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PRACTICING NON-PROFESSIONALS AS MODELS FOR CAREER CHOICES FOR ADULT EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Most students studying Adult Education as a discipline in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning usually ask for the utilitarian value of the course after graduation. This could be because, they initially wanted more popular courses like Law, Medicine and Economics and could not gain admission into these disciplines and then found themselves studying Adult Education which they probably did not know about before they came to the University. This is why this study teased out knowledge and skill areas of Adult Education and found out from those who have never attended adult education programme either at certificate, diploma or degree levels but has excelled in the identified capacities, skills, training, attitudes and behaviour that the discipline of Adult Education instills in its students. It also identified the unique educational capacities, training skills, functional attitudes, and desirable behaviours that B.Ed. Adult Education programme in University of Ibadan target at producing in its graduates. The study is anchored on value arguments and utilitarianism to prove to doubting categories of students or graduates who found themselves by chance in the department that if those who never had training in Adult Education could make a success of what they are doing, it should be expected that they, who would be professionals of Adult Education should have better opportunities after leaving the University.

Introduction

Most students studying Adult Education as a discipline in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning usually ask for the utilitarian value

of the course after graduation. This could be because, they initially wanted more popular courses like Law, Medicine and Economics and could not gain admission into these disciplines and then found themselves studying Adult Education which they probably did not know about before they came to the University. Hence, some of them were averse to the nomenclature 'Adult Education' and this has brought about intense agitations for the change of Adult Education as a University discipline to a more appealing name like andragogical studies or human development studies. At an inter - University debate held by National Association of Adult Education Students NAEES (2015), Ibadan branch, the then president of the association said 'the debate on nomenclature of Adult Education has become urgent to make the department more attractive to students'.

Beyond the change of name, the problem of employability of Adult Education graduates poses a greater concern to students, graduates and lecturers in Adult Education department. This is why this study teased out knowledge and skill areas of Adult Education and found out from those who have never attended adult education programme either at certificate, diploma or degree levels but has excelled in the identified capacities, skills, training, attitudes and behaviour that the discipline of Adult Education instills in its students. It also identified the unique educational capacities, training skills, functional attitudes, and desirable behaviours that B.Ed. Adult Education programme in University of Ibadan target at producing in its graduates. The study is anchored on value arguments and utilitarianism to prove to doubting categories of students or graduates who found themselves by chance in the department that if those who never had training in Adult Education could make a success of what they are doing, it should be expected that they, who would be professionals of Adult Education should have better opportunities after leaving the University.

Practicing Non-Professionals

Practicing non-professional adult educators are those who by their talents and on the job schedules as well as non-formal training programmes have acquired and are utilizing skills which are identified as distinctive adult education skills and capacities. From

the courses that have been explained in this paper which are offered in adult education departments, the knowledge areas, capacities and skills are namely: facilitation, mobilization, lobbying, and advocacy. Others include producing attitudinal changes in individuals and organisations, helping or caring services, productive educational consultancies, functional multi-skilling in organisation, event planning and management.

Methodology

Qualitative method of theoretical analysis and application was done on twenty eight participants who were selected on the criteria of being nominated by seven lecturers of Adult education. They were asked to nominate four professions each who exhibit knowledge areas of adult education authority. They identified religious leaders, business owners, government officers and community members, as well as political leaders. Preliminary observations then showed that there are other non- professional adult educators such as medical officers, human resource consultants, literacy facilitators and continuing education organizers, and helpers who are excelling in adult and non- formal education endeavours. Twenty eight of these non- professionals were then interviewed.

These key informants were interviewed using a guide.

Some of the items of the guide are:

- Describe your job that have given you the prominence you have
- How did you acquire these skills?
- What are the educational programmes that you have ever had?
- What do you think those who read Adult Education as a course did?
- Did you ever do any programme in Adult Education?
- Have you ever held of any adult education programme?
- Describe Adult Education as a programme?

The basis for asking the following questions is the fact that the curriculum of Adult Education programmes in Nigeria already states

the objectives, knowledge and skills areas that the discipline should imbibe in its participants.

Bachelor Degree Curriculum of Adult Education in Nigeria

Being the first department of Adult Education in Nigeria, the curriculum of Adult Education, University of Ibadan can be used as the basis for generalizing what is obtainable in other departments of Adult Education in the country. One is not oblivious of some differences that are in some other departments in order to align with the needs and peculiarity of their environment. Nevertheless, all departments of Adult education in Nigeria have to comply with the benchmark of National Universities Commission in Nigeria. The curriculum of the department of Adult education, University of Ibadan states that 'the programme is designed to provide students with intellectual and professional skill which will help them to function effectively and fit into changing economic situation of the nation. The programme provides: adult personnel for professional work in private and public sectors and teachers for effective teaching and learning processes. The programme of the department was justified by the following statements:

The curriculum is premised on the realities of changing job requirements. Changing world of employment opportunities require certain competencies which presuppose that higher educational training should incorporate skills that will meet current job demands. The old curriculum was lacking in some of these core competencies. Consequently, the current curriculum addresses these competence areas and seeks to provide hands-on experience for graduates of this programme. It is envisaged that products (graduates) of this programme will be better positioned for job opportunities in the ever changing world of job requirements and situations.

