



Advocacy Campaigns: Panacea for Repositioning the Social and Policy Structure of Adult Education in Nigeria.

By

KOBANI Doreen Ph.D

Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo

Faculty of Education

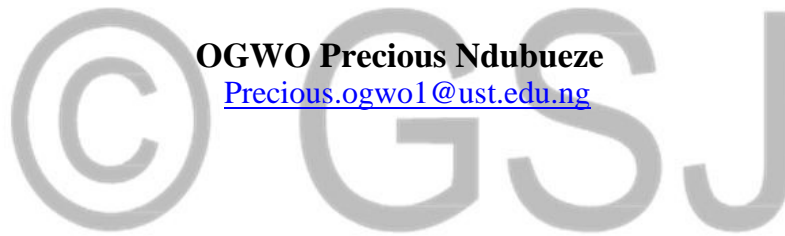
Department of Adult Education and Community Development

doreenkobani@gmail.com

&

OGWO Precious Ndubueze

Precious.ogwo1@ust.edu.ng



ABSTRACT

The achievement of social, economic and political development in a country depends to a large extent on the presence of a skilled and informed adult population. The relevance of adult education as a tool for achieving the urgent need for a skilled and functional adult population has been advanced in recent times. This implies that adult education is an imperative, not only for the effective functioning of individuals at the workplace and in their own communities, but also for the renewal of society itself. Adult education should be seen by all stakeholders as a strategic goal for nation building. In spite of these clear social benefits accruing from adult education it is observed that in Nigeria, adult education still operates mainly as disparate, piecemeal activities that are not integrated into a coherent, purposeful strategy in pursuit of a national development vision. Hence, the emphasis on advocacy campaigns as a strategy for promoting changes in awareness, attitudes and beliefs in order to strengthen public and political opinion for the development of adult education and to further strengthen the social and policy structure of adult education in Nigeria.

Key Words: Advocacy Campaigns, Adult Education, Social structure, Policy Structure.

Introduction

The intrinsic value of adult education in providing quick response to the challenges confronting adults and the society at large is the foundation upon which adult education will continue to mount and thrive. At the individual level, adult education is valuable in helping adults become constantly and consistently relevant in a modern economy. On the other hand, Adekola (2008) posited that adult education at the national level plays the vital role of promoting improved participation and contribution of the adult citizenry towards social, economic, political and technological progress of the nation. In other words, you can hardly have an industrialized country without a well-developed framework for adult education. Seen in a life-long learning context, it is an inclusive education that emphasizes self-esteem, empowerment, human resource management, citizenship/leadership capacity-building, community organization, labour skills, income generations and even poverty alleviation.

From Ume's (2012) perspective in Kobani (2022) it was averred that a fundamental problem in a democratic organization is that of recruiting, retaining, developing and finding a functional leader, at all levels, from the smallest local government to the entire country or central government. To solve the problem of leadership therefore, adult literacy education has been used to equip leaders with skills of governance. It has thus, served as means to retool them, impart knowledge to them and ensure that sustainable development is guaranteed. This process is vital so that the human species are treated as real human organisms capable of enjoying their environment in peace under good leaders.

In Nigeria, the possibility of achieving social, economic and political development depends on the production of a skilled and informed adult population. Adult education is capable of preparing adults to expand their communication skills, improve their human relations, facilitate the spirit of patriotism and enhance their personal growth. This is re-echoed by Kobani and Alozie (2016) when they stated that Adult and non-formal education instills in the individual the ability to get along with other people without behaving like a beast; teaching people how to communicate with others amicably in the community without resorting to shouting and quarrelling, which will enhance harmony in the society, respect for the feelings of others, tolerance of divergent views and peaceful coexistence between people. As noted by Nzeneri (2006) man is presently being challenged by constant change in technology and rapid increase in new knowledge, which brings about expansion and dynamism. These changes demands that adults must possess at least basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as, general social knowledge in order to catch up with the world around them. No wonder Anyanwu in Eya, Ugwu, and Alu, (2001) conceptualized adult education as a veritable tool for nation building. This implies that adult education is an imperative, not only for the effective functioning of individuals at the workplace and in their own communities, but also for the renewal of society itself. The discussion so far clearly indicates that Adult education is fundamental to building a world of

justice, well-being and social change. Yet, despite the essential role it plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, deep and persistent inequalities still exist in the social and policy structure of adult education in Nigeria.

