

## **Strategies for Promoting Lifelong Education among Adult Learners in Anambra State of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The general purpose of the study was to evolve the strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. Specifically the study determined learners, facilitators and curriculum-related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. It adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 4, 376 adult learners from 23 adult literacy centres in Anambra State. The sample size was 438 adult learners. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings reveal eight (8) learners-related, seven (7) facilitators-related and eight (8) curriculum-related strategies were needed for the promotion of lifelong learning among adults in Anambra State.

**Keywords:** Strategies, Lifelong, Learning, Education, Adults, Learners

### **Introduction**

Education lays the foundation for individual and societal development. According to Denga (2005), education is the process by which every society tries to preserve and promote the stored knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural settings and heritage in order to foster endless wellbeing of mankind. It is a process of acculturation through which an individual is helped to attain the development of his/her potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary according to right reason and to achieve his/her perfect self-fulfillment (Ogbonna, 2011). The acquisition of knowledge to a reasonable extent demands continuous learning which gives people the opportunity to go beyond the classroom.

This kind of learning forms the basis of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning which is interchangeably used as lifelong education is a continuous education and training that enables one to continually adjust to lifetime changes and challenges. It is all about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge, and qualifications from the preschool years to post retirement that will enable adaptation to the knowledge-based society (Soni, 2012)). Thus, lifelong education is the acquisition of skills from the cradle to the grave for the effective functioning in the society. Nzeneri (2010) shares similar view of this learning when he explains that it involves all experiences individuals acquire during lifelong learning process that liberate them from constraints,

depression, ignorance, and exploitation. This form of education encompasses all forms of learning such as formal, informal, and non-formal.

The various forms in the acquisition of knowledge suggest that lifelong learning is central to addressing the day to day challenges of the individuals while striving to survive in a constantly changing milieu. Thus, for individuals, (adult learners) to survive, and function effectively, they need to engage in lifelong learning which must be qualitative. A quality education is that which provides all learners with capabilities required to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies as well as enhance individual's well-being (Tikly & Barrette, 2007).

The above education is precipitated on four pillars: learning to be, learning to do, learning to know and learning to live together. While addressing these pillars, adult learning is seen as having broader social purpose capable of contributing to the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). By this, learners are said to be part of a learning community; active and creative explorer of the world; a reflexive agent; a self-actualizing agent and an integrator of learning' (Medel-Anonuevo, Ohsako & Mauch in Blewitt, 2005:26). These features require some strategies which are but not limited to learner, facilitator and curriculum related strategies.

Learner related strategies are ingredients needed for active participation of learners in learning activities. They are self-directed learning processes by which people identify their learning needs, set goals, choose how to learn, gather

materials, and evaluate their progress (Mezirow as cited in Rubenson, 2011). Thus, for learners to be self-directed and assume responsibility, they need to be involved in planning and organizing the learning task, evaluating its worth and constructing meaning from it. A worthwhile evaluation could be achieved through the leading role of the facilitator. These facilitators' attributes are embedded on facilitator related strategies.

Facilitators related strategies are those features that are possessed by the facilitator for effective teaching and learning. However, Olori (2015) observed that one of the challenges in the delivery of adult literacy is the use of unqualified facilitators. Thus, a qualified facilitator is one who guides, facilitates and moderates every learning activity. Coolahan (2002) explains that other attributes require becoming an agent of change and promoting understanding and tolerance. This is made possible through the application of various teaching methods in order to make learning participatory. The existence of cordial relationship between the facilitator and learners is to further help in the development of learner-centred curriculum.

Curriculum is basically a plan made for guiding learning through which the vision of the planners is translated into learning experiences for the learner. The Indiana Department of Adult Education (2010) defines curriculum as planned interaction of learners with instructional content, materials, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives. It is an interactive process developed among learners, teachers, materials, and the environment (Chen, 2007). Thus, curriculum functions

as a guide for teaching and for learners' to have further improvement. Unlike the conventional school system where it is fixed, in adult education programmes, it is flexible. Thus, a change in the needs and aspirations of the society call for changes in the curriculum (Mbah, 2015).

The application of the above strategies to lifelong learning obviously will help in the achievement of quality education. However, in Anambra State which is one of the states in South East, learners are rarely incorporated into designing the contents of what to learn. This in most cases has resulted to their withdrawal in the programme. More so, the use of unqualified facilitators seems to disseminate wrong information or wrong use of methodology in teaching. This is why Nwabuko (2014) identifies uncoordinated programme implementation, and unqualified personnel as some of the inhibiting factors facing adult education programmes. In addition, Seya as cited in Akpala (2013) observed that the objectives of adult education are not achievable in an environment where majority of the nation's population especially the adults who are in the production sectors of the economy are illiterates. Therefore, the study seeks to find out the strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study was to evolve strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. learner related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

2. teacher/facilitator related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.
3. curriculum related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the learner related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State?
2. What are the facilitators' related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State?
3. What are the curriculum related strategies for promoting lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State?

