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**THE CHALLENGES
OF
ADULT EDUCATION**

BY

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Professor of Adult Education



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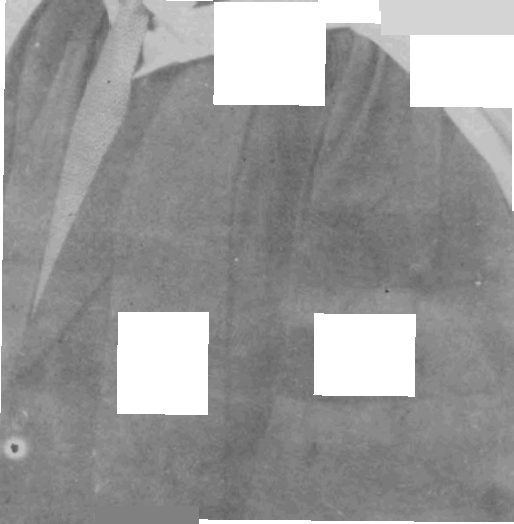
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Introduction

Most developing countries of the world inherited a negative attitude towards adult education from the former colonial powers. This was as a result of the little regard the colonial masters had for any form of education that fell outside the formal education system. They embraced the formal education system, (hierarchically structured, chronologically graded, credential based and running from primary school through the university) for a long time at the expense of any other form of education.

The colonial masters did not intend to **slight** adult education that they knew embraced all forms of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements. Rather, it was simply a reflection of the prevailing attitudes at that time to any form of education not directed towards children and youths.

There is no doubt that rising populations have necessitated accelerated school programmes. All but a few countries, however, have been able to keep pace with the demand for schools by children and youths. Each year, there may be more children in school, but each year also, there are more children out of school than in the previous year. Such a situation clearly calls for fresh thinking as to whether the continuing provision for more places in schools as conventionally conceived is both wise and within the financial competence of a country.

Indeed, it is now universally recognised that what can be learnt at school is but an introduction to life: that knowledge in every sphere is accumulating and changing so rapidly that learning must of necessity be a **continuing activity**. There is therefore the necessity to establish another form of education that is equally effective, possibly less costly, and which reaches out to a mass audience rather than to smaller narrowly defined groups within the community. By so doing provision will be made by government, organisations or institutions for the rising number of young adults who have missed out altogether on

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formal schooling. It is to be noted however, that government, organizations or institutions alone cannot meet the challenges for the provision of adult education in the twenty-first century. The energy imagination and genius of people as well as their full, free and vigorous participation in every aspect of life are also needed.

There is the need for continuous updating of skills which is indispensable and which now makes up part of the curriculum. This must be adapted to form a programme of lifelong education. Both old and young now have to face the reality of changing jobs especially traditional jobs which must give way to service-oriented activities that call for a higher level of qualification. The challenge is immense. **Methods of education must be reformed to include new information technologies and environmental issues.** Foreign cultures and languages must be introduced. There is the need to formalise adult education and insist that it be accorded due recognition and standing.

Teachers and those who train them are also concerned and must be mobilised. They must re-think teaching techniques and upgrade their own skills continuously, working with new methods or programmes which reflect state of the art innovations. Considering the high economic, social, political and cultural stakes involved, the twenty-first century calls for a visionary approach to the field of adult education. This is the main objective of this inaugural lecture.

Concept of Adult Education

As an area of intervention and a focus for research, adult education is a reality that is perceived and structured differently by the various actors according to their specific contexts and historical circumstances. The concept of adult education also varies according to who requests it and who proposes programmes.

Differences between regions are numerous. In Africa and the Arab States, in the light of the urgency of basic

training needs, adult education is perceived first and foremost as literacy training. If literacy and adult education are simply equated, this tends to hide other very important needs for and possibilities from adult education. In the sub-regions of Asia in which economic growth is escalating, continuing education for adults is the primary focus of adult education rather than literacy training. In regions, dominated by political violence, popular education remains underground. In other regions the urgency of resolving practical survival issues takes precedence over both theoretical and basic research in adult education. In Nigeria, adult and non-formal education consists of functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youths and adults outside the formal school system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981).

A challenge for the adult education planner and administrator is to determine how far adult education should be a part of and integrated into the total education system and how far it should operate separately and even in competition with formal education. Certainly, it is not desirable for adult educators to think of themselves as permanently offering programmes that compensate for deficiencies in the formal systems. No country can afford to run two educational systems, the second designed to make good the deficiencies of the formal.

Adult education therefore embraces all forms of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their varying interests and requirements at their different levels of comprehension and ability in their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life. It occurs whenever adults find themselves in the process of learning how to help satisfy primary nutritional, housing, clothing and health needs and also when they endeavour to learn how to ensure a greater degree of social justice and more active participation in the cultural and political life of their communities. Adult education thus incorporates anything that enlarges men's understanding, activates them, helps

them to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves.

Liveright and Haygood (1969) proposed that adult education is the process whereby persons who no longer (or did not) attend school on a regular and full time basis undertake sequential and organised activities with a conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding or skills, appreciation and attitudes; or for the purpose of identifying or solving personal or community problems. Thus the term "adult education" denotes the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in attitude or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participates in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development (UNESCO, 1976). These definitions embracing the dual purposes of achieving individual self-fulfillment and increasing social participation lay to rest the notion that adult-education is purely concerned with what were once regarded as vocational activities (Coles, 1977).

Aims of Adult Education

In industrialised nations like the United States, Canada and Western Europe, one current major challenge is to find ways to re-educate the work force to keep pace with changes in technology that make the skills of a past decade outmoded. Adult education is a necessity for everyone in the 21st century. No school system, however efficient, can fully prepare people for lifelong participation in any society today. There is therefore the need to complement the formal school system with adult education.

