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Planning Adult and Non-Formal Basic Literacy Education Programmes: Roles of Scheme Organizers

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Abstract

Planning is regarded as one of the important components of management. It is considered as a serious action that should be taken if success can be achieved. Planning of basic literacy programme is critical to the provision of basic education for people who do not have opportunities to formal education. Planning gives direction to what the goals to be achieved and resources that are required for the accomplishments of the activities that will lead to the attainment of the goals. This paper therefore examines how important planning of basic literacy is to the provision of basic education in Nigeria. The scheme organizers are regarded as right drivers to the realisation of the provision of literacy programmes at ward level. Hence, the roles of scheme organisers were raised and explored.

Keywords: Adult and Non-Formal, Basic Literacy Education Programmes

Introduction

Educational programme planning involves a series of decision making which can take place among different organizations, people, and activities (Caffarella, 1994). Adult learners have characteristics which are different from young learners including social roles of adult learners as parents and employees, obligations to work, family, and communities, abundant experience brought into classroom, and purposes of returning to university such as improving their working skills, developing their careers, and making a better life. According to Knowles (1990), adults are autonomous, self-directed, goal-oriented, and practical, and have accumulated work and life experience, family responsibilities and previous education. Besides, adult learners have barriers against participating educational programs such as limited time, transportation, motivation, interest, money, and confidence. Based on these characteristics of adult learners, educators should design curriculum and adopt instruction methods to meet the needs of adults and to ensure the continual process of learning for adults throughout their life. Unlike more traditional kinds of education, adults and continuing education should respond flexibly to the needs and interests of potential adult learners (Long, 1983).

Adult education is a learning process distinct from child education, is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. Adult Education gives mature learners the chance to increase their knowledge, develop new skills and gain helpful qualifications and credentials. The importance of adult education is difficult to overstate. Adult education plays an important role in helping mature aged learners develop new skills and improve the career prospects available to them.

Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition,

alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars.

Adult literacy is one of the important programmes of adult and non-formal education which is meant for those categories of people who have no initial formal education opportunities. The programme provides reading, writing and numeracy skills with a view to enabling people to use the skills in their day to day activities. The realisation of the goal of any programme including basic literacy is determined by the way and manner the programme is being planned. Scheme organisers play important roles in the planning of basic literacy programmes. The focus of this paper therefore is to examine the planning of basic literacy and roles that scheme organisers play in its planning.

Basic Literacy Programme

Basic literacy means forms of abilities to read and understand the language in which a document has been presented, it also means an ability to read, write, and comprehend. Therefore basic literacy is ability in developing foundational competency including reading, writing, maths, job application assistance and overall life-skill development. Basic literacy for out-of-school youths involves the acquisition of the basic skills needed to cope with our complex and technological world, including IT and computer skills. Developing the literacy skills of out-of-school youths is a complex process, which involves enhancing the knowledge and capacities that they have gained over the years and providing them with access to challenging learning opportunities.

The Basic English literacy class aimed to help learners use language in an appropriate and grammatically correct way. Basic English literacy is also considered as a means of widening the experiences of learners and allowing them to communicate effectively in everyday life as well as in their future lives as responsible citizens and professionals. Woven into this framework is the development of critical thinking skills. Thinking critically means grasping the complexity of the world and questioning how others think in order to clarify and improve one's own understanding. These objectives are fundamentally different from that of acquiring basic literacy skills only.
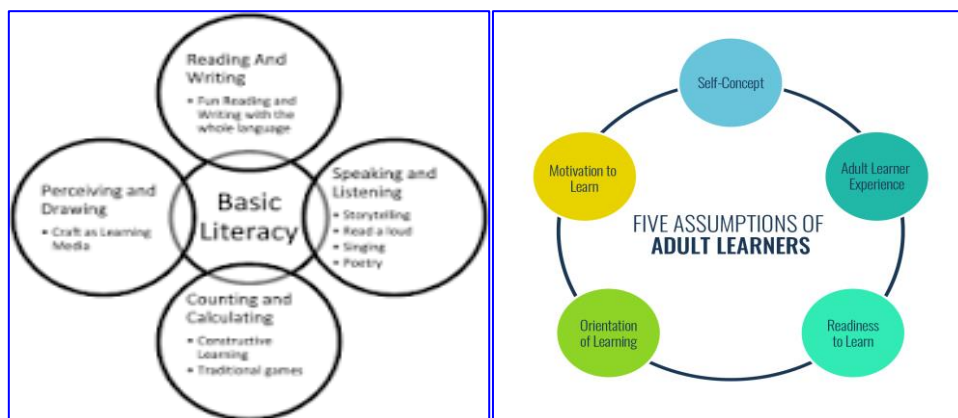
Component of basic literacy   How adult learn

The curriculum included a wide range of issues and texts relevant to the learners' lives. The languages and thoughts of the various authors of the materials used in the course were utilised in a way that helped the learners to develop:

- problem-solving skills;
- the ability to explore issues from their own perspectives;
- the ability to develop evidence to support their views;
- the capacity to apply knowledge to new situations; and
- vital thinking skills.

