

ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MANPOWER RESOURCES IN NIGERIA

John Chinedu Ihejirika

Department of Adult & Non-Formal Education,
University of Port Harcourt,
NIGERIA.
ihejirikajohn@yahoo.com

Ethelbert Chidi Onyenemezu

Department of Adult & Non-Formal Education,
University of Port Harcourt,
NIGERIA.
dr.chidigodwin@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the various ways adult education can contribute to development of manpower resources in Nigeria. It also identified some relevant adult education programmes that can be used to improve the quality and skills of workers in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Nigerian labour force is fraught with illiterates and products of formal education system, the curriculum of which could not cater for the rapid technological changes and knowledge required to continuously function effectively in both the industry and the labour market at large. Obviously, formal school education alone cannot make workers functionally effective throughout their working life, particularly as today's knowledge society tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skills inappropriate for effective operation in societal life. The need arises for Nigerian workers to be updated and reskilled using adult education programmes in order to remain relevant on their jobs and professions. By utilizing the facilities of already established institutions (as is always the case), adult education through its plethora of programmes, is capable of developing and improving, within a short period and at less cost, the productive capacity of the nation's much needed human capital. This involves a vast programme of educational re-conversion and re-training which must be affected through out-of school, part-time education, which is the field of adult education. The study analyzed how the following adult education programme: adult basic education, extension education, workers' education, vocational education, open and distance learning (ODL) and extra-mural studies can be used to develop and improve the skills of Nigeria's labour force.

Keywords: Adult education, development, manpower, resources

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of human capital in the development of any nation economically and politically cannot be over-emphasized, especially when such a nation aims to harness its resources for achievement of the required growth that can bring about improvement to living standard of the populace. In view of this fact, Udom (1999) stressed the importance and role of people at work in nation building by stating that the relevance of human being in any organization and indeed the nation is attested to by the fact that the first syllable in the concept of management is "man". To him, "man" in this context, otherwise referred to as worker, human resource, or labour, remains the most relevant and therefore should be given utmost priority attention. Still on the importance of workers or labour and the need to give them a deserving empowerment to continue to function for the well-being of the national economy, Ogunlaye (1996) postulated that it is a universal affirmation that human brain is a high fidelity recorder and a high fidelity player, and therefore, for employees to remain effectively functional, they need necessary education and training which serves as lubricant for constant refinement and reinforcement for performance.

Essentially, the concept of human resource development, according to Enuke and Oyitso (2005) proceeds from the person; the human being; in other words, the individual in full exercise of his or her human faculties and responsibilities. To them, Enuke and Oyitso (2005) the chief dictate of human development is investment in people. Supporting this view, Psacharopoulos (1972) argued that the return to investment in education seems, in most cases, to be above the returns to alternative investment opportunities and he advised that priority should be given to investment in men versus investment in machines. Contributing further to this argument, Asojo (2001, p.146) emphasized that:

The quickest way to increase productivity in less developed countries is to train adults who are already on the job. Education for children is fine but its potential contribution to output over ten years is small compared with the potential contribution of efforts devoted to improving adults' skills.

Still on the issue of human development, Kawawa (1971) believed that what it means to talk of a people developing is widening their mental horizons so that they can exert greater control of their own future and environmental. The question arises: how can Nigerian manpower resources be assisted to develop their capabilities and potentialities; in other words, how can Nigerian workers be helped to widen their mental horizons which is considered as a pre-requisite for national development? This, is more a matter of education, moreso education of the youth and adults who constitute Nigeria's labour force. It is imperative, therefore, that if Nigeria is to catch up with developed countries that enjoy buoyant economy, she must have workers who are well trained, highly and technically educated, and well motivated to work towards achievement of her development goals. Adult education can help to bring this about.

Definition of Concepts

Adult Education has been defined severally as educational programmes aimed at improving the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of people who are recognized by their societies as adults. It permeates all levels of education, and concerns itself with everything that affects the well-being of the entire citizens and their societies. For clarity of purpose, let us look at a few definitions of adult education by scholars. Houle (1976, p.31) defined adult education as:

The process by which men and women (alone, in groups or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skills, their knowledge or their sensitiveness; any process by which individuals, groups or institutions try to help men and women improve in these ways.

A more comprehensive definition of adult education by UNESCO (1976) cited in (Olumukoro 2005) described the concept as:

The entire body of organized educational process whatever the content, level and method, whether formal 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 and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two-fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development, (p.56).

In another vein, scholars like Delker (1974), Omolewa (1981), Aderinoye (1977) observed adult education as organized and sequential learning experiences designed to meet the needs of adults. From these definitions, it is clear that adult education is development-oriented, being a programme that is geared towards making an adult to be more useful to himself and his society.

