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Adult Education as a Blueprint to Development in the 21st century: An African Perspective

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Abstract: *This paper examines the role of adult education in development in the 21st century in the notion that the two terms are intrinsically related. Studies on adult education and development have revealed that education develops a balanced individual capable of surviving in his environment and contributing meaningfully towards the survival of that society to which he belongs. Adult education here includes but also goes beyond the notion of imparting knowledge and skills to adult men and women for day-to-day survival, to include a transformative process that enables them to respond to their environment in proactive manner. The focus of this paper is adult education and development while taking into account factors that hamper adult education in Africa emanating from policy, quality, relevance and access among others. It concludes that adult education is a highway to development of any country. Challenges to adult education should be critically addressed for development in the 21st century.*

1. Introduction:

Education and development is indispensable ingredient of a nation. Without education there can be no development and without development there can be no further national progress and any educative efforts are enfeebled by a weakened developmental base. But what is education and what is development. These terms are frequently mentioned in the course of daily speech, but little glance is intently cast at them and few people spend more than a little time to ponder what they should really mean. They therefore need a more concerted exploration and definition.

Ishumi, (1976) defines development as a virtue, it is advance from the lower, less peaceful stages of being to higher, satisfying emancipating conditions. Denis Goulet contends that not only is development a process but it is also a terminal goal that represents the happiness of man. Adam Curle has a similar view when he argues that equality and social justice are not so much the cause as the essence of development seen in this light, development is an achievement that represents not only a material but a cultural and psychological uplift of man.

2. Who Is An Adult?

The word adult means different things in different regions (Lowe, Darkenwald, 1975 and Merriam 1982). Even in one country, different writers use the term so differently that no uniform or precise definitions can be arrived at. These differences in perception and the use of the term arise from the fact that adult education is closely related to the social, political and cultural conditions of each country. Then one wonders what we mean when we call someone an adult? According to Rogers (1986) a wide range of concepts are involved when we use the term adult. It may refer to as age in the life cycle of the individuals; because he or she is first a child, then a youth, then an adult.

It can also refer to status, an acceptance by society that the person concerned has completed his/her novitiate and is now incorporated fully into the community. It can refer to a social subset; adults as distinct from children or it can include a set of ideals and values: adulthood.

Bown, (1997) see adult as one who has achieved full physical development and is expected to have the right to participate as a responsible homemaker, worker and member of a society.

Nzeneri , (2010)_ perceives an adult as a person who is physically and psychologically mature ,and the individual is socially economically politically culturally and environmental responsible looking at the above definitions of a adult, two key words exist ,which are maturity and responsibility

Globally, there is a dilemma in defining who an adult is. As such there is no universally accepted definition of adult. According to the Kenyan constitution 2010 an adult is one who has attained the chronological age of 18 years, can obtain a national ID card and is able to vote (Kenya Constitution 2010). Consequently such an individual is assumed to be mature and possess knowledge and skills needed for personal and community development.

In some of the ancient societies a 14 year old boy was a mature adult and was fully prepared to the world of work. Accordingly, among the Hebraic society a boy matured at the age of 13 years. At this age he was allowed to interact with elders and attend to all the social, economic and political engagements thereof (Sifunaet,al 1994)

Consequently, the term adult is difficult in define because it varies from one society to another and has changed over time. As such the boundaries that determine who is considered as adult can depend on action's (i.e. legal age to fight in a war, drive a car, drink, vote) activities, (i.e. age that one can begin to work) and /or responsibilities (i.e. marriage, age to begin supporting family).

3. The Concept Of Education:

Various disciplines offer different explanation of what entails education. According to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Education is the process of transmitting from one generation to the next of the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of society and their active participation in its development (Hinzen , 1979).

As quoted by Peter, (1966) education philosophers like Barrow and white 1993; Hirst Peters 1970s, Peters 1967; identified three Criteria for education.

