

## **Adult, Non-Formal Education and National Development**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of adult is an amorphous one. This makes its definition to be difficult. Except different angles are considered to delineate the geographical boundary of the concept, we would continue to commit errors of definition. Equally too, given a universal definition to education may lead to another error because our definition of education depends on the societal values, and societal values are relative to that particular society. Thus to give a balanced definition to education, one needs a critical analysis. The place of non-formal form of learning in Adult Education is indispensable. This is because it transforms moulds and modifies learner's physical, mental and psychological development. This paper would therefore examine the concept of adult and non-formal education. It would equally examine the scope, purpose and objectives of adult education as they relate to Nigerian society and an attempt would be made at juxtaposing adult education and national development. This paper however is not an empirical one. The methodology takes the form of conceptual analysis of concepts that are related to adult, non-formal education and national development. Therefore research questions and hypotheses formulation were not involved.

### **Abstrak**

Konsep dewasa adalah konsep amorphous. Ini menyebabkan definisinya sukar. Melainkan jika beberapa sudut lain dipertimbangkan untuk mengurangkan konsep batasan geografi, kita akan terus melakukan kesilapan masing-masing. Sama juga untuk definisi universal kepada pendidikan mungkin menyumbang kepada kesilapan lain kerana definisi pendidikan kita bergantung kepada nilai kemasyarakatan, dan nilai-nilai kemasyarakatan adalah relatif kepada sesuatu masyarakat. Justeru untuk memberi satu definisi pendidikan yang seimbang, seseorang perlu satu analisis kritikal. Tempat untuk membentuk pembelajaran tidak formal dalam pendidikan dewasa adalah amat berharga. Ini adalah kerana ia akan membentuk acuan dan mengubah fizikal, mental dan pembangunan psikologi seseorang pelajar. Sehubungan dengan itu, kertas kerja ini akan menilai konsep dewasa dan pendidikan tidak formal. Ia juga akan menilai skop, tujuan dan

objektif pendidikan dewasa yang berkaitan dengan masyarakat Nigeria dan cubaan akan dibuat untuk mendedahkan pendidikan dewasa dan pembangunan nasional. Kertas kerja ini walau bagaimanapun bukan berbentuk emperikal. Kaedahnya mengambil bentuk analisis konseptual yang berkait dengan konsep dewasa, pendidikan tak formal dan pembangunan nasional. Oleh itu soalan penyelidikan dan pembentukan hipotesis tidak terlibat.

## **Introduction**

The idea of adult and non-formal education is enhanced because in Africa, development is not only a question of qualitative growth accompanied by minor structural changes. After their political revolutions, most African countries, especially Nigeria, have now embarked on the process of social and economic revolutions. Very many of the changes needed to enable growth to take place are of the qualitative nature. Important policy decisions are continually called for both, at central and local levels, and if people shall not become mere object of change, they must understand what is going on around them; and participate in the decision taken. To accomplish this lofty idea, everybody must not only be literate but must also be educated. This gives both the young and old people who had missed the opportunity of being educated to now have it. Thus the implementation of the fourth tier of education, which is the adult education becomes highly imperative, if Nigeria's attempt at becoming a developed nation is to be achieved.

## **Who is an Adult?**

The task of getting a single acceptable definition of an adult is not an easy one. As a result of this, examination of a jungle of definition will be necessary. Webster's new College Dictionary, defined adult as a person who has reached maturity. Maturity according to the same source is defined as a stage of ripeness or full development. The Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary of Current English defined an adult as a person who has grown to full size or strength, intellectually and emotionally mature, person old enough to vote and marry. Harvinghurst (1972) defines an adult as the person who is a workman or woman and who is responsible for himself. Verner (1964) sees an adult as a person who has come into that stage of life in which he has assumed responsibility for himself and

usually for others and who has concomitantly accepted a functionally productive role in his community. While Houle (1972) asserts that an adult is a person who has achieved full physical development and expects to have the right to participate as a responsible home maker, worker and member of society. Oyedeji and Asiedu (1982) in his own view conceives adult as mature individuals from about the age of 18, who are out of school and are engaged in one form of full-time activity or the other. The first international conference on the comparative study of Adult Education (1968) defines an adult as a person who no longer attends school as a full-time activity and who is over twenty one years of age.

