DESIGNING NEED-BASED CRRICULUM FOR ADULT LEARNERS: A PERSPECTIVE

Amina Abba Sanda, Augsta Obum Okwute and Aminchi Daniel

Continuing Education and Extension
Services Department,
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri

ABSTRACT

Curriculum is a plan or an organization of the total learning experiences the learner is expected to engage in under the guidance of an educational institution or agency. It is a well known fact to educationists that curriculum is central to any educational programme, its relevance to needs and aspirations of the adult Learners cannot be overemphasized. Any curriculum which is designed without taking into cognizance the background, needs and aspirations of the learner will hardly succeed. Since adult education is primarily a need-based type of education, curriculum planners are expected to embark on needs assessment so as to know what should constitute the curriculum goals and objectives. The curriculum must contain the widest possible range of activities which have the capacity to attract interest, appreciation and participation. In this vein, the adult literacy instructors and organizers need to be well trained in principles of Andragogy. They also need to know the nature of the learners and be well acquainted with current methods of instructing adult learners. Therefore, to ensure success, the adult literacy curriculum must address the needs of the beneficiaries. The paper also discusses the components of a curriculum which include curriculum structure, objectives, contents, implementation and evaluation.

Keywords: Need-Based Curriculum for Adult Learners A Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Any curriculum which is drawn without considering the learners' background and needs will hardly succeed. Therefore to ensure success, the adult literacy curriculum must revolve around the learners' personal experiences. This is to among other things, enable them solve immediate problems confronting them. Bown and Tomori (1979) assert that the starting Point of any educational programme is to address the needs and interests of individuals or groups concerned. As much as possible, the educational programme offered to learners should address their developmental needs, problems and aspirations and cultural lives, that is, the community and the larger society. However, it is often assumed that curriculum that is applicable to learners' practical life experiences can no doubt induce and keep them on to the end of the programme. That is why Ngada (2006) opines that Curriculum designed should have the interest of the learner, the nature of the learner, the nature of the society and the ways in which learning takes place as its central focus.

According to Brown and Tomori (1979), in the Mazila (2015), the term curriculum 'in adult education was borrowed from pedagogical sciences from the 1920s till date; this terminology has been undergoing refinement pending that time when it might be replaced with a more suitable and typical adult education terminology. Biao (1999) ascertained that there is a concept referred to as "education programme in adult education" which was adopted in the early 1960s to mean educational enterprise enjoyed by or designed for adult learners. This type of educational enterprise may vary from education enterprises running from few hours to those going over many years. He said, originally too, the term programme or "educational programme" referred to credit or non-credit awarding educational enterprises meant for adult learners. At the close of the 1990s however, this term has come to assume a more restricted meaning which confines its use to only non-credit

awarding enterprise designed for adult learners. The term curriculum at about the same time then began to mean a course of study in only one knowledge area (subject) which led to the award of credit or certificate.

Mazila (2015) asserted that the purpose for planning and developing a curriculum is to have an instrument of education for a society which can foster its ideals and values and subsequently lead to the maximum attainment of its social, economic, political and other needs and aspirations. Verdum, Harry and Charles (1975) advised that adult literacy instruction should not be a haphazard activity. Adult literacy instruction should be properly designed, made specific, (directed towards learning goals and manned by professionally trained personnel.

Designing the Need Based Curriculum

The National Policy on Education (2013) stipulates that interest and ability should play a major role in education. The curriculum for adult learners should be learner centered and the learner's interest should be paramount in drawing such curriculum. 'The concern of education, as a tool for development, has always been anchored on functional curriculum that will help the learners realize their potentials and prepare them for life.

