

Research Article

# Strengthening National Security Through Community-based Adult Education Programmes: A Legacy of Michael Adekunle Ajasin

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## Abstract

In recent years, security challenges characterized by insurgent activities, communal clashes kidnapping have escalated in Nigeria, hence a need for creative and community-oriented ways of handling them. The paper discusses how community-based adult education programmes may contribute to enhancing national security through significant development of an informed, resilient, and civically active citizenry. Lessons were drawn from the educational philosophy of Michael Adekunle Ajasin, an advocate for an accessible and universal education, who believes in transformative education that changes communities by making people active participants in nation-building processes. The paper explores the Ajasin legacy of policies and principles bequeathed to humanity, especially his commitment to free and lifelong learning, as a viable framework through which contemporary security problems can be handled. This was done by assessing how community-based adult education programmes contribute to social cohesion and a reduction in the vulnerability of citizens toward radicalization, as well as ensuring increased local awareness of security concerns through a critical review of related literature. Recommendations include the infusion of security topics into adult education curricula, development of partnership between the government and communities, increase in financing for local education initiatives, and training of adult educators in conflict resolution and emergency response. Drawing from Ajasin's legacy, this paper reasons that community-based adult education can constitute the fulcrum of a national security strategy in Nigeria and even lay the foundation for lasting peace and development.

## Keywords

Community-based Adult Education, National Security, Ajasin's Legacy, Social Cohesion, Lifelong Learning

## 1. Introduction

Today, the concept of security is increasingly viewed as having various dimensions: military, economic, political, and social. Security threats manifest through insurgency, terrorism, and inter-communal conflicts, among other forms in Nigeria; it is in such a situation that the role of community engagement became recognized in the country's effort toward the improvement of security. Such threats certainly test the full limit of

traditional security frameworks in comprehensively handling them, thus the need for a community-based approach in mobilizing active citizens in national security. Thus, community-based adult education is acquiring increasingly greater importance, fostering civic awareness, nurturing social responsibility, and enabling citizens to contribute directly to national security efforts. While traditional education often focuses on

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academic or vocational skill-building, community-based adult education addresses practical, localized needs and prepares individuals to address pressing societal challenges. A programme of this nature would instill in the citizens a sense of civic duty and communal responsibility by providing the knowledge and skills necessary for active participation in community security.

Community-based adult education has played a very important role in building a populace that is informed and conscious of their civic duties, a situation that supports national security directly. This is because the programmes empower adults through a sense of civic awareness that enables them to take on an active role in monitoring and mitigating against potential security risks, such as signs of radicalization or suspicious activities within their localities. In addition, civic awareness encompasses the rights and responsibilities of an individual in relation to the community, while stimulating an active role in adults by participating in the self-government process at the local level and involving them in the process of community policing, as well as support for various social programmes focused on crime reduction. Communities with appropriate civic engagement register lower rates of crimes, seeing as citizens feel responsible for what happens around them [1].

It also contributes to the growth of social responsibility by instilling values such as empathy, respect for others, and a determination to coexist peacefully. Most programmes include modules on conflict resolution that would enable members to develop the needed skills in negotiation, mediation, and the art of reaching consensus on resolving disputes that may otherwise escalate into full-blown conflict [2], in the case of Nigeria, where ethnic, religious, and economic causes are always the roots of communal conflicts. Community-based adult education provides the means for peaceful conflict resolution to reduce violence and strengthen social cohesion within communities. As such, individuals who will have undergone such training will be better placed to serve as interlocutors or models in providing non-violent alternatives and pacification methods to their respective communities whenever conflicts arise.

Programmes in adult learning for community are especially useful where formal education has been limited and socio-economic conditions have made such communities vulnerable to skills which may result in radicalization and criminality. The disempowered youths and adults in areas where access to education and job opportunities remains limited are the most at risk of extremist ideologies promising economic or social rewards [3]. Community-based education addresses this since, in addition to imparting practical knowledge, it instills a sense of purpose and belonging among this section of the population, hence preventing them from joining radical groups. Community-based vocational training and civic engagement programmes have been particularly effective, for example in Nigeria, in engaging at-risk persons and reducing the prospect of their recruitment by extremist groups or gangs. Such pro-

grammes equip adults with skills that not only enhance employability and financial independence but also undercut the socio-economic drivers of insecurity, going a long way in stabilizing regions vulnerable to ideological manipulation and violence.

