

THE ROLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS IN ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

***Muhammad Shehu Hussain and **Abdullahi Umar Alhassan**

****Department of Adult Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto***

mshussain999@yahoo.com

*****Department of adult education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto.***

abdulfuntua@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of local government councils in adult education delivery. It is therefore the responsibility of the local government to collaborate with the state in the recruitment, training, and payment of facilitators allowances and to sensitize the public and other stake holders for support in adult education delivery. However, concepts of local government and adult education were highlighted as well as programmes like basic literacy, post literacy, continuing education amongst others. The paper dwelt on the challenges facing effective delivery of Local Government councils in adult education which are among others poor funding corruption and misappropriation of public funds and inadequate trained personnel. The paper suggested some strategies such as increase in funding, transparency and accountability in the local government administration, recruitment of trained adult education personnel and motivation facilitators. It is believed that these will not only encourage more learners to enroll in the programmes but will also help towards achieving Education For All.

Key words: Adult education, roles, Local Government councils, delivery.

Introduction

The present local government in Nigeria started with the 1976 local government reforms which aimed at restructuring the local government administration in conformity with the modern society and at best to make the local government administration an ideal in Africa. The term local government administration in Nigeria has attracted serious attention at national

and international arena, since the great reform of 1976. Incidentally it was this reform that opened the rural area to any meaningful development in terms of in-put that could be garnered from the federation account.

The reform focuses on the administration of the public at the grass root level where we have the majority of the

population in Nigeria. Though the reform started in 1976, it passed through various stages of development in terms of scope and operation, function and general administration. Some of the aims of the reform were:

- a) The desire to extend the principle of federalism to its logical conclusion, bringing the government at grass root level.
- b) Uniformity of local government administration in all local government councils of the federation of Nigeria (Olanipekun, 1988).

The Concept of Local Government

The 1976 local government reforms define local government as:

Government at local levels exercised through representative council established by law to exercised specific powers within the defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of state and federal governments in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of these functions to these councils and through the active participation of their people and their traditional institutions, the local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (Olanipekun, 1988).

Awa (1981) defined local government as a political authority set up by a nation or state as subordinate authority for the purpose of dispersing or decentralizing political power. Wraith (1984) also defines local government as the act of decentralizing power, which may take the form of deconcentration or devolution.

Deconcentration involves delegation of authority to fields units of the same department and devolution on the other hand refers to transfer of authority to local government units or special statutory bodies such as school boards for instance.

Emezi (1984) on the other hand perceived local government as a "system of local administration under local communities that are organized to maintain law and order, provide some limited range of social amenities, and encourage cooperation and participation of inhabitants towards the improvement of their condition of living. It provides communities with formal organizational frame work which enables them to conduct their affairs effectively for the general good".

The Evolution of Local Government System in Nigeria

The history of local government in Nigeria dates back to the colonial days. Although a contact with Europeans dates back to fifteen century, it was not until 1861 before the first steps were taken to establish an administration in Britain. The colonial administration was established based on indirect rule. This requires that the administration should be carried out through the traditional rulers and institutions. This led to the establishment of native authorities in their most rudimentary forms from the 1890s to the 1930s. The main function of native authority is to maintain law and order (Igzubor, 2007).

The first native authority ordinance recognized traditional rulers as native authorities. This was easily done in the Northern Nigeria but there was a problem in identifying who those authorities were in the southern Nigeria. This necessitated the first reform in the 1930s and the 1940s culminating in the establishment of chiefs – in-council and the chiefs and council in place

of sole native authorities. The chief-in-council is made up of the chief and members of the council (Igzubor, 2007).

In 1976, the Federal Government in collaboration with the state governments embarked on extensive reforms of local government. The objective of the reform was outlined as follows:

1. To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative bodies.
2. To facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the grass roots of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential.
3. Mobilization of human material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development, and
4. To provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government (both State and Federal) (Olanipekun, 1988)

The concept of Adult Education

Adult education is embedded in the political, social, cultural and economic processes of the society. This suggests that the nature of adult education policies, programmes and practices reflects the interest and values of different social groups and distribution of power and influence in the society (Walters & Watters, 2002.)

