

Functional Literacy Curriculum for Adult Learners: A Motivating Device

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Abstract

Functional Literacy Programme curriculum in Nigeria has come a long way in training and empowering Adult learners in society by stakeholders such as the Government and its agencies and other organizations that motivate literacy; because literacy contributes to the uplifting of society. Functional literacy curriculum gives Adults basic knowledge and understanding of the general technical and vocational knowledge as well as skills, values, and attitudes to self-fulfillment, and active participation in the social, economic, and political life of society. Through the functional curriculum, which is progressive, it can change an individual to acquire knowledge and contribute to the development of the community. This paper noted the view that to effectively teach adult learners, the active and ecological methods should be integrated, and to motivate adult learners, and entrepreneurs, rewards, and punishment should be applied to adult learners. However, the Functional Literacy programme may encounter problems of psychological prejudice, Sociocultural, Language, Religious, and Economic problems. But if the National Literacy Campaign, Adult Literacy Week, National get-to-togetherness, Pilot project, involvement of students in the literacy program, utilization of the services of voluntary organizations, and expenditure on the Adult Literacy program. It will go a long way in motivating Adult learners to attend a functional literacy programme.

Keywords: Literacy, Adult, Learners, Features, Characteristics.

Introduction

Education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. An educated man or woman understands his or her world well enough to deal with it effectively. The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument of excellence for effecting National development (FRN, 2013). The implication is that the Government realizes the importance of education as a veritable tool for National development to develop the nation effectively, the need for Adult Education is required. And to Beder (1991), Adult Education refers to any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal schooling system. The notion of Adult Education is often used interchangeably with other concepts such as Literacy, Adult Basic Education, Lifelong Learning, and Continuing Education, Adult and Non-formal Education etc. Adult Education is understood as a transmission process of general, technical, or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values, and attitudes, which takes place outside the formal education system. The essence to remedy early education inadequacies of mature people or equip them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic, and political life of their societies. Adult learners are those in the informal school system, those who want to acquire knowledge to fit into society. Adult learners are to enhance prospects, New skills, personal enrichment, career change and meet certification requirements.

The concept of Adult Learner

An Adult is categorized as anybody who has assumed the stage of responsibility. At times, It's considered as anybody who has exceeded the age or period of adolescence. To the majority, an adult is someone mature enough, with the age range of 18-20 and above. Adult learners have multiple tasks to handle and have a lot of demands on their time. These adults have needs and concerns that are unique and have to be attended to. Despite these commitments, they need to be advised that it's never too late to learn; they are never too old to improve their lives, and that engaging in learning; they will finish with slow and steady progress and this will improve their functionality. They must be counseled to subdue their all-or-nothing attitude and must be advised to distinguish between what they can let go and what they do not want to let They should also be counseled as to their confidence level as they do not always have the same confidence level as children.

The academic concepts, which adults are learning need to be put into operation in practical life. For instance, when adult learners get enrolled in computer training programs and acquire knowledge in terms of computer skills, they need to ensure they make use of these skills in their real lives. There are several fields in terms of which programs are organized in educational institutions and training centres. Some of these include computer training, personality development, English-speaking courses, travel and tourism, communications, early childhood education, arts and crafts, food and nutrition, and so forth. When adults form the viewpoint that they need to get enrolled in training programs in terms of a particular field to achieve the desired goals and to improve their living conditions. Then they get enrolled in such programs and make use of the concepts learned in real life (Samphina), 2020).

Characteristics of the Adult Learner

The Adult learner participates in any form of adult education activity since he or she is like the key person in the learning process.

An adult learner can be said to be a person engaged in the process by which men and women (alone, in groups, or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, their knowledge or their sensitiveness. (Utulu, R.E. (2007) defined an adult as a person (man or woman) who has achieved full physical development and expects to have the right to participate as a responsible homemaker, worker, and member of society.

