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ADULT EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIAL RE-ORIENTATION AND SELF RELIANCE

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ABSTRACT

The development of any nation is anchored on the development of its human capital. The commitment of the Nigeria Government to the restructuring and effective implementation of adult education programmes would go a long way in affecting national development. The paper examines the need for social re-orientation of the Nigerian adult citizen in order to foster positive values that would contribute to the development of a life of fulfillment and self reliance for the average adult citizen. The paper ends with recommendation which include among others that the Nigerian Government should mobilize adequate human and material resources to boost adult education programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all processes through which a person develops ability, skills, attitudes and other forms of behaviour with positive values in the society in which he lives (Ehiamentalor in Okocha 2008). In the present socio-political dispensation, it is becoming increasingly difficult for anyone to function effectively without a good measure of education. This age of modern information and communication technological (ICT) development makes basic literacy and numeracy skills very necessary. ICT is the bedrock of national survival and development in a rapidly changing global environment. Any nation that aspires to participate effectively and become a key player in the emerging information age needs to key into it (Opone and Ugulu 2010). Without some form of formal education, this would be difficult. Chidobem (2008), citing Martin Luther King emphasized that the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue, not on the strength of its

fortification, not on the beauty of its public buildings, but it consists in the number of it cultivated citizens, its men of education enlightenment and character.

It is against such background that the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Nigeria, a British creation is Africa's most populous country, endowed with a lot of natural resources that if positively harnessed, will place the nation among the rich nations of the world. Yet, the nation is ranked 151st out of 177 nations in 2004 Human Development index by the United Nation Organization.

The high level of poverty may not be unconnected with the low level of formal education of the adult citizens of Nigeria. Meyer (1992) observed that contemporary society has institutionalized education as a citizenship right, as a social virtue, as a public good, and as a stratification process. This paper therefore examines the role of adult education as an instrument for social-re-orientation and self reliance, pointing out the challenges to effective adult education programmes in recent times.

THE CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary regards an adult as a fully grown person who is legally responsible for his actions. In Nigeria, 18 years of age is constitutionally regarded as the attainment of adulthood. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) says the goals of Adult Education among others are to;

Provide functional, literary and continuing education for adults, who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Abamba (2005) quoting Julius Nyerere pointed out that; Adult Education covers many of the subjects learned at school for those who never had the opportunity. It applies to every one of us, without exception. We can learn more; those who had never been to

school, those who have just attended secondary school or university; there is much more that every one can learn about our work and about areas of knowledge that they were not taught at school... We must become aware of things that we as members of the human race can do for ourselves and our country.

Dewey (1916) emphasized that as one interacts with his environment, he acquires knowledge which he uses for subsequent actions. Education therefore should seek to equip man with the ability to organize every reality into action and thought Cropley (1979) pointed out that education should, last the whole life of each individual, lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessitated by constantly changing conditions in which people live amongst others. Comenius (1957) argued that all should be educated and that education should be a corollary of life. The argument simply posits that education would make the individual better fitted to manage the challenges that the environment might pose.

The Need for Social Re-Orientation for Self-Reliance

Most of the adults are saddled with a lot of social, occupational and family responsibilities. They are poor, and find themselves struggling against odds to earn a living. The level of political awareness, of most of such adults is highly limited. They are hardly aware of the procedures that they can utilize to influence political leadership. As Okafor (2010) noted, endemic poverty, poor quality of governance, lack of political will power amongst other factors have played significant roles, in bringing about low level of socio-political development in Nigeria. Gartfort, (1980) observed that citizens need to understand how government functions and what their responsibilities and right are. They should know the procedure they can utilize to constrain or influence their leaders.

That Nigeria is a multi-ethnic/multi-lingual nation with a lot of diversity in the cultural background of most of the groups that make up the federation calls for a greater need for continuous social orientation that would help to bind closer together the adult citizens. Jega (2001) observed that in the Nigeria content, democracy is something much

talked about, greatly aspired and strenuously struggled for. It is evidently a set objective pursued with apparent vigour but not yet attained. It is an aspiration dearly cherished by many, but far from being realized. Democracy in Nigeria, seems to be turning out to be a sort of profound mirage. The truth is that after over 50 years of self-rule, Nigerians are yet to grasp the full meaning of citizenship education. The National Policy on Education (2004) emphasizes that the acquisition of citizenship values and norms by the individuals should not be treated as a chance affair.

The need for man to realize his full potentials and maximize understanding of himself and his environment cannot be over-emphasized. Literacy is critical to the development of the individual. The independent Commission on Population and Quality of life (ICPQL 1996) pointed out that in contemporary society in which laws, rules and instructions are written, illiteracy is a severe handicap when participating in decisions affecting life. It is tantamount to disability affecting every aspect of living. It confines opportunities to the most menial and low paid jobs.

Issues relating to population and family life education which could significantly affect quality of life are not placed in the proper perspectives. Adeniyi (1995) stated that population education in Nigeria seeks to involve the citizens in a guided and self learning process which would make them become aware of the inter-relationship between population change and the quality of life. When individuals realistically plan their family size, they are better able to provide for their family basic needs.

The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria calls for serious attention to an orientation that could be equip adults with some knowledge and skills for setting up small businesses. Nyerere (1979) who seriously advocated education for self reliance, aptly sees education as development. He opined that education develops man who in turn, transforms his society. Esen (1972) declared that: if the young adult is not seeking for solace from his father, he is turning to God or his ancestor or his community or the government; anyone but himself. The young ones are not taught to have confidence in

themselves but in others. Hence when their hopes are shattered, they are easily frustrated, disappointed and disconcerted. Therefore, an individual, community or nation who see unquestioning obedience, dependence, submission an uncritical attitude and poor attitude to work as religious duties can never be self reliant, independent and democratic. Adult education for social re-orientation and self reliance is therefore imperative for repositioning Nigerian towards effective tackling of socio-political/ development challenges.

CONCLUSION

It has been established in this presentation that adult education programmes in Nigeria are grossly inadequate and not effectively co-ordinated to meet the educational needs of the adults who are responsible for taking key decisions and therefore hold the destiny of the country in their hands. Indeed, the uneducated, undereducated and educated adults need some form of continuous education to make them remain relevant in socio-political and economic involvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are therefore made to boost adult education in Nigeria

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should give serious attention to comprehensive adult education programmes that would cater for the educational needs of all segments of the society.
2. Adequate incentives should be built into adult education programmes; graduates from adult skills acquisition programmes for example, could be given's soft loans to start off business.
3. Community leaders could be integrated into the management bodies of adult education programmes for effective sensitization and mobilization of their members.
4. A practical approach to education that the individuals could see and appreciate its value should be adopted

5. The mass media should be effectively co-opted in the sensitization of the citizens concerning issues that would help to improve quality of life.
6. Adequate resources, human and material should be mobilized to boost adult education programmes Adeogun (2001) emphasized that availability, relevant and adequacy of resources contributes to academic achievement.

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