

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria by 2030: The Adult Education Input

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Abstract

The concept of sustainable development has come to stay as a major focus in the development of human society. To sustain simply means to make something continue for some time without becoming less. The concept evolves in the 80s and received its most popular exposition in the Brundtland Report; Our Common Future in 1987. Since then, the concept has become widely accepted as a route to better human society. Sustainable development goals (SDGs), came into being as an aspiration arising from the inability of many developing nations to achieve the MDGs fully. The SDGs were therefore formulated as a post-2015 development agenda and Nigeria as a nation is seeking for means and resources to actualize these goals by 2030. Therefore achieving sustainable development goals by 2030 and by extension a sustainable society in Nigeria is a collective responsibility for all. Adult education is geared toward promoting a sustainable society through creating knowledge-driven and enlighten society, provision of attitudinal changes, skills and knowledge thereby reducing illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, hunger and diseases among Nigerian citizens. This means that adult education has enormous roles in the achievement of the sustainable development goals by 2030 in Nigeria. Hence, this paper highlights the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reveals the role adult education could play towards achieving the sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Adult Education, Goals, Role.

INTRODUCTION

After the agrarian revolution, the industrial revolution was accompanied with large-scale development resulting in massive destruction of the environment. Environmental resources were used and abused without the thought of tomorrow. In other words, man's relationship with the environment was dominated by economic rather than ecological consideration particularly since the industrial revolution.

Hence, after decades of ecological destruction, abuse and misuse, man's attention was drawn to a number of warnings from nature which include; the depletion of the ozone layer leading to heating up of the land mass and melting of the Icebergs in the north and south poles, flooding, desertification, pollution of the air, land and water, the reduction of arable land among others. Thus, the realization that if the present rate of development in carelessness, unguided and unregulated persist, very soon we would succeed in destroying ourselves. This led to evolving

strategies of development that will be in conformity with the demands of the protection of the fragile ecosystem. This is in essence, concern the way development (both physical that is development on landscape and human) can go on without or with minimum destruction of our flora and fauna. This is what brought about the concept of sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 80's as a unifying approach to concern over the environment, economic development and quality of life and was first used in the World Conservation Strategy (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN 1980) but made popular by the World Commission on Environment and Development otherwise known as the Brundtland Report in 1987. Since then the concept has been widely accepted as a route to better human society, integrating the environment, economic, political, social, cultural and technological development in order to reduce and eradicate the effects of climate change, hunger, illiteracy, diseases etc in the world especially in the developing countries.

Therefore, arising from the failure of most countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015, the United Nations on 25th September, 2015 adopted a new set of seventeen (17) global goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016-2030 which seek to attain zero poverty, hunger, quality education for all, good health and well-being, gender equality, peace, justice and strong institutions among others. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a call for action for all. Therefore, adult education has a great role to play in this regard. Hence this paper x-rays the important role of adult education in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION

Several definitions of Adult Education have been attempted all aimed at portraying its importance for the development of the individual and his community. Wokocha (2000) conceived adult education as essentially concerned with the development of personal abilities, attitudes and the encouragement of social, moral and intellectual responsibilities in relation to local, national and world citizenship. According to him, adult education includes all the activities with an educational purpose directed at solving the current needs and problems of the individual and the community. It is therefore, a major factor of change in improvement of personal, social and economic life.

Nzeneri (2006) saw adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. Sheats, Jayne and Spence (1953) conceived adult education as education that embraces learning undertaken voluntarily by people in their matured years.

Liveright and Haygood (1968) defined adult education as a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and part-time basis (unless full-time programmes are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, undertaking, or skills, appreciation and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.

UNESCO (1976) viewed adult education as the entire body of organized educational process whatever the content, level or method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replaced initial education in schools, colleges or 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 attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspective of personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Townsend as reported by Wordu (2006) saw adult education as embracing all forms of educative experience needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements at their differing levels of comprehension and ability and their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life.

The definitions of adult education cannot be exhausted in this piece of work. However, like Nzeneri (2006) noted what is important is that it is in adult education that greatest emphasis is placed on life-long education, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization and group dynamism.

