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# **The Role of Adult Education In Achieving Vision 20:2020 In Nigeria: Implication For Policy Implementation**

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By

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## **Abstract**

*Advocates of adult education suggest a type of education that raises critical consciousness in adult, that will enable them perceive their existential realities and take action towards remedying the life situation facing them. Nigeria in attempt to pull itself out of the quagmire of underdevelopment, has drawn a laudable development programme tagged “vision 2020-20”; which has its vision statement as making Nigeria “by 2020, one of the 20 largest economies in the world, able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena, this paper attempts to provide partial answer to Nigerian’s inadequate commitment over the years to pursue the development of adult education as a strategic objective and for national development. Underscoring the role of formal education in the achievement of self-fulfillment, this paper proposed an adult education agenda for Nigeria in accomplishing the policy vision*

## **Introduction**

The national policy education (2004) provides for adult and non-formal education as an instrument par excellence for lifelong education. Section 6 of the policy, outlines the goals of adult and non-formal education to include; providing functional literacy and continuing education for adult and the youths; providing education for different categories of completer of formal education system to improve their basic knowledge and skills, providing in-service, on the Job Vocation and professional training for different categories of workers, and giving adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic cultural and civic education for public enlightenment. Ugwuegbu (2003), is of the view that adult education to fill a gap, but that it is needed and wanted by all as long as they are alive and regardless of previous education. Dave (1973) had earlier argued that Adult Education aims at providing lifelong education that prepares the individual for change and creates a dynamic

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frame of mind in the individual. This is because the world is constantly changing in all spheres including technology, communication and industry. Human's craving for learning is thus continuous to keep pace with the changes. The concept, 'education' suggests development of valuable knowledge and skills in a society. O'Connor (1957:7) sees the educational system of any society as an elaborate social mechanism, designed to bring about in the person submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. As a result of the necessity for education, there has the view, that one who ceases to learn, ceases to exist, although the one (person) may be living. Freire (1974) noted that to "exist" is more than to "live" because it means being in the world and at the same time the world. Thus, he continued, that one who exists has attributes of transcending, discerning, communicating and participating with others who exists, whereas one who is merely living does not possess these critical attributes. Therefore one whose development of knowledge ceases has also stopped to exist, he is merely living.

Amos Comenius (1957), realizing the need for education for all advocated universal knowledge or pan sophism. He emphasizes that:

*“Our first wish is that all men should be educated to full humanity, not only one individual, nor a few nor many, but all men together and single, young and old, rich and poor, of high and low birth, men and women-in a word, all whose fate is to be born human beings; so that at last the whole of the human race and all nations..... Just as the whole world is a school for the whole of the human race..... From the cradle to the grave..... Every age is destined for learning, nor is man given other goals in learning than in life itself”.*  
(p97).

In his last work in education, he argued that all should be educated and that education should be a corollary of life. Dewey (1916), identified education as a continues reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience. He further observed that active habits involve thought, invention, and initiative in applying capacities to new aims, as opposed to routine which marks an arrest of growth. He equates the saying that “as growth is the characteristics of life” so is education for all growing, it has no end beyond itself. Consequently, the value of the formal school constitutes in the extent to which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies the means to make the desire realizable.

## **Motives for Adult Education**

Freire (1974), advocates a type of education that raises critical conscious in adults, that will enable them perceive their existential realities and take action towards remedying the situations. Education for adults should, in both content and methodology be an instrument of equipping students to adequately grapple with the issuing problems of existence and recreating the situation through action and

reflection emanating from the lethargy and alienation characteristics of the Brazilians during the sixties.

It has been observed that the drop-out rates in the primary and secondary cycles increased due to poverty, juvenile activities etc. Some pupils sometimes graduate from primary or preparatory education without mastering any of the basic skills. This creates lots of problems in the society because these pupils won't possess the required competencies to enter the labour market. This situation is worsened by the undue emphasis that is laid on paper qualification rather than on skill acquisition.

Furthermore, some adults did not have the opportunity to enroll in public schools.

Jones (1974) argued that knowledge is socially grounded, and that a large part of it arises from the simple fact of living over a total lifetime, hence emphasis should be placed on individuals having full participation in knowledge process in the society. The realization of the need for educational provisions throughout life has led different bodies to coin out different terms for it such as, continuing education, recurrent education, education permanent and lifelong education. In each of these terms, all agree that education should be a cafeteria system where the appetite of everybody should be catered for at any point in time, be it for intellectual, vocational or recreational purposes. Cropley (1979), noted that education should:

- (i) Last the whole life of each individual;
- (ii) Lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes made necessary by the constantly changing conditions in which people now live;
- (iii) Have as its ultimate, the self fulfillment of each individual;
- (iv) Be dependent for its successful implementation on people's increasing ability and motivation to engage in self-directed learning activities;
- (v) Acknowledge the contribution of all available educational influence, including formal, non-formal and informal education.

