

ESTABLISHING A LINK BETWEEN ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR IMPROVED TEACHING, LEARNING AND PRACTICE OF THE CONCEPTS.

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(Received 19, October 2011; Revision Accepted 10, June 2012)

ABSTRACT

Adult education and community development are two areas of practices which development practitioners have recently identified as useful tools of development. However, there is confusion among practitioners on the link between adult education and community development in terms of theory and practice. The concepts are treated as if they are independent of each other in all ramifications. This discourse therefore reveals the linkages between adult education and community development in terms of theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Adult education and community development are two relatively new areas of study and practice when compared with other fields such as Mathematics, Classics, Philosophy, History, Music etc. However, trends in modern development paradigm have shown that both adult education and community development are not less important as fields of study and field of practice. This is because as established by Adekola (2008) recent development strategies had shown that they are much more useful tools in achieving desired changes for the welfare and improvement in the life of the people and national development.

As observed by Olajide (2003) the concepts of Adult Education and community development to a greater extent possess some underlying features that promote the social essence of growth and development of people and their community. A close look at the two concepts simultaneously, adult education and community development seem to be like conjoined or at least non identical twins that are always difficult to separate or identified. In some situation, scholars and practitioners use the concepts distinctly as if they have no link at all.

As a result of this confusion, it becomes necessary to examine closely, the areas of convergence or divergence of the two concepts in terms of study and practice for adequate teaching, learning and practice.

Concept of Adult Education

The concept of adult education has no generally accepted definition. As observed by Omolewa (1981) adult education is one of the most difficult concepts to define. This according to Fasokun (2006) is because adult education means different thing to different people. According to Adekola (2008) the confusion in the meaning of adult education arises from the variations in interpretations of the roles adult education performs in different societies, in different sectors of the national economy and at different levels of national development. Adekola (2008) noted further that many terms are used interchangeably with the term adult education. For instance, while adult education may mean basic literacy, extral mural studies, or mass education for community development in a developing nation like Nigeria, it may mean workers education or liberal education for relaxation or entertainment in advanced countries

like United States of America or the United Kingdom. Thus Adesanya (2006) concluded that the concept of adult education does not lend itself to easy definition. However, these confusions notwithstanding, from whatever perspectives adult education is perceived Anyanwu (1981) posited that it affords a pattern of adult development which has in view the needs of the adults not only as an individual but also as a member of the community which help him to live more effectively in the society. Nzeneri (1996) observed that it is in adult education that emphasis is placed on life-long education, education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for conscientization and group dynamism. He then defines adult education as any education given to the adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems, to enable them adjust to changes and challenges in their life and society.

Prosser (1967) in Akintayo and Oghenekowho (2004:7) describes adult education as

That force which in its ideal application can bring about a maximum of readjustment of attitude within a society to any new and changed situation in the possible time and which helps to initiate changes which evolves and imparts new skills and techniques required and made necessary by the change.

In an attempt to arrive at a comprehensive and generally accepted definition, various bodies especially at the international level have proposed definitions of what adult education mean or should mean. For instance, the California State University of Education in Anyanwu (1987:16) defines adult education as %learning achieved by adults during their matured years.+

In the same vein, the International Congress of University Adult Education in Anyanwu (1981) defines adult education as a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis (unless full time programmes are specially designed for them) undertake a sequential and organised activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding and skill appreciation and attitudes

or for the purpose of identifying or solving personal or community problems.

To clear the confusion in the definition of adult education, as a field of study and to afford an internationally accepted definition, the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1976 as presented in Adekola (2008) defines adult education as:

The entire body of organised educational process whether the content, level and method; whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges or universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about change in their attitude or behaviour in the two-folds perspectives of personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (P.5)

Despite the length and seemingly comprehensive nature of the UNESCO 1976 definition it has its weaknesses thus; Adekola (2008:6) observed that UNESCO in 1997 came up with what it termed adult basic education; which it defines as

All forms of organised educational and training that meet the basic learning needs of the adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and life-skill, and values and attitudes that they require to survive, develop, their capacity, live and work in dignity, improve quality of their lifes and make informed decisions and continue to learn.