An adult learner is a person who is engaged in a process that brings about a desired change in behaviour. The adult learner is different from the young learner in many ways such as size and age and the adult class is different from a class in formal schooling. In the class of adults, you will often find that:

- Some believe they are too old to learn, they are worried about whether they can keep up, and whether others will laugh at them if they make mistakes.
- Some have never been to school before, and they do not know what to expect, some have been to school but have bad memories of the experience, possibly they could not cope, failed an examination, or were severely punished.
- Many of them are married, many are fathers or mothers, they have responsibilities at home and may be worried about problems such as sick children, shortage of food, family arguments, or lack of money to pay school fees.

- Some have community responsibilities, such as being a committed member of a cooperative, a local counselor, a member of a women's club, a church worker, or an officer of a trade union.

Adult learners differ in many characteristics ways from their formal counterparts.

1. Differ from children in self-image; range of experience, readiness to learn, and in time perspective.
2. Have the ability to learn, but learning is dependent on motives learning needs, and tasks in adulthood.
3. Their educational interest tends to reflect vocational concerns, socio-economic standing, personal and practical needs of everyday living, and general orientation to learning for action, unlike the theory-based passive learning with delayed, application of the formal system.
4. Adult education must therefore be largely non-formal and flexible.
5. It must recognize the learner's role as busy and responsible parents, workers, leaders, and citizens.
6. It calls for flexible scheduling in evenings, weekends, on-the-job training, by correspondence, in services that would put the interest and convenience of the learner above those of the teacher and the institution.
7. It must be geared towards giving the learner or teacher some skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes, or appreciations i.e. one oriented towards problem-solving, self-improvement, and vocational competency. The administration of such loosely structured individualized, self-directive learning largely calls for a pluralistic, participatory, consultative, and collegial style.
8. Adults retain much of their ability to learn as they get older, but their role learning may be slower.
9. Adults may be able to learn almost as well as young people, they may learn best under different conditions, including frequent feedback to let them know how well they are succeeding, relating activities to real-life situations that concern adults, absence of time pressure, and avoidance of competition.

Features of the Adult Learner

The adult learner possesses some characteristics which cannot be overlooked in the learning process.

The adult learner's psychological and motivational levels, for instance, differ from those of the children. There is the belief that the youth is smart, able-bodied, and intelligent while the adult is old, dull, and incapable of learning.

It is often said that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. This means trying to impart knowledge to someone already filled with what he/she might have got through the years of experience. These beliefs have been proved wrong. In 1928, Edward L. Thorndike published the results of his research on adult learning. He found out that the ability to learn declined with advancing age. He was proved wrong by other researchers like Jacob (1970) and Dickson (1976). In Utulu (2007), found out that the decline in the performance of a learning task at advanced age is not necessarily due to a decline in learning ability. But rather a result of such non-cognitive factors as poor health malnutrition, poor family background, lack of drive, decline in visual acuity, and other adverse physiological conditions like learning impairment and poor verbal ability (Bello)), 2012).

The Adult learner is seen as an achiever. He/she exhibits a sense of purpose and commitment. The learner who voluntarily subjects himself to an adult literacy programme must have developed a specific need and thirst to be literate. He or she attends to his or her duty with a meticulous sense of purpose and dedication. Such a person tends to learn better and faster. Arising from his age and experience in life, the adult learner tends to grasp the meaning and relevance of the subject more quickly than a young person. At the adult level, people in a learning situation want to be viewed from the standpoint of the entire adult personality and not solely about their role as students. The adult comes to learn with some residual knowledge; it does not matter whether he is an illiterate, a dropout, someone on the job training, a part-time student, or jobseeker. Thus, no one particular dimension of the adult person should be approached through the complexity and diversity of their emotional, physical social, and practical dimensions (Unesco, 2006).

The adult impressions, reflections, judgments, feelings; and happy or unhappy experiences, go a long way to build up and facilitate his/her educational experience. Instruction should be seen as an exchange of ideas as adult education seeks to assist individuals to become aware of the elements which have gone to make up their personality and give form to life experiences. Examples, used and illustrations employed should be related to the adult sociocultural milieu

that exists at home, in places of work, and in social gatherings, to make the learning exercise realistic.

