

## Relevance of Education in Adolescent and Adult Development

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**Abstract:** Hindrances to fundamental human right, including the right to education, have been observed as the root causes of adolescents and adults problems. This could be attributed to the fact that deprivation of sound education would invariably result in deprivation of the weapon of development. Education is a measure, which can liberates adolescents and adults from the bondage of ignorance, mal-development and under development. To free adolescents and adults from the dilemma of un-informed plans, decisions, choices and adventures in life, which undermine their development and progress, the writers advocate and uphold effective education programmes as empowerment tools for sustainable adolescent and adult development.

**Key words:** Reevance, education, adolescent, adutt development, liberates, deprivation

### INTRODUCTION

The very existence of individuals depend on developmental changes in life and the achievement of developmental tasks are yardsticks in measuring progress in life. Human growth and development take place in the physical, physiological, intellectual, emotional, psychological and social aspects of a person's life as one advance in age. These changes occur in two folds. Some, which the individual tried deliberately to bring out, some, which occur as part of an unfolding natural plan.

Growth and development are related. Growth is the gradual increase in the size of body parts, in terms of cell growth and division observed quantitatively. Development is more than quantitative changes in the organism. It denotes increasingly, maturity of the structure and functions of body parts and changes in behaviour of individuals in various aspects that reflects maturity as one advance in age (Clifford, 1988). Development is the change that relate to distinctive traits or activities of a person such as growth in intelligence, creatively, sociability and morality.

According to maturation theory, The chief principle of development is maturation, which means physiological ripening, especially of the nervous system coordination. Development has its drive toward self actualization/self fulfillment. Leading humanistic theorists like Abraham Maslow believed that everybody has a drive toward self actualization, which is the ultimate motivating force for all ages. Maslow believed that the attainment of ultimate step in development is unlikely unless the basic needs are satisfied (Payne and Hahn, 1998; Anwana, 2001).

Education therefore creates awareness on how to meet the human needs on the ladder of the hierarchy, in order to achieve self actualization, self fulfillment and integrity. For the life of the adolescent and the adults, there are certain developmental tasks that should be accomplished related to their advancement in age, related to the physiological ripening. The developmental tasks suitable for age grade of adolescents and adults could be achieved through related learning experiences acquired from formal and informal educational programmes (FRN, 1998; FRN, 1999; Anowor, 2003).

**Theoretical concepts:** Different philosophers viewed development from different perspectives. The mechanistic theorists see changes as quantitative and development as continuous. B. F. Skinner, a leading supporter of this theory believed that human behaviour, though innate, is shaped by outside influences, which one encounters in the course of his life. These behaviour's are learned and acquired through reinforcement (using reward and punishment) experiences in environmental conditions where one is conceived, reared, educated and the group he belongs to, the family lifestyle, the air he breathe, etceteras.

Organistic theorists see people as active organism who by their own action sets in motion their own development. Life experiences from environmental factors are viewed not as basic cost of development but as factors that provide educational experiences that make development to proceed more quickly or slowly, as the case may be. According to Piaget in 1954 as reported by Scar (1986) the ability to think, reason logically and

understand concepts progresses through 4 stages. From the inherited cognitive blueprint, sensory motor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage, to formal operational stage (Scar, 1986). These are achieved through appropriate exposure to learning experiences.

The psychoanalytic theorists, Freud in 1923 and Erikson in 1952 claimed that people are neither active nor passive, but always have conflict with two elements of life, the natural instinct and the constraints imposed upon them by the society. To Freud, the individual reacts to environment in the sexual realm, from the pleasures of sucking the mothers breast in the oral stage, to anal, phallic, latency and genital stages. To Erikson, the individual reacts to environment in the social realm and he looked at the socio-cultural and biological influences of development in eight stages which stresses an individuals' triumph over psychological hazards of each stage (Kosslyn, 2001).

#### **DETERMINANTS OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Heredity:** Heredity refers to the intrinsic force of development. Every individual begins life with a genetically determined unique physical, biochemical and mental potentials received from the parents at conception (Clifford, 1988). It is the genetic blueprint that establishes one's ultimate development capacity.

