The Adult Educator in Nigeria – Born or Made?

T.V. Bakare

Adult Education Department
University of Lagos, Akoka. Lagos. Nigeria

Abstract
The paper looks into who an adult educator is and what is expected of him. Many people in the industry hardly recognise that they even fall into the category of an adult educator. There is every indication as shown by studies that adult educators, especially in Nigeria are not fully aware of what is involved in being an adult educator. Majority did not believe that they needed extra training to handle adult learners and some assume that the training for child education is sufficient to make them adult educators. The paper examines this phenomenon and documents a list of category of people who fall into the group of adult educators. The question of whether the adult educator is born or made was thoroughly debated. Several recommendations were made and the necessity to train adult educators appropriately was re-emphasised.

Keywords: adult education, facilitator, training, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION
This discourse examines the adult educator from the Nigerian perspective, right from the appellation to the expected duties and also looks at the future of the adult educator. The rapid change in societies as well as rapid technological advancement threatens to make man obsolete along with other serious threats like depletion of natural resources, population explosion, atomic warfare and environmental pollution, among others. The adult educator, in the modern society is therefore faced with the awesome challenge of creating a crash course in re-arming the present adult population with the necessary competencies needed to function adequately in the present condition of perpetual change. This then makes the question of who the adult educator is very relevant and vital to the current adult education system, especially in Nigeria.

There are various terms utilized in different situations to describe a person who works in an educational capacity with adults; these include adult educator, facilitator, tutor, mentor, among others. There is often controversy in describing the person who helps the adult to learn. One of the difficulties in describing a professional educator or trainer of adults is the fact that so many people are now working with adult learners in different capacities. The fundamental problem however arises from the title itself. We usually try to run away from ‘self-fulfilling’ labels like teacher, tutor, trainer, organiser, instructor, etc (Corder, 2002 adds appellations like master/mistress, educator); for someone who works with the adult learner. This is largely because the different labels do not adequately or automatically portray a true picture of what should be happening in the teaching/learning process in adult education. Also, these array of popular but often confusing terms/labels for the adult educator mostly imply that the learner is a passive object being acted upon (which is contrary to the tenets of adult learning, according to Humanists). This probably further contributes to the uncertainty of what appellation is appropriate in the field. The more commonly accepted title is often that of FACILITATOR (from the French word ‘facile’ – easy, he who makes it easy for the adult to learn) or Adult Educator in general. Sometimes the ambiguity of the term adult educator is born of the fact that it does not immediately bring to mind a clear picture of the task involved as in other professions (like saying someone is a Lawyer, Doctor, Engineer etc). This is also because many people work in different capacities to help adults learn which means that the position of one educator may be quite different from another’s. The other side of it though, is that, fortunately, the array of positions show that a vast number of opportunities abound for many people in this field; (whether appropriately trained or not).

Who then is the adult educator? Do they actually need special training to be effective in what they do? How many in the field are appropriately trained? What are the roles he is supposed to play and what are the characteristics of a good adult educator are some of the questions to be addressed in this discourse. This is to establish whether adult education is being practised properly, as well as to help identify those in the trade. Several factors obviously affect the practice of adult education, as far as the adult educator is concerned. Various terms are popularly utilized in Nigeria to describe a person who works in an educational capacity with adults. According to Bakare (1999), popular adult educators in the Nigerian adult education system include:
Table 1: Recognised Adult Educators in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult education type</th>
<th>Adult educators and their qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy (instructors)</td>
<td>NCE, Teacher Training and Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing/ Remedial Education</td>
<td>Graduates and Post graduates, Graduates, Experts in various fields, Traditionally trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education</td>
<td>Artisans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Extension Officers, different Experts, NGO officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental Education</td>
<td>Trainers, Religious leaders, Mentors/Counselors, Lecturers, /Rural -Animators, group heads, supervisors, training officers etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field work, Bakare (1999)

The above table shows some of the adult education programs in different categories including the usual qualifications to conduct such. Bakare’s study was done in Lagos State, however the same conditions apply in all adult education programs in the country as far as qualifications for the different adult education types go.

