

## **Strategies for Promoting Skill Acquisition by Adults through Adult Education in Enugu State**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined strategies for promoting skill acquisition by adults through adult education in Enugu State. Specifically, the study determined skills and ways through which adult education could provide training for adults in Enugu. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was made up of 3,750 basic literacy adult learners from 21 government owned adult basic literacy centres. A random sample of 375 of learners was drawn from seven centres. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. Findings reveal 15 skill areas where adult education could provide training for adults. These include literacy skills for, hair dressing, soap making and training, hat making, literacy skills for fabrication, literacy skills for catering service, literacy skills for masonry, etc. Other findings include 15 ways adult education can provide training for adults. These include the use of media for virtual conferencing, workshops, seminars as well as observation, using media to train learners on acquisition of literacy, exposing adults to skills on decoration through face to face contact. The study recommended among others that sensitization should be intensified by the State agency for mass literacy education to enlighten the public on skill areas that are provided in adult education.

**Keywords:** Strategies, Skills, Acquisition, Adults, Education, Promoting

### **Introduction**

Illiteracy is conceived as one of the impediments to the growth and development of individuals, community and nation. It is the inability of an individual to read or write and change behaviour needed to conform to the modern norms of the society (Akpan, 2015). Illiteracy is manifested in various forms such as high rate of unemployment amongst

the adults, increasing poverty and insecurity among others. There is no doubt that its effect is evident in the underdevelopment of a country. In attempting to overcome this challenge, adult education is seen to occupy a strategic place in the transformation of the society. This is because adult education is defined as any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs

to enable them to adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society (Nzeneri, 2010). It is an organized and purposeful education activities designed for adults for their personal and societal fulfillments within or out of school, thus making them to adapt to the constant changing global requirements and needs in order to get them integrated into the society and avoid exclusion and marginalization (Obidiegwu as cited in Anurugwo, 2019). Thus, adult education is the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of attitude, knowledge, skills and values (Zuofa & Victor, 2020). The exposition of adults to various learning opportunities infers that adult education is multidimensional and multifaceted, meeting varying needs of adults in a constantly changing society.

While playing an important role in socio- economic development, adult education embraces all types of educative experiences needed by men and women according to their interests and necessities at different levels of comprehension to improve the quality of life of the people. This education therefore aims at empowering the adult to realize his/her potential for self-realization; raise the standard of living of the families, communities, societies and nations; promote peace and communal harmony in the multi-cultural global village; as well as enhancing the pace of development and welfare of the individual nations and the international community as a

whole (Kapur, 2019). It is not surprising that the recommendation of adult education as conceived by UNESCO and cited by Mbalisi and Ugwu (2019) was viewed as forming part of lifelong education and learning, with no theoretical boundaries and meet the particular situations created by the specific needs of development; of participation in community life and of individual self-fulfillment; they cover all aspects of life and all fields of knowledge and are addressed to all people whatever their level of achievement. Looking at these attributes closely, it could be deduced that various skill areas are addressed in adult education. Skills connote learning capacity to carryout predetermined results often with minimum outlay of time, energy or both (Amazon, 2009). The essence of skills is to prepare the adults to effectively contribute and participate in matters to improve the immediate surroundings as well as the larger society. In achieving this objective, adult education utilizes various programmes, one of such programmes is the skill acquisition.

Skill acquisition involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary for effective employment in a specific occupation. Glym and Tracey (2012) submitted that these skills are essential for the achievement of the purpose of creating jobs for the jobless, creating wealth for the poor, reducing youth restiveness, empowering people and achieving sustainable living and development within the society. Ukpabi (2019) in a

study revealed that participants with high skill trainings had the ability to secure better jobs than those with low skill training. This finding clearly shows that the acquisition of skills exposes learners to various levels of empowerment. In addition, there are various skill areas that are exposed to learners for empowerment. Some of these areas are the basic skills for bead making, cap making, sewing, fashion designing, snail farming, fish farming, computer training, catering services, carpentry, and shoe making. Furthermore, Asokhia and Agboluae (2013) identified agro-based vocational skills acquisition programme, carpentry and joinery, dress making, hair dressing, laundry and dry cleaning services and soap and pomade making as available vocational skills acquisition programmes in Enugu State. With these areas, it is believed that adult enrolls into any of the programme that most addresses the need at a given time. In addition, providing knowledge through skill acquisition will enhance learners' status, boost their confidence and compensate for their lack of literacy skills.

