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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementation of Andragogical Strategies for Sustainable Development in Adult Literacy Education Programmes In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Adult literacy education encourages lifelong learning, preventing and combating high illiteracy rates, promoting a smooth transition from school to work, and is essential for good economic growth, social development, and the reduction of poverty. There is therefore a need for professional facilitators to encourage adult learners to embrace the programs through the use of andragogical strategies, which focus on the experience, needs, and interests of adult learners in a conducive environment. This paper examined the andragogy method of teaching, qualities of professional facilitators in adult literacy education programs, adult literacy education, and sustainable development. It also explored andragogical strategies for sustainable development in adult literacy education programs and challenges of implementation of andragogical strategies in adult literacy programs in Nigeria. The paper concludes that andragogical techniques which provide full opportunities for adults to participate fully in, and direct their learning by themselves, should be fully implemented for sustainable development of adult literacy education programs in Nigeria. It recommends, among others, that professional and well-trained adult educators should make use of andragogical strategies for promoting adult literacy education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Adult Literacy Education; Andragogical Strategies; Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Adult literacy education equips learners with foundational education at any level, irrespective of their previous levels of education, in order to improve their quality of life, income, ensure job security, and participate meaningfully in their social, economic, political, and cultural activities[1,2]. It is used to conscientize and re-orient adult learners to change their behavior and/or attitudes, which will condition them to embrace new and improved techniques, progressive ways, and actions towards improving their standard of living.

In Nigeria, the expectations from adult literacy education are numerous to catalog. They range from the eradication of illiteracy, poverty, school attrition, unemployment, diseases, crime, and immorality, just to mention a few. It is necessary to know that, unlike the formal school system, where strict discipline is maintained regarding attendance, punctuality, regulated programs in terms of subject exposure and class duration, and so on, adult literacy education programs are highly voluntary and flexible in nature; such flexibility will include a direct focus on the needs and interests of adult learners, and the available periods of the week they might want to attend such programs[3,4].

In recognition of the importance of adult literacy education to national development, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education was set up, whose functions, according to the National Policy on Education (2004:27), include:

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i.The co-ordination of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education programs nationwide; liaise with national, non-governmental organizations and corporate bodies for the implementation of the mass literacy programs;

ii.Train the required manpower for the state agencies;

iii.Develop curricular and didactic materials for mass literacy; and adult and non-formal education;

iv.Provide a nationally recognized basic education certificate

v.Ensure uniform standard and quality control nationwide;

Corroborating the above submission, World Bank, Ochaka and Clair, stated that an adult is expected to participate in politics and understand the dynamics of democracy, preserve the environment for sustainable development, create wealth and employment for poverty reduction, and partake in learning in order to become literate[5–7]. In essence, the education of adults is needed, in fact, by everyone, not just by a select few; everyone has to continue to learn throughout life in order to survive and evolve in a world where each has to adapt to constant change, which is a mark of development and advancement[8].

In spite of the significant role of adult literacy education programs in the development of individual participants in particular and the country in general, many adult illiterates and dropouts are yet to embrace the programs, maybe due to the method of teaching them[9–11]. Since the physiological, psychological, and social characteristics of adults are very different from those of children, their learning situation cannot be handled in the same way as that of children. In planning, design, selection of approaches, and implementation, special consideration must usually be given to these characteristics. There are a variety of teaching methods facilitators can use to transmit knowledge to adult learners during the course of teaching and learning. However, Bouchrika stated that the andragogy method of teaching is one of the most effective[11]. In essence, implementation of andragogical strategies would go a long way for the sustainability of adult and non-formal education programs in Nigeria.

