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**Adult Functional Literacy Curriculum: Effective Strategy
for Human Resource Development in Nigeria**

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Abstract

Adult functional literacy curriculum no doubt, is a panacea to human resource development in Nigeria. Government and non-government organizations have roles to play in providing functional education to adults who drop out of school or have no opportunity of attending the formal school

system for all round development. This paper therefore, examined some basic concepts related to the work such as adult education, literacy, curriculum and human resource development. It highlighted some evils of illiteracy, the scope and merits of adult literacy curriculum. The challenges of implementing adult literacy curriculum were also x-rayed. Relevant recommendations and conclusion were made as a way forward.

Introduction

The scope and content of adult functional literacy curriculum is broad and diverse which gives it universal acceptance. Every nation is aware of the fact that adult education is based on nationally identified needs. The primary aim is to organize for the solution of group problems. However, without proper adult education process and practice, there can be no true human resource development. Government and non-governmental organizations have great roles to play in providing functional education to adults who drop out of school or have no opportunity of attending formal school system for all around development.

Many citizens feel deeply touched when they see beggars and others weakened by ill-health and physical starvation. But intellectual starvation is much pitiful and much more serious. Illiteracy constitutes a greater danger to national development and survival. In any adult education forum and until there are changes for the better, there exists apart from stark illiterates, other types of illiterates. There should be concern for the so-called dropouts and the push-outs from primary and secondary schools for many of them will relapse into illiteracy, and huge national investments in their education can only be salvaged through remedial adult education.

Conceptual Explanations

Adult Education

Adult education has been defined by different authors, experts in the field. To understand most of the definitions, one has to be equipped with some ideas of who an adult is. Ojo (2005) considers an adult as a person who has come into certain stages of life in which he has assumed responsibility for himself and for others and who has commitantly accepted a functionally productive role in his community. In terms of social and political definitions, an adult is a person who behaves as an adult, one who is performing social roles typically assigned by our culture to those it considers to be adults, and that individual who perceives him/herself to be essentially responsible for his

own life. This shows that adult can be anyone without regard to chronological age, who is exercising adults' responsibilities.

However, Anyanwu (2007), sees adult education as the entire body of organized educational process – whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities, as well as in apprenticeship, where by persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Qwoade (2005) considered adult education as referring to all education provision for adults. It is an integral part of social, political, economic and cultural process. It may include literacy, primary health care and some handicraft skills, education and retraining for the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Literacy

According to Aderinyaye (2008), defines literacy as a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol system of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept is expanding to include the media and the electronic text, in addition to alphabets and numbers. He equally submitted that individuals must be given life long learning opportunity to move along a continuum that includes reading, writing and the critical understanding and decision making abilities they need in their communities.

Curriculum

The concept of curriculum has gone through many developmental stages as much as the area of study itself. Thus, we can say that the concept of curriculum has been as developmental as curriculum development. Oforma (2002), sees curriculum as a programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance. Eneogwe (1996) refers to the curriculum as the consciously planned programmes of the school, for the education of the child.

Human Resource Development

Nwankwo (2007) sees human resource development as organized learning activities arranged within an organization in order to improve performance or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual, or the organization.

Evils of Illiteracy

Illiteracy is associated with ignorance which deepens primitivity, dependency and social backwardness. An illiterate depends on a literate to write or read his letter even when the letter is highly confidential. He is ignorant of how he can save and withdraw his money from the bank unless a literate comes to aid him and in addition, he has to depend on some one to keep important records for him.

An illiterate is primitive and unaware of many present social changes in his locality and thus living in a far social past. For a man to live with the social demands of the present age, he has to be literate as it is literacy that can remove inferiority complex and offer confidence needed for good behaviour.

Illiteracy leads to decline in productivity and use of human resources. An illiterate woman cannot read the recipe needed for good cooking; the illiterate in the civil service cannot read circulars while an illiterate farmer cannot read the number of kilograms of fertilizer he should apply on a crop.

Scope of Adult Literacy Curriculum

Adult literacy curriculum may include literacy, primary health care, and some handicraft skills. The concepts, field and scope is broad, different and multi-localational. According to Archibaid Callway, out of school education, which is an important aspect of adult education, may be grouped into three categories:

- (i) Preparation of school leavers for occupations e.g. carpentry, goldsmithing, cloth weaving, tailoring, mat making, raffia making, etc.
- (ii) On the job training and
- (iii) Education for community improvement with particular emphasis on creativity to change.

