

THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

Adult education programmes are specifically designed to give youth and adults the required empowerment needed for employment creation. The programmes play an important role in empowering youth to develop new skills and improve the career prospects available to them. Adult education programmes empower youth through employment creation and other numerous programmes to increase their knowledge, develop new skills and gain helpful qualifications and credentials. Also, Adult education programmes empower youth for social connections, inter-personal skills, improved confidence and self-esteem through employment creation. Therefore, this paper examined the role of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation. Adult education has the capability of empowering the youths through its programmes such as economic, social, political and education empowerment for employment creation. In attempt to approach the study, the paper is subdivided into sections. The first section deals with the introduction and clarification of concepts. The second section centered on the roles of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation. The paper also probed into the challenges militating against effective utilization of adult education programmes in employment creation and youth empowerment. Finally, the paper suggested among others that government at all levels need to show more commitment to adult education programmes by providing funds and necessary logistics for the programmes. Competent adult education facilitators have to be recruited and adequately motivated to take charge of the programmes.

Key words: Adult education, Facilitators, Employment creation, Empowerment, Youth empowerment.

Introduction

The role of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation is very important and cannot be over-emphasized. In this context, adult education is specifically designed to empower youth and adults through its humanitarian programmes such as economic, social, political and education empowerment for employment creation. Adult Education is any organized learning activity for people considered as adults

by the society in which they belong (Paiko 2015). It is based on this, that youths and adults need to improve themselves by increasing their knowledge, skills and attitudes through an organized learning activities for employment creation. Adult education according to Ihejirika and Onyenemezu (2012), is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis, undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge and undertaking skill appreciation through employment creation.

Education in the other way has been defined as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental, and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based (UNESCO 2015). Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. According to Egwuekwe C.V, Imo, C. O, and Nwachukwu, R (2018), education is one of the most important means of empowering the people with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development and empowerment of the youths. It has been documented that education whether for adults or youths satisfies a basic human need for knowledge, provides a means of help to meet other basic needs. It helps to determine the distribution of employment and income for both present and future generations. It influences social welfare through its indirect effects on health and wellbeing, sanitation, information, fertility, and life expectancy. Indeed, Education whether formal or non-formal like adult education has been acknowledged to be one of the best investments in national development. The benefits derived from empowering youths through education are enormous such as economic, social, political and education empowerment for employment creation.

More so, education is a common knowledge that as youths grow older they begin to take on additional responsibilities and face more important issues related to getting their own homes, and relationships. As youths, they need knowledge and skills to manage not only day-to-day issues, but life-cycle needs so as to reduce vulnerability and be empowered by creating employment for them. Youths are important group in national populations and they need education to build their confidence and skills for employment creation.

The high rate of illiteracy among youths and adults in Enugu State has negative implication to the whole society and it affects the illiterates themselves for their entire lives. Indeed, uneducated person can easily slip into the marginalized strata; less healthy, less skilled with fewer chances, ill prepared to participate in the political, social and economic development of their communities. They remain at high risk of poverty, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence. The uneducated are often the poorest and most marginalized in social, political and economic domains.

UNESCO has long argued that literacy is a key to the twenty-first century (UIL, 1997, Resolutions) and fundamental for participating in society (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO has recognized literacy as a lever to attain a range of rights, skills for work, employment generation, and socio-economic participation and empowerment, particularly for youths and people. However, because of the correlation between poverty and illiteracy,

literacy today has gone beyond reading and writing but also acquisition of vocational skills.

Based on the foregoing and in line with the national policy guideline the Enugu State Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education is saddled with the roles or responsibilities of eradicating illiteracy and unemployment among youths and adults through its empowerment programmes for employment creation in Enugu State.

Conceptual clarification

Adult education programmes:

Basic literacy

According to Obi (2006), basic literacy is a literacy programme organized for people that have never been to any formal school at all for the purpose of acquiring the skills of reading, writing, and numeracy. The duration is determined by the number of contact hours, which may last between nine and twelve months. It is nine months if the contact periods are six hours a week and twelve months if the contact periods are four hours a week. Basic literacy is the equivalence of the first three years of basic education in the formal system.

Post literacy

Post literacy is a literacy programme organized for those who have acquired basic literacy but further acquire skills and knowledge (Obi, 2006). The duration may last between twelve and thirty-six months. It could be twelve months if the contact periods are nine hours a week, twenty-four months if the contact periods are six hours a week and thirty months with three contact hours per week. It is the equivalence of primaries four to six in the formal system.