The Adult Educator

There is hardly any consensus yet as to what to call the person who helps the adult to learn. The adult educator is generally anyone who is involved in the business of helping adults learn. These would then include Adult education teachers, Literacy leaders, Supervisors, Group leaders, Civic clubs, Administrators, Training officers, Discussion leaders, Religious laymen, Business executives, even the Library, Media, Directors and Lecturers, among others. This broad sweep is done deliberately and probably explains why many do not even realize they should be classified as such. This also includes generally, people who are also involved in planning and operating many programs with adult educational content. Who then is the adult educator? Those recognised as adult educators can be put into different categories: They include Adult Basic Educators, Literacy Teachers, Change Agents, Mentors, Resource Persons, Extension Agents as well as those who plan, initiate, administer and evaluate adult education programs, among others. Others who fall into the category are Community leaders, Teachers, Lecturers, Training Officers, among others. Corder (2002) recognises three main categories of Adult Educators - those who work directly with adult learners, those who direct the programs, and those at the professional leadership level (who generally help in furthering the development of the field). This sums up those who can be seen as adult educators.

Hiemstra (2002 ) comments on the ambiguity of the term adult educator being born of the fact that it does not immediately bring to mind a clear picture of the task involved like in other professions. He recognises the administrative role, teaching role (by far the largest category), as well as professional and miscellaneous roles; (also in-service-training programs) ranging from full-time Adult Basic Education teachers, to teachers of non-credit evening classes such as quilting, oil painting, to vocational teachers in a trade or proprietary school as well as trainers in a large Company.

An adult educator is expected to have certain attributes. Many of the adult educators’ good qualities are developed over time like preparedness, patience, concern and hard work. The effective adult educator is expected to have a set of “core qualities” that are easily recognized in good teachers, along with a set of specific skills like knowledge, good interpersonal relations, interest and other skills that can be learnt over time. The adult educator will likely, at some point need to take on the role of communicator, disciplinarian, and bearer of information, classroom manager, counselor, decision-maker and role-model. Other attributes include that he must have new ideas, listen to the adult learners and have a good attitude, ultimately, he must genuinely wish to help the adult to learn and enjoy what he does. He therefore wears many ‘coats’ and must be adept at changing them to whichever one is required at any particular point in time. An adult educator’s work may also often have to extend beyond the meeting areas with the adult learner. This multitasking ability is even more necessary in consideration of the adult learners’ peculiar situation of often conflicting roles and responsibilities, fear of failure, ambivalence, and deteriorating senses, among others.

Adult Educators must work at having the patience to explain things, stay in control while dealing with everyone. They should have a sense of humour because using humour while teaching can be a powerfully effective strategy; they should be fair-minded. They need common sense and must have the ability to quickly assess a situation and make an appropriate decision; they need to have command of a broad range as well as an in-depth knowledge of a variety of subject matters. They must be good managers of time and they should lead or follow as the situation demands even if clearly a leader in the classroom.

A related question is what effect does the adult educator, with little understanding of the adult learner have on the learning outcome? Does the disadvantaged adult learner become discouraged if a teacher fails to treat him or her as an adult? Do self-motivated, mature adults refuse to utilize available services from teachers and organized adult education programs if they sense a child-oriented classroom atmosphere? These types of questions, largely unanswered, imply that much work still needs to be done to adequately address the issue of whether to
train adult educators or leave it to chance, as well as understanding how to facilitate the learning of every type of adult. If the adult educator is one who has the responsibility of helping the adult to learn then it is not surprising that many people unknowingly fall into this category (which may suggest that being an adult educator comes naturally). They may be unconscious of the defined role that they are playing - that of an adult educator. A typical problem in Nigeria however, is that the adult educator hardly wishes to be recognised as such because of the low level of esteem accorded the title. In the first place, adult education itself is derogatorily seen as that type of education for lazy or unintelligent people who are doing in the evening what they should have done in the daytime. Adult education itself does not enjoy much popularity and many people simply see it as consisting largely of Literacy Education. Talking of the status of adult education and the opinion it enjoys in the society. Popoola (1998) opines that only Literacy teachers see themselves as adult educators in Nigeria. Anyanwu (1997) also observes that they accord low esteem to being an adult educator and don’t want to be called or seen as such. The role of the adult educator is generally seen as simply successfully operating educational activities for matured individuals, measuring success by the attendance and enthusiasm level, as seen often in Community as well as Literacy programs – it should be more than this though. The primary assignment of the adult educator should be to help the learner satisfy their needs and achieve their goals; to separate needs from interest but ultimately to self fulfilment. He makes his work easier by working towards making the adult a self directed learner so that the learner can continue to learn on his own throughout his life.