The relevance of advocacy campaigns as a tool for promoting adult education has been advanced in recent times. According to Grella (2021) Advocacy campaigns are the driving force of progress in most developing nations of the world as they are used to call attention to issues or problems, identify solutions, coordinate efforts of the masses, and work to bring about changes that lead to positive development. In a related view, Vaughn (2021) averred that Advocacy campaigns are organized movements focused on influencing political change and driving awareness around issues at the local, state, or national level. In his view, when they are effectively organized and implemented, advocacy campaigns have the power to effect real change. UNESCO (2021) suggests that an advocacy campaign for adult education brings together adult learning advocates, activists, organizations and practitioners, including health services, workplaces, communities, universities and media, to position adult learning and education higher on the international agenda and act together for a healthy planet and a better world. Effective advocacy campaign for repositioning adult education in Nigeria requires participatory decision-making and skilled communication among stakeholders to generate positive change towards adult education based on a shared vision. Flowers and Goyal (2013) aligned with this view when they opined that the foundation of a successful advocacy campaign is a flexible partnership in which individuals collaborate in decision-making and decision-implementation. In their view, a campaign's impact and effectiveness depend on principled leaders who share power with team members, engage in dialogue, and foster trust. An effective advocacy campaign is citizen-initiated and citizen-centered. It seeks to create change by drawing attention to a problem and directing policy-makers to a solution. Using participatory,

transparent, and accountable decision-making processes, successful advocacy brings about a change in the policy decisions that affect people's lives.

Social Structure of Adult Education in Nigeria

The social structure of adult education in Nigeria falls far short of the high status it enjoys in the developed countries of the world. According to Fasokun (2000) most developing countries like Nigeria inherited a negative attitude towards adult education from former colonial powers, as the prevailing circumstance at the time encouraged more of the formal system of education. In modern times, the relevance of adult education in Nigeria is recognized mainly for literacy purposes. Obasi (2014) suggests that this narrow minded view of adult education influences the governments towards supporting only adult literacy programmes to the detriment of other important aspects of the discipline. In his view, there has hardly been a sustainable, virile, and coherently comprehensive set of programmes demonstrating government's commitment to adult education as a strategic priority in Nigeria's development. Hence, Adult education is yet to be fully appreciated as a discipline relevant for socio-economic development in Nigeria. Interestingly, Shamsideen (2016) averred that Adult education is a powerful tool for favoring inclusive development through democracy, thereby ensuring peace and social stability, prevention of political disorders and civil unrest. In his view, Adult education promotes an active civil society, reinforces gender democracy and help to solve conflicts between different countries and groups to the extent that the world at large is experiencing the effects of multi-faceted globalization with varying degrees of impact on peoples and cultures. It is apparent from the foregoing that adult education is an indispensable vector for social and economic progress in Nigeria.

in spite of these clear social benefits accruing from adult education in developed countries of the world, Nnazor (2005) noted that in Nigeria, adult education programmes still continue to operate

mainly as disparate, piecemeal activities that are not integrated into a coherent, purposeful strategy in pursuit of a national development vision. As a result, much government sponsored adult education activities have been chronically anemic due to inadequate funding and lackadaisical implementation, owing largely to a historical lack of passion and vision for adult education as both a strategic goal and an instrument for nation building.

The rippling effect of a poor social structure for adult education in Nigeria can also be seen at the tertiary level, where the adult education training programmes offered in the various universities are devoid of a coherent understanding of the actual scope of the discipline and its role in national development. This lack of appreciation of scope is further strengthened by the fact that the backgrounds of a sizable number of Lecturers in the programmes are from other disciplines which has influenced the curriculum contents and direction of the programmes. It is expected that those who have been initiated into the field of adult education must belong to a professional body and enjoy a level of respect from the general public. This is yet to be said of adult educators in Nigeria. According to Jutte (2011) the field remains largely not regulated because it is yet to acquire other requirements such as: having a clear monopoly on the occupation; definite entry requirement; a professional association that is functional at the grass root level to maintain code of conducts and common core of competencies etc. the social structure of adult education in Nigeria is indeed a paradox considering the fact that it a major element for social reengineering.

