



Learning Innovations for Addressing Emerging Challenges of Adult Education Instruction in Nigeria During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Education of citizens is a right enshrined in diverse documents of the international organization evidenced by declarations and treaties. This right was truncated by COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed in almost every country at diverse times. Apart from live learning centres being shutdown, several other challenges financial constraints, unemployment, poor learning and academic achievement emanated from the pandemic which jeopardize the educationally vulnerable adult learners. Hence, the emergence of asynchronous strategies of transmitting knowledge to learners. These strategies include distance, online, zoom and mass media learning methods. These new ways of learning have the tendencies of absorbing the effect of the pandemic and curtailing the spread of the virus as well as improving the standard of learning environment and societal development. The study recommends that; infrastructure of the online or distance education system needs to be strengthened; access to every adult learner should be established; in-service training should be provided to instructors in order to improve instructors' distance or online teaching competencies.

Keywords: Adult education, COVID-19, Pandemic, Zoom

Citation: Inusa, D. and Umar, M. A. (2022). Learning Innovations for Addressing Emerging Challenges of Adult Education Instruction in Nigeria During Covid-19 Pandemic. *Kashere Journal of Education*, 3(1): 113-122.

Submitted: 10/2/2022

Accepted: 13/4/2022

Published: 1/6/2022

Introduction

The right to education is imbedded and recognized by laws both at international and national levels signed at various international declarations and treaties. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are the paramount and foundations to right to education of citizens. The United Nations conventions on the rights of children, women, minorities, indigenous people, and people with disabilities also proclaimed the right to education of the target group of these international laws (Hussain 2013). As a result, the prominence of education for the economic, social and moral development of nations is overwhelming. This is why Eze, Sefotho, Onyishi, and Eseadi (2021), Fägerlind and Saha, (2016) stated that, importance of education to human development has been well documented, highlighting the catalytic roles of education in

national and human capital developments. Simply put, education is a means of self-development through learning, knowledge, skills, and habits conveyed across generations for the benefit of mankind.

Adult education is one of the fields of academic endeavors that is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems. According to Hussain (2013), there is positive correlation linking adult education programmes and self-esteem, knowledge and skills. These after words encourage positive and active engagement of people in their own development (Umar, Eshak, Bichi and Aujara 2010). Adult education programmes are taken via diverse channels including distance learning, online, mass media, and so on. This is to give adult learners a fair chance of scheduling their time to conveniently learn at the same time. Researchers such as Kara, Erdoğan, Kokoç and Cagiltay (2019), Moore

and Kearsley, (2011) admitted clearly that distance education provides adult learners with the advantage of life-long learning due to its flexibility.

Pandemics are diseases that occur from time to time throughout human history, causing many people to die and negatively affecting public mental health (Akat and Karataş, 2020). Pandemics have been experienced in different periods throughout history. Examples of pandemics are Influenza, HIV / AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and presently the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). According to the World Health Organization, (2020) pandemic is the spread of a new disease worldwide, causing harm to many people and also killed many people. At all times of these occurrences, humanity is negatively affected sociologically, economically, emotionally and psychologically (Akat and Karataş, 2020). The pandemic crisis, and its widespread impact on economies and societies globally, also has prominent role for adult education in a COVID-19 affected world. Within and beyond the crisis, adult learning is key in ensuring people obtain (new) skills and competences required in a COVID-affected labour market and society. How will this be achieved when physical learning schools are closed? Hence the need to adopt new innovations that keep learners at home while learning at the same time, coupled with the fact that adult learners have other activities and responsibilities which may distract and contend with their time and resources. Thus, flexible innovation is mandatory if the goals of adult education is to be achieved in this pandemic era. This necessitate this paper to proffer solutions that could address the challenges faced by instructions in adult education by using emerging innovations.

Concept of Adult Education

The concept of adult education is difficult to define due to the word “Adult”, making scholars to define it from different perspectives. Researchers such as Hussain (2013) delineated that “adult education is an education that has adults as its clientele”. The difficulty in expatiating on who an adult is puts contrasting



views aloof. Hence, the big question is, who is an ‘adult’. Researchers have used various parameters in ascertaining who an adult is - biological, chronological, historical, psychological, economic, political and sociological amongst others. This is why Nzeneri (2002) says an adult is one who is physically and psychologically matured and is socially, economically and politically responsible and contribute to human development in diverse spheres. According to Adesanya as cited in Hussain (2013) the term adult is defined from one society to another and has changed over time. This is in tandem with the recommendation of UNESCO (1976) as cited in Hussain (2013) that a person should be regarded as an adult based on the laws of the society to which he /she belongs. Therefore, the admission into adulthood lies aptly on the action, activities and responsibilities an individual perform in a society. Hence, the society one lives in decides when to start addressing one as an adult.

