

## **Capacity Building of an Effective Facilitator in Teaching and Learning: Emerging Issues in Adult Learning Environment in Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

The Provision of relevant educational services to the increasing adult population without formal education is the concern of researchers in contemporary society. The foremost concern has hitherto been narrowed on the quality of adult learners' facilitators towards effective teaching and learning in an emerging adult learning environment. Adult Learning environment is a variable that contributes either positively or negatively to the achievement of the goal of adult literacy education, hence the need for capacity building needs of the facilitators. This paper conceptually argues that Capacity building is one of the ways of equipping adult education facilitators with the capacities required for effective adult personnel services and job performance. Today, the adult learning environment has been undergoing major changes brought about by emerging educational concepts and technological reforms. These emerging concepts and reforms pose several new challenges to adult learning environments which include Androgogical approaches, personalized adaptive learning, and attractive learning amongst others. The methodology adopted was the Content Analysis Format. The paper however affirms that capacity building of adult learner facilitators is necessary for emerging adult learning environments. It suggested that educational– stakeholders should advocate for in-service training of facilitators to get acquainted with the new adult learning environment.

**Keywords: Andragogy, Capacity, Facilitator, Learning, Environment.**

### **Introduction**

Building the capacity of facilitators in the adult learning environment is crucial for the overall effectiveness of adult education programs. The efficacy of a facilitator is a key factor or determinant of the success of an adult learner. Therefore, there is a dire need to build the capacities of these adult facilitators to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Facilitators have a deep understanding of instructional methods, adult learning principles, and effective communication strategies. Moreover, a well-skilled facilitator can adapt to

diverse learning styles and needs within the adult learning environment fostering an inclusive atmosphere that accommodates various backgrounds and experiences, promoting a positive and collaborative learning environment. This, in turn, enhances participant engagement and knowledge retention, among adults.

Consequently, a capacity building focus on facilitators enables them to integrate modern educational technologies and innovative approaches into their teaching methods, staying relevant and effective in ever-evolving learning. Ultimately, investing in the capacity of facilitators ensures that adult learners receive a high-quality education, promoting lifelong learning and skill, development in diverse and evolving contexts.

### **Concept of Capacity Building**

Capacity building is one of the ways of equipping adult education facilitators with the capacities required for effective adult personnel services, and job performance. According to Mestry and Grobler (2014), capacity building is the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills, and access to information, knowledge, and training. This increases their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and understand and deal with their job performance needs and in a sustainable manner. Hassan (2014) stated that it focuses on efforts geared toward improving the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes possessed by individuals for proficiency in a given task or job.

Capacity building, according to Hilder Brand (2014) is the process of developing human capacities (knowledge, skills, attitudes, potentials, and practice – KSAPP) through different methods (training, management development, organization development, career planning and development among others) and time-bound organized learning experiences, to improve the productivity of the people to achieve organizational goals more effectively and efficiently. In the context of this study, capacity building refers to efforts (strategies and methodologies) taken toward improving the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes possessed by the adult facilitators. Uchendu (2015) Opined that when the capacities of people are built, they can guide their internal development and activities as they would have been skilled and knowledgeable to act in ways that would improve their standard of living.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015) defines capacity building/capacity development as the process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their development objectives over time. Capacity building in the words of Imasaya (2016) is a way to build up new capacities which is related to enhancement, improvements, or strengthening of individual or organizational capacity to attain their goals. It also refers to

the process of enhancing an individual's, group's, or organizational ability, knowledge, skills, resources, and structures to effectively and sustainably perform tasks, solve problems, and achieve objectives. This includes training, skill development, Infrastructure improvement, and other strategies to strengthen the capacities of entities to better address challenges and meet their goals. Rounmeil (2017) observed an essential ingredient in capacity building is a transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within, transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.