Realising the need for adult education especially in the developing countries of the world, Fasokun and Obilade (1988) called on the Nigerian government at various levels to initiate, execute and adequately finance adult-education programmes within their areas of influence in order to enhance the role of adult education as an important element in the development of human resources.

Traditionally, adult education has played an important role in many democratic movements connected with social, political, economic, cultural and personal development.

In the liberal tradition, adult education is primarily concerned with individual self-empowerment. The goal is to empower the individual's character, abilities and capacities with a sense of unique personal meaning. It is aimed at bringing out the individual nature in each man and woman to its true fullness and so bringing about the expression of their individual uniqueness.

In the communitarian tradition, adult education **empowers the community and the entire people**. It helps to create a strong sense of utility and initiate a process of nation-building.

There are still many educators of adults who see themselves primarily as agricultural extension workers, health aids, nurse, forest ranger, small business adviser, banker, journalists etc. This diverse group can be united by the common purpose of promoting adult learning as an essential means of extending the well being of all the world's people. Adult education which is promoted within educational systems is still needed, but it has to be supplemented by structured and purposeful adult learning opportunities which also happen under different labels.

It must be noted that no education system is complete without adult education. The formal system of education has proved inadequate and incapable of giving education to all, because it is selective and elitist. The education for a selected few at the expense of the whole society is in itself a social injustice which should be

redeemed by the provision of education through adult education. Adults have various reasons for participating in educational activities. Fasokun, (1984a) identified, rated and determined the level of discrepancies among and between the expected and the observed educational intentions of adults attending extra-mural classes in the old Oyo State of Nigeria. Based on the results of this study, adult education, especially in the developing countries has the following aims:

- to compensate for lack of formal education;
- to serve as an initial access to primary education (literacy and primary school completion programme);
- to orient it around basic needs;
- to promote democratic culture in the people;
- to serve the interests of the underprivileged population;
- to sensitise adults towards social and political transformation;
- to improve the living conditions of the target group;
- to enlighten society in the changes taking place in economic and social life;
- to provide further education and in-service-training to the target group in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- to provide the target group with the necessary aesthetic, cultural, vocational and civic education for public enlightenment;
- to offer people who have interrupted their school careers for whatever reason the opportunity to finish their education; and
- to provide employment opportunities to the participants.

Content of Adult Education

The most important feature of adult learning is its diversity; the multiplicity of the educational agents involved, the variety of institutional and financial arrangements, the breadth of learning needs and the different ways in which people participate in educational activities throughout the post-initial education life-span. Hence adult education is offered by a broad range of providers to highly heterogeneous audiences. This diversity introduces a number of variables that must be taken into account in economic studies of adult education, which may range from public basic education provided in the formal system of education to informal learning in the work place and continuing education of highly skilled professionals.

The broad-scope of adult education includes the wide range of learning modes outside of the normal age-graded school system. It includes formal classroom instruction and non-formal learning through discussion groups, peer instruction and apprenticeships. It also embraces the informal, self-initiated learning that takes place in family, work settings and the society as a whole (Carman and McKeekehn, 1985).

Fasokun (1981b, 1984b), in determining what could be regarded as the content of adult education in Nigeria, noted that the level of education given under adult education differed from literacy work to training and retraining in skills and knowledge: to general information for awareness on issues of development such as water, food, health, agriculture, population, to certificates, diplomas and degrees. In essence, adult education is no longer an appendix to formal education. Priority is always given to the specific needs of educationally underprivileged groups such as rural people, women, unschooled youth and the urban poor.

Adults attend organised learning activities in a variety of locations, at the workplace, in training centres, in business or commercial schools, in universities, colleges, at

home or elsewhere. Adult education is also provided through a variety of approaches and methods (classroom, software, radio/T.V., audio/video, reading materials, on-the-job-training etc. (Belanger and Gomez, 1997).

Based on the fore-going, the following subject areas will be relevant for adult education.

- different forms of literacy, numeracy, and life skill programmes;
- primary education for adults;
- population education;
- law and statutory regulations;
- new technologies, data processing and communication techniques;
- political, economic, social and cultural democracies;
- maintenance of sustainable development;
- overcoming ethnic prejudices and multi-cultural openness;
- women, work and child care;
- women empowerment;
- health education and health promotion;
- environmental education;
- media, new information and communication technologies;
- economics of adult education;
- principles of market economy and management;
- further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system;
- in-service and on-the-job training for workers;
- general, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education;
- remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- adults and the changing world of work;
- continuing education;

- distance education/correspondence education;
- prison education;
- nomadic education;
- extension education; and
- apprenticeship education.

We shall now examine a few of the subject areas that are relevant to adult education.

Adult Education and Democracy

Fasokun and Mejuini (1991) found out that education and society are mutually dependent on one another. Adult education on its own part is inextricably interwoven with the whole of community's life. Based on this view, they called on the Nigerian government at different levels to make provision for all the different aspects of adult education that could promote effective democratic participation of the people in politics.

Democracy is not only a legal system but a way of life. In essence, democracy depends on a living civil society. It depends on moral virtues. To build a society is an art that does not originate from the state or from the market but from the citizenship of the civil society. The key institutions of society, especially the educational system, have to support this art; if they do not, democracy will be destroyed.

Democracy depends on the favourable organisation of civil society. It cannot be over-emphasised that it is in the learning life associations, organisations, movements and study circles that common problems, which reverberate first in individual life histories, are distilled and transmitted in amplified form to the public sphere.

