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SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Adopting Adult Education for Fulfilment of the Right of Women to Education in Nigeria



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ABSTRACT

The importance of education and the need for women's education, in particular, is advocated worldwide. However, there are still impediments to the realisation of women's right to education in Nigeria. It is through education that women acquire the desire and nature for the attainment of values, competence, skills, attitudes and knowledge. This paper highlights the need for serious consideration to be afforded to adult education generally in addition to adult literacy specifically in a bid to aid women in achieving their right to education. As such, the concept of adult and non-formal education being a basis aimed at the abolition of illiteracy amidst women in Nigeria was discussed.

KEY WORDS: *Women's right to education, literacy, adult education, non-formal education, access to education*

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Introduction

Women's lives and destinies all over the world are being trampled upon due to the fact that there is a deprivation of their right to make and get financial freedom through decent means. The female folk are being compelled to marry and then raise children. Some are led into prostitution and other illegal acts just because they do not possess power or even a voice to stand up for themselves. Women as a group are the worst hit when it comes to poverty and economic crises. Machel (2002) and Oxfam (1999) observed that the education of women was the first of their activities to be sacrificed in time of crisis. This is a trend that runs contrary to the moral principles of the World Conference on Education for all (EFA) which took place in Jomtein in 1990 which was restated by the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar in 2000 where allegiance to basic education for everyone with specific highlight on girls' education was re-established. There exists in Nigeria, a legal structure to safeguard the rights of women specifically the right to education. However, it could be perceived that in spite of the availability of these laws, the laws seem not to be so effective in the actual daily life of the women due to the scarcity of educational access particularly literacy.

Literacy is formulated in educational institutes and all other surroundings that are suitable for not only youths but adults also and is an implemental form of learning of reading, writing and numeracy which via the non-formal methods of education is learned to assist the student in understanding short simple sentences (UNEP, 1978). Literacy in a narrow sense is the capacity to be acquainted with how to read and write. The analogy of farming can be used to describe adult literacy. It can be equated to fertilizer that is required for development to take root and grow (Aspbae, 2006). Women use literacy skills for themselves and the nation as it can be used to increase direct access to information (Jeffries, 1967).

Forms of Education in Nigeria

There exist three main forms of education recognised in Nigeria. They are informal, non-formal and formal. In informal education the student or learner learns from community, family, religious leaders, and peers and this is from the day to day life and the actions carried out at work, while with the family or even during relaxation as it does not require any deliberate work.

The non-formal education is a not so structured system of education as it is loosely organised. It could or could not be directed by a formal syllabus and is open to all categories of people. The interest of the learner is paramount because it directs their input and involvement and directs the tempo of the classes as it encourages discussions and debates. It is open to everybody irrespective of the age or sex and this is carried out in seminars, conferences, courses and even workshops. However, the non-formal form takes place outside of the educational institutions. It helps people possess valuable skills that they otherwise would never have gained. Formal education is an organised method of education that is conducted by the use of a formal curriculum. At the completion of the course of study a certificate that is formally recognised is given to the student such as a Diploma or a Degree. The teachers are professionals and not just people with only experience. It is regulated by statutory laws and is controlled by the state (National Policy on Education 2004). It is what obtains in educational systems such as schools, universities and other institutions.

Delineating Adult Education

The definition of Adult and Non-Formal Education is so wide as its scope can be said to have no limit as it flows through all the facets of life. UNESCO (1976) stated that adult education is the constituent of education that lasts throughout life and starts from the crib and terminates in the tomb. It also stated that it denotes that total body of organised education processes whether in the formal sector or otherwise as it pertains to the content level and method. Harry and Kasi (2012) were of the opinion that adult education may possibly be termed as the entire educational actions or procedures which adults involve themselves in all through their life in order to ensure that their knowledge is up to date and also to widen their horizon to enable them to live a better life. This is in line with the final International Conference on Adult Education (UNESCO, 1976), which adopted the Declaration of the Right to learn which stated that the right to learn is the right to read and write.