- i. that education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it.
- ii. that “education” must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inertia,

- iii. that education at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner. The above criterion may raise questions like what is worthwhile, what is knowledgeable and how can one measure inertia.

However a simpler definition is given by UNESCO as organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life (quoted in Jarvis 1990). This has a positive implication on adult education as adults are instructed in knowledge, skills and values useful for all life activities.

4. Dimensions Of Education:

Formal education refers to an-graded, hierarchically organized, and formally constituted system. This kind of system promotes specific curricula for different levels of development (i.e. age). Each level must be completed before the student moves to another level. It requires compulsory attendance up to a certain age and has clearly stated objectives (Republic of Kenya, 1992).

Non –formal education involves all organized educational activities outside of the formal educational system. It includes anyone who desires to engage in these activities (i.e., individuals do not need to have special qualifications or a specific degree and has clearly stated objectives (Informal education involves learning that takes place in daily life and does not have clearly stated objectives .This implies that the individual is conscious of the learning that is taking place (e.g.) attending a lecture, having conversation, visiting the museume.t.c).

Incidental education involves learning that takes place in daily life does not have clearly stated objectives andso implies that the individual is not conscious of the learning that takes place (e.g., learning to walk or ride a bike).all the above discussed forms of education there are important to the development of a nation since such kind of education imparts skills, knowledge, altutides and values necessary for development.

5. The Concept Of Adult Education:

The definition of adult education has been defined by different authors and writers from different perspectives. Most writers seem to agree that adult education is the education geared towards the adult. The meaning of adult education in 1930s and 1940s was literacy and remedial education. Okedara (1981), observes that adult education offers some who were not privileged a last chance to learn. In this regard he remarks that some feel a need for training in basic skills of learning so they enroll for work in reading, writing and arithmetic. In accordance with this perception, the focus of adult education at that time was to give second chances to those who, for some reason, had very little or no formal schooling at all.

Liveright (1968), observes a major departure of Adult education in the 1960s from merely being associated with certain learning opportunities to mean all responsibly organized learning opportunities that enable people who are considered adults in their communities to enlarge and interpret their own living experiences.

A more recent outlook of adult education by UNESCO (cited in Titmus et. 1979) denotes that it is

“the entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeships, whereby person 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 changes in their attitudes or behavior in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social economic and cultural development”.

The above definition is broad and encompassing in the sense that it does not only define adult education but it also defines its content and scope.

The purpose of adult education is to address the adult learners' educational needs outside the constraining and often discriminatory formal education system. According to Knowles book, Adult education, he states that adult education refers to at least three different phenomena”..... to a set of activities to the intellectual proceed by means of which adults seek or are assisted to learn things..... [and] to the social system which is made up of an individual and organizations conceived with education of adults.

MwalimuNyerere, (1971) defines adult education as, “learning about anything at all which can help us understand the environment we live in and the manner in which we change and use the environment to improve our selves. (ElimuHainaMwisho 1971) –Tanzania newspaper. Quoted in Adult education and the development of socialism in Tanzania.

According to Prosser , (1967) explain that adult education especially in the developing parts of the world, concerned itself primarily with teaching the fundamental techniques of life which become especially important in the rapid transitional from one culture to another. Despite the various explanations of adult education, these explanations seem to have one thing in common, namely, that the purposes of adult learner’s educational needs are met outside the constraining and often discriminating formal education system. In the western countries and most parts of Asia, the concept of adult education has been expanded to include community education as well as continuing education, aimed at facilitating modernization and development in general. In the west that term denote all activities in which capacities and capabilities of people who are considered to be adult are developed for specific purpose, irrespective of particular setting of the activity.