Merits of Adult Literacy Curriculum

It should be possible to use education as a tool for bridging economic and social gaps and other imbalances between individuals, between urban and rural, the coastal and interior, and the male and female population. Under an effective system of education, unemployment can be prevented or reduced to the barest tolerable minimum. Unfortunately, the formal school system takes several years, and often a generation to produce results. On the other hand, adult education may be designed and tailor-made to correct specific deficiencies and to cater for specific training needs within a very short period of time. Certainly today's problems of development will not and cannot wait for pupils presently in primary and secondary schools nor even for students in the polytechnics and universities. These problems must be solved by adults of today. Properly designed and administered adult education programmes can teach people how to solve such problems. The right type of adult education can promote the much desired national unity and national self reliance in all their ramifications instead of producing and promoting naira-mania and ethnic champions both of which constitute the seemingly intractable hydra-headed problems in the nation's efforts at achieving political stability and overall human resource development.

Challenges of Implementing Adult Functional Literacy Curriculum in Nigeria

i. Non-provision of instructional materials by the government

Teaching is an arduous task; it is made easier and more meaningful with certain teaching materials and aids. Books, charts, drawings, tools etc all constitute teaching aids. They must be there, because as John Dewey posited, learning is easily done by doing. According to Omabe (2009), instructional materials help the teacher to increase his students learning experiences as students learn with materials, they become conversant with many issues or ideas. An investigation into the use of instructional materials in adult education classes in different geo-political zones of the country showed that government has not done much in the provision of teaching materials and the teachers employed to teach these adults do not improvise materials to teach their subject.

(ii) Lack of motivation of teachers

Motivation can be regarded as the desire to do something. It may be intrinsic or extrinsic but it has power to catalyse a person to achieve more. The

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), in her National Policy of Education (NPE 2004), made it clear that the aim of teacher education is to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers and enhance their commitment to the teaching profession. But researchers, Ogbuanya (2005) and Allen (2004), have shown that the stipulated aims in the National Policy of education have not been achieved as teachers who teach in adult education classes are neither properly paid nor are they committed to their work.

(iii) *Inadequate supervision of instruction by supervisors*

Supervision is characterized by providing necessary assistance that will help teachers improve their teaching style with the aim of achieving educational objectives. Ogbuanya (2003) rightly states that “the success of any educational policy or plan depends to a great extent on the efficiency of the supervision machinery. Despite the supervisory activities carried out by the government supervisors the quality of education and the performance of students at adult education centres still remain deplorable (Eze 2001). This could be attributed to poor quality of supervision by the supervisors who are often accused of compromising standards when their fingers are greased.

(iv) *Inadequate classroom facilities*

According to Abraham (2000), the classroom must be comfortable for the teacher to give his best and the students to learn effectively. Teachers can only teach effectively if the classroom facilities are adequate and of high standard. Eze (2001), identified physical facilities and equipment as a major problem confronting adult education programme being run at different centres in Nigeria.

Recommendations for Effective Implementation of Adult Literacy Curriculum

The following recommendations are made for effective implementation of adult literacy curriculum by the government and non-governmental organization.

1. Sponsorship of teachers to workshops and seminars for production of literacy materials.
2. Donation of literacy materials like textbooks, exercise books, drawing books, pencils etc.

3. Donation of teaching aids like video tapes, slides, films, charts, poster and handbills.
4. Volunteering (especially in the case of youth organization members) to teach in the literacy centres free of charge.
5. Sponsorship of media propaganda and programmes which would continuously motivate the Nigerian adult to participate in the mass literacy programme as either a sponsor, a teacher or a learner.
6. Procurement and donation of vehicles for transportation of literacy workers to ensure that their activities are spread to the remotest and most geographically intractable areas of the country.
7. Establishment of adult literacy centres in rural areas.
8. Effective monitoring and supervision of adult literacy programme by the ministry of education.

Conclusion

Adult functional literacy programme is based on nationally identified needs. Without proper adult education programme, there can be no true human resource development. Government and non-governmental organizations have great roles to play in providing functional education to adults who drop out of school or have no opportunity of attending formal school system. It should be noted that a resolute role of the government in providing leadership, direction and congenial atmosphere for the purpose of promoting adult literacy in the country remains the life wire of the programme if it must succeed.

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