### **A Facilitator**

A facilitator is a person who guides an individual or group to learn through interactive activities by using a range of processing skills and methods to achieve measurable learning outcomes. A facilitator could be seen as one who leads a group through discussions, meetings, or workshops, guiding the process to achieve specific goals. An effective facilitator according to Balog (2018) possesses strong communication skills, active listening abilities, neutrality, adaptability, and the capacity to manage group dynamics. They foster collaboration, encourage participation, and aid groups reach consensus or solutions. Their role is to create a supportive environment for productive discussion and decision-making. A facilitator is a person who helps adults to learn. Marshall (2016) describes a facilitator as one who intelligently handles complex learning situations and simplifies learning for adult learners. They liberate, free, unfetter, deliver, disentangle, extricate, unravel, unburden, and ease adult learning through adult education programs. Facilitator competency is the skills that are needed for optimum performance in adult education programs. Facilitators are key factors in the execution of adult education programs in Nigeria. The safeguarding and improvement of the professional quality of Learning Facilitators in Adult and Continuing Education (ACE), as well as in other sectors of education. It is considered today one of the most challenging tasks for any society that wants to survive in the globalizing competition (Ogu, Osaru &Yahaya), 2019).

The term ACE Learning Facilitators refers to a variety of professional roles such as teachers, trainers, coaches, guidance and counseling staff, and others. What these roles have in common is that a major part of the professional activity takes place in direct contact with the adult learner(s) and consists of initiating, supporting, and monitoring the learning processes of these adults. The activities of learning facilitators can be considered as classical aspects of the work of most ACE professionals working in different domains of ACE. These domains are vocational education, corporate and functional education, social and moral

education, or cultural and arts education. Adult Learning Facilitators mainly work in various contexts covering the entire field of Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) consisting of

- a) Formal adult education institutions offering basic, general, and vocational education and training,
- b) Non-formal education institutions offering popular education, and
- c) Work-related training and development mainly of non-formal character. (Ogu and yahaya, 2019)

### **Concept of Teaching and Learning**

Teaching involves the deliberate imparting of knowledge, skills, or information from one person to another. It typically involves the use of various methods, strategies, and resources to convey information and facilitate understanding. Teaching is a profession that requires training on the part of the person who wants to be effective. Teaching has evolved from the old missionary approach that was teacher-centered where the teachers knew all and had answers to everything while the learners were listeners and accepted all they were taught. It has a new approach which is learner-centred where the learner is given credit with some knowledge and skill. The teacher therefore now only guides, facilitates, motivates, and allows room for interaction, (Adzongo, Shir & Hembah, 2016).

According to Al- Rawi (2013), teaching is an attempt to help someone acquire or change some skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideas, or appreciation. A good teacher is also able to manage and control the classroom for effective teaching and learning so that teaching quality in the overall educational process can be achieved. Effective teaching is a building block of high student achievement which requires creativity, innovation, and adoption of various teaching strategies (Marshall, 2016). The skills required to achieve effective teaching involve more than just expertise in an academic field (Marshall, 2016). Teaching occurs when an individual deliberately attempts to assist another individual or a group of people in performing a skill or learning a specific activity or concept (Adzongo, 2018). Adzongo, further states that teaching involves many activities that complement each other to complete the process, some processes are: (a.) creating conditions that facilitate learning: A teacher facilitates learning by stimulating the “child”, establishing a favourable atmosphere developing a good student-teacher relationship, exercises good discipline: He or she is also able to manage, control and introduces a variety of activities that aid learning. (b.) Teaching Involves Social and Physical Factors: This involves the creation of a conducive educational environment, which in turn motivates the learner’s interest consciously and sub-consciously. Interesting things like pictures, models, books, and so on make teaching and learning

more effective. (c.) Teaching Facilitates Changes in Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes: Teaching is aimed at bringing about the right changes in the behaviour of the learner that should contribute to better living which is manifested by acquiring desired new knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, and interests. (d.) Teaching Entails Active, Pupil/Student Involvement and Participation: A good teacher should be aware that learners have a right to participate in learning and should enjoy all the activities taking place in the classroom. Therefore, students must be actively involved in the teaching and learning processes. (e.) Learners' differences should be taken into cognizance: a good teacher needs an understanding of learners' capabilities for teaching and learning to be effective. The teacher should know when to assist, how to relate contents, sequence capabilities, and apply particular teaching methods to arouse genuine interest in the learner and be able to help the learner develop. Use of instructional materials: A good teacher will always ensure the use of instructional materials. This is because pupils/students learn better when they use their sense organs. Based on this reason, when instructional materials are lacking, the teacher must improvise.