Policy Structure of Adult Education in Nigeria

Efforts have been made to develop education in Nigeria since independence in 1960. This includes several National Development Plans articulating the country's development priorities and strategies for the development of education in Nigeria. Unfortunately, none of the plans provided a comprehensive framework and impetus for the development of adult education. The Nigerian National Policy on Education was adopted in 1977 and has been modified severally

with the latest being the 2013 edition. This policy provides for equal access to education, including continuing and further education, and commits to the eradication of illiteracy and promotion of lifelong learning. According to the Nigerian National policy on Education (2013) the goals of Mass literacy, adult and non-formaleducation shall be to:

- a. Provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left too early
- b. Provide remedial and lifelong education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; and
- c. Provide in-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

To achieve the prompt eradication of illiteracy, the policy stipulates that

- a. There shall be nationwide mass literacy campaign based on various strategies
- b. State and FCT agencies for mass education shall be responsible for the regulation of all adult and non-formal education classes/programmes
- c. Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education shall continue to be under the supervision of ministries of education and FCT education secretariat
- d. Mass literacy programmes shall be provided free by the government to the beneficiaries IT and other infrastructural facilities, such as Libraries, Viewing centers and Reading Rooms shall be provided in every community
- e. Community radio and radio literacy

Beyond the articulation of these desired outcomes, only little can be said to have been achieved in terms of significant development of adult education in Nigeria. The euphoria with which Nigerians welcomed the National Policy on Education has died down and been replaced with despondency due to non-performance. Furthermore, the confusion and inconsistency with the

national policy on education is obvious with the duplication and stratification of the relevant organs of adult education, for example, the national policy on education has separate sections for basic education, mass literacy, adult and non-formal education and distance education all of which are relevant organs of adult education. Maruatona (2008) is of the view that most developing countries in Africa have failed to adopt the all-encompassing visions of adult education as promoted by the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), as a result, adult education tends to be undervalued in terms of policy structure and budgetary allocations. UNESCO (2005), reports that many nations lack even basic statistics on literacy rates or proper documentation of literacy policies and practices. Apart from the general problems of policy implementation common to most countries, especially those of the third world, some factors have been identified as peculiar to Nigeria and inhibiting her educational growth. Okoroma (2006) opined that some of the factors responsible for poor implementation of educational policies include; lack of political will, corruption and political instability. In the present circumstance, the lackadaisical attitude of the political class towards adult education makes the dream of Nigeria to move to a state of parity with the advanced world a mirage.

Some of systemic failures of adult education policy in Nigeria as outlined in Nnazor (2005) include the lack of:

- Motivating incentives for adults who participate in education and training programs that are not employer-sponsored such as subsidized child care services especially in the cities, flexible scheduling, and career and personal guidance services.
- Clearly defined framework and guidelines for the participation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector and international organizations in adult education
- Review of both content and method of delivery of programmes in order to ensure their currency, appropriateness and effectiveness.

Relevance of Advocacy Campaigns in Repositioning the Social and Policy Structure of Adult Education in Nigeria

Advocacy and campaigns are central to securing a consistent and holistic progress in the development of adult education in Nigeria. Gruyter (2015) is of the view that advocacy involves embracing and promoting a course in an attempt to shape public opinion and promote the interests of a group. Advocacy in this context implies a set of organized activities to influence government and other institutional policies and practices to achieve lasting changes in the development of adult education in Nigeria. With reference to adult education, Mera (2004) emphasized the relevance of advocacy as a strategy for promoting changes in awareness, attitudes and beliefs in order to strengthen public and political opinion for the development of adult education. Hence; Taylor (2005) opined that advocacy must be placed at the heart of any effort to develop adult education.

