

Review Article

Adult Education Programmes for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates for Community Sustainability in Nigeria

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Article History

Received: 07.10.2025

Accepted: 28.11.2025

Published: 15.12.2025

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: Inclusive and equitable quality education for all have being a major concern for countries around the world, as it is capture as part of the year 2030 agenda for sustainable development, specifically in sustainable development goal 4. While international organizations and governments around the world have been making effort in promoting and enhancing literacy among citizens including adults, however, literacy rate among adult populations in most developing countries including Nigeria seems alarming, as considerable portion of Nigeria's adult population, especially those residing within the rural areas finds it difficult to read, write and do simple arithmetic operations. High level of illiteracy results in poor employment opportunities as well as low income, low self-esteem and higher crime rates. While crime is an inevitable occurrence in societies, prisons exist to protect societies from criminals as well as deviants, whose actions portend threats to societal functioning. Although, prisons are mainly established for protecting societies; reformation and rehabilitation of the convicted prisoners are key functions of all correctional institutions, and education plays crucial role in the rehabilitation process. Thus, this study advocates the inclusion of adult education programmes such as peace education, adult literacy, environmental adult education, civic and political education in Nigerian correctional institutions, as a way of minimizing high incidences of recidivism, as well as ensuring pro-social attitudes and behaviours required from prisons' inmates, after serving jail terms. The requisite knowledge in adult education programmes, becomes a source of potential benefits to community sustainability, as ex-prisons' inmates can make effective contributions through knowledge acquired, in achieving the desired socio-economic and environmental sustainability in Nigerian communities.

Keywords: Adult Education, Education, Peace Education, Adult Literacy, Environmental Education, Prison, Inmates, Community, Sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

Generally, education is seen as the bedrock of community development, as it set humans free from the pangs of poverty, inequality, illiteracy and other aspects of socio-economic challenges, bedeviling societal development. Notably, education prevents intolerance in societies, as it helps individuals have deeper insight about social conflicts as well as the needs of others in order to ensure minimal conflicts among individuals and groups in societies; it provide better quality of life for the vulnerable populations in societies; it encourages healthy lifestyle, thereby making it easier for individuals to handle issues of poor health conditions; it reduces crime as well as enhances social life of individuals in the society. Also, education equips individuals with the right

knowledge, skills and values required to function effectively and make meaningful contributions to societal progress and development. While the benefits of education to individuals and societies seems innumerable, observably, considerable number of citizens (especially adult population) in most sub-Sahara Africa, lacks the basic as well as functional literacy skills (reading, writing and numeracy skills) required to function effectively as adult members in communities. Substantiating, Chinonso (2024) reveals that one person out of three adult individuals aged fifteen and above cannot read, write and perform basic arithmetic operations in some sub-Saharan countries.

While the rate of illiteracy among adult population in most developing and underdeveloped

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countries remain high, the rate of adults who are unable to read or write in sub-Saharan Africa is revealed to be the highest among the regions of the world. Report indicates that 32 percent of adult population in sub-Saharan Africa are illiterates, followed by 25 percent of south Asian adult population who are unable to read or write (Galan, 2025). This has been an issue of concern to government and international organizations around the globe. Although, the significance of adult education and its transformative influence had been recognized since the 1990's by the Education for all conference, however, at recent, Sustainable Development Goal 4 specifically emphasized on the need in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In spite of the efforts made by international organizations and government around the world in promoting and enhancing adult literacy, the rate of illiteracy among adult populations in Nigeria still remains high. Reports has shown that 31 percent of adult population in Nigeria are illiterate (Suleiman, 2022). In other words, more than one quarter of Nigeria's adult population are unable to read or write and find it difficult to perform simple arithmetic operations. The low level of adult literacy to some extent, accounts for Nigeria's low level of development.