People's participation in the economic, social, political and cultural transformation of the world is the central issue of our time. This can only be achieved through adult learning of the people for the people and by

the people (Korsgaard 1997). The concept of democracy has political, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

Political democracy is essentially linked to the relationships governing governments and the governed, rulers and the ruled. It always refers to people's quest to realise themselves without severe external constraints, and to their wish to be able freely to take part in improving their social environment (Hazoume, 1997). The new world environment depends upon access to knowledge and technology which will bring about greater participation in civil life and effective understanding among citizens of the political actions that they take. The situation also gives them the ability to oppose anything that is inimical to justice or infringes people's basic rights. It also means citizen's participation in the framework of an uninterrupted process of dialogue, discussion and agreement on the decisions affecting their lives. There is the need to create a literate environment that favours not only the sharing of communication but also a knowledge of rights and duties via the written word.

Political democracy takes into account all social groups including equality between the genders. Hence, there is the need for everyone's right to information, to access and disseminate information. This is the fundamental principle of civil society. It should address the issue of minorities and the recognition of their basic rights. Freedom of expression or democratic communication is always encouraged in political democracy. There is the need for the eradication of illiteracy in order to encourage the avenue for dialogue among the people. By so doing, justice is being applied since equal consideration will be given to all social groups. Such are the political challenges facing adult education.

Economic democracy could be understood as the opportunity for people to organise their economic lives. It also means the promotion of endogenous development. If development is not endogenous, it is in danger of going against the traditional, cultural and economic context of

everyday life, even of overturning it. Economic democracy linked to development could be understood in its totality as the desire to distribute equitably the goods produced by all members of society. Economic democracy includes access to knowledge, health, a clean physical environment, presentation of cultural heritage, shared community life, democratic freedoms and other choices.

Democracy also implies achieving and strengthening social and cultural rights. These could be the right to education, the right to be different, the right to a decent standard of living and the right to good health.

In order to achieve the rights of adults, there is the need for them to have an environment that favours relevant communication. No educational programme, however perfect, can bear lasting fruit unless it touches on what gives individuals their values and makes them human. It is therefore logical to say that political, economic, social and cultural questions cannot be resolved in a society unless democracy is at the heart of their implementation: full and unrestricted democracy covering all of society. There is therefore no peace without democracy, and no democracy without peace. For the establishment of a culture of peace, this intrinsic relationship calls for education (and indeed adult education) for democracy in all departments.

It is to be realised that no democracy can claim to be developing without a satisfactory resolution of the question of illiteracy in any country. There is the need for people to be aware of what goes on in their societies in their quest for a better life. This awareness sets the concept of education in the context of a completely new vision which challenges adult education in all its aspects.

Adult Education and Literacy

It is estimated that out of nearly six billion people in the world today, nearly a billion of them have entered the twenty-first century unable to read a book or sign their names - much less operate a computer or understand a

simple application form. At the same time over 130 million children of school age in the developing world are growing up without access to basic education.

Fifty one years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spelt out a global vision for peace and prosperity that included the right to education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child – the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history – enshrines the right of all children to a primary education that will give them the skills they need to continue learning throughout life.

According to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, when the right to education is assured, the world gains. There is no instant solution to the violations of that right, but it begins with simple proposition: that on the eve of 21st C there is no higher priority, no mission more important than that of Education For All (Annan, 1999). Thus, ensuring the right to education is a matter of morality, justice and economic sense. The denial of the right to education hurts people's capacity to work productively, to sustain and protect themselves and their families. On a society-wide scale, the denial to education harms the cause of democracy and social progress – and by extension international peace and security. By impairing the full development of children, illiteracy makes it more difficult for them to make their way in society as adults in a spirit of understanding, peace and gender equality among all peoples and groups.

Over 150 million children in developing countries start school but suddenly drop out after two or three years in school. They are not emerging with literacy, numeracy and life skills that are the foundation of learning throughout life.

Apart from the denial of education to children, adults are also faced with the problem of illiteracy. The bellicose language often used against illiteracy includes words like elimination, eradication, battle, scourge, plague as well as many others. All these words cannot achieve any desirable result unless the world, North, South, West and East, the

rich, elite and powerful within countries are prepared for an alternative orientation and on total shift of financial resources from arms budget to basic services. Illiteracy is not a fatal disease which requires a "vaccination" programme for its eradication. On the contrary, literacy work needs a careful sensitive and sensible choice of andragogical approaches; neither handouts nor injections will help.

There is no doubt that reading, writing and arithmetic are useful to people in many ways. Literacy should be used to develop people's interdependence, confidence and the ability to cope with everyday life (Fasokun, 1979, 1980, 1981a, 1981b; Fasokun and Amadi, 1983; Fasokun and Obilade, 1990). In order to help illiterate persons in different parts of the country, Fasokun (1980) developed the techniques for literacy teaching. These include the various techniques for acquiring basic literacy, information, skills and the application of the knowledge gained. He described with concrete examples the conditions under which each of the techniques could be used in literacy teaching. However, one may not be able to deny that many things can be done by people who are not literate. But the point is that almost anything can be done better by people who are literate because literacy enables the recipients to analyse things more clearly and to bring the recorded experience of people to bear on their problems. Literacy is a basic skill without which it is difficult to acquire the modern skills of agriculture and industry.

Thus literate persons are better able to cope with the modern world. A person who cannot read a sign on medicine bottle or a fertilizer bag, let alone a textbook, is going to experience problems. The person who cannot read or write a letter, or manage a bank account faces many embarrassing situations. With technology advancing everyday, those who cannot handle reading, writing and arithmetic are going to find themselves increasingly at a disadvantage. The gap between the literate and illiterate in our society is likely to grow even wider, with all the social

tensions implied by that unless we take definite action to remedy the situation.

It is a common experience that illiterate persons somehow feel that as they are uneducated, they should keep quiet and leave the running of their country and even the community to others who apparently know better. Through the acquisition of literacy, we want our people to be self confident, well informed and if necessary, critical. We want our citizens to boldly exercise the rights and responsibilities which are theirs as human beings.