According to Borode (2002), adult education in Nigeria comes under Non-Formal Education. He stated that non-formal education serves like an alternate to formal education process and remains an intentional and systematic learning carried out separate from the formal school system. Furthermore, that it is usually designed for adults in or out of school and

people attend it for the purpose of updating their knowledge; improving their skill and performance on the job; to ensure promotion in their places of work or remedy their educational imbalance. Adult education is also the practice of adults being taught and educated which takes place frequently either in the place of work or by extension or continuing education courses at secondary schools, high schools, colleges in the community, universities and lifelong learning centres (Chijioke, 2010).

The concept of adult education encompasses every planned and focused opportunity for learning which is presented to individuals who are acknowledged and who acknowledge themselves as being adults in their own society (Rogers, 1992). These individuals are also the adults who had to leave the formal education which is the first system of education or those that were not in the initial education but cannot attend again because they are way beyond that level.

There are various ways in which adult education could be classified. One way is to classify it into the following categories:

- a) The formal adult education: It has some features like that of the formal school system.
- b) The non-formal adult education: In terms of organization, it is totally different from the formal form and takes place out of school. It is based and tailored to suit the learners so that it will be beneficial.
- c) The informal adult education: Carried out informally and is not organised as it can be accomplished through watching television, listening to radio or even reading of books and normal daily activities.

It could further be classified into four major segments namely (Nzeneri, 2002):

- i. The education that is for personal development and emancipation: The programmes here are basically for the personal life of the learner and it also sets the learner free from all forms of ignorance and includes such programmes as the adult basic, political, functional literacy, environmental, women, citizenship, preventive.
- ii. The education that is aimed at skills development and competence: This encompasses all programmes that are for skill acquisition and training with the resultant effect of the ability to handle and operate efficiently all tools. Such programmes include education

on the following: apprenticeship, post basic, vocational, aesthetic and labour.

- iii. The education for adjustment and sustainability: An important reason for ANFE is to aid the learners in adapting to the changing realities of life. These programmes consist of education studies that have to do with peace, health, family planning, reproductive, community, co-operative, population.
- iv. Education for the continuation and awareness: This includes extension education, continuing education, intermittent education, second chance education.

Adult Education could also be classified into different types such as Adult basic Education; Functional Education; Political Education; Environmental adult Education; Women Education; Citizenship Education; Consumer Education; Liberal Education; Apprenticeship Education; Vocational Education; Post-basic Education; Workers' Education; Internship Education; Labour Education; Peace Education; Population Education; Family Planning Education; Reproductive Education; Health Education; Fundamental Education; Co-operative Education; Community Education; Remedial Education; Extension Education and Distance Education.

Objectives of Adult Education

According to the National Policy of 2004, the objectives of adult education amongst others are:

- 1) To make available functional literacy as well as continuing education aimed at adults and youths who at no time were opportune to have the benefit of formal education or who were not able to finish their primary education.
- 2) To make available functional and remedial education aimed at the young individuals that were not capable of concluding their primary education.

These objectives highlight the fact that adult education programmes have been designed as alternative educational opportunities for individuals who could not attend or who missed out at the formal level (UNICEF, 1993). It was opined that the totality of the objectives is geared towards one target which is to ensure that the adult is equipped with all that is needed for existence in a bid to become a person of relevance to his immediate

environment and society in general (Indabawa, 1992). This is achieved by assisting to proffer solutions to societal problems.

Right to Education

Education is a fundamental right by itself and because it is an empowering right, it accelerates human development in every way. It is a right and not anything that should be quantified by financial benefits. Education raises awareness and understanding (Radović Marković et al. 2012). It also opens up the consciousness of individuals to fresh prospects while developing dignity and self-respect. It is a basic human right crucial for enjoying many other rights (CESCR, 2002).

