

Inclusive and Equitable Quality Adult Literacy Education: A Panacea for Economic Recession in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

As typical in a recession, Nigeria's declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been accompanied by other debilitating factors as high inflation and unemployment. There is no doubting the fact that recession still persist in Nigeria. Adult literacy education which ensures inclusive and equitable quality education has a potential to end economic recession in the country. This type of education is therefore crucial to development of the future workforce, foster innovation, and generate stable and more prosperous society. It is also, not only to equip future workforce, but also to equip society with the means to economically progress. This paper x-rayed major concepts used in the discourse such as economic recession. Causes of economic recession in Nigeria, inclusive adult literacy education, equitable adult literacy education and inclusive and equitable quality adult literacy education as a measure to end economic recession in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, among many others recommend that improving access to adult literacy education provision will go a long way to overcoming the economic recession in the country.

KEYWORDS

Economic Recession, Adult Literacy Education, Inclusive Adult Literacy Education, and Equitable Quality Adult Literacy Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic recession is a period of economic slowdown featuring low output, liquidity and unemployment. It is characterized by its length, abnormal increase in unemployment, falls in the availability of credit, shrinking output and investment, numerous bankruptcies, reduced amounts of trade and commerce, as well as highly volatile relative currency value fluctuations, mostly devaluations, financial crises and bank failure (Odey; Sunday and Ali, 2025). The effects of economic recession find expression in downsizing, mass unemployment, and crashes in the money market. More specifically the economic recession has brought in its wake enormous increase in the level of unemployment in the country. It is no longer news that the nation unemployment rate has been shooting up the sky thereby increasing poverty in the society. It has vastly been documented that more than 80% of Nigerians lives on less than one dollar per day (UNESCO, 2022).

International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020), reported that all the G7 nations had already entered or were entering into what was called deep recession alongside most of the Western World with significant slowdown of growth across developing countries (Nigeria inclusive).

It also confirmed that the world is facing economic recession and projects a global contraction of 3 percent in 2020.

There is no doubt the fact that there is a great degree of economic uncertainty and will remain so for some time due to ongoing unchecked inflation. Elliot (2020) and Okunade (2023), also state that, the oil price war between Iran, United State and Israel are hitting the country hard. Unfortunately for us, Nigeria do not have the resources or policy flexibility to respond to the challenge. To buttress this assertion, The National Bureau of Statistics stated that more than four million people lost their jobs and this number continued to increase in 2026. More than half of population in Nigeria live in poverty and hardship (Okemakinde, 2025). It also acknowledges the fact that Nigeria is experiencing economic recession and means different things to different categories of people in the country. The recession to many individuals and families is real. For some it means not being able to pay school fees for others it is not being able to afford the high cost of food (rice and millet) or the high cost of local or international travel, and for many of our young people the recession means joblessness, sometimes after graduating from higher institution.

No doubt, Nigerian government has taken some steps like the elimination of dollar purchase privileges for importers of 40 items such as toothpicks, rice, textiles, cements, soaps and so on. It appears to have a four-pronged tactical plan for Nigerian economy: 1). Protect the naira and strive to maintain a dollar naira exchange rate of less than #1,500 to the dollar as a means of controlling inflation. 2). Promote import substitution to reduce inflationary and devaluation pressure on the naira. 3). Diversify the economy to promote exports and grow jobs and 4). Increase capital investment in the economy through the fiscal budgetary process to drive growth (Akinyemi & Omotunde, 2021). In addition, the step taken by government in recovering looted treasury and blocking wastages are highly commendable. However, they are not sufficient measures to advance the nation's economy. The government has, on the other hand, create more economic hardship for Nigerians through the usual generalities that every government indulges itself in diversifying the economy; improving manufacturing/mining sector; raising agricultural output and encouraging foreign investment, among others, yet one cannot point to a concrete evidenced strategic plan out of economic recession in the country.

It should be noted however that, there is no solution to economic recession without a strategic plan. A strategic plan sets targets, identifies milestones by which progress will be measured and identified policy areas that need to be addressed to achieve the growth objectives. The solution to economic recession, if it can be solved are not private or secrets of any kind. This is why anyone who keeps it a mystery does not have anything good to offer. What is therefore needed more in Nigeria today is a development-oriented adult literacy education to ensure the principle of self-reliance both in individual and national terms (UNESCO, 2020; Siregar, 2025). In essence, the solution to Nigeria economic recession is inclusive and equitable quality Adult and non-formal education programmes. Unfortunately, the policy makers had not discovered the secret in adult literacy education programmes and how it could help to restore the economy.