One can see that the definition and explanation for who is an adult varies from one another because of the cultural, legal and biological considerations given by different scholars. The controversy has often led to the collective desire to find a universally accepted solution. Between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1966 scholars were brought together by the New England Board of Higher Education and centre for the study of liberal education of adults to exchange ideas on this issue and that which dealt with the training of counsellors of adults. The conference ended with a joint decision that an adult should be seen as a person who has assumed (whether by his choice or not) some kind of responsibility for self and perhaps for others, and some degree of independence of parental authority not characteristic to the same degree of adolescents. Even though the above definition has tried to steer clear of controversy, it tends itself to different interpretations. This is the reason, perhaps why scholars in the literature have preferred to anchor their definitions on biological, social, legal, economic, psychological, historical, chronological among a host of others.

Let us considered some criteria for detemining who is an adult as given by Braimoh and Biao (1988) quoted by Oladapo (1999) and Borode (2002). Age may sometimes be deceptive, particularly when the physiological maturity is at variance with the age of a given person. Thus a child of twelve may look very much like a child of eight due to hereditary development or malnutrition. Age is a very difficult criteria to measure adulthood, for example the Nigerian constitution regards age eighteen as the chronological age for adulthood. Legally, any child in Nigeria that is eighteen years old is answerable to any offence committed against the state and eligible to vote. To be voted for in Nigeria, one must be 21 years

of age. To be voted for as president of Nigeria, one must be 50 years old. In the United States of America, a person is legally considered an adult when he attains 14 for the purpose of marriage, an adult at 16 for the purpose of operating a vehicle, an adult at 18 for the purpose of exercising his voting rights, while he would only exercise his legal instruments when he attains twenty one. Whereas in Canada, 19 is the marriage age but 13 is the case in Nigeria. Can the above criterion give us a clear-out description of an adult?

A historian may classify someone as adult if he has got life experience and possess a sizeable armory of socio-political information in his memory. He can give a vivid history of some past events which his community had encountered during his life tenure on the planet of the earth. Generally speaking can historical documentation and presentation qualify someone as an adult?

From social perspective it is connected with someone being responsible for self and perhaps others, plays social roles like payment of tax, participation in community development activities within and outside his place of birth, shouldering family responsibilities, married, building houses and sponsoring children in schools. These however are elaborate qualities of an adult. But can these qualities alone qualify one to be an adult?

Someone is said to be matured biologically when all the natural traits that reveal a mature individual are seen developing e.g. one is recognised as an adult when one has developed maturational characteristics associated with adulthood, such as the changes in physiological make up like breast development, commencement of menstrual cycle and changes in voice. Defining adulthood in this way may be controversial. There are instances in which people who cannot be regarded as biological adults are seen to have these physiological traits, yet such young people cannot be regarded as adults. Can we regard a ten year old with a full grown physical features as an adult? Thus physical or biological criterion alone cannot be seen as a sufficient determinant of adulthood.

An adult according to psychologists is somebody that is bold enough to stand before a crowd and talk. He is somebody who is able to control his emotions, brave and psychologically confident. He is somebody that is

always ready to help other people, enjoys doing good and most importantly keeps his head when others are losing theirs. Ability to develop shock absorber and have an enlarged belly to absorb and bury certain shocks without people seeing the traces of such in an individual is often termed as adulthood. Can we regard a child who is able to exhibit these psychological traits as an adult and regard a seventy year old who is unable to exhibit them as a child? This shows the fault in the above criterion.

An economist will define an adult as somebody who is economically autonomous and financially viable. What then happens to orphans and children from poor homes who fend for themselves possibly through hawking on the streets and market places and therefore become economically independent? Do we regard them as adults?

