

ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA.

¹Dr. Ogechi R. Obiozor and ²Uba Chiamaka .J.

¹Department of Adult and Continuing Education Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia State.

²Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri, Imo State

Email: roseoge2017@gmail.com

Phone: 07066790480

Email: makinsquin@gmail. Phone No. 08033776239

Abstract

The study assessed the role of adult education in human resource development in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives were to ascertain the extent adult education programmes made participants more resourceful; determined the attitude of adult learners to adult education and training programmes in Abia State, examined the level of participation of respondents in the adult education programmes, and determined the constraints faced by adult learners in adult education programmes in the state and also if there is a significant relationship between human capacity developed and level of participation in adult education and learning programmes. A total of 60 respondents were purposively sampled from two active centres in the major towns of Aba and Umuahia who are adult learners. Data generated were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Result showed that such capacities has improved reading skills with a mean score of 3.23 improved writing skills, improved communications skill, and enhanced management skills were capacities respondents agreed to have been largely developed by the programme. Result also showed that respondents had positive attitudes towards adult literacy programme in the state. Participation was high However, Unconducive learning environment , Incompetent facilitators , and inconsistent learning periods were considered as severe constraints to adult education among the respondents. A t-ratio which was significant at 5% probability level showed that participation in adult literacy programme was positively related to the attitude of the respondents to adult learning. The study therefore recommends increased awareness and mobilization of more adult facilitators and provision of conducive learning environment with needed facilities.

Keywords: Assessment, Adult education, Learning and Human Resource Development

Introduction

Adult Education is a lifelong development that is education for life without restrictions to any aspect of

knowledge. As opined by Otty (2018), Adult education is an age long education and as well as education for life which is a pathway through which

people take full responsibility for their own lives and also participate effectively in the development of their communities. Adult Education may be analyzed in terms of the individuals and groups of people served (clientele), agencies and institutions offering programmes, methods and techniques used, subject matter or content covered, functions, skills and competencies taught. It may also be defined as a means of social adjustment and also as an educational movement that can be realized through many approaches. However, irrespective of the approach adopted, the philosophy, principles, processes and methods are similar and there is a common objective which is to improve the quality of life. Uzoka (2013), opined that adult education is a process where skills and attitudes are acquired and exchanged on voluntary basis and could either be on part-time basis for people with full-time occupation. The overall purpose is to educate adults for World citizenship, social and technological changes, creative diversions and family living Uzoka, (2013). Apart from enhancing adult cognition, adult education also serves different purposes in remedial, occupational, relational, political, vocational efficiency, vocational security, home/family education, civic participation, and self-realization (Otty, 2018; Uzoka, 2013). Learning on the other hand can be seen as the process by which one, through her/his own activity, becomes changed in behavior and this change in behavior affords the individual the opportunity of facing life's challenges and problems and it has to be permanent (Uzoka, 2013). Learning can also be seen as a cognitive process of acquiring skills, new knowledge, behavior, skills, values, preferences or understanding and may involve synthesizing different types of information (Bakare, 2011). Learning is a mental activity, it can be conscious or not, directly or indirectly acquired. It is personal and mostly occur during teaching and can be correlated to training, observation, and experience and can be done formally, informally or non-formally.

Cranton in Bakare (2011) opines that perspective on adult learning have shifted over the years from being freed from the oppression of illiteracy, gaining knowledge and skills or merely satisfying the learners needs to a process of critical self-reflection capable of leading to transformation. In a more adult perspective, Merriam and Caffarella as cited in Bakare (2011) opined that people learn desired behaviours due to stimuli from their external environment that recognize and reinforce the behavior in a positive manner while undesired behavior can then be controlled by ignoring such stimulus. In Nigeria, adult education has wide objectives of upholding all round development through education and at the same time abhors negative behavior through education. On this note, one will have to understand that learning does not involve a particular kind of learner, nor a specific goal for learning, no special method of learning and no special environment where learning must take place. Despite rising programmes of government at all levels, there are still major increases in the rate of adult illiteracy in Nigeria. As reported by Omoyeni and Ajayi (2010), apart from the series of campaigns which were made between 1946 and 2003, and yearly sensitization of people, only a negligible drop in the rate of illiteracy was recorded. A major contributing factor to the challenge of illiteracy level in Nigeria is the fact that most of the Nigerian population that are illiterate are found in the rural areas where they live in poverty or absolute want and could not afford the demands of formal education system. Another concern in the rising cases of illiteracy in Nigeria is the disguised neglect of basic education by the government, where there are increasing number of private education institution with higher demands which are hardly met by the rural poor. The lack of knowledge and skills needed for self-reliance, employment in industries and public establishment invariably results to youth restiveness as well as other social vices and for some others who may go into

petty trading and Small Scale businesses often realize that low literacy level is a major setback in the business space (Ogbezor and Okanezi, 2008).