Adult education defined as any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal schooling system (Seya, 2005). The primary function of adult education is to increase their knowledge, enhance their abilities, and advance their technical or professional qualifications with the objective of meeting their goals and those of the society. To elaborate this, Nzeneri (2010) says adult education is: ‘The entire body of organized educational process, whatever the content, level and method, formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in the two fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced an independent social, economic and cultural development.’ Accordingly, adult education is a flow of process of general, technical or vocational knowledge as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view of remedying

early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with knowledge and cultural elements required for their self –fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2005; Hussain, 2013).

Pandemic (COVID-19) Era

Few months after the emergence of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in 2019, it arouses to the scale of a global pandemic. The world is now facing rapid and drastic changes that touch all domains of life: family, work, leisure, education, etc. COVID-19 has shaken all aspects of societies around the world in unforeseeable ways (James and Thériault, 2020). Almost all countries if not all, are currently affected. Countries used all manner of restrictions to avert the spread of the virus; these measures include travel restrictions and various forms of ‘lockdown’, which affected almost all areas of society including the educational sector which went into total disarray resulting from school closure and social distancing enforcement. The mode of transmission of the virus was quite unique and confusion enshrined policy makers who could not say exactly what to do to revert to status quo. Consequently, people were forced to address and explore new ways of tackling emerged issues. The pandemic forced people into digitalization of education and rapidly pushed education and training systems to explore new ways of teaching and learning (European Commission, 2020).

Stakeholders at all levels - governments, public and private organizations, communities and individuals - have been developing and implementing innovations and creative solutions to ensure that education systems can continue functioning in light of this. According to Goldberg (2021) COVID-19 upended classrooms and campuses across countries at the same time as the pandemic’s devastating effects were being felt in nations’ economy and loss of life. To overcome this gruesome challenge to human kind, in response, educators, staff, and school leaders at all educational levels and in all parts of the world have made diverse and extraordinary commitments and dedicated their talents,



energy, and resources to address the needs of learners and families in their communities. Parents, family members, and caregivers have done the same, supporting their learners while responding to profound challenges in their own lives. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on adult education has also been acute.

According to James and Thériault, (2020), COVID-19 has rendered social inequalities – related, but not limited, to disability, employment status, immigration status, income, language, race, and social-class – more visible and piercing. In the view of Watts (2020) these inequalities have also deeply affected access and participation to lifelong learning education, which in turn has had consequences for wellbeing and mental health. Furthermore, as schools closed down their campuses, the ‘vulnerable’ remained left without a physical safe haven, while disadvantaged families had no or limited access to equipment or connectivity to take full advantage of online and digital learning. Adults have suddenly faced unemployment, having to find ways to support themselves and their families, putting earning before learning and (re)training by working longer hours and taking extra jobs to protect household incomes (Pember and Corney, 2020).

Challenges of Instruction in Adult Education in Nigeria

The major challenges facing adult education delivery in Nigeria according to policy issues and practice of 2010 and acknowledged by Hussain (2013) include:

1. Failures of the UBE act to give adequate recognition to Adult and Non-Formal Education (NFE) as a key sector of basic education.
2. Accessibility - all citizens should have the opportunity to develop themselves throughout their life at whatever age, to acquire knowledge and know-how to better pilot their life transition, to improve their quality of life, develop their potential and experience the joy of learning. Hence, in the world of rapid changes, adult education should be established at the door steps of all the interested adult learners so as to avail the opportunity for learning. In that

perspective, no area should be left without a center for adult learning.

