

## Learning in Later Years: Perspectives from Nigeria

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### **Abstract:**

This chapter explores learning in later life in the Nigerian context, highlighting research findings on the focus of learning among older persons, with special emphasis placed on adult and non-formal education programmes. Discussion includes allied concepts of ageing and learning, lifelong learning/education, policy developments in (older) adult education, patterns of Nigerian seniors' participation and intergenerational learning in this West African nation.

**Keywords:** Adult Education; Later Life Learning; Lifelong Learning; Nigeria; Non-Formal Education

### Introduction

People all over the world are living longer with the resultant requirements for engagement, healthy living and long-term independence. The need for older persons to continue to learn and improve personal as well as professional competencies, knowledge and skills is gaining prominence, and becoming the focus of sustainable human development discussions globally. In the Nigerian adult education space, where Professor Lalage Bown worked for many years, emphasis on later years learning and education has been minimal, most probably as a result of age biases against older persons and the government's concentration on children's and youth education rather than adult education. Indeed, Nigeria's age structure is youthful in comparison with most nations – population aged 0-14 years: 43%; population aged 15-64 years: 54%; population aged 65+: 03% (UNPF 2023). Yet, this observation should not obscure the need to analyse the contribution of learning in later life to the overall phenomenon of lifelong learning.

This chapter will explore the essence and nuances of learning in later life highlighting research findings on the focus of learning among older persons with special emphasis placed on adult and non-formal education programmes in centres in Nigeria. The discourse will also consider the dimensions of allied concepts of ageing and learning, lifelong learning, policy developments in (older)

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adult education, patterns of seniors' participation and intergenerational learning in this West African context. The inclusion of intergenerational learning in this discussion is because it offers considerable potential to maximise benefits for all Nigerians.

### 1. Ageing and Learning in a Broad Context

Population ageing is named as one of the four global demographics 'meg-trends' alongside population growth, international migration and urbanisation. Older people account for more than one fifth of the world's population, according to the United Nations (2019). This report states that in 2019, there were 703 million persons aged 65 years and over in the world. In their 2020 report, figures rose to 727 million (UN DESA, Population Division 2020). There are projections that the number will double to 1.5 billion in 2050 as life expectancy at age 65 will increase and the number of older persons will total more in number than youth.

Modern societies are heterogeneous across a range of dimensions including age, and there is great complexity in meeting the needs and demands of individuals, groups, communities and populations. There is the demand to continue to engage in learning as a life-wide activity especially as people are living longer. There is the urgency to ensure and encourage learning; knowledge and skill acquisition is vital to meet challenges and address disruptions from current and emerging trends. Demographic changes, increasing longevity, mobility among older persons, more diverse living arrangements, new modes of production, active consumption and increased earnings, sustaining of democratic values, technology improvements and challenges make adult learning imperative to address the threats posed (Slowey et al. 2020). Lifelong learning also potentially mitigates attendant negative effects on health, helps to promote well-being, citizenship, governance, employability, new work skills and sustainable living in communities throughout the world. These changes have implications for adult and lifelong education as they pertain to the dynamics of ageing, financing, consumption patterns, assets, work and functionality, and short and long-term care needs with associated dependency fears. These emerging trends in the economic, social, environmental and technological milieux suggest that skills and competencies acquired formally in school are no longer sufficient to navigate work and the lifecourse in general. There is on-going need for creativity, intergenerational adaptability, critical thinking, and life-wide learning.