**Environment:** Environment is the aggregate of all external conditions and circumstances that affects development and the life of the individual. This composes of two closely allied parts: The physical and the social environment that exert either benefiting or adverse forces on development. The physical environment involve climate, seasons, weather, geography, water, air, oil, buildings and machinery, which exert direct or indirect influence on personal development. It also include the biological component consisting of all living things, plants and animals that surrounds man; both macro and micro-organisms.

The social environment is made up of people, their attitude and behaviour which could deter or facilitate the building up of a person's development. Traditional prejudices, religions and cultural practices, the family especially their emotional interactions, the school and other avenues of education, associated including groups and intimate friends, clubs and other recreational groups, do influence a person's pattern of development. Other social environment determining development include mass media, newspaper, books magazine, radio, television and other media organization and instruments. The feeling of the individual in response to social situations and the

socio-economic avenues which facilitates the individual to earn a living also exert influence on a person's development. Education is a universal measure that is used to equip the individual and the society with the necessary knowledge to tame, organize and relate with environment in order to achieve adequate development and fulfillment in life.

**Facets of development:** Development as a whole is a complex structure consisting of so many facets, which are also interrelated. It involves dynamic interaction and interdependence among a person's physiological, physical, moral, emotional, social, psychological and intellectual aspects of life emerging as a dynamic interplay between a person's genotype and environmental factors (Anwana, 2001; Clifford, 1988; Payne and Hahn, 1998).

Physical development refers to increase in weight, height, size, shape, structure and strength of parts of a person's body, which makes individuals vary a great deal in their rates of growth and development. Physiological development involved the functioning of body systems and organs, reaction to stress, the ability to build up immunity, strength and endurance. Emotional development refers to the ability to cope with stress, remain flexible and compromise to resolve conflicts. The social facet involve the acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with the accepted social expectations in the home, family, with relations, in school, in employment, parenting and in community involvement. The moral aspect of development refers to the acquisition of knowledge of upright or wrong, the establishment of appropriate behaviour patterns based on such knowledge. The psychological development refers to the functioning of the mind related to the age of maturity. It encompasses the ability to make necessary adjustment to adult life. Intellectual development involved, perceptual ability, abstract and logical reasoning and understanding especially in an advanced level.

**The adolescent:** Adolescent is derived from a Greek word 'addescere', which means 'to grow into maturity'. Thus 'Adolescent' refers to a person experiencing the period of transitional development between childhood and adulthood (Okafor and Ugwuegbulam, 2000; Okon, Egari, Ethiopi and Ekpikem-Ekanem, 2003). Adolescents span the ages of 10-24 years. They are grouped into three distinctive sets. The early adolescents aged (10-14 years); the middle adolescents aged (15-19 years) and the late adolescents aged (20-24 years).

Adolescents' spurt growth in size has influence on their self concepts. As boys and girls are progressively large due to the marked growth spurt, they think of themselves as older and more important, more and more as self-reliant, independent human beings and are less and

less submissive. Their attributes towards adult and other children change accordingly. The same must be said of their feelings and emotions. The early spurt development brings disproportion and awkwardness with stereotyped ideal body size. Some are not entirely satisfied with this result and hence develop a feeling of inferiority. The associated desire to be accepted as adult or nearly so bring fears and notions of insecurity, these fears often provoke defence mechanism behaviours.

Early maturers are more interested in social activities, while later maturers tends to be anxious about their deviant status. This leads to several maladaptive behaviours calculated to gain attention and recognition from others. Psychologically, the adolescent is attracted by pleasures of adulthood, but usually unwilling to accept the responsibilities that goes with such adult privileges. Their not being treated as adults brings confusion and insecurity, hence they revolt against rules set up by the parents and by adult society in general. Their expression of rebellion may lead them to turn to drugs, usually on experimental phase, which however, may become addicted or intoxicated.

Intellectually, girls show slight superior in intelligent over the boys of the same age in terms of intelligent scores (Engle, 2001). This could be attributed to their early maturity and partly due to the fact that most test are verbal in content such as vocabulary, language usage and analogies. Boys are superior in terms involving spatial relations and mechanical abilities (Engle, 2003).