The andragogical approach is learner-centered, whereby the adult learner is engaged in the learning process on the basis of his/her abilities, pace, and needs. The methods of teaching and learning, techniques, and contents of all andragogical processes are participatory. It includes both the traditional and contemporary methods of teaching adult learners. Examples of traditional methods are lecture methods, the Socratic technique, simulation, drama, games, stories, proverbs, song, symposium, workshops, panel discussion, debate, and so on. Contemporary methods include Regenerated Freirean Literacy for Empowerment and Community Technique (REFLECT), Real Literacy Resources Materials (RLM), Learner Generated Materials (LGM), Drop-in-Centre (DIC), Work Based Literacy (WBL), Place Based Literacy (PBL), and Market Based Literacy (MBL), among others[12–15]. These strategies, either traditional or contemporary, are used to facilitate teaching/learning processes in adult literacy education programs, taking into consideration the unique nature of adult learners.

The features of adult learners in adult literacy programs include the natural tendency for the learner to experience change in concept, the ability to accumulate experience, self-motivation, the readiness to learn, and the tendency to use learning for the purpose of solving their own problems[16]. A facilitator should therefore know the adult learners and establish psychological, sociological, and physiological relationships with them before any meaningful learning is promoted. There is a need for him to identify the learners' likes, dislikes, goals, background, values, ideas, age, social status, economic status, and political and religious inclination of the adult clientele.

According to Hasna and Ahmed, sustainable development is a process of development for all aspects of human life affecting sustenance, a term often used in many situations today[17,18]. National Policy on Education stated that education is an instrument that fosters the worth and development of the individual for each individual's sake and for the general development of society[19]. There is no doubt that adult literacy education is highly connected to national development, as the production of knowledge and human capacity reflects how a nation's progress is pursued, attained, and sustained. According to Akeusola and Norasyikin et al., adult literacy programs produce the personnel that are required to function in various facets of national life and development[20,21]. The catch of this paper, therefore, is to examine the andragogy method of teaching and its implementation for the sustainable development of literacy education programs in Nigeria.

ANDRAGOGY METHOD OF TEACHING

Andragogy has come to be understood as an alternative to pedagogy; a learner-focused approach for people of all ages. It can be seen as learner-centered/directed. It emphasizes the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and also emphasizes more equality between the teacher and the learner. It

also helps to create awareness and raise the consciousness of adult learners about their potential to create and refine their fortune. Andragogy, as a study of adult learning, originated in Europe in the 1950s and was then pioneered as a theory and model of adult learning in the 1970s by Malcolm Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, who defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults to learn". Pedagogy can be thought of as 'teacher-centered or directive' learning and the art and science of teaching children[9].

In his attempt to describe special features of an adult learner, or adult orientation towards learning, Knowles proposed the concept of andragogy and presented his view on what he considered the concept to be in relation to the principles and practice of adult education[22]. His argument was based on four assumptions about adult learners. The assumptions are based on the fact that as individuals mature,

1)their self-concept moves from being a dependent personality towards being self-directed;

2)they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich source of learning;

3)readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to developmental tasks of their social roles; and

4)their time perspective is one of immediacy of application, and they become performance-oriented rather than subject-centered (pp 9–13).

Andragogy asserts that adults learn best when: they feel the need to learn; they have some input into what, why, and how they learn; the learning's content and processes have a meaningful relationship to the learner's past experience; their experience is used as a learning resource; what is to be learned relates to the individual's current life situation and tasks; they have as much as autonomy as possible; the learning climate minimizes anxiety; and encourages freedom to experiment; their learning styles are taken into account; there is a cooperative learning climate; we create mechanism for mutual planning; we arrange for a diagnosis of learner needs and interests and enable the formulation of learning objectives based on the diagnosed needs and interests; we design sequential activities for achieving the objectives[5,23].

QUALITIES OF A PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR IN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Teaching and learning may depend on the situations, programs, clientele, and the needs of the people in time and space. It is necessary to note the qualities of a professional facilitator before effective teaching can take place in adult literacy education programs. According to Jayeola-Omoyeni and Okemakinde, a competent, effective, and well-trained tutor must be a good adult sociologist, psychologist, and counselor[15,24].