3. Inadequate funding - the budgetary allocation to adult education at all levels of government is grossly inadequate especially when compared to the formal education sector. More importantly Non-Formal Education is excluded in the share of two percent Consolidated Fund meant for Basic Education in spite of policy provision.
4. Lack of mobilization - many people who may be interested in learning, may not be aware of the existence of the adult education centres and even the programmes they are supposed to enroll. This seriously affects the efforts to achieve 'Education for All'. Even there might be some philanthropists who are willing to contribute their own quota but due to lack of advocacy and mobilization they cannot do so.
5. Lack or inadequate number of literacy instructors or personnel who possess Information and Communication Technology skills is a challenge to Nigeria's desire of becoming a key player in the information age. Lack of personnel with Information and Communication Technology skills across the Non-Formal Education centres inhibits the effective use of Information and Communication Technology for Non-Formal Education delivery in the country.
6. There is the dearth of skilled manpower in the area of monitoring and evaluation - lack of trained monitoring and evaluation personnel in the Non-formal education sector is a challenge to the development of the sector because monitoring is a sine qua non to a successful adult and Non-formal education programmes. It involves the management of a large database. Monitoring is vital ingredient for successful implementation of NFE as such it should be integrated in the programme action plan. Adequate funds are not provided and required information about the status of the programmes is not available. Due to lack of proper monitoring



and evaluation in the Non-formal education has resulted in variations in the types of programmes available and offered across the States of the Federation.

7. Poor remuneration of instructors - most States and Local Government Areas do not pay the instructors regularly, the 7500 naira stipulated in the benchmark meant for the remuneration of the instructors cannot be paid by almost all the States. Even when paid, the payment is not commensurate to the work done.
8. Inadequate number of qualified instructors - appointment of non-professionals and untrained instructors who do not understand the use of andragogical techniques, primary school teachers and even school certificate holders are usually appointed as instructors. According to NMEC/UNICEF (2010) Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) should be the minimum teaching qualification in compliance with the provision of National Policy on Education to ensure the quality delivery in Adult and Non-Formal Education.
9. Poor record keeping - there is a problem of record keeping in NFE. This has negatively affected the database needed for adequate planning and implementation of Non-Formal Education intervention programmes. This also affects the tracking of learner's performance and transition from one level to the other.
10. Poor attitude of the target group - statistics shown that most of the targeted groups have not really embraced the NFE programme.

Emerging Challenges of Adult Education during Pandemic (COVID 19)

COVID-19, which was first seen in Wuhan, China and then spread rapidly all over the world, affects the whole world deeply and caused many people to lose their lives shortly after emerging like other pandemics (World Health Organization, 2020). COVID-19 has not only demonstrated the current digital gap in society, it has also widened the educational attainment of those who have had access to

digital technology during the pandemic and those who have not (EAEA, 2021). Amongst the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic include:

a. Closure of school

On a more negative note, a great number of adult education programmes stopped due to the crisis, meaning that learning has been disrupted for many adult learners (EAEA, 2021). This is impacting on one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the society more prominently. A good number of institutions closed for face-to-face courses to reduce the number of contacts of person to persons in order to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus. This portrait of adult education in these uncertain times does appear rather gloomy (James and Thériault, 2020) due to the lack of technological resources in adult education settings and at home ((Patrinos and Shmis, 2020; Beaunoyer, Dupere and Guitton, 2020), imposing additional barriers in the completion of educational projects by adult learners. Even for the adult education practitioners, the pandemic has meant a reduced or different kind of offer of support for learners, additional stress and anxiety as they quickly find that they have to digitally up skill themselves, and for some, the loss of their employment (Lasby, 2020; James and Thériault, 2020),

b. Poor learning and academic achievement

The learning of the individuals dropped drastically in all spheres of educational prowess. COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the educational process. Students and educators are affected by school closures, social distancing and other limitations due to COVID-19. This may cause negative psychological conditions as a result of anxiety and fear, and these could affect the well-being and performance of students (Ozer, 2020). Several countries implemented local closures impacting millions of learners including adult learners (UNESCO, 2020). Thus, learners have not been able to continue learning in formal settings of adult learning programmes (Römer, 2020). Although, precautions were taken, the learners' learning process was negatively affected leading to poor learning outcomes (Akat and Karataş, 2020). When school closures take



longer, learners' learning is negatively affected thereby decreasing motivation of the learner towards learning and learning goals are not achieved.