The desire to love and be loved become extremely high in adolescents due to hormonal changes. With this affection, adolescents desire more time with peers than families. Initially, they are interested in close friendship with members of the same sex. This precedes and prepares them for sound heterosexual relationship (Steinberg, 2001). Dating starts by this period.

Adolescent also faces the challenges of adjustment to school life. The guidance and supervision of a single homeroom teacher in elementary school gives way to high school life with different teachers on different subjects. They now have to learn to carry out school work independently. Delinquency are common in adolescents. They are more likely to commit such crimes as theft, robbery, rape, assault. Delinquency abates in late adolescence (Anwana, 2001).

Adolescent career usually centre around school life and part-time help in the home, shops, farm or offices. As the stage advances, adolescents tend to make transition from school and domestic help to another career. Selecting a field of work is another challenge faced by adolescents.

**Adults:** The term adult implies a fully grown person who is legally responsible for his/her action. Legally,

adulthood starts from the age of 22 years when a person is no longer a minor. Adults are believed to be fully mature and developed with basic sense of creativity, self actualization, fulfillment and integrity. Adult development involve finding an occupation, selecting a mate, coping with family life, parenting, taking civil responsibility and finding congenial social relationship. These are achieved at about 18-30 years. The next stage 31-65 years bring such tasks as attaining and maintaining an economic standard of living, developing leisure time activities and looking after aging parents. The last stage 66 and above years involve such tasks as adjusting to retirement and reduced social interaction, adjusting to death of spouse, meeting larger social and civil obligations and maintaining a satisfactory standard of living (Engle, 2001; Payne and Hahn, 1998).

### **THE RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION IN ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

Developmental tasks are tasks that arises from infancy and spans through life. Successful achievement of tasks at each stage of development leads to mastery, happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to confusion unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks. Intensive education is needed to provide adequate knowledge and skills on these developmental tasks that are necessary at each stage and skills to make informed decisions, choices and adventures in life. Education is relevance in adolescents' development in the following ways.

**Forming an initial adult identity:** Forming an initial adult identity is the first task of development by adolescents. Psychologically, as emerging adults, most young people want to present a unique identity to the society. Educational experiences must be such that provide adolescents with the ability to appreciate themselves of the developmental changes that takes place as they advance in education and in age and the expectations required of them. This makes them to work hard in the achievement of the task to identify themselves with the adults.

**Proper adjustment to secondary sex characteristics:** Sex education should pre-informed them and acquaint them with changes that must take place and with knowledge on proper adjustments. Before puberty, children should be informed about the various types of psychosexual developments, individual differences in terms of sexual maturation, the fact that girls mature earlier than boys, the likely physical changes that occur during onset of puberty, interpersonal relationships, dating and courtship.

Girls should be educated on skills of seeking and receiving adequate medical care in case of menstrual difficulties. The naturalness of menstruation should be explained to adolescent of both sexes. Adults too, should demonstrate pleasure in their greater maturity. This gives adolescents a sense of acceptance.

**Establishing emotional independence of parents and the adults:** Adolescents should be educated to appreciate the fact that they have to establish emotional independence of parents and adults. For nearly twenty years, the family is the primary contributor to adolescents knowledge, values and behaviours. By late adolescence they should be equipped with the necessary knowledge that should make them capable of moving away from dependable relationship that exist between themselves and the family to an independent life of adulthood.

**Developing intimacy:** Adolescents must be educated on the need of developing intimate relationship with some people. They must be aware of the fact that we need to have others with whom to share our most deeply held thoughts and feelings as we attempt to validate our own unique approach to living. Intimacy may unfold in the context of dating relationship, close friendship and mentoring relationship.

**Assuming responsibilities:** Assuming responsibilities is developmental challenge of adolescence. Adolescents should be exposed to varieties of educational experiences that gives them opportunity to assume responsibilities, to the community and the society, which gives them a sense of maturity. For example, joining campus organizations, establishing friendly clubs, assignment on projects in school or community, meeting the demand of new employment, meeting the demand of dating partners.