Different people come to the learning centre with various expectations and needs. Their needs may vary according to age, gender and occupation. For example, some adults want to become literate in order to read the Bible or the Qur'an, fill out Forms (apply for bank loans or rent allowance, posting farms, etc.). In some cases, learners sign up for class in order to be able to take formal exams afterwards. This approach is Common among young people between 15 and 20 years old. Others want to improve their attitudes with regard to specific situations (conflict, health, family life etc.) UNESCO, (2006). Since adult education is a need-based type of

education for adult, the curriculum, content and materials for the development of the learners' self concept should be seriously considered. For this reason, curriculum planners are expected to embark on needs assessment so as to know what should constitute the curriculum goals and objectives. The systematic determination of learning needs according to Oni (1995) is usually based on, among other things, the analysis of the person(s), determining the needs, the materials to be learnt, the kind of change(s) expected, learners' learning capability, available human and natural resources, and anticipated problems that such needs might pose to the programmer and the beneficiaries. Expressing a similar view, Omolewa (1992) observes that there are many approaches to the required analysis of learning needs. These include:

1. The analysis of the activities where each step is examined and questioned as we go on analyzing the various activities, analysis of equipment, materials or tools for their adequacy or otherwise.
2. Analysis of the dictated problems to ascertain whether such problems are created by circumstances or otherwise.
3. Analysis of behavior response to dictate what factors are responsible for prevailing situations such factors could be human or the set up and
4 An analysis of the programme developers to know how organized they are, to know whether discipline is maintained, whether there is good leadership and whether learning goals and objectives are clear and sufficiently unambiguous.

All these, according to him, wilt assist in the determination of learning needs for a particular group and that to obtain this information, the programmer or (developer may have to look at some Sources since all the required information cannot be gotten from a singular source. He identifies sources such as information that comes from complaints, requests and suggestions from the people concerned, in addition to those sources such as existing

information obtained through the study of records and field surveys undertaken by program developers.

Meanwhile considering the varied needs of the prospective or registered adult learners, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) and Oni (1995) in Mazila (2015) share common sentiments On who should determine their needs, set their goals and objectives. To carry out all these, there are several possibilities such as the teacher, the learner or both through negotiation. They may equally be undertaken by external agencies such as institutions and experts in designing such programme.

Biao (1999) ascertains that children are not usually involved in planning their programmes. This is due to their limited experiences of "what is and is what ought to be". Adult learners on the other hand have unique experiences and capabilities. It is therefore not surprising when Miller (1964.) Knowles, (1977) and Mazila (2015) observed that:

> Adults have much to contribute in programme
> design, teaching techniques as well as education.
> They have relative freedom to choose the kind of
> programme they are interested in and to some
> extent the freedom to proceed at their own pace.

Similarly, Thatcher *(1956)* and Oyedeji (1981) in Mazila (2015) Admit that adult education has no Fixed curriculum. What is offered to the adults depends on the particular needs of the potential participants. Adult learning requires free and forthright exploration of issues, problems, point of view from all those that are involved. They Stressed that adults should have the opportunity to clarify their own experience, their own feeling and ideas and relate this honesty to the materials to be designed for learning Knowles (1977) laments that most adult literacy projects are often started without a thorough study of the educational needs which the learners have

and what problem education is expected to solve. Also, adult literacy projects are often generalized courses and often offered to any participant who enrolls in the programme no matter the learner's background. Most adult literacy projects expose both male and female participants to the same learning experience as if their motives for enrolling in the programme is the same, but in reality, it is known that adult learners have varying educational needs that is why most adult learners get discouraged and drop out from the programme , Obi and Okidc *(2005)* reiterated that adult education is not just about literacy, but a holistic educational programme which is directed at, the total development of adults with the course offering shifting from academic subjects to issues, problems and topics which touch on the lives and work, demands of the adults. Therefore a project that will attract and retain them must be one geared towards satisfying their specific educational needs and interest as revealed by Okukpon, (2005) that such programme must be one which stimulates and empowers adult learners to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetime and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environment. Hence it is often assumed that dropping out from adult literacy classes is a function of discrepancies between a learner's expectation and actual learner's experience in the classroom environment. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of human needs emphasized that the learning experiences made available to learners must be such that will enable them solve their immediate problems. Mazila (2015)

