

Capacity Building through Adult Education Programmes for Poverty Alleviation in Nigerian Communities

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Abstract

The sustainability of any development depends on good capacity. Education is one of the principle activities to achieve sustainable development. This means any country that has an intense desire for sustainable development must be committed to a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education, the realization of everyone's right to education and the belief that education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. It is through education (functional one) that everyone can respond adequately to contemporary challenges. Responding to contemporary challenges means building the capacity of individuals through education to face such challenges (<http://www.unesco.org>). Poverty is ravaging the nooks and cranny of not only Nigeria but also many countries over the world. Nigeria is one of the third world nations where a good proportion of the largest poorest citizens live (Millennium summit 2000). So many attempts and efforts have been made by Nigerian government to reduce poverty in an effort to improve the lifestyles of people; but one still discovers that these attempts and efforts are yet to yield the best of results. To break the circle of poverty or at the best reduce poverty among the people, education must play a major role in building the capacity of the people. It is evidently not possible for every community member in Nigerian society to become literate through formal education, this is why Adult education should be prioritized to provide literacy education and skill training while addressing the need for an integrated functional literacy or livelihood training programmes that encompass critical areas of adult education such as civic, cultural or environmental education or the broad field of continuing education. This is to equip learners or establish a livelihood or carry out economic activities after they have completed a course of training. For poverty reduction and sustainable development to be achieved by any country therefore, there is the great need for increasing equity and access to education, there is also the need to ensure that education develops knowledge and skills in all areas to the extent that people are empowered to shake off the shackles of poverty. This paper examines the importance of adult education programmes in poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Keywords: education, empowerment, development, participatory, knowledge, improved living standard.

INTRODUCTION

Capacity building which can also be synonymously used as capacity development is a conceptual approach to development that focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, government, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations from realizing their development goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. This term refers to strengthening the skills, competences and abilities of people and community so that they can overcome the causes of their exclusion and suffering (www.wikipedia.org). When capacities of people are built, they can guide their internal development and activities as they would have been skilled and knowledgeable to act in ways that would improve their standard of living to the extent that their poverty would be reduced. The UNDP defines capacity building as a long term continual process of

development that involves all stake holders including ministries, local authorities, nongovernmental organizations, professionals, community members, academics and more. (UNDP- [Wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). This implies that capacity building does not exclude any community member; it is an all inclusive activity since its aim is to tackle problems that are related to methods of development. The potential, limits, and needs of the people concerned are put into consideration in the process of capacity building.

United Nations of committee of expert on Public Administration states that capacity building can take place on an individual level, institutional level and societal level. On an individual level, capacity building requires the development of condition that will allow individuals to build and enhance existing knowledge and skills. It also calls for the establishment of

conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change (Capacity Building Wikipedia.org). It can be inferred from the above that individuals have potentials which can be improved upon to bring about better living standard such that poverty can be reduced if not totally eradicated. It also implies that capacity building is a process whereby individuals learn to change the status quo. Therefore building people's capacities changes the myopic view of people about their lifestyles to a widened one and thus they have the view that they have the right to be the authors of their own development and denying them this right leads to poverty and suffering (Capacity building:<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/capacity-building#cite-note-Deborah-2005-30.E2-80.939>).

Capacity building is therefore not a one for all process. It is a continuous process through which individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their ability to identify and meet developmental challenges. Capacity building therefore emphasizes planned development, increase in knowledge, and management skills. In the process of capacity building, learning is thus encouraged. It means that a person whose capacity is to be effectively built must be educated in a functional way. Access to quality education that will enable community members to identify their needs and seek solutions to such is of great importance. When people are educated they will be able to use their knowledge to manage their skills to bring about increase in output rate in whatever they do.

Capacity building is also defined as empowerment which encompasses the ability, will and skill to initiate, plan, manage, undertake, organize, budget, monitor, supervise and evaluate project activities (www.adf.gor). Education empowers, education will help people to be more organized, planned and help them to make good use of their skills to bring development not only to their persons but to the community in which they live. Education as the viable key to necessary information and development should be made accessible and available to every community member. This is because knowledge is the foundation of capacity. A person who is not knowledgeable cannot contribute in any way to poverty reduction in self let alone of community. Investment should thus be made in establishing educational systems and opportunities that would aid continual learning and the development of professional skills. Capacity building is a process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts and abilities, processes and resources that communities and individuals need to service, adapt and thrive in the fast changing world (Philbin, 1996). Capacity building which is also empowerment can therefore be equated with bottom up

approach and one that is participatory in outlook. However, for this empowerment to be meaningful it must be backed by meaningful and functional education. Capacity building should be pursued through informal approaches like networking e.g. building relationships with communities where development projects had been successfully carried out. It is therefore of great importance that a sufficiently structured adult education system which imparts knowledge and skills relevant and useful to the various sections of the community be instituted.