Bown (1979) asserts that “the essence of adulthood lies in the word responsibility; and adult person is expected to take full responsibility for his steps, for any debt he incurs, for any agreement into which he enters (such as marriage or a business partnership) and for the orderly conduct of his life within the laws of the land”. From whatever angle an adult is perceived, he must be so known in his society as an adult.

### **The Concept of Education**

The definition of education still remains a controversial one up till now there is no single universally accepted definition of education. Scholars who have tried to define the concept have been influenced to a large extent by their social, cultural, environmental and professional background. Thus education is a phenomenon related to societal values. And what a particular society values may be peculiar to that society alone.

Plato’s attempted definition as quoted by Rusk and Scotland (1985) would definitely be our first area of call. Plato defines education as “a process through which we foster in the individual, desirable and relevant changes in behaviour and attitude”. Desirability and relevancy in this definition are equally debatable concepts. Education as involving a desirable change in behaviour is related to the socio-cultural acceptability of that particular society. This definition however involves the interaction between the facilitator and the client especially in adult education.

Milton (1957) defines education as the one “which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously, all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war”. This definition seems to cover much more ground than Plato did, it uses hazy words but it is less precise. It takes far longer to list the areas of study which Plato’s idea of education entails. What Milton is saying is that, if you know everything, you can do everything. It implies that education should train someone in veracity and adaptability. This is however the essence of which adult education stands for.

Joad (1955) defines education “as a social force in the sense that any education system must reflect the ethos of the people it is called upon to serve” he believes that to know what we want from education, we must know what we want in general and in this sense our theories of education must derive from our philosophy of life. Thus Joad believes that the purpose of education should be among others to equip the recipient the power to play his part as a citizen of democracy. This definition aptly describes what adult education should be. Thus the definition is more relevant to adult learner.

Dewey (1916) defines education as a process of living and not a preparation for it. It is a continuous process of growth. To him, education is restructuring or reconstruction of experience. Is Dewey taken education as an instrument for conserving, transmitting and renewing culture? If this is his intention then, adult learners form the target of this definition.

We have noted earlier that the task of defining education is a difficult one, this is so because each society with their different cultural background would like to define education in line with their interest and aspirations. Whatever be the case, it is globally accepted that the goal of education is the production of the right type of individuals as approved by the society. This makes Jowitt to assert that the purpose of African education is the effective organisation of the African man’s experiences, so that his tendencies and powers may develop in a manner satisfactory to himself and to the community in which he lives by the growth of socially desirable knowledge, attitudes and skill. This last definition actually reflects the cultural background of the society by putting into focus the values cherish and admire by that society. This is however the target an adult learner in Nigeria should aim at.

Having gone through some definitions of education; it is expedient to say something about adult education.

### **What is Adult Education?**

The term adult education is a difficult one to define. One reason for the difficulty is that the term is used with different meanings in different countries and societies, depending on their socio-cultural background. Thus the definition of adult education is still a controversial one and there has not been a universally accepted definition. A look at some definitions of adult education will reveal the complexity of the task it involves.

One needs to start this assignment with the UNESCO's definition as quoted by David (1962) in the first international congress on comparative study on adult education which stated that adult education should be seen as a:

Process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full-time basis (unless full-time programmes are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organised activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, undertakings or skills, appreciation and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.

The above definition actually reflects the complexity we have noted earlier. Undoubtedly, one could see that the definition ignores the case of adults who had never been to school. Thus, the definition may be appropriate for the developed countries where more than 70% of their population are literate and no consideration is given to the developing nations with less than 30% literate.

Another definition by UNESCO (1972) sheds more light on the above definition. It defines adult education as denoting:

The entire body of organised educational process, whatever the content, level and methods, whether former or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or

turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in two fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social economic and cultural growth.