Who is an older adult (senior) in Nigerian society? The commencement age for later life learning cannot readily be stated in terms of precise years or chronological definitions. However, Government proclamations provide some guide to who qualifies as an elder. The *National Policy on Ageing* (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2020) describes an elder, in terms of age, to be an individual who is 60 years and above. The document makes clear distinctions as 60-74 years, the young old; 75-79, the aged; 80 years and above, the oldest old (6, 9). Retirement age usually provides some benchmark too. Prior to 2012, mandatory retirement

age in Nigeria stood at 60 years for civil servants and non-academic staff in universities; 65 years for academic staff in universities and 70 years for judges, or calculated along the lines of 35 years in service (Obashoro 2016). Some of these have been reviewed upward – 65 years for non-academic staff and 70 years for academic staff in universities. Policy definition aside, the issue of individual differences in life circumstances, cognitive functions or decline and personal goals should be recognized in understanding who might be considered a senior and when later life learning may begin. Beyond 60 years, individuals may have more time to devote to learning new skills, gaining knowledge, engaging in new activities and exploring new interests to meet their personal, professional or community needs (Laslett 1989).

## 2. Learning: Its Varied Forms and Contexts

Learning is a multi-faceted concept occurring throughout individuals' lives and in many locations. Usually, at an individual level, learning may involve understanding ideas, making connections between old and new knowledge and transferring knowledge across contexts (Withnall 2010). There are diverse philosophical orientations that are used to seek a greater understanding of its character. According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), varied orientations include behaviourism, humanism, cognitivism, and constructivism. The relative emphasis tends to focus on the *location* of learning: external to the individual; internal; or a combination of both (changes in individual behaviour as a result of interaction with an environment). In adult learning contexts, the humanistic strand has tended to receive a more popular response from educators as it accentuates the locus of control within an individual and gives greater credence to how people change across different environments through social interaction. For instance, Jarvis (2001) posits that learning is about becoming a person in society; about transforming the experience of living into knowledge, skills and attitudes so that individuality might develop.

## 3. Learning and Its Alignment to Education

Learning needs to be differentiated from education. Learning is not the same as education. Lifelong learning (LLL) is not the same as lifelong education (LLE). While learning is usually closely linked to individual development, education «consists of learning which is both systematic and intentional, usually the outcome of deliberative policy at local, national and global levels» (Findsen and Formosa 2011, 22). When social-cultural structures in society influence the behaviour of (older adult) learners this is very much an education issue related to the historical development of society, as in Nigeria. Next, the demarcation of when learning becomes education is explained in terms of experiential/informal learning, formal education and non-formal education.

### 3.1 Informal and Experiential Learning

In the Nigerian context, learning in later years is primarily informal and experiential, built on the practice of the Indigenous/Traditional African Adult Education pattern. The Indigenous African Education system dwells on informal methods of learning facilitated by master craftsmen and in apprenticeship schemes. Informal learning takes place when there are neither conscious nor pre-planned, deliberate learning efforts. It consists of day-to-day experiences of life in the family or community. It is unstructured, non-institutionalized learning activities that are related to work, family, community or leisure. It may involve learning from discussions, civic and social engagements, reading journals or books, taking tours, taking part in hobby groups; listening to radio broadcasts, watching television, reading newspapers or other forms of recreation (Bown and Tomori 1979; Findsen 2005). It is truly the life-long process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in their environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library and the mass media (Okenimkpe 2003). It is learning from, and, in real-life situations while passing through the daily routines of human life. Other instances include the acquisition of skills like farming, fishing, welding, tailoring and a host of others. Acceptable societal conduct and values are learnt from cooperative groups, casual and sometimes organized discussions at family, age-grade locations, in religious practices as well as community venues.

### 3.2 Formal Education

At the other end of the continuum from informal learning, is formal education. This form of learning has been thoroughly institutionalised, most often provided by governments who have a responsibility to educate younger generations. It usually entails a graded system from early childhood to higher education. It does not occur through happenstance but is planned to socialise respective generations to the norms of society as in Nigeria. Hence, programme offerings are those available mainly for young people. Educational structures related to these programmes tend to legitimate credentials, especially at upper high school and university levels. There are few courses specifically directed at older adult learners, although the Open University and distance learning were implemented to attract older learners (Omolewa 2016). Features of the provision from the Open University, including more open access to studies away from stringent examination entry, is provided by Imhabekhai (2006). Some traditional adult learners who have acquired knowledge at the non-formal settings have the opportunity to mainstream into higher education. In the over 100 higher institutions in Nigeria, different degrees and diplomas courses offered are open to both young and older persons without bias. Options available include open and distance learning; regular university, college or polytechnic full-time or part-time degree and non-degree programmes. Yet, the absence of seniors in universities is stark.