The core of community-based adult education is to create a culture of preventative security whereby communities identify and mitigate threats before actual incidents materialize. These major securities, such as emergency preparedness, neighborhood watch practices, and recognizing early signs of criminal behavior, empower active individuals in contributing to the safety of others. Educated citizens on preventative security measures are well-placed to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and participate in community safety initiatives. Other than fostering trust between the community and the security apparatus, such cooperation strengthens the effectiveness of local policing since better-informed citizens share intelligence information and support security initiatives [4].

Community-based adult education is very crucial in Nigeria, which is suffering from some peculiar security challenges due to regional differences in education and employment. Besides, areas with very limited access to formal education have not been able to bridge the knowledge and skill gaps in adults for their civic responsibilities and contributions toward the efforts on security [5]. Community-based adult education would, therefore, be the means of bridging these gaps through context-specific education concerning what individual communities' needs and challenges are in security matters. This is also in line with the decentralized nature of Nigeria's socio-political landscapes, since that would enable different communities to realize appropriate cultural and regional ways of putting their security practices into place. Localizing adult education in Nigeria will help in the communal process of building security-conscious citizens who are aware of specific risks they face and are able to take meaningful activities to counter these threats.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Role of Adult Education in National Security

Adult Education has become a powerful means of consolidating national security through informed citizenship, social responsibility, and community resilience. Evidence from research shows that adult education in general and literacy in particular play a much broader role in areas highly relevant to national security and social stability. Adult education improves social responsibility and stabilizes civic consciousness as individuals become better aware of their rights, responsibilities, and the need for solidarity with others in the community [6]. It is important for a country such as Nigeria, where instability and threats to security are often associated with a lack

of adequate access to education, economic inequality, and intense levels of social fragmentation [7].

### 2.1.1. Enhancing Community Surveillance and Response

Adult education programmes can thus play a critical role in the active involvement of communities in local security measures, including surveillance, putting up an effective emergency response, and reporting suspicious activities. Often, educated citizens are in a better position to notice potential threats and report them, knowing the importance of proactive security measures for the protection of their communities. The training of adults in the basic principles of security makes them an informal complement to the police because they assist in preventing certain crimes through vigilance and reporting [2]. They are so empowered, but trust is created between the communities and their respective security forces so that a collaborative attitude toward safety is adopted. Community-based programmes oriented to developing emergency response and crisis management skills help adults further act at a critical level and build resilience at the grassroots level, with reduced dependence on external intervention especially in Nigerian rural communities experiencing late responses to emergencies.

### 2.1.2. Addressing Root Causes of Insecurity Through Education

Beyond immediate security measures, adult education addresses conditions underlying socio-economic contributions to national security threats. Adult education can reduce risks at their roots, which may be poverty and illiteracy or lack of economic opportunity—factors that often undergird criminality, unrest, and even extremism. In the absence of means of livelihood within the law, dispossessed people can easily take to crime and radicalism. Vocational training, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship education within adult education programmes offer a means of exit from poverty as adults build skills that will lead them to stable incomes, making them less vulnerable to criminal recruitment or radicalization [8]. The transformative power of education found in changing perspectives and empowering individuals with routes different from those leading to economic stability. For example, community-based adult education has been utilized in Nigeria to equip individuals with agricultural skills, small business management, and financial planning as sustainable avenues for economic improvement. Such a programme reduces reliance on illicit activities or radical ideologies by providing legitimate, productive avenues for economic advancement. For this reason, adult education contributes to overcoming insecurities founded on socio-economic disparities, which in the end reduces crime and ensures stability [9].

### 2.1.3. Promoting Civic Engagement and Social Cohesion

The civic education within adult learning programmes even

reinforces national security by embedding the habit of responsibility, cooperation, and community obligations. It is identified that the core component of adult learning is to inculcate civic responsibilities, such as regard for law, contribution to public administration, and answerability [6]. That is most applicable in some societies where education enables people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds to come together for the common purpose of ensuring security; thus it integrates them into a cohesive unit. Civic engagement programmes also ultimately lead to the involvement of adults in local governance and community activities, thus increasing their sense of connection with the community and vested interest in the well-being of society as a whole.

This is also in line with efforts that have been made presently in Nigeria aimed at mitigating violence caused by ethnic or religious discord. Adults who have been trained in conflict resolution and intercultural communication can help resolve and dissipate lingering resentments causing outbreaks of violent conflicts [10]. For instance, community-based adult education programmes based on common responsibilities and respect for one another can build bridges of trust across cultural chasms, culminating into cohesive social standards that prevent violence from happening in the first place [1].

