resistant crops. Among literate farmers, the extension agency teaches farmers through distributing notes or instructional sheets. The farmers are generally taught how to improve their living conditions by using their own efforts, resources, materials and relying less on government assistance (Birhanu & Ayele, 2020).



**Adult Post-Literacy Education:** This is planned for adults to enable them up-date the knowledge they gained or missed in the formal school system. Anyanwu and Njoku (2019) posits that it involves those who have reached certain levels in the formal schooling. It is all or any education no matter its objectives/content provided it is beyond the literacy education stage.

**Adult Remedial Education:** This aspect of adult and non-formal education covers all aspects of primary and secondary education syllabuses or scheme of work (Naboth & Agi, 2019). It involves those who dropped out of the primary or Secondary schools who may go into remedial programmes to-update their knowledge.

**Consumer Adult Education:** Adamu, (2018) explained that consumer adult education is concerned with teaching adults about the nature and content of available goods and services, which they want to buy. It also educates adults as to the time and place to get the goods and the ruling price of the goods they intent to buy. According to Anyanwu and Njoku (2019), consumer adult education is popular in advanced countries, which are characterized by high urbanization, technological innovations, economies of scale with mass production of similar goods, which find their way into developing counties markers. The people here need consumer education to maximize their consumption.

**Continuing Education:** Adult and Non-formal Education, is a continuing education that is why David (1962) strongly indicate that:

*Adult 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 the minimum of knowledge required.*

The minimum education required for an adult to be functional in his occupation increases with time due to rapid changes in life.

**Death Education:** Adult education for death and the dying is the education which examines the end of life. It involves the study of various aspects of death and dying (Ojokheta, 2019). This education helps to break down or reduce unhealthy fears and misunderstanding about the end of life. Death education provides participants opportunity to re-examine their feelings about death and then modify their attitudes towards it. This helps them plan how to die well. Since death and dying are inevitable,

education for death and dying is very necessary. This education is often associated with aging (Gerontology).

**Distance Education:** Ojokheta, (2019) posited that distance teaching and learning in adult education involve such components as the mass media, the broadcast media, the print media and sometimes correspondence instruction. The purpose of distance education is to reach out to as many people as possible in many places. It uses such devices as books, magazines, newspapers, films and television programmes.

**Environmental Adult Education:** According to Obeka, (2017), this is concerned with communal area management using indigenous resources. It exposes adults to current energy crises, which is experienced in all continents. It enables adults to manage their cultural, scientific, educational and technological resources and to channel them towards their desired development.

Apart from the above branches of adult education, it is necessary to indicate here that the scope of adult education is equally exposed by the relationship between Adult Education and other disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, politics and history. The concept, tools and techniques of these disciplines may be borrowed to assist research in Adult Education (Anyanwu & Njoku, 2019).

**Fundamental Adult Education:** This is concerned with day-to-day living, hygiene, nutrition, agriculture, local governments and co-operative organizations (Obeka, 2017). It is sometimes called social education. In this education various group techniques like group dynamics, cooperative reading, discussion sessions and study circles are often stressed. This is popular in the United States and France.

**Life-Long Education:** Adult and Non-formal Education are life-long. This type of education starts from the cradle to the grave. Learning therefore, takes place as long as one lives. UNESCO (1976) recommendation for life-long education emphasized global approach to education. Education, to UNESCO, must be life-long considering the full development of the human personality in view of the accelerated pace of changes in science, technology, occupation, communication, social, economic and political institutions, for individuals to be current, they must up-date their knowledge and skills.

**Workers Education:** According to Anyanwu and Njoku (2019), workers education is concerned with increasing the individual worker's capacity and socio-economic efficiency. In other words, workers

education helps a worker to acquire new knowledge and skills to function effectively as a union member and efficiently in his occupation.

Other programmes like community development, agricultural extension and programmed instruction have many things in common with adult education that some authorities see and defined them as adult education programmes.

### **The Development Agenda in Nigeria 2021-2025**

This national development plan is designed to shape the country's development between 2021 and 2025 (Vanguard, 2022). This plan builds on the foundation developed in Vision 20:2020 and the Economic Recovery and Growth plan (ERGP). The 2021-2025 National Development plan has six broad objectives

1. Economic diversification
2. Investment in infrastructure
3. Security and good government
4. Poverty Alleviation
5. Social and economic development across the state
6. Educated population

This plan was formulated against the backdrop of several subsisting development challenges in the country and the need to tackle them with the framework of medium and long-term plans. There are so many challenges this plan seek to address among which included, weak institutions, insecurity, low and fragile economic growth, infrastructure deficits, monocultural economy e.t.c. According to Vanguard (2022), the plan aims to generate 21 Million full-time jobs and lift 35 million people out of poverty by 2025, thus setting the stage for achieving government's commitment of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years.

The country can achieve these target through high quality economic growth and a more inclusive economy, leveraging on its young workforce through aggressive mass awareness and orientation programmes of adult and non-formal education. The government can also enhance its mplementation capacity at national and sub-national levels by engaging adults education programmes and activities

for effective implementation. Nigeria will progress significantly on the path of unlocking its potentials in all sectors of the economy for sustainable, holistic and inclusive national development.