The UNESCO (1972: 120) defined adult education as:

entire body of organized educational processes 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 apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behavior in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development

Presently man is seriously being challenged by constant changes in technology and rapid increases in new knowledge. A part from these, the unhealthy fears and misunderstanding of various aspects of death and dying challenges man into studying the end of life (Nzeneri, 2005)

Okedara (1996) defined adult education as all educational activities arranged for adults without any legal compulsion.

Programmes of Adult and Non-Formal Education

The programmes of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria as presented in the UNICEF (2010) are as follows:

1. **Basic Literacy** – this is a literacy programme designed for people that had never had the opportunity of attending any form of school for the purpose of acquiring the skills of reading, writing and calculating simple arithmetic. The duration of the programme is determined by the number of contact hours which may last between six and nine months and four hours per week. It is equivalent of three years of lower basic education.
2. **Post Literacy**-This is the literacy programme organized for graduands of

basic literacy who wants to acquire more knowledge. It is an equivalent of six years of primary education, based on the psychological maturity and readiness of the learners. The duration may last between 12 months to eighteen months. It is like middle basic education that is primary 4-6 and has nine contact hours per week.

3. **Continuing Education** - this is an educational programme designed for post literacy graduands who wants to acquire Junior or Senior Secondary School Certificate or an individual who wants remedy inadequacies in his / her educational pursuits. It is either called Extra-Mural, Open and Distance Education Learning, Remedial Education, Industrial Education, Workers Education, Labour Education, Prison Education amongst others.
4. **Vocational Education** - This is a Non-Formal Education programme designed to equip learners with vocational skills. The duration depends on the trade or craft that is jointly agreed between the organizers and the learners (NMEC/UNICEF, 2010).

The role of Local Governments councils in Adult education in Nigeria

Local Governments councils are the closest organs of government to the grassroots as far as the implementation of adult education is concerned. It is therefore the responsibility of the local government to: Establish literacy centres; it is the responsibility of the local governments to establish literacy centres in their areas based on certain criteria and need of the people and also to ensure the establishment of

literacy network committees at local government, district, ward, and village and centre levels for efficient and effective operations. It is also the responsibility of the local governments for the day-to-day control and administration of mass literacy and Adult education programmes and the mobilization of the learners as well. In view of the foregoing the Local Government councils must ensure the following:

1. **Recruitment and payment of the facilitators:** it is the responsibility of the local governments to collaborate with the state agencies responsible for adult education in the recruitment, training and payment of the facilitator's allowances in line with the prescribed benchmark. Local governments are saddled with the responsibility of compiling, producing, monitoring and evaluation of grassroots report and their onward submission to relevant bodies and agencies for planning purposes (UNICEF, 2010). Fundamentally, in the history of adult and non-formal education, many of the people involved in the teaching or rather facilitation of adult learners are either unpaid volunteers or people who have not depended largely for their living on the payment that accrue to them from the voluntary services that they render to adult and non-formal education programmes in the community and this greatly affects their performance. However, qualified adult education personnel should be employed and this would enhance professional reorientation of activities and programmes.
2. **Provision of learning materials:** the provision of well-articulated learning

programmes is an important prospect of innovation in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. The local governments in collaboration with the state agencies are to procure learning materials and in some peculiar cases expected to develop relevant curriculum peculiar to the local needs of the people in which the instructional materials could be developed. The learner in adult and non-formal education lives and continuously interacts with his or her environment. Two categories of phenomena namely physical and non-physical exist within the environment. The physical phenomena include material objects such as artifacts, places, maps, signs and symbols which have been referred as to as “Real Literacy Materials” (RLM) while the non-physical phenomena include songs, stories, beliefs, and parable. Therefore these two categories of phenomena serve as literacy a resource from which learners derives maximum value during learning process. The use of Real Literacy Resources is to make learning more enjoyable and satisfying as well as simplify the learning process in an environment that is most familiar to the learner. Production of primers and all other essential materials should be provided by the local government councils. the local governments are to provide physical facilities for rural libraries, reading rooms, television viewing centres and radio listeners’ clubs. It is however, to establish in order to ensure public enlightenment and also to reawaken the reading culture in the minds of the people.