Planning and Planning of Basic Literacy Programmes

Planning is one of the critical components of management. Planning is a process by which an individual or group decides in advance on some future course of action (Omran, 2002). It is also defined as a process of determining of how organization can get to where it wants to go (Certo, 2000). Planning involves selecting from among alternative future course of action for the organization as a whole and for every department of selection within it (Cook, Hunsaker & Coffey, 1999). It is always believed that if we fail to plan we are planning to fail.

Generally speaking, planning is a process whereby a direction is mapped and then the ways and means for following that direction are specified. There are many forms of planning with several types of activities involved in this process. A plan is the product of the planning process and can be defined as a set of decisions about what to do, why, and how to do it. A plan of action implies that: ƒ It has to serve as a reference for action, built on the consensus, agreed upon by all those concerned as well as by those contributing to its implementation; ƒ It is designed as an indicative, living framework, in such a way that allows for adjustments in light of new developments during implementation; ƒ It includes not only policy directions, but also information on the implementation strategies, actions and benchmarks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the expenditure frameworks.

More and more, non-formal education managers are "constrained" to think and plan more strategically, due to the reasons including: First, one may wish to plan and carry out all the activities that people deem necessary, but without achieving the ultimate goals and results. ƒ Furthermore, more resources do not necessarily stand for the best results. The way one uses these resources can lead to different levels of benefits and results. Thirdly, it has become more and more difficult to plan everything one would wish to do. One ought to make choices, often tough ones, through balanced decision-making, tradeoffs across the programmes and through a consensus building process.

Rothwell and Cookson (1997) proposed a comprehensive Lifelong Education Program Planning (LEPP) model. In the model they identified four quadrants in program planning: "exercising professional responsibility, engaging relevant contexts, designing the program, and managing administrative aspects" (p.8). According to Rothwell and Cookson (1997), exercising professional responsibility involves clearly making working philosophy, responsibility and role of educators. In other words, program planners should have their own values, ensure that program planning continually meets the needs of learners and develop training based on a moral framework (Kilgore, 2003). According to Kilgore (2003), program planners should pay attention to every step of planning process and consider for all of the people involved in an educational program. For example, they should reflect on their values and beliefs about education, and consider perspectives of all stakeholders involved in the program planning, developing needs of adult learners and teachers' professional development to ensure continually meet the needs of life learning of adults (Kilgore, 2003).

Understanding of adult learners is one of the important steps in planning basic literacy programme. Planning effective programs and services and helping adult learners succeed require a clear understanding of adult learners' needs and expectations and how adults learn. Andragogy, a theory of adult learning, makes assumptions about adult learners and the design of adult learning (Knowles, et al., 2005). It emphasizes the importance of understanding the characteristics of the adult learner because of their non-traditional characteristics create needs and priorities which should be paid special attention when planning educational programs. Therefore, to ensure adult learners success and keep them enrolled, an educational programme should be provided to meet their needs and expectations.

Planning of basic literacy programme is very important as it will help to decide who is to be enrolled, resources to be mobilized, instructors to facilitate and the contents to be taught. Scheme organizers have very important roles to play in all of these activities.

Roles of Scheme Organizer

Adult and Non-Formal Education Scheme organizers provide access to a range of learning activities and programmes to meet the needs of the local community at the ward level and he encourages people to take part in basic and post literacy programmes. They are sometimes known as community education organizers or community learning and development workers. The range of literacy programmes such as worker literacy, functional literacy for farmer etc. They are responsible for community mobilizations and outreaches to the target groups, such as young people, families groups and civil service secretariats. These are all aimed at encompass literacy and numeracy skills and programs like civic activities. Much of an adult education organizer's focus is on generating more enrolment in learning centers, giving groups access to qualifications and the opportunity to enhance their skills. Specific roles and duties of organizers include:

a.   He leads at ward level in all adult and Non-formal education programs
b.   Identifying local interests and community learning needs.
c.   Liaising with community or resident groups, education providers and agencies.
d.   Developing an annual programme of learning and training
e.   Finding and booking venues for each program, liaising with local schools and community centres.
f.   Preparing online and printed programme materials and arranging local distribution and promotional activities, such as press coverage and enrolment events.
g.   Providing support and information for interested learners.
h.   Interviewing prospective learning facilitators.
i.   Monitoring all scheme centers.
j.   They conduct examination and ensure moderation
k.   Preparing reports.

Senior organisers are likely to manage a cluster of teams. They may also be responsible for preparing cluster training and curriculum development.Review Adult education scheme organizers may work as full time or part time. At the level of chief Organizer they coordinate at local government level to support.

Qualities required of Scheme Organizer

At the state Agency for adult and Non-formal education organisers are expected to have the following qualities and abilities

➢   The ability to encourage and motivate people to take part in literacy
➢   Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
➢   Good organisational and time management skills.
➢   Commitment to equal opportunities.
➢   The ability to work independently, maintaining constant contacts
➢   An understanding of the education and qualifications system.
➢   To be decisive and creative.
➢   A flexible approach to planning workloads.
➢   Good ability in numeracy and literacy skills.
➢   Enlist and recommend hiring of learning facilitators

Conclusion

Scheme Oorganizers are the key individuals in term of conduct of adult and non-formal education programmes and activities, they establish center for learning, they conduct number of community mobilizations, outreaches and advocacies in order to enable sets of learning centres run according to plans. They supervise the whole centres activities, they distributes all working materials including; text books, exercise books, chalkboards, markers. These roles portray them as most important factors that determine the success of learning centres.

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