African societies have lagged generally behind in adopting this broader and more encompassing view of adult education. Although there is plenty of adult education and learning going on in industrial and tradition circles of Africa, there has been very little acknowledgement of the role of adult education in development in this societies (Mpofu 1998). A resent, study (Mpofu and Amina, 2004) of perceptions of adults learning involving institution providers of adult education, among others in Namibia, revealed that perception of adult education remains very narrow. Adult education is largely viewed as nothing more than literacy and remedial education. However, Namibia is not alone in this predicament for the concept still remains hassy in most of the African countries and consequently, there is very little commitment to the promotion of adult education activities.

6. The Concept Of Development:

Like the concept of adult education, the concept of development has undergone several changes in the past. Up to until 1970s development was seen solely as the quantitative provision of infrastructure and utilities such as potable water,electricity, schools primary, health clinics, roads, bridges and recreational facilities (Rogers 1983).This view of

development has long been considered one sided, faulty and unrealistic (Indabawa, 1995). Following such a definition equates development with modernization which simply means the attainment of standards of western technological, advance. Sees, (1969) argued that poverty, unemployment and inequality have not declined but are growing in any society, so then it will be strange to call the results development, even if per capital income doubled (Youngman 2000). Akinpelu, (1990) acknowledges that there is more to human development than material. For instance in many parts Africa the spiritual aspect of life is often seen to be more essential than the material. The year 1970 witnessed a shift in the basic concept of development. The view of development placed more emphasis in the persons, the ultimate beneficiary of all developmental efforts (Rogers 1983).

Indabawa and Mpfu, (2006) observes that in this view of development, the target of the development process is people, and not the material artefacts surrounding them, nor the economic growth of their country. The central concern of this conception of development is that all efforts need to be directed to meeting people's diverse needs more effectively (United Nations, 1993).

Development is seen as a process of helping people change, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to conceive plan, design and implement their own self development. Mpfu (2006) argues that this conception of development is conceived as made up of two stages. The first stage consists of liberating people from all social, economic, political and cultural inhibitions that prevent them from realizing their full potential. The second stage involves the enhancement of people's knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to boost their self-confidence, creativity and readiness to participate in all issues involving their personal development and that of their society. The envisaged result of the second stage constitutes what Julius Nyerere (1974) and Paulo Freire (1984) , among others have described as transformation or change in consciousness . This is the immense role that adult education has tried to play in development.

When discussed further development in any country is characterized by growth, improvement and change. Development as growth entails economic prosperity, transformation of infrastructure and technology to facilitate production of more goods and services. It also refers to the efficient distribution of those goods and services, social and psychological transformation essentially to mean democratization of society. This entails the development of people's capacity to grow socially, cultural, economically and politically through

acquisition of new knowledge, attitudes and skills and through participation in social and political / decision –making. Finally, development as characterized by change intends to bring out a desirable change in personality of the individuals or society.

7. Aims Of Adult Education:

The role of adult education in development need not be overemphasized. The formulation of national aims of adult education is determined by the needs of the country at a particular time and its political philosophy. Adult education provides an individual to learn to grow, to increase their capacities to attain a richer and fuller life. The education provided encourages adult learners to have an inquiry mind, ability to learn from what others do, and to reject or adapt in to his own needs. Finally he should have a basic confidence in his own position as free and equal member of society who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not what he obtains (Nyerere, 1974). In Kenya in particular adult education aims at providing literacy to adult learners. Secondly to sustain literacy through knowledge, skills and attitudes and behavior towards life and society. Thirdly to promote nationalism, patriotism and awareness of the role of the individual in national development.

8. Adult Education And Development:

The goal of any education system is to provide or develop a balanced individual capable of surviving in his environment and contributing meaningfully towards the survival of that society to which he belongs. Adult education is one of the principle professions that can take adequate care of social- economic, cultural, political and environmental problems of the adults. Adult education changes the social psychological minds of adults more than any other profession. Instills lost hope in them and librates them from their prejudice of seeing themselves as not beings that are capable of learning. (National policy on education 2004).