This is however a comprehensive definition which suits both developed and developing nations in various perspectives. There are some individual definitions, for example, Prosser (1967) says the real nature of adult education can be exposed by defining it as that force which in its ideal application helps society to determine its ends, brings about a maximum of readjustment of attitude within the society to any new and changed situation in the shortest possible time and which involves and impart new skills and techniques required for the change. This definition implies that learning is the activity in which adults acquire new skills and that education is the process that facilitate this learning. If adult population therefore are to contribute and be committed to the improvement of their way of life, they must possess the skills and knowledge by which they can improve their own existence and contribute to the development of the society in which they live.

Tugbiyele and Julius Nyerere's definition corroborate the above assertion. Tugbiyele (1975) asserts that by adult education we do not mean literacy education alone. Adult education is more than literacy or remedial education to fill the gap, it is something people need and want as long as they are alive and regardless of the amount of their previous education. Julius Nyerere, in one of his addresses declared 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 all learn more. Those who have never been to school, those who have just attended primary school, and those who have attended secondary schools or university – there is much more that every one can learn about our work and about areas of knowledge that they were not taught when they were at school...

Nyerere's intention was to create Africanised ways of handling, solving and implementing programmes. At any rate, the issue of definition as regards adult education has always been inconclusive and controversial. This is because all the definitions are always influenced by the socio-cultural, political and economic background of the person giving the



definition. Whatever be the definition, the focus and the target inform of objectives have always remain similar. Thus all the definitions reflect the following objectives. That adult education should:

- (i) Make adults economically more efficient, more compellent and more viable.
- (ii) Make them aware of their civic responsibility to one another, their community and the nation.
- (iii) Provide them with the means of developing both vocational and non-vocational interests through opportunities for self-expression.
- (iv) Supplement and broadening their educational background etc.

It must be noted however that all the above summarized objectives and others not mentioned are in concomitant with the scope and purpose of adult education.

### **The Scope and Purpose of Adult Education**

The scope of adult education according to Okafor (1988) includes programmes that are properly planned and methodically applied for provision of remedial, continuing and other forms of education for adults outside the former schools system. Thus the scope of adult education includes literacy, formal education through primary, secondary and university-education. It also involves education through extension, extramural services as well as other forms of educational activities that are planned for adults to aid their all round development and growth outside the former school system. Nyerere is of the opinion that the scope of adult education should include any programme that is meant to contribute positively to the development and understanding of adults. It should also be the programmes that will gear and wake adults up, the programmes that will activate and equip them to take decisions and implement them without the assistance of government agencies.

Generally speaking the scope of adult education includes all programmes that involve extension education, liberal education, moral and cultural education, aesthetic and mass education. It is believed, hopefully, that adults who can function well in all these adult education programmes will be able to acquire enough knowledge which will fit him to perform justly skillfully and magnanimously all the offices or positions assigned to him.

This will assist not only in the development of the individual but also the entire nation. With these highly loaded scope of adult education, one may ask them what purpose(s) are they aiming at achieving?

### **Purpose of Adult Education**

Anyanwu (1981) is of the opinion that “social, political, economic moral and intellectual decadence can overwhelm the adult who refuses to learn new things or improve his knowledge”. Therefore the purpose of adult education is to liberate the recipient from ignorance, poverty, idleness and make them aware of their responsibilities to themselves, their communities and the world at large. Adult education is undoubtedly a way of correcting the imbalance in the education of the adult. In Nigeria for example the system of education we know essentially are primary, secondary and the tertiary system. The idea behind this is that the three system will build someone up to become a useful adult who will be able to handle himself and possibly societal issues. This is however based on a wrong assumption. An assumption that both what we learnt in primary and secondary will be useful out of school. This seems to be wrong because what we have learnt in primary, secondary school may fade away before we become adult. Society changes, syllabus changes everytime, so what we think will build us up may not be so. What we then learn as adult in adult education would be useful for immediate needs. For example, if a farmer is taught how to use modern farming equipment’s and strategies, this will be adopted just immediately, an increase in production would follow. Moreover, development and growth had brought complexity in international and interpersonal relationships, the purpose of adult education therefore is to enable interested adults to focus their attention on things that will develop them within the large complex societal needs. In other words, adult education leads to the development of self-fulfillment and self-appraisal and for the formulation of personal principle and identity.