Continuing education

This is an educational programme organized for those who have completed post literacy, and wish to proceed to junior or senior secondary school or individuals who want to remedy insufficiencies in their educational pursuit. This type of education assumes the forms of extra mural, open and distance learning as well as remedial education, nomadic education, industrial education, community education, social welfare, peace education, cooperative education, worker's education, labour education, prison education, among others (National Policy on Education, 2004). The duration may last for a period of twenty-four to thirty months with a contact time of fifteen hours per week for those targeting the junior secondary school certificate. The same number of months may hold for learners opting for the senior secondary school certificate.

Vocational education

This is a Non-Formal Education programme designed to equip the learners with vocational skills. The duration, which depends on the trade or craft, may be jointly agreed upon between the organisers and the learners. In some cases, it may last up to twelve months, eighteen months, or even sixty months depending on the types of trade or craft enrolled for by the learners. (NMEC 2017)

The question is with these adult education programs in place in Enugu State since the establishment of the state Agency for adult and non-formal education what had been the role of adult education in employment generation and youth empowerment in the state. This opinion paper therefore seeks to X-Ray the roles of Adult Education in employment creation and youth empowerment in the state.

Employment creation

Employment in a layman's language means the act of being hired or employed by a company or employer. Ede (2022) sees employment as an agreement between an individual and another entity or institution with stated conditions such as, payment terms and arrangement and rules of the workplace. The institution involved could be public or private sector in some cases it could be between individuals. Employment refers to the idea that an individual has entered some form of verbal or written commitment with an entity, known as the employer, under certain stipulations such as payment, schedule, etc. Employment creation is a means of making available what should be done distinctly in order to engage people with, especially our youths who are faced with the challenges of unemployment in the state. Employment creation is to make available what the youths should do and empower them with adequate skills and knowledge that will sustain them in life. Adult education programmes play an important role in empowering youth to develop new skills, knowledge and improve the career prospects available to them.

Types of employment

Employment is an agreement between an individual and another entity or institution with stated conditions such as, payment terms and arrangement and rules of the workplace. In line with this, Tatama (2019) outlined five major types of employment. They include:

Part-time employment

Part-time employments are usually for people who work less than 35 hours a week and are typically paid by the hour rather than salaried. The employees are always legitimate staff but may not be eligible for benefits. Part-time employment is useful for those who have other responsibilities and engagements. This is a common form of employment that companies offer to diversify their team members and schedules.

Full-time employment

Full-time employment is for people that work an average of 40 hours a week and are eligible for benefits. Employers usually decide how to classify full-time employment within their organisations. In most cases Employers often offer health care coverage to their full-time employees and their dependents. Full-time work is best for those who have fewer engagements, higher financial needs and want to focus on developing their careers. This is a common form of employment that many professionals choose.

Seasonal employment

Many industries experience busy seasons and off-seasons. This means they often hire seasonal employees to meet their staffing needs during the busy season. Seasonal

employees are temporary but may return for many seasons in a row. Retail locations are good examples of companies that hire seasonal team members. There are many other industries that also hire seasonal team members. For example, a landscaping company may employ some staff during landscaping season and staff fewer people during the off-season.

Temporary employment

Temporary employment is usually when Companies use temporary staffing as result of falling short of staffing needs or experience unexpected absences. For example, a hospital may use agency nurses if they don't have enough nurses to care for their patients. An accounting firm may fill an accountant role with a temporary staff when another staff member goes on leave.

Leased employment

A leased staff is an individual who works with a staffing agency and then leases out to an organisation to complete a specific job. Leased Staff typically work with the company for a year or longer. While still considered a team member, a leased worker is on the payroll of the staffing agency and also receives any benefits through the employment agency rather than through the organisation they're working for.

With these understanding of what employment is and the types of employment Tatama further explained employment generation as creating opportunities that can yield quick impact, or development of more enduring livelihoods in the civil service or private sector. In a simpler term employment generation is creating opportunity for people to engage in an income generation activity either as an employee of public service or private sector.

One of the major factors according to him in employment generation is education and skills development. It is therefore important for adult education programmes to collaborate with employers, industries, experts, and government agencies to ensure that the skills being taught align with market needs. By tailoring education and training to current employment trends, adult education can therefore contribute to employment generation. Therefore, the role of Adult Education programmes on youth empowerment in the areas of skills acquisition for economic independence and self-reliance can remedy the imbalance of the youths in schooling, career, and taking control of their lives and the society.