3. **Advocacy and mobilization for more enrolment:** Portraying adult education activities to the public and cultivating its local, national and international usage are the main concerns of advocacy and mobilization. It has been observed that inadequate information and poor publicity are also viewed as a major obstacle militating against effective implementation of the numerous adult education policies. It must be noted that adequate information and publicity about adult education will obviously stimulate people’s interest in the programmes. Sensitization of all the stake holders is the responsibility of the local government to accept and contribute towards the success of the programmes. While the stakeholders like the opinion leaders, politicians, local philanthropists are mobilized and sensitized for massive support either in terms of funding, materials provision, training or provision of venues as centres. Development and production of jingles, drama sketches, literacy talk shows and broadcast of pro-literacy programme activities all of these rest with the local government councils
4. **Monitoring and evaluation of the programme:** it is the responsibility of the local governments to conduct, monitor, evaluate and provide grassroots’ report to the agencies for mass education for onward transmission to the state for the purpose of planning. Monitoring is the continuous process of checking, watching, and assessing regularly, various activities, stages and uses of inputs of programmes in order to minimize waste, save time, improve efficiency and ensure successful completion. Adequate

facilities should be provided for effective monitoring to take place e.g. transport facilities and other logistics. Evaluation is a sporadic act of assessing programmes or project's effectiveness, efficiency, cost, relevance and impact based on specified objectives in order to improve the effectiveness of the programmes /projects. The local governments should provide feedback to the states and federal Ministry of Education in respect of curriculum and materials development, techniques of facilitation, evaluation procedures and the collection of data. Due to poor planning a lot of potential learners are not captured, therefore it is very necessary for local government councils to undergo census on the potential learners for any adult education programme.

5. **Build the capacities of Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Community Based Organizations to take on literacy activities:** these organizations are non state actors who voluntarily come together to ameliorate and improve the conditions of the less privilege or disadvantage through support in various ways therefore it is the responsibility of the local government to sensitize and create awareness to promote volunteerism among the Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Civil Society Organizations to partner with and ensure responsibility of providing adult education in their particular area (NMEC/UNICEF, 2008). Professional bodies like Non-Governmental Association on Literacy Support Services (NOGALSS) and other

NGOs, CBOs as well as CSOs should be used in training other facilitators towards eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria. These organizations were used in the past in training of facilitators and mobilization of learners and resources for adult and non-formal education programmes.

The Challenges facing effective adult education programme delivery by local government councils

The following are the major challenges as regards to local governments' responsibilities in adult education delivery in Nigeria:

- i. **Poor funding and corruption:** The issue of poor funding has persistently remained a serious challenge to education in general and adult education in particular. The poor funding of adult education has made it extremely difficult for the goals of this important sector to be achieved. The level of funding is very low and the limited funds available are not released promptly. Some of the local governments do not accord much importance in the implementation of adult education. According to Hassan (2009) the budget that serves adult education is not the budget line explicitly meant for adult education. What Okeh (2004) reported in Uganda is similar to the difficulty being encountered in Nigeria. Local governments are often accused of corruption, embezzlement, and mis appropriation of funds, as funds meant for one programme or project is usually diverted to another thing else. It is very common to see how some local government officials were caught in fraudulent activities

