Addressing Social Problems through Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Societies exist through guiding rules and regulations that are agreed upon by members of the society. The study on Addressing Social Problems through Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective, reviewed literature under the following subheadings: concept of sociology, concept of society, education and the adult learner where five assumptions of adult learners were described; social institutions (political, family, and religion) and their impact on adult education; the concept of social transformation and factors (politics, economy and technology) promoting such; the concept of social stratification and its functions; social problems and the role of adult and non-formal education in addressing social problems (economic benefits, healthy living and civic social engagement) among others. The review concluded that adult and non-formal education is an assured means of tackling social problems in the society as educated and informed adults will give rise to a promising younger generation in a rapidly changing technological age.

Key words: Social problems, adult education, non-formal education

INTRODUCTION

Societies cannot exist without members and these members constitute different groups of families (nuclear and extended). The most interesting thing is that all families are known with one occupation or the other that identified them. So, with the compositions of these families, make a particular society. Hence, societies exist with guiding laws, culture and or traditions, beliefs, norms and customs which guide their actions. Human beings naturally are created with differences in ideologies, beliefs and so despite enacted laws used in guiding these societies, members tend to behave in certain negative ways. Thus, social problems exist when a significant number of people in society perceive an undesirable difference between social ideas and social realities, and believe that this difference can be eliminated by collective and social actions (Aderinto, 2002). In this regard, adult and non-formal education perceived to be as agent in addressing social problems can be apprehended through the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, political, social and cultural determinant factors of Nigerian development in particular and Africa as a whole. The economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation.

CONCEPT OF SOCIOLOGY

To define the concept sociology, it will be better to understand what the popular conceptions of the discipline seem to be. As may be the case with other sciences and social sciences sociology is often

misconceived among the populace. Even though the concept sociology may be seen to be about people, others think it is all about "provision of the fateful and doing welfare work; while others think that sociology is the same as socialism and is a means of bringing revolution to our schools and colleges" (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978 as cited in Zerihun 2005). The first social scientist to use the term sociology was a Frenchman by the name of Auguste Comte who lived from 1798-1857. As coined by Comte, 'socius' means different things for instance society, association, togetherness or companionship while, 'logos' means to speak about or word. Literally, sociology is directly describing a certain word or speaking about society. In a simple and precise term, the word sociology is of society and their culture. (Indrani, 1998 as cited in Zerihun 2005).

Auguste Comte defines "sociology as the science of social phenomena subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation while Max Weber a German philosopher defined "sociology as a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects. Emile Durkheim who was a French philosopher and one of the important classical social thinkers, define "sociology as the science of social institutions" (Ranjini & Jawhar nd).

Concept of Society

Society is a system of interrelationships which connects individuals together. All societies are united by the fact that their members are organized in structured social relationships according to a unique culture. No culture could exist without societies and no society could exist without culture. Without culture, there would not be human interaction nor would there be a language in which to express, no sense of self-consciousness, and the ability to think or reason would be severely limited (Giddens, 2005 & Itulua-Abumere, 2013).

In a more precise and clear description to what it means by society could be understood as discussed by Maclver (nd) that society does not refer simply to a group of people associated for a social life, rather it refers to the complex pattern of the norms, interaction and relationships that arise among them. A person exists only as an agent of social relationships. Mere congregation of individuals does not constitute society. Rather society refers to the complex network of social relationships by which every individual is interrelated with his fellowmen. Hence, society is abstract, not concrete, in nature and resides in the mind of the individual. It is a process of living not a thing, a motion rather than structure. A system of social relationships is the most important aspect of society. A social relationship implies reciprocal awareness among individuals.

EDUCATION AND THE ADULT LEARNER

Education has been identified as the vehicle for development of communities, societies and nation at large. The importance attached to education is the reason why governments of every country take it serious on its provision in terms of its policy formulation, curriculum development, quality assurance, beneficiaries at each level and so on. Education is of different types; formal, informal and non-formal. Formal education is highly structured with very rigid bureaucracy for the beneficiaries to follow while informal education is an accidental learning that take place unscheduled. Thus, non-formal education seems like the formal but with flexibility in its operation, audience or participants, age, experiences, responsibilities and so on. Knowles (1984) describe five assumptions of adult learners as follows:

1. **Self-concept:** as a person matures her/his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being
2. **Adult Learner Experience:** as a person matures s/he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning
3. **Readiness to Learn:** as a person matures her/his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to

the developmental tasks of his/her social roles

4. **Orientation to Learning:** as a person matures her/his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject- centeredness to one of problem centeredness
5. **Motivation to Learn:** as a person matures the motivation to learn is internal

These and many more reasons are the sociological foundations of adult and non-formal education. As described above, it can be understood that adults are unique in terms of their perspective to learning, what they ought to learn, when and where to learn. Similarly, the adult learning perspective sociologically is in line with the principles of adult learning. Hence, Knowles (1984) further outlined the following principles:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented

Education is considered to be agent of change, any adult who attended adult education programmes went with intention to change his/her behaviour and attitude to meet the current global happening. Learning is a process of social transformation through some social agents. The interaction between learners' themselves entails different things likewise, the tutors or facilitators interaction with learners is another means of getting knowledge from each other. The learners in attendance are considered experienced individuals with verse knowledge of different kind. Therefore, learning is related to the human conditions of life, transformation, and changes that occur as a result of learning interaction. The ability to learn is an attribute of one's existence and the fundamental explanation of evidence to continued existence in the society where people live.

Schools and educational institutions are agents of transformation where significant learning take place. Learning is considered to be as an existential phenomenon. Throughout an individual's effort to understand and describe learning it becomes obvious that he or she is not only concerned with the agent of developing a working definition but he or she constantly tries to relate learning with the social context where it happens (Jarvis, 2007). Adults are the heart of a community or society and serve as an asset that could encourage transformation and changes that occur from generation to generation. Societies are developed with some indicators: economic, political, social and technological. Consequently, sociology of adult education provides that adult members of communities attain these positions because these are the indicators that enable individuals, groups and communities to really function as expected. Adult education is for the adults and they must be educated on political life and politics that exist within the human communities (Inglehart 1991; Putnam and Pharr 2000).

Social Institutions and their Impact on Adult Education

Social institutions are components that exist in communities and these institutions determine the strength and weaknesses of communities. Social institutions have been created by man from social relationships in society to meet such basic needs as stability, law and order and clearly defined roles of authority and decision making. Social institutions are formal cultural structures devised to meet basic social needs of adults, male and female. Most institutions that exist within communities are being run by elders with the help of their younger, energetic adults who have the capacity and ability to create and innovate for their personal and community development. Therefore, social institutions shape behaviours, norms, values and the existing laws that govern the affairs of communities. Some of the major institutions this paper will consider are: political, religion, economic and family.

POLITICAL INSTITUTION

Political institution is one of the organs which exist under the auspices of community elders, leaders and the participation of their adult into the local, State and national politics. The political institution in community or society operates within the agreed values, customs, norms and beliefs of each community. Hence Dahl (1963) as cited in Ademuson (2021) describe political system as "…any continual structure of quality human relationship that involves, to a significant extent of power, rules or control". The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (1994) defined political institution as a unit in any persistent pattern of human relationship that involves power, rule and authority. Political institution is an organized environment which creates, enforce and apply laws; that mediate conflict; make communities policy on the economy and social systems; and otherwise provide representation for the people from all environs of the community. Political institution can also be defined as a structure of rules and principles within which it operates under the mandate or unanimous agreement of community members.

Political institution is an organization, a machinery or tool that is designed or established for the purpose of maintaining law and order and creating peaceful coexistence in a given society. The political system functions in an environment and it has power resources, that are capable of controlling the other aspects of society. It removes obstacles in its environment, it interacts with and changes the environment. Hence attention is often directed to the way a society is organized politically as a means of understanding its other subsystems.

Family as an institution

Family as an institution is another organ whose impact in the community is very essential. Family serves as a strong threshold that shapes members as well as communities' morality. All communities start from family settings that are either nuclear or extended; father, mother and other members of the family. However, family is a kinship group that consists of two or more people who consider themselves related by blood, marriage, or adoption. A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, with the adult members assuming responsibility of caring for children. The United States Census Bureau (2000) defines the family as a relatively permanent group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption and who live under the same roof.