Today, available definitions of the concept of adult education vary as the number of practitioners and organisations involved in it. Therefore, efforts to have a generally accepted definition of adult education are still on.

Community Development

The term *community development* is a relatively new term in the social sciences and also a relatively new art of practice in the western world. This is because the concept was only introduced in 1948 at the Cambridge summer conference. However, in Africa, Anyanwu (1981) noted that community development is nothing new. He observed that from the earliest periods of human history, men have sought to improve their lot, and community development is only a modern way of doing this.

The above opinion was shared by Adekola (1997) when he asserted that community development has always been a part and parcel of African culture. He based his stance on the view of Fafunwa (1974) who identified the objectives of African Traditional Education to include the development of a sense of belonging and the encouragement of active participation in family and community affairs. Before the advent of imperialism, Fafunwa (1974) revealed that, Nigeria traditional societies like other African societies had learnt to meet their social and economic needs. He argued, for instance, that age groups usually engage in communal work. They may help other members of the group in clearing, planting or harvesting or helping the community at large in road building or the chief in performing a given assignment.

In the African traditional society, community development implies working together as members of a particular community to achieve common goals that are designed to benefit the entire community. The place of community development in African society is best revealed in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) lecture series of 1986 as cited in Adegboyega (1988:51) thus:

One of the enduring and flourishing heritages of traditional societies in Africa is their involvement in community development. It has been the indigenous mechanism and technique developed and employed by the people to identify their felt needs, choose what they want and take co-operative action to satisfy the needs. Long before the introduction of the science of development planning and studies, many rural communities in Nigeria had learnt to pool their resources and provide both functional and physical facilities for themselves. It

was in this way that they involved themselves in construction of fortification, moats and trenches round their settlements, shrines, churches and mosques for religious worship and of late educational institution.

The above positions of scholars clearly revealed that community development is not new in the African societies. However, with the growing fields of knowledge and emphasis on real development for the improvement in the life of the people, community development has become an area of interest for development practitioners, social scientists, adult educators, social workers and even politicians.

According to Anyanwu (1992 and 2002), the concept of community development lacks a precise definition that caters for its ever expanding field. Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004) support this view when they observed that it is difficult to state briefly, adequately and fully what is subsumed in the concept of community development. This by implication means that what constitutes community development cannot be fully described in a few meaningful words called definition.

While no widely accepted definition is available, few important elements or aspects of community development appear again and again in literature. These elements together provide a generally acceptable description of the term community development. Such elements as noted by Osuji (1991), include:

1. Community as the unit of action;
2. Community initiative and leadership as resources
3. Use of both internal and external resources;
4. Inclusive participation;
5. An organized and comprehensive approach that attempt to involve the entire community; and
6. Democratic and rational task accomplishment.

Based on the reoccurrence of the above elements Ojokheta and Oladeji (2004) observed that there is little or no divergence in scholars perception of the concept, going by their views. This means they are saying the same thing in

different ways. The lack of agreement on a specific definition therefore, has brought about the existence of various but similar definitions. For instance, as cited in Anyanwu (1992:36) the Cambridge summer conference (1948) define community development as

a movement designed to promote better living with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to ensure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement.

This definition by the Cambridge Summer Conference formed the rallying point for subsequent definitions. Even the definition provided by the Ashridge Conference on Social Development in 1954 as cited in Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004:18) does not show much difference. The Ashridge Conference defined community development as "a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community."

The United States definition of community development as contained in the guideline for International Cooperation Administration of 1956 is "a method by which national governments reach out to people at the village level and help them use local resources to achieve increased production and higher standard of living."

In the search for a consensus definition for the concept of community development, the United Nation Organization (UNO) in 1963 as stated in Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008), presented a definition that today enjoys wider acceptability. It defined community development as

a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of community, to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and to enable them contribute fully to national progress(P.22)

A critical look at the definitions given by organizations as mentioned above reveals that community development has been described as a movement, a method and a process. This implies that community development is a development instrument that can manifest in different forms depending on the practitioners. In this vein, individual scholars and development practitioners have also expressed views on what they feel is embedded in the concept of community development. For instance, Batten (1957) described community development as "a process during which people in the small communities first thoroughly discuss and define their wants and then plan and act together to satisfy them." According to Anyanwu (1992) community development is "education in the fullest and best sense." To Paul and Alice (2001) community development is "the economic, physical and social revitalization of communities led by the people who live in that community."