The Curriculum of the Adult Learner

The curriculum is all about changing one's behaviour which can be acquired through a functional literacy curriculum in place. The conception that curriculum is progressive education was brought in 20th century to bring about the change in curriculum. The need for a new conception of curriculum was inevitable as a result of a lot of factors such as; change in the conception of knowledge, change in the persons who want to acquire knowledge, particularly scientific and entrepreneurial skills knowledge, change in the knowledge of learning process as a result of child study movement. The need to link the formal school with the life of Adult Learners and the change demands of the larger society. The progressive curriculum with all the zeal to change the conception of the curriculum has yet to arrive at a universal agreement as to how curriculum can function and appear to motivate or influence people in society. That is why we often say the curriculum is a planned learning activity with a set of objectives supervised or guided by the school (Utulu, 2007). Similarly, the curriculum can be conceptualized in three ways. As a course of study, a document kept by the school containing contents to be taught to learners as the entire programme of study. This can change an individual way of life to become literate and better the society in which he lives. As the saying, To participate in functional literacy classes or activities, one must be involved in making a variety of sources and communicating to a variety of audiences. Literacy must be the most constructive for the future; what is needed is a broader of reading and writing that integrates and emphasizes human abilities in the context of a changing world that requires their development and use. The path to learning literacy by young must be less rigid, more attention must be paid to different sequences and structures of learning. And more sensitivity must be shown towards cultural and class influences. In curriculum subjects such as social studies, literacy influences the ability to integrate and utilize knowledge, facts, skills, values, and attitudes from a wide variety of disciplines to solve societal problems. Because curriculum is gagged by its relevance it is planned in such a way that one does not interfere with another except it is relevant. This is why, curriculum is said to be relevant as put by Dike (1995). In Bello (2012) the curriculum should demonstrate knowledge in a way that students can understand.,

1. Mechanical Engineering to design a bridge or any mechanical device for use in a given environment.

2. Agricultural engineering graduate to devise alternatives for traditional hoes and knives to till the land and harvest their crop manually.
3. Chemical engineering to come up with chemicals to combat mosquitoes
4. Fishery biology to identify the various fish species and set up a viable fish pond.
5. Curriculum studies to lead a team to develop a new curriculum or to review an existing curriculum.

Functional Literacy Curriculum

It deals with a selective and extensive curriculum that is tailored to a particular need. The concept of functional literacy is important; functional literacy emphasizes economic development, modernization, and individual employability through literacy skill development. Literacy is a “set of skills that enable an individual to function better in the socio-economic arena” of their communities (Holme, 2004). Becoming literate according to functional literacy means acquiring the basic level of literacy required to perform particular tasks that contribute to the economic development of one’s community

Component and Important Features of Functional Literacy

The literacy component focuses on the skills of reading , writing and the functionality component deals with economic skills. However, functional literacy curricula do not merely teach and demonstrate economic skills that are typically taught within the context of income-generating projects to enable participants to earn some money. The awareness of component, which in addition creates awareness among learners, in regards to their social, cultural, and political life is vital as functional literacy is a mixture of cultural and civic literacy. Nevertheless, experience tells us that awareness is not easy to teach (Bola, 1995).

The importance of adult literacy has been widely acknowledged in the literature across the developing world. Literacy gives adult learners a voice in their families, political life, and on the world stage. It is a first step towards personal freedom and broader prosperity. When adult learners are literate, the whole society gains (Bokova, 2010). Evidence from the research shows that literacy is critical for a country’s development because literacy brings adult empowerment which affects their lives (Adelore & Olomukoro, 2015). These effects are multidimensional, including family life, socio-economic activities, and community development. It is evident from a research study conducted in Nigeria that the adult literacy curriculum has functional impacts on adult lives; family life, trade, and role in community development (Mbah, 2015).