Experts and bureaucrats tend not to listen to the arguments of grace-roots people and participants of literacy classes, as they assume to know or prefer to hide behind rules and regulations. This is certainly wrong. However, the question remains: How attentively do we listen? How much do we try to understand before we offer rural people our dishes of literacy to them? Part of the answer has been expressed by illiterates attending literacy classes from India in the poem written by Moitra (1979) from which I will like to quote a few lines:

Why should we become literate?

What kind of people are we?
We are poor, very poor
But we are not stupid

That is why, despite our illiteracy
We still exist
But we have to know
Why we should become literate...

Why do our teachers feel so superior?
They behave as if we were ignorant fools,
As if we were little children.
Please, do understand that
The teacher may know things
Which we don't

But we know a lot of things
Which are beyond him...
Literacy should help us live better;
At least we look at it that way.

They say that things are being planned
For we – the poor
Would literacy help us in knowing
Those government plans?
Would it help us know
How to raise our yield and increase our income?
And from where could we borrow money
On easy terms and what benefits
Would we get from the co-operatives?...

Will this programme teach us how to think
And work together?
Will “doing” be made a part of “learning”?
We want a straight answer.

Then we shall decide whether
We should become literate or not
But if we find out that we are being duped again
With empty promises
We will stay away from you ...

Despite the views expressed by illiterates from India in the poem presented above, one of the great myths behind literacy movements was that of crisis (Graff, 1992). In essence, literacy is manifestly riddled with questions, tensions and conflicts which need to be clarified. The concept of literacy should be brought out of its **corner**. The concept of literacy should also be widened by reintroducing traditional knowledge and skills and indigenous languages into basic education (Fasokun, 1998). There must also be more participation in literacy programmes by local communities. Adults' rights to education must be enshrined in the constitution and be the subject of specific

legislation. Above all it must be remembered that learners are at the heart of literacy process. They must all be involved in all stages of learning.

Adult Education and the Empowerment of Women

The impoverishment of Africa means the deterioration of living conditions particularly for women who in major regions of the continent, bear the triple responsibility of raising a family, bringing home an income, and upholding community structures. The problem of survival that they face anew everyday leaves them little opportunity to develop “liberating” energies of their own. Effective solutions tailored to their situations, interests and needs can only be designed by them, and in collaboration with them. It is therefore not surprising to see women in many communities in Africa challenging the precarious situation in which they find themselves as illustrated by the poem below titled “African Woman” by Marriet Malomi of Uganda:

African Woman

1. African woman, African woman
Which name suits me best?
I am the family plough
Plough the land which I don't own
Yet my beloved husband reaps what I sow
2. African woman, African woman
Which name suits me best?
I bear children every year
I plough for them every year
I feed them every year
I dress them every year
Yet they are not mine
My beloved husband claims them

3. African woman, African woman
Which name suits me best?
I am the source of water for the family
I am the source of firewood for the family
I am the source of food for the family
I am the source of income for the family
Yet I own nothing but my beloved husband owns everything
4. African woman, African woman
Which name suits me best?
I am the bed for my husband
I am the pillow for my husband
I am the blanket for my husband
Because he bought me, so he owns me
5. African woman, African woman
Which name suits me best?
African woman
Please wake up!
Is this a good quality of life you woman should live?
Men let women reap what they sow

The 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education For All and the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women seem to have addressed some of the issues pointed out in the poem just presented. Both conferences called for the elimination of discrimination in education at all levels, for the creation of **gender sensitive education systems** and for equal educational and training opportunities for women.

The Beijing platform also talked about empowerment of women. Longwe (1997) views empowerment as women's capacity to make the best of their own lives. A woman can be **empowered** if she has access to literacy, education, productive skills and capital which will then **pave the way for her to get ahead**. Education for empowerment allows women to learn the following:

- challenge and transform the ideology and practice of women's subordination;
- transform the structure and institutions which have upheld and reinforced discrimination such as the family, class, ethnicity and social, economic and political structures and institutions including religion, the media etc;
- think and work collectively with others, instead of working as an individual to compete against others;
- question the social and political environment, not merely as given which must be understood, but also as an unsatisfactory environment to be changed;
- look for political interests which underlie apparently technical and neutral explanations;
- recognise that the gender policies do not command political consensus but in fact attract both explicit and covert opposition;
- question whether public institutions are working in public interest;
- develop strategies for working in an area of political conflict and confrontation;
- devise strategies for counter covert bureaucratic resistance to gender oriented policies; and
- gain access and control over materials and knowledge (Longwe 1997, Batliwala 1995).

Three major concerns of empowering education have been identified. These are access, content and andragogy. Historically, women have been denied access to schooling, literacy and other educational opportunities. This has produced a gender gap that continues to be evident whether in school enrolment rates, literacy rates or adult education. For example out of the almost one billion non-literate population, two thirds are women (Anonuro, 1997). It has been found out that there is a positive relationship between learner's self concept and access to education (Fasokun, 1983). Efforts should therefore be made to ensure that

adult learners are helped to build positive views of themselves.

Discrimination against women is the largest impediment to achieving education for all. The broad social benefits of educating women are almost universally acknowledged. They include the following:

- the more educated a mother is, the more infant and child mortality is reduced;
- children of more educated mothers tend to be better nourished and suffer less from illness;
- children (and particularly daughters) of more educated mothers are more likely to be educated themselves and become literate;
- educated women are less likely to die in childbirth;
- the more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to have opportunities and life choices and avoid being oppressed and exploited by her family or social situation;
- educated women are more likely to be receptive to, participate in and influence development initiatives and send their own daughters to school; and
- educated women are more likely to play a role in political and economic decision-making at community, regional and national levels.