Manpower: This means the labour available (human resources) in a country. It is the key to the development of any country because, according to Gardiner (1971, p.21) "man is not only the beneficiary of properly planned development, he is at the same time the instrumental factor, the most important factor, in the process". Gardiner did emphasize this point at the third conference of African Adult Education Association held at Dar es Salaam where he declared that "human energies, human ingenuity and creativity, human skills and human motivations are the springs of development action".

Development is principally a result of mobilization of each community's human and natural resources because the progress of a society is not in the outcome of capital income, but it is all about knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation of its people for sustainable progress (Igbo, 2008). Lending credence to development as being humanistic, Nyerere (1976) declared that development is for man by man and of man, which means that true development is essentially people centred and is brought about by people through education.

The strongest argument posed by some scholars such as Harbison (1973), Todaro (1977), Nzeneri (1990) in favour of manpower development indicates that:

Human resources ... constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

From the above statements, it is observed that the impact of education, particularly adult education, is to develop in people skills and knowledge which make them active agents of production in their nation's development process. This paper takes a critical analysis of the role of adult education in development and improvement of the skills of Nigeria's labour force for improved productivity.

Role of Adult Education in Nigeria's Manpower Development

Manpower development denotes a process of education and training through which human resources available in a country are enabled to acquire relevant skills for optimal performance and subsequent improved productivity. As a process, such recurrent form of education and training could be at the instance of governments, employers of labour or associations or still, at the discretion of individual workers who perceive the need for further training in order to remain relevant on the job. In the views of Igbo (2008) the role of adult education in development (of manpower) is explained by the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, political, social and cultural factors of development.

For instance, the economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. More importantly, adult education yields high rates on investments and enhances labour productivity by equipping various categories of recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills alongside health care, sanitation and nutrition knowledge that improves peoples' standard of living; as well as relevant skills to improve productivity. In all, Igbo concluded that investment in the development of human capital through adult education is critical for producing a labour force and technical know-how that is able to compete in today's global economy.

In another vein, adult education is very effective in providing the cheapest and the shortest way of training the nation's much needed human resources. This it can achieve, because, according to Paiko (1977) the training of adults takes place on part-time basis, using the facilities (classrooms, training workshops, furniture etc.) of already established education institutions thereby cutting costs. Lending credence to this, Oyedeji (1979) affirmed that the duration of training adults is rather shorter (six months, nine months or twelve months as the case may be) than the education of children which continues for nine or more years beyond the period of completion for the adults. Also due to their maturity and experience, adults learn quicker and at completion of short training courses, Oyedeji (1979) submitted that those newly trained and skilled can secure employment thereby add strength and quantity to already existing labour force.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's workforce is fraught with both illiterates and products of formal education system the curriculum of which could not cater for the rapid technological changes and knowledge required to continuously function effectively in both the industry and the labour market. It is certain that formal school education alone cannot make a worker functionally effective throughout his working life. Invariably, Nigerian workers need to be updated and re-skilled through adult education, especially as today's knowledge society tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skills inappropriate or old fashioned for effective operation in societal life. As a way out, a vast programme of educational re-conversion and re-training is indicated to make Nigerian workers more capable of doing the jobs they are doing now or do new kind of jobs. According to Gardiner (1971), since it is not feasible on account of age and social status to send the workers back to full-time schooling, the change must be effected through out-of-school, part-time education, which is the field of adult education.

Some Adult Education Programmes that Aid Development/Improvement of Nigeria's Manpower Resources

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Adult basic education refers to the teaching of adults according to any organized formal or non-formal plan of education with the ultimate goal of helping them better their occupational opportunities and quality of life (Nji, 2000). Through basic education, necessary learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving are acquired in addition to basic learning content such as knowledge, value, skills and attitudes to enable the adult learners develop their full capacity, participate fully in development process, make informed decisions and continue learning. Beyond the ability to read and write, illiterate workers could be led to acquire other life skills that can enable them operate usefully and gainfully in a community and society on the basis of existing economic and social dispensation. As an indispensable strategy for empowering non-literate workers, literacy education is very effective in development of Nigeria's manpower resources, to the point of enabling recipients to go on obtaining and exchanging new and possibly complex information needed to improve their productivity. As a matter of fact, adult basic education for Nigerians should incorporate functional literacy, the concept of which is a production-oriented form of education that involves integration of literacy training to the needs of the society, to economic development, social improvement and cultural awakening.