Adult literacy curriculum plays a key role in children's education, which is a strong aspect of family life. These curricula develop adult's confidence to take on assertive roles in their families and communities (Oxenham, 2008). These results have been endorsed by Prins (2008) that literacy gave adults the ability to influence family members, engage in decision-making, attain greater self-confidence, and thus improve relationships with family members, parents, and children. This is what the curriculum is about. Robinson-Pant (2005) in Aroge and Olaniyi(2020) also argued that literacy has come to mean much more to individuals and communities than just reading and writing. Similarly, Oyitso and Olomukoro (2012) in Aroge and Olaniyi, (2020) also pointed out the importance of literacy in adult's family life. They denoted that literacy gives adults personal freedom to become agents of change, paving the way for economic and political freedom required for the development of the country. Literacy imparts skills and knowledge to participants that make them more productive in self-employment or in employment by others (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report; 2006).

Methods of Teaching Functional Literacy Programme to Adult Learners

Discussion groups, study circles, or mental training sessions; are adult group learning methods aimed at a common seeking for truth. By this method, the teacher will be an adviser or a guide in the group that upholds democratic principles. The independence of every adult learner must fully be protected. Each adult learner has a chance to express his opinion or a chance for his opinion to be taken seriously. Such a method will be more acceptable to the adult as he has already formed an opinion about himself, others, and the situation. Bello (2012) This method may help to make its aim and methods to guarantee its acceptance by the adults and the following are the methods.

Integrating Methods and Media

In this method, different approaches, methods, and techniques are brought together. The radio, films, slides, television, posters, charts, graphs, exhibitions, museums, etc are brought to the attention of the adult learner. The Library may be linked with films, films with radio, etc to produce the required effect.

Active methods

The main aim in this method is to instruct the adults through their own participation. Participation in a cooperative activity or engaging in community development work are excellent active way of learning vocational and occupational skills, the exercise of responsibility and social values such as team spirit, the exercise of responsibility and social values such as team spirit. Discussion groups are widespread forms of active education that

may be employed by an adult educator. Book clubs, recreational activities such as sports, drama, dancing etc are other forms of active learning that can be used to develop the spirit of initiative and a sense of social responsibility among adults. In adult education, active participation and commitment of the adult learner must be ensured at each stage of programming, execution, and evolution.

Ecological approach

By this approach, most learning will be done within the learner's setting. This approach could also be described as the "Milieu Approach" where most learning is done in the learner milieu and every potential learner is also a potential teacher. The separation of the teacher's and learner's roles may not be necessary. The teacher at best could be seen as a guide, a counselor, a facilitator, or a motivator engaged in mutually reinforcing educational activities. On the other hand, the learner is an active participant, and a problem solver on the way to becoming an independent learner who has learned how to learn. The learning may be organized in groups within work situations or a community. By such an arrangement, the independent learner may have the opportunity of learning independently.

The Concept of Motivation in Adult Learning

Motivation is a psychological concept that explains what exactly propels human beings to voluntarily undertake specific actions. Psychologists differ in their definition of motivation. They define it as drives, needs, incentives reinforcement, energizer, goals, and expectancy. Barelson (2004) defined motivation as an inner state that energizes, activates, moves, directs, or channels behaviour to exert a high level of effort towards some set goals conditioned by efforts, and the ability to satisfy some individual needs. Motivation determines largely when an adult learner wants to learn and how far he or she will not respond to any stimulus. Unless he or she is in a state of need and feels he or she can himself or herself by responding.

In Nigeria, it is general knowledge that unemployment is on the high side, Nigeria is said to be the poverty capital of the world, more than half of its population lives below the poverty line; economic hardship is experienced all over the country. Yet when you go to the functional literacy centres, you will find many adults enrolling in functional literacy curricula, amidst these challenges.

Motivation as a Device for Effective Functional Literacy for Adult Learners

Motivation, derived from the word 'motives', is a dominant factor that explains human behaviour in a given situation. The concept of motivation refers to the dynamic forces in human behaviour, why people think, feel and act the way they do. Motivation can be used

to explain why people prefer alternatives, why they differ in their enthusiastic pursuit of their goals, and why they persist in the way they feel, think, and perform. It is, therefore, a determinant of behaviour that must be acquired, cultivated, and nurtured (Utulu,2007).