As a sociologist, an adult educator should identify that the learner has gone through the life stress of changing social roles. For instance, a person regarded as an adult may have many social roles to play in society. He may be a husband, head of a clan, high chief, community leader, club member, just to mention a few. It is therefore important to make allowances for the social situations in order to sustain. As a psychologist, the change agent has the basic responsibility to elicit the interest of the adult learners. He is to provide the necessary motivation that may facilitate learning. For example, the learners' needs, interests, experience, emotional behavior, and so on. As a counselor, an adult educator is abreast of information on educational and methodological options necessary for a specific group of adult learners in a learning situation. He advises the learners with a view to allowing them to develop regular learning habits and gain confidence in their ability to learn.

The qualities of a good facilitator should be a reflection of the basic sociological, psychological, and counseling concepts in the teaching of adult learners in adult literacy education programs as stated above. Alabi and Okemakinde stated that a successful tutor of adults should consider the following as some of his tasks[25,26]:

Understand and provide for the needs of adults in a learning situation.

Know the community needs.

Know how to use the various methods and techniques of instruction

Possess good communication skills.

Know how to locate and use educational materials and aids.

Continue his education.

Know how to provide adequate feedback to learners about their progress.

Have a good knowledge of the subject matter

Demonstrate the ability to help the learners to achieve those things they missed at formal school system during their childhood and adolescence

Be very flexible in the application of the curriculum contents and methods.

Organize the class comfortably to cater for the physiological changes inherent in adulthood.

Radiate love among the adult learners.

It can be derived that the promising way of working at the task is that of cooperation, founded on mutual respect, acceptance, and trust. Since the adult learner in this context is in the program to achieve his felt need, it is up to the facilitator to create the right atmosphere and to give the client a feeling of security and recognition.

Some of the ways to attain this with the application of the principle of participation according to Balogun, Owoade, and Bouchrika include[3,23,27]:

Participation in the clarification of the starting situation (a guided self-diagnosis concerning all relevant matters);

Participation in defining, operationally, the objectives of the enterprise;

Participation in the relevant decision process concerning procedure, methods, techniques, and so on; and

Participation in the evaluation process.

It is noteworthy that participation is very important and useful in the implementation of andragogic principles in adult literacy education programs in at least two ways. In the first instance, it gives the adult learners a feeling of being respected for their own worth, as learning material is treated in the same way that they are accustomed to in their home or work, or in a better way. An atmosphere of cooperation is very conducive to overcoming resistance grounded in feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, incapability, and so on. Participation also prevents choosing objectives, subjects, methods, and ways of learning that are not in line with the personality features of the adult learners involved, nor with their needs, intentions, and capacities.

ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

The importance of education to human beings cannot be overemphasized. It has been defined as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the needs of the society where the education is based. In order to establish its relevance to national development, it is on the concurrent list in the Nigerian fiscal policy.

Adult literacy education refers to educational programs that are organized to equip learners with foundational writing, reading, calculating, and problem-solving skills for all ages, regardless of the content or place of study, once the program is flexible enough to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries and the community. It is that form of education program that is properly planned and methodologically applied for the provision of remedial, continuing, and other forms of education to adults and youths outside the formal education system. It can also be defined as any organized and sustained educational activities that take place both within and outside educational institutions, for persons of all ages. According to Ige and Fasakin (2014), adult literacy education aims at meeting the educational needs of learners not enrolled in formal education, those who have dropped out of school, or those who never had a chance to receive formal schooling, due to a complex and intricate set of social and economic reasons, as well as the failure of basic education systems to retain students. These may be adults, youths, or children[28]. It is also conceived as any organized educational activity outside the established formal school educational system to serve identifiable learners and learning outcomes.

