

Adult Education and Reform in Nigeria: Towards Better Patronage

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Abstract: The role of adult education in the development of man and nations cannot be underestimated. It is, however, surprising that the issue of adult education is taken with levity in areas of recognition of its value to nation building; and its funding. It is very surprising to note that in many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria; many students are yet to understand that adult education is beyond traditional literacy of reading, writing and doing simple arithmetic. There is therefore, an urgent need for reform in adult education to bring it to limelight so that everyone will see it as a discipline of relevance for all time. This work dealt with reforms in the area of content, flexibility of adult education programmes, reform in nomenclature, methodology and research with the hope that when the content of adult education is made relevant to adult learner and reform is carried out in every area of adult education, the discipline would be more inviting and with improvement in methodology many would show interest in the course of study. The recommendations include that adult education should be well funded, the programmes of adult education should be relevant to learners while relevant methodology should be used with technology being intersected and adult education programmes should be planned in a flexible way to allow for patronage

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I. INTRODUCTION

The role of adult education / adult learning in the development of man and nation cannot be undermined as it is a relevant course for all time and a course of study that seeks solutions to emerging problems without having to wait for longer years with which the youth study: Adult education, despite its huge importance is played down in the educational system of Nigeria while much emphasis is placed on formal education.

Many students in the higher institution of learning in Nigeria are of the opinion that adult education is only about old men and women learning to read, write and doing simple arithmetic. This has caused a great attrition rate in various Departments of Adult Education in many universities. Students would prefer staying back home for another year, instead of studying adult education as a discipline. This might be as a result of their ignorance of the discipline. People who should be in one programme of adult education or the other also find it inappropriate to register for adult education as a result of ignorance about the varied programmes of adult education, its content and its methodology. Parents and even some lecturers do not have an in-depth knowledge of what adult education entails and that the discipline is a viable tool for both personal and national development.

Many people in the Nigerian society are still at the lowest wrung of events in societies because they do not understand that adult education is education for social mobility, personal development and national development. Many Departments of Adult Education /Continuing Education suffer attrition and this has made them to change nomenclature to be more inviting and captivating to would be students of this great department and to out-of school people and adults who still need to continue learning.

This paper is, therefore predicated on strategies to bring reform into adult education in terms of its content, method of teaching and enlightening the society as a whole on the importance of adult education. When reforms are put in place in policies by the government and such policies are followed to the letter, and reforms are carried out in all areas of the discipline; the discipline is likely to be rigorously pursued by both out of school people, on the job personnel and all those who are in need of academic development for personal and societal reasons.

Adult Education

Adult education is a concept that poses a lot of problems to people in terms of definition. Adult education is an inclusive type of education with its varied programmes for diverse groups of people in society in order to raise their standards of living; giving them opportunities to catch in on the either to missed earlier opportunities in their youthful days. It is a “second chance” type of education for some. It is also that education that gives people on the job better effectiveness and efficiency on their job performances through training, re-training programmes, seminars and conferences.

It is education that helps one to improve oneself, develop abilities, enrich knowledge, improve technical or professional qualification in such a way that balance is introduced in to their social, economic and cultural development (Adedokun 2008). In the words of Onasode in Adedokun (2008); Adult education is education that prepares men and women optimally for life. With reforms brought into the discipline, every adult would thus, be interested in enrolling for one program of adult education or the other for personal improvement and subsequently for national development. This view of adult education is one that dovetails into lifelong and flexible learning which could either be informal or non-formal.

Therefore, adult education as a course of study should be accorded its rightful place in educational matters. Though adult education is perceived by many Nigerians in the light of giving literacy skills to people, the idea of literacy has gone beyond its traditional meaning which implies every person involved in one job or the other needs literacy skills in their areas of expertise. These skills might not be taught in the formal school setting; this is why enlightenment should be further spread on adult education. Adult education gives new dispensation and makes opportunities available for growth and re-growth, self-direction and helps people to obtain needed qualifications or additional qualifications that would make them comfortable and relevant in labour market as situations change daily in the world of work.

Tuigbiyele in Okedara (1981) is of the view that “adult education does not mean literacy education alone... adult education is more than literacy or remedial education to fill the gap. It is something people need and want as long as they are alive regardless of the amount of their previous education” (p.4).

The above implies that adult education is life-long and should be made suited to all circumstances. As society keeps changing and moving forward with new things emerging everyday due to technological advancement and in this era of fourth industrial revolution which is about interjecting disruption into everything being done, there is need for reform. Hill (1942) lends credence to this view as he believes strongly that adults have to learn because economics change, there are changes in political dispositions, interests are born and new demands come up daily so adult as members of the society must learn. Because socio-economic, political and cultural atmospheres change, learning of adults must reflect all these.

Adult education should be perceived as fundamental education because of its value to the society. Sumit (2016) describes adult education as “mass education of people, works education, further education, basic education and social education“(N.P).