Skill acquisition therefore becomes paramount in the development of human capital. This capital reflects the individual skills which include individual experiences, ideas, values, attitudes, abilities, knowledge, aptitude, professionalism and competencies (Olmedo-Cifuentes & Martínez-León, 2015). The acquisition of such competencies and skills rely upon many factors, inclusive of a

quality lifelong learning system and a supportive studying environment which adult education is part of (Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), 2018). This is to say that the development of skills encompasses the productive abilities acquired through all tiers of learning and training, occurring in formal, non-formal, informal and on-the-job settings (SIDA, 2018). By formal, skills are acquired through a defined curriculum with strict monitoring by the government to ensure quality. In non-formal, acquisition of skills is made flexible as the learner goes into a programme based on the immediate need. While this training is defined, there is less supervision by the government or some other constituted authority. In informal, skills are acquired accidentally, sometimes through listening to media and other devices.

Consequently, adult education acknowledges the diversity in the process of acquisition of skills to equip the learners for active functioning in the society. It offers a more cost effective and flexible means of skills transfer, and at the same time, capable of absorbing a larger number of adults in Nigeria than their formal counterparts (Fajobi, Olatujoye, Amusa & Adedoyin, 2017). The learning is made possible through distance education. A planned teaching and learning that use a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance (Okop & Nwizu, 2015). Thus, distance education is an educational process in which there is

no constant physical contact between the learners and the teacher through the use of technological devices in the delivery of instruction. It also suggests that learning can occur through various ways. One of such ways is the use of media for virtual conferencing. Cher and Bryer (2012) noted that this social connectivity influences and changes the way learners think about knowledge and learning. More still, stating the benefits in the use of ICT, Bakare (2020) indicated that it is fast, secure and reduces human error and enhances communication.

Looking at the merits of adult education in enhancing knowledge through the use of technologies among other traditional methods like the conventional face to face method, the researcher is worried that adults in Enugu State seem not to utilize the opportunity of acquiring various skills through adult education needed to enrich themselves for enhanced living. Langer (2013) observed that foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, transferable skills such as problem solving skills, learning techniques, communication skills which help people to adapt to different situations and technical and vocational skills that specialize people for specific professional tasks are some of the adult literacy programmes through which skills are developed and acquired in people. Unfortunately, in a pilot study conducted by the researcher in some adult learning centres in the state, it was revealed that most adults complained of not acquiring the skills. The poor

acquisition by these adults also led to low participation in the development of their locality. In view of this poor knowledge of adults in acquiring these skills, the present study sought to determine the strategies for promoting skills acquisition for adults through adult education in Enugu State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to evolve the strategies for promoting skill acquisition by adults through Adult education in Enugu State. Specifically, the study:

1. identified areas where Adult education can provide training for adults in Enugu State
2. determined ways through which adult education can provide skill acquisition training for adults in Enugu State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the skill areas where Adult education can provide training for adults in Enugu State?
2. What are the ways through which Adult education can provide skill acquisition training for adults in Enugu State?

### **Methodology**

**Design of the Study:** The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design focuses on collecting data on, and describing in systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design was adequate

since it sought the opinions of selected learners from adult learning centres in Enugu State.

**Area of the Study:** The study was carried out in adult learning centres in Enugu State. The learning centres are found in all the 21 local government areas of the state.

**Population:** The population of the study was 3,750 basic literacy adult learners from 116 government owned adult basic literacy centres in Enugu State. These learners comprised male and female enrolled into basic literacy to acquire the skills of reading, writing and numeracy needed to improve the economic activities and participate in the development of their locality. They are aged between 18- 35, and above, engaged in various income generating activities (in other words, they are self employed) with no educational qualifications.