The goals of adult literacy education now include: preventing and combating high illiteracy rates, unemployment, promoting a smooth transition from school to work, social inclusion, and social cohesion. It is characterized by: a great potential for a multiplier effect; that is, it is more easily replicated as it takes a short time to learn a trade; a very flexible mode as it is designed to meet specific needs of the learners; short or limited time span as learners go straight to the main task; evaluation is determined by performance on the job; and progress is at the learners' rate[29].

Adult literacy education, among others, always aims at:

Reducing adult illiteracy rate.

Conscientizing adults towards their socio-economic and political transformation.

Improving the living standard of the adult learners.

Creating awareness of the need to be more educated and continue learning.

Providing educational needs for those who had no initial access to formal education.

Balogun, quoting Brookfield, advocated the following principles of adult literacy education[27,30]:

i.Participation is voluntary;

ii.Respect for the self-worth of the learner underlies all

educational efforts;

iii.Adult literacy education is collaborative;

iv.An interplay of action and reflection is at the heart of adult literacy education;

v.Fostering the spirit of critical reflection means fostering ways of thinking and living, alternative to those the learner already inhabits;

vi.The aim of adult literacy education practice is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults; such adults will see themselves as pro-active, initiative individuals who engage in a continuous recreation of their personal interest, work world and social circumstances, and not as reactive individuals buffeted by the uncontrollable forces of circumstance (pp.17)

There is no doubt that adult literacy education offers a wider opportunity for many people because of its wider area of coverage. It is equally important to state that, apart from the enviable use and values of adult literacy education to a wide range of clientele and its importance to national development as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004:27), this form of education is at a crossroads, a deep, infectious and outrageous crisis that is yearning for the urgent attention of all the stakeholders. However, one of the major challenges being confronted by adult literacy education programs in Nigeria is the application of appropriate methods of teaching in the programs[31].

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The history of discussions on education for sustainable development can be traced to 2005 at the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. According to Wikipedia, it is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[32]. Sustainable development is a changing process that not only ensures the social well-being of the present generation, but also guarantees future generations' needs and expectations. Ospina and Akeusola emphasized that from an educational perspective, evolving sustainable development can be viewed as placing a system of values and ethics at the center of society's concern and encouraging a meeting of disciplines, a linking of knowledge and expertise, and rendering human understanding more integrated and contextual, as well as opening up new horizons for justice and equality[20,33].

Adult literacy education encourages lifelong learning, starting at the beginning of life, and is grounded in radical transformation of society and a change in the moral character of society, and is also essential for good economic growth, social development, and the reduction of poverty.

ANDRAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

It is paramount for a professional in the area of adult literacy education to understand the unique learning requirements of adult learners to ensure that he encourages them during training intervention. Malcolm Knowles, who arguably stands as one of the most influential writers in this field, distinguishes adult learning from "the 'pedagogical'" approach of child learning. To him, the process of engaging adult learners in the learning experience is known as andragogy.

For sustainable development in adult literacy education programs, training needs for adult learners have to be designed in a way that meets the following core principles of adult learning:

1.Self-Directing: Adults need to know the benefits, values, and purposes of a learning program. They need to know why they are learning what they are learning. This is necessary on the grounds that they live under a large degree of self-governance and according to their own laws, beliefs and values.

2.Learn by Doing: Adults learn through direct experience; therefore, their training and learning interventions must include active and practical participation in the learning process.

3.Relevance: The content of the learning exercise must be meaningful and relevant to the adult learners, their lives, and their business.

4.Experience: Adult learners need to be able to draw upon their past experiences to aid their learning. Learning exercises should be ones they can relate to, as well as refer to their direct past life, work, and social experiences.

5.All of the Senses: The facilitator must make sure that the learning interventions have appropriately proportioned delivery techniques that meet the needs of audio, visual, reading/writing, dependent, and independent learning preferences.

6.Practice: Adult learners often engage in learning because a problem needs to be solved. Practicing skills in a controlled environment allows them to grow self-efficacy in new tasks that prepare them to act autonomously outside of the learning environment.

