

The Role of Adult and Non-formal Education in Curbing Challenges of Democracy, Insecurity for National Unity in Nigeria

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In the recent time, government of Nigeria has laid much emphasis on development especially of the rural areas. Closely associated with it is the mass literacy campaign preached in all nooks and crannies of the country. This is as a result of the government's realization that development cannot be achieved without eliminating challenges of democracy and insecurity in the country. This therefore calls for introduction of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria so as to enhance national unity. This paper therefore defines some key concepts. The importance of adult education to Nigerians and the nation was highlighted. The paper also discussed some of the challenges militating against adult and non-formal education programme in Nigeria which include but not limited to finance, competent instructors, and infrastructure. The paper then highlighted some of the challenges of democracy and insecurity in Nigeria. Some of the recommendations were made which includes encouraging functional adult and non-formal education and how to rid of challenges of democracy and insecurity so as to achieve national unity in Nigeria. They include among others the appointment of qualified staff, improved condition of service for staff, increment in financial allocation to adult education programme, provision of adequate instructional materials, adequate publicity of the programme, periodic evaluation of the programme, and proper training and equipping of security agents in order to fight insecurity in Nigeria for national unity.

Keywords: role of adult and non-formal education, challenges of democracy, insecurity, national unity

Introduction

In the recent time the government of Nigeria has laid much emphasis on development especially of the rural areas. Closely associated with it is the mass literacy campaign preached in all nooks and crannies of the country. This is as a result of the government's realization that development cannot effectively be carried out in a country where majority of the population are illiterates. This idea led to the introduction of adult and non-formal education in order to change value of citizens to enhance socio-economic development in Nigeria.

In order to alleviate the situation, government deemed it necessary to provide a forum where the adult who were not opportune in their youth and wanted to continue their education, to receive basic formal education to be educated. The Federal Government tackled by launching in 1982 a ten-year mass literacy campaign. The campaign was aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the country by the year 1992. If the majority of the population is

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to contribute towards the development of the democratic system of the country such as political, social, and economic life of the country, a democratic system where their value towards adult and non-formal education has to be re-orientated. This is the major reason why adult education has now been widely accepted as an inseparable aspect of citizenship in any democratic community, and Nigeria is no exception. As a result of this, it has become recognized more than ever before as a national necessity.

Adult illiteracy has assumed a world dimension according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO). The population of illiterates throughout the world in 1970 stood at 172 million. In Africa, it was the same story for the illiterate population had risen from 139 million to 156 million between 1970 and 1980 (Aji, 2015). The pattern is the same for Nigeria with the estimated illiterate population of 60 million as at 1980. UNESCO has further reviewed that Nigeria has 20 million dropouts of school children up to this 2022 year. Essentially the figure is sure to have risen to something more than previous estimates.

In spite of this lofty plan by the then government, there still remains remarkable poor participation in the programmes by the adults. This challenge emanates from a number of reasons which make the whole exercise not interesting to the adult and this has drastically affected democratic practice with the attendant insecurity in Nigeria. It is against this background that this paper looks at the subheadings as reflected in this discussion and also to discuss what should be done in order to eliminate challenges of democracy and insecurity bedeviling the nation so as to enhance national unity in Nigeria.

Impact of Adult Education to Nigerians and the Nation

Impact of adult education cannot be underrated in present day Nigeria. It is very important for the individual; hence he/she will acquire literacy which is vital in his/her everyday activity and business, domestic work and in fact everything that goes around him/her in his or her world. Adult education helps him or her acquire skills and attitudes which equip him or her to contend with the challenges of democracy, insecurity, and modern life. Adult education is not only important to the individual but also of great importance to the government. The literate adults are potential tools for political, economic, and social development of our nation.

Furthermore, adult education is the life-wire of democracy. Adult education as we know grows out of a persistent faith in democracy as a principle of social system of values. We know that literate parents play important roles in the education of their children. We also know that adult education is a veritable weapon for combating diseases, ignorance, and poverty. It is now generally recognized as the most vital instrument in providing access to education for all and thereby making democracy to come to fruition. It is now obvious that impact made by adult mass literacy cannot be underscored. The Federal Government realizing these impacts has given it a space in its annual budget and established adult education departments in different parts of the Federation.