There are certain features of the Right to Education. This is referred to as the 4A Scheme and it was propounded by Tomasevski, who was the erstwhile UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. It comprises the required contents for education and was adopted by the ICESCR Committee (CESCR, 2002). It distinguishes between the four interconnected and indispensable aspects of education which are availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. Availability deals with the availability of a satisfactory number of educational institutions, programmes and infrastructure to expedite the achievement of this right. Accessibility denotes education being accessible to everyone. It has three aspects namely economic accessibility, non-discrimination and physical accessibility (Tomasevski, 2001). Acceptability deals with the form and substance of education given. This consists of the curricula and the techniques for teaching. Adaptability has to be adaptable. It is ideal for the curriculum to be revised continuously to make it useful and relevant for the learners.

The right to education includes delivery of quality education that is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to the requirements of the students.

Legal Framework on Education

At the core of every one of the various fundamental human rights treaties are the standards and -principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. International human rights law forbids the discrimination meted out on women in the sphere of education.

Nigeria has ratified several international instruments that deal with the right to education along with the right of women to education. Nigeria remains bound by the obligations under these treaties.

Examples of these treaties are:

- a. Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR, 1948)
- b. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979). (Article 10).
- c. UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE, 1976).
- d. ICESCR (1966): Articles 13 and 14.
- e. African Protocol on the People's Rights and Rights of Women APPRRW (2003): Article 12

The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education (NMEC) is the statutory federal government department saddled with the onus of ensuring that any individual who based on whatever reasons; could not or had not benefited from the formal system of schooling is made to be literate. It is to eradicate illiteracy among the citizenry. This is inclusive of youths that are not in school, children found on the streets, women in purdah, teenagers that have become mothers, Nomads who are not literate, almajiris and other fishermen who are migrants. The purpose is for the beneficiaries to be able to utilise these literary skills received in their daily socio-economic activities. It was established by Decree No 17 of June 26, 1990 but it did not take off fully until June 25, 1991. Its aim is to organise and manage the different facets of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) in Nigeria. This it does by coordinating and monitoring government agencies, academic institutions, and non –governmental organisations (NGOs) taking part in the programmes of NFE. This was done further to the Jomtien and Delhi Declarations where it was agreed to by nations that were members of the UN to eradicate illiteracy by year 2000 to expedite development. NMEC works in conjunction with the State Agencies for Mass Education (SAMEs). It is the SAMEs that provide the structure for the literacy classes carried on in the local governments.

The Right of Women to Education

In Nigeria, women's literacy and right to education is categorised under Adult and Non Formal Education (ANFE). On the part of the government, it is carried out by NMEC. This agency works with adults of which women

are inclusive and is concerned with ensuring that any adult not literate should be made literate.

Statistics have shown that out of the 774 million illiterates worldwide, women account for 64% (UNSD Gender Statistics, 2010). This is just a slight difference from what it was in the early part of the 1990s. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of the UN that deals with the advancement of gender equality and women enablement makes use of education as its objective while it uses the measurement of the level of disparity in education based on gender as its pointer of advancement and growth. Concerning women education, Nigeria's policy on education has eventually tilted towards a gender focus. The commitment of Nigeria towards formulation of policies on equality in education could be seen in formulation of various policies over time. The Blueprint on Women Education was launched in 1986 and this was succeeded by the creation of Women Education units in both the ministries of education at the federal and state levels. The purpose of the units was to take care of both the urban as well as the rural women with the aspiration to advance in their education. The blueprint was to make available equal educational opportunities to all. Vocational centres were also run which taught such vocations as cloth weaving, tie and dye, farming, processing of food and its preservation, tailoring, cooking, cosmetology, secretarial, and computer studies. Mass Literacy classes are being carried on in and around Nigeria and women are the major targets of the fight against illiteracy. Then there was the Family Support Basic Education Programme which was launched in 1994. Closely followed was the Universal Basic Education which was created in 1999. The National Policy on Women was inaugurated in 2001 with the Education For All Fast Track Initiative following closely in 2002. The Policies were still being created with the Strategy for Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria in 2003. This was basically geared towards girls and ensuring that the girls child is paid much attention in terms of education. This was to speed up the plans and proposals for the girl child education by the federal government. Next in line that was formulated was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which was in 2004 which was the same year with the UBE Act.

