

Managing Adult Education to Meet 21st Century Development Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper examined the concept of adult education, ascertained the objectives of adult education in Nigeria, assessed the management of adult education in Nigeria, analyzed adult education and development in Nigeria, identified the problems of adult education in meeting 21st century development challenges in Nigeria, and highlighted the strategies for managing adult education to meet 21st century development challenges in Nigeria. The paper concluded that in the 21st century, Nigeria is facing development challenges. If properly implemented and efficiently managed, adult education can bring about the desired positive changes because it plays significant roles in economic, social and political development. It is widely acknowledged that growth in a country's economy will not reduce poverty unless the poor are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective through adult education. Therefore, Nigerians would need some kind of formal and non - formal education and training for the country to overcome its development challenges. It was suggested among others that government should ensure that adult education facilitators are adequately remunerated to contend with the prices of things in the open market; their remuneration should be made very lucrative to attract the best brains; managers of adult education should ensure that adult education programmes are effectively managed to meet 21st century development challenges in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Management, Adult Education, Development, Challenges, 21st Century, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

In this 21st century, Nigeria as a country is faced with economic, educational, political, and socio - cultural challenges. These development challenges have indeed become the immanent preoccupation of post - independent Nigeria, partly because underdevelopment and persistent poverty among the citizenry seem not to be responding positively to the policy strategies and enormous resources so far committed to the amelioration of the problem (Elewa, 2021). The 21st century development challenges present themselves as predicament. While some of the predicaments are located in the dynamics of the larger society's problems, some are located within the school system. The development challenges within the school system have been confronted with pervasive lack of conducive teaching and learning environment and ineffective management, especially in adult educational institutions.

In spite of the concerted effort of mass literacy, adult and non - formal education commission in administering, controlling, financing, and supervising adult education programmes, the unfortunate situation reflecting in inadequate management and improper coordination of adult education still persist. This situation seems to be associated with problems and challenges confronting adult education as a result of negligence on the part of government. Prominent among these challenges are improper implementation of adult education policy, insufficient adult educators, incompetent facilitators/instructors, poor state of infrastructure, poor monitoring and evaluation of adult education programmes, poor planning and insufficient funding among others. If properly implemented, adult education can bring about the desired developmental changes. Adult education plays a significant role in social change, as it is now widely admitted that growth and development will not reduce poverty unless people are able

to actively participate in it. such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education (Wami, 2020). It is in the light of the above facts that the discussion in this paper are based on managing adult education to meet 21st century development challenges in Nigeria.

Concept of Adult Education

Adult education has been defined in various ways by scholars of education. Fasokun in Wami, Nwafor and Deekor (2019) defined adult education as concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping and assisting adults to live more successfully as useful acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. Wanyama in Wami and Deekor (2020) asserted that adult education plays a significant role in the development process of any society. It is widely recognized as a powerful tool for eradicating adult literacy, reducing poverty, and attaining the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It provides basic education and training opportunities to adults and out of school youths, aged fifteen years above, who have either missed out on formal education in their childhood or for one reason or another dropped out of school before attaining sustainable levels of literacy.

Adult education is a broad field of education that covers different areas of human learning. The basic tenet of adult education is the conviction that learning should not be restricted to once - in - a - lifetime opportunity (Oghenekohwo, Tonukari & Samuel, 2020). Through adult education, many adults have found their way onto different paths of learning and have made up for lost time by discovering their potential and skills, achieving things they never knew they could achieve. Natukho, Amutabi and Otango in Oghenekohwo (2017) opined that adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self - educating activities in order to gain new

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forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. Adult education is any organized educational programme designed for adults in order to acquire skills, upgrade their knowledge and enhance their standard of living (Oghenekohwo et al, 2022).