Adult education as a tool for promoting unity, progress, self-reliance, individual and national development must be taken into cognizance. The vulnerable, marginalized, IDIS, youths, women, elderly and many more are among the affected persons. According to the nature of adult education, these and many more categories are among its target groups. As Odiaka (2018) puts its adult education is conceptualized as special form of education that is put in place to afford the adult learners the opportunity to optimize his or her potentials and become efficient, relevant productive and fulfilled socially, economically and intellectually. Similarly; it is regarded as the type of education that cater for the needs of adults and equips them with relevant skills, values and attitudes for them to be useful members of their respective societies. (Ahmad, 2020).

### **African union 2063 and SDGs**

Agenda 2063 is Africa's blueprints and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continents strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued, under pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realization by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritize Africa's agenda from the struggle against apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continents which had been the focus of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U) the precursor of the African Union; and instead to prioritise inclusive social and economic development, Continental and regional integration, democratic governance and peace and security amongst other issues aimed at repositioning Africa to becoming a dominant player in the global arena.

Agenda 2063, was a declaration during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the OAU/AU in May 2013.its was a declaration to mark the re-dedication of African towards the attainment of the pan African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful African, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena.



### **The 13 fast track programmes and projects of the Agenda 2063**

- i. Establishment of four continental financial and monetary institution to service development
- ii. Create a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)
- iii. African community Strategy (ACS)
- iv. Pan African integrated high speed train network
- v. Establishment of single African aviation markets
- vi. Projects in energy generation focusing on the great inga. Dam
- vii. Create free movement of person and the African passport
- viii. Establishing annual African economic dialogue platform
- ix. Peace and security roadmap
- x. Establishment of the virtual university
- xi. Pan African E- network on Tele-education and Tele medicine (PAEN)
- xii. Developments of African outer space strategy
- xiii. To establish the greats museum of African

For these fast-track programmes and projects to be achieved in African, education must be given priority as it is the ladder that uplifts the citizen's lives which at the same time reflect on development and younger generation to have secured, better and productive future. To achieve these, adult education must be involved. This is because, most of productive sectors in the country are driven by adults. There is no doubt adult education contributes to individual societies and development through its various developmental programmes socially, politically and economically that will always strengthen African.

The need to envision a long term 50 years development trajectory for Africa is important as African needs to revise and adapt its development agenda due to ongoing structural transformation; increased peace and reduction in the number of conflicts, renewed economic growth and social progress; the need for people centered development, gender equality and youth empowerment; changing global contexts such as increased globalization and the ICT revolution; the increased unity of African which makes it a global power to be reckoned with and capable of rallying support around its own common agenda; and emerging development and investment opportunities in areas such as Agricultural business, infrastructure development health and education as well as the value addition in African commodities.

## Indicators of Sustainable Development

According to Ugwu (2016) sustainability will be assured when;

- Human development index is high: this is measured by people's life span, educational attainment and enrolment ratio (yearly increase in enrolment and standard of living).
- Individuals take care of their basic needs like the need to eat good and healthy meals, clothe and shelter themselves
- There are employment opportunities for the country's teeming youths in the streets.
- The population does not outstrip the resources to meet the needs of the population (needs in term of health, food, housing, education, security etc.)
- Improvements in the environments conditions or quality renewable natural resources meet the environment needs of the people.
- Natural and man-made disaster including conflicts reduced to the barest minimum

This goes to show that sustainability is assured when people become more responsible and responsive to their own needs, empower themselves and increase their skills. When ignorance and poverty is reduced, employment created and people's income increased and the overall quality of life is improved. If the present generation can achieve all these without a compromising the ability of the future generation to achieve them, development is said to be sustainable (Ebohon, 2018).

## Conclusion

The paper, through the proposed framework, has provided a strong justification for the use or deployment of adult education into contemporary issues if their goals are designed to be achieved. The discipline emphasizes practical knowledge, skills, vocational competence, co-operative education, community development, among others to promote in adults lives functionality and effectiveness. The world is increasingly getting more interdependent. Distance between and among countries and regions are shrinking. The reality of today's world is that no country or region is immune to the consequences of crises and conflicts whether natural or artificial or any other manifestation of inaction about the challenges of life in other places. Adult education is, therefore, poised to properly engage adults and

youths and help to develop their skills, knowledge, values and potentials, so that they all become active participants in the development of their society.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proffered;

- The attention of government at all levels should be focused on educational discipline that will help bring an end to the challenges that have bedeviled the nation in the recent past and present.
- There should be regular in-service training programmes with the aim of creating awareness and developing adult education facilities in an effort to meet international standard. This will help not only to improve the standard of the profession but will as well as make the profession be publicly acceptable.
- Adult education programmes should be designed in such a way that the primary aim of eradicating illiteracy should be the major purpose of the discipline. This will make the individual, society and the nation at large to develop inherent interest and aspirations for the good of their lives.

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