

# MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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## **Abstract**

*Adult education is a relatively new discipline within the field of education when compared with other disciplines in education. As noted by Okedara (1981), while older disciplines in education have enjoyed systematic research, study and training for a long time, adult education terms and concepts are yet to be consistently defined or standardised. This paper therefore discussed in detail the concept of adult education. It identified and discussed some of the various innovations introduced in adult education, and the problems and prospects of managing such innovations.*

Basically, adult education can be taken to mean learning that takes place among adults. An adult, according to the Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary is a fully-grown person who is legally responsible for their actions. Nwagbo and Ebiringa (1997) said that in the African context, an adult is somebody who has reached the age of “knowing a woman”, who covers his nakedness (Iwa Akwa), who lives on his own, who can answer the village “call” and who is taxable. They went further to say that the traditional African meaning of an adult does not attach any age. But most developed countries attach age to their definition of adult. To some an adult is somebody who has reached the age of eighteen, to others, the age is 21 years. So there are discrepancies over the correct age of an adult. For the purpose of this paper, an adult is somebody who has reached maturity, thinks coherently, knows what he/she wants and can take full responsibility for his or her actions.

## **Adult Education**

Adult education means learning that takes place among adults. Scholars in adult education refer to it using different terms and concepts. These necessarily depend on who they are, the culture they represent, whom they are writing for, the social economic and political prevalence at the time of their writing, and the context in which their terms and concepts are used (Okedara 1998:10). Thus Friedman (1972) in Okedara (1981) defined adult education as a product of culture. He said that

adult education is a process, which is part of cultural development, primarily the establishment of a means of communication between the cultural systems of the transmitters (inventors, research workers, creative minds) and the cultural systems of the receivers (i.e. groups for whom adult education is intended). Okedara (1981) reported that there was a time when scholars in developed countries tend to define adult education as the kind of learning that is expected to be undertaken by those who need to catch up on their formal education or who need to use their leisure purposefully or who need to upgrade their skills and knowledge in the face of changing technology. Okedara (1981) gave the definition found in the report of the First International Congress on Comparative Study of Adult Education as typical example of such definitions. The congress defined adult education as a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis (unless full time programmes are especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, undertakings or skills, appreciation and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems. Okedara (1981) stated that this definition assumed that all adults have been to school for some period of their childhood.

Scholars residing in or writing for the developing world conceptualized adult education in terms of the circumstances prevailing in the developing countries, such as high illiteracy, the problem of free and compulsory education, the need to catch up technologically, ignorance and conservation (Okedara, 1981).

Nwagbo and Ebiringa (1997:16) referred to adult education as “education for people (young and old) who missed formal education for one reason or the other”. They went on to elaborate that these are people who are old enough to work, vote, fight and marry and who are now desirous to make up for their lack of formal education.

Adult education can be seen as a lifelong education for the purpose of human and national development. To this end, Tugbiyele cited in Okedara (1981) viewed adult education as being more than literacy or remedial education to fill the gap but as something that people need and want for as long as they are alive and regardless of the amount of their previous education and must be an integral part of any modern country’s educational system. Continuing with this theory, Nyerere in Okedara (1981), posited that:

*“adult education covers many of the subjects learned at school for those who never had the opportunity. It applies to every one of us, without exception. We can all learn more. Those who have never been to schools, who have just attended school, and those who have attended secondary or*

*university-there is much more that everyone can learn about our work and about areas of knowledge that they were not taught when they were at school”.*

This view of adult education embraces all aspects of education, primary, secondary and university. In other words, there is no limit to the scope of adult education.

The National Policy on Education (2004) defines adult and non-formal education as consisting of functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetics, cultural and civic education for youths and adults outside the formal school system.

Nwagbo and Ebiringa (1997:27) and Okedara (1981:17) made distinctions about formal adult education, non-formal education and informal adult education. According to them, formal adult education refers to systematically arranged Adult Education Programmes in which participants (students) are enrolled or registered to follow established courses either on a full time or part time basis. The programmes are taught in institutions and follow established norms set by the school type learning. The students are taught, examined and recommended for awarding of certificates. An example of this is sandwich programme. Non-formal education on the other hand means alternative to schooling or out-of-school education. This type of education covers training and instruction outside the formal education system and ranges from individualized apprenticeships to nation-wide literacy and vocational studies. Seminars, skills acquisition centres, programmes organised by the National Directorate for Employment etc come under this category. Informal adult education comes unintentionally and accidentally as adults engage in normal daily routines. Recipients of this type draw upon their experiences to solve their problems.