Fasokun, (2006) observes that ‘‘adult education is concerned not with helping/assisting people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. In the face of all, adult education in the 21st century is generally faced with challenges. Adult education has been neglected by the government irrespective of the fact that it is adult personnel of this country

who are already at the production sectors and who will eventually transform this continent from what it is today to a high level of development.

Omelewa, (1981) says it is not the children of today who hold the present destiny of Africa in their hands; it is the assaults .so it is only by establishing effective communication with the adult population, by helping them to adjust to a rapidly changing world that an immediate impact can be made on urgent problems of society and essential. The dominant shared purpose of adult education has always been ameliorative. It has been intended to enhance individual life opportunities; to widen their horizons; to empower them; to alter the nature of the society of which generally as an end in itself. Adult education has long been acclaimed as an essential component of development. There is no denying that adult education is an indispensable condition for sustainable development in any society.

9. Adult Education In Africa:

When adult education was first introduced in Africa most education departments set up centers in both urban and rural areas. These centers were manned by residents' tutors who were responsible for putting on weekly classes and short courses in towns and in large rural centers. However there was much less success in the rural areas as there was in the urban where people daily activities tended to occupy them all day long and they would find it hard to drop their work in the evenings to attend classes. What used to happen is that centers opened to run such courses obtained enthusiastic attendance for a few weeks and then numbers begun to dwindle until the centers were gradually closed due to lack of attendance

African countries have in the recent past sought to improve access to quality education for all by encouraging private sector investments in the education sector. But in spite of these efforts there are still many challenges hindering our efforts. In Kenya for example like many other African countries is faced with high rates of illiteracy among the youth and young adults, most of these are women who constitute well of 75 percent of Kenya's rural productive labour force.

Several adult education programmes are offered in several learning institution. Currently, adult education training programmes are offered at farmer's training centers and technical training institutions, institutions of research, science and technological, health training institutions and teacher training institutions at colleges and universities. The programmes

offered include certificate programmes, diploma programmes and degree programmes besides these formal programmes. There are several adult education training programmes offered at the community level in the rural areas and in urban centers. There exist several modes through which adult education training programmes are offered. Examples include conferences, workshops, seminars and intuition in formal classrooms settings. All these learning processes focus on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes considered very important to adult educators in Africa.

However, there are very many challenges that impend the progress of adult education in Africa. Bholá, (2000) has observed that the challenge of adult education today is to create a vibrant sector of adult education without devaluing and weakening the character and content of the indigenous culture of adult education. Indeed, the adult education sector should receive its agenda of research and training from the culture of adult education and in the process should contribute to enrichment and renewal of the culture of adult education ...but on the other hand it is argued that the modern sector of education may have dismissed the traditional culture of adult education out of hand and without thought and borrowed indiscriminately from the west irrelevant ideologies, missions and methods of adult education simply to keep up appearances of modernity or only because the donors donated and demanded. Some of the most challenges are discussed below;

10. The Context Of Illiteracy And The Lack Of Basic Education For All:

Mulira, (1975) in his book 'Adult literacy and development. A hand book for teachers of adult notes that UNESCO has developed figures that reflect on the high illiteracy rates in Africa. It is thought that eight out of ten adults in Africa are unable to read and write. It is also a common place that Africa is the continent most burdened with illiteracy and lack of basic education. In Southern Africa development committee of education and training signed in September 1997 highlighted the need to address the educational needs of people who either do not have the liberty to attend full learning or are past the age of basic education or whose skills need to be upgraded. It is evident that economic difficulties and the aids pandemic have made this situation worse over the last decade and it's generally acknowledged that the resounding declarations calls for action to ensure education for all made at Jomtien and reaffirmed at Dakar in 2000 have been properly implemented. Most contemporary analysis's

regard illiteracy as a development issue because of the link between poverty and illiteracy (Atchison et, al.)

