

TOWARDS ENHANCING ADULT EDUCATORS' QUALITY IN NIGERIA TO REDUCE ADULT ILLITERACY RATE BY FIFTY PERCENT BEFORE 2030

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Abstract

This paper examined strategies towards enhancing adult educators' quality in Nigeria to reduce adult illiteracy rate by 50 percent before 2030. The National Commission on Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education report states that over seventy million adult Nigerians are still illiterates despite United Nations emphasis on education for all at least at the Basic Education level which adult literacy is a part of. The Nigerian government through the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education have done much by providing adult literacy programmes to these adult illiterates. However, the effective acquisition of literacy skill by adult learners has been a fundamental problem confronting adult literacy programme in the country. Hence, the need to enhance adult educators' quality. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, this paper is an attempt to discuss the strategies of enhancing adult educators' quality in order to reduce illiteracy in the country. It is in view of the above that this paper discuss who an adult educator is, the characteristics and functions of an adult educator as well as strategies which can enhance adult educators' quality to include; repositioning adult educators training curriculum, adequately motivating adult educators, provision of in-service training programme, adequate provision of instructional materials as well as proper monitoring.

Keywords: Adult Educator, Quality, Adult Illiteracy

Introduction

On Friday October 1, 2022, Nigeria celebrated 62 years of independence. This 62nd anniversary was important and significant for us to critically examine the Nigerian education system, assess the journey so far and redefine the way forward. Nigeria over the years has been regarded as the giant of Africa. This is as a result of the natural as well as the human resources that Nigeria as a nation is blessed with. The Nigerian educational institutions in the early days of independence were built on discipline, honour and integrity. Today in Africa, where are we? Despite being the giant of Africa, seventy-six million adults are still non-literates (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Having seen the alarming rate of illiteracy in the country, what then are we celebrating? Is there any need to celebrate? It

is good to celebrate if such will help us to think about the past, reflect on the present and think about the future of adult literacy in the country.

Adult illiteracy simply refers to the inability of an adult to read, write and compute with figures while adult literacy on the other hand refers to the ability of an adult to read, write and compute with figures. Hence, adult literacy education is that education which equips an adult with the skills of reading, writing, numeracy and general life skills. It is important to note that reducing illiteracy will lead to the reduction of poverty and hunger. This is because literacy education does not only enable people to acquire reading, writing and numeracy skills, but it also enables people to acquire other productive and livelihood skills that will enable them to be functional and

responsible citizens (Betiang, Ekuri and orim, 2017). Corroborating this, the International Literacy Institute (2010), states that literacy is a pre requisite for economic growth in developing nations and that in a compelling global environment while illiteracy lead to a dwindling economy. This implies that literacy education is an inevitable measure for national development. According to Nzeneri (2010), literacy is the key for individual and national development, the key which unlocks the door of modernization and ensures improved living standard of people and protect the fundamental rights of the adults.

It is obvious that the importance of literacy cannot be overemphasized. However, from our observation, many non-literates adults who would have loved to acquire literacy skills shy away due to lack of facilities and due to the negative attitude of some adult educators. The situation therefore clearly shows the importance of facilities and adult educators towards the eradication of illiteracy in our society. Hence, for the effective eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria, adequate attention must be given to the facilities available at Adult Education centres as well as the availability, adequacy and quality of adult educators.

Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FGN, 2013), this means that financial and non-financial resources be invested in making sure that adult educators quality is improved upon if illiteracy is to be reduced in the country. Based on the above background, this study therefore is an attempt towards analyzing ways in which adult educators' quality can be enhanced in order to bring about the reduction of illiteracy in Nigeria by at least 50 percent in the year 2030.

Adult Educator

An adult educator refers to one who helps an adult learner to learn effectively. To Nwabuko and Ebirirm (2017), an adult educator is one who helps adult learner(s) to learn anything useful. The adult educator is not just the teacher in the classroom teaching

a group of adults but includes one who is a health educator, agricultural extension worker, a community development worker, a vocational skills trainer and any other person who helps mostly adults to learn something.