**Development of parental skill:** Details of education on parenting should be given and should include: whether to parent or not, if so when to begin, number of children to have, what interval between each child and the role that parenting will play in their overall adult life.

**Development of social skills:** Educational experiences has to prepare adolescents very effectively in this regard. Adolescents must be endowed with the knowledge of developing an expanded range of appropriate and dependable social skills. They must be oriented in such areas as general education, sex and family life education, social education, continuing education and gerontology. This will equip them with skills such as being involved in membership in a variety of groups that range in size and

class, from interaction in friendship, peer groups, dating partners, marital pair, political party, work relationships, community organizations, to a national or international organizations. Education should also endow the adolescents with ability to adjust effectively and cope with stress, which could be encountered in the social life.

**Career preparation:** Appropriate career planning is another challenge faced by adolescents. Adolescents must be educated to select and prepare for an occupation appropriately as this provides adolescent with opportunity to assume new responsibilities, avenues to practice skills learned in schools, establishment of friendship and financial foundation for establishment of independence. Traditionally, girls become home makers, but modern advancements makes it become common for married women to work, therefore vocational planning is important for both boys and girls. Career planning and vocational education should enlighten adolescents to know that they have to make their choice of career using all the available evidence about themselves such as the general pattern of interest, fitness in terms of health and fitness in terms of qualifications (Steinberg, 2001). Adolescents must be educated on where and how to get clues of labour market: from school records, from parents, other adults, from experience in part-time work, from checks on posters, internets, advertisements in electronic or media print. Insisting on professional career, because of prestige without considering qualification, should be abolish as it usually lead to failure in implementation and personal fulfillments. All career planning for men has to be alert to the likelihood of military service (Engle, 2001; Steinberg, 2001).

#### **THE RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT**

**Creativity and generativity:** Generativity reflects the process of contributing to the collective good of the society. Adolescents, young adults and adults must be educated that naturally they have to pay back to the society to replenish the resources for the support they received from the society for their own growth and developments. Generativity include: effective parenting directly or through institutions that function for the good of and development of children, support for aging parents, or institutions that serve the elderly; engagement in labour, innovations and development of new technologies.

**Reassessing the plans of young adulthood:** Adults must be educated on the need to periodically review their

aspirations they had, to more clearly study their short and long-term goals, to see their strength and limitations. With this assessment, the inexperience of youthful days are replaced by insights and experience, commitment to quality rather than quantity.

**Accepting the decline of aging:** Adult must be educated on changes that they should expect as they advance in age so as to make them duly prepared to understand the naturalness of the changes as they take place. These changes involve decline in functions physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and occupationally.

**Maintaining a high level of physical function:** Adults must be educated on the fact that some areas of ageing associated with decline can possibly be reversed. They should be enlightened on the availability of rehabilitation programmes to bring back or maintain some functions to the highest possible level. The use of remediation as an alternative to loss of function should also be taught. Examples are; the use of hearing aid, audio-cassettes, prescription shoes. Most importantly adults must be educated on the need and benefit of regular physical activities.

**Establishing a sense of integrity:** In adulthood one must assess his/her life as to whether it has had meaning to oneself and to others in the smaller and larger society. To achieve integrity proper education is required to provide suitable learning experiences in infancy, early childhood, childhood, adolescence and adulthood, from the home, school and other environmental exposures. Basic experiences should be such that lead to the development of basic trust for others, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, creativity and integrity. When integrity is achieved, it endows the adult with the sense of having lived a fulfilled life and this, is the hallmark of development.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescents and adults life require a balanced involvement of the physiological, physical, emotional, moral, social, psychological and intellectual developments such that can lead them to enjoy a more productive and satisfying life. Education is obviously needed for these developments. As such, it is recommended that:

- All, in all walks of life should join hands in fostering education.

- Education should be treated as priority among the tools of self, national and global developments. As such there should be faithful implementation of the National Policy on Education by education administrators at all levels, in every nation.
- Parents, guardians, teachers and administrators should be familiar with adequate knowledge of growth and development from infancy to adulthood by making good use of educational programmes.
- Adolescents and adults should be educated on the expected development required of them by the society. They should be properly equipped with knowledge and skills of achieving their developmental tasks.

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