Challenges of Adult and Non-formal Education Programme in Nigeria

The problems militating against adult and non-formal literacy programme for national unity in Nigeria are many and diverse. First, the problem of finance. Financial problem has been a great problem the world over in running adult education programme. In respect to West African countries for instance, Okedara (2012, p. 27) maintained that “none of the West African countries spend up to one percent of its allocation on adult education”. This practice according to him contributes to the slow progress of adult education in West Africa. Okedara’s assertion is supported in the Nigerian Third National Development Plan in which adult education received N6.95

million out of a total sum of N2 billion allocated to education. Even in the fourth National Development Plan, adult education did not receive a lion's share like teacher and technical education that got N194.8 million and N354 million respectively while the neglected adult education got only N14 million. The problem of funding of adult education in Nigeria is not an easy matter. Even though meager sums of money are always allocated to adult education in the national budget, the money is often diverted to another thing if not embezzled.

Recruitment of competent instructors is another problem. The problem of having well educated and adequately trained teachers to teach the adult students is a problem. Okafor (1964) recounted with dismay in his report about adult education, the incompetency of adult education instructors. Okafor said that anybody who could read and write automatically becomes eligible for appointment as instructors. The job is often left for those who have passed their First School Leaving Certificate Examination (FSLC), and those who are West African School Certificate (WASC) attempts and seem to be all comers' affairs. This is so because a person who has been educated in higher institutions does not like to teach the adults and is lowly paid and the fact that the adults "could not understand". The consequence of this quality of staff is poor teaching which leads to lack of interest on the part of the adult clientele and the consequent high drop-out rate experienced in some adult education centres.

Another factor to be considered is the problem of infrastructure. The problem of infrastructure is a great handicap for adult education mass literacy programme. Onyejemezi (2014) from his study of constraints facing adult education in Abakaliki area confirmed this problem of infrastructural facilities by enumerating the following: "Lack of textbooks, other teaching materials and lack of transport facilities". In Nigerian situation, adult education has no physical buildings for adult students to receive their lessons other than old primary school buildings which are nearing collapse. Inside the classroom everything seems to be in disarray; hence what are found there are broken seats, broken chalkboards, and old lanterns.

It is not arguable that effective use of instructional material is very important in teaching-learning situation. In sharing this view, Ozigi (2010) said that instructional aides are necessary tools for teaching and learning, and that an institution without essential equipment cannot reasonably expect to achieve its main objective.

Furthermore, problem of publicity is another factor militating against adult education programme. The issue of being aware of the existence of adult literacy programme is one thing and enrolling as a student, another. The view is gaining ground nowadays that adult mass literacy is "a thing of the few individuals" because of lack of effective and wide publicity. We all know that the illiterate adults cannot attend adult literacy classes unless they are aware of its existence, utility, and relevance to their present needs, aspirations, and circumstances.

Time factor is another challenge hampering the smooth running of adult literacy programme in Nigeria. The availability and suitability of time is a major factor. Time is very important in every activity of human endeavours. That is why the economists often say that "time is money" just to emphasize the importance of time. The time factor has been considered to be a very big barrier to full participation in functional adult education (Abiaka, 2016).

Rogers (2017) attributed the poor performance of adult students to a scheduling of time-table which does not accommodate the unseen circumstances as illness, changing jobs or by general disturbance in home lives or at their work.

Challenges of Democracy, Insecurity, and National Unity in Nigeria

The term insecurity can be conceptualized according to the discipline or subject of study. For instance, Nigerians talk of insecurity when describing a declining safety of lives and properties, apprehension over

increasing rate of terrorism, armed robbery, kidnappings, political upheavals, religious conflicts, assassinations, secret cults-related criminal acts, intra- and inter-ethnic strife, hijacking, riots, demonstrations, etc. Therefore, democracy cannot thrive well in an environment where there is insecurity not to talk of allowing the operation of functional adult and non-formal education.

Effiom and Edinyang (2013) defined insecurity as the state of being subjected to danger and injury. Security therefore is perceived in terms of protecting the generality of the people, allowing smooth democratic system to thrive, and it is a collective responsibility of the government and the people. Hence, the notion of community policing has become a recurrent decimal in security parlance in Nigeria. Mezieobi (2012) saw security as a word which brings to mind issues that pertain, predominantly, to one or a combination of defence and protection of national integrity or Nigeria's sovereignty, territorial and political jurisdictions from external and internal interferences or intervention. Personal safety of members of political class who are in control of the helm of affairs of governance, in addition to safeguarding or protecting their office, hence the incredible allocation of funds for security services. The security agents or forces, civil defence corps protecting the lives and properties of the mass of the defenceless citizenry against the menace of the men of the underworld; etc.

From the few given definitions above, security therefore can mean the state of being free from danger, risk, or threat. It covers freedom from anxiety, fear, the safety of a state or organization against criminal activities and attacks like terrorism, theft or espionage (Ogheneakoke, Omoroje, Egbule, & Emuebie, 2014). The security interests of any nation therefore include safety of lives and properties, economic, physiological, mental well-being and the freedom to pursue the attainment of objectives without hindrance (Otoibhi, 2012).