The roles of the adult educator, according to Knowles cited in Bakare (1999) are:
- helping the learners diagnose their need (diagnostic)
- planning with the learners a sequence of events to reach their goal (planning)
- creating conditions that will make them want to learn (motivating)
- selecting the most effective methods and techniques (methodology)
- providing human and material resources to help achieve their aims (resources)
- helping the learners to measure the outcomes of their learning (evaluative)

This sums up what is expected of the adult educator, especially if the rules of andragogy are to be followed. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, the gratification of one level free the man for the next level. So the adult educator is to help the learner with what is needed to fulfil each rung of the ladder in a quest to becoming all he can be. In his book, Palmer (2007) posits that we teach who we are, as the human heart is the source of good teaching. He believes that a subject matter must be viewed from the spiritual and emotional dimensions and wholeness of reality, rather than in segmented aspects. He therefore sees the teacher as the connector of this reality to the subject matter and his students. Good teachers join the self, subject and student in the fabric of life, as they possess the capacity for connectedness. He sees the characteristics of the teacher as:
- creating conditions that will help students learn
- being humble and with integrity
- having an educated heart – that will remain open to learning
- having authentic respect for the students as complex beings
- and being willing to take risks, among others

These attributes further echo Knowle’s andragogical principles. Corder (2002) adds however that it is the human element that pulls it together and that every good class is run by a good teacher. Invariably, the functions of the adult educator include helping the learner diagnose his learning needs, helping to plan, creating conducive condition for learning, motivating, selecting the most effective method and techniques for producing desired learning outcomes, providing the necessary human and material resources to support and helping the learners evaluate their success. The adult educator is to help the learner satisfy his needs and achieve his set goals. He is also to help him develop the attitude that learning is a lifelong process and to acquire the skills for self-directed learning. He is therefore, a leader, inspiration, motivator, counsellor, friend, resource person, guide, all wrapped in one (all of which are not implied in terms like instructor, trainer etc). Certain attributes are expected for the effective and efficient dispensation of the duties of an adult educator. There are some characteristics to be possessed by the effective adult educator. He must be humble, ready to learn, resourceful, knowledgeable, a friend, and counsellor, among others. His primary goal is to aspire to be a facilitator who helps to smoothen the way for the adult learner and who removes any obstacle that could stand in the way of adult learning. The question then is should such an awesome task be left purely to the genes? It is obviously not an easy job but a demanding one and is therefore made easier if the adult educator is appropriately trained to prepare him for the arduous task. The adult educator’s job is best described using a bicycle analogy:

**The Bicycle Analogy**

The major goal of the adult educator is to ensure that the attitude of the learner is to continue to learn through life and to encourage self – learning, curiosity and fearlessness. The simplest analogy of the duty of an adult educator can be illustrated with
the scenario of a child learning to ride a bicycle and is being helped by the father. The adult educator is the one holding the bicycle and the adult is the frightened child who is yet unaware of his ability to do it by himself. His cries of ‘please don’t let go’ encapsulates the adult learner’s insecurities. The adult educator’s work is done when the child’s cries of ‘don’t let go’ is welcomed with the awesome power that follows the child discovering that the parent already let go for the last one hundred yards unbeknownst to him. The empowerment comes from the realization that he actually could do it by himself after the parent let go of him which also marks the beginning of independence. The adult educator’s job is then well done when he can see the adult to the point where he becomes an independent learner. If adult education is truly to be from cradle to the grave then the adult educator cannot possibly keep holding to the adult learner’s bicycle for life - this will be a disservice to both. There has to come a point when the adult must fully move to being self directing in his life. The best way of being an adult educator is for the leader to be invisible but help the work along in such a way that when it is completed the learners can look back and say that they did the work themselves. Adult educators need to stop being the sage on stage and more of the guide on the side.

Training of Adult Educators
The largest share of adult educators in Nigeria have had very little specific training related to the adult as learners (Bakare, 1999). Bakare’s study revealed that only 1.5% of facilitators in the field were specifically trained in adult education even though many had degrees and other teaching diplomas, they were largely trained to work in the Formal school system. Such a situation has often meant that additional training and knowledge were acquired through formalized programs or through intensive self-study efforts. One very common means of obtaining help in working with the adult learner is through short-term Workshops, often for two or three weeks to provide a concentrated exposure to some aspect of adult education. Many of such Workshops usually concentrate on improving certain skills like those of selecting appropriate methods and materials for the adult learner, designing instructional settings for adults, and developing more effective communication skills in working with the self directing adult learner. Others means are through Seminars and Conferences and other outreach programs offered by the Adult Education Departments of Universities as well as Government organised programs and those by different Organizations.