Low level of adult literacy has significant social impact on nations, as it often leads to poor employment opportunities as well as low income, low self-esteem and higher rate of crime. Numbeo (2015) ranked six African countries as among the twenty societies with the highest crime rates in the globe. These include South Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Libya. However, in Nigeria, the most prevalent crime include arson, manslaughter, robbery, corruption, consumer fraud, sexual assault, kidnapping, cybercrime, and property crimes involving car hijacking, theft of livestock, and burglary just to mention but few. Bryjak (2011) argued that lack of education plays a leading role in increasing crime rates in big cities. In addition, reports revealed that more than 75 percent of convicted persons in Europe (particularly Italy) had not completed high school (Buonanno & Leonida, 2006 in Uzodinma & Udefuna, 2019). This indicates the propensity of higher prison sentencing among adult individuals as result of low education attainment and low literacy rate. Report revealed that out of 504 inmates in Nigerian prisons that responded to the questionnaire been administered, 54.7% could not read the questionnaire and 16.2% was assisted by the researchers. Only 19.1 % had junior secondary school education and 10% had senior secondary school and tertiary education (Joseph, 2010 cited in Adegoke, 2017).

While prison denotes a place set aside often backed by law in ensuring restrain and custody of individuals accused or being convicted of violating the criminal law of the state, it offers convicted individuals to be trained and reformed in preparation for their return back to the society as normal law-abiding citizens. Inusa

(2021) state that Nigeria correctional centres operate not only as place of keeping convicted persons but also operate as a place of reformation and social rehabilitation through various reformatory programmes such as vocational skills (including carpentry, welding, tailoring, catering, hair dressing/barbing, plumbing, painting), modern farming, health education, recreational activities and so on. The essence of these reformation programmes is to avoid incidence of recidivism. However, Drago, Galbiati and Vertova (2011) observe that reducing recidivism is one of the major challenges faced by the criminal justice system around the world. Accordingly, in Nigeria, recidivism rates in Nigeria are estimated at 52.4% (Abrifor *et al.*, 2012 cited in Irogbo, 2024). Observably, Nigeria's high criminality score on the Global Organized Crime Index proves that ex-offenders contribute significantly to crime rates, thereby, questioning the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes (Mbah, 2021). This has attracted the attention and interest of researchers who aimed to ensure crime-free society in order to achieve the desired socio-economic and environmental sustainability of communities.

Several studies have emphasized the contribution of adult education programme on community development. For instance, Lakan and Jiya (2023) among other findings highlight that community education mobilizes local resources, vocational education reduces idleness and poverty, literacy education enhances problem-solving skills, entrepreneurship education fosters economic independence, and peace education encourages peaceful coexistence. Similarly, Babanzara (2024) in a study on the role of adult and non-formal education in building a sustainable national peace, security and development in Nigeria, revealed that educated individuals and societies are more likely to resolve disputes without resorting to violence, which positively impacts society, politics, culture, and development. Boateng, Boateng and Darkwa (2024) found a strong relationship between the promotion of education, particularly adult education and learning, and the benefits of sustainable health. Apena & Osikomaiya (2024) revealed a higher rate of reading skills among adult learners who participated in Adult Basic education programmes. While these studies above have all shown significant contribution of adult education programmes to community sustainability, however, few studies (Akan, Mayowa-Adebara & Oluwatuyi, 2023; Inusa, 2021; Egwuagu & Udentia, 2022) had been done in examining adult education programme within the context of Nigerian correctional centres, yet little is known on the potential benefit of adult education programmes in rehabilitating prisons' inmates specifically for community sustainability in Nigeria. Thus, the need for this paper.

Adult Education Programme

UNESCO in Mbalis (2019) conceptualized Adult Education as the "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 adults by the society in 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 behaviour in the two-Fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent economic and cultural development". Bala, Osagie and Yakubu (2019) in Uzoagu (2024) view adult education as any educational activity that caters for the need of adults to improve their performance in all areas of adult life so as to improve their living standard. Deb (2018) viewed adult education as any form of learning provided for mature men and women. It is a practice in which an adult engages beyond traditional schooling and it encompasses basic literacy to personal fulfilment as a lifelong learning and the attainment of advanced degrees.