Objectives of Women Education

UNESCO (1988) came up with the ensuing, as the objectives of women education to:

- a. Empower women to better the health and nutrition of their families.
- b. Cause there to be a rise in the productive capability of women which would further lead to an increase of the standard of livelihood of the family.
- c. Provide access to suitable technologies for the women and also the administration of cooperatives.
- d. Ensure that the women's societal and cultural standing is improved.
- e. Make it possible for the women to carry out their duties more efficiently.
- f. Assist women to overcome any fears and any notions of being inadequate or inferior that they may possess.
- g. Educate women in comprehensive development, which is mental, social, physical, psychological, religious and economical.

For the objectives to be achieved, it must be done by first and foremost, ensuring that women acquire quality education. When this is done, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other potentials that are required by women for full participation in national development will be developed.

Relationship between Adult Education and Women's Right to Education

Nigeria views education as essential to enable a person dwell in and add his own quota to the societal development. It will be done through the acquisition of all necessary skills and abilities which could be physical and mental. Women that are not literate are often side-lined by the society (Rovenská, 2020). This is why the adult education for women is important. Education is therefore the fundamental implement that they would be provided with to equip them to perform any functions as complete members of the society. As women the option is the attendance of adult education classes. This is a second opportunity for women who were not afforded the opportunity of benefitting from the formal school system as they would be able to better their position. This was the reason why the federal government in 1986 established women education units in the ministries of education both at the federal and state levels. The creation of eighty eight (88) women adult education centres was an attestation of the belief that the education of the women is at the core of progress and advancement. The participation of

women in the formal education helps to broaden their experience and it furthermore offers them entrance to novel resources and skills as education is seen as the main tool for passing on this skills and attitudes (Shaheed, 1995). A woman's role could therefore be said to be restricted to commercial and sexual work, satiating the desires of men, labouring in the fields, nurturing babies and kitchen duties such as cooking of food (Hammond & Jablav, 1992).

Using adult literacy as an empowerment tool can be accomplished successfully by designing and implementing well laid out programmes for literacy and non-formal education. In 2010, severe importance was placed on the empowerment of women. The UN former secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon while delivering a speech (Ban, 2010) stated that if literacy is used to empower women who have different and many responsibilities in the society, there would be a great contribution made towards the nation's development. True empowerment of women can only be achieved when they are given higher levels of authority and are afforded the opportunity of acquiring education and skills. To achieve this, programmes that deal with developments are created to enhance the standards of living of the women and empower them to participate in the procedures that would aid their progress domestically, in the society and the nation as a whole. The principal aim is to lessen the weight that women carry on a daily basis via suitable programmes that deal with empowerment such as those on skill acquisition, basic education or even dissemination of health of family information. The question of women's literacy skills is of importance not only for educational and cultural reasons but also because it forms the very core of modernization and development. In other words, literacy is perceived as a means of building a community as well as promoting social and individual standards of living (Mutanyatta, 2004). The burdens shaped by progressing technology today requires an improved level of knowledge, skills, understanding as well as the ability to improve someone's living and working conditions. For example, in modern civilized society, reading and writing are considered indispensable elements for personal advancement and achievement (Jeffries, 1967). Although literacy cannot be claimed to be the entire cause of development or an end in itself, it is an important factor in its capacity to reduce levels of inequality especially between women and men (McGivney & Frances, 1991). Sex discrimination in the delivery of education opportunities has victimized females in all communities of the world and the result of this discrimination has given rise to a high rate of illiteracy among women (Pierette, 1985). It was further observed that the

importance of their contribution to life is not only at the family level but national wise (Germaine, 1985). Through the ages, women have constantly been performing all sorts of tasks in their homes and taking active role in various community endeavours.