Physiologists have stressed the importance of motivation in human learning. Students often develop an interest in learning when they are highly motivated. It is generally observed that motivation helps to induce or encourage learning in students. Encouragement focuses on helping students recognize and own their strengths and resources and can inspire them towards the conviction that they can make decisions and choices, and find solutions. Encouragement is an important thread in life. In a teaching/learning situation, you let your pupils know you value them by really listening to their feelings and intentions. The teacher can challenge students' strengths, recognize and encourage their increased awareness, and attempt to change their behaviour and solve problems.

Motivation gives the impression that learners need to be interested. That is to say, something has to be added to arouse the interest and encourage the learner. In cooking a dish, you add some condiments, e.g Spices, flavor, etc;to make it palatable. So also in teaching a concept or topic, you need to add something interesting to motivate the learners to learn effectively. The Deweyan concept that the learner must be interested in the learning task if he or she is to learn remains vital in educational theory. Dewey's conception of interest is focused on materials and methods that are vitally connected with the learner's purposes and present powers. He also looks at rewards, punishments, and artificial inducements as motivational devices.

To Taba (1962), in Utulu(2007) the criterion of interests is to take advantage of the student's interest in what is taught and to undermine it means overlooking potent motivation and courting the possibility of ineffective learning. Reward and punishment are the most commonly used motivational devices in our schools. Motivation could be intrinsic and extrinsic. The school, the electronic media, etc; can be used to develop extrinsic motivation in pupils who lack confidence in their ability to achieve(low self-concept). Cohen's (1995) in Utulu, 2007 findings show that motivation is mostly derived from home. This type of motivation is intrinsic and is more commonly advocated by educational theorists. This is because it deals directly with the learners' interest and purpose e.g. in teaching wild animals take the children to the zoo, so that they can appreciate the animals. Motivation should start from childhood because it is physical and emotional stress that young children and adolescent girls go through, in addition to denial of opportunities to play, explore the environment, and

interact fully with peers. Also, the physical and emotional abuse and sometimes neglect, monotony, separation from family, and the burden of premature responsibility is likely to have permanent adverse psycho-social impacts. Naidu and Pansuranaman (1985) in Utulu (2007) note that children who have low academic motivation and are exposed to working early are frustrated; they suffer from role conflicts and low educational aspirations.

Motivation is necessary in classroom instruction because it increases awareness and willingness to listen, respond, and attach value to learning, which helps to internalize positive virtues and commitment to the learning process.

Problem of Functional Literacy of Adult Learners

1. Social engagement: The adult literate learner in the rural community could be the family head, the breadwinner, who belongs to different organizational groups in his community and who attends the social engagements, especially those of the organizations to which he belongs. In addition, to these duties, he must also learn how to read, write, and carry out calculations to improve his way of life and participate progressively in his community. He has to forgo relaxation with a pot of palm wine and folklore and riddles after a tiring day in the farm, market, or river for a literacy class. The adult learner goes to the class preoccupied with such family and community problems that he finds it humanly impossible to pay adequate attention to what the instructor is putting across. Center of literacy classes, especially in the rural areas, suffer a setback during the farming and fishing seasons. For the cattle-rearing communities, there is an issue of keeping them in one location. Some centres are forced to be suspended due to poor attendance. Such situations have been observed in Cross River, Bauchi, and River States of Nigeria. Thus, social engagement and community pressures may outweigh the motivation to undertake an educational enterprise.

2. Psychological Prejudice: psychologically, some adults given the the option would not ever attempt attending literacy class because they fool too bad. Their children may ridicule them for going to school in old age. Friends and relations may discourage them by telling them it is a waste of time because little or nothing will be added to their age. Some of them are scared of meeting their instructor who may be of their group or even much younger than them. The illiterate has an inferiority complex because he cannot read or write. All these difficulties go to show what dilemma the adult learner faces in pursuit of what is a human right, I.e. the right to learn. He needs to help in the struggle for self-improvement and enlightenment to resolve his approach in avoidance of conflict.