This perception also subscribes to adult education, as education for life and for all as it captures every important area of man’s endeavor as it has the tendency for ensuring individual upliftment, help improve participation in economic, political, socio-cultural life and it enables participation at the international levels. Adult education is, thus, an integral part of lifelong learning which can contribute to economic progress and world peace.

Reforms in adult education should be based on the consideration that “experience acquired in adult education must constantly contribute to the renewal of its methods as well as to the reform of educational systems as a whole..... that the attainment of its objectives entails creating situations in which adults are able to choose from among a variety of forms of educational activities, the objectives and content of which have been defined with their collaboration, those forms which meet their needs most closely and are most directly related to their interest (np) (UNESCO, 2016).

Some of the objectives of adult education as put forth by UNESCO (2016) include:

- Promoting work for peace, international understanding and cooperation.
- Promoting increase awareness of the relationship between people and their physical and cultural environment and fostering the desire to improve the environment and to respect and protect nature.
- Creating an understanding of and respect for the diversity of customs and cultures both at the national and international planes.
- Developing the aptitude for acquiring new knowledge, qualifications, attitude and forms of behavior conducive to the full maturity of personality.
- Ensuring the individuals’ conscious and affective incorporation into working life by providing men and women with an advocated technical and vocational education and developing the ability to create, either individually or in groups and new material goods and new spiritual and aesthetic values (n.p.).

The Nigeria objectives of adult education as stated in the National Policy on education (2004) in Borode (2019) include.

Providing functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete primary education, including the nomad migrant families, the disabled and other disadvantaged groups.

- To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education to improve their basic knowledge and skills and
- To provide in service and on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills;
- Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Placing the Nigeria set of objectives side by side the ones of UNESCO, much needs to be done to make the practice of adult education robust in Nigeria, hence, need for reform.

There is, therefore, a need for total reform in adult education programmes because education in the form of adult education means.

- Applied action and applied knowledge.
- It covers a wide range of pedagogical activities

Reform in Adult Education

Need for reform in the programmes of adult education is an important factor in the successful transition to a knowledge based economy and society that is sustainable. Reform in adult education is also important because it is a ridal point for other fields because adult education is interdisciplinary in nature. (dvv-international.de)

IMPORTANCE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Viewing adult education and its programmes as an all time relevant discipline there is need for reform. Some of the point of relevant are listed below

- Adult education allows persons to develop valuable skills to improve career prospects and expands professional knowledge
- It gives confidence to people in and out of the work place
- Teaches a range of valuable skills that can be put to use to improve one's abilities for example, it is not possible for anyone to learn all one needs at the beginning of one's profession but learning new skills through adult education will bring one into the limelight of new operations of the 21st century, help secure promotion, and open up new opportunities that might not have hitherto been available. (Quora.com)

The importance of investing in adult education includes greater employability, increased productivity and better quality employment, reduced expenditure in areas such as unemployment benefit, improved civic participation, better health, lowered incidence of criminality and greater individual wellbeing and fulfillment (ab.gov.tr).

Adult education /learning will thus bring about total change in man and the nations of the world. It is not only in Nigeria that adult education is not put in its rightful position. The Board of Management of the German Adult Education Association and the Advisory Board of the Institution for International Cooperation of the DVV(112/DVV) is of the concern that adult education is not accorded enough priority in development policy and proposed development schemes. Adult education is no longer viewed in its narrow form of being able to read and write that but it is now exponentially linked with social and labour market. This proves that adult education has significant development potential and thus, it is an important force in human capital development, it is, therefore, to be promoted as an integral part of lifelong learning.

When there is a total overhaul of adult education it could lead to overcoming many challenges as people would have being enlightened enough and empowered to overcome challenges coming their way such as:

- High incidence of poverty and social exclusion
- People would have been empowered to be actively engaged in civic matters
- High level of early school leaving with a high number of adults having reading and writing problems and encouraging the need for second chance opportunities would be on a large scale.
- Overcoming these challenges will translate into raising the skill levels of low skilled workers helping them to be more knowledgeable and thereby using their power of knowledge in decision making for better participation not only in work places but at the community and national levels. Paying more attention to adult education/learning would translate into lifelong learning. This will lead to fighting social exclusion as people are undergoing learning on a daily basis. Efficiency and effectiveness will be enhanced as knowledge has increased and better living standards will be ensured.

Reforms

Reform is needed in adult education/learning so as to empower people in this knowledge based economy. Empowering them also means bringing about social change in every area of human endeavor. When mention is made of reforms, one is aiming at corrections of the existing practice in order to better the existing structures and policies so as to achieve the objectives set for adult education within a strategic framework. There is need for reform in adult education to boost the levels of participation in adult education. This means increasing the number of people participating in adult education programmes and various trainings. Broek, Buiskool and Hake (2010) express that “increasing participation is directly quantifiable in participation rate ... and to them widening participation consists of attempts to increase not only the numbers of people entering a certain kind of adult education or education in general but also participation from the so-called underrepresented groups” (p4).