### **Vision 2020 for Nigeria's Development**

It was believed by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua that Nigeria's economic potential is well recognized as the biggest economy in the West African sub region. Considering her resource endowments and coastal location, there is potential for strong growth, yet Nigeria has realized very little of this potential. Previous efforts at planning and visioning were not sustained. The history of economic stagnation, declining welfare and social instability, has undermined development for most of the past 30 years. But in recent years, Nigeria has been experiencing a growth turnaround and conditions seem right for launching onto a path of sustained and rapid growth, justifying its ranking amongst the N II (that is the countries identified by Goldman Sachs to have the potential for attaining global competitiveness based on their economies and demographic setting and the foundation for reforms already laid). The previous administration had declared the intention to pursue the vision of placing Nigeria

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among the 20 largest economies in the world by 2020, and the current administration is committed to the attainment of this vision.

### **Key Goals for Vision 2020 (Focus on Few Development Areas)**

A vision is a clear mental picture of the future which must represent a significant improvement on the current state. It must however be supported by a clear and realistic path to its realization, and requires consistent and sustained effort for its achievement.

### **Vision Statement**

“By 2020 Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world, able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena”.

To achieve this vision of reaching the top 20 economies by the year 2020; the country will need to enhance her economic development performance as illustrated by the under listed key parameters:

**Polity** – By 2020 the country will be peaceful, harmonious and a stable democracy.

**Macro-Economy** – A sound, stable and globally competitive economy with a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of not less than \$900 billion and a per capita income of not less than \$400 per annum.

**Infrastructure** – Adequate infrastructure service that support the full mobilization of all economic sectors.

**Education** – Modern and vibrant education system which provides for every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his/her maximum potential and provides the country with adequate and competent manpower.

**Health** – A health sector that supports and sustains a life expectancy of not less than 70 years and reduces to the barest minimum the burden of infectious diseases such as Malaria, HIV/AIDS and other debilitating diseases.

### **The Role of Adult Education in Vision 2020**

If we accept that education is an enabling factor, we need to ask ourselves whether it is just a pill that once taken perpetually immunizes one against ignorance. That is very far from the truth. Osuji (1984), noted that if one goes through the formal system and attains a doctoral degree, the one has not attained all the education he needs, and may even relapse in his knowledge after some time. He further stressed that some suggested that university graduates should be reviewing their degree certificates periodically in order to be sure that they know what they claim to know. He continued, “the fact remains that if one attains a university degree and stops learning, the one undoubtedly would relapse in his discipline”. He noted that the issue of adult education concerns the illiterates who have never been to school and different completers of the formal education of different levels. That every person no matter the level of education attained needs adult education of one type or the other. Hence adult

education is basically viewed as any education programme designed for people regarded as adults in their communities. That is, educational system designed for people who are mentally matured and are socially responsible. It is also literacy education, designed, to afford the adults some development for self-fulfillment through attainment of literacy skills.

Faure et al (1972), noted that, “when literacy is an aspect of under-development, literacy training, should also form an integral part of any development undertaken to help man to become a conscious agent and master of himself.....” Functional literacy aims at developing individuals’ mental equipment and communicative powers, as well as their technical and vocational capacities. It offers educative functions to broad sectors of society, promotes the formative part, which the major economic activities may play. This exactly is what the vision expects from education and is working hard to achieve: “A modern and vibrant education system which provides for every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his maximum potential and provides the country with adequate and competent manpower”.

In spelling out the programme of action on education in the report of the vision 2020, it is rather unfortunate that the adult education sector was not mentioned while primary, secondary and tertiary sectors were adequately mentioned. Only a scanty mention was made on the establishment of an institution of the status of a secondary education institution to be linked with vocational schools, mass literacy and adult education for absorption of junior secondary school (JSS3) graduates (p. 184). One wonders why the committee should ignore adult education, which is very relevant to this term of references. It should be realized, that while the formal system of education is selective, elitist and discriminatory, adult education takes care of a wider clientele and is non-discriminatory in any society. The formal system takes care of the youths in apprenticeship model of education, that type that prepares the youths for a working adult life. But adult education takes care of a person’s whole life. The characteristic features of adult include mental maturity and social responsibility. It is through adult education that adults are helped to be mentally articulate so as to be able to understand issues and judge rightly and creditably discharge their social roles as parents etc.

### **Implication for Policy Implementation**

Nigeria is a country of about 140 million people. In fact, it is regarded as the most populous country in black Africa with a variety of resources. She is a member of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Ironically, poverty continues to ravage the potentially wealthy country. Nigeria is ranked 151<sup>st</sup> of 177 nations in the 2004 Human Development Index (United Nations Development Program, (2004a). Between 66 to 70 percent of Nigerians are poor, and the rate of unemployment is about 15% (United Nations Development Program, (2004b). This paper argues that the pervasive poverty in Nigeria partly derived from inadequate commitment to the

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development of adult education. Nigeria was colonized by Britain and had no clearly defined policy on education before 1975. But first issued its education policy for Nigeria in 1925 following the Phelps-stokes reports and did not in any way address adult education.