Campaigns for adult education on the other hand implies a set of advocacies, communications and mobilization activities - informed by knowledge and based on values that influence norms, policies and practices to achieve progressive change in the practice of adult education. In a related view, Maruotana (2008) opined that campaigns involve concerted advocacy and mobilization effort, carried out over a given period of time. However, campaigning always goes beyond just influencing policies and practices and always seeks to engage the public in taking action and creating a broader movement for change. According to Bhola (1995) campaigns are motivated by a sense of urgency and combativeness in post-revolutionary settings and a desire to redress past injustice. With reference to promoting adult education policies, advocacy campaigns play the role of engendering among stakeholders the commitment to develop and implement policies for repositioning the social and policy structure of adult education. Rassool (1999) suggests that if they are effectively organized and backed by sufficient resources, advocacy

campaigns can bring about a significant improvement in the development of adult education. UNESCO (2016), reports that advocacy campaigns can garner significant attention, and can shift policy priorities. It is important to note that advocacy campaigns have contributed to the little progress made in promoting adult education in the past few decades in Nigeria, such as establishing the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC). Advocacy campaigns for improving the social and policy framework for adult education may include but not limited to:

Organizing Adult Education Festivals: Adult education festivals involves engaging a wide range of partners in education, business, the media, civil society and policy makers with the aim of stimulating a conscious bias towards improving the status of adult education in the country. According to Tucket (2018), adult education festivals are usually organized to celebrate existing learners, stimulate others to participate, and seek to influence policy makers and practitioners to improve opportunities for adult education, especially those from groups underrepresented in current provision. They engage a wide range of partners in education, business, the media, and in civil society. They make visible the wide variety of contexts in which adults learn, provide a platform for experimentation, and for adult learners' voices to be more effectively heard. In a related view, Aldridge and Tuckett (2011) opined that when properly planned, adult education festivals can be a vehicle for adults to become visible and vocal in the policy process – a useful tool, and a necessary component, perhaps, in the overall pursuit of equity and social justice. Beyond that, they provide a space for adults to celebrate the delights, challenges and joys of adult learning.

Build a Coalition in Support for Development of Adult Education

On the importance of coalitions, fine (2019), opined that advocacy campaign involves working with others “in an atmosphere of teamwork rather than as individual heroes.” Concurring, Anwar (2016) averred that if you want to bring change to a society, “you have to convince the

authorities, you have to convince the public that there is a widespread public demand for this. The only way you can do that is if you build a coalition, if you work together with other people to support your cause. On the workings of coalitions, Loue (2012) suggested that the essential factor in developing benefits of adult education in nation building is individuals who deeply respect each other and have a total understanding of the importance of the others opinion, of input, of collaboration. In his view, a coalition provides the benefit, combined wisdom, experiences, histories, cultures, methodology, challenges and solutions.

National Set-piece Events

This involves promoting the benefits of adult education in nation building through set-piece events. Loue (2021) suggests that such events should be organized using television and media activity with locally organized celebrations, and innovative activities, along with targeted research and advocacy. Organizing awards for individuals and groups selected as emblematic of the way adult education can transform lives, and inspire other. These events can serve as avenues for establishing partnership with, Civil Society Organizations, the Broadcasters, the Trades Union Congress, Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Education at all levels of government through national conferences and syndicate sessions aimed at establishing a new paradigm for adult education.

Conclusion

The place of adult education in nation building cannot be overstressed. It is indeed an imperative, not only for the effective functioning of individuals at the workplace and in their own communities, but also for the renewal of society itself. Sadly the social and policy structure of adult education in Nigeria falls far short of the high status it enjoys in the developed countries of the world. Beyond the articulation of specific objectives for adult and Norn formal education as contained in the national policy for education, only little can be said to have been achieved in

terms of significant development of adult education in Nigeria. In the circumstance, advocacy campaigns become a veritable tool for repositioning the social and policy structure of adult education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need for a workable strategy for the development of adult education in Nigeria. It is for this reason that the following recommendations are advanced:

1. The Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) in partnership with the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), must as a matter of urgency collaborate to Change societal attitude towards adult education: Society must ascribe value and prestige to this system of learning and appreciate it as needed for lifelong Education.
2. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council must ensure that Policy documents like the National Policy on Education (NPE) should be clear as to what specific roles the different levels of Governments, Federal, State and Local Governments should play in the advancement of adult education programmes in Nigeria.
3. The Agency for Adult and Non Formal Education in all the state of the federation must embark on advocacy campaigns at the grass root level for the purpose of Integrating literacy, training and basic education opportunities in all rural communities in Nigeria.
4. Finally, adult and continuing education should not just be shared responsibility of government alone; Civil Society, Faith-Based Organizations, Private Sector, Individuals and Communities should also contribute to the human capital development and the provision of conducive and quality learning environment for those who are engaged in all activities associated with adult education.

