# Appraising Adult Teaching Methods in Nigeria: Analysis of the Effect of Some Teaching Methods on Adult Learners

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**Abstract** The conceptions of adulthood vary from place to place especially in Nigeria where adulthood is not determined solely by age. Historical, physical, psychological and socio economic factors influence the individuals' ability to fulfilling certain roles and functions in the society that qualify and identify them as adults. This also vary from community to community in Nigeria as such, the term adult means different things in different situations and circumstances. Teaching at whatever level is central to curriculum implementation. Basically, teaching involves the process of transmitting knowledge. Interestingly, teaching as an activity or process is systematic, interactive, organised and purposive. The ultimate aim is to cause desirable change in the learners' behaviour. Learners in this instance are persons who have been recognised as adults in their environments who exhibit sense of purpose and commitment. The study examined various teaching methods in adult education and its implications to adult learners. Three research questions and two null hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance guided the study. The survey research design was adopted in the study with a population of 591 respondents made up of 291 male and 300 female adult learners from 12 adult learning centres. The sample of 355 respondents (60% of the entire population) comprising 175 male and 180 female was drawn using the convenience sampling technique. Data collecting instrument for the study was a-14 item questionnaire that was face validated by two validates in the field of study. Data collected were analysed using the mean for the research questions and the t-test statistic for the hypotheses. Findings revealed among others that lecture, simulation, project and drama methods were adult teaching methods mostly utilised in adult teaching in Nigeria. The findings further indicated that project method was identified as the most effective adult teaching method used in adult delivery followed by simulation. Inhibiting factors to the non use of appropriate teaching methods by facilitators in adult teaching in Nigeria comprised inadequate instructional facilities and the use of facilitators with no andragogical skills. It was recommended among others that Government and other providers of adult education programmes should ensure that adequate facilities are provided for effective adult education delivery and that funds should adequately be provided by the government for enhanced management of programmes.

*Keywords: adults, learners, teaching, methods, adult learners, teaching methods*

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## 1. Introduction

Methodology is an integral part of teaching. It is a veritable tool to convey theories or principles in addition to materials to the learner for the purpose of achieving the instructional goals or objectives. Zuofa [21] explains that methodology encompasses the study and practice of various teaching methods instructional techniques adopted during teaching-learning process. Nzeneri [14] distinguishes three elements in adult teaching process as methods, techniques and devices.

Methods relates to the way in which learners are organised in order to carryout educational activity. It establishes the relationship between the learner and the institution through which educational tasks are solved. This implies that teaching method forms a path to a pre-determined goal or objective. Technique is the way the facilitator helps or guides the learner to establish a relationship between his or herself and the learning task. Invariably, techniques are series of activities which direct the learner to go through the path laid by the teaching method. Device involves the use of instructional materials which facilitate teaching-learning experiences shared by both facilitator and the learner.

According to Ajalabi [2], teaching is an activity that is systematic interactive organised and purposive to achieve the desired objective for both the learner and the facilitator. This means that for the facilitator to enter into teaching relationship with the adult learner there would be need to understand who he/she is. The adult learner in learning to attain, has characteristics that make it possible for him or her to be an achiever [3]. Anyanwu [4] pointed out that the adult learner exhibits sense of purpose and commitment as one of the characteristics. These characteristics enable him or her study with a meticulous sense of purpose and dedication. Age as characteristics contributes to the ability to grasp the meaning and relevance of subject matter faster than a young learner who is identified as a more dependent learner who comes to school with no accumulated experience.

Apart from individual characteristics of the adult learner, Anowor et al [3] identified some common characteristics of an adult class. They are of the view that the adults are too old to learn and are sceptical over being able to learn as well as being laughed at when mistake is made. Some of the adults in a class have never been to school before as such do not know what to expect. Some have bad memories as a result of negative experience while in school. Most of them are engaged in one form of livelihood or another. Many of them are married and are parents. They are confronted with one family challenge or another. Many are engaged in addition to both communal and religious activities.

The stated characteristics on adult class become imperative that the facilitator who engages the adult learners for teaching-learning activity should be competent in handling such a class. No wonder Tough [17] and Tennant and Philip [16] posited that successful facilitators should view themselves as participating in dialogue between equals, be open to change and new experiences to learn from helping activities, be genuine in entering into personal relationships with learners rather than consistent adherence to the prescribed role of the teacher, able to accept and trust the learner as a person of worth and have empathy for the learners perspective.

Imhabekhai [11] while discussing adult learners teaching method noted that adults learn better and achieve more when learning tasks are practical and highly participatory. There are many teaching methods that could be utilised in teaching of the adults. Scholars like Brookfield [6], Sitler [15], Knowles [13], Kerka [12] and Turoczy [18] all advanced various forms of adult teaching methods which included but not limited to discovery method spaced lecture, group work, dialogue, scaffolding and constructivism. Adekola [1], Nzeneri [14] and Zuofa [21] identified the following teaching methods as mostly used in Nigeria, lecture method, discussion method, project method, simulation method and problem solving method. For the purpose of this study, only four of them would be further discussed.

Zuofa [21] describes the simulation method as a method whereby old and discarded materials like radios, television sets, wrist watches, fans etc. are made available in the class or workshops to the adult learners for practice. It is the use of mock objects to hasten the understanding of learners. The learners are opportuned to acquire particular skills to perform specific tasks.