Nnazor (2005) noted that the Central Board of Education endorsed a policy on adult education in 1951. The aim, as articulated in the policy, was to organize remedial primary education for adults, which also included basic adult literacy and craft-making. He further noted that there were adult literacy classes' initiatives in many parts of Nigeria as a result of the policy. But unfortunately, the enormous cost of free primary education schemes of 1955 and 1957 left little resources for adult literacy. Thus, the first serious attempt at adult education lost steam. Nevertheless, adult education flickered in some communities unattended to by the federal government, but barely kept alive by regional governments and voluntary agencies. Nigeria became independent in 1960 and since then, there have been several National Development Plans articulating the country's development priorities and strategies, but none of the plans provided a comprehensive framework and impetus for the development of adult education.

The Nigeria National Policy on Education adopted in 1977, modified in 1981, provided for equal access to education, including continuing and further education, and was committed to the eradication of illiteracy and promotion of lifelong learning. Beyond the articulation of desired outcomes, nothing much has been achieved in terms of significant development of adult education. There has hardly been a sustainable, virile, and comprehensive set of program demonstrating government's commitment to adult education as a strategic priority in Nigeria development.

Although the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education was established in 1990 to monitor and coordinate adult education programmes, as well as to conduct research related to the development of adult and non-formal education in country, adult education programs continued to operate as disparate, piecemeal activities that are not integrated into a coherent, purposeful strategy in pursuit of a natural development vision, Nnazor (2005). Many government sponsored adult education activities have been chronically anemic due to inadequate funding, and lackadaisically implemented owing to historical lack of passion and vision for adult education as a strategic goal and an instrument for national development.

### **Content/Scope of Adult Education for Policy Implementation**

An articulated content for adult education in Nigeria would entail the development and implementation of a systematic adult education policy. As Osuji (1984), noted, "knowledge or degree acquired, if not revived periodically may keep or leave such individual relapsed in his discipline; knowledge acquisition is a lifelong issue, therefore it becomes 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. A systematic and comprehensive adult education policy would cover the following:-

### **Comprehensive of Offerings**

There is a tendency in developing countries to concentrate efforts in adult education on literacy or basic education. If the talents and abilities of the adult population are to be developed, mobilized and optimally utilized in national development, there must be comprehensive education and training opportunities for adults. A variety of professional, vocational and general education programs and courses must be available and affordable.

### **Personal Development and Family Management**

Responsive adult education should aim at helping adults to make informed choices in managing their personal and families concerns. Adult education for personal development would provide learners guidance on how to access information regarding issues, such as health, nutrition, family planning, education and career opportunities for self and children.

### **Civic and Peace Education**

Gartforth (1980) stressed the need for an educated populace if democracy is to succeed. "Without an educated electorate, democracy is impossible, for it requires of its citizens, alert, informed, critical interest and, as far as possible, participation in the processes of government". Vision 2020 statement is determined on bringing about a peaceful and harmonious country with a stable democracy by year 2020. The citizens need to understand how government functions, and what their responsibilities and rights are, so civic education programs would help to bring about politically aware citizenry.

### **Community Development Education**

Freire (1974) advocated a consciousness raising process designed to help individuals to become aware of the fundamental problems in their lives to the extent that they are motivated to take action to improve their circumstances. Community development education programs could be developed around themes such as, leadership, stewardship and accountability, self-help, team work, basic economic and health issues, as well as social change process.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education could help to reduce the high rate of unemployment in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria, by equipping adults with the knowledge and skills for setting up and running small businesses effectively. However, it is not only about pursuing economic ends, but entrepreneurship education helps learners also to develop entrepreneurship or problem-solving skills that can be used in addressing personal and social challenges; it also proactively prepares learners

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for an unpredictable world that can help them overcome dependence and hopelessness and also stimulate the emergence of an enterprising culture that values creativity, flexibility, self-efficacy, self-employment and self-sufficiency.

### **Literacy**

“Illiteracy is a severe handicap when participating in decisions that affect life; it is tantamount to disability, affecting every aspect of living, confines job opportunities to the most menial and low-paid tasks” (ICPQL 1996, p.174). Nigeria cannot develop in any significant way if the majority of Nigerians are not first considerably developed through literacy training.

### **Conclusion**

Considering that knowledge and skills have become the means for individuals and nations to be competitive, the high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, in spite of the country’s natural resources, can be attributed to a significant extent, lack of an education and training system committed to equipping adults to contribute more effectively to social, economic, political and cultural development. Education is necessary for man in order to articulate himself and achieve fullness. The formal education system cannot help man to attain all the education he needs for achievement of self-fulfillment. National development or competitiveness, no matter how passionately desired, is not likely to occur to any meaningful extent if a country is not earnestly committed to a sustainable adult education policy purposefully articulated with its development goals and implementation in view.

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