Workers Education

Olumukoro (2005) stressed that for Nigeria to catch up technologically with the advanced countries that enjoy buoyant economy, she must have workers that are well trained and well motivated to work towards her developmental goal. Workers education, according to Igbo (2008) covers the aspect of adult education that is the fastest growing part of the Nigeria education system. It provides education that helps workers to maintain their employment status and tackle the challenges of stunning advancement in all disciplines as well as provides up-to-date information in one's special field. Igbo (2008) highlighted the methods of workers' education as consulting services, questions and answers, campus visits with demonstrations, field trips, conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums all of which aim at up-dating or topping up the knowledge, skills, expertise and work ethics of a country's labour force. In evaluating the role of workers' education in manpower development, Ngwu (2006) had this to say:

Since initial education alone cannot make a worker functionally effective all through his working life, workers education is therefore one of the means of pushing forward the urgent task of improving the quality of Nigerian labour force with the cardinal objective of releasing the potentials of individuals and collectives for growth, economic, productivity, social and political responsibility.

Vocational Education

The essence of vocational skill education is to enable the citizens to acquire appropriate vocational or occupational skills that can make them better people, live in peace with others and relate well in their day-to-day life. It is education based on one's aptitude or interest in choosing what suits one in his quest for self-fulfillment. By engaging in one vocational training or another; be it teaching, crafts technology, smithing, farming, music, medicine, etc. the potentials, knowledge and skills of participants are improved for success in life and contribution to national economy. A good adult education programme through which government provided enabling environment to allow citizens acquire skills of different types is the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), which should be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to the citizens of Nigeria.

Extension Education

This is another identified adult education programme that is relevant to development of skills and productivity of Nigerian workers particularly those in agriculture, health, environmental studies, some agencies of government ministries, libraries and museums. Extension services are programmes of extending the services of experts from main ministries or research institutes to the rural areas to

educate and train people to improve their skills as well as raise their productivity level. Agricultural extension which seems to be the most popular in Nigeria (about 60-70% of Nigeria's working population is engaged in agriculture) involves getting the farmers into a frame of mind and attitude conducive to acceptance of a change from traditional methods of farming to modern mechanized technique for improved food production. In whatever sector of the economy extension service is provided, it not only increases productivity but contributes immensely to the development and improvement of the skills of Nigeria's workforce.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Open and distance learning is an adult education programme which supports the idea that time and space should not be a constraint to learning. It is basically the type of education without restrictions where the facilitator is often not physically present with the learners, which makes the learning dependent on other types of communication between the learner and the teacher, other than the regular face-to-face experienced in the regular and children type of education. In fact, this type of learning has enabled individuals who for reasons of social, economic, academic or other hindrances could not utilize the earlier educational opportunities available to them as youngsters, but now have another chance to amend their situations by studying for and obtaining the desired degrees and qualifications mainly on part-time basis.

For example, the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) established in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria for training and developing teachers at both Grade Two, NCE and degree levels plays important role in upgrading the skills of Nigerian teachers. According to Olumukoro (2005), the institution has produced almost a million grade II teachers and up-graded more than 40,000 Grade II to NCE and a good number of NCE to B.Ed teachers for the nation's educational institutions. A part from the NTI, Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is in no less way contributing immensely to developing the nation's manpower through her qualitative education and training of her numerous clientele that are found in all the states of the federation. These attest that adult education programmes can be a catalyst in Nigeria's manpower development.

Extra-mural studies are another adult education programme that contributes to development of knowledge/skills of Nigerian workers. In modern Nigeria, continuing education which extra mural studies is part of covers remedial education and training provided by universities to various grades of workers, school dropouts and those who missed earlier opportunities to attend formal education system for their elementary education or qualification. Through the various state and federal universities in the country, high quality manpower resources have been developed and continue to be developed through research and training programmes. For example, the University Of Ibadan Department Of Adult Education runs Certificate, Diploma and Degree programmes up to Ph.D. It also runs an External Studies Programme (ESP) which is a form of distance and correspondence education. This programme prepares graduates already with NCE for Bachelor's degree (B.Ed) in Education, thereby developing high quality manpower for the teaching profession. Other Universities such as Nigeria, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Ahmadu Bello, Benin, Awolowo, Calabar, etc. have equally contributed greatly to the development of high quality manpower through their various extension programmes, all offering part-time degree courses in education and other professional courses in Accounting, Business Administration, Banking, Finance and so on. Specifically, the Distance Learning Institute (DLI) of the University of Lagos and the Centre for Distance Learning and Continuing Education (CDLCE) of the University of Abuja provide opportunities for those who, though they already have the regular university education, may be interested in acquiring new knowledge and some specialized skills in other areas outside their initial areas of specialization. Ebirim (2002, p.123) aptly assessed the CDLCE of the University of Abuja in particular when he wrote that "it provides on-the-spot training for manpower development" which eliminates the inherent problem caused by people having to leave their places of work for further training. Another illuminating example is the Correspondence Teaching In-Service Programme of Ahmadu Bello University which runs three basic programmes namely: Adult Education, Field Extension Services and Distance Teaching, all of which aim at higher education and training of manpower in the corresponding fields of study. Furthermore, occasional seminars and workshops are organized by