c. Emotional disorderliness

The emotional reaction of each person in the face of intense stress and fear caused by pandemics can be different. These reactions can manifest negatively on the adult learners. The effect of COVID-19, as seen in other epidemics, could cause emotional disorderliness on the adult learner, especially when the infected person is a family member, colleague, friend or class mate. This could be as posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, loneliness, distress, fear, anger and fear of being tagged with the pandemic (Bo, Li, Yang, Wang, Zhang, Cheung, and Xiang, 2020; Cheng, Wong, Tsang, and Wong, 2004). For example, Van Bortel, Basnayake, Wurie, Jambai, Koroma, Muana, Hann, Eaton, Martin and Nellums (2015) examined the psychosocial effects caused by the Ebola pandemic, and found that Ebola has personal, social and global effects (emotional). These effects are generally expressed as fear and anxiety, shame, mourning, loss of confidence, trauma, discrimination and psychological disorders.

d. Fund/income

Funding and personal income decreased during the pandemic, resulting from loss of job and closure of businesses. This affected the smooth running of the adult learning centers due to social distancing and other needed facilities. The funding reduced and in some cases totally unavailable for adult learning providers. This is especially a concern for adult learning that is funded based on demand, for instance through invoices to adult learners or companies.

e. Decrease in enrolment

The level of enrolment into formal educational centers decreased because of the pandemic. Adult learners stayed away from the centers for fear of contracting the virus. This decreased enrolment brings about increase in illiteracy level and school drop-out. Total lockdown affected the enrolment as intended learners could not enroll as a result of the lockdown. In some cases, sessions were missed or annulled. With the total closure of public places to reduce

or curb the spread of the virus rained fears to both learners, tutors and intended learners. Where the intended learners could summon courage and go for enrolment, the administrators of the centers may not be around based on instruction or order from government to close schools.

f. Time management

Time management consist of several activities such as planning, organizing, mobilizing and controlling time productivity (Sari, Ilhamdaniah and Megayanti, 2020). Time is a moment that its existence must take advantage of, and time cannot be replaced because time is running and rolling. Time management is also important in realizing organizational goals. For the instructors to meet up with the goal. Time management for large group of learners became very difficult as a result of social distancing. In some cases, the facilities cannot accommodate the number of learners, meaning the learners will be taught in groups with different numbers. The instructor ends up teaching one class several times causing tiredness and stress on the instructor. This problem is aggravated by the fact that very few instructors are in the field of andragogy. On the side of the learner, adult learners tend to have more responsibilities and existing commitments such as family, friends, work and travel times to contend with, so the restriction of a class-room based, set lesson time structure is not ideal. It can be difficult to make room for learning and is absolutely crucial to prioritize to obtain good result efficiency and flexibility is needed.

g. Anxiety

Many adults return to learning in order to stay ahead in the job market or boost their career, so adult learners are under a lot of pressure, from themselves and those dependent on their expertise. Returning to study can be a big investment in terms of time and money and because adults are more acutely tuned to learning outcomes and the results they want to achieve, there is more pressure on them to do so. On the other hand, adult learners come to the educational setting with more relevant experience and while the pressure can be greater as a result, having focused goals is often the key to success.



Learning Innovations Strategies in Addressing Emerging Challenges of Adult Education Instructions During Pandemic (COVID 19)

Learning innovations strategies could harness addressing challenges of adult education instructions especially during pandemic. During the COVID 19 prevalent period, a lot of challenges emerged which needs to be addressed with specific strategies, otherwise, the aim of adult education will be defeated. To win these challenges, Asynchronous instruction strategies were adopted.

Asynchronous Instruction

Asynchronous strategies involve learners working separately at different times. For instance, using recorded lessons or the internet, rather than involving learners and instructors taking part in a lesson all at the same time. This allows learners to participate in discussion or class work at different times. Asynchronous strategies give visible results through learners' learning and wide thinking. Instructors can make use of additional time to develop intentional and thoughtful feedback. These strategies also provide flexibility when activities do not work as planned. The hallmark of asynchronous learning activities is that learners do not participate at the same time. Amongst the asynchronous strategies are:

i. Distance learning

This involves the act of students participating in learning close to their choice area. Distance learning is defined as the planned teaching and learning activities provided through the use of a communication channel within an institutional organization without any time and place limitations (Moore and Kearsley, 2011). This asynchronous learning method helps in curbing the issue of time management and increases enrolment of learners. When learners planned their activities to incorporate their personal businesses bearing in mind that they are mature and responsible people who may have several other activities that classroom activities becomes a distraction. This was collaborated by Kara *et al.* (2019) who stated that adults compose the largest audience for

online distance education. With distance learning, income is generated both by the government and the individuals as they could have more time to attend to their personal businesses which could boost financial capabilities without interfering with their learning process.