Empowerment

Empowerment implies to give power to. In this case, people enabled to act, and are encouraged to act towards a vision. Sabran (2003) defines empowerment as giving power to others. When it is done in a community level it is seen as a social action process, which provides skills to a set individual to enable them bring about change in their own area. This makes people to be in charge of their lives. Empowerment ensures the right kind of support so that development is fast tracked.

However, empowerment is one of the roles of adult education or learning. This is critical in our world where there are crises of low-skilled labour, job unavailability, job losses, shortage of man power among others, so it prepares people who can be appropriated any time for situations to be improved upon. When these people are approximated, they are later given further trainings which are capable of making them

professional. This is why Adult education or learning is called a life Long learning. When it is extended to people or group, they become empowered. They are confident, liberated and can be self-reliant. The learning acquired, be it skills or knowledge, will always act as a saving grace in the course of life's pursuit.

Apart from these above, empowerment through adult education or learning can ensure all of these which are; new basic skills for more investment. In human resources, innovation in the teaching and learning, cherishing learning, revisiting guidance and counselling, as well as bringing learning closer to home, Commission of the European communities (CEC), 2011, it can also bring about personal fulfillment and even active citizenship which will affect in a positive way, economic development.

Youth empowerment

Youth empowerment is an idea or programme fashioned to enable the young learn skills, a trade or a profession whereby giving young people the tools, resources and opportunities they need to take control of their lives. Youth empowerment is also a process where young people are encouraged to take charge of their live by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their lives.

According to Olusola (2019), youth empowerment can be defined as a process where people gain the ability and authority to make informed decisions and implement change in their own lives, the lives of other people, and a means of encouraging youths to do great things for themselves in order to make great impact in their society.

Also to buttress more on youth empowerment and its importance to the youth, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa (2023) of Delta State caught the vision and made the remark that one of his administration's greatest legacies to be bequeathed to the incoming regime in the state is the youths' empowerment programme. He said that the administration devoted reasonable resources in its various schemes for the youths to acquire skills that would make them self-reliant and able to contribute to the nation's economic growth. According to Boyadjieva&Ilieva (2023) empowerment through adult education relates to its role in further developing individual capability sets, thus increasing their potential to make high-quality choices and allowing them the freedom to act. It is about developing capabilities that enable engagement in social change processes. More so, adult education with its humanitarian programmes for youth empowerment has a major role to play in other to make youth capable of helping themselves and the society.

Social empowerment

Social empowerment is a process by which individuals and communities gain control over their own lives, develop their own skills and abilities, and participate meaningfully in society. It is also a process through which individuals and groups increase their access to and control over the material and nonmaterial resources necessary for their well-being. According to Martinez (2022), social empowerment is the process of building the autonomy, power, confidence and other necessary means to enact change and pave the way for a better future. Balaji (2023), defined social empowerment as a process through which disadvantaged sections of society can emerge from their subordinate position and achieve self-sufficiency and also a process by which people through adult education

organized programmes provided with opportunities to improve their living conditions, have access to education and other developmental services. Social empowerment takes place at both the individual and the collective levels.

Therefore, Adult education programme on Social Empowerment makes people to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and empowered to achieve social goals such as participation in decision-making processes, especially those relating to education, employment, economic opportunities and their health care needs.

Factors that determine social empowerment

Adult education programme on social empowerment highlights the importance of resources, such as education, health care, and economic opportunities, in the achievement and attainment of social empowerment. They include the following:

Education: Adult education programme on social empowerment portrays education as a key factor in empowerment as the youths and women increased their access to economic opportunities and gave them greater control over their own lives. Similarly, education was an important determinant of empowerment among youths and women as it increased their access to knowledge, skills, and resources.

Another important factor in social empowerment is political participation: Political participation was positively associated with empowerment among youths and women and with the aid of adult education programme on youth empowerment; it gave them a voice in decision-making processes and increased their sense of control over their own lives. Similarly, participation in local governance was a key factor in empowering youths in communities as it allows them to take control of their own development processes.

Finally, community-based intervention in social empowerment is another programme of adult education on youth empowerment which is capable of empowering the youths and women by increasing their knowledge and awareness of their rights and their ability to access education, economic opportunities and health care services. Community-based intervention is vital in empowering youths and women by providing them with education, job training, and leadership skills.