### **Innovations in Adult Education**

Innovation is a planned change intended to improve the system. To innovate is to introduce a totally new thing or phenomenon into a system. According to Maduewesi (1992:7) “innovations are new changes or developments that bring about or are intended to bring about improvement”. One major aspect of adult education is that it is democratic; the learners are free to choose whatever they want to learn and so contribute to the development of the curriculum. Adult education has no age limit and the participants are called learners while their teachers are called instructors.

There have been various innovations in adult education ever since its inauguration in Nigeria. This paper will attempt to discuss some of the innovations.

#### **i. Adult Mass Literacy Programme**

The purpose of this programme is to learn how to read and write. It is organized for illiterate adults and youths who wish to learn how to read and write in either their native language or English or both. Adults who dropped out from primary education and hence did not achieve permanent literacy also benefit from the programme.

**ii. Correspondence Course**

This is a course of study done at home and using books and exercise sent to you by post or mail. Correspondence courses are designed for adults who want to continue their education for one thing or the other. They are either too old to enter secondary or higher education or they are weighed down by family responsibility so that they cannot enrol full-time in formal educational institutions. The only option left to these people is to receive packaged lessons by post or mail. This type of adult education is intended for home learning.

**iii. Continuing Education Programme**

This is a type of education for adults that is available outside the formal education system. This programme is meant for those who want to continue their education. They are normally for adults or youths who have passed through primary or secondary schools and attend the continuing education classes in order to improve their knowledge and to achieve higher educational qualification and certificates. The classes are conducted in the evening or in the night.

**iv. Remedial Education**

This is designed to enable learners to make up for school previously missed; either those who never entered school at all, or those who started and then dropped out for one or another reason. Remedial programmes may cover the width of the primary and secondary school curriculum.

**v. Adult Education Extension Services**

This consists of extending education for immediate use to people in their farms, homes, and factories. Useful information and services on how to improve productivity in the places of work are supplied to people who need them. An example of this is the agricultural extension officers who present to local farmers the new species or kinds of crops.

**vi. Extra-mural Studies**

These are programmes of education for adults designed within the walls of a university to help the community outside those walls. They may provide formal and non-formal education. They are meant for the benefit of adults who want to

acquire further education, improve the quality of their certificate or enrich their knowledge. They are aimed at helping people acquire new skills and improve existing techniques of doing things.

**vii. Radio and Television Adult Education Programme**

This type of programme is carried out as radio and television programme. Enlightenment programme, discussion on issues, etc. are aired on radio and television channels.

**viii. Out of School Youth Programmes**

Eke (2003) reported that the innovation intervention programmes of UNICEF in 1999 conducted a research on male drop out of school syndrome in Nigeria. It was found that many boys especially in the South Eastern States of Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Imo and South-South State of Rivers and Bayelsa have dropped out of school. The reason for the South Eastern States is to make quick money in business while those in the South-South are to enjoy oil money. UNICEF established contact points where these boys are met and taught. There was one of such centres at Timber shade, Owerri, Nekede and Orji Mechanic Villages etc. UNICEF also supplied instructional materials and provided allowance for teaching of the participants.

**ix. Sandwich Programmes / In-Service Training**

The federal government made the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria to be at least a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), most teachers, especially primary school teachers were employed with their TC II certificate. This development necessitated the mounting of sandwich programmes in institutions of higher learning where teachers can upgrade their qualification, knowledge and expertise. It is a sort of in-service training usually conducted during the school holidays. Workers may also be sent on in-service training to upgrade their professional standards.

**x. Seminars, Workshops, Conferences**

These are in-service training techniques undertaken by organizations to upgrade the knowledge and professional standards of their employees. Experts and specialists on particular fields are invited to talk or teach the participants.

**xi. Certificate Examinations**

Adult education participants now sit for the Junior Secondary School Certificate examination (JSSCE).

**xii. Computer Education**

There are many centres for computer literacy programmes organized by the government for workers.

**Management of Innovation in Adult Education**

Management of innovation has been defined by Omeyi (1997) as the application of the principles and processes of management to all available procedures and techniques to changes that have occurred or that are yet to occur.

It is the duty of the educational administrator to apply the principles of management in order to be able to achieve the desired change or the innovation being introduced.

Innovations should be properly planned before they are introduced. Due consideration should be given to sources of funds to finance such innovations. Provision should also be made for capable/well-qualified staff for implementation as well as storage and security facilities provided.

Adult education is one aspect of the educational system that does not have its own teaching staff. The instructors are teachers borrowed from the primary and secondary schools and applicants, all of whom operate on part-time basis. For the effective management of innovations in adult education, efforts should be made towards employing adult education graduates as instructors of adult education programmes. This will make it necessary for the section to have its own teaching staff on ground instead of relying on borrowed teachers who may not be qualified to handle an adult education class.