REFERENCES

- Adekola, G. (2008). *Methods and Materials Utilization in Adult and Non-Formal Education*. Ibadan; Gabesther Educational Publishers.
- Anwar D. (2016). *Community: Reflections on Definition*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 199588–95.
- Bhola, H. S. (1995). The National Literacy Programme of Namibia (NLPN): A Policy Analysis and Programme Evaluation. Windhoek: Government of the Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Eya, L. O., Ugwu, J. C., Alu, B. E. (2001). *Adult Education: Its Nature and Purpose*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.
- Fasokun, T. O. (2000). The Challenges of Adult Education. Retrieved on July 15, 2021 from <https://ir.oauife.edu.ng>.
- Fine G. A. (2019). Public Narration and Group Culture: Discerning Discourse in Social Movements. IN: Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Flowers, N. & Goyal, R. (2013). Developing Effective Advocacy Campaigns. Bethesda, USA: Women's Learning Partnership.
- Grella, C. (2021) Advocacy: A Rundown of the Basics With Real World Examples. Retrieved on 2/10/22 from <https://www.salsalabs.com/blog/advocacy-campaign-planning>.
- Jutte, W (2011): Professionalization-The Struggle Within. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 2, 1(11):15-22.
- Kobani, D. & Alozie, K. (2016). *Adult Education: Principles and Practice*. Owerri: Beauty Koncepts.
- Kobani, D. (2018). *Adult Education: Methods and Materials*. Owerri: Beauty Koncepts.
- Kobani, D. (2022). Leadership Literacy as means for Sustainable Community Development in Nigeria, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications (IJSRP)*, 12(3): 166-172.
- Loue S, (2012). Community Health Advocacy. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Maruotana, T. (2008). Reflections on Policies for Mass Literacy Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Review of Education* 54, 745–754.
- Mason, P. M. (2015). Advocacy in Nonprofit Organizations: A leadership perspective. Retrieved on 27th July 2021 from www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515.npf-2014-0036/html
- Mera, C. Z. (2004). Reflections on Challenges Facing the Adult Education Movement. *Adult Education and Development*. 63, 103-110.

- Nnazor, R. (2005). Adult education in Nigeria: The consequence of neglect and agenda for action. *International Education Journal*, 6(4), 530-536.
- Nzeneri, I. S. (2008) Handbook on Adult education Principles and practice. Onitsha: Goodway Printing Press.
- Obasi, S. (2014). Adult Education in Nigeria: A Discipline in Search of Scope and Direction. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(11) 27-31
- Okoroma, N. S. (2006) Educational Policies and Problems of Implementation in Nigeria, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 46(2) 242-263.
- Rassool, N. (1999). Literacy for Sustainable Development in an Information Age. Philadelphia: Multicultural Matters.
- Shamsideen, S. (2016). The Role of Adult Education as a Catalyst for Social change in Nigeria. *Pyrex Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*, 2(2) 010-014.
- Taylor, R. (2005). Lifelong learning and the Laborgovernment's 1997–2004. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1), 101-118.
- Tucket, A. (2018) Adult Education for a Change: Advocacy, Learning Festivals, Migration, and the Pursuit of equity and Social Justice. Retrieved on 2/24/2022 from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971418796650>.
- UNESCO (2021) UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning supports global campaign for adult learning and education. Retrieved on 2/10/2022 from <https://uil.unesco.org/node/10786>
- United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization.(2005). Global Monitoring Report, 2006. Paris: UNESCO.
- Vaughn, C. (2021). The Ultimate Guide to Advocacy Campaigns: Best Practices. Retrieved on 2/10/2020 from <https://www.muster.com/blog/avocacy-campaigns>.