Nigeria like most other developing countries have placed undue emphasis on formal education while apparently neglecting adult literacy education. Inclusive and equality adult literacy education ensure that all citizen have access to quality education: It eliminate

gender disparities in education, no age barrier and ensure equal access to all levels of education and training for all citizen, the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, youths in vulnerable situations. It also promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2024).

Adult literacy education though taken by the Nigerian society to be a low-cost area of educational system, but from the point of view of return of investment, it is the most immediate productive and profitable for the nation's economy. It is the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude, and value needed for life and a place of work. In contrast to general education, learning in adult literacy education is centred on applied as opposed to academic, practical, as opposed to theory, and skills as opposed to knowledge. Ekpo and Onweh (2012), stated that despite the features of adult literacy education stated above, during the learning process in adult literacy education, the underpinning knowledge, attitude and values are imparted to the learners. In essence, adult literacy education prepares people for the world of work and that through programmes people acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and values to help people participate in production of goods and services.

It also has potentials in contributing to the economic growth in Nigeria. The growing problem of unemployment has contributed largely to worsening problem of poverty among the populace. Unemployment has posed a serious problem not only to the welfare of individuals but also to that of their families (Adeoye & Ogundoyin, 2024). Many able-bodied and highly qualified persons who could not secure gainful employment have remained economically dependent on few employed ones. This is because they lack the necessary occupational skills to be self-employed and to effectively function in today's world of work. This occupational skill can be provided through adult literacy education programmes on the ground that it prepares one for the world of work with which the individuals become self-reliant and can make contributions to the society (Berger & Fisher, 2013). It will therefore be difficult and impossible for them to participate in economic recovery efforts, if they are not conscious of the significance of economic development through adult literacy education. The philosophy behind this strategy is to bring about diversification of educational system, primarily with the view to meeting the growing demand for skill acquisition programmes. In other words, the system needs to be made more responsive to the changing labour market needs to enable the country come out of economic recession.

II. ECONOMIC RECESSION

Economic recession can be defined as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in a real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale retail sales. It is a general downturn in any economy. A recession is associated with high unemployment, slow Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and high inflation. It is a general slowdown in economic activity over a period of time, or a business cycle contraction. Nigerian economy is really in crisis. To Ode, Sunday & Ali (2025), stated that there is a unidirectional causality was found running from unemployment to output levels in Nigeria. According to them, the Nigerian economy has been hit hard by a recession, driven by excessive imports, declining oil revenues, and reduced investment inflows, all of which have significantly impacted the country's economic performance.

III. CAUSES OF ECONOMIC RECESSION IN NIGERIA

One of the major causes of economic recession in Nigeria is that, Nigeria's oil wealth has been mismanaged over the years by successive governments, resulting in serious structural problems in the economy. Oil revenues have typically degenerated more than two-third of government income, while the share of other sectors has steadily declined (Njoku, 2016). Coupled with the current weak global oil prices, our revenue has experienced a significant decline from the projected

According to World Bank (2020) and Ode, Sunday & Ali (2025), some of the causes of economic recession in Nigeria include but not limited to the following:

Poor Economic Planning: Poor economic planning and failure on the part of government in the implementation of her economic planning is one of the major causes of Nigeria economic recession budget delay, exchange rate policy, and so on.

High Interest Rate: The interest rate in the country is between 26.8 □ 27%. High interest rate is discouraging the investors and invariably leads to high rate of unemployment in the country.

High Taxation: Despite government efforts to end economic recession, yet, she is still charging high tax during economic recession. High tax rate has therefore lowered Nigeria aggregate demand.

High Inflation Rate: Banning the importation of certain essential agricultural products like rice by Nigerian government without considering the gestation period is not good enough for the economic growth. Major causes of inflation are: Speculation in stock market due to budget delay; rise in domestic oil price due to subsidy removal; fall in the global crude oil price deteriorating Nigeria exchange rate and so on.

Policy Conflict: Implementation of high interest rate, high tax rate are tight monetary policy measures that appears conflicting as economic measures to end economic recession in Nigeria.

IV. INCLUSIVE ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

Inclusive is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all citizen through increasing participation in learning, culture and communities and reducing eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structure and strategies with a common vision that covers all citizens and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all citizens (UNESCO, 2020). An inclusive education system can only be created if ordinary school become more inclusive in other words, if they become better at educating all citizen in their communities.