### 3.3 Non-formal Education

In the mid-stream of a continuum between experiential/informal learning and formal education is non-formal education. The structures for learning are informal, but the learning is systematised and seldom credentialled. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community-based centres constitute the majority of this provision. This is an alternate route to learning in later years available to adults in Nigeria accessible at different learning spaces across the country (Bown and Okedara 1981). These spaces as non-formal education centres can be found in all the States in the Federation managed by the Nigerian Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and financed by the federal government. Other agencies include the many centres run by private and commercial undertakings, non-governmental organisations, faith-based and philosophical organisations as well as community development and community-based associations. These agencies are located in both government and private school buildings (used out of school hours), village/town/community centres, market squares and worship structures. Training programmes comprise skills acquisition, learning new methods of doing things, learning to be self-reliant and learning to be more responsible in every situation (Omolewa 2016). Further, basic literacy, post-basic literacy, computer literacy, vocational and agricultural training are some additional offerings in the non-formal centres.

Non-formal education is consciously, deliberately and systematically implemented outside the formal education system. It entails organised educational activity planned by the provider, outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives (Okenimkpe 2003). As it is programmed to serve the needs of identified groups, it necessitates flexibility in its design and schemes of evaluation. It is often complementary to formal education in the context of lifelong learning. It covers programmes on life skills, work skills, generally out of school, for self, social, community or cultural development (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2023). It includes non-accredited workplace training, as well as education undertaken for personal development and empowerment.

A recent empirical study was carried out to assess learning in later years among older adults in non-formal education centres in Nigeria (Obashoro-John and Abdulazeez in press). A sample of 180 persons, who were 55 years and above, was drawn from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Findings revealed learning needs to be expressed in the following areas: learning for self-management and decision-making competency, learning for competence in literacy, learning for career promotion and learning for effective communication skills. It established that the ultimate goal of learning at any stage of life is to bring about the desired change in participation, whether in a vocational or recreational domain (e.g. personal growth and self-efficacy). Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made for increased participation of older persons; expan-

sion of current provisions and offerings in the centres; more effective monitoring and supervision of their operations. These recommendations point to the importance of these instances of non-formal education to individuals' survival and their ultimate contribution to the progress of the nation.

#### 4. Lifelong Learning/Education

Discussions concerning the character of lifelong learning (LLL) and lifelong education (LLE) abound in the international literature (e.g. Longworth and Keith Davis 1999; Osborne et al. 2007). Lifelong learning (LLL) finds its roots in integrating learning and living, and covers learning activities for people of all ages, in all life contexts and through a variety of modalities that meet a range of learning needs and demands. The differences between learning and education are echoed in the distinction between LLL and LLE. Lifelong learning is a much broader concept and is exemplified in the above experiential-informal education list of activities. Lifelong education provision is closely related to and dependent on governmental and providers' active support. The purposes of lifelong learning have been identified by Findsen and Formosa (2011) as follows:

*The learning economy* – This purpose gives precedence to the world of work where learning is channelled towards maximising positive outputs for the national/local economy. Unsurprisingly, governments around the globe are concerned that their economies are sufficiently buoyant to sustain a knowledgeable workforce where workers are adaptable and multi-skilled.

*Personal fulfilment* – The personal growth of individuals is given priority in this strand. An ideology of individualism prevails rather than the encouragement of a collectivist approach. In adult education, this approach is aligned to Knowles (1984) and is humanistically-inspired.