Adult education is categorized into various forms including formal adult education, non-formal education programme and informal learning (SCOH, 2022 cited in Lakan & Jiya, 2023). While formal adult education is seen as a structured education programme normally with a prescribed curriculum and certificate being awarded to learners upon graduation, contrarily, non-formal education programme refers to learning organized out-side established institutions of learning in which either a certificate or not recognized certificate is awarded to adult learners. Informal learning refers to learning that goes on continually from daily activities and is related to work, community, family or leisure. Akinpelu (2002) cited in Adetuyi (2016) considered literacy education, continuing education, civic education, community education, rural transformation, agricultural extension education, health extension education, mass education, population education, workers education, nomadic and migrant education, environmental education, consumer education, prisoners welfare education and rehabilitation, women education, peace education, distance education, political education, vocational education, continuing professional education, cultural, aesthetic and recreational, geriatrics education, public enlightenment, industrial and labour education, as various forms of bona fide adult education programmes.

Peace Education

Bajiji and Hant (2008) described peace education as a series of teaching encounter that draw from people their desire for peace, nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017) view peace education as "an educational process that aims to promote the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to bring about behaviour change that will enable individuals, groups, and societies to live in

harmony and resolve their conflicts peacefully. Peace education is not only about teaching conflict resolution skills but also about addressing the root causes of violence and conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is education that persuades people to accept measures that will improve the quality of the environment through the alteration of environment - unfriendly knowledge, habits, attitudes, skills, beliefs and technology. It is education that promotes harmonious relationship between human beings and their natural and man-made environment. Inyang Abia and Untoren (1995) in Adehikun and Ihieghulem (2005) view environmental education as a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts as a means of developing knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to comprehend and value the interrelatedness of man with his culture and biophysical environment. Environmental education provides individuals awareness and become sensitive to environment and its problems; it encourages experiences in, and an understanding of, the environment and its associated problems; encourages values and concerns for the environment and motivation for participating in environmental protection; it helps individuals acquire the requisite skills required to identify and solve environmental problems.

Civic Education

Levine (2013) defined Civic Education as all the processes that affect people's belief, commitment, capabilities and actions as members of a community. Civic Education otherwise known as Citizenship education seeks to transmit skills necessary for participation in a civil society. Alabi (n.d) affirmed that the main goal of civic education can be considered as the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems, adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, represent and protect their rights and interests while respecting the interest and rights of others.

Adult Literacy Education

Adult literacy education is viewed as a component of adult education that assists adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge skills and competencies necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. The aim is ensuring that adult members of the society are able to read, write and carry out arithmetic operations in order to function effectively in society. Ihejirika (2015) view literacy education as the teaching of adults according to any organized formal or non-formal plans of education with the ultimate goal of helping them better their occupational opportunities and quality of life. Adult literacy education enhances beneficiaries' understanding and participate effectively in the decision making of their own affair and

consequently improves their economic, social, cultural and political lives (Otaru, 2023).

Open and Distance Education

Jegede (2003) view distance education as education provided by a mode other than the conventional face-to-face medium whose objectives are related to and just as noble and practical as those of the on-campus full time face-to-face education. It is flexible and open in terms of its admission requirements, that is, not as rigid as in conventional institutions, freedom in terms of place of study, time, place and composition of study programme, content and dialectic approach (Ajufo, 2012). Accordingly, in Nigeria, the National Open University has taken care of marginalized sectors of population like Nigeria Prison by establishing special study centres in a bid to take education to the inmates (Ajufo, 2012). School of Arts and Social Sciences, School of Business and Human Resource Management, School of Education, School of Science and Technology, and Centre for Continuing Education and Workplace Training, in National Open University of Nigeria tends to cater for the educational needs of most inmates because of their level of education (Ajufo, 2012).