In the same vein, learning can be considered as permanent change because change is brought to students by a teacher through techniques like developing specific skills, changing some attitudes, or understanding specific scientific laws operating behind a learning environment (Sequeira, 2012). Learning is about a change: the change brought about by developing a new skill, understanding a scientific law, and changing an attitude. The change is not merely incidental or natural in the way that our appearance changes as we get older.

Learning according to Karban (2015) is the process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, attitudes, and preferences. The ability to learn is possessed by humans, animals, and some machines, there is also evidence of some kind of learning in certain plants, some learning is immediately induced by a single event but much skills and knowledge accumulate from repeated experiences.

Learning on the other hand is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, or understanding through steady experience or teaching. It involves absorbing information, making corrections, and applying the acquired knowledge in various contexts. Pear (2014) posits that learning may occur consciously or without conscious awareness, learning that an aversive or escaped may result in a condition called learned helplessness. Learning is a relatively permanent change, usually brought about intentionally. When we attend a course, search through a book, or read a discussion paper, we set out to learn (Broughan & Princlloo, 2020)

However, to be an active learner in higher education, each student expects to be treated as an adult learner who has some right over the learning ambiance in the form of asking questions and clearing doubts. That is, students expect to have ownership over the learning session. Moreover, students also want their instructor to be cooperative and humorous who would teach clearly and usually use relevant examples so that the course material being taught becomes easy to understand. This is increasingly being required in classrooms today (Balog) 2018).

Teaching and learning are two activities that reflect each other, so it's preferable to use the term "Teaching and Learning Methods" rather than "Teaching Methods". As we all know the outcome of teaching is learning, therefore the separation of the two activities is not appropriate. The criteria for measuring good teaching are the amount and the quality of learning the students get. Our aim here is to establish principles to evaluate teaching methods against learning outcomes (Al- Arawi, 2013).

Teaching adult learners is an arduous task. This is because adult learners by definition come to the learning situation with a myriad of characteristics that set them apart from traditional (young) learners (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners, due to their chronological age, possess a considerable wealth of experiences which when well harnessed can become an asset in the teaching and learning encounter. Again, adult learners are more likely to take responsibility for their learning than young learners (Knowles, 1980). Given these assumptions, in teaching adult learners, the educator is faced with many questions paramount among them is how best to promote effective learning among adult learners. This is re-echoed by Gervis and Capel (2013) when they state that what is important about teaching is what it enables the learner to do, know, or understand. "From the literature on teachers of d their strategies, we know that it is not unusual to consider general pedagogical and didactic approaches for adult learners" (Jeffs and Smith, 2018). As a result, many theories have been propounded to explain how best to promote learning among adults. For instance, Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy focused on the various characteristics of adult learning and based on such characteristics deduced some principles for adult learning. However, the theory fails to give details on the practicalities of teaching adult learners.

## **Adult Learning Environment**

This refers to the educational setting designed specifically for adults. Madu and Obiozor (2020) posit that the learning environment is one crucial element in facilitating adult learning and training. The learning environment is second to learning content also takes cognizance of the learner's characteristics in a holistic. The learning environment can be referred to as an educational approach, a Cultural context in which teaching and learning occur. The term typically refers to educational philosophy or knowledge experience by the learners and may also encompass a variety of learning cultures, their presiding cultures, cultures ethos and characteristics, how individuals interact, governing structures, and binding philosophy. (Warnock, 2013). These environments are characterized by being learner-centered, acknowledging the life experience and knowledge that adults bring into the learning environment. These environments emphasize self-directed practical, application of knowledge flexibility in scheduling and relevance to real-life experiences.

They can include settings like higher education institutions, courses, vocational training programmes, or workplace training tailored to the needs and learning styles of adult students. (Balog, 2018).