*Active citizenship* – In this conceptualisation of lifelong learning the focus is upon how to produce a citizen who is active and who is committed to democratic practices in a civil society. Such a citizen engages in communities, may volunteer services for the betterment of others and/or become a member of social movements and be critically reflective of what is occurring in society.

*Social inclusion* – Given the plethora of people who are removed from the mainstream because of age, gender, social class, sexuality, geographical location or disability (or combinations of these categories), this theme is concentrated upon getting people included in social interactions to improve their quality of life. In the case of educational provision, the invisibility of older people in the planning and implementation of older adult education is significant.

In the Nigerian context, varying forms of literacy training have been to the fore as an exemplar for lifelong learning. Arguably, all four above categories are encapsulated in this campaign. In particular, opportunities for older adults to increase their functional literacy enhances life chances and prospects for meaningful social interaction (social inclusion).

#### 4.1 The Context of Nigerian Lifelong Learning/Education

Lifelong learning in the Nigerian context has always been primarily informal and non-formal and indeed, an everyday phenomenon (Bown and Okedara 1981). One begins to learn at birth and stops at death. It is the practice in which adults engage in self-directed activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, traditions, attitudes, customs or values.

There are structures and systems (some more formal) through which individuals learn throughout life. Learning continues to be carried out in the following domains: Environmental Education; Community Development; Social Work; Consumer Education; Citizenship Education; Peace and War Education; Preventive Education; Prison or Correctional Centre Education; Political Education; Family Life Education; Open and Distance Learning and Geriatric and Ageing Education (adapted from Obashoro-John 2013, 5). Such a diverse range of forms of education can fairly readily be incorporated into the four above thematic areas of lifelong learning.

The 2014 edition of the National Policy on Education and the National Blueprint for Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria provides for adult and non-formal education as an instrument for lifelong education. Although there are other activities which can be termed adult education, the National Policy on Education identified mass literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education as the key components of adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

There is no doubt that the National Policy for Mass Education and Literacy is built on the need to provide adult basic education for the high numbers of Nigerian youths and adults as expressed in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) goals and policy. The Nigerian Government operates and coordinates the activities of adult education through the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) established in 1990. However, the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), an association of academics in the practice of Adult Education, plays an advocacy role for improving policy formulation and implementation as well as programme development and delivery.

#### 4.2 Policy Related to Older Adult Learning/Education

Nigerian policy on education has experienced modifications over the years to accommodate seniors. The first edition of the National Policy on Education was published in 1977; the second and third editions were published in 1981 and 1993 respectively. The dynamics of social change, innovations and their demands on education informed the review of the third edition in 1998. The fourth edition was in 2004; the fifth edition was published in 2007 while the sixth edition compiled in 2013, was published in 2014. The sixth edition highlights the objectives of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education as follows:

Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education encourages all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. The goals of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal education shall be to:

- i) Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.
- ii) Provide functional and remedial education to young people who did not complete secondary school.
- iii) Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to integrate basic knowledge and skills.
- iv) Provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- v) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (FNR 2014, 19).

In line with these goals, the NMEC operates on the components of the Policy Guidelines to enable youths and adults acquire skills and knowledge in the spirit of lifelong learning and with the possibilities for mainstreaming into the formal sector. However, specific mention of older adults is missing in the above account. Perhaps «other categories or groups» may suggest connection to seniors. In the official discourse, programmes are designed to encourage flexibility, inclusiveness and equity, greater problem-solving ability, self-reliance and community participation. Programme offerings are generally in the areas of basic literacy, post literacy, functional literacy, vocational education, continuing education and workers' education (NMEC 2017).