Vocational Education

Vocational education is education aimed at equipping individuals with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on labour market. Vocational education training provides the needed employable skills and attitudes necessary for effective performance in the workplace. Vocational education is the acquisition of basic skills in various vocational areas such as, carpentry, shoemaking, electrical installation, woodworking, block laying, Radio and TV servicing, mechanized farming system, tailoring, agriculture, barbing, air conditioning and refrigeration, welding, metalwork, mat-making, dyeing, fashion and designing, pot making, weaving and so on. These skills when acquired by inmates after discharge has the potential of making them become self-employed; self-reliant and responsible citizens in communities. Observably, vocational education is one of most widely taught adult education programmes in Nigerian prisons, as most correctional centers in Nigeria teach inmates various vocational skills ranging from carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, welding, bricklaying just to mention but few.

Political Education

Osakwe and Itejere (1993) view political education as a means of conveying to the learners, the body of knowledge, set of values and behavioural orientation that are considered vital and necessary for the sustenance and wellbeing of the people. Political education is a process of liberating the psychological and mental attitudinal behaviour of the citizens of a nation by sensitizing and concretizing them in order to have increasing awareness that would enable them to fully, actively and productively participate in the

developmental process of their community (Aladebo & Oni, 2017). Omare (1999) in Aladebo and Oni (2017) state that the manifestation of political education can be seen in the behavioural traits such as critical thinking, activism, inquiry, goals and value of a good political system. Aladebo and Oni (2017) conclude that political education performs the function of engendering political awareness within a society through the preparation of the people for the socio-political world in which they live so that they will become useful to themselves and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of their society.

Community Sustainability

Community sustainability emphasizes on developing and maintaining prosperous environments in which inhabitants can work, live and flourish without compromising the ability of future generation to live, work and flourish. It integrates economic, social and environmental practice in ways that ensures balanced and healthy community, promotes social equity, economic vitality and renewable resources. In other words, sustainability seeks stability, balance, and preservation. Mackendrick and Parkins (2004) view community sustainability as the sum of community-focused attempt aimed at preserving a strong and successful economy, society and environment; to adjust and respond to external challenges and opportunities; and to ensure quality of life for its inhabitants in persistent manner.

Accordingly, Community sustainability consists of a set of tangible and intangible elements, representing different elements of sustainability (Can, 2020). The most important ones include sustainable production and consumption, job creation, transport and connectivity, infrastructure, health, aging and wellbeing, ecology, education, housing, energy use, cultural and social activities, and tourism (MacKendrick & Parkins, 2004; Winther, 2017). In communities, a number of subsystems are placed within larger systems and these subsystems are presented by different stakeholders such as governors, local businesses, healthcare service providers, and schools. Middlemiss (2011) opined that within this integrated system, sustainability of communities relies on fostering social equity, creating and maintaining economic and environmental health, and motivating community members' participation in planning and implementation of common issues. Ling *et al.*, (2009) in Can (2020) states that the success of community sustainability initiatives is largely determined by the involvement of members in sustainability principles and collective vision for future and the integration of economic, environmental, and social goals.

The Concept of Prison

Prison is seen as an institution for the confinement of people who have been reminded or held in custody by a judicial authority, or who have been

deprived of their liberty due to conviction for a crime. Also, it is a facility that holds those who are been accused of a crime, awaiting trial. Prison is seen as a regimented institution established to keep away people who committed crime thereby enhancing the security of the general society. The term prison is a generic word which applies to penal institution housing both prisoners awaiting trial and prisoners who have been sentenced by judicial authorities (Devi, 2023). Accordingly, prison system serves as a protection of society, retribution, deterrence, reformation and rehabilitation of the convicted prisoners (Adegoke, 2017). The concept "prison" denoting place of confinement, has often been synonymous with several other terminologies including penitentiary, house of corrections, asylum, jail, borstal, reformatory, detention centre and correctional institution. Dholakia (2023) view prison as long-term detention facilities, holding persons serving sentences to incarceration longer than a year. Those in the prison, convicted of crime or awaiting trial are often referred to as prison inmate. Convicted inmates, lifer, awaiting trial and condemned inmates are all various categories of persons serving as inmates held in prison custody.