Adult education is by all age lifelong learning process that has both general and specific objectives respectively. Bala, Osagie and Yakubu (2019) averred that adult education is any educational activity that caters for the need of adults to improve their performance in all areas of adult life so as to improve their living standard. Omolewa in Alumona (2022) stated that adult education is a discipline that encompasses all education and training activities by adults, either for professional or personal reasons. Bacchus (2018) posited that adult education is one of the fields of academic endeavour that is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio - economic, cultural, political and environmental problems. This is positive association between adult education programmes and increased levels of self - esteem and high levels of knowledge and skills which thereby encourage positive and active engagement of people in their own development. According to Emeya (2022) adult education is an inevitable instrument for life - long and life - wide learning. In the 21st century, it has become associated with every life - long learning initiative for the adults.

The concept of adult education has enjoyed numerous definitions. This is owing to the broad nature of the discipline and the various contexts in which it has been viewed. Oyebamiji in Taylor, Jack and Wami (2022) opined that adult education is a response to the educational needs of adults and their societies. Such needs may vary according to individual and community differences; hence the fluid nature of adult education, as it evolves in accordance with the changes in circumstances of individuals and their societies. Providing another comprehensive and all - encompassing definition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its 19th General Conference in Nairobi, 1976, as reported in Wami (2020) regarded adult education as:

The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges and universities as well as apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behavior in the two - fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

According to Taylor, Jack and Wami (2020) The above definition explains the meaning, content and scope of adult education. It reveals the different modes in which adult education can take place, whether through formal, non - formal or informal settings. This definition has greatly influenced the educational policies of many nations, including Nigeria. It views adult education as the process by which people continually improve their functionality towards developing themselves and their society. In this

regard, adult education becomes a functional type of education which increases people's abilities to perform effectively and productively in the development of their society.

The Objectives of Adult Education in Nigeria

The specific objectives of adult education as submitted by Oghenekohwo (2017, p.11) are to:

- 1) Reduce drastically the level of illiteracy thereby promoting basic literacy that can assist adults to address all forms of poverty of knowledge and know - how;
- 2) Empower people through the creation of access to basic education without restriction;
- 3) Promote life - long learning that makes everyone functionally inclined all through life;
- 4) Enhance learning orientation and opportunity among adults of ages without barriers, limitation and restrictions;
- 5) Mitigate all forms of social exclusions that are designed to limit access to life - long learning; and
- 6) Engender learning opportunities to all persons irrespective of age, sex, position, class, race, and colour.

The goals of adult education as stipulated by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014, p.30) are to:

- 1) Provide functional basic education for adult and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include migrant folks, youths and adolescents; persons who left the formal school system early and are now willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories of disadvantaged groups; who are unable to have access to the conventional educational system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances.
- 2) Provide remedial and life - long education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; and
- 3) Provide in - serve, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.

Management of Adult Education in Nigeria

The hub of implementing government policies depends on the managerial competence of the managers. This is because policies of adult education become meaningless if they are only on paper. The only way in which this situation can arise is when there are no qualified personnel to manage adult education programmes. In education, it is the management that discern and influence goals of government policy on education. To achieve these goals, the managers ought to know much about education and the management of the schools. Their professional orientation or values permit them to make wise decisions from one alternative to the other and to provide reasons for their decision. The managers are expected to bring their expertise knowledge in addressing the challenges that may arise in course of performing their duties. From the foregoing, it is expected that for effective managerial role that will lead to achievement of adult education goals and objectives, qualified personnel with sound knowledge of adult education should be persons that should be appointed to manage adult education programmes in Nigeria.

Management is an integral component of every organized society because it helps to maintain and expand the relevance, effectiveness, and productivity or usefulness of various complex institutions available to society (Okoroma, 2019). Institutions of learning in every society are expected to survive and flourish but this is dependent largely on the quality of services rendered by administrators or managers. Therefore, to meet 21st century development challenges through adult education, managers of adult education programmes are expected to perform their basic duties of discern and influence the development of goals and policies to teaching and learning, facilitate the planning and operation of appropriate programmes for teaching and learning and procure materials. This enhances the implementation and achievement of the goals of the programmes of adult education.