THE PURPOSE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Nyerere (1973) contended that the purpose of adult education centres on individual, group and society needs, interest and aspiration. These educational needs and purposes border on the areas of liberating people from ignorance, restraints, poverty, malnutrition, poor health, idleness, social and economic ills and assist them to advance towards improvement of self and others. According to him, the purpose of adult education is to encourage the development in each citizen of three things; an acquiring mind, and ability to learn from what others do and basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of a society who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains.

Similarly, the purpose of adult education for the world as recommended by UNESCO (1976) is summarised as follows:

- To develop a critical understanding of major contemporary problems and social change.
- To develop the attitude for acquiring new knowledge, qualification, attitudes or forms of behaviour.
- Ensuring the individual's consciousness and effective incorporation into the world of work.
- Promoting increased awareness of the relationship between people and physical and cultural environment.
- Creating an understanding of and respect for the diversity of customs and cultures.

Furthermore UNICEF (2015) averred that the aim of adult learning and education is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes interpersonal and professional development thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and environments. It fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals. It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributes to sustainable learning society.

Similarly, the objectives of adult learning and education are:

- To develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility;

- To reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the development taking place in the economy and the world of works;
- To contribute to the creation of a learning society where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities;
- To promote peaceful co-existence and human rights;
- To foster resilience in young and older adults; and
- To enhance awareness for the promotion of the environment.

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The term sustainable development has attracted different meaning to different individuals, institutions and organizations depending on their orientation, focus and disposition. The Brundtland report (1987) conceptualized sustainable development as a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. The report holds that the vision of sustainable development is a call for policies which recognize the need for economic growth without depleting the future viability of the resource base. The Brundtland report identifies two key concepts in sustainable development policies:

- The basic needs for all people must be met in a way which provides for their needs with security and dignity, and
- There is no absolute limit to development, development potentials is a function of the present state of technology and social organisation combined with their impacts on environment. The report recommended that there should be a break away from the past pattern of development and seeks security through change, reduce risk to survive and put future development on the paths that are sustainable.

Uchegbu (1998) noted that the concept of sustainable development is concerned about development that is socially responsible, recognizing the extensive nature of poverty, deprivation, classes, nation and communities. Accordingly, sustainable development entails ideas of about poverty reduction as well as the overall improvement in the standard of human lives. Koroma and Bwala (2005) averred that the concept of sustainable development is geared towards proper management of natural and human resources, the environment, energy, waste and development based on pattern of production and consumption that can be pursued into the future without degrading the human and natural environment.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in Torutein (2010) defined sustainable development as the management and conservation of the natural resources base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Tammemagi (1999) as reported in Oyebaniji and Adekola (2008) is of the view that sustainable development means to conserve, use and manage resources and undergo the process of development in such a way that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of resources and improvement in life and living standard. It is the integration of economic, social and environment system.

Wikipedia (2017) saw sustainable development as the organizing principles for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to

provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. The desirable end result is a state of society where living and conditions and resource use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural systems.

Onyeozu (2007) noted that a development initiative is said to be sustainable when its objectives are realized and the effect of its outcome become not only enduring but regenerative. Generally, sustainable development is concerned with the improvement of the quality of life of all people; empowering the poor of today and the generations of tomorrow.

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1980), the principles of sustainable development are as follows:

- Respect and care for the community of life. This principle reflects the duty to care for other people and other forms of life, now and in the future;
- Improve the quality of human life: The real aim of development is to improve the quality of human life. It is a process that enables human beings to realize their potentials, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment;
- Conserve the earth's vitality and diversity: This requires us to conserve life support systems, conserve biodiversity and ensures that uses of renewable resources are sustainable;
- Conserve and minimize the depletion of non-renewable resources e.g. minerals, oil, gas and coal;
- Keep within the earth carrying capacity;
- Change personal attitudes and practice;
- Enable communities to care for their own environment;
- Provide a national framework for integrating development and conservation; and
- Create a global alliance

OBJECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The World Commission on Environment and Development otherwise known as the Brundtland report advanced the following list of objectives for sustainable development policies:

- Reviving economic growth
- Changing the quality of growth
- Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation
- Ensuring sustainable level of population
- Conserving and enhancing the resources base
- Re-orientation of technology and managing risk
- Merging environmental and economic in decision making process.