It is important to note that the purpose of adult education differs from individual to another and from one nation to the other. In Nigeria for example, the National policy on education identified the purpose of adult education among others as

- (i) To provide functional literacy education to adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education.
- (ii) To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal schools system.
- (iii) To provide further education for different categories of the formal educational system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- (iv) To provide in-service, on the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- (v) To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Undoubtedly, the above stated purposes are laudable and beautiful they are to meet the needs of individual in Nigeria and to assist the development of the nation in general. But the only problem facing us in Nigeria is the problem of implementation. How far have we been able to implement adult education programmes to achieve the above stated purposes.

The above purposes are credible, they are universal purposes of adult education, but can they meet the demand of individual nations throughout the world? The possibility is however doubted because the socio-cultural and econo-political differences in these nations. It is reasonable to state here that adult education is the ability to fulfil individual needs which may be classified as basic educational needs, technical vocational training needs, ideological-political education needs and the need to improve the quality of life.

### **Non-Formal Adult Education**

Non-formal form of learning is as old as man and it is equally important as the formal education, because it transforms, moulds and modifies learners physical, mental and psychological development. In the olden days people learned their trades through non-formal education. The son of a drummer will necessarily learn drumming unconsciously from his father through observation and interest, hence in Yorubaland we have (Ayandiran) hereditary trades and so it is in other profession like blacksmithing, dyeing, hunting etc. Thus non-formal education is learner centred and

problem solving. Some people refer to this system as alternative to school, hence it is again called the out of school education. It is equally a deliberate organised learning activity outside the established frame work of the formal school system. The coverage of the programmes is wide as it includes training and ranges from individualised apprenticeships to mass literacy programme. The various National Directorate for employment apprenticeship and Babangida better life for rural Woman Programmes in Nigeria are good examples.

It does not cost much compared with the formal education and it allows for flexibility of operation as no one is under any serious obligations to attend school regularly or punctually or wear a particular uniform. It may equally be social, economic, political or civic community education. People may take pleasure in attending such centres in that the information gained could enhance their better living and citizenship education. There are some people who attend non-formal adult education programme only to update their knowledge or to improve their skills and performances on their jobs, while others may attend as a way of ensuring promotion in their places of work or remediating their educational imbalance. Non-formal education offers adults a better opportunity for self renewal and social advancement. It encourages lifelong education which rejects age-limits and also rejects concept of failure. It assumes that individuals of equal intelligence and ability may progress at varying rhythms and that they may pursue learning at varying stages, starting and re-starting at will. This is however the contention of Paulo Freire (1972, 1974).

His ideas had been clearly expressed in two of his books, the first one is “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1972) and second one is “Cultural Action and Freedom” (1974). Paulo Freire was reacting against certain conditions in the society. He was reacting against the economic control exercised by American big business men in Latin American countries. These groups of people dominated and compelled the people to accept their philosophy and ideologies which were oppressive in all ramification. He was equally reacting against the political, social and economic relationship between the government of cosmopolitan city and the colonies.

Thirdly, he was reacting against the relationship between Western Industrial countries and undeveloped countries, according to him the basic

relationship is that one is oppressing the other, this may come in form of cultural and economic dependency. The conquest may come in term of food, dress, education and the way we think and react to issues, all which lead to mental slavery. He believes that there is the domination of passive learners by authoritarian teachers who are naturally dictators and oppressors. In other words, the oppressed has a silent culture. A culture in which they have no voice of their own, they have no choice, no room for originality or initiative. They are to accept unquestioned impositions. With all these in existence, Paulo believes in a programme of action in which one can tear off the strings of oppressors. It is on this basis that Paulo's philosophy of education was rooted in his own belief. The belief that men can improve the quality of their life. This could be done in two major ways, firstly, through reflection and secondly through human action.