It is deducible from the forgoing that a well - planned management strategy is vital for the implementation and achievement of the goals of adult education in Nigeria that will help in meeting 21st century development challenges through adult education. Unfortunately, the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non - formal Education in Nigeria whose duties among others is to provide the managerial and supervisory role to adult education centres in Nigeria, appeared to have failed. The snail speed rate of improvement in the quality of teaching instructors and output of adult literacy centres suggests that the commission appeared to have failed in its managerial role. It is therefore, imperative for the commission to wake up from slumber and ensure the effective management of adult education to meet 21st century development challenges in Nigeria.

Adult Education and Development in Nigeria

Adult education is a foundation for progress in areas such as human capital, health, nutrition and the development of institutions and democracy; therefore, the role of adult education in development can be comprehended through the complex relationships existing between all forms and the economic, political, social and cultural determination factors of Nigerian development in particular and Africa as a whole (Jinna & Maikano in Wami, 2020). The economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It is now well established that, alongside health care, sanitation, and nutrition that improve people's standard of living and productivity by reducing sickness and mortality rates and by increasing life expectancy, adult basic education has equipped recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills, yield high rates on investment, thereby enhancing labour productivity. An educated population also provides a more attractive investment climate. Thus, investment in the development of human capital, through adult education, is crucial for developing labour force and managerial know - how, able to compete in today's global economy (Seya 2014).

Formal education alone is not enough for playing the role of developing human capital. This is because the categories of the population who have had formal education and training might need to be updated and skilled through adult education, mainly because today's knowledge society tends

to render previously acquired knowledge and skills which is termed inappropriate and obsolete (Jinna & Maikano in Wami, 2020). Adult education is also instrumental in familiarizing the active population of Nigeria with information and communication technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of Nigerian economy in global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge - based economic structures and information societies that comprise networks of individuals, firms, and countries linked electronically in inter - dependent and interactive relationships.

Adult education also plays a major role in social development. It is now widely admitted that growth will not reduce poverty unless poor people are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education. Indeed, the Nigerian population will need some kind of formal and non - formal education and training to be able to benefit from basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, the development of new medicines, and thus be in a position to free itself from diseases that devastate poor people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other parasites. Adult education will also be needed to enable the Nigerian poor to really take advantage of programmes aimed at protecting orphans and vulnerable children to safe water and basic sanitation (Samisideen, 2016).

The role of adult education in development is not limited only to economic and social spheres; it also has a political dimension (Aminu, 2022). Aminu averred that there is a strong link between adult learning and democracy. This is so because "substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed" (UNESCO in Wami, 2020). For democracy to be achieved, adult education is needed as to inform Nigerians of their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels. It is today admitted that the lack of recognition of the need to involve civil society, especially grassroots organizations, by giving them a voice in decision - making and means to participate effectively in society is one of the major causes of development failure in many African countries. Abuse of human rights and social justice leading to the exclusion of important segments of society, have also constituted stumbling blocks to economic and social progress on the continent and paved the way to violent conflicts (Seya, 2014).

Adult education proves to be a powerful tool for favouring inclusive development through democracy, thereby ensuring peace and stability, as a number of studies have shown that prevention (through adult education) is much more effective than intervention (Wami, 2020). Prevention of political disorders and civil unrest can be made possible through various adult education strategies. A number of adult education policies that promote democracy and peace have been proposed during the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (UNESCO in Wami, 2020). They tend to attain their objectives through various strategies that promote an active civil society, reinforce gender democracy and help to the extent that the world at large is experiencing the

effects of multi - faceted globalization with varying degrees of impact on peoples and cultures. It is apparent from the foregoing that adult educations an indispensable vector for social, economic and political progress in any society.