As opined by Ihebreme in Obiozor (2018), Products of adult education are expected to be sufficiently skilled, empowered and supported with enabling policies and operating environments to be competent service providers and wealth creators. This explains the implications of adult education in human resource development.

Human resource development of any community, society or nation comprises all efforts, activities and actions geared towards improving, maintaining an effective functioning of the human labour for better production of goods and services. Human resource involves management of physical capital, exploitations of natural resources, globalization, information and communication technology which necessitates development. Nigeria is endowed with natural resources but these cannot fall into places for development without being manned by human beings. Therefore, man is not only a beneficiary of a properly planned system but an instrumental factor to development. Thus, adult education is a major means of sharing the latest and most pertinent knowledge with people and through it, human resources can be developed to match effectively what seems an avalanche of technological improvement and knowledge economy for the world standard of competence (Ochoma 2010). Furthermore, Ihebreme as cited in Obiozor (2018) opined that adult education has given unskilled workers greater occupational mobility in the nations' workforce, and workers have also ample opportunities to be retrained in their various professional areas for quality output.

Research report demonstrated that massive unemployment among Nigerian adults result from lack of technical skills needed in various industries as well as lack of entrepreneurial initiatives and enhancing ethical aspect. This is in line with Bugaje

(2022) who discovered that Nigeria has about 90 million unemployed youths and graduates who obtained their degrees and diplomas from various tertiary institutions in the country owing largely to lack of skill acquisition. These quality and equity issues are basically related to: (a) socio-economic condition, (b) zone of residence (urban/rural), (c) ethnic identity and language, and (d) gender. A National Literacy Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) in Nigeria estimates the adult literacy rate at 56.9%, with huge variations across the states of the federation, and between 2008 to 2018 Nigerian literacy level moved from 51.1% to 62% (FME, 2018). The Nigerian Government recognizes that literacy education will help equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for economic self-sufficiency, poverty reduction and sustainable development, and is therefore making efforts to address the illiteracy challenge which will invariably increase human resource development. Keeping such a large percentage of the population outside the radiance of literacy and education makes the task of national development more complex and burdensome (UNESCO, 2012). If something drastic is not done to accelerate literacy and education for all Nigerians, the country may fail to achieve the significant milestones of its developmental targets under Vision 20:20:20.

Government at all levels have continued to strive to reduce the illiteracy level in the Nigerian society through adult learning for resource development. In Abia State, the Ministry of Education through the State's Agency for Mass Literacy and Adult Education has continued to champion the promotion of literacy level among citizens, as evidenced by the setting up of Adult education and training centers in some strategic locations, especially within two of the main towns of Aba and Umuahia. Notable among this effort is the setting up of literacy centres around some markets such as Ariaria international Market to

encourage adult learning among some business men and women and centres close to the three correctional centres in Aba, Umuahia and Arochukwu (www.abiastategov.ng). There are also some adult literacy centres operated by some private and public institutions such as NGOs and Higher Institutions within the State. However, how all these efforts are contributing to the reduction of adult illiteracy and human resource development in Abia State required a scientific investigation.

Research Questions:

- ❖ In the light of the foregoing, the study therefore was designed and guided by the following research questions:
- ❖ To what extent has adult education programme contributed to human resource development?
- ❖ What is the attitude of adult learners to adult education and training programmes in Abia State?
- ❖ What is the level of participation of respondents in the adult education programmes?
- ❖ What are the constraints faced by adult learners in adult education programmes in the state?

Hypothesis:

The following hypothesis guided the study:

There is no significant relationship between respondents' attitude to adult education and their participation in adult education and learning programme in Abia State?