ii. Zoom learning

Another strategy to address challenges of learners during COVID-19 is the Zoom method. Zoom is a video communication app that generally provides an easy, effective, reliable, and efficient cloud platform for audio and video conferencing, chat, collaboration as well as virtual seminars across desktops, mobile devices, and other similar gadgets. According to experts, Moser and Smith, (2015) zoom is the best way and means for educators around the world to design their teachings and lesson for properly addressing their learners sitting at their homes. This was the answer to the school closure period. With zoom method, learners will not miss classes even while at home. This increases time efficiency and social distance, which reduces the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and anxiety of contrasting the virus. With this, instructors and learners work remotely. Zoom was 'the new normal' for classroom participation.

Another advantage zoom has over the live learning classroom during pandemic is the challenge of integrating the social distance in classroom management. Learners often times distract, intermingle and disrupt learning process and task, with zoom this is solved. A benefit of having your learners atomized into a grid of individual faces on screen is that they each have one point of focus, and you are it which is not so in live learning environment. Learners are less inclined to be distracted by the other learners in the room, less distracted by their feelings of self-consciousness and helps learners focus on what they need to do in each stage of the lesson. Another great benefit of teaching via Zoom is the mute feature to tackle the issue of learners interrupting and speaking out of turn in live learning environment considering that the spread of COVID-19 is with aerosols of people who are close to each other. The zoom allows instructors to motivate



learners by giving learners individual praise anonymously.

iii. Internet/Online learning

Internet or online or e-learning refers to the use of digital materials to support learning. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has seen a substantial increase in online learning by adults (OECD, 2020). Much of the training that was originally planned for the classroom is now being delivered online. Furthermore, individuals are being encouraged to use the time freed up by short-time work schemes to train online from home and acquire new skills deemed useful in the aftermath of the pandemic. This asynchronous strategy could help reach a much bigger number of adult learners with a smaller investment in education infrastructure, making it a cost-effective solution in the context of rising unemployment due to the COVID-19 crisis. Thereby, tackling the shortfall in income, increasing time efficiency and improving learning. Also, this is more effective during the school closure period. Learning online primarily heighten educational level of adult learners in form of strong digital skills. With internet learning, the digital infrastructure is strengthened. Instructors are equally retrained for up skilling and better usage of the services.

iv. Mass media

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the biggest disruptions to education the world has ever known affecting large number of the learners' population. Many countries turned to distance education to ensure that learning never stops. This was done through the use of television and radio, which have proven to be good alternatives in a context where live classroom learning is not possible. The value of educational broadcasts through television and radio also goes beyond the needs of learners alone but also important in supporting populations affected by the threat of COVID-19. This enable the learners to participate at their convenience bearing in mind that most of the adult learners are responsible and mature people with other task in the communities and families to handle. TV and radio programmes could cover a wide range. This saves resources,

time and energy as well as increase learning because it is done with ease, less stress and comfort.

Conclusion

Pandemics are usually devastating and could deeply affect all facets of humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic brought emerging challenges that traumatized the existence of man especially the vulnerable adult learner who originally is faced with responsibility of learning amidst huddles. To curb these setbacks, innovations to address challenges of instruction for adult education during pandemic emerged with direct link to the economic development of a nation because it is the adult that could transform the nation not children. Therefore, the quality of adults who can address the needs of the nation relies heavily on their skills, knowledge and awareness which is the core function of adult education. Consequently, adult education should be vigorously pursued using the asynchronous innovations proved to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is commonly said that during times of challenge, people turn to learning in order to understand what is going on, to adapt to it, and more importantly, to shape change. These new ways of learning have the tendencies of absorbing the effect of the pandemic and curtailing the spread of the virus as well as improving the standard of the learner for economic development and betterment of all.

Recommendations

It is recommended that;

1. Infrastructure of the online or distance education system needs to be strengthened;
2. access to every adult learner should be established in order not to deprive any learner the right to education;
3. In-service training should be provided to instructors in order to improve instructors' distance or online teaching competencies;
4. More awareness campaigns on the danger of COVID-19 should be carried out by the orientation agencies.



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