To further strengthen the objectives of adult education programme in University of Ibadan, this study tease out the knowledge and skill areas for future adult educators. It considered compulsory courses in the department. They are: Introduction to Adult Education; Philosophy of Adult Education; Principles and

Practice of Adult Education; Field Work I in Adult Education, Community Development, Literacy Development, Social Welfare; Principles and Practice of Social Welfare; Principles and Practice of Social Welfare; Field Work II in Adult Education; Organisation and Administration of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria; and Management of Adult and Non-Formal Education (Department of Adult Education, 2007).

Knowledge and skill areas of Adult Education courses

Introduction to Adult Education is the first and only compulsory courses that candidates have in their first year. The course is describes as: 'concepts of adulthood, education and adult education; Needs for adult education, various types of adult education: scope nature and objectives of Adult Education, including planning, organisation and administration of adult education programmes; roles of different forms of adult education in nation building. A survey of adult education agencies and institutions, examination of factors influencing the progress of different form of adult education in Nigeria, Concept of traditional and indigenous education and entrepreneurial skills in adult and non-formal education.

The knowledge of the introduction to adult education provides candidates with self realisation of their identity of being an adult. It instills in them the consciousness that they are already on their route to adulthood which connotes responsibility and maturation. This supports what a new student said about the course that 'when I introduce myself as a student of adult education, my friends expect me to behave like an adult. When I did behave like one, they said no wonder you are in adult education but when I fall short of the behaviour of an adult they reprimand me for behaving otherwise'. (Omoregie, 2015)

Philosophy of Adult Education describes Adult Education as a specialized discipline, and provides the rationale for its practices, and analyzes, key concepts, issues and problems in Adult Education. It also involves an intensive study of Adult Education scholars and ideas. This course develops in candidates a broad area of knowledge from where Adult Education subsists as a discipline and a specialization. It teaches skills of critical and creative thinking.

Ofoego & Odionye (2017) remarked that 'the first step in taking an initiative to start business is critical and creative thinking in order to explore all possibilities and consider many alternatives before reaching a sound conclusion'.

Media Techniques in Adult and Non-Formal Education as a course in Adult education is described as an application of Media Techniques to Adult Education, Community Development, Literacy Development and Social Welfare, Psychology, benefits, issues and challenges of media techniques. Emphasis will be placed on the use of multi-media communication strategies for Adult literacy programmes as well as for mobilizing the masses for community development projects in developing countries and integration of ICT in Adult and Non-Formal Education. In an age of information technology, the knowledge and usage of media remain very necessary for everyone. This course opens the students up to the enormous possibilities in the world of media which they are already familiar with and assists them to use media potentials to their advantage in order to become employable even before graduation.

Principles and Practice of Adult Education is another course in Adult education curriculum which is described as including aims, nature and scope of adult education: Principles and practice of Adult Education in developed and developing world are taught and theories of Adult Education and planning, organization, programmes, principles, methods and techniques of adult teaching, and evaluation techniques in Adult Education are topics that are also treated. This course opens learners to all the practices of adult education which includes basic literacy, functional literacy, seminars and workshops and skill acquisition programmes.

Field work in adult education, community development, literacy Development, and social welfare is a practical course that teaches survey and field observation of the practice of any different components of Adult Education. Students are expected to visit and observe any adult education practice of interest and write a report of their field experience. This course has opened the students to all sorts of experiences that could give them opportunity of practice in the future. Adult students and potential students who are aware of the world and actively involved can transform their communities

and society. Adult education teachers and programmes can serve the liberation of adult students or they can be society's gate keepers, to control and domesticate them (Green, 2007).

Principles and Practice of Social Welfare is another course that is described as explaining some socio-economic and political contexts within which social work and social welfare develop. In the course are analysis of social problems and organisational patterns of social welfare; Problem solving methods and techniques in Social action; application of organisational concepts through the use of case studies done. It also teaches examination of the organisation and administrative processes in social welfare services: mutual aid, and cooperation. Case studies of social welfare institutions which highlight strengths and weaknesses and drawing implications for acceptable practices are also taught. Since social welfare remains a wide aspect of practice, students are exposed to what happens in the field and their interest can be stirred up for future career.