Adult Education, Prison Inmates' Rehab and Community Sustainability

It is the collective responsibility of all members in the community to protect and enhance the environment, resources and assets within it, so as to preserve for future generation. While environmentally friendly and stable practices had long been the concern of international organizations as well as governments, its attainment becomes nearly difficult in communities characterize with high rate of crime and defiant behavior from members. Although, humans as complex beings are often difficult to control, however, the existence of law, makes it possible to control human conducts and behaviour to some extent, so as to conform with acceptable principles and values in communities. While laws are created to restore sanity and order in societies, violators, criminals, defiants and the accused, are confined or incarcerated in correctional facilities, so as to reform convicts and prepare them for successful reintegration into society. Convicts reformation implies rehabilitation and reintegration interventionist programme in the form of education and vocational training.

While various forms of reformation and rehabilitation programmes (vocational education and distance education) mainly exist in Nigeria for training and education of prison inmates, yet there are reports of high rate of recidivism in recent times. For instance, it was revealed that, of the inmates in Gombe Central Correctional Services, between 40 - 50% of the inmates were recidivists (Nigeria Prison Services, 2016 cited in Inusa, 2021), Nworu (2018) estimated a recidivism rate of 22.8% in Rivers state. These have becomes issues of concern to community sustainability, thus, requires extensive adult education programmes in the form of

literacy education, peace education, civic education, health education, environmental education, political education to prevent and minimizes incidence of armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, drug trafficking, fraud, traffic offences, murder, internet fraud just to mention but few, often perpetrated by ex-convicts after serving their prison term and released back to the society.

For instance, inclusion of peace education in the educational plan for inmates in Nigerian prison system can bring about peace orientation; it can nurture social skills and outlook required by inmate for living together in harmony with other members of the society when being released from the period of their jail term. Inclusion of peace education in prisons can promote national integration and international understanding; it will as well, serve as catalyst for activating a secular and democratic culture. Sheikh and Akhter (2023) opined that the aim of peace education is to create a society that is free from violence, discrimination, and oppression, where people can live in harmony and respect each other's differences. While being incarcerated in prison cell for a crime, may create feeling of bitterness and hatreds in minds of inmates, however, inclusion of peace education as part of the rehabilitation and reformation curriculum will contribute to the development of a culture of peace among inmates, which is characterized by the presence of values such as respect, tolerance, justice, and empathy. Accordingly, the scope of peace education is broad, encompassing both formal and informal learning environments, and can address a wide range of issues, including conflict resolution, human rights, environmental sustainability, and social justice (Sheikh & Akhter, 2023). Expectantly, the inclusion of peace education in the rehabilitation and reformation processes in Nigerian prisons, to some extent, will support the attainment of social, economic and environment sustainability desired by communities in Nigeria as well as other stakeholders around the world.

In addition, emphasis on civic education in the reformation and rehabilitation processes of inmates is highly essential in Nigerian prison services. This is because responsible citizenship is the hallmark of every promising society and is a vital requirement for sustainable community development and statehood. Civic education is required for inmates, serving jail terms in Nigerian correctional facilities, as it is capable of inculcating in them, sound moral values. Buttressing, Dynneson and Gross (1991) cited in Lukman and Audu (2014) argued that citizenship training had long been devoted to building a human environment where the new members value and believe in the democratic way of life, is based on specific and identifiable moral and ethical behaviours. Ethics and civics education lays down the fundamental rules of life in a rule of law. Like every other education and training being taught to inmates in prisons, the virtue civility which emphasizes equal treatment, equal opportunities for each individual can be taught in the prisons in order to change inmates'

orientation about life and create sense of responsibility to community's survival.