ADULT EDUCATION FOR CAPACITY BUILDING:

Adult education remains a fundamental principle for capacity building in a bid to reduce poverty because it is education for all because of its multidisciplinary nature and its various programmes. Adult education provides education for people that need basic education skills and other diverse needs and for whom there is no other place to go for such. Adult education is popularly known as education that provides second chances for adults. The importance of Adult education was brought forth by Lois Freeberg (Executive Director of Edsource, California) when he states that Adult education is "*education that is serving a population that falls through the cracks*" (<http://topped.svefoundation.org>). In another comment on the importance of adult education for capacity building, McKay, a 49 year old single Mother who dropped out in the 9th grade but was back in adult school said: "*Education is so important because when you don't have it, you're so limited*". She also states that "*being back in school has opened her mind and given her a different outlook in life*", stressing the importance of education to her children she also says "*I always tell my children, get your education because, I don't really get all mine and you see where am at. They hear that from my mouth every day.*" (<http://topped.svefoundation.org>).

The above is an indication that with adult education, capacities can be built for greater exploits. When one is educated, there is no limitation to what one can become and education is an eye opener to the world event and so with education, poverty can be conquered. Education will give one a broader outlook that will make one to take active steps in raising one's standard of living. When one is not able to get it when young, adult education is the option, because the mission of adult education is to advance the economic workforce development and societal goals by preparing adults for career and civic responsibilities.

Adult education is suitable for capacity building considering its methodology which is participatory and

experiential in nature. Its method is one that enriches the already gained experience and knowledge of the learners and it enhances the skills of learners for efficient management in whatever they do. Through various programmes of adult education, the capacity of people can be built through trainings in life skills education in various training centres. (Capacity Building: <http://www.srcindove.com/capacity-building.php>). Adult education is the education that brings about holistic development and one that leads towards good health and thus empower people for better living. Capacities of people can be built through various adult education centres such as training centres, vocational training centres and extension education. From here, people can acquire one vocation or the other. By being equipped, they are empowered to be free from poverty.

Adult education is easily accessible and affordable and so it is appropriate for building people's capacity in a bid to overcome abject poverty because it provides educational opportunities and services to equip adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as citizens, workers, parents, and family and community members. It provides adults with education and skills required in a competitive economy for a better quality of life. It is education for all. It prepares people for employment, citizenship, parenthood and self sufficiency. It gives basic skill training and job skills training opportunities in preparation for employment and self sufficiency.

Programmes of Adult Education

The following are some of the programmes of Adult Education that could lead to capacity building:

- i. **Adult basic literacy Education.** The objective is for learners to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to be functionally literate in whatever job placement they found themselves in.
- ii. **Citizenship education:** This will prepare them for active citizenship and civic participation so that they become active participants in politics so that they are not cheated.
- iii. **Vocational adult education programmes** are geared to the vocational and occupational needs of learners. Adult education trains people with various occupations with a view to enabling them improve their working efficiency and increase their productivity. This type of adult education helps people to apply their new knowledge and skills to solve basic economic and social problems. It leads to increase in manpower output production of foodstuffs, and it involves the kind of adult education which sets out to teach the basic way of modern living.

Under the Vocational Adult Education is Extension education under which there is :

- a. **Agricultural Extension Service:** This adult education programme aims at building the capacity of farmers to make them better farmers with increase productivity. The programme mobilizes and educates farmers in modern agricultural technique and thus bringing about a radical change in agricultural methods from subsistence farming to an advanced one that leads to the development of economy. This type of agricultural extension education brings about socio-economic revolutions- the type that poverty cannot withstand.
- b. **Health Extension Education:** The focus of this adult education programme is to educate people on how to live well so as to eradicate poverty in healthy living. The people are educated and empowered on how to keep their environments clean. Through such health education services, people realize that their prosperity and progress depend on their good health which may be assessed as their greatest asset to good and improved living (Adedokun 2008).

