

PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION AND THE IMPLICATION FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

Adult Education and Agricultural extension play complementary roles. This is why Adult education is a prerequisite for agricultural extension. The paper highlights the relationship between adult education and extension using the philosophy as a fulcrum between both. The paper further reiterated the need for sound methods, resources and approaches which the extension agent who is a major stakeholder in extension work would have to put in place when he is introducing an innovation. It also includes, the covert or overt expressions he needs to exhibit to facilitate learning and acceptance as expressed in the level of adoption of innovation, through which a better standard of living and true development can be achieved for the people.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of philosophy is as old as the Creation of man, since his progenitors were able to use simple commonsense to reason and question. Notwithstanding, there was no record of any systematic philosophical speculations to the primitive man until about 4000 B.C (Okafor, 1987) when the subject captured the attention of many scholars. This period was marked by what was termed the "African Egyptian Mystery System" the most ancient University System, which eventually became the springboard for philosophy and science in later centuries for both African and the Egyptian colonies that included Greece.

Philosophical Speculations became a vogue in later centuries. Questions about life, the environment and living occupied the central position and continued unabated until about 600 B. C when the first documentation was recorded in Ionia, by the pre-Socrates Greek thinkers like Thales, Anaximander etc. From about 500 B. C. Came other notable Greek philosophers like Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Parmenides,- all itinerant philosophers and Socrates, Suffice to say, that the search for knowledge started on a tottering note, cautiously and consciously guided to become formalized. Thus the acquisition of knowledge through education became a bigger vogue thereafter because the basis for doubting, questioning and rational thinking to proffer solutions have been put in place. Consequently, the philosophical maxim, " I doubt because I think" was popular at the period since "doubt", spurs" rational thinking hence solutions to problems. In fact, acquisition of knowledge became one of the measuring parameters for civilization and development.

However, the phenomenal crusade was not universal to all continents / countries and the different categories of people within such continents / countries, either because of geographical location or economic disadvantage. For such categories of people the need to carry them along and be part of the moving train in the crave for knowledge became imperative. Consequently, the strategy of Adult Education which adequately addressed the peculiarities of such group became a veritable tool.

The philosophy of Adult Education could be best appreciated if the key words are well understood. Therefore the contextual postulate of Aristotle which says "for discussion to be intelligent, it must start with the definition of terms", would be adopted. Taking the words one after the other, the first attempt to define philosophy was made by Socrates during the pre-medieval period, by coining it from the two Greek words that formed philosophy. These are "Philia" meaning "love" and "Sophia" meaning "wisdom". Thus, he defined it as lovers of wisdom, a phrase

that became the name of students and which was seen as synonymous to knowledge. A better definition emerged during the medieval period (Middle ages- between A.D 1100-1500), as philosophy was defined as “the knowledge of things through their ultimate causes”. Yet after the middle ages, it was defined as “A set of principles regulating human conduct and values in various ways of life”. The point is that the various definitions have established the meaning of philosophy beyond any doubt but relative to the discussion within our purview, the post-medieval definition is more appropriate. On the other hand, Adult has been defined in many ways, either in terms of age, social role or psychological maturity (Verner 1964). In this context, the last is favourably viewed and according to Knowles (1937), the point at which individuals achieve a self-concept of self-direction is the point at which he psychologically becomes an adult. With regards to Education, it a process by which continuous and systematic instructions are given to individuals, who over time develop in character and power. Suffice to say, that education is not a snap action but planned, continuous and systematic in delivery, to bring about the acquisition of knowledge, enlightened intellect and strengthened will. Having adequately defined these words, it is the objective of this study to bring to focus the implications of the Philosophy of Adult Education on Agricultural Extension Services.

What Is Adult Education And Its Philosophy In Agricultural Extension

Erroneously, and for long too, Adult Education has been seen by many as the type of education meant for only aged parents who were denied the conventional one. Events have proved this as a misconception. However an incontestable fact is the multiplicity of definitions arising from different authors to emphasis the various adult education programmes, which include, Remedial, Distant learning literacy,

Agricultural Extension etc. In the preview of this topic, Agricultural Extension Education is the concern.

Verner and Booth (1964) designated all those educational activities designed for adult as adult education. This implies all the above-mentioned programmes and many more are inclusive. Arguing a separate case, Verner (1964) posited that it is a relationship between an educational agent and learner in which the agent selects, arranges and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experience to achieve learning for those whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary role in society. While the first definition is in line with extension activities, the second appears same, up to the point where the learning experience of the target group is regarded as subsidiary and supplemental to the primary production role. This is actually the reverse. Therefore the most appropriate and concise for our purpose is that of Williams (1980) who defined Adult Education as an extension and dissemination of resources to help farmers solve their problems as individuals through their various organizations and agencies. The totality of what agricultural extension is all about as regards the clientele, their profession and the purpose, is all inferred in this definition.

This leads to the question of what the philosophy of this type of Adult Education, nay, Agricultural Extension Education is. In this regard, the philosophy simply means the principles or rules guiding the operations and operators to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. This is where the post-medieval definition of philosophy now holds sway as the topic can now safely read, "The principles of Adult Education and its Implications for Agricultural Extension". In line with this, a long list of such guidelines, which were derived from validated hypothesis had been drawn up on all aspects of adult education concerning agricultural extension. These guidelines would be discussed from three main domains to avoid unnecessary semantics. These are, cognitive, psychomotive and affective domains.