### 2.1.4. Building Preventive Security Cultures

Adult education builds a culture of preventive security, whereby communities are enabled to take steps pre-emptively in the mitigation of risk before they become serious threats. It is often more effective than reactive when communities build a preventive security culture and they are most likely to identify and mitigate risks at the earliest stage. [9]. Adult education programmes including neighborhood watch practices, how to communicate during and about a crisis, and early signs of criminal or extremist behavior in individuals helps community to be proactive as regards security matters in their community and so, they are better prepared to participate in the security process as prevention. An educated citizen is more likely to participate in programmes like the neighborhood watch, which may be a significant criminal activity deterrent in neighborhoods [11].

Preventive security education further provides room for collaboration between the community and law enforcement agencies, as informed citizens can give insights and intelligence information that may help in efficient policing. When people are properly educated on issues of security, they would be most likely to perceive themselves as partners in matters of security rather than passive beneficiaries, hence facilitating effective law enforcement operations [12].

## 2.2. Community-based Adult Education Programmes to Combat Insecurity

Community-based adult education programmes are increasingly viewed as an essential tool in addressing security-related challenges from the grassroots level. Targeting specific needs

within the local population, such programmes build resilience within a community through the preparation of active citizens with the skills and knowledge that foster self-sufficiency, social responsibility, and civic engagement. Coupling traditional adult education with security themes provides the communities with the capacity to address the causes of insecurity, and ensures that people can actively support efforts toward crime prevention and peace-building processes themselves. In the following section, some of the kinds of programmes-community-based adult education discussed later-include literacy, vocational skills, health education, and civic education programmes-which have been applied in an effort to deal effectively with these security concerns.

### 2.2.1. Literacy and Basic Education Programmes

Programmes in literacy lay the foundation for community development and security since such programmes give adults the basic read-and-write skills that afford them access to critical information. In fact, adults who possess literacy skills are more likely to comprehend and pass on information pertaining to security, health advisories, and emergency protocols, especially in times of crisis. Literacy programmes in areas with low formal education are one of the most basic ways through which informed citizenship and community engagement could be empowered [13]. Furthermore, literacy programmes can include training in simple digital skills and help the members of the community access and disseminate information using mobile phones and social network sites. This can be vital for community-led surveillance and response to emergencies or disasters, literacy programmes also leave quite positive signals in conflict-prone regions by way of empowering people with constructive dialogue, away from violent confrontation [1]. In a related study conducted in Kenya, for example, themes of conflict resolution and dialogue were integrated into adult literacy programmes to help reduce tensions in communities affected by inter-ethnic violence [14]. Literacy programmes greatly improve communication skills that allow negotiation and mediation of disputes, reducing community-based violence.

### 2.2.2. Vocational and Economic Empowerment Programmes

Economic empowerment through vocational training is another powerful means of fighting insecurity, particularly in regions where unemployment and poverty act as drivers to both crime and radicalization. Vocational skills training provides adults with practical skills in various trades such as carpentry, agriculture, and tailoring, as well as in small business management, thus enabling them to earn a decent income and become less dependent on illicit activities. The rate at which crime occurs is low in communities where economic empowerment programmes of this nature are available since adults and youths will not readily engage in criminal behaviors when their livelihoods are assured [15]. Programmes in these areas

have made a great deal of difference in parts of Nigeria where insurgency and organized crime have taken such a heavy toll. The civic and security themes woven into these programmes equip these individuals not only with skills to find jobs but also knowledge of their place within community safety, instilling an important sense of shared responsibility for peace and security. For example, vocational programmes in northern Nigeria include modules on financial literacy and anti-radicalization that have helped participants resist recruitment by extremist groups [2].

### 2.2.3. Health and Social Awareness Programmes

Health education programmes on topics such as mental health, substance abuse, and reproductive health also have implications for community security. Poor health status, substance dependence, and high levels of psychological distress increase the risk of individuals engaging in criminal or violent behavior. Health education programmes on these issues can, therefore, reduce some of the socio-economic causes of insecurity. For example, Shaw identifies that "adult health education could potentially contribute to stability by reducing risk factors for crime and violence, especially when substance abuse and its linkage with youth violence are discussed. Community health education programmes are being done in Uganda regarding substance abuse and prevention of HIV/AIDS amongst the youth who could be prone to violence. These services also included counseling and social support, which have contributed to a decrease in the rate of insecurity linked to social isolation and economic vulnerability. The integration of health education with security awareness provides adults with informed choices about their health and makes communities safer by addressing key causes of insecurity.