Finally, adult education programme on social empowerment gives the youths access to resources, education, political participation, and community-based interventions. By understanding these factors and working to address them, youths can be helped to empower themselves and communities, giving them greater control over their own lives and a greater ability to participate meaningfully in society for national development.

Political empowerment

Politics could be regarded as the process through which public policies are consciously articulated with to uplift the living conditions of the citizenry by ensuring that democratic institutions in a given society are optimally efficient and effective. Accordingly, Leftwich (2015) posited that politics could be used positively in the context of devising mechanisms for solutions to various social problems without imposing hardships on the citizens. Empowerment is the degree of autonomy and self-determination in individuals and certain communities. This enables them to adequately represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It equally

involves the lobbying and horse-trading in the allocation and distribution of state scarce political positions and resources.

Politically, empowerment and accountability are closely interrelated, with considerable overlap between them. Thus, the empowerment and accountability agenda takes an integrated view of how people can gain the necessary resources, assets, and capabilities to be able to demand accountability from those who wield political power. To a significant degree, Smith (2005) concluded that it requires not only social and political empowerment, which forms the basis of transformed relations with the state, but also economic empowerment, which enhances people's abilities to reasonably engage. Accordingly, the underlying logic is that greater empowerment also allows for greater accountability. Strategic interventions to empower the poor people and give them greater control over their own development is closely linked to, and reinforces efforts to build accountable and responsible governmental institutions that have the potential of meeting the needs, aspirations, and preferences of the people (Rakner; Rocha-Menocal; and Fritz, 2007). Furthermore, Shankland (2006) stated that empowerment equally supports the development of inclusive political institutions through which poor people's interests can be meaningfully represented.

Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capability of individuals to solve their basic needs and preferences by having the requisite resources under their control. According to Golla; Malhotra; Nanda and Mehra (2011) economic empowerment is defined as the totality of an individual's ability to make and act on decisions that involve the control over as well as allocation of financial resources. Unarguably, economic empowerment and youth development have significant relationship with adult education in the world generally and Nigeria particularly. This is due to the fact that adult education offers learning programmes to both adult and youths to conveniently acquire knowledge and competences for employment creation. According to Osuji, (2006), adult education represents a veritable platform of opportunities because it does not only take care of those who did not have the opportunity to the formal school, but also accommodates those who have completed formal education at various levels (Akyildiz, 2019; Crawford, 2017).

Thus, the development of literacy and numeracy skills through adult education offers the youth ample employment and empowerment opportunities directed towards attainment of full potentials in their various and varied life endeavours. Also, economic empowerment involves providing individuals and the youth, usually the disadvantaged in the society with education, training and skills that are needed for them to secure gainful employment and empowerment, earn a living income and possibly become self-supporting individuals in the communities in which they inhabit. Undoubtedly, economic independence has the potential of the life narratives of the vulnerable members of the society for the better, as they will no longer depend on someone else to provide them with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and roofs over their heads. Helling; Serrano; and Warren (2005), observed that economic empowerment allows the youths prospectively to take charge over their lives and therefore increases their happiness, productiveness, and fulfilled life, and which, in a long, boosts general societal development. The hallmark for youth empowerment and employment is anchored on the

capability of the individual to possess requisite technical skills which will make them really employable. This assertion is irrevocably in tandem with the expressed views of a popular Chinese proverb which thus posits: Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; and teach a man how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime (Keyes, 2006). The term empowerment connotes the capacity of an individual, groups, and or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to assist themselves and other members of the communities to maximize the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008).

Therefore, from the current economic challenges facing many countries, particularly Nigeria and its teeming youth population, the notion of engineering greater technical and innovative activities to empower the youths has become a role which adult education has to play. To this end, what will offer the youths sustained economic empowerment is adult education programmes which equip them with prerequisite skills and adequate resources that will assist them to establish their own ventures as well as being employment of labour.

Economic empowerment is definitely empowering of previously disadvantaged sections of the population, that is; in many previously colonized African countries, particularly, Nigeria. There is therefore no gainsaying the succinct fact that social criminalities such as kidnapping, human trafficking, ritual killing, banditry and all sorts of thuggery will be significantly reduced in Nigeria if the youth of Nigeria are gainfully empowered and employed. Mass youth unemployment and lack of empowerment undoubtedly may be responsible for the incessant social restiveness among the teeming youth population in Nigeria; which is antithetical to peace and national development.