It is therefore imperative that equal opportunity in all aspects of education is essential to enable women of all ages to make their full contribution to society and to the resolution of the multiple problems confronting humanity. When women are caught in a situation of social isolation and lack of access to knowledge and information, they are alienated from decision making processes within the family, community and society in general, and have little control over their bodies and lives.

Adult Education and Child Care

Putting today's essential child care knowledge into practice will be seen by many as 'women's work'. But women already have enough work to do. They grow most of the developing world's food, market most of its crops, fetch most of its water, collect most of its fuel, feed most of its animals, and weed most of its fields. And when their work outside the home is done, they light the third world's fires, cook its meals, clean its compounds, wash its clothes, shop for its needs and look after its old and its ill.

The multiple burdens of womanhood are too much. The greatest communication challenge of all is the challenge of communicating the idea that the time has come, in all countries, for men to share more fully in the most difficult and important of all tasks – protecting the lives and health and the growth of their children

Young adults usually need additional education regarding reproduction and sexuality as they initiate reproductive behaviour. This may take various forms. Sometimes pre-marital counselling or education programmes are offered by churches, government departments or non-governmental organisations, to assist these young adult learners in preparing for the reproductive decisions that await them.

Learning about prevention of birth defects should occur before conception. The early stage of pregnancy, especially the first six weeks, is the period when the embryo is the most vulnerable to drugs and other external factors that can cause birth defects when expectant mothers consume or are exposed to them (Angarita and Sikes, 1990).

If couples are planning a pregnancy and are aware of the heightened risks during the early weeks, they can take necessary precautions (avoiding e.g. drugs of any kind, alcohol, smoking and X-rays) before the pregnancy is confirmed.

Certain nutritional deficiencies can also contribute to birth defects. If a woman consumes 0.4 milligrams of folic acid daily, beginning at least one month before conception and continuing at least through the early stages of pregnancy, the likelihood of a neural tube defect in her child is reduced by half. Folic acid may be taken as a dietary supplement and could be found in foods such as peas and oranges.

Once conception has occurred, the couple will need information on prenatal care, including diet. In some cultures, tradition discriminates against women in terms of food allocation. Education has an important role to play here, because the diet of a mother-to-be is an important factor in health status of her pregnancy (Sikes, 1997).

Educational interventions are also intended to protect the infant through education of parents in oral rehydration therapy, the need for infant immunizations and other protective measures as they continue with each clinic visit as the child grows.

Parents are the child's first educators. It is important for parents to learn how to communicate with their children, whether they be pre-schoolers, children moving into puberty or adolescents who are trying to learn who they are and how to establish meaningful relationships with others.

The need to produce family information on material and child health care at this stage cannot be overemphasized. That information about birth-spacing, safe motherhood, breast-feeding, weaning and child growth, immunization, diarrhoea diseases, respiratory infections, domestic hygiene, malaria and AIDS – should be provided to enable most families in the developing world to make significant improvements in their own and their children's health. There is therefore the need to teach parents the ways of achieving the first level of primary health care.

Women should be taught compensatory care which returns a child to a previously accepted state of health or development and stimulating care which serves to promote

further development such as language and social development (Engle, 1992).

Throughout the world there are millions of children with many problems. Many of these children have been ignored or neglected, and also abandoned. These reactions are generally due to ignorance about the causes of their handicaps. Special needs children are often looked upon as a burden. They are frequently regarded by the family and community as worthless, useless and dependent and it is no surprise that children quickly take on this view of themselves.

Parents should be taught an **Early Childhood Screening Tool**. According to Evans (1998) they should know that the child might have a problem in these areas when the child exhibits some of the following behaviours:

Hearing if the child

- does not turn towards the source of new sounds or voices
- has frequent ear infections (discharge from ear, earache)
- does not respond when he/she is called unless he can see the person
- watches your lips when you speak
- talks in a very loud or soft voice
- does not talk or talks strangely

Seeing if the child

- is often unable to find small objects which he has dropped
- has red eyes or chronic discharge from eyes, spots on the eyes, a cloudy appearance to eyes or frequently rubs eyes and says they hurt
- often bumps into things while moving around
- holds head in an awkward position when trying to look at something

- sometimes or always crosses one or both eyes (after six months of age).

Talking if the child

- does not say mama (or equivalent) by 18 months of age
- cannot name a few familiar objects/people by age 2
- cannot repeat simple songs/rhythms by age 3
- is not talking in short sentences by age 4
- is not understood by people outside the family by age 5
- is talking differently from other children of the same age

Understanding if the child

- does not react to own name by age 1
- cannot identify parts of face by age 3
- cannot answer simple questions by age 4
- cannot follow simple stories by age 3
- seems to have difficulty understanding things you are saying when compared to other children of the same age.

Playing if the child

- does not enjoy playing simple waving games by age 1
- does not play with common objects (e.g. spoon and pot) by age 2
- does not join in games with other children by age 4 (e.g. catch, hide and seek)
- does not play like other children of the same age

Moving if the child

- is unable to sit up unsupported by 10 months
- cannot walk without help by age 2
- cannot balance on the foot for a short time by age 4
- moves very differently from other children of the same age.

Adults should be exposed to these early childhood screening tools through well planned and effective adult education programmes.

Adult Education and the Environment

At the beginning of a new century so badly affected by ecological crises, most of which have been knowingly brought about by human activities, and a few unwittingly, environmental education for adults seems in fact to be the key to warning the 21st century people against some harmful behaviours that have in the past led to serious damage to the environment (Gaba-Waye, 1997).

Progressive degradation of the earth's environment poses a threat to its very existence. Unlike our grand parents, we have too much ozone where it shields us. Large forest belts are disappearing, as a result of massive timbering and an increasing instance of forest fires. Farmers are finding it more and more difficult to cultivate what is left because of spreading erosion, accelerating exhaustion of the soil, and a sinking water table.