Problems of Adult Education in Meeting 21st Century Development Challenges in Nigeria

Adult education encounters a lot of problems that hamper it from meeting 21st century development challenges in Nigeria. Amongst these problems are:

1) Misconception of the Principles and Desirability of Adult Education in the Society

Adult education has been misconceived to mean a “night school” meant for old men and women that are about to die. This misconception questions its desirability and effectiveness in driving the socio - economic development activities of the country (Mbalisi, 2015).

2) Illiteracy

The rural dwellers who have the highest population of illiterate adults do not know the importance of education and cannot afford to buy some instructional materials. Most adults still believe that “you cannot teach an old dog a new trick”. This means that an adult cannot learn a new thing (Wami, 2020).

3) Accessibility

In the world of rapid changes, adult education should be established at the door steps of all the interested adult learners so as to avail the opportunity for learning. However, all citizens should have the opportunity for learning. However, all citizens should have the opportunity to develop themselves throughout their life, at whatever age, to acquire knowledge and know how to better pilot their life transition to improve their quality of life, to develop their potential, to experience the joy of learning. In that perspective, no area should be left. In that context, the rise of fees to attend evening courses is becoming a huge issue all over the country (Aminu, 2022).

4) Lack of Political Will

The institutional framework for the implementation of adult education programmes have been provided, but the will to match the declarations in the framework with actions is lacking. This may be because political leaders lack understanding of the relevance of adult education to national development or they tactically do not want a vast majority of adults to be educated in order not to be empowered to start asking questions about how the nation’s affairs are run (Mbalisi, 2015).

5) Lack of Infrastructure

Infrastructure to implement adult education programmes is lacking due to paucity of fund. This either hampers progress in the achievement of the objectives of adult education programmes or leads to closure of many adult education centres (Wami, 2020).

6) Lack of Mobilization

Many interested learners are not aware of the existence of the adult education centres and even the programmes they are supposed to enroll. Thus seriously affects efforts to

achieve Education for All (EFA). Even, there are some philanthropists who are willing to contribute their own quota but due to lack of advocacy and mobilization, they cannot do so (Aminu, 2022).

7) Lack of Instructional Materials

This has led to the use of instructional materials meant for children in formal school sector and hence, adult learners are discouraged from active participation in their learning programmes. This is because most of them see themselves as been reduced to the status of the children those materials were designed for (Wami, 2020).

8) Lack of Trained Personnel

There is paucity of trained facilitators for the implementation of adult education programmes in Nigeria. Many people plying the business of adult education in Nigeria are not trained in the principles, theories and practices of adult education and thereby may not help to realize the objectives of adult education in Nigeria (Mbalisi, 2015)

9) Poor Remuneration of Facilities

Most states and local government areas do not pay the facilitators regularly; the 7, 500 naira stipulated in the benchmark meant for the remuneration of the facilitators cannot be paid by almost all the states. In some cases, even facilitators are not being paid for so many months (Aminu, 2022).

10) Adult Learners’ Self - Concept

The feeling that adults can participate and perform better in a programme results in increase in participation and better performance of learners in any given adult education programme. Whereas the feeling that the programme is not for adults and even when they participate, would not perform better, results in low turn - out and poor performance of learners in any given adult education programme (Mbalisi, 2015).

11) Socio - Cultural Factors

Traditional social structures that exist in a given society may lead to either acceptance or rejection of any adult education programmes that are planned to be introduced in the society. For fear that the programmes may lead to disruption of social relations, loss of traditional knowledge, norms, values, and customs will result in the rejection of the programmes; whereas the hope of positive change and development that will accompany the programmes will result in the acceptance of the programmes (Wami, 2020).

12) Poor Record Keeping

There is a problem of record keeping in adult education which has seriously affected the data - base needed for adequate planning and implementation of adult education intervention programmes. This also affects the tracking of learners’ performance and transition from one level to the other (Aminu, 2022).