### **Methodology**

*Design of the Study:* The descriptive survey research design was used for the study.

*Area of the Study:* The study was carried out in Anambra State. There are 23 adult learning centres in the state.

*Population of the Study:* The population of the study was 4,376 adult learners from the 23-adult learning centres in Anambra State.

*Sample for the Study:* The sample size of the study was 438 learners which is 10% of the entire population. The sample was drawn using first purposive technique to select centres and random technique to select the learners.

*Instrument for Data Collection:* Instrument for data collection was questionnaire. It had two sections, A and B. Section A focused information on the

personal data of the respondents with three items. Section B contained 30 items in three sections addressing learners' related strategies, facilitators related strategies and curriculum related strategies. The items were designed on a four-point rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree on assigned numerical values 4,3, 2, and 1. Instrument was based on the specific purposes of the study. It was subjected to face validation by three experts.

**Data collection Method:** Four hundred and thirty eight (438) copies of the

questionnaire were administered by hand at the selected centres. Only 405 copies were retrieved. This represents 92.47% percentage return.

**Data analysis technique:** Data collected from the respondents were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision making. Items with mean score of 2.50 and above ( $\bar{X} \geq 2.50$ ) were regarded as agree, while below 2.50 was disagree.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Learners related Strategies for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning among Adult Learners (n = 405)**

S/N	Learner-related Strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Engaging in self-regulated learning	3.27	0.48	Agree
2	Relating new learning skills with previous experience	3.59	0.56	Agree
3	Appreciation of learners present state	3.25	0.53	Agree
4	Encouraging learning by doing	3.17	0.43	Agree
5	Engaging in self-directive learning	3.28	0.52	Agree
6	Having immediate application of what is learnt	3.03	0.85	Agree
7	Involving in setting up learning content	3.23	0.47	Agree
8	Respect for readiness to learn	3.37	0.50	Agree
9	Functioning in socially	1.81	0.50	Disagree
10	Acting autonomous using tools interactively	2.18	0.79	Disagree
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of adult learners on learner related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning in among adult learners in Anambra State. Respondents had as agree the mean scores for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 as 3.27, 3.59, 3.25, 3.17, 3.28, 3.03, 3.23 and 3.37 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.48, 0.56, 0.53, 0.43, 0.52, 0.85, 0.47 and 0.50. However, items 9 and 10 had mean scores of 1.81 and 2.18 as disagree with standard deviation of 0.50 and 0.79. The Table had the cluster mean

(3.02) of agree and a standard deviation of 0.56. Since the cluster mean of 3.02 was above the criterion mean of 2.50, it implies that there were various learners related strategies among which were relating new learning skills with previous experience, engaging in self-regulated learning, self-directive learning, and respect for readiness to learn are involved in the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Facilitators-related Strategies for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning among Adult Learners (n=405)**

S/N	Facilitators-related Strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Creating conducive adult learning environment	3.57	0.59	Agree
2	Providing material resources for effective learning	3.27	0.49	Agree
3	Planning the sequence of learning needs of adult	1.84	0.51	Disagree
4	Diagnosing the needs for particular learning	2.22	0.82	Disagree
5	Utilizing appropriate teaching method for a given topic	3.58	0.57	Agree
6	Creating the culture of respect to learners	3.17	0.42	Agree
7	Engaging learners in problem-solving	3.30	0.54	Agree
8	Involving learners in developing content	3.01	0.86	Agree
9	Creating a culture of authenticity	3.01	0.86	Agree
10	Enlightening learners on subject matter	2.37	0.51	Disagree
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 indicates the mean and standard deviation of learners on facilitators related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. The Table reveals that respondents had agree for items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, while their standard deviation ranged from 0.42-0.86. Items 3, 4 and 10 however had mean scores below 2.50 and were classified as disagree with standard deviation of 0.51, 0.82 and 0.51. The Table

further had the cluster mean (2.93) of agree with a standard deviation of 0.62. Since the cluster mean (2.93) was above the criterion mean of 2.50, it means that the provision of conducive adult learning environment, utilization of appropriate teaching methods and the engagement of learners in problem solving were some of the facilitators related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Curriculum-related Strategies for Promotion of Lifelong Learning among Adult Learners (n = 405)**