Since curriculum that does not apply directly to the learning needs and interests of participants cause withdrawal from the literacy centre, the planning and designing of a curriculum must have the knowledge of the community. This means an analysis of the people in terms of age, sex, ethnic, racial, religious, social, economic, political, educational and interest categories. Palmer; (2004)

stressed that, this will ascertain the underwriting of diverse programmes based on levels, skills, interest, needs, Previous experiences, capacity to perform and willingness to Participate. 'The learner is an important factor influencing the planning of the curriculum. This is because the curriculum is basically designed for the consumption of the leaner. The curriculum design should focus on the learning experiences from the specific literacy needs and problems of the participants, that is, it should be functional in nature, hence UNESCO, (2001) states that such programmes mirror the lives of the learners. For instance, a functional adult literacy project for nursing mothers which aims at leaching them experiences for the task of effective motherhood and craft will include it knowledge of common sicknesses that afflict children, consumer educational, family planning and family budget. From this the project will diversify to other needs of the mother in the home and in the society. The essence is that the functional literacy skills which the women acquire in the literacy centre are immediately applied in their household tasks. By implication, one discovers that there will be different functional literacy projects for different groups of adult learners. For example, farmers, wine tapers, rice farmers, poultry farmers, members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) as well as traditional rulers and others would have separate packaged programmes which are designed to address their needs,   In the same vein, Oni (1995) in Mazila (2015) opines that the adult learners practical life problems should constitute the instructional objectives of the curriculum. It should be such that, among other things, places emphasis on: 1.Taking note of adult learners learning curriculum and life experience of learning process.

2. Creating sufficient and adequate instructional materials for the learners use. Curriculum planners should ensure that all the learning needs of all adult participants arc met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill programmes. Therefore in

curriculum design, the programme planners should consider the following components:

Curriculum Structure

Curriculum structure provides the basic plan. It lays out the basic parameter that defines the task to be undertaken. Tyler (1949) believes that the curriculum planner should attempt the four basic questions in the course of his work:

i.   What educational ends should the school seek to attain.
ii.   What educational experiences are likely to achieve these ends?
iii. How can those experiences are most effectively organized.
iv.   How can those experiences be evaluated?

Using Tyler's rational for planning a curriculum, there would be need to describe what it is that the learner should be able to do after working through a curriculum. What type of behavior should they be able to display? The description of such behavior constitutes the instructional objectives of curriculum. Ngada (2006) equally affirms that there are four significant aspects of' curriculum structures:

I.   Statement of aim/specific objectives.
II.   Selection and organization of content (problem of sequence in the core curriculum).
III. Patterns of learning and teaching.
IV.   A programme of educational outcomes.

He is of the view that the young ones have to be inducted into a culture of formal and informal education. James however supported Taba's(1962) eight steps for scientific curriculum development structure:

Step 1: Diagnosis of needs
Step 2: Formulation of objective
Step 3: Selection of' content
Step 4: Organization of content
Step 5: Selection of learning experiences

Step 6: Organization of learning experiences
Step7: Determination of what to evaluate and how to evaluate
Step 8: Checking for balance and sequence

Curriculum Objective

This portion of the curriculum explains what the planner expects the target learners to have achieved after they use the material. Expected learning Outcome, change and improvement in behavior, attitude, knowledge, skills and literacy competence of the learner. Biao (1990) refers to the objectives of the curriculum as the scientific behavioral, natural and/or social transformations envisaged by the development, and running of the curriculum. A statement of Objective refers to what the leaner must be able to do or perform when demonstrating his mastery of the content. Statement of objective helps us to determine the state of the learners' intellect or skills through his behavioral actions or performance. Such behavior or performance may be verbal or non- verbal. The learner may be asked to respond to questions verbally or in writing, or be asked to demonstrate his ability to perform certain skills, or to be asked to solve certain kinds of problems. One of the characteristics of a useful objective is that it identifies the kind of performance which will he accepted as evidence that the learner has achieved the objectives; It must be in measurable and Observable terms.

Ngada (2006) opines that the statement of objective should be in concrete terms, specifying the behaviors that are required from learners. They should he written, observable and able to measure performance, it is only when the objectives are stated precisely in terms that one can determine whether one have succeeded in guiding or helping adult learners learn. Objectives. Therefore try to answer questions such as "what will the learners are doing at the end of: the programme?" In order to answer such questions the statement of objectives must begin with measurable verbs, or explicit words such as tell, state, discuss, describe mention,

draw, plan, select, identify, estimate, explain, demonstrate analyze, express, infer, calculate, solve, etc. Objectives written in this form will provide a very successful guide in the planning of instruction.