A number of people working in the field have arrived there “through the back door” as is often used in adult education parlance to refer to the many people who find themselves professionally responsible for adult learners without having had any training directly related to adult education. The commonest kinds of training (content, duration, frequency) that a typical adult educator should seek who suddenly finds himself or herself working with adults but who has had no prior training or experience in adult education include working from experience, short term courses in adult education as well as university degrees as well as self training, among others. There are also trainings for volunteer adult education leaders, paraprofessional adult educators, etc. Even kindergarten teachers in training at the undergraduate level should receive some exposure to adult education because invariably in life, anyone who is in the line of teaching will often at some point find themselves in adult education. In situations where the adult educators find themselves thrust into the field, it is often advisable that additional training and knowledge be acquired through formalized programs or through intensive self-study efforts (Hiemstra, 2002). The discerning adult educator should remove himself from the tendency to teach and focus more on helping the adult to learn and to become more self-directing.

It has been argued that since teachers are trained why can’t Supervisors and other categories of adult educators be too? They need to know about the growing body of knowledge and techniques available to help them perform their roles better. Everyone teaches in different circumstances but there must be basics we can adapt to. As was corroborated by Corder (2002), a good class is run by a good teacher and it is the human element that pulls it together. The mission of the adult educator has therefore become more complex and is forever changing; he therefore needs more preparation to do a good job. It is no longer tenable to assume as before that the same technique and method s used for children can be equally effective for adults. There is a uniqueness that sets the adult learner apart, especially in the learning milieu and as posited by Malcolm Knowles. Generally, the awareness of adult education opportunities have increased, just like those professionally trained in adult education have also increased, providing a large corps of people with a good understanding of the adult learner and knowledge of how to develop effective programs for such learners. However, the number of specifically trained adult educators in the field is still very low. It has been established that an adult thinks and acts differently from a child and should therefore be treated as such; there may be elements of andragogy too in the teaching of both. The adult is seen as such because of age, life-cycle, maturity, etc. Adults have such attributes like being above the age of compulsory schooling, experienced, work, have financial, domestic and family responsibilities, are reasonably independent, able to make their own judgement, and may also have previous learning experience; and usually bring to the classroom
knowledge, experience, commitment and confidence. However, the adult may initially overcompensate out of anxiety and nervousness in an unfamiliar or formal setting when he re-enters learning. They may also not be able to participate until they are made to feel valued, at ease, relaxed etc. If the adult is truly going to be a self-directing learner, he is going to wind up doing a lot of the learning on his own which leaves room for a lot of informal learning also, either self-taught, reading manuals or imitating etc. The adult educator must always be aware of what role he is called upon to play, whether that of guide, counsellor, resource or teacher etc. Some adults had good experiences at school and they are glad to keep on learning but for many more, the experiences were fraught with puberty, bullying, boredom, examination, peer pressure, and difficult subjects. The damage caused thus can only be repaired by adult education, but all of us need to learn and are happy when we do something we thought we could never do before. It must also be noted that the concept of education as a lifelong mission was not imbibed in earlier education when people were encouraged to KNOW as opposed to being curious and continually discovering, and this makes lifelong education a new line of preaching in education today.

CONCLUSION
The study has established the multitude of adult education practitioners in Nigeria who were not aware of their roles. It has also suggested what these roles are supposed to be as well as the general trend of practice in the field. Teachers for children are trained and undergo rigorous on-the-job practicum experiences; supervisors provide feedback that should lead to the improvement of their teaching skills and elimination of what they are doing wrong. They also monitor the progress of student teachers over the course of the Practicum. This is not a readily seen conduct in the adult education world as trainee adult educators seldom engage in the practicum aspect (or seriously work with adult learners) of their training as religiously as in child education. Adult educators need to be trained properly and more rigorously. After all, it has been said that the only way to get rid of bad teachers is to make good ones. If they are to become good adult educators, they must be trained appropriately. There are also a whole slew of gadgets out there we could be using in enriching the conduct of adult education.

According to Hiemstra (2002) one of the problems is how to distinguish between a teacher who simply has the adult as student and a teacher who is trained specifically to facilitate learning for the adult learner. This is because training for adult educators is also fraught with ambiguities, especially with many not even realising they are in the field and also because the field of adult education is in an evolving stage compared to most other professions, probably the largest share of adult educators or trainers have had very little specific training related to the adult as learner. Hopefully, as the field matures, as it gains better financial support, and as adult teacher-training programs are more fully developed, this situation can be reversed. There should no doubt be appropriate training for adult educators, and especially the adult education departments of Universities should improve on their status and also extend their services outside the University campus like outreach programs to offer short courses on dealing with the adult learner.