13) Poor Attitude of the Target Group

Yearly statistics of NMEC have shown that most of the targeted groups have not really embraced the NFE programme. It is on record that average of 1.7m learners out

of over 44 million projected learners had only embraced the programme (Aminu, 2022).

14) Inadequate Funding

The budgetary allocation to adult education at all levels of government is grossly inadequate especially when compared to the formal education sector. Most importantly, NFE is excluded in the share of 2% of consolidated fund meant for basic education in spite of policy provision. However, it is noted that there is problem of accountability and transparency in the management of funds allocated to NFE sector (Aminu, 2022).

Strategies for Managing Adult Education to Meet 21st Century Development Challenges in Nigeria

In order to combat the problems and manage adult education to meet 21st century development challenges, the following strategies are preferred by the writer:

1) Provision of Necessary Educational Facilities

The federal, state and local government should ensure that the necessary educational facilities for adult education are available in rural and urban areas. Government should be actively involved in the provision of education especially in the adult education sector. The Federal Ministry of Education through the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non - Formal Education should effectively monitor, supervise, and inspect adult education facilities and centres and ensure their maintenance for effective delivery of adult education programmes.

2) Professional Training

Facilitators of adult education programmes would need to undergo professional training and development from time to time. Adult education instructors would need the professional developmental training to equip themselves with necessary skills and knowledge for effective implementation of adult education. This training would help the facilitators to understand the importance of adult education and the central role that are to play in adult learners' successful outcome. This will help in the methodology and the teaching curriculum of adult education.

3) Adequate Funding of Adult Education Programmes

Government at all levels should ensure that adult education programmes are adequately provided with funds for smooth and effective delivery of the programmes. Nzequeme (2011) opined that money is a very important resource needed in the educational system and that needs to be well allocated because through it, all other vital elements in the school can be obtained. Ebong (2013) posited that money is the fuel and lubricant which propels any business or social organization or activity to be financed. Money is needed for putting up infrastructure, furnishing the schools and offices, paying of academic and non - academic staff; purchase and maintenance of equipment and other needs as training on - the - job or in - service course for the required manpower. The various points, point to the fact that effective provision of finance in the delivery of quality educational endeavour for the development of the education sub - sector cannot be over - emphasized (Abali & Suanukordo, 2015).

4) Provision of Incentives for Adult Learners

In the face of pervasive poverty that faces adults in Nigeria, monitoring adults to participate in education and training programmes that are not employer sponsored would require a variety of incentives such as subsidized child care service, flexible scheduling, and career and personal guidance services.

5) Coherence of Programme

A coherent adult education policy should have a unifying mission, as well as organizational structural mechanisms for coordinating programmes and activities. Adult education programmes should be integrated in such a way to ensure relationship among programmes and the needs of adult participants as well as the needs of the society.

2. Conclusion

In the 21st century, Nigeria is facing development challenges. If properly implemented and effectively managed, adult education can bring about the desired positive changes. Adult education plays significant roles in economic, social and political development. It is widely acknowledged that growth in a country's economy will not reduce poverty unless the poor are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective through adult education. Therefore, Nigerians would need some kind of formal and non - formal education and training for the country to overcome its development challenges. The effective and efficient managing of adult education becomes imperative in the present circumstance.

3. Suggestions

Based on the discussions made so far, the following suggestions were made:

- 1) Government should ensure that adult education facilitators are adequately remunerated to contend with the prices of things in the open market. Their remuneration should be made very lucrative to attract the best brains.
- 2) Government should enforce the effective implementation of the regulations laid down by the federal ministry of education as regards the provisions of adult education for improvement.
- 3) Effective quality monitoring unit should be set up by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non - Formal Education and provide necessary support to ensure minimum standards are made in adult education programmes across the country.
- 4) Teaching and learning materials for both facilitators and adult learners should be made available in adult education classes for effective delivery of adult education programmes.
- 5) Managers of adult education should ensure that adult education programmes are effectively managed to meet 21st century development challenges in Nigeria.

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