Paulo Freire (1972, 1974) is of the opinion that adult education is a tool for conscientising the recipient and synthesising their awareness towards addressing the inequalities in their societies thereby normalising the abnormalities that serve as impediments to the smooth transformation of the society. From Paulo's view point, adult education harnesses all forms of knowledge to bring people out of oppression and subjection within a given society. Thus this type of education encourages individual contributions to his or her own liberation and the aim is to teach adults to be able to bring this philosophy to reality. Adult education is inseparable from life, it is part of life, it is lifelong and it involves change, Oladapo (1999). Paulo condemns the banking concept of education which he calls education for domestication, domination and indoctrination. Education that kills originality, critical thinking and initiativeness. According to him any education that involves the recall of implanted ideas is no education, since it does not involve liberation and academic emancipation.

### **Adult Education and National Development**

Development implies change in growth. It proceeds gradually and cumulatively through a kind of unfolding of the internal or latent potentialities. Development has to be expressed in terms of quality of living. This involves human qualities as well as culture and traditions of every society. In Africa for example, development connotes higher levels of production and consumption of goods and services.

Generally, development can be perceived as a multi-dimensional process which involves changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the elimination of poverty. In consequence of the above, National Development could be seen as the overall social, political and economic progress which result in systematic improvement of living standards and the increased control over the environment. It involves the development of self-reliance and the elimination of dependency. The promotion of national development requires not only money, people and materials but more importantly it requires knowledge of developing techniques and skills in the application of approaches and methods of rehearsing the set goals of the mention. Such knowledge must be continuously updated and upgraded to enhance the value required. Thus the role of adult education in this dispensation becomes inevitable, many developing nations, inclusive Nigeria are composed of several ethnic groups adult education serves as instrument that helps in harnessing and addressing the present needs to develop a sense of nationality, oneness and togetherness among the people in order to promote an allegiance to the country which goes beyond the family, the tribe or any particular section of the country. Coupled with this is the need for a sense of civic identity which acquaints people with their rights and privileges, their responsibilities and duties toward their country.

The critical need for skills and knowledge by the adult population is one of the most salient features of developing countries. Development depends more than just capital investment it equally depends on education, health and attitude concerning life and work. A systematically organised and purposefully arranged adult education programme will assist in meeting the socio-economic needs of the nation and create new opportunities for employment.

It is believed that the absence of capital investment is the main constraints to social and economic development of any nation. The large number of uneducated and illiterate adults in developing countries is considered to be responsible for this. In solving the above problem, embarking on the development of human talent through adult education programmes becomes imperative. It must be noted however that investment on adult education is not a waste since it is definitely going to increase the skill and knowledge of the adults already present in the labour force. The recipients

of adult education will be able to liberate themselves from the limitations and constraints of ignorance as well as from the commonly dependence on forces which they should be able to control. Thus adult education is seen as a veritable tool for all forms of development.

### Conclusion

Adult education as explained in this paper occupies a very high pinnacle in the realm of effecting positive change in any society. For a nation to develop, all the four levels of education need to be adequately funded and put in a priority position. Thus the assumption that old people cannot learn is wrong. No time in one's life that one cannot learn provided none of his senses is faulty. This is why Paulo Freire, Julius Nyerere and others put this type of learning as lifelong education, viz, education that takes place from cradle to grave. The learners in adult education programmes are out to achieve some practical or set functional goals, be it to become literate and numerate as in adult literacy programmes or to acquire some vocational or the latest technical skills as in on-the-job training schemes. It must be noted however, that the fourth tier of education which is the adult education is perhaps one of the best truly situational activities in the realm of education because its curriculum is built around the students needs that will assist in the general development of the nation. When every individual in a nation is educationally developed, there is likely to be socio-political liberation, economic emancipation, religious tolerance and cultural transformation. All these are elements and off-course veritable elements of development.

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