According to Study.com, (2018) Adult learning environment encompasses learning resources and technology, means of teaching, modes of learning, and connections to societal and global contexts in adult and continuing education. The term also includes human behavioral and cultural dimensions, including the vital role of emotion in learning. The adult learning environment is a composite of human practices and material systems, much as an ecology is the combination of living things and physical environment (Balog, 2018). Contemporary learners deserve learning spaces that meet their individual and collective needs. To meet this challenge, Adult educational leaders must provide physical and cultural environments that are empowering and engaging (Orlu, 2013).

Learning environments vary from classroom to classroom and from context to context each with unique elements. According to study.com (2018) learning environments can be learner-centred; knowledge-centered; assessment centred and community-centered. learner-centred, environments are designed for the active construction of knowledge by and for learners. Knowledge-centred learning environments are those which support students' deep investigations of big ideas through generative learning activities. Assessment-centred learning environments provide frequent, ongoing, and varying opportunities for assessment, including opportunities for revision and self and peer assessment (Orlu, 2013).



Community-centered environments value collaboration, negotiation of meaning, respect for multiple perspectives around which knowledge is constructed, and connections to the local community and culture (Zhu et al, 2016). Adult Educators are greatly concerned over adult learning in the sense that learning environments are diverse in use, learning styles, organization, and education with a focus on the culture of the population, it serves and their locations (Madu & Obiozor 2020).

### **Emerging Issues in the Adult Learning Environment**

Today, the adult learning environment has been undergoing major changes brought about by emerging educational concepts and technological reforms. These emerging concepts and reforms pose several new challenges to adult learning environments, as enumerated below.

**Andragogical Approaches:** Many advances in education will be brought about by the further integration of personalized learning and intelligent learning environments. Price, (2015). pointed out that learning is personal, social, distributed, universal, flexible, dynamic, and complex. In a smart adult learning environment, a fundamental shift is needed towards a more personalized, social, open, dynamic, emergent, and knowledge-pull model for learning as opposed to the one-size-fits-all, centralized, static, top-down, and knowledge-push models of traditional learning solutions (Peng and Spector, 2019). To achieve this goal, new pedagogical and Andragogical approaches are required regarding the effective application of integrating technologies into the curriculum in a smart adult learning environment, to improve the effectiveness and efficacy of students' learning.

**Personalized Adaptive Learning:** Tailoring learning experience to meet individual needs and preferences by using adaptive technologies and personalized approaches. According to Hwang and Fu (2020), a smart learning environment is regarded as a learning system for facilitating efficient personalized learning. Adaptive learning provides technical and methodological support for personalized learning. Personalized adaptive learning makes adaptive adjustments according to the individual characteristics of learners to promote the individualized development of students. Smart devices and intelligent technologies in smart learning environments can be used to promote the development of personalized learning and adaptive learning for students. The Adult learning environment has a large potential to effectively promote the development of personalized learning and adaptive learning (Peng, Ma & Spector, 2019). Thus, how to design learning ecosystems that integrate smart learning to personalize and self-regulated learning will be a key challenge (Gros, 2016). The following efforts could be made: monitoring learners' differences and changes in individual characteristics, individual performance, personal development, and adapting teaching



strategies (Peng, Ma & Spector, 2019).

**Assessment Method:** Despite advances in psychological research and educational technology, assessment practices in educational institutions have remained unchanged for decades. In an adult learning environment, there is an urgent need to go beyond traditional forms of assessment and use new methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environment. The formative assessment might be an effective approach. It can enhance adults' ability to change from passive learners to active learners, where they can understand their strengths and weaknesses, recognize gaps in learning, and develop solutions (Price, 2015).

**Integration Of Formal Learning And Informal Learning:** In the past, the channels for students to acquire knowledge were formal school and university studies. But now through the Internet, students can easily obtain and use informal learning methods, which leads to formal learning time allocation may only account for 50% of learners' study time (Kinshuk et al., 2016). However, due to the blurring of the boundaries between formal and informal learning and the increasing attention to informal learning, the learning environment must integrate formal and informal learning to create an autonomous learning environment to support individual learners (Gros, 2016).