11. Lack Of Highly Skilled Work Force In The Context Of Globalization:

In Africa, we are constantly bombarded with warnings that the new information and communication technology based world requires every nation to have educated and skilled workforce which we are not sufficient. So most of the people in this region have been left behind because we lack the educated and skilled citizenry needed in the world we live in.

12. Civil Wars:

Wars and conflicts in some African state drive the adult community to concentrate on survival. Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sudan, Zimbabwe and Kenya have experienced war conflicts which have created vulnerable citizens. In such situation education becomes secondary to survival (Nfukho and Kange'the 2002). When Evelyn Karidakai, the Liberian minister of education received the invitation to participate in the global education For All 2000 Assessment nearly two years ago her first reaction was -after seven years of civil war we have nothing to report (<http://www.africaaction.org> .Africa education for all .2000).This Compounded with political unrest and clamor for constitution reform has dragged on for so long. It has drawn away and side tracked attention from providing better education.

13. Learners Based Factors:

According to Nafukhoet, al; (2005) learner based factor limit access to adult education programme. This is because learners have unique characteristics which education educators must recognize in order for them to enroll and complete their programmes successfully. These characteristics such as the nature of adult learners and their objectives for attending adult education programmes are important factor in determining motivation. In many sub-Saharan African Countries, if adult's learners do not see a connection between attending adult

education programmes and improvement of life, they are not likely to seek enrolment in adult education programmes.

14. Other Related To Adult Responsibilities:

Other factors are related to adult responsibilities which include marital status, the stage in the lifespan, size of the family and family problems. In Africa a married, female student will often need permission of the husband to attend adult education. African families also tend to have large families with several children in addition to extended family members. These responsibilities place pressure on adult time, finances and energy, and this limits their accessibility to adult education (Nafukhoet; al; 2005).

15. Community Based Factors:

Factors which limit participation in adult education programmes in Africa include community appreciation for adult education, cultural factors, cultural institutions, wars and conflicts. The adult community's appreciation for education motivates adult learners to seek education. However, if the reverse is true, then the adult's motivation to study falls very low and no matter how many adult education programmes exist in that county the attendance level will be very low, community appreciation is relevant especially in nomadic communities such as the Maasai people of Tanzania and Kenya. When the entire community keeps shifting in search of pasture for their animals, the provision of adult education for such adults becomes a problem (Sabo, 2006; Hazoume 1999).

16. Language Barrier:

Depending on the type of adult education programme, the language of instruction has also becomes a big problem for adult learners. According to Sabo, (2006) there are many languages in African countries and the, choice of language of instruction determines the attitudes towards the programmes. In Kenya for example the use of English & Kiswahili as languages of instruction in various adult education programmes should not be a problem. However, if some adult learners are not conversant in those languages they will experience

resentments and discouragement as opposed to the experiences of learners familiar with the language of instruction.

17. The Desire And Willingness Of Adult To Complete Education:

The desire and willingness of adult's learners to complete their education presents with many common challenges regardless of where they may be geographically. Adult learners abroad and in Palau echo each other on what they identify as barriers to their education goals. As much as they enjoy being back in school, many face the enormous task of balancing this with jobs, house work, and childcare. In addition to these responsibilities many adult learners everywhere face the problem of supporting themselves and their families as well as pay for school and for their children (Prosser R.C, 1970)

18. Lack Of Government Support And Political Will:

In addition, there is a lack of government policies in many African countries that encourage individual students enroll in adult education programmes. This is because in most of African countries there is no policies and legislation passed in order to support adult education. On the same note there is lack of political will. This means that the rulers, political elite do not mobilize the people on this kind of education adequately, when it was launched in 1979 in Kenya people said it is ridiculous to waste resources for our children on the old. However workplace learning has become necessary for all workers and thereby need for employers to provide incentives for employees so as to motivate them to learn on a continuous basis (Nafukho and Kang'ethe, 2002).