**Sample for the Study:** The proportionate sampling technique was used to select 10 per cent of the population resulting to 375 learners and 12 centres. Out of these centres, 31 learners were chosen from each using the simple random sampling technique by balloting.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** Questionnaire was used for data collection. It was developed through literature based on the specific purposes of the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; A and B. Section A provided personal information of the respondents, while section B was made up of two clusters with 15 items each

addressing a given cluster. The questionnaire items were based on a four-point likert scale of strongly agree (SA) (4 points), agree (A) (3 points), disagree (D) (2 points), and strongly disagree (SD) (1 points). The questionnaire was given to three experts for a face validation. Two experts were from the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies, while one was from the Measurement and Evaluation unit of Science Education Department, all from the university of Nigeria Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established through a trial testing on administering the questionnaire to 20 adult learners in two centres from Ebonyi State which was not used for the study. The Cronbach Alpha Statistical Tool was used to establish the internal consistency reliability estimate of the instrument which gave 0.81 and 0.86 while the overall was 0.84.

**Data Collection Method:** Three hundred and seventy five (375) copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher with the help of three research assistants at the various learning centres. The entire copies of questionnaire were retrieved, representing 100 per cent retrieval from the respondents. Out of the 375 copies administered, 364 representing 97.07% were dully completed and used for the study, while 11 (2.93%) were wrongly filled, hence not used for the study.

**Data Analysis Techniques:** Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was

used as the benchmark for decision making for each item. Thus, item with a mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as agree, while below 2.50 was disagree.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Derivations on Skill Areas where Adult Education can Provide Trainings for Adults (n= 364)**

S/N	Skill Areas	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1.	Literacy skills for hair dressing	3.42	.61	Agree
2.	Literacy skills on crop production	3.27	.55	Agree
3.	Soap making training	3.40	.70	Agree
4.	Literacy skills for pomade making	3.36	.70	Agree
5.	Knowledge on hat making	3.26	.64	Agree
6.	Training on carpentry	3.21	.65	Agree
7.	Literacy skills for decoration	3.21	.58	Agree
8.	Knowledge on bakery	3.30	.72	Agree
9.	Knowledge on basic literacy skills	3.34	.74	Agree
10.	Literacy skills for catering services	3.14	.67	Agree
11.	Training on tailoring	3.37	.66	Agree
12.	Literacy skills for fabrication	3.28	.64	Agree
13.	Training on shoe making	3.31	.66	Agree
14.	Literacy skills for printing	3.29	.73	Agree
15.	Literacy skills for masonry	3.10	.64	Agree
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>.66</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 1 indicates that items 1-15 had mean scores of agree as 3.42, 3.27, 3.40, 3.36, 3.26, 3.21, 3.21, 3.30, 3.34, 3.14, 3.37, 3.28, 3.31, 3.29 and 3.10 with corresponding standard deviations ranging from .55 to .77. The Table further had the cluster mean (3.28) as agree with the standard deviation of .66. This implied that several skill areas were provided in adult education for training of adults. Among which were literacy skills for hair dressing, soap making and basic literacy.

**Table 2: Mean Responses and Standard Derivations on Ways Adult Education can Provide Trainings for Adults (n= 364)**

S/N	Ways Adult Education can Provide Trainings for Adults	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1.	Exposing learners to workshop on soap making	3.40	.68	Agree
2.	Conducting seminars on livestock production to learners	3.27	.64	Agree
3.	Providing catering services to learners through visual aids	3.30	.68	Agree
4.	Training adult on hat making through the use of social	3.22	.73	Agree