Family as an institution has certain functions and impact on its members and the entire community. For instance, Tinuaola (2021) confirmed that family institutions play great roles or functions as:

1. **Social identity:** As adults and parents, a standard social identity becomes important as it enhances life chances and prospects. Social class or race, ethnicity, education, power wealth and hierarchical status have advantages and as acquired from parents. The social identity of an individual defines the nature of social status and class which are directly related to life opportunities.
2. **Socialization:** In most societies, the family is the major and primary unit through which socialization occurs. Socialization is a long-term process through which a child learns and ensures conformity to all the norms and values of a particular society. Thus, adult education becomes another form of socialization as learning is a continues process.
3. **Basic physiological needs:** The family is ideally a major source of practical support towards meeting the physiological needs of its members. It is expected to provide food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials required for human survival. It provides its members with the facilities and requirements of basic needs like food, housing and clothing for its members.
4. **Psychological support:** The family is expected to provide its member's love, comfort, help in times of emotional distress, and other types of intangible support that are needed to sustain the continuing

existence of the family. It also provides affection, affirmation, intimacy, and mutual care for all members to ensure a stable state of mind.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION

Religious institutions are spiritual thoughts by different followers of different religions that exist in communities. These religions are guidance, beliefs, moral, and total submission to the will of their creature. The followers of these religions have complete devotion to that religion as the complete guidance. Alagbu (2011) observed that religion consists of values, cognition and skills with conceptions and images of the world of all which help to guide man in his day- to-day life and to contribute to the development of the society in which he lives. The function of religion has impacted the human race especially adults. Gbadero & Adeleye (2011) as cited in Apenda (2015) argue that with the practice of religion, communities enforce the need for rule of law for everyone to follow. These include political equality and stability of citizens, protection of everyone's rights to live irrespective of their ethnicity, tribes and religion. It is observed that these are lacking today and their absence bring about corruption in the Nigerian society. This leads to loss of national values.

Ohazulike, (2023) describe that faith-based organizations (FBOs) have played important roles in society by providing a variety of services to the populace, such as tending to their spiritual needs, providing welfare assistance, fighting for the rights of the oppressed, and playing a significant role as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). Thus, in humanitarian aid and under the national development efforts, caring for the elderly, providing for their educational needs, providing for their health care needs, are provided. (Wikipedia, 2010 as cited in Ohazulike 2023). In the same way Warren (2010), observed that faith-based organizations are non-profits that provide medical care, emergency relief, housing for the elderly, training, shelter for the homeless, care for widows, hospice care, food pantries, welfare-to-work programmes, refuge services for job training, child care, and pre-school, among other services.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The entire human life or societies is all about transition from one point to another. This transition which is largely between human beings and from which majority is championed by young and energetic adults. Therefore, social transformation implies a change involving processes that occur in society and that alter the existing structures, creating a more just and equal society enhancing people's lives (Pierli & Selvam, 2017). Human societies acknowledge and receive changes in their cultural spheres, social interactions and political activities all these in the name of modernization and innovations. But for Hegmon and Peeples (2018) social transformation is a crucial change that occur and benefit members of the societies ways of life, cultural beliefs, and their socio-economic development. Social transformation thus reflects societal shifts on a deep structural level, a fundamental 'step-change' that re-configures all existing social patterns. Portes (2010) argued that change can only be identified as 'fundamental' or 'deep' when it affects the core of society that is, its value systems and power structures. But Castles (2010) & Portes (2010), argued, social transformation as a fundamental change in the way that societies are organized and resources are distributed that goes beyond the continual processes of cyclical and life-cycle-related social change that are always at work and that do not change deeper social structures and the overall functioning of societies. Hence, social transformation refers to the application of knowledge through the deployment of procedures, skills and techniques (Haas, Frasen, Natter, Schewel, & Vezzol, 2020)

Factors promoting social transformation

A number of factors exist and cause the champion of social transformation around the world. These factors are what consolidate the existence of many civilized nations in the fast and in the presence. Traditionally in

African nation and the world over exist under control by people who are in the position of power to take charge of the entire region, community and societies sources of livelihood, means of productions and laws which govern the activities and affairs of the entire populace. Haas, Frasen, Natter, Schewel, & Vezzol (2020) maintained that some the factors promoting social transformation are; Politics**;** the political dimension of social transformation concerns the organized control over people within a given territory, using power as a lens through which to look at society. The increase in population and the level of educational attainment become necessary to accommodate changes in the political institution that were practice before. Economics; the economic dimension of social transformation refers to the accumulation and use of land, labour and capital in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Technology; The associated central meta concept is tools, both in their material form such as machines, computers, metals and in their idealization-abstract form as in the guidelines, procedures, manuals and records of knowledge that are essential in the organization of increasingly complex economic systems and bureaucracies. Culture: The core cultural-change processes associated with modern transformation can be summarized as individualization, rationalization and the rise of consumerist ideologies. Cultural shifts are associated with modern transformation through enlightenment, intellectual movement in reasoning, logic and individualism over tradition.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