7.Personal Development: As learners get older, their reasons for participation in learning programs often move from external drivers (such as getting a promotion) to internal drivers, like simple learning out of pure pleasure or interest in learning something new.

8.Involvement: Adults need to feel as though they have a sense of responsibility, control, and decision-making over their learning. This requires the flexibility of the learning situation, the learning programs, and, most importantly, the facilitator to actively involve the adult learner in a way that allows them to have a degree of control over what they do, or how much they learn. In essence, effective adult learning programs have a plan for learner feedback and consultation[22].

Making use of adult learners' previous experiences and knowledge effectively in order to address adult learners' desires could prompt them to relate their life experiences to what they are learning now and will provide opportunities for them to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. To Knowles, adults learn best when: they understand why something is important to know or do; they have the freedom to learn in their own way; learning is experimental; the time is right for them to learn; and the process is positive and encouraging[22].

Adult literacy education can be made quite qualitative when the following are taken into consideration through the implementation of andragogical principles:

Establishing a climate and educational setting conducive to learning. For example, comfortable seating arrangement, good ventilation and lighting, an environment free from distractions but loaded with empathetic feelings, cordiality, and respect, among others.

Involvement of learners in curriculum planning and learning tasks is of great importance and benefits.

Analysis of diversified needs for learning, and the help given to learners in the process of realizing their objectives.

Develop content and programs that are relevant to the needs of learners.

Design a pattern of learning experiences, analyze adults' experiences, and build it into the teaching/learning tasks.

Using appropriate methodologies and materials for the realization of learning tasks.

Diagnosing and evaluating learning needs, as it provides information and resources that promote and enhance knowledge and skills.

Learners should play a part in diagnosing their needs, planning, conducting, and evaluating the educational experience on which they embark; they have fixed habits and patterns of thought which leave them less open-minded to new ideas than children. The educational process frequently needs to free them from these preconceptions[13,34].

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ANDRAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA

Impediments to the implementation of andragogical strategies in Nigeria include, but are not limited to, the following:

1)Appointment of non-professional and untrained facilitators who do not understand the use of andragogical techniques. In most cases, primary school teachers or School Certificate holders are usually employed as adult literacy education tutors.

2)Problems of time and group management by both adult learners and facilitators create impediments to andragogical strategies.

3)A non-conducive learning environment that is not conducive to the successful handling of andragogical strategies.

4)Dearth of research in the area of andragogical techniques.

5)Inadequate relevant materials and media on andragogical techniques due to poor funding.

CONCLUSION

Since the physiological, psychological, and social characteristics of adults are different from those of children, their learning situation cannot be handled in the same way as that of children. In planning, designing, and selecting approaches, and in implementation, special consideration must be given to these features. In essence, andragogical techniques which provide full opportunities for adults to participate fully in, and direct their learning by themselves, should be fully implemented for sustainable development of adult literacy education programs in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders in the field of adult literacy education should advertise and set aside resources to popularize the use of andragogical strategies for facilitating adult

learning.

Professional and well-trained adult educators should help train community leaders and interested people in the use of andragogical strategies for promoting adult literacy education.

Government at all levels should employ professional and well-trained facilitators in the area of adult literacy education who understand the use of andragogical techniques.

Researchers in the field of adult literacy education are enjoined to focus their attention on andragogical strategies and how they will promote the programs in Nigeria.

DECLARATIONS

About the Author

Okemakinde Sunday Oyelowo is an Associate Professor of Adult Education. He obtained his Bachelor degree (Adult Education/Yoruba), Master's degree (Adult Education/ Social Welfare), and Doctoral degree (Adult Education) from University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He was former Head of Department and the Dean, School of Adult, Non-Formal and Special Education, Coordinator, Centre for literacy and Continuing Education, Chairman, Conference and Publication Committee. He has attended more than 35 conferences and has published more than 60 scholarly articles in reputable local and international journals.

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