## 5. Motivation and Participation in Nigerian later Life Learning

Seniors' participation in later life learning in Nigeria is motivated by human needs identified here and elsewhere (Withnall 2010; Merriam and Bierema 2014) to improve the general quality of life; earn a living in retirement, especially in situations where there are no pension packages; desire to respond to growing demands of life, especially social change, social media and technological expertise. Learning at this period is to acquire new knowledge and skills for more meaningful activities in later life. Participation of older adults in diverse activities (identified above) enables them to develop at a personal level, contribute as active citizens and to be less marginalised in day-to-day life (Desjardins 2011). For some, training and development in information technology places them more favourably for employment, whether for payment or voluntary.

In accord with the purposes of lifelong learning, later life learning/education can have many benefits be they physical, mental, social, emotional and economic, ranging from better health, sustained cognitive functioning, enhanced



personal well-being and as a protector against social marginalisation. It can support the functioning of democratic systems and provide greater opportunities for older adults to find new or better employment (Schuller and Watson 2009). It can encapsulate the idea that learning is a lifelong process and that it is never too early or too late to start learning new things. It may have a positive effect on young people through appropriate modelling and encourage them to continue learning throughout their lives. When aligned to active ageing, lifelong learning promotes engagement of older people in the activities of the mainstream of society, avoiding invisibility (Braun 2022).

Barriers to participation have been categorised in dispositional, institutional and situational (Cross 1981; Deggs and Boeren 2020). The more overt barriers reside in the latter two categories; for instance, institutions whose marketing is unresponsive to the needs of citizens, especially older people. Even within the institution, the methods for teaching and learning may be unattractive to elders.

Although learning in later life may be hindered by poor access to required education, lack of infrastructure, increasing displacement of people including older persons; diminishing social and economic activities with implications for intergenerational functioning, learning and relationships; poverty, disability, inequality and ageism, there is a need to eliminate these problems to give room for adequate and appropriate learning in later years. Aside from these mainly situational barriers, the dispositional barriers are typically the hardest to combat as they reflect attitudes and orientations to learning of older adults themselves ingrained across a lifetime, most of which are detrimental. Nigeria is no exception.

## 6. Ageing and Learning in a Nigerian Context

Ageing is a multifaceted process involving interlocking systems (physical, psychological, social, cultural). During this process, biological changes occur which may lead to decreases in physical and cognitive abilities. Despite the resultant physical changes, challenges and limitations of later years, it can still be a time of new learning, creativity and potential development (Obashoro 2007). The ability to learn continues throughout life and is strongly influenced by interests, activities, experiences and sources of information.

Social conditions identified at a much earlier time (Cowgill and Holmes 1972), remain relevant today. They are: older persons always constitute a minority within the total population; in an older population, females outnumber males; widows comprise a high proportion of an older population; in all societies some people are classified as 'old' and are treated differently because they are so classified; there is a widespread tendency for people defined as old to shift (either voluntarily or by coercion) to more sedentary, advisory or supervisory roles involving less physical exertion and they may become more concerned with group maintenance than with economic production. In most societies, older persons continue to act as political, judicial and civic leaders; cultural mores prescribe some mutual responsibility between old people and their adult children; and all societies value life and seek to prolong it even in old age. Given the more

than 50 years since the description by Cowgill and Holmes, some traditional roles and societal expectations have altered the Nigerian social landscape. As explored later in this chapter, family dynamics and expectations have changed dramatically (see under Intergenerational Learning).

With regard to training and lifelong learning, the Policy on Ageing has promised to

- build work capacities of older workers;
- provide public education;
- provide skills training for alternate employment and reduce the risk of exclusion or dependency in later life;
- ensure that older persons have access to continuous education, training, retraining as well as vocational guidance and placement;
- develop and strengthen strategies that encourage older persons' participation as educators and trainers;
- increase the understanding and awareness of ageing issues through education and training;
- ensure the full utilization of the potentials and expertise of all ages recognizing the benefits of increased experience with age;
- introduction of gerontology at all levels of education (FRN 2020, 36, 40-41).

Hence, the policy is supportive of all forms of learning related to the four thematic areas of lifelong learning. Some priority to gerontological issues is included in this list.

