

Strategies for Improving Adult Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was carried out to examine the strategies that can be employed to improve adult education programme for sustainable human development. It is a descriptive survey carried out in all adult education centres in Afikpo Local Government Area (L.G.A) of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. All the two hundred and twenty adult education instructors in all the centres formed the population of the study. There was no sampling since the entire population was used for the study. Data was collected using researcher-made questionnaire titled strategies for improving adult education questionnaire (SIAEQ). The instrument consist of twenty-two items and was subjected to both face and content validation using two experts in adult education and one expert in measurement and evaluation all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. Reliability test on the instrument was carried out through test-retest method. Using Pearson product moment method reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Three research questions guided the study. Some of the results obtained include: that to improve adult education programme, the quality of adult education instructors have to be improved through workshops, seminars, conferences, in-service training, incentives, and proper supervision; adequate infrastructures, facilities; instructional materials and resources needed in adult education centres should be provided. It was recommended that in-service training should be periodically organized for adult education instructors, and that necessary facilities should be adequately provided in adult education centres.

Introduction

Education is the bedrock for meaningful development of any country. Education plays crucial and cardinal role in the development of human resources of a country. A country cannot develop beyond the level of education of it's citizenry who form the country's human resources. Nigerian government has over the years initiated educational programmes in order to eradicate illiteracy which is one of the major barriers to sustainable development. For instance, in 1976 the federal government of Nigeria launched Universal primary education (UPE). The UPE programme was mainly focused on providing basic education for every Nigerian child of school age. The UPE programme was at the onset vigorously embarked upon but along the line began to encounter a lot of problems that led to it's collapse. The federal government did not rest on its oasis in it's effort to eradicate illiteracy. Hence, it launched universal basic education (UBE) on September, 30, 1999. The universal basic education is a holistic approach to total eradication of illiteracy in the country. Unlike UPE which was tailored towards children's education, the UBE caters for the educational needs of children, youths and adults. The recognition of the fact that the work-force of the nation is made up of adults, and the fact that these adults cannot contribute to the development of the country beyond the level of their education could have informed the federal government's decision to include adults in UBE programme.

Adult education, according to Omolewa (1981) is the education provided for men and women who for one reason or the other dropped out of the formal school system, or those who for the purpose of work and their engagements are unable to register for full time courses, abandoning in the process, their work and family. According to Eyibe (2005:4) adult education is "any kind of education designed for the illiterate population, the formal school dropouts, and the unskilled and semi-skilled workers and carried on outside the formal school setting" United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) in Eya, Ugwu, and Alu (2001:4) defined adult education as "the process by which men and women in groups or institutional settings seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skills or knowledge or by their sensitivity". The definitions of adult education above, imply that adult education includes literacy programme, remedial programme as well as skill-training and re-training programme. The work-oriented definitions given to adult education by the scholars and UNESCO attest to it's vital role in developing the human resources of a country.

The objectives of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education as stipulated by FRN (2004):25 include:

- i. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.
- ii. Provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.

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

These objectives are laudable and should be pursued vigorously in order to develop the human resources of the country. However adult education programme in Nigeria is beset with a lot of problems which could mar the realization of these objectives. In view of the importance of adult education in developing the human resources of a developing country, such as Nigeria, this study is geared towards the strategies for improving adult education programme.

Statement of the Problem

Adult education programme in Nigeria is fraught with many problems which pose a challenge towards the provision of quality education for adult learners. According to Anyanwu (2010) some of the problems that militate against effective implementation of adult education include: poor funding, inadequate facilities, location of adult education centres, and poor supervision. A look into many adult education centres in Nigeria shows that secondary school leavers are recruited as adult instructors. The secondary school leavers neither specialize in any subject areas nor possess any knowledge on the principles and practice of adult teaching and learning.

Adult education programme in Nigeria are carried out in dilapidated government owned primary and secondary school buildings, with children-sized chairs and desks, that are uncomfortable for adult learners. The organizers of this programme make use of primary school reading books which have no adult illustrations and taste for especially those in literacy classes.

One of the major constraints towards achieving worthwhile development in any sector of Nigerian economy is the problem of inadequate power supply. This problem has crippled a lot of developmental project in the country, education inclusive. Adult education in Nigeria is carried out mostly at night. How then can the adult learners learn effectively without constant power supply? Coupled with the problem of inadequate power supply is the problem of transportation at night. Many commercial bus and taxi drivers retire at night, and commercial cyclists have been banned in many states in Nigeria. Some states that have not completely banned commercial cyclists prohibited them from plying at night on dual carriage ways. This makes transportation to and from adult education centres at night very difficult for both the adult learners and the instructors.

All these and other problems encountered in adult education programme in Nigeria if not urgently tackled can jeopardize government's efforts towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) some of which deals on combating illiteracy, and poverty.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the strategies for improving adult education programme. Specifically the paper sought to ascertain the following:

1. Adult instructors' strategies that can help improve adult education programme.
2. Instructional material strategies that can help improve adult education programme.
3. Infrastructural strategies that can improve adult education programme.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are adult instructors' strategies that can improve adult education programme?
2. What are the instructional material strategies that can improve adult education programme?
3. What are the infrastructural strategies that can improve adult education programme?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of 220 adult instructors in all the adult education centres in Afikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. No sampling was done. The entire population was used for the study.

The instrument used for the study was a researcher-made questionnaire made up of 22 items. The instrument was face-validated by two experts in Adult education and one experts in measurement and evaluation all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. Test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Twenty copies of the instrument were administered to twenty adult education instructors outside the area of the study with time-lag of two weeks. Result was calculated using Pearson product moment co-efficient.

Reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. 220 copies of the instrument were administered with the help of two research assistants. All the copies

administered were retrieved and used for the study. Mean statistics was used for data analysis. Mean of 2.5 above was accepted, while any mean below 2.5 was rejected.

Table 1: Mean Responses on Adult Education Instructors' Strategies for Improving Adult Education Programme

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Dec.
1.	Employing adequate educators who are specialists in various subject areas.	140	68	7	5	3.6	Agree
2.	Organizing in-service training for adult instructors to up-date their knowledge in andragogy.	180	35	3	2	3.8	Agree
3.	Organizing workshop and seminars for adult instructors	120	80	15	5	3.5	Agree
4.	Provision of incentive for adult instructors.	140	50	20	10	3.5	Agree
5.	Proper supervision of instruction in adult education centers.	160	45	7	8	3.6	Agree
6.	Periodic use of resource persons to handle specialized areas.	120	55	30	15	3.3	Agree
7.	Periodic assessment of adult instructors	174	40	3	2	3.8	Agree
	Total	1035	373	85	47	25.1	Agree

Table 1 indicated that the respondents agree that the following adult instructors' strategies could help in enhancing adult education programme: employing adult educators who are specialists in various subject areas; organizing in-service training, workshops, and seminars for adult instructors, provision of incentives for adult instructors; proper supervision of instructions, periodic use of resource persons and periodic assessment of adult instructors. All the items in the table have means above 2.5

Table 2: Mean Responses on Infrastructural/Facilities Strategies for improving Adult Education Programme

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Dec.
8.	Building of adult education schools instead of using primary and secondary schools for adult learners.	170	40	5	5	3.6	Agree
9.	Provision of adequate classrooms for adult learners in adult education schools.	170	45	4	1	3.7	Agree
10.	Provision of adult-size desks and chairs for adult learners.	130	80	8	2	3.5	Agree
11.	Provision of recreation centres in adult education schools.	150	60	7	3	3.6	Agree
12.	Provision of sports facilities for adult learners.	180	30	5	5	3.8	Agree
13.	Provision of stand-by generator for steady power supply in adult education centres.	140	50	20	10	3.5	Agree
14.	Provision of free transport services for adult learners.	120	38	22	40	3.1	Agree
	Total	1060	343	71	61	24.8	Agree

Table 2 shows the infrastructural/facility's strategies that can help improve adult education programme as indicated by the respondents include: building of adult education schools; provision of adequate classrooms; provision of adult-sized desks and chairs; building of recreation centres; provision of sports facilities; provision of stand-by generators; and free transport services for adult learners. All the items in the table have means above 2.5; which indicates that the respondents agree with the items.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Instructional Materials' Strategies for improving Adult Education Programme

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Dec.
15.	Provision of adequate good writing board in adult education schools.	95	10	30	85	2.5	Agree
16.	Provision of adequate chalk or marker in adult education schools.	160	40	18	2	3.6	Agree
17.	Provision of well-equipped library in adult education schools	145	35	20	20	3.4	Agree
18.	Provision of well equipped science laboratories in adult education schools	520	270	-	-	3.59	Agree
19.	Provision of adequate reading materials with adult illustrations instead of using primary school books.	420	210	60	15	3.2	Agree
20.	Provision of reading resource centres.	356	285	40	16	3.1	Agree
21.	Provision of ICT facilities such as computer and computer hardwares.	460	315	-	-	3.52	Agree
22.	Provision of free reading and writing materials for adult learners.	120	75	206	62	2.10	Disagree
Total		2276	1240	374	200	25.01	Agree

Table 3 shows that the respondents agree that the instructional materials' strategies that can enhance adult education programme include provision of the following: adequate good writing board, chalk and markers, well equipped library, well-equipped science laboratory, reading materials with adult illustrations, resource centres, and ICT facilities. All these items have mean ratings ranging from 3.1 to 3.5. However, the respondents disagree with items number 22 which is, provision of free reading and writing materials for adult learners.

Discussion

Result in table 1 shows that for the quality of adult education programme in Nigeria to be tremendously improved, issues related to improving the quality of adult education instructors have to be effectively tackled. This finding agrees with Eyibe (2005) who stated that there is need to organize constant workshops, seminar, and conferences to improve the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of adult instructors and learners. The finding also agrees with Egwu (2007) who is of the view that one of the strategies for improving adult education programme is the organization of workshops and seminars for adult education facilitators and instructors to keep them abreast with current methodology of teaching adult learners.

Result in table 2 revealed the need for drastic approach towards the provision of infrastructures and facilities to enhance the quality of adult education programme in Nigeria. Zenke and Zenke (1984), stressing the need to improve the quality of adult education programme stated that the adults' learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable. This finding agrees with Eluwa (2001) who opined that standard infrastructure and necessary facilities should be made available in schools in order to make learning environment conducive for learners.

The result of this study in table 3 showed that the respondents agree that adequate and varied instructional materials need to be provided in adult education centres in order to improve the quality of adult education programme in Nigeria. In relation to this finding, Aderinoye (2002) stated that inadequacy of instructional aids and resources in adult education centres in Nigeria, is indicative of the neglect and marginal status of adult education the country.

Conclusion

A nation's workforce is made up of adults. These adults cannot function beyond the quality of education they receive. Hence the need to improve the quality of adult education programme in Nigeria, a developing country, requires urgent attention. To improve adult education programme, it is imperative to develop the quality and quantity of the following: adult instructors, infrastructure, and instructional aids.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. Nigeria government should ensure that only experts in adult education are recruited to teach adult learners
2. Constant workshops, seminar and conferences should be organized for adult education instructors

3. Adequate infrastructures and facilities should be provided in adult education centres.

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