**Inclusive Education:** This has to do with teaching and addressing the needs of adults with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities that require specialized literacy instruction and also experiences of adult learners

**Digital Literacy And Accessibility To Technology:** Ensuring that adults acquire digital literacy and skills and also ensure that they have access to technology for literacy education. Intergrading technology into the curriculum in an adult learning environment will help improve the effectiveness and efficacy of adult learning (Chapman& Mahick, 2014)

**Multilingual Education:** In multilingual societies proud education in languages that studies understand and also balancing local languages and the national language in literacy programs is a very big challenge in adult learning.

**Remote Learning Challenges:** Access, equity, and engagement issues in remote or hybrid learning environments are being addressed to accommodate diverse adult learners (Study com. 2018). Issues such as internet outages and device errors can significantly hinder the ability of a student to engage in remote learning likewise the distance can make it even more of a challenge for the learning.

**Lifelong Learning and Upskilling:** The need for continuous upskilling due to rapid technology market changes requires a shift towards lifelong learning strategies. Moustakas and Fokiali (2019) suggested that the adult learning environment needs to extend beyond basic skills and promote the continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge throughout one's life. Upskilling within adult education focuses on enhancing or acquiring new skills relevant to one's current or future job. It is a proactive approach to staying competitive in the workforce by developing expertise in areas that align with industry demands and technological advancement. Lifelong and upskilling helps individuals remain adaptable and resilient in their careers.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing:** This involves fostering a supportive atmosphere that considers the psychological and emotional needs of learners. This includes addressing stress, and anxiety and adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles and mental health challenges, creating a positive and inclusive learning environment that contributes to overall well-being and enhances the learning experience for adults. (Lee et al, 2020)

**Work-Based Learning And Experiential Education:** Work-based learning and experiential education are effective approaches in the adult learning environment. They provide practical, hands-on experiences that enhance skills and knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding of concepts. These methods align with adult learners' preferences for practical application and retention of information.

Integrating real-world experiences and work. This learning approach tends to bridge the gap between theory and practice, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant. (Kinshuk et al 2016).

**Global And Intercultural Competences:** This has to do with the ability of adult learners to navigate and thrive in a diverse and interconnected world. This involves developing skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable individuals to understand and engage effectively with people from different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives.

Intercultural competence addressing emerging issues. These competencies encompass cultural awareness, communication skills across cultures, adaptability, and a capacity for global collaboration.

Integrating global and intercultural perspectives helps adult learners develop a broader worldview and prepares them to navigate the complexities of our interconnected global society.

Adults acquiring these competencies help them to tackle challenges such as cultural diversity in the workplace, globalization of industries, and the need for cross-cultural communication in a variety of contexts.

Developing skills that prepare adult learners for a globalized world emphasizing cultural understanding and international perspectives (Hwang, 2020)

### **Way Forward In Building Capacity Of An Effective Facilitator For Effective Service Delivery**

To enhance the capacity of facilitators for effective service delivery and to create a conducive adult learning environment, the following strategies should be considered:-

1. **Training And Development:-** Offer comprehensive training programs focusing on facilitation skills, communication conflict resolution, and leadership skills and equip facilitators with necessary competencies. Also, Provide facilitators with ongoing training in adult learning theories, instructional strategies, and effective communication to understand the diverse needs of adult learners. (Roumeil, 2017).
2. **Continuous Professional Development:-**Encourage ongoing learning through workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs to keep facilitators updated on best practices and emerging trends in their field and also stay updated with the latest trends, tools, and methodologies. (Uchendu, 2015).
3. **UNDERSTAND ADULT LEARNING:-**Encourage facilitators to comprehend the unique characteristics of adult learners such as their motivations, experiences, and learning styles.
4. **Adapting Instructional Methods:-** Encourage the use of varied teaching methods like interactive sessions, real-life applications, group discussion, and multimedia to cater to different learning styles and preferences. (Abiam et al, 2016).
5. **Feedback And Evaluation:-** Implement a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement. According to Lee & Cheung, (2020) regular evaluations and feedback from participants can help facilitators refine their approaches and their assessment, and implement regular feedback mechanisms to gather insights from service users, peers, and supervisors to help, facilitators improve their performances.
6. **Technology Integration:-** Incorporate relevant technologies to enhance learning experiences, and service delivery, promoting engagement, and interaction and improving the overall facilitation experience.
7. **Mentorship And Coaching:-** Establish mentorship programs to pair experienced facilitators with new ones fostering knowledge transfer and skill development through