### 2.2.4. Civic and Citizenship Education

Civic education programmes are integral to building a culture of lawfulness and social accountability. These programmes provide citizens with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, as well as an understanding of governmental structures, legal processes, and the importance of rule of law. The importance of civic education in fostering social responsibility and civic duty, empowering individuals to participate in local governance and community security initiatives actively. When adults understand the value of participating in governance and civic duties, they are more likely to engage in community policing, local governance, and volunteer-based security initiatives [6]. In Nigerian contexts, civic education has proven effective in strengthening community security, as it encourages individuals to view security as a shared responsibility. Programmes that emphasize the importance of civic participation have enabled communities to establish neighborhood watch groups, which monitor and report suspicious activities, reducing crime rates [16]. Moreover, by involving local leaders in the design and implementation of these programmes, community-based civic education becomes cultur-

ally relevant, addressing security concerns specific to the region [11].

### 2.2.5. Preventive Security Education

Preventive Security Education equips people with the ability to discover and mitigate conditions which may give rise to an impending security threat well before they deteriorate. Preventive security education programmes spur proactive security measures by teaching people to recognize the early warning signs of radicalization, criminal behavior, or community-based conflicts. One of the ways in which preventive security education contributes to placing the emphasis on vigilance and readiness, essential to community-based security initiatives, is in relation to related adult learning [9]. In those countries that have been facing insurgencies and threats of terrorism, preventive security education programmes have been inducted, which will help adults to be aware of the potential risks arising out of extremist recruitment and propaganda. For instance, in Nigeria, adult education programmes through community-based initiatives help in showing ways to the citizens for identifying and countering such strategies of radicalization that often target easily susceptible youth. These programmes also train participants in basic self-defense, crisis management, and how to work effectively with local security forces.

## 3. Implementation and Challenges in Nigeria

The high level of underfunding, insufficient resources, and a general shortage of trained educators are some of the issues that impede the effective implementation of community-based adult education programmes in Nigeria. On the other hand, successful case studies have been conducted across regions such as South Africa and Rwanda to show that these models work when communities are involved with the support of governments. These could offer some lessons learned toward scalable methods for integrating security themes within adult education in Nigeria. For example, [14] has identified that locally driven projects in Rwanda succeeded by the collaborative efforts between local leadership and the government and as such could serve as a model to draw upon for Nigeria in its quest to improve community resilience.

## 4. The Legacy of Michael Adekunle Ajasin

Michael Adekunle Ajasin was a prime figure in Nigerian history, contributing to the fields of education and governance with many legacies still influential in present Nigeria. He was a former governor in Ondo State and an avid believer in free and accessible education; he saw how such education had brought transformation to societies by consolidating social stability and improving economic progress. His governorship

in the Second Republic of Nigeria was attached to high points of educational reforms democratizing knowledge and giving a voice to the voiceless, aimed at ensuring equal distribution of qualitative education across the state. Ajasin's vision went further than mere formal or institutionalized educational systems, noting that lifelong learning may be applied to higher causes in society such as security, civic, and economic empowerment.

Ajasin's educational policies were based on the concepts of inclusivity and universal access. He thoughtfully laid the foundation for those tearing down the barriers to education, including offering free education for primary and secondary students, and adult education programmes designed to reach underserved communities. His holistic approach, therefore, opines that education cannot be confined to traditional schooling systems but must contain programmes of activities designed to meet needs arising in the lives of all citizens, young and old, rich and poor, rural and urban [12]. Through this philosophy, a platform was given for community-based adult education models wherein literacy is sought conjointly with skill building and civic awareness, leading to social responsibility. Ajasin, in creation of an inclusive environment in education, afforded opportunities for the community members to effectively be involved in different issues affecting society, such as security, as enlightened active participants.

At the heart of Ajasin's legacy is a commitment to civic responsibility and community empowerment. He regarded education as one way of instilling community responsibility and helpfulness into people. According to Ajasin, the educated were more qualified to contribute toward social cohesion, to advocate for justice, and to work with the authorities to ensure peace and security. His policies encouraged education that was not only on academic subjects but also in the line of social and civic training, emphasizing the belief that a well-educated populace is a steadying force for society. It is what, in modern concepts, community-based adult education aims at: adults are equipped with skills to participate actively in security initiatives, civic duties, and in supporting local governance.