Community development today has gone beyond its traditional boundaries of developing the community and the physical, economic and social conditions of the people to include emotional and psychological development of the people. To this end, community development can be described as a process by which the efforts of members of a community are united with those of governmental and non-governmental bodies for a gradual and positive reconditioning process with much reliance on local initiatives, leadership and resource for improvement in the physical and social structure of the community and general well-being of the inhabitants.

Relationship Examined

Having equipped ourselves with what the concept of Adult Education and Community Development entail, there is the need to have a clear focus on the relationship that exist between the two concepts in terms of study and practice. Issues discussed here is significant in that it would serve as guide to instructors, adult learners, change agents, participants and policy makers in the field of Adult Education and Community Development.

To present a clear discussion of the relationship between adult education and community development, the paper focuses on discussion of the objectives and scope of the

concepts, the target audience, methodology, theories and public policy, problems and prospects of adult education and community development.

Objectives and Scope of Adult Education and Community Development

The field of Adult Education can broadly be classified into formal, non-formal and informal. In terms of focus, the scope of adult education according to Omolewa (1985) covers, traditional adult education, basic literacy, functional literacy, remedial education, liberal education and Open University. Anyanwu (1981) posited that adult education is a part of the wider life-long education which includes: Fundamental Education; Vocational Development; civic education; social and cultural Education; and recreational education.

In a more recent examination of the scope of adult education, Akintayo and Oghenekhwo (2004) observed that the scope of adult education has expanded to include: Worker education; Remedial education; Lifelong learning; Distance education; Prison education; Mass education; Nomadic education; Women education; Vocational education; Community education; Leadership education; and Labour education. Aderinoye (2004) in his broad classification of the scope of adult education identified basic literacy; functional literacy; open distance education, prevention education; vocational education; life skill education; and extra mural education as the area of coverage in adult education.

A critical observation of the scope of adult education reveals that, in practice, the focus of adult education is inexhaustible, the scope continues to widen as modernization, technology and globalization bring about new ideas and inventions that touch on the life of the adult.

In theory and in practice, community development focuses on two specific but broad areas. Community development focuses firstly on development as an improvement in the life and living standard of the people and secondly on the improvement and development of the physical structure and environment of the community itself.

To be relevant in the coverage areas, both Adult Education and Community Development had outlined specific objectives

they set out to achieve. Anyanwu (1981) identified the objectives of adult education as:

- a) To make adults aware of their civic responsibilities to one another and to their community and nation;
- b) To make them economically more efficient;
- c) To develop in them a knowledge of how to set about making personal adjustments to their home life and family relationship; and
- d) To promote their health and physical fitness.

Apart from the general goal of adult education, individual nations have also set out what they want to achieve through adult education. For instance Cole (1978) as cited in Nzeneri (1996) identified the objectives of adult education in Tanzania as:

- i. To keep up with new knowledge;
- ii. To fill the educational gap;
- iii. To be brass for social change; and
- iv. For mobilization of the people for development.

In Nigeria, the objectives of adult education as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) include:

- i) To provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never has the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education;
- ii) To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education;
- iii) To provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skill;

- iv) To provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- v) To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

In discussing the objectives of community development, Anyanwu (1992) identifies the objective of community development to include:

- v. To educate and motivate the people for self-help;
- vi. To develop responsible leadership among the people;
- vii. To inculcate a sense of citizenship and spirit of consciousness among the members of the community;
- viii. To introduce and strengthen democracy at grass-root level through creation of instruments designed to promote local participation;
- ix. To initiate self generative and self sustaining process of growth.
- x. To enable people establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationship in their community; and
- xi. To bring about gradual and self-chosen changes with minimum stress and disruption.

A cursory look at the objectives and scope of adult education and community development reveals that in practice, both are concerned with the development and promotion of better living for the people especially the adult members of the community through education. In fact, the objectives and scope of adult education and community development portend them as problem solving schemes working toward achievement of better living condition for humanity. The similarities in focus and objectives

are so much close that even if the objectives are collapsed into one, none of the concepts would have lost much in terms of structure and what it stands to achieve. In fact, recent development according to Anyanwu (2002) seems to be shifting away the concept and practice of community development to community education which Akintayo (2004) identifies as one of the field of adult education.