In the cognitive domain, how the farmer can gain knowledge is addressed. It is cardinal in extension that there must be a useful information (technology or innovation) to disseminate and which the farmer must know and understand. For instance one of the postulated principles says "Adult learn when they possess the desire and see the need for education." Another states that "Adult learn when they understand the task and the procedure for its accomplishment, yet a different one states that "adult learning is facilitated when the change agent adjust to the learners' ability". These examples show that the need must be established before any action towards a solution. There must also be an understanding of the methods to use while all learning must start from the level of what the clientele knows.

In the psychomotive domain, emphasis is on skill. This is because the farmer ,must be independent of the agent thereafter, by not only knowing the technology but also, have the ability to adopt and practice it on his own. In this regard, principles like "Adult learn fast when there is active participation" and "Learning is facilitated when there is repetitions of tasks", adequately address skill development.

Lastly, the affective domain focuses on attitudinal change. The farmer have their age-long beliefs and things they cherish. These they have acquired through the process of acculturation or informal education. An innovation often comes with the aim of changing the status-quo and for this to occur, a strategy of subtleness, perseverance and persuasiveness must be adopted to win the heart of the people. No wonder, principles including "Adult learn in an unpressurised and non-competitive environment, they learn when an idea of fact could be associated or related to another and learning is facilitated when the change agent gives recognition for achievement" have been guided to address the stated conditions.

Implications For Agricultural Extension Work

Agricultural extension has three key functions. The first is to persuade the farmers on the need and value for change. This is because a typical farmer holds on tenaciously to tradition and fear to take risk unless they are convinced of the overall relative advantage of such a change. Secondly extensions is out to bridge the gap between research and the farmer by way of disseminating technology information to the latter and carries a feedback from him to the farmer. By so doing, there is advancement and development at both ends. The third is the fact that it equips the farmers with the ability to make and take wise decisions in the appropriation of production resources.

Each of these has its implications. Firstly, individuals behave in a way that is reflective of his socio-cultural setting and upbringing and the farmer is not an exception. But he is derogatorily described as being conservative, a laggard etc. in deviance to the attitudes, beliefs and values, which we all acquired from childhood at different environments. If he is therefore trying to resist a sudden change which often times, he sees as an anathema, he should be excused. Since such a change aims at bringing a better life to him, it implies that the change agent (Extension officer) must be smart and humble in his approach to get the change effected. It implies adopting an appropriate methodology to reach his target group. He must let him see the need for change by being analytical in revealing the "situation as it is" in contrast to "what it should be". This is why Williams (1984) argued the importance of starting a change from the present interest and needs. It implies being a good listener and observer. It implies right perception, showing empathy, respect, confidence and good rapport with the clientele.

As an agent of information (research) dissemination, the extension agent becomes a teacher and marketer who must have clear understanding and grasp of the knowledge he is selling to the adults, by implication. It goes further to imply that he must be a good communicator who must emphasis on the four (4) aspects of the model

of Direct Personnel Relationship and Appeal. The content is the message which must be transmitted in simple language while self-revealing or the senders character should portray proficiency and competence of subjects mater. The relationship is expressed in the way the message is formulated, the intonation or non-verbal communication used and the Appeal is the way the receiver is respected or otherwise.

In terms of making and taking wise decision, the implication is that the agent should be analytical in his approach because this is the only way by which the farmer could identity and appreciate available alternatives. He should always make himself present as a good assistance and guidance.

Also as farmers learn faster with repetition and when one fact can be related to another, the implication for agricultural extension is that the agent must exhibit patience and an unwariness or untiredness in going over and summarizing what has been done to his adult students. It implies thoroughness in his dealings with them, avoiding haphazardness and over-assumption.

Finally, extrinsic factors like failures, success and recognition are quite important. This is because even if they are not the primary factors leading them to undertake the risk of change, they are consequences that must eventually affect future motivations. Therefore, no matter what, the change agents, in accordance to Williams (1984), should always have them live in a spirit of accomplishment and desire for more in case of failure, and adequate recognition, for success.

CONCLUSION

Education is the pivot of development because it is an enabler which stimulates the mind for a clearer, critical and logical thinking. Unfortunately, due to circumstances of birth and environment, sound education is not open to all, hence the introduction of Adult Education.

The philosophy of Adult Education as it affects the farmers, focuses on the best way to impact knowledge into them and make them a better people in the Community. The philosophy is the basic principles that guide learning processes of the adults who form a special class of students. It is important that the farmer is adequately equipped with technical knowledge for meaningful change and rural development as averred by Olayide et al (1975), that the rate of agricultural development and rural transformation is directly related to the educational standard of the rural communities.

In effect, the implications are the need for sound methods, resources and approaches which the extension agent would have to put in place when he is introducing an innovation. It also includes, the covert or overt expressions he needs to exhibit to facilitate learning and acceptance as expressed in the level of adoption of innovation, through which a better standard of living and true development can be achieved for the people. This is definitely the goal of the philosophy of adult education and which is in line with the words of Rashid Kawawa (1971) who said "True development means the development of the people, not of things.

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