According to Giddens (2001), social stratification simply refers to as structured inequalities between or among different social groupings. Social stratification is a structure that shows societal arrangement in terms of social level or classes one attained: high, low, and or middle level. Oyekola & Oyeyipo (2020) observed that this form of categorization that operates in a structured system of inequality in which members are ranked based on selected criteria thereby limiting members' access to wealth, power and opportunities is referred to as social stratification. That is, social stratification is a sociological term that applies to the ranking or grading of individuals and groups into hierarchical layers such that inequality exist in the allocation of rewards, privileges and resources.

The hierarchical status attained by adults in the society could be inherited from the family while for some adult it is acquired as a result of daily life struggle. These class struggle among adults in communities some time creates a vacuum to be filled through education, in order to make others function well. The Social structure has some vital function which are performed by the adult members in the societies as identified by Davis and Moore (1945), Rao (2006), Ritzer (2011), Johnson (2013), as cited in Oyekola & Oyeyipo (2020):

1. It determines individual placement where individual adults are placed into various positions or statuses in the social structure. Every position is occupied and functionally necessary for societal survival of members in the society.
2. It encourages competition and hard-work among members of society to aspire for the top position. It therefore induces individual adults to live up to societal expectations.
3. It regulates human relationships as human behaviour in the upper class is different from those in the lower echelon in stratification system.
4. It performs economic function as individual adults must be motivated to perform the duties required of their positions. This requires motivation to fill certain positions and to perform the duties attached to them clearly and perfectly.
5. It serves as social control as each social class has its own sub-culture which guides and controls the behaviours of the teeming population of adult members in societies.

Social Problems and their Effects on Adults

Social problems are inter-related activities which are caused by the absence of certain basic requirements

that are supposed to be provided by the authorities concerned. Social problems could include; poverty, poor education provision, corruption, cultism, rubbery among other things. The young and matured adults of every community in Nigeria are characterized with one or more of these social problems. These hinder the progress and development of these youth and their communities. In a more precise statement, Obileye & Aborisade (2020) argue that social problem is that condition that affects a significant percentage of the society which therefore requires urgent attention in order to save the society and the people affected. In other words, social problem is simply an issue that pertains to a particular society having a bearing on a large scale thereby necessitating prompt attention from appropriate authorities to sustain, and develop the society.

The sociological explanations of a social problem as a public issue tend to occur at different levels periodically, chronologically, and accidentally. Holstein and Miller (1993) as cited in Obileye & Aborisade (2020) noted that social problem is treated as an appalling circumstance where an urgent attention must be given to its effect. In other words, social problem is an abnormal condition that emanate from appropriate conditions and how certain individuals/groups/institutions suffer from these conditions (Trevithick, 2007; and Healy & Link, 2012). Accordingly, Kallen, Miller & Daniels (1989) opined that social problem is a dysfunction in the social institution which needs an urgent intervention from the appropriate agents in society.

The nature of social problem experienced in any living society bears a significant effect on the state of the economy, political administration and the individual members of the society regardless of their social class (Ogionwo, 2016). In essence, social problem threatens the social and the physical world. Social problems such as underemployment, unemployment, poverty, rape, terrorism, hard drug use/abuse and host of others can impact a person's quality of life (emotions, psychology, social and medical) negatively, as well as his friends and families (Aborisade & Vaughan, 2014; and Ogionwo, 2016). Bahrom (2004) has related the family economy as a major cause to social problems in today's society. Based on a survey conducted at the East Coast's moral rehabilitation center, the majority of juvenile trainers come from poor families earning less than RM500. This group was caught in the urge to meet their needs and had to be involved in a crime scene. The proof is that most of these juveniles are involved in stealing, drug trafficking, escape from home and others related to socio-economic families. In fact, unemployment is closely related to the increased risk of poverty (Gallie, Paugam & Jacobs, 2003) and this will lead to the increase of social problems (Hafid, 2011).