The role of adult education in the youth empowerment programme for employment creation

Adult education programme is a programme that crosses every spheres of life in order to affect the lives of the people which youth empowerment is one of them. Adult education has special programmes for empowering the youths in the areas of skills acquisition for economic independence, employment and self-reliance.

Olusola (2019) outlined the role of Adult Education programmes on youth empowerment for employment creation as follows:

Skill acquisition: Adult education plays an important role in training the youths on areas of skills acquisition for employment. When youths are trained, they are given the tools, resources and opportunities they need to take control of their lives and become self-reliance and independent even to be able to take care of their lives, others and contribute to national development (Kubani & Alozie, 2019).

Poverty eradication: Poverty eradication is a training given to youths in vocational trades to support and create employment in the area of skill acquisition (Olusola (2019)). Adult education through its programme on youth empowerment can curb the rate of poverty to a large level. This can be done through empowering the youths with skill acquisition. When a youth is equipped with essential skills, he or she can utilize them to feed, assist others, and even invest for the future, aiding the nation economically. This will in-turn contribute to the increase in employability of our teeming youths.

Improved standard of education: Adult education is an educational programme which gives especially illiterate youths insight on the importance of education. Adult education helps youths to understand the importance of education that leads to social improvement of the country. Empowering the youths academically accelerates the spirit of patriotism in the education sector. The empowered youths know the importance of education and can issue scholarships to students because they understand the value of education due to the empowerment, which was given to them academically. Education exposes people to know what they did not know before.

Crime reduction and national security: Adult education programme on youth empowerment plays an important role in the lives of youth of today. Empowerment ensures that youths have the necessary skill to sustain a livelihood, preventing him to adopt the path of crime. When youths are empowered, they become self-reliance and there will be no room for perpetrating crime, this reduces crime among the youths leading to national security.

Employment creation: This is another importance of adult education programme on youth empowerment. A youth empowered society will not seriously suffer from the problem of unemployment that many nations are battling with in the current time. When the youths are empowered, they empower the masses, creating employment opportunities for them thereby paving path for a better future. Therefore, adult education humanitarian programme on youth empowerment is essential to train and nurture the youths of today for a better tomorrow because a skillful youth is a job creator.

Therefore, the role of adult education programme on youth empowerment is important to both the empowered youths and the nation. Adult education youth empowering programme trains and nurtures the youths so that the youth should see it as a duty to personally develop themselves and the society for national development.

Challenges facing the role of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation

Adult education plays a crucial role in empowering the youths by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills and opportunities to succeed in their personal and professional lives. However, several challenges can impede the effectiveness of adult education programmes in achieving this goal. These are some of the key challenges facing adult education in empowering youths.

Access to education. Limited availability of adult education programs in youth empowerment for employment creation can constitute a barrier that can hinder participation.

Financial constraints: Because of high cost associated with adult education programs and training courses, limited availability of finance for adult learners is a problem.

Relevance and quality of programs: Lack of up-to-date curriculum and inadequate training resources in the form of human and material resources for adult education can hinder the effectiveness of the programme.

Recognition of prior learning: Difficulty in certifying skills gained outside formal education. After learning the skill in the programme, many of them don't recognize or remember the skills they learnt.

Digital divide: Unequal access to technology and digital skills among disadvantaged groups because of limited digital infrastructure and connectivity in certain regions which constitute a problem for the programme to be effective.

Conclusion

Youths need to be equipped with the tools, knowledge, skills and necessary resources that will bring about positive changes in their lives and communities. Adult education programmes empowers youth for social connections and inter-personal skills, improved confidence and self-esteem through employment creation. The role of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation is very important in the lives of our timing youths. Adult education has the capability of empowering the youths through its humanitarian programmes such as economic, social, political and education empowerment for employment creation. When young people are empowered and trained through programmes of adult education on employment creation, they can realize their full potential and contribute to the development and progress of society.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges facing the role of adult education in youth empowerment for employment creation, the following recommendations were made by the researchers:

1. Government at all levels should show more commitment to adult Education programs.
2. The government should allocate funds and offer grants to support adult Education programs.
3. Competent adult education facilitators have to be recruited and adequately motivated
4. Government should develop policies that will create conducive environment for adult Education more so the learners.
5. Government should organize outreach and awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of adult Education.

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