Mager (1967) states that a good objective should possess three components such as:

1   Identification of terminal performance which the instruction attempts to produce, that is   behavior which identifies what the learner will be doing as evidence that he has mastered the objectives.

2 Description of the important, condition under which the behavior is expected to occur

3   Description of how good a learner's performance must be acceptable

The objectives of a functional adult literacy project must he well articulated and stated. These objectives should be measurable. They should be derived from a marriage of the objectives of' the learners, the sponsors and perhaps societal and national needs

Curriculum Content

Curriculum content is concerned with the number of subjects, the specific subjects and the aspect of the subjects that arc to be included in the curriculum. It is clear that an adult education programme is primarily designed to bring about behavioral change in the participants or to be able to solve some problems that have been identified. Omolewa,(1992) contends that, among other things, the programme must recognize learners involved, their experiences, their educational background, present skill and the expected objectives of the learners experiences. On the other hand, Bhola (1999) states that a functional adult literacy curriculum has the following dimensions namely: literacy, functionality and awareness, the functionality components enable the learner to acquire all or some of the following skills:

i. Socio-political skills, which help them to participate fully and actively in various activities in their Communities by exercising effectively their civic rights and responsibilities.
ii. Life skills which will make them health Conscious through appreciating the importance of personal and environmental hygiene.
iii. Work/occupational skills, which will help the learner, to work for a living.

iv. Cultural development skills, which will help the learners to appreciate the good aspects of their culture and enable them to condemn and drop those aspects that are not good.

The literacy dimension ensures that the literacy skills provided to the learners arc given at a sustainable level. The awareness component further exposes the learners to important knowledge related to issues such as Family planning, population, environment, leisure, retirement, citizenship and religion.

Since curriculum is the totalities of the learning experiences learners are exposed to and which will enable them participate in the world around them, it must contain the widest possible range of activities which have the capacity to attract interest, appreciation and participation.

Curriculum Implementation

Is the general process of moving from planned curriculum to instruction. It is the interpretation of a syllabus in schools. Putting a planned programme to work through lessons by literacy instructors. In an attempt to do so, instructors have to consider the notes which must be prepared, media motivation, teaching methods, classroom procedures and classroom evaluation and techniques. Tyler, (1949) opined that curriculum developers should realize that instructors are the key to successful curriculum implementation for adult learners.

That is why Obi (2006) emphasized that adult literacy instructors and organizers need to be well trained in the principles of Andragogy. They need to know the nature of the learners, their needs and interest as well as what they do not like. They also need to know the current methods of instruction. Adult learners love to work with instructors who are humane and show interest in their affairs and progress. They do not like instructors who nags, insults, and brags; the programme needs well trained instructors.

Curriculum Evaluation

Evaluation is a judgment or a quantitative statement value of some kind. It means judging whether the learner has achieved certain aims and objectives or activity. It involves judgment about the nature and desirability of the change in value, attitude; skills, and knowledge in any given programme or learner's behaviors. Evaluative process serves as the process of obtaining feedback for the purpose of adjusting or maintaining some actions and equally making, the process a Continuous activity Mbahi (1990). Palmer (2004) views evaluation as a means to ascertain if objectives have been met It may be the form of questioning scoring of finished work or assessing a project based on lesson taught. It is left to decide the most appropriate form of evaluation to use in assessing learners' progress. Evaluation can he through verbal communication, writing and in Demonstrating a skill learnt.

CONCLUSION

The Success of any programme of education for adult will largely depend on the Degree to which the learners are made central to the process. Curriculum design [or adult literacy programme should therefore be centered on individual Learners background, age, learning needs, and aspirations The curriculum goals and objectives should focus on needs and interests of Participants. The adult learner can only be adequately prepared for life if the educational programme to which he is exposed is relevant to his problems

needs and aspirations. Hence, discounting or dropping out from adult literacy classes is often assumed as a major function of discrepancies between learner expectation and actual learner experience in the classroom environment.