Materials and Methods:

A purposive random sampling technique was deployed in sampling a total of 60 respondents involved in adult literacy programme from the two main towns of Aba and Umuahia in Abia State. Abia state has over 3000 adult learners under the State Agency for Mass Literacy and as at 2017 has trained over 300,000 learners since inception with 355 study centres located in the 17 LGAs of the state (www.abiastate.gov.ng). However, for the purpose of this study a purposive selection of 30 respondents from each active centres in Aba and Umuahia was

drawn to arrive at 60 respondents which served as representative samples for the study. To generate the desired data from the respondents, a well-structured questionnaire was designed and validated. Data generated was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means while the hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis. The extent adult education has developed the capacity of respondents were measured using a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with ratings of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. Any mean score above 2.5 is regarded as agreed while any mean score below is regarded as disagreed. Respondents participation was measured by asking questions relating to participation measured on a three point scale of Always = 3, Sometimes = 2, and Never = 1 with values summed and a mean point of 2.0 used as a cut-off point in judging whether they participated or not. For the constraints, a three point rating scale of very severe, severe and not severe assigned 3, 2 and 1 respectively were raised, summed up and divided by 3 to give 2.0. However, 0.05 was added to arrive at a decision point of 2.05. A simple regression analysis was used to test the relationship between respondents' resourcefulness and their participation in adult education and learning in the study area. The model is implicitly specified thus:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + e_i$$

Where:

Y= Extent programme has developed capacity of participants (mean score)

X₁= respondents' participation to programme (mean score)

e_i = error term

Results and Discussion:

Extent adult education programme has contributed in human resource development as perceived by participating Individuals:

Table 1: mean distribution of respondents on extent adult education has helped in capacity development

Human Resource development variables	Mean scores	Standard Deviations
Improved reading skills	3.23*	0.85
Improved writing skills	2.52*	0.87
Improved communication skills	2.83*	0.94
Other practical skills	1.72	0.45
Enhanced rate of information assimilation	1.97	0.99
Improved interpersonal relationship	2.43	0.95
Enhanced management skills	2.67*	0.84
Grand mean	2.5	

Source: field data, 2019

The study critically examined the effect of adult education and learning in human resource development in the study area. The result as presented in Table 1, showed that such capacities as improved reading skills with a mean score of 3.23, improved writing skills (2.52), improved communications skill (2.83), and enhanced management skills (2.67) were capacities respondents agreed to have been largely developed by the programme. However, 'other practical skills (1.72), Enhanced rate of information assimilation (1.97), and Improved Interpersonal relationship (2.43) had low mean scores were regarded as capacities not well developed. A grand mean of 2.5 also showed that respondents agreed that the programme has positive effect on human resource development. However, with the standard deviation ranging from 0.5 to 0.9 it shows that respondents varied greatly in their opinion concerning the effect

adult education has on human resource development in the study area. Sustaining the achievement of the aim of adult literacy with respect to human resource development, would therefore require increased mobilization of people, introduction of more capacity/skills development programmes and ensuring that facilitators are well trained and remunerated (Hussain, 2013; Onyenemezu, 2012 and Umar *et al*, 2010. Note that adult education and adult literacy are not the same thing. So be consistent

Attitude of Respondents to adult education and Learning in the study area.

The study investigated the attitude of adult learners to adult education programme in the study area and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: mean distribution of respondents based on attitude to adult education and learning activities

Attitude variables	Mean scores	Standard Deviations
Always punctual to lessons	2.0	0.34
Always do my homework	2.4	0.49
Always pay attention to lessons	2.5*	0.59
My business/work does not interfere with my lessons	3.0*	1.01
I can sacrifice leisure to attend my lessons	2.4	1.09
Grand mean	2.5*	

Source: Field data, 2019

Result in table 2 showed that respondents had positive attitudes towards adult literacy programme in the state with a grand mean of 2.5. However, respondents exhibited poor attitude in such variables as punctuality (2.0), home work (2.4) among others. Poor attitude to adult education and learner was also observed by Hussain (2013), who further recommended increased mobilization and awareness

to arouse the interest of adult learners and change attitude and increase participation.

Level of Participation of respondents in Adult Education and Learning in the Study Area.

Respondents' participation in adult literacy programme in the state was studied and result presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean distribution of respondents based on their level of participation in adult education and learning processes in the study area.