various institutions for workers in both private and public sectors to enable them keep abreast of developments in their various fields.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Investment in the development of human capital through adult education is critical for producing a labour force with technical know-how that can compete in today's global economy. For obvious reasons, formal education alone is not sufficient to make a worker functional all through his working life especially as today's knowledge tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skill inappropriate or old fashioned for effective operation in societal life. Since Nigerian labour force is fraught with illiterates and products of formal education system, they need to be constantly updated and re-skilled through adult education programmes to enable the country have workers that are well trained, technically educated and well motivated to work towards her developmental goals. In this regard, a vast programme of education re-conversion and retraining is indicated, the change must be through out-of-school, part-time education and training, which is the field of adult education.

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made:

1. Education should make allowance for the young employed youth to alternate between further studies and work through leave of absence without fear of losing their jobs. This alternation between work and schooling is the essence of recurrent education.
2. Nigeria should explore the possibilities of developing her adult population to respond to the demands of new technology and professional development through adult education, through which various skills can be acquired to raise the productivity level of the workforce.
3. The imbalance between formal education and adult education should be redressed. Accordingly, in-school education for children and out-of-school education for adults should receive equal attention in the form of resource allocation, recruitment and selection of leadership, mobilization of learner, training of teachers, and institutionalization of arrangements for the delivery of adult and lifelong education.
4. The Departments of Adult Education in higher institutions should be expanded and adequately equipped for effective education and training of labour leaders and workers to make them more functional, effective and efficient on their jobs and professions.
5. Professional adult education personnel should be employed in all the formations of National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education nationwide. This would enhance professional reorientation of activities and programmes of national and state agencies through effective needs assessment and mobilization of stake-holders in the teaching and training of adults who constitute the bulk of workers in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Aderinoye, R.A. (1977). *Literacy Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Publishing House.
- Anyanwu, C.N. (1981). *Principle and Practice of Adult Education and Community Development*. Ibadan: Abiprint Publishing.
- Aroge, S.T. and Hassan, M.A. (2006). Labour Education and Actualization of Millennium Development Goals: A Perspective. *Adult Education in Nigeria, Journal of NNCAE*, 13, 63-76.
- Delker, P.V. (1974). Governmental Roles in Lifelong Learning. *Development Education* 7 (4) 24-33.
- Enuku, U.E. and Oyitso, M. (2005). Literacy and Community Development Strategies. *Nigerian Journal of Adult and Lifelong Learning* 1, (1), 71-79.
- Gardiner, R. (1971). *Adult Education and National Development*, A Key Paper Presented at the Third Conference of the African Adult Education Association held at the University of Dar es Salaam, April 19th -24th.
- Harbison, F.E. (1973). *Human Resources as the Wealth of Nations*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Houle, C. (1972). *The Design of Education*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Igbo, R.O. (2008), (ed). *Contemporary Adult Education: An inclusive Approach*, NCAEP Book of Readings, 132-172.
- Kawawa, R. (1971). *Adult Education and National Development*, Opening Address delivered at the Third Conference of the African Adult Education Association held at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, April 19th – 24th.
- Ngwu, P.N.C. (2006). *The Social Context of Non-Formal Education*. *Adult Education in Nigeria. Journal of NNCAE*, 13, 184 – 196.
- Nji, A. (2000). Creating a Knowledge Society through Distance and Open Learning in Cameroun, in S.A. Indabawa, A.B. Oduaran, T. Afrik & S. Walters (Eds.). *The State of Adult and Continuing Education in Africa*. Windhoek: John Meinert Printing.
- Nzeneri, I.S. (1990). *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Adult Post Literacy Education in Imo and Lagos States of Nigeria*. *Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Unilag*.
- Olumukoro, C.O. (2005). The Role of Continuing Education in National Development, *Nigerian Journal of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning*. 1 (1), 5-56.
- Omolewa, M.A. (1981). *Adult Education Practice in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Evan Brother.
- Oyedeji, L. (1979). Adult Education as a tool for Nation Building in Nigeria. *Adult Education in Nigeria Journal of NNCAE*, 4,51-60.
- Paiko, J.Y. (1997). *Introduction to Adult Education*. Minna: Cosmopolitan Publishing Press.
- Psacharopoulos, G. (1972). Rate of Return to Investment in Education Around the World. *Comparative Education Review*, 16, (1), 54-67.
- Todaro, M.P. (1977). *Economics for a Development World London: Longmans*.
- Udom, U.E. (1999). *Administration, Prudence: A Behavioural Approach to Managing Directors and Other*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.