Majority of adults are not aware of the basic environmental impact of their own activities. Yet it is they who are voters, decision-makers, government and community leaders and consumers. The planet cannot wait for the next generation of young people to apply their environmental knowledge (Clover, 1997). The urgency for adult education in this connection is unparalleled. As such it requires a holistic approach. Political awareness must be awakened. Practical steps must be taken.

The problems of the environment are different for the rich and the poor, for men and for women. In poor countries, the demand for food and fuel by the rapidly growing poor population leads to deforestation, soil erosion, silting and depletion of water supplier. The poor not only contribute to local environmental degradation, but also suffer from it. It is women certainly in the poor countries,

who are mostly affected by environmental degradation. Therefore, the link between women's empowerment and the development of new values in relation to the environment is critical. There is a strong argument for women to be placed at the centre of development in the twenty-first century.

Environmental adult education considers the environment in its totality, natural and built, technological and social, and it assists people to make global and local links. It attempts to help people to become more politically literate about the ideologies and systems at work that are contrary to the promotion of a healthy social and natural environment.

Some of the causes of ecological crisis are linked directly with the over-exploitation of the resources of the earth and toxic industrial waste. Environmental education is hence an absolute imperative that will enable the various communities in our world, which are rapidly changing to manage their own educational, cultural, scientific and technological resources and to direct them towards a form of development of which they will themselves decide the content and priorities in accordance with their experience and particular ways of life.

The link between environmental adult education and sustainable development has been particularly accentuated in recent years; thanks to the technological explosion that has demanded occupational retraining of adults in many fields, including the planning and use of new renewable forms of energy such as solar cookers, biogas, photovoltaic cells etc. Since adults are the main users of the environment through their occupational and leisure activities, they must have access to information that is relevant to the natural resources available.

It is to be noted that solar energy can be used in Africa directly or indirectly according to need. Everywhere in Africa, it is possible to create solar power stations that will operate 12 hours a day without interruption, as the sun releases on average one billion KWh of energy on Africa per day. Such installations would enable all African towns and

villages to be supplied with electricity, and to draw water from underground tables in order to re-afforest arid lands with a view to making them once more fertile for agriculture and grazing, which are the main economic activities in Africa. Adults should also realise that as a result of the trade winds that blow along the west coast of Africa, it is possible for the continent to be supplied with wind-energy, which lends itself perfectly to the irrigation of desert and semi-desert areas and the watering of stock.

Environmental education is hence an absolute imperative that will enable the various communities in our world, which are rapidly changing, to manage their own educational, cultural, scientific and technological resources and to direct them towards a form of development of which they will themselves decide the content priorities in accordance with their experience and particular ways of life.

Environmental adult education is not a luxury but an urgent necessity, on which depends both the ecological equilibrium of the earth and the survival of humanity. Adults bear both the heavy responsibility for decisions affecting the environment of the planet and the duty to educate the younger generation. Improvement in nutrition, sanitation and economic and social conditions, to which all peoples of the world aspire, depends on adults' awareness of environmental degradation. Learning and information-seeking activities can play an important part in helping adults cope with their environment (Fasokun, 1987).

Adult Education, Health Education and Health Promotion

Major global trends including globalization of trade, ageing population, rapid increase of urban population, increase in poverty, violence development of new information technologies, the spread of tobacco use and HIV/AIDS present major challenges for health promotion and health education (Gaba-Waye, 1997).

Despite progress in controlling certain communicable diseases, new ones have emerged and some old ones continue to affect the health of people in the developing world, providing a double burden. It is also noted that non-communicable, life-style related diseases are now causing more and more deaths in the developing world too.

Health promotion enables people to increase control over, and to improve their health. It involves people through the context of their everyday lives e.g. home, school, workplaces, cities etc and promotes the achievement of the highest level of physical, mental and social well-being for all people.

There is an increasing concern for the health and fitness level of adults. This is due to the high incidence of hypokinetic diseases resulting from inactivity. The problem is multi-dimensional. Lack of fitness can result in obesity which increases the risk of coronary heart diseases, stroke, diabetes as well as causing orthopaedic disorders.

It must be emphasised that physical fitness helps in stemming the onset of diseases e.g. cardiovascular disease, intellectual skills since games facilitate the development of cognitive skills. In addition, dances and gymnastic movements help individuals to think, remember and conceptualise.

Success in sports and games provides ample opportunities for the development of self-image. This promotes self confidence, popularity among peers, ability to accept new challenges and set realistic goals. Exercises help adults to reduce anxiety and state of depression. Exercises help in the reduction of various stress indices.

The content should be carefully selected after a medical examination. This is necessary because rigorous activities have serious consequences for individuals who already have a low fitness level. Cardiovascular flexibility, strength, body composition and motor ability tests may be used for this purpose. It is imperative that adults are exposed to health education and health promotion through viable adult education programmes. Adults with

homogenous intentions should be grouped together for the purpose of receiving instructions (Fasokun, 1984a).

Adult Education, Media, New Information and Communication Technologies

Fasokun and Mejuini (1988) acknowledged the power of the broadcasting media in reaching and stimulating a large audience for adult literacy education. In their study on the use of broadcasting media for adult literacy education in Oyo State of Nigeria, they observed that more air time was allocated to children's education than to adult literacy education. The proportion of the total air time allocated to adult literacy education was rather too low when compared with the overall total air time spent by each of the broadcasting media per week. The time allocated to adult literacy education was not evenly distributed among various occupations engaged in by the adults. This is the general trend in many developing countries of the world.

However, in comparison with traditional media (television, radio and the press) it has been observed that new technologies have an enormous potential for communication, interaction and distribution of content. New technologies provide powerful tools to increase the opportunity of all citizens to have access to education, information and knowledge to create materials as part of the learning environment.