Poverty and marginalization are the major causes of exclusion in most part of the country. Majority of households in rural communities and children in urban slums do not have access to education. It is of crucial importance that all children and young people have access to

education. However, it is equally important that they are able to take full part in school life and achieve desired outcome from their education experiences (Vindigni, 2024).

Promoting inclusion means stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitudes and improving educational and social frameworks to cope with new demands in education structures and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner, his or her learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience (Puppo, 2016). The success of creating inclusive education as a key to establishing inclusive societies depends on agreement among all relevant partners on a common vision supported by a number of specific steps to be taken to put this vision into practice. The barrier to inclusion can be reduced through active collaboration between policy makers, education personnel and other stakeholders, including the active involvement of members of the local community, such as political and religious leaders, local education officials and the media.

Some important steps according to UNESCO (2020), include:

1. Carrying out local situation analyses on the scope of the issue, available resources and their utilization in support of inclusion and inclusive education.
2. Mobilizing opinion on the right to education for everyone.
3. Building consensus around the concepts of inclusive and quality education.
4. Reforming legislation to support inclusive education in line with international conventions, declarations and recommendations.
5. Supporting local capacity-building to promote development towards inclusive education.
6. Developing ways to measure the impact of inclusive and quality education.
7. Developing school and community-based mechanism to identify children not in school and find ways to help them enter school and remain there.
8. Helping teachers to understand their role in education and that inclusive of diversity in the classroom is an opportunity, not a problem.

Inclusive education system has the full responsibility to ensure the right to education; it is equipped and ready to handle diversity through: flexible teaching and learning methods (adapted to different needs and learning styles); reorienting teacher education; flexible curriculum (responsive to diverse needs and not overloaded with academic content); welcoming of diversity; involvement of learners and the community; early identification and remediation of learners at risk of failure. Flexible teaching methods with innovative approaches to teaching aids and equipment as well as the use of ICTs; responsive, learner-friendly environments; and professional environment working deliberately and actively promote inclusion for all.

Adult literacy education is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and so on, which involves problem-solving and team work as well as personal skills such as responsibility and honesty which can make individuals more efficient and more competitive in global economy. It needs to be conceived more broadly as acquisition of the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills required to meet the challenges of contemporary societies (Eze, 2020). Adult needs to be provided with learning opportunities as well since the ultimate goal of inclusion

in education is concerned with an individual's effective participation in society of reaching his or her full potential. Looking at adult literacy education through inclusive lens implies a shift from seeing the adult as the problem. Initial views emphasized that the source of difficulties in learning comes from within the learner and ignore the environmental influences on learning. Adults have experiences through interaction with their environment and their day-to-day activities. Inclusive adult literacy education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out all learners and can thus be understood as a strategy to achieve education for all and economic growth. As an overall principle it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just equal society.

A. *Equitable Adult Literacy Education*

In education, the term equity refers to the principle of fairness. Which is often used interchangeably with the related principle of equality. Equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models programmes and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. It has been said that equity is the process; equality is the outcome, given that equity what is fair and just may not, in the process of educating learners, reflect strict equality what is applied, allocated or distributed equally. Inequalities occur when biased or unfair policies programmes, practices, or results and outcomes exists in a programme.

Equitable education is dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking educational consultancy with a successful track record of working in partnership with schools and other educational organisations to close the gaps in both educational achievement and attainment for children and young people (UNESCO, 2024). Educational equity is dependent on two main factors. The first is fairness, which implies that factors specific to one's personal conditions should not interfere with the potential of academic success. The second important factor is inclusion, which refers to a comprehensive standard that applies to everyone in a certain education system. These two factors are closely related and are dependent on each other for true academic success of an educational system (Adesulu, 2015).

Inequality in educational system in Nigeria may be due to societal inequality; socio-economic inequality; cultural inequality; familial inequality; staffing inequality; instructional inequality; assessment inequality and so on. There is therefore the need to introduce modification(s) intended to address or compensate for that inequality through adult literacy education programmes.

V. INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC RECESSION IN NIGERIA

Education according to the National Policy on Education (2004) is an instrument per excellence for affecting national development. According to Ekpo & Onweh (2012) and Conti, Cafieroad and Scanchef (2020), modern economics should be built on knowledge, skills, and expertise. There is no gain saying the fact that the formal educational system in the country is not suited to meet the multiple demands of economic development. Therefore, creating a challenge to attain high-quality equitable education for all.