Also, habitat restoration and active introduction of declining species have been a major concern for environmental conservationists around the world. While environmental conservation benefits all (including humans, animals, plants and so on), as it sustains the environment for future generations, the need for the potential benefits and outcomes of inculcating in prison inmates, sound environmental values is yet to be explored. Kaye, Bush, Naugle and LeRoy (2015) note that engaging prison inmates in conservation practice and science education creates a win-win situation with high potential for positive impacts on the environment, inmates, and social communities. Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) opined that effective in-prison environmental education can have the potential to be transformative on both individual and organizational level, enabling individuals to exert control and engaging them in decision making for social change. Kaye *et al.*, (2015) revealed that inmate participation in habitat conservation can result in a substantial increase in the capacity of land managers and scientists to restore landscapes, conduct research, and work toward recovery of threatened and endangered species. Thigpen *et al.*, (2011) cited in Kaye *et al.*, (2015) further support the need to include natural resource conservation into correctional facilities as part of the "greening of corrections" movement, as it is capable of promoting sustainability in prisons which may have positive effect on the environment, inmates as well as communities.

More so, incorporating adult literacy education in correctional centres has significant benefits to prison inmates, as empowering prison's inmate with basic skill of reading, writing and numeracy has the potential for crime reduction after being released from jail. While literacy is more than just reading, writing and arithmetic operations, it is a human right, a tool to personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Inculcating in prison's inmate the ability to understand, interpret, identify, create, communicate, compute, and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts, as it has the potential for enhancing inmates' employability after the period of jail term, minimizes the potentials for high recidivism and improves inmates' personal development. In communities where literacy rate still remains low and is seen as one of the main challenge for the reintegration of offenders, learning how to read and write may provide offenders with what they need to function effectively. Thus, to attain World Bank's goal which states that 'Every person including child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1990), effort is required to deliberately include adult literacy in Nigerian prisons, for them not to feel excluded and fit into the society on after their prison term.

Accordingly, literacy helps in fostering inmates' abilities, increases their potentialities and enables them to participate in social and economic activities (Igoni & Deekor, 2022).

While not all who are incarcerated in correctional centres may have been guilty of crime, actually, some might not have been guilty of their jail sentencing, as some convicts were incarcerated based on political grounds. This necessitate the need for political education to enable some inmates realized their leadership ambition after their jail term. For instance, Nigeria's former president who was sentenced for 30-year term, but only served for 3 years and was released from jail, thereafter contested for the position of presidency and was declared winner with almost 63 percent vote (Humphrey, 2020). It is observed that most Nigerians (including inmates in prison, although, inmates in Nigerian prisons are not allowed to vote), stay completely away from electioneering process. However, inculcating the importance of political participation through political education in Nigerian correctional centres, have the potentials of inducing inmates' interest in actively participating in the electioneering processes thereafter the period of their prison sentencing. Aladeipo and Oni (2017) conclude that political education plays a very important and significant role in the development of any community.

CONCLUSION

All individuals in communities are responsible for the social, economic and environmental sustainability of their communities. While some members are confined in prisons as convicted inmates, awaiting trial, lifers and condemned inmates, for various degree of crimes, do not limit or prevent the possibility of being re-integrated back into the wider community. Adult education programmes become one of the most effective medium for inmates' re-integration into society, as it has the capability of ensuring pro-social attitudes and behaviours required of prisons' inmates thereafter the periods of jail term, as well, can prevent high incidences of recidivism. While various forms of adult education programme (vocational education and open distance education) are implemented in Nigerian correctional facilities for inmates' reformation and rehabilitation; however, ensuring the right to inclusive and equitable education for all enshrined in sustainable development goal 4, and preventing high incidence of recidivism requires the inclusion of other facets of adult education programme such as peace education, adult literacy, environmental adult education, civic and political education in Nigerian correctional institutions. These have the potentials for inmates' contributions in achieving the desired socio-economic and environmental sustainability of communities in Nigeria.

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Cite This Article: Ifeoma Felicia Uzoagu (2025). Adult Education Programmes for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates for Community Sustainability in Nigeria. *East African Scholars J Edu Humanit Lit*, 8(12), 645-651.