Organisation and administration of adult and non-formal education is a course that explains and examines key concepts in organizational and administrative processes. Application of identified concepts to the practices and problems of Adult Education in Nigeria is taught. Skills and attitudes necessary to under-take organisational development projects are also explained. Institutionalization of programmes in such ways that the society runs effectively without depending on particular group of people has become a requirement for effective development programmes.

Management of adult and non-formal education is a course that studies the nature of management: project evaluation and review techniques. Planning, programming and budgeting systems, job evaluation and techniques as it applies to Adult Education, community development and social welfare are also taught. When students find themselves in practice of adult education or other fields in the future, they will find useful the knowledge of this course in the management of materials and human beings

What does Adult Education curriculum do?

Knowledge and skills from different courses that Adult Education undergraduates go through can develop the following skills: improve

time management, develop effective relationships with different people in and outside the formal educational system, exhibit matured and responsible behaviour, possess leadership skills in formal and non-formal organisations. However, these skills are not limited to adult education graduates. Houle (1970) expressed the problem that professionalism faces in Adult education when he said "some adult education specialists call themselves 'professionals,' but they do so with an uneasy air." He quoted Allen (1961) who has shown that adult education has moved steadily toward professionalism, but that it has not yet achieved the attributes accepted as essential by most contemporary definers of the term and which are characteristics, for example, of law, medicine, theology and engineering.' The specialist in Adult Education can be considered as a professional only in a loose and analogical fashion, such as that which distinguishes the trained from the amateur historian or the political scientist from the politician. By study and experience, he has acquired a body of knowledge, a discipline and an expertise which sets him apart from other people, but he is not yet a member of a consciously defined company of men and women who have achieved the socially recognised and legally protected stature of a profession (Houle, 1970). It is unfortunate that Houle's position of about fifty years ago still stands in African countries especially in Nigeria. Despite the efforts of professional bodies like Nigerian National Council of Adult Education' (NNCAE), Adult education is not yet recognised in Nigeria has a professional discipline.

Findings and Discussions

When asked to describe their jobs that have given them the prominence they have. One of the key informant said 'as a professional I have been trained to relate well with people and solve their problems when they approach me'. On the question: how did you acquire these skills? All of the participants said they acquired their knowledge and skills from schools and colleges. When asked 'what are the educational programmes that you have ever had? All the key informants mentioned the formal sectors like Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education as where they have acquired the skills. Only 23% have had training sponsored by their

organisations in the last five years. Other training programmes they have acquired are mostly self-sponsored. The answer to the question what do you think those who read Adult Education as a course did was the same by all the participants. All the participants thought adult education graduates teach old people who never had opportunity to go to school. A pattern was seen in the answers given to the question: did you ever do any programme in Adult Education? All of them said they never needed to go for adult education programme because they went to school.

Have you ever heard of any adult education programme? The participants pointed to literacy centres and continuing education centres as adult education programmes that are available. On their description of Adult Education as a programme, they said Adult Education are meant for people who never went to school and have problems of getting admitted for further education.

While the success stories of the selected practitioners are commendable for their innovative strides in life, their responses would be shocking to professional adult educators who are daily confronted with students who are discouraged by their parents and guardian to study Adult Education as a University course. This means that these non - professionals need to be corrected that most of the complementary programmes that help them on their jobs are adult education programmes. Their practices can be enhanced by some sort of Adult Education training programme. They lack the knowledge that training programmes they are exposed to and on the job training are adult education programmes. This means that they need further exposure into what Adult Education can do to continually enhance their jobs.

Results show that 98 percent of participants know about Adult Education but do not know that the discipline can build capacities in areas they need on their jobs. 62 percent wish they have some form of training programmes that would enhance their skills in what they are doing and they want to have certificates for these training, yet they do not know that these training programmes can be organized by Adult Education departments.

Conclusion

Adult Education undergraduates and graduates in Nigeria have extensive area of career choices, yet they need to come to the stark reality of who they are and what career choices they want. They need to identify their areas of interest at the early stage of the course, so that they can develop themselves in their chosen area of competence and interest. There is need to involve undergraduates of Adult Education in more practical oriented aspects of Adult Education and they should be made to write their projects in these areas. On the part of organizers and curriculum planners of Adult Education Departments, there is need to expand areas of coverage in the discipline by taking into consideration the needs of industries and community members.

Recommendation

Professional adult educators have the burdened duty of developing in their students the entrepreneurial and business sense for employability. Since the facilitators first have to be entrepreneurs, there will be need for them to be trained in entrepreneurial skills area before they can impart on their students. Professionals in Adult Education have the task of designing self- directed training programmes for these practitioners in order to improve their productivity and serve as models for the promotion of Adult Education in Nigeria.

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