19. Poverty:

Poverty is a big factor militating against the provision of adult education. When a choice has to be made between education and food the later is a priority. The situation has been compounded by the escalating death from the pandemic H.I.V and Aids. The effects of the disease are beyond measure in terms of economic impact. (Sabo, 2006). Most of the people in

Africa live below the poverty line as such they are not able to pay taxes, the same may not have transport to go to adult education centers or access education.

20. Lack Of Awareness:

A survey done on adult education in 2007 it was reported that many people are completely unaware that there are an adult education centers that exists. Meaning that opportunities are there but most adults are not aware. This is also referred to as ignorance. According to Sabo, (2006) many adults have families or big families to look and support. In mean time, they also have to strive and allocate some saving for studying whereby in this, high cost living where budgeting expenses really matters that contributes to why many early attrition among first time – E-learners.

21. Lack Of Trained Personnel:

Today adult education is recognized as one of the most important factors in bringing about social and economic development. However entrusting adult education to agents who may not have necessary qualification, coupled with shortage of suitable teaching materials prepared by competent author's visual aids among other factors serves as impediments to adult education. Rashid A. Siddigi wrote a paper which he presented to UNESCO in Paris September 1967 on literacy and education. He argued that in Somalia there is lack of teaching staff with pedagogical training in adult education.

22. Lack Of Adequate Funds:

According to a paper presented at the international conference on Arid lands in changing world University of Arizona in June 1969, it was noted that Adult education has been faced with lack of adequate funds for implementing education programmes and that the need for regular professional supervision and on the job training. UNESCO, (1997) Conference observed that lack of funds and Meager government resources, adult education programmes have not been receiving sufficient allocations for the planned activities. In Uganda for instance Okechfor instance remarks that many adult literacy facilitators work on a volunteer

basis without any remuneration, asked their motivation many of them answered that they were happy to share knowledge with their communities. However majority also contended that they would be happier if they would be remunerated. (Basic education for All, EFA, 1992, Okech, 2004).

23. Lack Of Facilities And Staff Training Facilities:

There is use of text books and schools equipment unsuitable for adults which created a sense of easiness and disinterestedness among the recipient and also lack of reading rooms facilities and libraries containing suitable books for the newly literates as well as continuation course to prevent them from falling back into illiteracy (Prosser RC,1971;, Malcolm. T., 1996).

While it taken for granted that to an effective school teacher a teacher should have correct training to make him proficient in the subject the teachers, the same does not hold true for the teachers of adults.

24. Lack Of Supervisors:

According to Recho, (1990) lack of effective supervision leads to collapse of Adult education programmes. As supervisors do not understand how adult should be taught and therefore are not able to advise teachers satisfactorily.

25. Disperities:

There is a wide disparity of on adult education in terms of region and gender. In Nairobi, there are more adults who are literate than other areas. The highest rates of illiterates are in the major pastoralist's areas (Waithaka, 1992). In urban centers there are good numbers of learners because there are many learning centers. In semi- arid areas centers are few and there is no security. Learning centers should be evenly distributed and rebuild the distracted one. Some adult education programmes are better than others. One would expect some centralized institution which could have the function on helping in the producing of curricula syllabli and teaching materials. That would be responsible for the evaluation of their effectiveness and

their continuous improvement. Such institutions do not exist. However, it is left to the unskilled staff of the individual providing bodies to do the best they can (Prosser 1971).

26. Conclusion:

In conclusion from the above discussion it is clear that adult education in Africa is threatened. The challenges are social, cultural, economic and political. It is in such a moment when all African government should lay emphasis to create conditions that will allow strong, structured adult education system of education. This will aid in realizing the millennium goals and in particular education for all.

Freire, P. (1992) in his book pedagogy of the oppressed acknowledges that literacy is a weapon for social change and it is the means by which men can perceive, interpret criticize and finally transform the world around them. As such African nations should endeavor to obtain high levels of enlightenment so as to win the match against illiteracy.

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