There is no permanent structure or buildings erected for adult education programmes. Thus it makes use of existing primary and secondary school buildings, community halls, churches, etc. Facilities and infrastructure are also scarce. Centres of adult education programme complete with adequate facilities, infrastructure, instructional materials etc. should be built to ensure permanency and safe keeping of such instructional materials.

The National Policy on Education (2004) places the responsibility of adult and non-formal education on state and local governments. Philanthropists and international agencies such as UNICEF also organise out of school programmes for boys and girls. Adequate funds should be provided to ensure smooth running of the programmes.

Adult and non-formal education should be managed by the three tiers of government. Also the agency for adult and non-formal education must supervise all adult education programmes within its jurisdiction. Local government councils should also be in touch with adult education instructors and participants.

Participants of adult education programmes should be made to sit for all external examinations such as the first school leaving certificate, junior and senior secondary school certificates etc. as this enables effective evaluation of the programme. Adult education programmes should be effectively evaluated to ascertain their impact in the system and enhance learning outcomes.

### **Problems of Management of Innovations in Adult Education**

Adult education faces the same problems other levels of education experience in Nigeria. They are:

#### **i Financial Constraints**

The introduction of any innovation involves extra financial burden since new gadgets and retraining of teachers may be involved. All this takes money to implement. Adult education is grossly underfunded in Nigeria. There is no recurrent cash for the maintenance of adult education units.

#### **ii. Shortage of Trained Manpower**

Adult education does not have its own teaching staff. It borrows from primary and secondary schools and applicants on part time basis. These are not specially trained to teach adult learners. Since these borrowed teachers are employed on part time basis they may leave the programme at any time.

#### **iii. Lack of Storage Facilities**

Adult education does not have permanent buildings of their own; hence they do not have stores or permanent class rooms to store their teaching aids.

#### **iv. Accommodation**

Adult education makes use of existing primary and secondary schools buildings. It has no permanent building of its own. Adult education makes use of these facilities only when the owners are not using them and this disorganises adult education activity.

#### **v. Attitude of the Participants**

It is not always possible for the participants to attend classes as often as it is required as most of them are engaged in one business or another which they attend to on a daily basis for their livelihood.

- vi. There are few books written and published specially for adult learners, particularly those in literacy classes. They are often taught with the same books written for primary school pupils.
- vii. Correspondence courses for adults run into difficulties because postal services are known for poor services.
- viii. Some cheap and easy to run adult education programmes such as Radio and Television adult lessons are not fully utilised in Nigeria. This is because of poor planning and irregular power supply.
- ix. **Method of Evaluating the Adult Education Participants**  
There is no approved method to evaluate the participants when they have completed their programme. They register as private candidates in external exams such as NECO, GCE, NABTEB, etc. There is equally no organised system of evaluating the programmes and learning outcomes in adult education.

### **Prospects of Management of Innovations in Adult Education**

Adult education is one of the emerging disciplines in education that is not overflowed. Employment opportunities abound for graduates of adult education in the labour market.

Most Nigerian universities have today department of adult education with the faculty of education responsible for training adult educators and carrying out research for the improvement of adult education.

There are now many types of adult education in the country some of which are organised by the government, higher institutions, private individuals and cooperate bodies.

Adult education can substitute for and/or complement formal education in the quest for increases in the volume and efficacy of production. For example, the training of craftsmen for modern sector activity can be carried out either in vocational schools or through apprenticeship arrangements or by some less formal means on the job. In this case, adult education is a substitute for formal education. Should skill requirements continue to increase as a result of technological change, adult education in form of continuing education or retraining programme can help provide needed training for the required skills. Here, adult education becomes a complement to formal education. An individual may be interested in training himself for specific skills needed for self development; for instance a retired woman may decide to pick up Home Economics Skills which she did not have before, by attending Home Economics classes in an extra-mural programme. Here again, adult education becomes a complement to formal education or training (Ogunsheye and Okedara, 1981).



Participants of adult education are now registered for first school leaving certificate examinations. Adult education has been accorded recognition by the three tiers of governments. Adult education learning centres are now scattered all over the country.

There is now a council, National Council for Adult Education (NCAE) to oversee the smooth running of adult education in Nigeria. Research is being carried out in the area of adult education, and the methodology and curriculum of adult education programmes may soon be in existence.

More adult education programmes are being developed and introduced to supplement the ones already on ground.

### **Conclusion**

Education is a continuous process and has no age limit and as such is meant for everybody. Almost all programmes in higher institutions are part of adult education because undergraduates are adults. It embraces all sectors of the education system.

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