- ii. Inadequate trained personnel. The dearth of qualified staff and facilitators that would manage adult education programmes in the local government areas is a serious challenge that is affecting adult education delivery at the local government areas. This is coupled with the inability of most of our colleges of education to offer adult education in their Nigeria Certificate in Education programmes. Therefore it is not every NCE graduate that is competent to facilitate in adult education programmes. The inability of the local government councils to recruit qualified or to train them in art of facilitating adults is a serious constraint towards effective adult education delivery.
- iii. Poor staff motivation: this has seriously militated against the numerous innovations in adult education sector. According to Aruma (2012) the poor cash motivation of adult education has, undoubtedly, affected the implementation of the innovations in the sector since most of the workers are volunteers or part-timers who are not adequately motivated to stimulate effective service delivery in adult education in Nigeria. As a result of poor motivation, salaries and emoluments are often not paid on time and is also very meager as compared to what is enshrined in the national benchmark that is minimum wage to be paid to all part-time facilitators, there is no single state in the federation that is paying its facilitators up to minimum wage, while some states pays as low as one thousand five hundred naira per facilitator monthly, this is grossly inadequate and retards performance.
- iv. **Continuity:** This is also a major challenge facing our local government system. It is a common occurrence that programmes and projects of one government will be abandoned by many succeeding governments. This leads to economic and mental wastage as well as retrogression of development.
- v. **Lack of involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations:** in most of our local government areas local NGOs, CBOs and CSOs are not involved in adult education programmes as such they are not seen as partners in progress. NGOs, CBOs and CSOs are very good in sensitizing community members for action and mobilization for resources.

Conclusion

The history of local government in Nigeria shows that there are problems of governance. Over the years, efforts have been made to reform the local government system and increase participation of the people. In order to consolidate the gains made in the local governments made over the years and reposition it for greater performance, there is the need to repositioned local government along certain lines; first there is the need to put in place mechanism to promote transparency and accountability. Secondly adult education delivery which rest on its hand should be pursued vigorously and fully implemented in order to achieve the desired national developments.

Suggestions

Based on this conclusion the following suggestions were made:

1. **Increase in funding, transparency and accountability:** more funds should be allocated to the adult education; adequate budgetary provisions by local government council should be ensured and fully implemented. This will stimulate effective services delivery in adult education in Nigeria. There should be transparency in all the activities of the local governments and Officials whether elected or civil servants should be accountable for all what they did while in office. Budgets of the local governments should be open for all citizens to see and also to make inputs, this will ensure check and balances in the conduct of government officials. There is the need to get the political class and all other opinion leaders in the community to understand and appreciate the importance of adult education.
2. **Recruitment of trained personnel:** the local government councils should collaborate with the state in recruiting qualified staff. However, training and re-training for officers in adult education should be given priority attention in order to acquaint themselves with the new innovations in the field. Politics should be put aside in the recruitment of facilitators, competence should be our guide. Staff and facilitators with qualification in adult education bias should be employed or they should be exposed to training in adult education for better delivery. Teachers in formal schools and retired teachers who already possess the minimum qualification with additional training in adult andragogical methodologies shall be accepted in terms of appointment as facilitators in adult and non-formal education.
3. **Motivation:** adequate remuneration should be accorded to adult education sector as set by the national benchmark that is part-time facilitators should be paid regularly and as at when due, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) should be set as the minimum qualification for facilitation in the adult education sector and Colleges of Education in the country should be encouraged to establish departments of adult education so as to provide qualified personnel for adult education in the country.
4. There should be continuity of programmes and projects. Programmes and projects started by a predecessor should be continued in as much as it has positive impact on the lives of people. Result oriented approach should be employed as a main focus of adult education.
5. Involvement of the Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Community Based Organizations in order to support the government efforts in adult education delivery through training and re-training and also their roles in adult education delivery should be clearly spelt out. The councils should establish partnership, establish linkages and lubricate existing relationship with the NGOs, CBOs and CSOs in order to achieve the desired results.

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