guidance and coaching. (Lee, 2020)

8. **Adapting And Flexibility**:-Equip facilitators with the ability to adapt to changing environments, handle diverse scenarios, and remain flexible in addressing the varied needs of service recipients.
9. **Emotional Intelligence and Empathy**:-Emphasize the development of emotional intelligence and empathy in facilitators to better understand and cater to the emotional and practical needs of their learners (Feidakis et al, 2013).
10. **Creating A Supportive Environment**:- Support facilitators in creating a safe and supportive learning atmosphere that encourages participation, collaboration, and a positive attitude toward learning. (Zhu & Rizeebos, 2016)
11. **Empowering Facilitators**:- In empowering facilitators, Sequeira (2012) posits that providing autonomy and encouraging facilitators to experiment with Innovative methods and activities while keeping the learning objectives in focus. By focusing on these aspects, facilitators can enhance their capabilities to effectively deliver services, ensuring better outcomes and higher satisfaction among adult learners.

## **Conclusion**

This paper argues that capacity building is very necessary for adult learner facilitators in an emerging adult learning environment. This paper critically explains what capacity building is and its importance to adult learner facilitators. The authors argue that capacity building is one of the ways of equipping adult education facilitators with the capacities required for effective adult personnel services and job performance. Like General Education, Adult Education can only attain its stated goals and objectives only if it is made relevant to adult learners personally and the entire society in which such an adult belongs including the learning environment through capacity building of its facilitators. Also, there have been emerging trends in the adult learning environment especially in the areas OF digital technology. Hence the a need for capacity building of adult learner facilitators.

## **Suggestive Ways Of Capacity Building Programmes**

Finding suggestive ways to improve one's ability in the Adult Learning Environment should be through capacity building. These capacity-building programs usually take the form of in-service training, workshops/seminars, refresher courses, electronic training, and staff meetings, among others

1. In-service education is an integral part of the staff development program, which is organized for adult learners facilitators while in service. As part of achieving professional development for education managers, the relevance of in-service training

cannot be over-emphasized as it provides an avenue for adult learners facilitators to regular update of knowledge and competencies that is required to administer school policies and curriculum for achieving and enhancing job performance for achieving the objectives of adult education as stipulated in the national policy on education in Nigeria.

2. Asserted that the workshop is a training device used in upgrading professional efficiency. Workshops bring adult learners and facilitators together to learn new methods of problem-solving skills through which skills will be employed for effective implementation of educational policies. Seminars as well is a form of on-the-job training and development needed by adult learner facilitators that could make them professionally more committed to their job in the case of giving professional guidance to teachers in their various areas of specialization for effective teaching and learning in an emerging adult learning environment.
3. A refresher course is another form of capacity-building program for facilitators. In this program, the school administrator or adult educator is released or granted leave by the education board to attend training of special courses relevant to adult education and transformational leadership. The knowledge, skills, and competences acquired are usually in consonance with contemporary development in the job of school administration in line with sustainable and proper implementation of the secondary school curriculum.
4. Electronic training as a form of capacity-building program for facilitators is a necessary tool for the proper implementation of adult education programs. The world is now a global village that needs adult educators to be abreast with the changes in the adult learning environment. In this type of training the facilitator gets himself trained through the Internet. By getting familiar with the internet, he gets acquainted with information relevant to skill development through the use of a computer. When a facilitator gets acquainted with the computer, his services delivery becomes easy as sharing and receiving of information (communication) within the school and around the world becomes very easy and reliable.

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