Despite the fact that some measures were put in place by government to end economic recession in the country, yet, people are excluded from employment due to insufficient opportunities to access appropriate learning, lack of skills and training facilities resulting in major economic and employment consequences that Nigeria is experiencing. To solve or mitigate these problems, a holistic lifelong vision of education is therefore imperative, including acknowledging the importance of adult literacy education programmes to improve Nigerian's well-being. Education that can define the values and principles on which our society can flourish and our economy can be reborn and permit people to acquire skills with no barrier in respect of time, space, age and previous educational qualifications (Alam and Mohanty, 2023). Through it, people acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and values, and help people participate in production of goods and services that will attract income. It gives hope to those that wish to redefine their lives acquiring skills that will empower them and enhance their productivity and bring about economic development; it prepares one for the world of work with which the individuals become reliant and can make contributions to the society.

Adult literacy education programmes are designed to provide people with knowledge and skills to perform effectively in their developmental efforts in their communities (Badu-Nyarko & Zumapkeh, 2014). Most of its programmes is voluntary therefore, the participants are generally motivated to acquire the skills on the ground that the adults frequently apply their knowledge and experiences in a practical fashion to learn effectively and have a reasonable expectation that the knowledge and skills gained will help them further their goals. It creates the backbone of a strong economy that productive, educated citizens create the foundation for an economy to thrive. The economy of adult literacy education programmes does not exist in parallel worlds, they are intricately linked (Lopez, 2013). No wonder it has been gaining the role of economic development in developed countries of the world in 21st century. For instance, special institutions on the national and European level are being established as well as professional and advisory bodies engaged in adult and non-formal education. It has also been an integral part of national development strategies in United States because of its impact on productivity and economic development (Gordana, 2016 and Okunade, 2023).

It is therefore, important for the youths and adults to have skills in adult literacy education which focus around several careers which include auto-repair, woodworking, carpentry, cosmetology, sewing, and so on. It serves to prepare learners with the skills they need to succeed in life. It focusses on practical skills that adult learners can put to use immediately. Because the training is specifically related to youths and adults' field of interest and often, they find job easier and interesting than people with general academic background. It tends to be less expensive than longer academic educational programmes. Therefore, it results in considerably less debt and greater freedom with income.

To individuals, skills acquired through adult literacy education enhances their future earning potential, career, progression and employability. To the unemployed, skill through this type of education offer them capacities to find ways of earning a livelihood (Okoliko and Adebayo, 2025). This may be achieved through self-employment or setting up business. It develops the economy by bridging the demand and supply gap with skilled workers. Adult literacy education recruits, retains, and assist more people from its target population at a lower cost than other job training programmes. It enables individuals to learn what suits them and what they need in order to improve their knowledge, techniques and skills. It is a powerful factor of economic development; increase of productivity and competitiveness of economy and improvement of employment.

Given the high level of economic pain experienced by Nigerian, government need to pursue measure of ending economic recession in the country through adult literacy education that ensure equal access to all levels of education and training for all citizen.

VI. CONCLUSION

Adult literacy education needs to be reassessed as a productive investment. The benefits to individual, the community and society as a whole- can be far reaching, it can pay dividends in terms of economic growth, earning and employment. Thus, without fundamental shift in values, beliefs and thinking, and without acquisition of necessary skills through adult literacy education, Nigeria will continue to dream of coming out of recession. In essence, the way out of economic recession is for government to pay proper attention to this type of education as the catalyst of the job creation category of the Nigerian development effort. Government must support this effort by improving access to adult literacy education programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to cope with the economic recession through adult literacy education in Nigeria. It is imperative to recommend among others that:

- Nigerian government should give adult literacy education the attention it deserves. This could be done by floating programmes which ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote equal access to all levels of education and training for all citizens no entry qualification, no age limit, no regard to gender, race, tribe and state of origin the attention it deserves.
- There is the need for a successful policy in adult literacy education which must provide a vision strategic framework for the expected use in adult literacy education programmes. While the implementation of the policy will definitely enhance the development of acquisition of specific skills which are essential for both future employment and lifelong learning.
- Nigerian government should invest more on rehabilitation and expansion of adult literacy education infrastructure and equipment or makes provisions for them where none exists.
- Government should ensure that the real targets of restoring the economy are the human beings who will remain the central to all re-definitions and to all revised strategies through adult literacy education.
- Products of adult literacy education should be certificated by the Ministry of Industry. This is necessary to enable customers be 100% secured by the government. Because, one of the main reasons why Nigerians do not patronize Nigerian products is the reliability.

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