A person who finds himself working with adults, especially without prior training should seek appropriate training either in institutions or in the short term through Workshops and Seminars and if necessary update the knowledge as often as needed. This type of training is also appropriate for volunteer and other paraprofessional adult educators. It is suggested that even teachers of the youth should be exposed to some level of adult education because andragogy itself is now seen as a continuum rather than being specifically applicable to adults only. They should also try to belong to adult education associations to keep abreast of new developments in the field. Therefore, good adult educators don’t just happen anymore – they get to be so by learning the principles and techniques necessary to become a good adult educator. Program Chairmen get there because they have done something similar before. The new adult educator is not an amateur or a child teacher tossed into the arena at the learning adult but a trained and competent specialist or at least should be or aspire to become one and this training can be obtained in many ways and in many places either through short term courses, Seminars and Workshops, through Literature, Programs in higher institutions etc.

SUGGESTIONS
In adult education, the amount of teacher control and teaching, should not outweigh the amount of student control. Lecturing should be eschewed as the Lecture method tends to make the learner dependent on the teacher. The atmosphere must be relaxed and humour can be used as a learning stimulus. There must be respect for the learners, flexibility in the procedure. The organization must ensure there is good arrangement and enthusiasm must be encouraged and nervousness dispelled. Students’ contribution must not be outrightly rejected, tact is important. Inter-student discussion must be encouraged and the teacher must be aware of and note learner’s reactions. There must be organised presentation of ideas. Learners must be treated as equals and it must be noted that the system of evaluation also plays an important role. It is also important to note that the fact that self-directed learning is encouraged does not mean that the teacher will abdicate their role entirely.
The adult educator needs to learn how to teach the same thing over and over without seeming to be repetitive. This is crucial to the adult’s memory. Adults learn in different ways or styles, nonetheless, the adult educator must appeal to the entire gamut. It has been argued that there is no method of teaching adults in general that is separate from that of teaching children. Adult educators cannot do it all but can begin to make the teaching/learning situation a better one.

They need to be conversant with latest technologies as this is the trend in the field of education now. They must become technologically adept to ensure the learners in varied ways and in line with the tenet of lifelong education. In Baio, A and Fajunjomi (eds) Policy issues in adult and community education. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.

Adults learn in different ways or styles, nonetheless, the adult educator must appeal to the entire gamut. They need to be conversant with latest technologies as this is the trend in the field of education now. They must become technologically adept to ensure the learners in varied ways and in line with the tenet of lifelong education. In Baio, A and Fajunjomi (eds) Policy issues in adult and community education. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.

The adult educator needs to learn how to teach the same thing over and over without seeming to be repetitive. This is crucial to the adult’s memory. Adults learn in different ways or styles, nonetheless, the adult educator must appeal to the entire gamut. It has been argued that there is no method of teaching adults in general that is separate from that of teaching children. Adult educators cannot do it all but can begin to make the teaching/learning situation a better one. Though adults may wish to be self-directing, they may lack the skills to do it on their own terms they need help and so the job of the adult educator is not totally redundant. Therefore, appropriate training for Teachers, Group Leaders, Supervisors is vital because being good at what you do will make it look easy.

So the question remains who is the adult educator? Especially in Nigeria, they are field workers, front-liners (those in direct touch with the learners), Program planners and directors and management, those with coordinating roles and professional teachers in the training institutions. They should seek to genuinely enter into personal relationships with the learners and not a teacher/pupil prescribed role, have empathy, be non-judgemental, understanding of intellectual and emotional feelings from learner’s perspective.

The Future Adult Educator in Nigeria

Future adult educators will certainly need to be skilled at solving various kinds of problems, especially the many problems that emerge because of growth and societal change. Adult education leaders must become technologically adept to ensure the programs they offer meet the needs and expectations of learners. Future professional adult educator will invariably need to be very familiar with technology as this is the trend in the field of education now. They need to be conversant with latest technologies in the field of education in order to best help adult learners in varied ways and in line with the tenet of lifelong education. In addition to this, technology not only widens the reach of adult education, but helps us to truly practice adult education in the sense that it supports the adult learner’s circumstances of independent learning. The modern adult educator should also be encouraged to join any professional adult education associations locally, to begin with. The future training needs of existing professional adult educators also needs to be thoroughly examined and updated, especially if adult learners are to expect more lifelong learning opportunities. This paper has enumerated some of the manifold duties of an adult educator and reiterated the urgency of ensuring proper training. No matter how it is done, it is seriously recommended that anyone who works with adults should aspire to be trained appropriately. This is because even if some are born with the rudiments and instincts of what it takes, many more will be better off made.

REFERENCES


Brown, Bettina L (2003) Teaching style vs learning style: Myths and realities. Eric: clearinghouse on Adult, career and Vocational education. Online