Characteristics of an adult educator

An adult educator is expected to possess certain qualities to be regarded as an effective adult educator. Ani as reported in Nwabuko and Ebirim (2017) posited that the characteristics of an adult educator are those qualities that help him or her to function as an effective adult educator.

Thus, the following qualities must be possessed by an educator to qualify as an adult educator:

1. The educator must be skilled and experienced in the theory and practice of Adult Education. He or she should be knowledgeable in Adult Education and also capable of practicing it;
2. The adult educator must know the community where he operates and what the community needs. An understanding of what goes on in the community by an adult educator helps him to work very successfully in that community;
3. The adult educator must understand those things that motivate the adult learner to participate in any learning programme, i.e. the interests of the adult educator;
4. The adult educator must understand what the adult learner need and be able to provide that to the adult learners. He must always try to understand the needs of the adult learners and provide them;
5. The adult educator must have good communication skills and also ready to listen to what other people have to say. The adult educator must know how to use different techniques of communication to learners for them to understand him or her;
6. The adult educator must know where to locate and use educational materials to help adult learn more effectively;
7. The adult educator must be open-minded; this means that the educator must be ready to allow learners reach him or her so as to help them in their educational needs.

Functions of an Adult Educator

The functions of an adult educator according to Nwabuko and Ebirim (2017) are as follows:

1. The adult educator must have the ability to find out or diagnose the needs of the individual, the institution and the society for adult learning activities that are relevant to the organizational goal;
2. The adult educators function includes the ability to establish and manage an organizational structure where there will be an effective development and operation of Adult Education programme. This is known as organizational function.
3. The adult educator must possess the planning function. The adult educator must be able to formulate objectives to meet the assessed needs and also be able to design a programme of activities to achieve the objectives.
4. The adult educator must possess the administrative and training function. He or she must be able to institute and supervise those procedures that facilitate effective operation of an Adult Education programme.

Strategies towards enhancing adult educators' quality in Nigeria

Importance of an adult educator cannot be overemphasized in a nation where over sixty million adults are illiterates. This therefore means that for illiteracy to be eradicated, quality adult educators are required. However, since no educational system rises above the quality of its teachers, hence the need to improve the quality of adult educators include; repositioning adult educators training curriculum, adequately motivating adult educators, provision of in-service training programme, adequate provision of instructional materials as well as proper monitoring.

Repositioning Adult Educators Training Curriculum

The term curriculum has different operational meanings to many educators, even among curriculum specialist. However, Umoren and Akpan (2011), defined

curriculum as an organized course of study undertaken by a student under the aegis of the school, college or university. To Eze (2016), curriculum is that instrument whereby the educational system strives to attain its goals. Commenting on the concept of curriculum,

Nnadi (2011) defined curriculum as the total experiences with which the school deals in educating young and adult members of her society. To him, curriculum is a deliberate systematic and planned attempts made by the school to change the behavior of the members of the society in which it situates.

Therefore, curriculum in Adult Education is the totality of all the learning experiences which is provided by the learning centre to the adult learner. This therefore means that for any educational system to be solid, its curriculum should be geared towards bringing solutions to the varied problems persisting in such societies as it is evident in developed nations of the world.

Consequently, it is therefore imperative that the present adult educators training curriculum be repositioned to include vocational skills programme in order to provide adult educators with skills which they will in turn impart on the basic literacy learners in the various learning centres. More so, students in the Departments of Adult Education especially in Colleges of Education should be allowed to combine Adult Education with courses like English Language, Social studies, integrated sciences, computer sciences. Mathematics. This is consequent upon the fact that adult basic literacy is part of the basic education sub-sector. Furthermore, combining Adult Education with the aforementioned courses will also encourage more candidates to enroll in the programme as observed in the universities. It is also important to state here that students undergoing training to become adult educators in the Department of Adult Education be adequately exposed to andragogical principles which will in no small measure enhance their effectiveness while practicing in the field.

Adequate Provision of Motivation for Adult Educator

Motivation has to do with the internal state or mental and psychological set in an individual which compels, energizes, sustains and directs the individuals' activity towards a goal. Wikipedia (2016), defined motivation as a theoretical construct used to explain behavior. It represents the reasons for people's action, desires and needs.