The above view implies that making reform should start from an inclusive point of view. Everyone is entitled to expansion of knowledge for privileged living, thus, policies on adult education must make provisions for everyone to have education. The content of such must be based on the needs of each group being catered for. Participation in adult education can only be widened to include all if there is a reform in economic and financial policies. When policies are made to ease learning for adults, every adult in need of knowledge would hastily enroll. This aspect of financial aid is important in encouraging adult learning because adults are known to be economically responsible to care for various kinds of dependants- children, siblings and aged parents.

For reforms to be effective in adult education there is need to provide vital information to the society at large. This can come in terms of counselling and guidance services for potential adult learners. This point is emphasized by the commission of the European community (2000), that there is need to provide information to enable everyone access relevant information and advice about learning opportunities.

Guidance would lead every adult of any age and at any point to identify their needs, interests and capacities. Thus each person can make educational training and occupational decisions and manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other setting in which the capacities and competencies they have obtained could carry them (Council of the European Union 2008). Giving necessary guidance in adult education amounts to enlightening people about the need for being relevant in today’s world, politically, economically, socially and culturally.

Reform in terms of Flexibility

In making reform in the content of adult education, flexibility is a watchword. Flexibility in adult education could be perceived from many angles such as flexibility in terms of admission, (there must be different entry routes based on the intent of the adult learner); flexibility of attendance (because adult learners are not supposed to be full time learners because they have other things to do to keep their families going). There should also be flexibility in timing; this implies timing both real and virtual learning formats. Consideration should also be given to location; implying that learning locations should be easily accessible, close to their homes and in terms of e-learning; the learners should be able to access learning from home, work and everywhere in the community.

There should also be flexibility in terms of course duration. Course duration should be adequately spelt out and not unnecessarily prolonged. Putting all these into consideration will widen participation in adult education.

Reform in Content

Reform in content of adult education should be done based on the aims and objectives and domains of adult education. According to Dallen and Van (2008), such domains include:

- Education aiming at providing qualifications for the labour market,
- Education aiming at providing basic skills (second chance) not directly related to the labour market,
- Education aiming to increase knowledge in culture and art and
- Education aiming at social cohesion and citizenship.

Reforming content, therefore, would mean focusing on the general aim of adult education and the groups targeted by the specific adult education programme. One of the main aims of adult education is aiming at a knowledge economy and employment, with improved living for all. This is with a view to emphasizing the societal value of knowledge in creating an open network society. Reforming the content of adult education would also mean considering the needs of the adult learners (Hans, 2007).

Broek et.al (2008) identified four areas of content reform in adult education based on various reasons for engaging in adult education reform. Reform could be for people who are engaged in adult learning in order to obtain skills and competences in areas of their own-interest; it could be learning to bring in innovation and competitiveness in a knowledge economy and it could be adult learning/education as driver of employability;

implying learning to acquire skills that would make one to be employable; it could also be adult education as providing basic skills for participating in societal inclusion (p.101).

Based on the above, the content of adult education must be re-shaped to meet the needs of individuals and the society at large

Reforming the content of adult education implies;

- Identifying the gaps in adult education and learning opportunities for all and
- Examining the current situation in adult education practice and determining the prospects for further developments.

UNESCO (2019), is of the opinion that gaps that are likely to be filled include policies on adult education which include “infrastructure and access, government and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation” (n.p)

Akpama, Ason and Erim (2011) are of the opinion that adults must be equipped “with relevant knowledge and skills if they must serve as efficacious conduits to stem the scourge of extreme poverty and hunger in Nigeria” (p. 85).

Reform in the content of adult education should be informed by the needs of learners and the relevance to which what is being studied will be put. With reform in the content of adult education programmes, the learners would be enabled to apply, demonstrate and use some sets of knowledge and skills rather than to know isolated facts.

New curricula should be developed for adult education with the needs of the adult learners in view. This should include the use of technology in all its forms to aid learning. It should include “the development of basic digital and mathematical skills which will enable adults with lower educational level to acquire competences in order to adapt to labour market and to actively participate in society”(n.p) (EACE A. 2019).

Reforming adult education therefore, means adapting adult education content to the needs of adult learners for greater qualitative relevance in this world of technological advancement. With content reform, there will be increase in the number of adult learners with completed basic education and training for simple jobs and for improved competence on the job performance. For reform to be meaningful, every adult must be technologically enabled in every programme of adult education because the global world is now technologically driven

Reform in Methodology

Reform in content cannot be achieved without relative changes in instructional methodology. Adult learners are full of experience which they must put to use in the learning environment. This makes learning to be participatory for adult learner. Adult learning method should involve group problem solving and it should be cooperative in nature allowing for social interaction of one sort or the other. Adeyemo in Borode (2019) states that adults learn better and achieve more when learning tasks are practical and highly participatory. She states further that to choose the appropriate method for adult learners, the facilitators should be guided by factors such as what the facilitators expects from the learners, and what the learners expect from the facilitators. The method of teaching should be reformed to be adult learner centred which is usually referred to as andragogy- adult teaching method.