Ajasin believed in lifelong education, which to him should not have stopped in childhood and adolescence but, in fact, throughout life. He knew full well that learning does not stop but is actually a continuous process through which one adjusts to new challenges, even those to do with security and community welfare concerns. By doing so, Ajasin actually laid a foundation that encourages the integration of adult education programmes into community-based security initiatives. It is this belief in lifelong learning as a tool for social empowerment that finds resonance in contemporary efforts at educating adults on issues such as conflict resolution, countering radicalization, and civic engagement—all of which bolster the resilience of communities and national security [17].

The framework set by Ajasin through his educational policies has great relevance to the security challenges the country is currently facing. His belief that education could make one resilient, economically buoyant, and socially stable still holds good in the context where the nature of security threats has

become complex and multivariate. By empowering citizens through adult education programmes to meet both current security needs and future societal stability, Ajasin's legacy still offers a model for successful community involvement in security matters. The philosophy he championed presumes that security does not have to be exclusively a state-driven affair; it can be done together-the people and the state-or certain levels of it should be transferred to educated and empowered communities to deal with local and national concerns [18].

## 5. Lessons from the Life of Michael Adekunle Ajasin

The life of Michael Adekunle Ajasin had provided a great deal of useful lessons relevant to modern society with respect to education, government, civic responsibilities, and engagement in community life. In this regard, the following useful lessons may be cited from his contributions:

### 5.1. Transformation Through Education

Ajasin believed in the transformative power of education and, therefore, maintained that education changes not only individuals but society from what it used to be. His governorship policy demonstrated that education ought to be a right, universally available and accessible, rather than a privilege. This, however, becomes important in the quest for an egalitarian society such as Nigeria today, where equal access to quality education empowers those individuals or groups that have seen themselves marginalized and contributes their quota to social stability.

### 5.2. Lifelong Learning

As far as Ajasin is concerned, lifelong learning has something to do with the importance that continued education beyond the formal ones is in place. He knew full well that adult education must be suitably catered for in order to make them adequately respond to changes and processes within society. This principle has become very relevant, especially in addressing contemporary issues related to economic shifts and security threats facing the world today. This, in effect, would enhance their resilience and adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

### 5.3. Civic Responsibility and Community Empowerment

The emphasis that Ajasin has placed on civic education points toward the essence of informed citizenship, meaningfully engaging with the governance and welfare concerns of the community. He saw educated citizens as basically indispensable for social cohesion and in cooperating with the government on security matters. This argument is crucial in the

current context whereby, any form of citizen participation in governance and security operations can be the missing link needed to guarantee stability in any nation.

### 5.4. Inclusivity in Education

Ajasin's policy aimed at breaking down the barriers to education for all, whether adults or not. His leading in advocating for a community-based adult education programme has served as a precedent for an approach to address multi-diverse educational needs, stressing that education must address different age groups and socio-economic status. This can be helpful in empowering people with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in security and governance effectively within the community.

### 5.5. Community-based Security Initiatives

Ajasin's contribution shows how communities can play their roles in security matters. According to him, security would be a joint affair between the citizens and the state - something relevant, no doubt, in the rather complex security scenario today. Educated and empowered communities are in a better position to cooperate with local authorities to ensure that their environment remains safe and secure.

### 5.6. Integration of Education and Security

Lastly, the framework by Ajasin shows how education and security initiatives are combined. His policy was, therefore, a model of what had been done in the past, what is being done today, and what will be done in the future to address this behemoth issue of security crises and their root cause within society that precipitates instability. This integrated perspective is quintessential in developing sustainable solutions to Nigeria's multifaceted security challenges.

The life and contributions of Ajasin remain a source of inspiration for education and community reform, as his life amplifies the importance of education in building resistance, civic engagement, and security. His life is a good example of how education can bring positive change and build an informed and responsible citizenry.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, a new bend in addressing the security challenges facing Nigeria by integrating community-based adult education with a focus on national security. The educational legacy of Ajasin will therefore be instructive, in steering the purports and intent of such programmes toward creating a secured, enlightened, and resilient society. In this regard, recommendations go to:

- 1) *Integrate Security Education into Adult Learning Programmes:* Security topics, including emergency response, conflict management, and civic responsibilities,

should be embedded in adult education curricula.

- 2) *Government-Community Partnerships*: Effective collaboration between government, NGOs, and local communities can amplify the reach and impact of community-based education programmes.
- 3) *Adequate Funding and Resources*: Funding from both government and private sectors is essential to ensure that programmes are sustainable and that educators are properly trained.
- 4) *Specialized Training for Educators*: Educators should be trained in security education to ensure they can effectively convey relevant and practical knowledge to participants.

## Abbreviations

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

## Author Contributions

**Ayobami Blessing Abiloye**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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