The report advanced the following changes as needed to achieve these goals:

- A political system which allows effective citizen participation in decision making process;
- An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis;
- A social system that provide solutions to tensions arising from our present form of disharmonious development;
- A production system that respects the obligation to conserve the ecological base for development;
- Technological system that can search continuously for new solutions;
- An international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; and
- An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Realizing that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) failed certain people and countries, the United Nations on the 25th September 2015 adopted 17 global goals with 169 targets otherwise known as the sustainable development goals. The 17 goals that aimed at transforming the world are as follows:

- No poverty;
- Zero Hunger;
- Good Health and Well-being;
- Quality Education;
- Gender Equality;
- Clean Water and Sanitation;
- Affordable and Clean Energy;
- Decent Work and Economic Growth;
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure;
- Reduced Inequality;
- Sustainable cities and communities;
- Responsible consumption and production;
- Climate Action;
- Life below Water;
- Life on Earth;
- Peace, Justice and Institutions; and
- Partnership for the Goals.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA BY 2030: THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION

The role of adult education in the overall development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. Adult education has over the years played a significant role in the social, economic, political, community, technological and agricultural development in Nigeria. In fact, adult education is one of the cardinal pillars of sustainable development. Therefore, achieving the sustainable development goals in Nigeria by 2030, adult education has the following role to play:

- Creating an enlightened society: One of the main objectives of adult education in Nigeria is the provision of functional literacy for adults who never had the advantage of any formal education and remedial education for those who prematurely dropped out of school. This adult education has done by providing quality and quantitative education for these categories of learners thereby reducing illiteracy, ignorance and creating an enlightened society for sustainable development. Similarly, adult education programmes in Nigerian Universities, Colleges of Education and other institutions has continued to create an avenue for Nigerian youths and adults to acquire quality education for sustainable development.
- Another important role adult education play in the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria is the creation of employment opportunities through acquisition of vocational skills and manpower development. This enables them to earn a living for themselves and others thereby eliminating poverty and hunger.
- Another area in which adult education contributes immensely to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria is in the provision of adult education extension services—especially agricultural extension education for food security. Through agricultural extension services, useful information about modern farming techniques are provided to farmers in order to increase their productivity and improve their standard of living thereby leading to food security and tackling hunger and starvation.
- Adult education over the years has contributed in creating awareness about the environment. Etigbamo (2014) noted that the programmes of environmental adult education has created awareness about the total environment—its resources and uses, degradation of the environment as well as solutions to the problems of environmental degradation. Environmental adult education is also concerned about conservation and protection of both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife as well as ways of combating the effects of climate change thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.
- Through health and family life education, adult education aim to promote good health and well-being among the adult populace, thereby striving to achieve the goals of sustainable development. Wordu (2006) opined that health and family life education which is a critical component of adult education focuses on mental and physical health, parenthood, personal hygiene, nutrition, family planning and environmental sanitation. The aim is to help the adult populace to observe simple medical rules for effective medication as well as health principles in order to maintain a disease-free environment.
- Through conscientization, adult education has contributed immensely in reducing inequalities in Nigeria, both gender and the gap between the rich and the poor. Various groups have utilized adult education programmes such as workshops, seminars, conferences, community education, etc in advocating for gender equality in Nigeria. Similarly, many adults especially the poor have improve their living conditions through various forms of adult education programmes.
- Through community education and development which are programmes of adult education, the needs and aspiration of most communities in Nigeria are fulfilled. Through community development programmes, communities are able to provide basic infrastructures for themselves. They also carry out environmental sanitations to ensure a clean and healthy environment thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

- Adult education contributes significantly to the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria in many other areas such as peace education, consumer education, and liberal education among others. The various roles of adult education in the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be exhausted in this piece of work. Therefore, the views of Nzeneri (2006) who defined adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust to changes and challenges in their lives and societies and that it is in adult education that greatest emphasis is placed on life-long education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment for self and nation development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization or animation and for group dynamism aptly summarized the indispensable role adult education play in the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing has shown that adult education has a crucial role to play in the achievement of sustainable development goals. The recommendations of UNESCO 2015 indicate that adult learning and education are cardinal pillars of sustainable development. However, for adult education to effectively perform its roles toward achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria, the perennial problems of adult education such as lack of manpower, government negligence, lack of instructional materials, poor funding among others must be addressed.

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