Before considering the pedagogical issues for adult learners, some of the characteristics of adult learners which are different from the assumptions about child learners should be examined as put forth by Knowles (1984). These include;

- Self-concept: the adult learner is matured and self-directed, thus learning is easier for him.
- Adult experience: An adult learner has accumulated a lot of experience that makes him a good resource for learning.
- Readiness to learning: An adult learner has reasons for learning.
- Orientation to learning: An adult learner has time perspective which changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. His orientation to learning thus, changes from being subject centred to one which is problem centred.
- Motivation: An adult learner is internally motivated to learn and this drives him to learn effectively.

Four principles emerge from the above as stated by Knowles (1984) and Kearsley (2010) in Adedokun and Ayodele (2018) these are

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
- Experience provides the basis of adult learning activities
- Adults are interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their jobs and personal life.
- Adult learning is problem centred rather than content – oriented.

It is therefore important for adult educators to put these into consideration while planning for methodology of adult learning. The educators should understand that there is no “the method” but a sandwich of methodologies would make adult learners learn effectively.

Adult methods of teaching and learning should be technologically inclusive in this era of fast technology. The use of digital and web technologies now represent new way of learning to which reform must be made in adult methodology because traditional teaching and learning, thinking and doing are being challenged, through the face of disruptive and constructive forces as stated by Ramdass and Masithulela (2016) in Adedokun (2018).

The digital and web technologies could be synchronous where all participants are present at the same time or asynchronous where participants access course materials on their own schedule. There must be reform in the use of technology both for the educator (as, you cannot give what you don't have) and for the learners. Any method of teaching for adult learners should be such that will help individual learners to become independent and autonomous in learning.

Quality of staff

There should be a major reform in the quality of staff employed as adult educators. Training and retraining courses must be organized for them periodically to aid effective delivery as they are the ones to facilitate learning. They must be apt in teaching and develop themselves technologically in the effective use of ICT. To ensure effective delivery, facilitators and their activities should be closely monitored and when they are well remunerated, there is hope of adequate delivery as good remuneration motivates people to deliver good services.

Reform in Researches

There should be major reform in researches carried out on adult education and its practices in Nigeria. Results of researches carried out seem not to be put to use by policy makers.

Aony (2011) notes that

“Adult educators have a vibrant and impassioned calling, yet the researchers failed the field. She explains this partly as a result of the fact “that researchers have not been able to move beyond a critique of power and oppression (p. 127).

She concludes that “adult education has eschewed any attempt to bring its research into areas that have implications for the actual practice of the field”.

Educators in the field of adult education must be apt to research issues and make researches in every vital area of adult education so as to upgrade the status of adult education not only in Nigeria but worldwide. With reforms carried out in every area of adult education, people would be drawn to the course of study and people's standard of living would be raised and life would be better for individuals and the nation and the world as a whole.

II. CONCLUSION

This author dealt on examining the various reforms needed in adult education so as to forestall attrition and to get people sensitized about the relevance of adult education to personal as well as national development. The paper examined reforms in the content of adult education; that content should be adapted to adult learners, reform in methodology; that this should consider the changing technological environment and that technology should be built into the instructional modes of adult education while considering the characteristics of adult learners. The author also stressed the importance of reform in flexibility not only in content but also in timing, location and quality of staff and that adult educators must bring about reform in the area of research, making researches have real implications for the actual practice of adult education.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above reviews and opinions, the following are recommended:

- i. There should be enlightenment programmes on adult education / learning and its programmes. The National Universities Commission, a body saddled with positive change and innovation for the delivery quality education in Nigeria should work relentlessly to bring adult education and its importance to limelight in every Nigerian University by making it compulsory for every university in Nigeria to float a course in introduction to adult education.
- ii. Facilitators should be trained to understand the psychological makeup of adult learners before planning their content and before making up their minds on the choice of relevant methodology.
- iii. The intent of adult education programme should be inclusive; reflecting the needs of every adult learner.
- iv. Information, advice and guidance services should be adequately planned to solve various learning needs of adult learner in area of emotional and psychosocial needs of adult learners.

- v. Policy makers on education in Nigeria should focus on adult education and its objectives and make sure that the objectives are achieved.
- vi. Adult education should be well funded as opposed to being underfunded as it is now. And adult educators should have adequate access to research grants that would enable them to carry out researches in adult education.

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