In the opinion of Brown (2013), national security is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory, to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms, to preserve its nature, institutions, and governance from outside disruption, and to control its borders. Also, national security is a condition where our most cherished values and beliefs, our democratic way of life, our institutions of governance and our unity, welfare and well-being as a nation and people are permanently protected and continuously enhanced. It is the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation through the use of quality education, economic power, military and political power, diplomacy and power projection. It can be described as the aggregation of the security interest of the individuals, political entities, human associations, and ethnic groups which make up the nation (Osakwe, 2013).

Succinctly put, national security is the security of a nation state, including its citizens, economy, and institutions, which is regarded as a duty of government (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>).

National security therefore refers to policy enacted by governments to ensure the survival and safety of the nation-state, including but not limited to the exercise of diplomatic, economic, and military power in both peace and war. In other words, it means the freedom from foreign domination which is the sine-qua-non for the sustenance of the state through the instrumentality of economic, diplomacy, power projection, and political power.

Roles of Education in Checking Insecurity and Promoting Democracy for National Unity

There is a significant relationship between national security and education. A cursory look at the personality of Boko-Haram Islamists and bandits in the northern region of Nigeria reveals high level or rate of illiteracy among them. It is in the light of this that the Emir of Kano, HRH Lamido Sanusi, admonished the elites of the region to establish schools, instead of building mosques. Also, in a bid to help to reduce the rate of illiteracy the

past administration of Dr. Good Luck Jonathan established nomadic education and Al-Majari schools in the northern region.

According to Nandi (2013), education helps in developing intelligent social actors with the ability to make rational decisions and act intelligently. For this to be actualized, our education system (primary, secondary, tertiary, and indeed adult and non-formal education levels) must be practical and functional. Therefore, quality education is the primary agents of national security and democratic development for bringing the vision of society into reality.

For example, if the militants, Boko-Haram, armed robberies and kidnapers were properly nurtured with quality formal, informal and indigenous education from the grass root level, all these security threats/challenges such as terrorism, riots/civil unrest, demonstrations, intolerance, cult-related criminal acts, religious intolerance, arm robbery, intra- and inter-ethnic strife, drug trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping, hijacks, yahoo and yahoo+ boys and many other vices threatening lives, properties and national unity would not have been in existence. (Osakwe, 2013, p. 27)

Efforts Made by Government to Curb Insecurity

The inability of the security agencies to address the Nigeria's security problems has raised some serious questions on the preparedness of Nigeria to achieve desired political, social, and economic growths in the year 2023. It further poses serious threats to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state (FinIntell, 2013).

Over the years, successive governments in Nigeria have adopted several measures aimed at addressing problems of insecurity in the country, ranging from the carrots and sticks measures to the use of outright force and periodic critical evaluation of the performance of security agencies saddled with the responsibility of handling the situation. But these measures yet have not found solution to insecurity in the country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is our firm belief that if adult and non-formal education is given needed attention to be functional, and challenges of democracy and insecurity are handled with utmost seriousness, there will be national unity in Nigeria; Nigeria will then be indeed a giant of Africa not only in size, population, but also in educational development as well.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations could be considered.

1. Appointment of qualified adult education personnel should be done. Considering the areas to be covered, more qualified adult education supervisors should be trained and employed for more effective supervision of the programme. This will create more contact opportunities for the instructors and supervisors. Furthermore, it would then be possible to organize more frequent orientation courses, seminars, and workshops for instructors and proprietors.

2. More adequate training or at least orientation, in the handling of adults, should be given to formal school teachers if they are going to be more effective since school teachers constitute the teaching staff of the adult literacy classes.

3. The Federal Government should make a policy that could help to remote and proximate causes of insecurity in Nigeria such as high level of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, dearth of infrastructural facilities, uneven development, among others.

4. Government should phase out the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and establish a more viable and result-oriented agency or even radically declare a state of emergency in the educational sector of the country.

5. Government should establish technical schools and polytechnics should be given priorities when educational policies are being formulated.

6. The current arrangement where security apparatuses are totally in control by the central/federal government needs to be looked into and redressed. This is where the issue of community policing comes into focus. This security configuration should produce a committee at village, community, local, state, and federal levels with the responsibility of providing sensitive security information for security agencies at their areas of operation. This will ultimately assist in identifying criminals, their sponsors and hideouts in the country. This when implemented could help to foster national unity in Nigeria.

7. For all these to be achieved, functional adult and non-formal education for the masses is key so as to enhance smooth and effective democratic system for national unity.

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