3. **Socio-cultural Problem:** Nigeria is a country with several cultures, and socio-mobility has brought the cultures together in the cities and to some extent in the villages throughout the country. These cultures have a lot of similarities but they also have certain distinct characteristics that are unique to each other. When people of different cultures are grouped in the same literacy class, there are bound to be problems of respect for their cultures. Adults are sensitive and are particular about their customs and cultures and any issue that casts aspersions on their customs is likely to be viewed with discomfort.

Teachers of adult literates, therefore, have the extra responsibility of being alert to the respect for the ideals of each custom and culture represented by participants. In all Nigerian cultures, respect for elders is a very prominent element. Respect for elders could also cause conflict among students themselves because of their varying ages. Many adult illiterates who are not used to the school situation will have a hard time coping with the new learning situation and with noise making.

4. **Language Problem:** In Nigeria, there are nearly four hundred separate languages. Through social, commercial, religious, political, and educational interrelationships and intermarriages; people of varying languages have mingled with one another, especially in the urban areas. In planning literacy education, the issue of the language of instruction cannot be ignored. If one language is imposed on a multilingual group, there is bound to be resentment. Since literacy training is not compulsory, the majority of participants to whom the language of instruction is foreign may decide to withdraw from classes unless that language is of religion to make a lot of demands on their members. To the extent that attendance at literacy classes may not be difficult if not impossible. Especially as some illiterates may work during the day and attend religious worship in the evening, leaving no time for literacy classes. Members of various religions are also generally sensitive and defensive about their faith. References to these faiths that are unfavourable in any way are likely to receive violent reactions from illiterate adults. Teachers of adults therefore have to be careful not to attack any religion in both the contents and methods adopted.

5. **Religious Problems:** There are three religions in Nigeria; Islam, Christianity and Traditional religions, in order of size. Each of them has several denominations, brotherhoods, sects, and branches. Adult literates also embrace all three religions, each of which stands for certain concepts and faiths. Some of them in an adult literacy class try to avoid unnecessary conflict and diversion of attention from the main objectives of the classes.

6. **Economic Problems:** A large majority of adult illiterates are poor; poor in the sense that they live below the subsistence level in terms of money available to them to eat, provide accommodations, and take care of their family, family's health, food, and accommodation. They are also poor in the sense that they do not know what to do to get out of economic poverty, and indeed, very few opportunities exist for their survival. This is a problem in learning as hungry people are not likely to want to enroll in literacy classes to start with and enrolled at all they may not concentrate in class.

Recommendation for Promoting Functional Literacy of Adult Learners,

1. **National campaign for Literacy:** This includes programmes of publication of literature for the neo-literates, establishment of libraries, and organization of continuing education for all the literate adults including the neo-literates.
2. **Adult Literacy Week:** Adult Literacy Week will help to stimulate national consciousness on the subject and mobilize national support for a mass campaign for the removal of adult illiteracy.
3. **National get-together:** National get-together to be organized for three days for the exchange of national and international experience on adult literacy and adult education and the formulation of concrete programmes. Also, pilot project for dealing with the different aspects of the concern and the special circumstances of different areas and different groups in the country.
4. **Pilot project on adult education:** Programmes of pilot projects on adult education should be launched in various parts of the country, both urban and rural, and assistance to be provided to the state governments, universities, and voluntary organizations by the centre. The ascent of the pilot projects will be on maximum public participation.
5. **Involvement of the students in literacy programmes:** National social services programme for college students to be undertaken to involve the entire student population; collegiate as well as senior school classes, in the campaign for literacy.
6. **Ministry of education to give priority:** Priority to be given to the eradication of illiteracy and follow-up of adult education programmes among the programmes for the youth.
7. **Utilizing the services of voluntary organizations:** The possibility of utilizing the services of the civil defence personnel, scouts, guides, and other appropriate organizations in programmes of adult literacy and especially in the follow-up programmes to be explored.

8. **Expenditure on adult literacy programmes:** Expenditure on adult literacy and adult education programmes to be regarded as a national investment and a legitimate charge on the resources of these departments.

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