Access to adult-education programmes, using both low and high technologies is predicated not only on the foundation of basic skills but also on the availability of the time, money, energy and physical ability to take part.

Distance education systems have been embarked upon by adults in different ways. It is estimated that over 10 million adults in the world take higher education courses at a distance each year. At least another 10 million or so are following in-service education and training, continuing-education and vocational training courses at a distance.

Distance education systems are very diverse; in fact, about the only obvious feature they have in common is that they do not rely on face-to-face classroom or lecture room contact as the main medium of instruction. The majority of teaching and learning activities are separated in space and in time (although nearly all distance education programmes have an element of face-to-face contact which may vary from 1% to 3% of total study time). In many cases, the diversity can be traced to the dominant influence of a specific underlying communication technology:

- postal correspondence – this forms the main basis for learner-tutor contact in vast majority of distance education programmes;
- newspapers and magazines;
- the telephone: audio and audiographic conferencing and video conferencing, via telephone and satellite communication channels;
- radio: used from the 1930s for distance education ;
- television: such as Chinese Central Television University;
- electronic mail, computer conferencing and World Wide Web (WWW) the current new technologies using the internet.

The mere deployment of technologies, however, does not guarantee that any learning at a distance will occur. The quality and extent of learning depends (far more importantly than in conventional education system) on the motivation, orientation and study skills of the learners, and on the quality, competence and professional skills of the course developers and the tutors. Adults should be encouraged to possess the correct attitudes and values which will assist them in facing the new challenges.

Adult Education and Teacher Preparation

It has been customary in the educational field particularly in the preparation of teachers to understand policy formulation as binary trade-offs: quantity versus quality, traditional versus modern, public versus private, formal versus non-formal; teaching versus learning, centralised versus decentralised, content versus method, intended versus implemented curriculum, teacher-centred versus learner-centred, passive versus active pedagogies, face-to-face versus distance teaching and so on. The binary option scheme and the policy recommendations derived from them have been questioned (Torres, 1996) on the following grounds:

- in reality no policy decision appears as a binary option but rather as a selection from a broad menu of possibilities and shades;
- educational change is systemic and does not operate on the basis of discrete, isolated elements: good textbooks without competent teachers are fruitless investment; teacher training in the absence of an overall revision of the status and condition of the teaching profession ends up increasing teacher rotation in search of better remunerated jobs; increasing instruction time does not necessarily result in improved educational outcomes if curriculum and pedagogy remain unchanged; and so on.

There is therefore the need for holistic measures to improve the quality of teachers at any level especially in the non-formal level. In recent times, more adults who left the formal educational system and who have assumed responsibility of adult status such as work, marriage or parenthood are now continuing their pursuits of educational activities through extra-mural classes, in-service and on-the-job training. Such adult learners are

usually taught in the evenings or during vacations by part-time teachers majority of whom are full-time teachers of adolescents in various schools. The teachers continue to use the same methods of teaching both adolescents and adults. They have to adapt their pedagogical methods of defining the content, assigning the reading and other learning activities to suit the adult learners.

It has been observed that many teachers of adults hold negative predisposition towards adults as learners (David, 1979). This situation arises because of the limits of the conventional methods used in training the teachers used for teaching adults. It has been observed by Torres (1996) that the teacher education preparation method is obsolete. She identifies the following as the possible reasons for this unpleasant situation. Most teacher education programmes;

- start from zero, ignoring or disregarding previous knowledge and experience;
- ignore teachers' real conditions (motivations, concerns, knowledge, available time and resources);
- adopt a top-down approach and sees teachers only in passive roles of recipients and potential trainees and do not consult teachers or seek their participation in the design of the training plan;
- have a homogenous proposal for 'teachers' in general instead of adjusting to the various types and levels of teachers and their specific needs;
- resort to external incentives and motivation mechanisms such as scores, promotions and certificates rather than reinforcing the objective of learning and improving teaching practice;
- are conducted outside the workplace (typically, teachers are brought to the training sites instead of bringing the training to them and making the school the training site);

- are focussed on the teaching perspective much more than on the learning perspective;
- reject teachers' previous knowledge and experience instead of starting from these and building on it;
- are oriented towards correcting mistakes and highlighting weaknesses rather than at stimulating and reinforcing strengths;
- are based on the transmission teaching model (teaching as the transmission of information and learning as the passive assimilation of that information: and
- are essentially contradictory to the pedagogical model that is requested of teachers in their classrooms, where teachers are expected to elicit active learning, critical thinking, creativity etc which they themselves do not experience in their own education and training process.

Teachers trained under the above conditions are not suitable as teachers of adults. In a study on teacher and student perceptions of the ideal and actual behaviours of extra-mural teachers, Fasokun (1988) found out that extra-mural teachers and the adult learners were fully aware of the ideal behaviours that should be possessed by the extra-mural teacher in order to facilitate teaching and learning in the classroom. However, as the study showed, both the teacher and the adult learner agreed that the actual behaviour of the extra-mural teacher was significantly less than the ideal behaviour expected of him. Hence both groups agreed that the extra-mural teacher was not effective in all the three major areas examined in the study, namely, desirable knowledge, skill and personal characteristics of the teacher. In order to achieve the desired results, there is the urgent need to prepare the part-time teachers to meet the needs and demands of the adult learners. This situation becomes very necessary in view of the fact that adult learners have to deal daily with

the realities of their work, their family and their community (Lindsay, 1984). There is therefore the need to examine various potential productive attributes of the teachers including educational preparation, experience, resourcefulness, talents and attitudes before appointing them as teachers of adults (Fasokun, 1979). The teacher of adults should have a desirable knowledge, skill and possess adequate personal characteristics.