2 Training and Re-training programme

Training is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies which may be as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skill and knowledge that relate to specific useful competences. (<http://en.wikipedis.org>) Its goal is to improve one's capability, capacity productivity and performance (Collings 2008). This type of adult education programme builds the capacity of adults to perform their duties more competently than before thus yielding more economic dividend with which they can improve their living standard and raise their head above poverty. Retraining of workers involves the renewal or updating of workers' skills, knowledge, attitude or work habits and competences to enable them perform their assigned responsibilities more creditably. Retraining in whatever form is germane to high productivity considering the level of technological advancement in the world today. When people are trained and retrained, they are equipped and empowered to face contemporary challenges of any form and thus relevant to make their living to subside poverty.

3. Civic Education

It is that adult education programme that aims at enlightening the adults with the hope of raising their consciousness and making them responsible adults in their society. Civic education educates people concerning their rights as well as responsibilities thereby guarding against the exploitation of the masses by the elite class. It is education for good citizenship

1. Liberal Adult Education

This type of adult education programme emphasizes education for leisure and for the improvement of the minds so that each person is set free from the bondage of oppression. It is education that sets man free from the hold of ignorance. When minds are liberated from the hold of ignorance and bondage, each person will think of what to do to live above poverty.

The above discussed and many other programmes of adult education are to build the capacity and capability of individuals through various informal approaches to get people sensitized that when they are empowered, they can overcome poverty. Other forms of adult education programmes include apprenticeship scheme.

POVERTY

Poverty has been defined in various ways and perceived by individuals from various angles. The consensus of all these definitions is that poverty is an enemy of man; it humiliates and dehumanizes its victims. Poverty is a situation in an economy where there is inadequate level of income and consumption resulting in insufficient basic necessities of life such as health care, housing and adequate nutrition (www.hollerafrica.com). The poorest citizens in Nigeria and World over are beset with high child mortality, malnutrition, sickness, poor physical health, illiteracy and poor access to sustainable water because of their inability to make good living. The above portrays poverty as a concept that is multidimensional in nature. It is a situation of low income and low consumption; a situation where people are not able to meet the basic necessities of life as stated above.

Ajaikaye and Adeyeye (2001) see poverty as a situation in which an individual is unable because of economic, social, political and psychological incapacitation to provide for himself, and his family the basic necessities of life

CLASSIFICATION OF POVERTY

Galbraith, (1969), Rogers, (1998) classify poverty into three major parts:

Absolute poverty: This refers to lack of minimum physical requirements for existence.

Relative Poverty: This is a situation in which the provision of basic needs for individuals within household is lower than that of others.

Rural Poverty: This refers to poor material condition, low level of education, lack of infrastructure, low investment and high level of migration

Urban Poverty: This refers to environmental degradation, overcrowded accommodation, low per capital income, slums, ghetto and shanties.

It is through capacity building, awareness programmes and education of one sort or the other that one can overcome the effect of various classes of poverty on people. Education will help people to take good care of their health, make them to be employed or improve on their skills for better productivity; will teach them to take good care of their environment and teach them not to live in overcrowded accommodation. This will lead to helping them to live a type of dignified life.

CAUSES OF POVERTY

Some of the causes as stated by Obadan (2001) are as follows

- Inadequate access to employment opportunities
 - Inadequate physical asset
 - Destruction of natural resources and
 - lack of power to participate
- Other causes include:
- Poor macro economic and monetary policies which have made it difficult for small and medium enterprise (SMES) to thrive and which would have contributed to reduction of poverty through job creation.

Globalization: This refers to trade liberalization. Nations are supposed to trade freely among themselves for the mutual benefits of their people. The gains of globalization in trade are eluding Nigeria because of her inability to export manufactured goods abroad like other developed nations.

Good governance: Policies should be formulated by those at the helm of affairs giving consideration to the welfare of the citizens with the aim of reducing poverty among the people.

Aku et al (1997) state the following as some of the consequences of poverty

- Loss of confidence: poverty renders people vulnerable to external influence because they are poor there is loss of self confidence and they are at the lowest ebb of self esteem.
- It makes production remain on subsistence level due to lack of capital needed for expansion. Labour becomes intensive but productivity is low.