Roles of Adult and non-Formal Education in addressing Social Problems

Social problems are inevitable group of activities (corruption, cultural indiscipline and social vices) which majority of adult youth engage themselves in. To address these issues, adult education could serve as means because it was spelt out on what and how to meet up the gap already created by these social problems. For instance, it provides adults with the necessary skills, attitudes, knowledge, values, beliefs required to improve the social and economic development of a society. It is important to target adults because they are matured and hold the destiny of modern society in their hands. In support of this Obi (2015) believe that adults are those who are already engaged in some developmental activities that in turn will change their dream into realities. The author further re-emphasizes that adult education programmes is unlike education for children and adolescents. Adult education is a kind of education which is centred in addressing pressing or immediate needs of the adults in their homes, social and occupational roles, civic and economic interests with immediate or direct positive relationship for development objectives of different adult individuals.

Poverty is one of the major causes of social problems. Aderinoye (2001) stated that being poor is one of the conditions that exist when people or human beings lack the means of meeting the basic needs of life. Poverty occurs in a situation where there is low, unstable, unbalanced economic status among people. The author further traced poverty to problems associated with unemployment or lack of job opportunity, under-

employment, low income, irregular source of income, lack of basic needs. Corruption is tired to poverty and which causes a lot of inbalance within the society or community. The effect of corruption on the nation's economy are many; on the home front, it breeds irresponsible and undisciplined children while in the educational institutions, it lowers the standard and reduces the level of competence of the output and this leads to the production of half-baked graduates and ill-equipped manpower. Religiously, moral values will be relegated and immorality will be practiced in broad day light. Politically, the right and dedicated candidate will not be elected or appointed into offices. The implication of this is that mediocre and unqualified people will continue to be relevant in the society (Aderinoye, 2001). Hence, the need for adult and non-formal education to be made functional programmes in educational institutions and the community as a whole.

Feinstein et. al, (2003) as cited in Jinna & Maikano (2014) opined that adult learning is associated with more "open-minded" perspectives on race and authority, greater understanding of people from different backgrounds, challenging previously held beliefs and with a sustaining effect on no extremist views. The role of adult education in minimizing social problems as stated by UNESCO (2017) is the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level or method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools or colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or turn them into a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in two-fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced, independent, social, economic and cultural development. Jinna & Maikano (2014) observed that adult education has wider benefits to adults' life as outlined below:

1. Economic benefits of adult education can improve employability and income, which is a key pathway to realizing a range of other benefits.
2. Adult learning can have both transforming and sustaining effect on health. Transforming effects are when adult learning changes health behaviour while sustaining effects are when health behaviour is maintained. People attending adult education courses are more likely to have healthy lifestyles
3. Adult learning might inspire the need for civic and social engagement; a change in attitude in voter participation, which in turn brings about a change in behaviour. Adult learning can promote social cohesion and strengthen citizenship.
4. It brings about a change in attitude. An individual who participates in adult learning may differ from the one who does not in terms of prior attitude. Academic oriented courses are most suited for opening minds and generally link adult learning to increased racial tolerance, a reduction in political cynicism and a higher inclination towards democratic attitudes.
5. Although inadequately understood, adult education has been cited as a key in reducing poverty levels around the world as it has the capacity to positively affect many dimensions of poverty.

Results show that adult education has a role to play in nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reducing the risk of poverty, but also for providing the capacity to withstand poverty-inducing pressures. EAEA (2010) underlines the empowering role that adult education can have in times of crises, providing a stable community, a chance for reorientation, a safe place and social recognition. Also, the United Kingdom, the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning (IFLL) (Sabates, 2008 as cited in Jinna & Maikano 2014) concludes that participating in adult learning can help substantially to reduce poverty through enhancing employment prospects, improving health levels of poor people and giving better chances of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives. Therefore, it should be a part of any approach to reducing poverty, as multiple initiatives are needed to lift people out of poverty.

CONCLUSION

Societies where humans live are guided by law, culture, tradition and custom. Where societies are faced

with social problems, adult education can serve as a means to cleanse the ills members associate themselves in. This is because societies are created by individuals, groups and communities that in turn mold and translate what will exist in terms of behaviour, believes, and conduct within the acceptable laws that govern communities and societies. As a result of changes brought about by science and technology came the interference with cultural settings in the name of modernization which has also brought about social problems in this 21ˢᵗ century. Societies have roles to play in addressing such issues through the educational institutions and most importantly adult and non-formal education. Through the institutions of tradition, economy, religion and politics, adult and non-formation education has been identified as one of the appropriate means to address social problems in Nigeria. The government through the efforts of meaningful members of the societies can use these means create a sound citizen and encourage development in the community.

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