Developing countries, including Nigeria, organise various programmes for the benefit of every woman which are executed by the federal government but in liaison with international institutions who are also the sponsors. The states and local governments also collabourate with the federal government. Decree No. 30 (Decree No 30 of 1989) was promulgated to better the lot of women in Nigeria culturally, economically, politically and socially as well as general welfare as it created the National Commission for Women (NCW) to execute programmes for women. The objectives of the Commission include (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012):

- i. The promotion of women's welfare in every sense;
- ii. Encouraging the complete use of women in human resources development and ensuring that they are regarded as active participators in national development at every level possessing equal rights and obligations;
- iii. Encouraging the women to be responsible mothers take and take care of their health;
- iv. Doing all things possible to ensure that there is an improvement in women's civil, political, cultural, social and economic education;
- v. Assisting NGOs and act as a liaison between the organisations that cater for women and the government;
- vi. The encouragement of the purpose and reasons for the establishment of cooperative societies as well as events amid women who are either in urban or rural parts. And to also arouse the enterprising spirit in them to aid them in the area small-scale industries.
- vii. Formulating and disseminating standards of morality for the family and the general public and setting up programmes aided by institutions to instil moral education in both the woman and the child;
- viii. Working in the direction of the complete abolition of every practice either social or cultural that tends to discriminate against and degrade womanhood (Review of European Studies, 2012).

Quite a number of organisations exist which organise classes for women by providing adult and non-formal educational chances to them.

Some of the organisations are religious women's organisations. There are also many NGOs that have education classes for women like the Armed Forces Officers' Wives Associations of Nigeria, which comprises of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. In the same way, various international agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, British Council, van Leer education Foundation, inter alia impart immensely to numerous programmes that have to do with the education of the Nigerian woman. It was stated in the UNICEF/FGN Master Plan of Operation for the 1991-95 programme of co-operation, that one of the chief areas that needed the intermediation of UNICEF was the subject of women's education. It is specified in the plan that the project pertaining to the education of women would speed up the accomplishment of functional literacy by improving accessibility and the quality of the education given for women who are of parturition age. It made provision for basic literacy and numeracy trainings for women in the skills that have to do with improving self, generating income and promotion of good hygiene and health related matters (Ojobor, 2008). There has also been the use of radio to improve the education in the community which was achieved through the assistance of UNESCO (2018) while funds were provided by UNDP to sustain the literacy programmes taking place in various states in the country. The number of literacy centres in Nigeria has increased significantly while quite a large number of NGOs that have gotten involved in Literacy. Also, Higher institutions³ are having literacy centres which are also called Extra Mural centres.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Adult education is the way out of women illiteracy. Women have the right to education and through adult education or literacy classes their right to education can be fulfilled no matter their age.

It is recommended that women must as a group be primarily convinced and persuaded that education is a way which leads to self-development and that education will be of benefit to them individually and then to the larger society. It is therefore paramount that the women need to be addressed via seminars and conferences carried out in the local level of the importance of education particularly literacy. There should be more awareness made for the women literacy classes. The announcements for the start of the

³ Such as The University of Ibadan under the Extra Mural Lessons held by the Adult Education Department in the Faculty of Education of the University of Ibadan.

programmes should be publicized more through the radio and televisions via jingles. The announcements would state the date of commencement of the classes and the available centres.

Mobile literacy centres should be established in the rural areas. The facilitators in these mobile centres would be made to move round different locations in the local government in order to reach a vast majority of who would otherwise not attend the centres. The mobile centres could be in markets where the women could be found and the literacy classes be carried out there in groups. The literacy classes for women should be set within the confines of women's issues. The women should be strengthened to confront the obstacles faced in the home-front and the society at large. Literacy could be used to provide the women to access to knowledge on such subjects as family, women's own health, health and nutrition, agricultural production, reproduction. This would help improve their manner of dealing with their anxieties and drives home the benefit of literacy. The Literacy classes should be organized in such a way that allowance or accommodation is made for women who come in with their little children. Activities or space could be provided for the children so that they do not distract the mothers from their lessons.

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