S/N	Curriculum-related Strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Flexibility in meeting learners need	3.56	0.51	Agree
2	Encouraging independent learning	3.17	0.42	Agree
3	Providing variety in styles of delivery	2.99	0.85	Agree
4	Applying instructional aids to facilitate learning	3.23	0.60	Agree
5	Using of right evaluation guide	3.23	0.46	Agree
6	Encouraging a two-way communication between the facilitator and learner	3.38	0.50	Agree
7	Developing a creativity skill	2.08	0.87	Disagree
8	Encouraging immediate application of taught subject	1.80	0.50	Disagree
9	Relating new knowledge to past experience	3.38	0.50	Agree
10	Promoting corroborative enquiry	3.01	0.86	Agree
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on curriculum related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. The Table indicates agree for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 with mean scores of 3.56, 3.17, 2.99, 3.23, 3.23, 3.38, 3.38 and 3.01, and with standard deviation ranging from 0.42 to 0.87. Items 7 and 8 however had the mean scores of disagree as 2.08 and 1.80 with standard deviation of 0.87 and 0.50. The Table further had the cluster mean (2.98) of agree with standard deviation of 0.61. Since the cluster mean was above the criterion mean of 2.50, it shows that flexibility in meeting learners need, encouraging a two-way communication between the facilitator and learners as well as relating new knowledge to past experience were some of the curriculum related strategies involved in the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State.

### Discussion of Results

Findings from research question one showed that there are various learner related strategies needed for the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. Respondents indicated that some of these strategies were relating new learning skills with previous experience and respect for readiness to learn. This finding agrees with the view of Mbah (2015) who submitted that changes in the needs and aspirations of the society call for changes in the curriculum. It is these changes that informed the incorporation of learners in participating in designing what they intend to learn *vis a vis* engaging them in lifelong learning. By building self-

confidence, learners see themselves as capable of acquiring new skills and knowledge.

The active involvement of learners is buttressed by Medel-Anonuevo, Olsako and Mauch as cited in Blewitt (2005) that an adult learner a self-actualising agent and an integrator of learning. Self-actualising agent encompasses engaging in a self-directive learning of the adult learner. It is also one of the strategies required for the promotion of lifelong learning as Mezirow (1997) rightly observed that the learners identify their learning needs, set goals, choose how to learn and evaluate their progress.

Findings from research question two showed that there are various facilitators related strategies required for the promotion of lifelong learning among adults in Anambra State. Respondents indicated that the utilization of appropriate teaching method to a given topic and creation of conducive adults learning environment were some of the strategies. The right choice of method is predicated by the knowledge of the facilitator as Olori (2015) rightly observed that one of the challenges facing the effective delivery of adult literacy in Nigeria is the use of unqualified facilitators.

Furthermore, the existence of cordial relationship between the facilitator and learners is manifested in the provision of material resources by the facilitators for effective learning. This is true as the relationship stirs cooperative participation of all in the learning activities. By promoting a two-way communication between the facilitator and learners, effective learning is said to have taken place. Hence, Coolahan (2002) saw the

facilitator as one who facilitates, guides and moderates every learning activity. This learning encourages the engagement of learners in problem solving skills, and creation of a culture of authenticity which are identified as facilitators-related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning.

Findings from research question three identified various curriculum related strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning among adults in Anambra State. Respondents noted that prominent among these strategies were the flexibility of the curriculum in meeting the needs of learners and the use of instructional aid to facilitate learning. The finding is supported by the assertion of Mbah (2015) that changes in the needs and aspirations of the society call for changes in the curriculum. The flexibility of the content is premised on the fact that unlike the conventional system of education where rigidity is maintained, learners are seen as key players to the learning activities. This is why the Indiana Department of Adult Education (2010) saw curriculum as planned interaction of learners with instructional content, materials and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives.

The application of instructional aid to facilitate learning, the use of right evaluation guide is based on the fact that a conducive learning environment is that environment which is devoid of distraction, but promotes active participation of both the learners and facilitators. This will further encourage the inquisitiveness of learning in undergoing learning activities which is the idea of lifelong learning. This idea corroborates with Chen (2007) who saw curriculum as

an interactive process developed among learners, teachers, materials and the environment.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded by identifying some of the strategies for the promotion of lifelong learning among adult learners in Anambra State. These strategies were further classified as learners, facilitators and curriculum related. Relating new skills with previous experience and respect for readiness to learn were associated with learners related, while the effective use of teaching method and creation of conducive learning environment were facilitators related. Curriculum related was evident on the flexibility of learning need and the promotion of a two-way communication between the facilitator and learners.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the finding of the study.

1. Policy makers should ensure representation of adult learners in developing learning contents to encourage participation in learning activities.
2. Facilitators should be exposed to further training especially in the use of various teaching methods to promote cooperative learning.
3. Government through the state agency for mass education should provide instructional materials to adult learning centres to promote effective teaching and learning.

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