The desirable knowledge of the teacher is usually expressed in terms of the knowledge of self, the learner, the subject-matter, the learning process and the teaching process. The desirable skills of the teacher include the art of planning, instructing, evaluating, communicating, decision-making, curriculum leadership, using the adult learners' life experience as instructional resources, developing learning experiences and maintaining an environment conducive to learning. The desirable personal characteristics of the teacher collapse into five categories. These are self-confidence, informality, enthusiasm, responsiveness and creativity (Knox 1980; Fasokun, 1988).

The teachers of adults can only acquire the desirable knowledge, skill and the expected personal characteristics only when there is an efficient and effective professionalization of the teaching profession. The professionalization of the teaching profession is at present the subject of many studies (Altet 1994, Bourdoncle, 1991 and 1993). Professionalization becomes more marked when in any profession, methodological guidelines and rules are superceded by autonomy guided by clear objectives, whose achievement can be evaluated. (Perrenoud, 1996). Until this is achieved, it is not desirable to rely on adolescent teachers to teach adults who differ considerably from children.

There is the urgent need to give the teacher the central place in the process of improving the quality of adult-education. They should be individually or collectively responsible for analysing the requirements of the adult learners. They should be able and be willing to debate

openly, not only among themselves but also with all those legitimately concerned, on the subject of possible solutions or desirable developments, and likewise to take decision on what should be done and how to implement them. Teachers of adults should be considered to be innovative, capable of self-improvement, analysing their own actions, identifying and reacting to learners' needs and evaluating the results of their own actions (Vonk 1992).

The need for holistic measures to improve teaching quality cannot be overemphasized. In essence, there is the need to redefine cost effectiveness in teacher education. Teachers should be seen as educational agents; textbooks and technology are educational tools. Teacher education reform is therefore vital. It is a *sine-qua-non* for educational reform and vice-versa. Teachers must adapt their relationship with learners, switching roles from "soloist" to "accompanist" and shifting the emphasis from dispensing information to helping learners seek, organise and manage knowledge, guiding them rather than moulding them (UNESCO, 1996).

Adult Education at Obafemi Awolowo University

Adult Education as an academic discipline started in this university with the creation of the department of Adult Education in 1967 as one of the four units that constituted the Faculty of Education. It was essentially established as part of the university's efforts towards bringing the 'gown to town and the town to gown'. Guided by the concept, aims and content of adult education just presented in this lecture there was the need by the department to broaden its programmes to cater for different categories of individuals in need of adult education.

By 1973, proposals which were aimed at fostering research, dissemination of research knowledge, development of leadership potentials, conducting and organising adult and continuing education programmes in the university and at approved zonal centres in selected

communities as well as teaching courses in adult education were brought to Senate for approval. This led the department to change its nomenclature to the department of Continuing Education to reflect its newly defined objectives. Although Senate approved these proposals in 1973, acute shortage of staff delayed their effective implementation until the 1975/76 academic session.

Attempts were made in the mid 70s to transform the department into a formal academic department by admitting its own students and awarding degrees in Continuing Education. The Visitation Panel Report of 1974 to the university advised it to concentrate its efforts on extra-mural and continuing education rather than in offering courses for first degree in adult-education.

With the revised undergraduate programmes as approved by Senate, the department continues to offer a joint Bachelor's degree in Education with other departments in the Faculty of Education. To date, the student-teachers offer prescribed courses in various aspects of adult education throughout the duration of their undergraduate programmes. The courses are aimed at developing in the student-teachers different aspects of adult education to enable them contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities. The department also trains postgraduate students to enable them earn M.Ed, M.A and Ph.D degrees in Adult Education. I am glad to mention here with humility and pride that the first sets of M.ED, M.A and Ph.D candidates in Adult Education in the department were all supervised by me. Some of them are now members of staff of the department while the others are holding leadership positions in government establishments and in private sectors.

In addition to our academic programmes, the department had organised seminars, extra-mural and evening classes in selected States within the western part of Nigeria. It collaborated with the Ife Women's Group in executing some of their community development projects. It also collaborated with the department of Extension

Education and Rural Sociology by offering functional literacy programmes in Isoya. Similar functional literacy programmes were carried out in Edunabon and Akiriboto. Relevant programmes were organised for staff nurses, horticulturists and many others.

The department in collaboration with the Staff Training School Unit of the Registry has been deeply involved in the planning and in training personnel for the university. Between 1976 and 1986, the department developed and executed in-service programmes in Secretarial Studies for the staff of the university who were then on grade levels 01-07. Many people were trained as typists, clerical officers, assistant executive officers (account) and confidential secretaries. The programme helped the participants in meeting the deficiencies or otherwise of serving officers and enhanced their professional competence in their chosen careers.

Conclusion

The code of conduct of adult educators asks for a lifelong perspective in the training of trainers, teachers and organisers involved in adult-education. They have to update their skills, and learn to cope with frustrations on the job long before burn-out occurs. Lifelong learning should be the framework within which adult education needs is to be understood. It should embrace childhood, youth and adulthood and should embrace all learning environments and learning opportunities (home, work, school, media etc).

Adult education must be all-inclusive by including people of all ages, genders, ethnic and social backgrounds. It must take into account the numerous aspects of lives and identities of individuals (citizens, parents, caregivers, workers, educators, consumers etc) and therefore needs to incorporate the learning needs of all adults in all their capacities. Adult education must become a more open and flexible system that incorporates less conventional media

such as self-directed learning, distance education and new technologies. Adult education should not be limited to adult literacy. It should not be seen as the education for the poor. It should not be seen as a compensatory social policy to alleviate poverty, but rather as a tool for human development and self-reliance. Equal opportunity in all aspects of adult education is essential to enable people of different ages make their full contributions to society and to the resolution of the numerous problems confronting humanity.

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