To Umeano (2012), motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior. In the context of this literature, motivation is that internal or external mechanism which propels adult educators towards achieving the goal of helping adult learners learn effectively. Consequently, adult educators should be adequately motivated by making them participate in the decision making process of the learning centre.

This will make them have a sense of belonging, they should also be properly and adequately remunerated in line with the Nigerian public service rule. Adult educators who are due for any financial benefit should be granted such as it will help enhance their job satisfaction as well as performance.

Provision of In-service training programme for adult educators

In-service training is a planned systematic sequence of instruction under competent supervision designed to impart pre-determined skills, knowledge or abilities with respect to designated occupational objectives. It involves the renewal of workers' skills, knowledge, attitude and habits which have become obsolete and irrelevant to the needs of their employment as a result of change. In-service training is intended to make adult educators play their assigned roles more productively.

In-service training programme can be subdivided into; on-the-job training and off-the-job training. On-the-job training takes place at the work place and possible while at work. It is done or implemented by a trainee immediate manager or supervisor, this is because the supervisor has an in-depth

knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates and they know how best these subordinates should be assisted to overcome any identified weakness. On the other hand, off-the job training are provided at learning centres either in the workplace while the trainee is not actually performing his responsibilities or outside the workplace. It could be organized in established institutions and employees are permitted to participate with or without official sponsorship from the employer. Off-the-job training according to Imhabekhai (2011) is necessary when some adult educators require the acquisition of the types of job knowledge, skills and attitudes which are best provided through a series of course out of the job environment.

Training for adult educators therefore should be tailored towards meeting their specific needs. The programme should be directed specifically towards equipping the participants with the knowledge, skills and competence in effectively helping adult learners to learn.

Adequate provision of instructional materials

Instructional materials refers to is a collection of print and non-print materials and equipment so selected, arranged and located as to serve the needs of the adult educators and adult learners and to further the purpose of learning. The use of instructional materials in teaching makes learning more practicable, applicative and meaningful. It makes learning more concrete and the retention rate increases (Umoren and Akpan, 2011).

The adult educator should ensure to skillfully select appropriate instructional materials for use in order to achieve quality performance and effective learning. Instructional materials make teaching learning process more participatory, interesting and effective. This is because with the use of appropriate instructional materials, more of the learners' special senses and organs of the body become involved. As such, not only will the process be more

interesting, retention and recall of acquired knowledge and skills will be enhanced. Hence learning materials such as primers, textbooks, chalkboard/marker etc should be adequately provided at the learning centres.

Proper monitoring of the adult educators

Monitoring according to Mishra (2015), is the process of gathering information and periodically bringing together key indicators to measure inputs, process and output in relation to stated objectives. Monitoring to Babalola (2014) has to do with keeping a watchful eye on the input, process and output and the environment of a system to ensure appropriate direction of things according to the set standard. Monitoring in Adult Education therefore involves the process of gathering information and measuring inputs, process and output of an Adult Education programme. It involves a systematic and deliberate information gathering about inputs, process and output in Adult Education centres.

Monitoring is important because it will create opportunity for Adult Education administrators to observe every educational process that is undertaken within the Adult Education centre. It will also allow Adult Education administrators to observe the method used by the adult educators in helping adult learners to learn as well as the relationship that exist between the adult educator and the adult learners. This will in no small measure afford the administrator the

opportunity to correct the adult educator wherever and whenever such an adult educator is found wanting in the discharge of his or her duty thereby bringing about quality and effective teaching and learning in Adult Education centres.

Conclusion

It is very clear that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (FGN, 2013). Consequently, it is important that adult educators' quality be properly and adequately improved so as to bring about the reduction of illiteracy in Nigeria which will lead to National development and the achievement of the Education for all goals before the year 2030.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered;

1. Adult educators training curriculum should adequately prepare adult educators to understand the theory of andragogy
2. Adult educators should be adequately motivated
3. In-service training programme should be adequately provided at Adult Education centres
4. Instructional materials should be adequately provided at Adult Education centres
5. Adult educators should be properly monitored

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