Target Audience

Adult education is the education designed for people regarded as adult by the society to which they belong. This simple description of adult education reveals its target audience. They are the people regarded as adult in their society. This means that the target audience may vary in practice from one society to the other, but the fact remains that they must be the adults in that society.

The practice of community development as a problem solving scheme lend it much to an approach useful among the adults. This is because, it is the adults of today that are responsible for solving the community problems. Various approaches used by community development practitioners are focused on problem solving among the adults. This means that community development as well as adult education have the adults as defined by the society as their target audience. Also, the community in which the adults reside is the center of action.

Methodology

The methods generally accepted by adult educators as most relevant, most useful and most frequently used in the fields of adult education is Andragogy. Andragogy as defined by its proponent Malcolm Knowles (1970) is the art and science of teaching the adults or making the adults to learn. This method as presented by Balogun (2002) asserts that;

- i. Learning is voluntary for the adults;
- ii. Adult learners are full of experience,
- iii. Educators is only a facilitator;
- iv. Objectives to be achieved are jointly formed by the facilitator and adult;

- v. Curriculum and course content is based on needs of the adult;
- vi. Learning process is based on mutual understanding between the facilitators and the learners.

Adult educators, most often, support the use of conscientization method especially when there is the need to enlighten, sensitize and mobilize adults for action. The methods of Andragogy and conscientization are deeply rooted in the practice of community development. The principles of Andragogy and conscientization make the methods more relevant in the practice of community development. The analytical usage and immediate relevance of outcome of learning and development efforts make the methods more relevant in community development. The method adopted in the field of practice therefore becomes a major link between adult education and community development.

Theories and Government Policy

Olajide (2003) submits that there is a relationship between adult education and community development in terms of theory. In the process of examining the theoretical relationship he identified three major theories upon which the practice of adult education and community development are based. He identified the theory of participation, theory of empowerment and theory of need as providing theoretical base for adult education and community development. In line with his views, it is believed in adult education and community development that there is a lack somewhere in the life of the individuals or the community and that such lack impedes desirable growth and development in the life of the individuals or the community. To eliminate such lacks, adult education and community development embark on empowerment programmes to equip the people with necessary information, understanding and skills. In doing this, participation of the individuals and the entire community is emphasized. This is to ensure continuity in knowledge acquisition which adult education emphasized and development which community development stands to achieve. The operation of adult education and community development based on common theoretical

foundation, interrelate the concept and practice of adult education and community development.

Problems and Prospects

The practice of adult education and community development encounter problems that retard their maximum use for human benefits. The common problems start with the unclear nature of the meaning of the concepts. This in turn affects government policies on the practice of adult education and community development, which is inconsistent and inadequate. For instance the National Policy on Education (2004) has separate sections for Basic Education (section 3); Mass Literacy, Adult and Non formal education (section 6) and Open and Distance Education (section 9) all of which are members of the Adult Education family.

Similarly, the confusion and inconsistency in public policies on community development is obvious in the duplication of governmental efforts through the division of community development into two ministries at the federal level: Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development and Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development. The same problem is also noticeable at the state level.

Other major problems confronting the practice of adult education and community development include: low level of research in the field by practitioners; lack of adequate recognitions as useful tools for rapid and sustainable development which culminated into inadequate funding; inadequate and unsustainable cooperation by the beneficiaries of the adult education and community development programmes; little knowledge and understanding of the concepts by the practitioners; and inadequate and unsustainable support from the international development agencies, as well as local and international Non-Government Organizations. The common problems therefore establish a union between adult education and community development.

CONCLUSION

Adult Education and Community Development as related concepts and practice are useful tools of development that could go a long way in reshaping and restructuring the development level of individuals and the

communities if adequate attention is paid to their practice. Adult Education and Community Development possess the capacity to effect rapid and sustainable changes that are required for the social, economic, technological and cultural development in Nigeria. To this end, adult educators and community development practitioners should harness available human and material resources in the two fields to secure adequate recognition for adult education and community development as tools for national development.

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