Several approaches have also been recommended to tackle the issue of poverty; some of which are stated below

- (a) Basic needs approach: This means making efforts to provide the basic needs for the poor such as shelter, portable water, food, sanitation and health care.
- (b) Rural development approach: efforts should be made to see that people living in rural communities

are benefitting from various poverty alleviation programmes. There should be radical changes in ownership and credit structure so as to favour the rural poor. Employment and income generating opportunities should be given to the rural areas. (AKU et al 1997)

- (c) Target approach: This approach is to favour specific targeted groups within the country e.g Micro credit scheme and school meal programmes

Apart from the approaches stated above, several efforts have been made and several programmes put in place by various heads for government in Nigeria. Some of these include; River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (AGGS), the Rural Electrification Scheme (RES) and the Rural Banking Programme (RBP) (Ogwu Mike, 2001). All these programmes and many more such as Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), and Community Banks (CB) among others are put in place to reduce poverty to the barest minimum. The programmes were designed specifically to take care of such objectives as employment generation, enhancing agricultural output and income generation and stemming the tide of rural/urban migration in order to reduce poverty.

Breaking Poverty Cycles through Capacity Building

It should be noted that the government of any country cannot do all for the people and this is why it is imperative for people's capacity and capability to be built so that each person could make personal efforts to overcome poverty. Putman (2008) is of the opinion that strong interpersonal ties in villages or organized groups can provide shared assistance that will break poverty.

Breaking poverty cycles also involve having comprehensive programmes which include a variety of services that bridge individuals and community needs. People should also be involved in collaborative efforts which involve networking among participants and among people outside their immediate community in a bid to seek solution to the problem of poverty.

Breaking poverty cycle must include individuals participating actively to raise his standard of living. The poor should be empowered to break loose from the hold of poverty.

The capacity of people must be built through adult education programme of one type or the other through which people are empowered to play a special role in overcoming poverty while at the same time democratic values are being developed in them (Adedokun 2014).

In the process of capacity building, they are being made capable to have ultimate control over their destiny and a substantial degree of freedom both by individuals and groups which will give them absolute independence and confidence in their income generating activities.

When proper education is given to people, they will acquire needed skills or upgrade the already acquired ones to help them in overcoming their inadequacies in terms of adequate income generating activities and thus begin to overcome poverty. Education will open people up to resourcefulness and will equip them with abilities to succeed in their established businesses. The capacity of people can be built to reduce poverty by establishing community skills training centres and establishing socio-economically diverse environment to provide systematic skill training to people. (Educationally disadvantaged people unesco.org).

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded from the above that education remains a viable tool in building people's capacity for sustainable development and bringing about transformation in the lives of people. It is also a strong tool for empowering citizens and hence a tool for poverty reduction. In this light, the government should prioritize the development and provision of access to education by every community member in the nooks and cranny of the country. Adult education with its diverse programmes has the capacity to empower the young, adolescent and the old with one vocational skill on the other which will help them to overcome poverty tendencies. Adult education should therefore be emphasized as an alternative route to basic formal education.

Livelihood oriented Adult Non-formal education initiative should be embarked upon for poverty to be alleviated. In like manner, adult literacy should be promoted using a livelihood approach to promote social empowerment, income generation, community development and vocational training.

Opportunities should also be provided for adults and out of school children to learn and receive training in non-formal education centres so that they can be empowered as done in Ethiopia (www.unesco.org/ui/litbase).

The type of education to be given for capacity building is the type that would reflect and capture the fundamental needs of both the nation and individual beneficiaries. It is the type that will lead to reduction/alleviation of poverty among the people and the type that will emphasize livelihood skills and the type that will help people to engage in income

generating activities and one that will lead to improved standard of living and make them contribute to the development of their communities both socially and economically. These qualities are found in Adult Education Programme (www.gla.G.uk/centres)

IMPLICATION

A lot of people look down on adult education as education of the adult, it is high time for people to realize that adult education is education for all time and for all people and it is education that seeks quick solutions to identified problems. The above submission has proved that adult education can prove so relevant in a poverty ridden economy. In Nigeria today many banners are put up asking people to attend one week or more empowerment training programmes and there are jingles and adverts asking people to also attend empowerment programmes. All these short time trainings and programmes of empowerment or capacity building are all programmes of adult education. The clarion call is that people should not look down on adult education again but make people aware of its relevance in poverty alleviation.

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