	media			
5.	Conducting seminars on tailoring to adults using virtual conferencing	3.39	.75	Agree
6.	Exposing adults to basic writing skills through symposia	3.24	.66	Agree
7.	Training adults on crop production using video clips	3.29	.80	Agree
8.	Exposing learners to basic skills of calculation through audio aids	3.24	.66	Agree
9.	Exposing learners to hair dressing skills through apprenticeship	3.32	.66	Agree
10.	Inculcating on learners the basic skills of reading through conferencing	3.39	.67	Agree
11.	Exposing learners to skills on cosmetic making using workshop	3.37	.73	Agree
12.	Using media to train learners on acquisition of literacy skills	3.51	.61	Agree
13.	Exposing adults to skills on decoration through face to face contact	3.24	.59	Agree
14.	Conveying to learners the skills of bakery through face to face contact	3.37	.60	Agree
15.	Exposing learners to soap making skills through media	3.20	.68	Agree
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>3.32</b>	<b>.68</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 reveals that all the 15 items had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, as such were regarded as agree with standard deviation ranged from .59 to .80. With the cluster mean (3.32) of agree and standard deviation of .68, the Table showed that various ways are provided in adult education for the training of adults in Enugu State among which are acquisition of literacy skills through the use of media and exposition of learners to workshop on soap making.

### Discussions

The findings showed that there were various skill areas for trainings adults in adult education. Respondents indicated that prominent among these skill areas were literacy skills for hair dressing and soap making. The

acquisition of these skills is believed to offer business opportunities to adults who may not necessarily have previous educational qualifications. It also underscores the importance of adult education as UNESCO in Mbalisi and Ugwu (2020) saw it as forming part of lifelong education and learning, with no theoretical boundaries and are addressed to all people whatever their level of achievement. Thus, by making these skills available to adults, the likelihood of their active participation in scheme of things in their locality will also be enhanced. This also collaborates with the view of Kapur (2019) that adult education was aimed at improving the quality of life of the adults. The study further revealed a wide range of skill areas that are covered in Enugu State. This was

supported by Asokhia and Agboluae (2013) stipulation that various programmes available in vocational skills acquisition in Enugu included agro-based, carpentry and joinery, and dress making among others. These skill areas stem from the fact that adult education is multifaceted, cutting across various aspects of adult's endeavours for proper functioning in the society. The preparation of the adults to proper functioning in the society may have led to the definition of adult education as the process whereby adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of attitude, knowledge, skills and values (Zuofa & Victor, 2020). This definition is in tandem with the availability of the various skills areas trainings are provided for adults through adult education in Enugu State.

Furthermore, findings affirmed that there were various ways through which trainings for adults can be provided through adult education. The recognition of the variety of ways stems from the fact that adult education is an organized and purposeful education activities designed for adults for their personal and societal fulfillments within or out of school to adapt to the constant changing global requirements (Obidiegwu as cited in Anurugwo, 2019). This explains the flexibility of adult education where learners are encouraged to undertake learning activity based on their needs and time. Thus, the study showed that prominent among these ways were the

use of media to expose learners to acquisition of literacy skills and soap making while employing workshop. While the use of media was conceived as one of the ways of acquiring skills, Cher and Bryer (2012) noted that it influences and changes perception of learners about knowledge and learning. This implies that learning was not restricted to a particular form as the convectional face to face contact which is mostly found in a formal setting. This goes to show that there more to learning outside the formal setting to adequately equip the learners for active functioning in the society. This finding acknowledges the fact that the acquisition of skills can take various forms such as formal, non formal and informal (SIDA, 2018). In building the skills and knowledge of these learners, human capital is said to have achieved. It is this capital that reflects the individual skills which include individual experiences, ideas, values, attitudes, abilities, knowledge, aptitude, professionalism and competencies (Olmedo-Cifuentes & Martínez-León, 2015). capability of the learner. Thus, providing the needed knowledge and skills for active participation of the learners in the society.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that the multifaceted nature of adult education has further provided a wide skill area for the training of adults in Enugu State. Some of these skill areas were literacy skills for hair dressing, soap making and tailoring. These skills



could be acquired in a variety of ways such as the use of media in reaching out to a large number of people in different location irrespective of distance, through virtual conferencing, workshop and seminars as well as observation. Thus, affirming the flexibility of adult education in provision of skills to learners.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study

1. Sensitization on skill areas that are provided in adult education should be intensified by the State Agency for Mass Literacy Education (SAME) through the organizers of the programme to the public.
2. Facilitators of adult education programmes should be encouraged to undergo further training on the use of variety of approaches in disseminating lessons to the adults.

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