## 7. An External influence on Nigerian (Older Adult) Education

In the Nigerian context, learning in later years has always been guided by the considerations of the principles of andragogy in relation to learning. Malcolm Knowles popularised the concept andragogy as the central theory of adult learning in the 1970s by defining andragogy as «the art and science of helping adults learn» (1984, 6). In brief, the principles of andragogy are summarised as the need to learn; development of a learner self-concept; the role of the experience; readiness to learn; and orientation to learning. Further, Knowles is acknowledged for the design of an andragogical process (1984, 17-18) as follows:

- Climate setting for conducive learning;
- Involving learners in mutual planning;
- Involving participants in diagnosing their own needs for learning;
- Involving learners in formulating their learning objectives;
- Involving learners in designing learning plans;
- Helping learners carry out their learning plans;
- Helping learners in evaluating their learning.

These principles and processes were initially accepted in many countries based on their humanistic stance where the (older) adult learner took central stage, not the teacher. Subsequently, the limitations of this approach have become quite obvious. In particular, Knowles has erroneously assumed that there is a generic adult learner. In Nigeria, as elsewhere, older people live in specific conditions with both unique individual characteristics and personalities shaped by the over-riding socio-cultural context. Knowles shows little awareness of differential power and the notion that education can be controlling as well as liberating. Hence, using a Knowlesian approach to the teaching-learning dynamic is to be implemented with due caution.

Generally speaking, despite the knowledge of various theories on older adult learning, the practice of adult learning in Nigeria has been largely influenced by the thought and principles of andragogy. Personal experience of the Nigerian author points to pockets of the use of the Freirean approach for community development activities but this is hardly extensive (Freire 1984).

## 8. Intergenerational Learning

One of the sites for real hope in an ageist society such as Nigeria is the fostering of genuine intergenerational communication and learning. Intergenerational learning is the process that offers opportunities for people of different generations, ages and groups (multigenerational) to learn together and from one another. According to Sharma (2017), intergenerational learning is the learning of knowledge and skills by two generations for the benefit of each other as well as of society. It is not intra-generational learning where learning sessions are arranged for persons of comparable or similar age. It is a collective obligation which ensures learning access for everyone. Everyone can be both learner and teacher because it is built on collaborative inquiry, updating, co-learning and co-production with multiple mutual benefits. With intergenerational learning, people learn from situations that arise on daily basis, from the behaviour, expectations, questions, words and silences of all around; learning is possible from results, materials and facts (DVV International 2019). Intergenerational learning may occur between generations or people of two or more living generations. The target population for intergenerational learning may include all citizens irrespective of age, role, status, abilities and dispositions.

Intergenerational learning, as an important adjunct to lifelong learning, has multiple potential benefits. It denotes relevance of learning for seniors, encourages continuous learning, and helps avoid obsolescence; and it can help to interrogate current global events, legacies, past experiences, life histories of past generations required for future knowledge and skills. It allows us to understand and adopt new or emerging ideas and work through new challenges in changing environment, circumstances and exposures. It can be directed at significant stressors such as cognitive decline of older persons in the family, immigration, redundancy, and caregiving needs together with improved communications skills in relation to younger generations and other matters that may appear in

the course of life. In the domain of career journeys, intergenerational learning may reduce segregation or non-inclusiveness and support inclusivity (Schmidt-Hertha et al. 2014). Across generational communication, learning is necessary to upskill, acquire transferable skills (from one work environment to another), to encourage younger generations to acquire new skills and older generations to foster a positive approach to new career paths, adopt skills to late careers and take on new roles and career responsibilities (Beatty and Visser 2005). In its broadest conception, it can focus on building bridges across the generational divide, closing the gaps created by age segregation and engender learning experiences through collaborative everyday activities.