Participation variables	Mean scores	Standard Deviations
Organizing learning environment	2.6*	0.50
Regular attendance to classes	1.9	0.55
Participation in discussion sessions	2.7*	0.48
Asks question when not clear on issues discussed	2.4*	0.50
Having understood a lesson, I guide others to also understand issues taught in class	2.0*	0.55
Grand mean	2.3*	

Source: Field data, 2019

As presented in Table 3, result showed a high level of participation of respondents in adult literacy programme with a grand mean of 2.3 which is above the benchmark of 2.0. Respondents' from the result presented participated more in organizing learning environment (2.6), Participation in discussion sessions (2.7), Asking questions when not clear on issues (2.4) and Guiding others appreciate issues

discussed having understood the topic (2.0). However, a mean score of 1.9 and a standard deviation of 0.55 showed that respondents were not regular to class sessions. This has implications in realizing programme objectives and developing the capacity of the participating individuals as lesson missed may not be repeated always.

Table 4: Mean distribution of respondents based on Constraints affecting adult education and learning.

Constraint	Mean scores	Remark
Unconducive learning environment	2.30	Severe
Poor teaching aids	1.90	Not severe
Incompetent teachers	2.05	Severe
Inconsistent learning period	2.20	Severe
Poor commitment of teachers	2.0	Not severe

Source: Field data, 2019

Constraints to adult education and learning were also studied and result presented in Table 4. Result showed that Unconducive learning environment with a mean score of 2.3, Incompetent facilitators (2.05), and inconsistent learning periods (2.20) were considered as severe constraints to adult education and learning among the respondents. These constraints if not

checked could hamper the goal of adult literacy which among all as opined by several authors is to aid in human resource development in any given society (Uwakah, 2005; Onyichi, 2004; Hussain, 2013). This findings is also in agreement with the work of Nzeneri, (2002), Nzeneri, (2006); and Onyemesu, (2012) who observed the need for improvement in

facilities and engagement of qualified personal to facilitate adult literacy programme in other to realize the goals and objectives of the same and eradicate

illiteracy in Nigeria. (More of discussion than analysis)

Hypothesis Testing:

Table 5: Simple regression table of the test of significant relationship between respondents' attitude and participation to adult education and learning

Variables	Linear	Semi Log	Double Log +	Exponential
Constant	3.094 (9.059)***	3.043 (10.254)***	1.134 (9.479)***	1.156 (8.400)***
Attitude to adult education	-0.242 (-1.748)	-0.610 (-1.843)**	-0.251 (-1.881)**	-0.100 (-1.794)*
R ²	0.50	0.55	0.58	0.53
F-ratio	3.056*	3.398*	3.540**	3.218*

***, **, * = significant at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively; α level set at 5%. + = Lead equation

There is no significant relationship between respondents' attitude to adult education and their participation in adult education and learning programme in Abia State.

The result of the test of significant relationship between respondents' attitude to adult education programme and participation was tested using the four functional form of the ordinary least square regression model. The result as presented in Table 5 showed that there is a significant relationship between respondents' participation in adult literacy and attitude. The Double Log form of the simple regression model was chosen as the lead equation due to the highest R square value of 0.58 implying that 58% of the total variation in the dependent variable was accounted for by the independent variable. Moreso, a t-ratio (1.881)** was recorded which was significant at 5% probability level which shows that participation in adult literacy programme was positively related to the attitude of the respondents. The implication is that a unit increase in the attitude of the learners will result in increased level of participation of the respondents in adult education

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is therefore concluded that participation in adult education programme has significant positive relationship with attitude of the respondents. Most respondents involved in adult literacy programme are yet to develop the right attitude needed to maximize the gains of the programme. Although the level of participation in adult literacy programme is high in the area, there are yet teething challenges confronting adult education and learning which has implication on human resource development such as; unconducive learning environment, inconsistent learning periods and poor performing facilitators.

Recommendations:

- ❖ The government should set up more adult learning centers and also equip them with the right human and material resources necessary for smooth operations of such centres.
- ❖ The programme providers should embark on massive mobilization and awareness creation to arouse the interest of some others who may need to enroll to increase literacy level.

- ❖ There is also need to encourage the inclusion of more practical skills especially ICT to further ensure that individuals trained at such centres can compete favorably in the global labour space.

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