One major part of the Nigerian society is the extended family with well-defined social roles and responsibilities for different age groups. Parental care is given until adulthood when the adult child begins to care for older members in terms of livelihood. Older persons offer advice and ideas, give moral support, take care of children and teach values, skills as well as family/community folklores since they are regarded as the reservoir of wisdom in all cultural, historical and practical realms. This is expressed in the proverbs:

the hand of the child cannot reach the shelf just as the hand of the elder cannot get through the neck of the gourd.

an old hare suckles from the young (Yoruba, Nigeria proverbs).

These stress the expectation in terms of intergenerational exchange of roles.

Adult children had a strong sense of family responsibility for older family members as a sign of being grateful for earlier care received. As urbanisation and foreign migration – *Japa Syndrome* (a term for mass migration of individuals and families) – increase, the traditional family care for older persons continues to weaken. At the same time, the expected role in old age such as rearing grandchildren continues to decline just as obligations and filial piety continue to decrease; adult children devise new ways of handling those social roles performed by elders including childminding (Arber and Timonen 2012; Obashoro 2016).

Owing to the increasing numbers of older persons and the eroding extended family, kinship and other traditional support systems, the National Senior Citizens Centre Act, 2018 came into being in Nigeria. It promises to offer training packages and programmes in the context of lifelong learning; provide a fortified support system for the ageing population and recreational activities to enhance intergenerational interaction and cooperation.

## 9. Recommendations

Owing to the importance and benefits of learning in later years as well as ensuring that older adults have access to the support and resources they need to continue learning throughout their lives, in accord with international guidelines (UNESCO 2022), it is imperative for governments to:

- provide financial support for programmes and initiatives that organisations and educational institutions offer to promote later life learning opportunities. This can include support for adult education programmes, vocational training and other lifelong learning opportunities;
- create policies and regulations to promote later life learning such as discounted tuition fees, grants and subsidised education costs or participation fees; tax incentives for organisations/employers who engage in staff training and professional development for older workers;
- build and maintain infrastructures such as libraries, museums, community cultural and learning centres where older adults can access educational resources and activities.

### Concluding Remarks

Learning in later years will, almost always, enhance the physical and mental well-being of older persons, shape healthy ageing and remove the feeling of isolation as a result of any intellectual disengagement and social isolation. Learning in later life should help to address significant social issues. These may include issues related to demographic transitions, social shifts, housing and living arrangements (independent living, varied living patterns, co-residence), employment, health care, social protection, transportation, intergenerational solidarity and family structures.

From an optimistic stance, learning in later adult years may build new roles in the family; allow for participation in childcare and contributions to family finances, civic engagement, volunteerism, and create a deeper sense of happiness and fulfilment.

It will be beneficial for Nigerian society to invest in adult learning and education (ALE), enhance lifelong learning (LLL) for skills acquisition required in the labour market and to foster continual mental and cognitive capacities, active and healthy ageing, and at a societal level for all generations to understand economic conditions associated with ageing. There is need to encourage the culture of learning in adult years for healthy lifestyles and promote the effective use of leisure which should reduce healthcare costs, enhance well-being and help societal resilience in the face of political, social and economic crises.

Recalling the four themes of lifelong learning, strengthening the notion that older adults can contribute effectively to the workforce where benefits accrue at both individual and societal spheres is an imperative. Fostering self-improvement and family/community interaction should heighten eagerness to acquire more knowledge, even in older age, enhance learning for the sake of learning or the refinement of knowledge already acquired. Discussion on social relations in the course of life should include 'learning to be and learning to live' together. In terms of civic responsibility, programmes should dwell on health rights, generational co-existence, environmental care, civil participation and age friendliness. Finally, but most importantly, the social inclusion of older adults in all facets of

societal development is crucial and would include on-going intergenerational communication and respect.

For these aspirations to be achieved in Nigeria, concerted and sustained efforts of government, institutions, civil society and individuals will be required to appropriately conceptualize, structure, organize, finance and deliver programmes in their entirety to and with persons in their later years.

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