## 1.1. Lecture Method

Nzeneri [14] and Gbamanja [10] agree that lecture method involves a group of persons/learners. It is a method in which the teacher explains and expresses ideas giving examples and occasionally writes on the chalk board. Facilitator in this instance presents a verbal discourse on a particular subject, theme or concept. It is otherwise referred to as talk-chalk method or telling method as noted by Zuofa [21]. The facilitator talks most of the time, explains, expresses ideas with examples and occasionally writes on the black board.

## 1.2. Project Method

Zuofa [21] describes this method as the cooperative study of a real life situation in a class under the auspices of a teacher or facilitator. This method has its root on John Dewey's work that emphasised the necessity of active participation of individuals in education. Project method encourages both individualised and small group instruction.

## 1.3. Drama Method

Adekola [1] refers to this method as role-play method. It is basically a group-oriented method concerned with feelings and reactions in the course of interacting with one another. Zuofa [21] explains that usually a small group is formed from the class while other members of the class act as observers.

For a facilitator to determine or select a particular teaching method for adult learning, Imhabekhai [11] observation on adults is very relevant. He observed that adults learn better and achieve more when learning tasks are practical and highly participatory. In addition, determining the appropriate teaching method to adopt for an adult learning process involves being guided by certain principles and questions which may include, what does the facilitator expect from the learners? What is the expectation of the learners from the facilitator? How can both expectations be achieved? Providing answers to these questions would form a guideline for determining what teaching method to adopt. In Nigeria other additional factors may be considered in selecting a particular teaching method for adult learning. Such factors include but not limited to quantity and quality of resources available which may include human, space, time of a particular lesson, type and duration of programme and availability of teaching devices. There is also the challenge of non-professionals who organise and teach adult learners. Adult learners for the purpose of this study are adults engaged in learning activities in adult education centres in Nigeria.

## 1.4. Statement of the Problem

From the background of the study, it is obvious that different adult teaching methods are employed in adult teaching in Nigeria. These methods positively or negatively affect the adult learners. Studies have also shown that scholars have not been able to establish the adult teaching methods that are most effective for adult teaching especially in Nigeria to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This therefore provides the knowledge gap which this study intends to fill. The problem of this study therefore is to assess the adult

teaching methods mostly utilised by facilitators in adult teaching and its effect on the adult learners in Nigeria.

### 1.5. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the different adult teaching methods in Nigeria and its effect on adult learners. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify adult teaching methods that are mostly used in adult teaching in Nigeria.
2. Identify the most effective teaching methods for adult learners in Nigeria.
3. Identify some factors that inhibit the effective application of adult teaching methods for adult teaching in Nigeria.

### 1.6. Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to guide the study:

1. What are the adult teaching methods mostly utilised in the teaching of adults in Nigeria?
2. What are the most effective teaching methods employed in adult teaching in Nigeria?
3. What are the factors that inhibit the effective application of adult teaching methods for adult teaching in Nigeria?

### 1.7. Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are tested at .05 level of significance.

$Ho_1$: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female adult learners on adult teaching methods that are mostly utilised in adult teaching in Nigeria.

$Ho_2$: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female adult learners on the most effective teaching methods employed in adult teaching in Nigeria.

## 2. Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in the study. 591 respondents made up of 291 male and 300 female adult learners from 12 adult learning centres was the study population. A sample of 355 respondents (60% of the entire population) comprising 175 male and 180 female was drawn using the convenience sampling technique. Data collecting instrument for the study was a-14 item questionnaire structured on a 4-point scale of strongly agree (4-points), agree (3-points), disagree (2-points) and strongly disagree (1-point). Validation of the instrument was done by two validates in the field of study from the Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained in a test retest method using the Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient. Data were analysed in the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 17 using the mean and t-test statistic. The criterion mean of 2.50 was used to accept an item as mean score below 2.50 was rejected. A null hypothesis was accepted if the t-cal is less than the t-crit, but rejected if the t-cal is greater than the t-crit at .05 level of significance.

## 3. Results

**Table 1. Mean ratings of respondents on adult teaching methods mostly utilised in adult teaching**

| S/N | Items | Male $\overline{x}$ $n = 175$ | Female $\overline{x}$ $n = 180$ | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Teaching aids are employed in the teaching of adult learners | 2.90 | 2.84 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 2 | Models are employed as instructional materials in adult learning | 3.19 | 2.63 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 3 | Roles are assigned to adult learners in teaching some topics. | 3.04 | 2.76 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 4 | Facilitators give out topics to learners to develop independently | 2.78 | 2.97 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 5 | Adult learners are exposed to seminars by facilitators as a way of teaching | 2.06 | 2.09 | *Rejected **Rejected |
| 6 | Facilitators engage learners in discussion as a way of conveying their lessons | 2.11 | 2.29 | *Rejected **Rejected |

* and ** represent male and female respondents.

Data on Table 1 indicate that items, 1, 2, 3 and 4 with the mean scores of (2.90, 2.84), (3.19, 2.63), (3.04, 2.76) and (2.78, 2.97) are accepted for both male and female adult learners respectively. Items 5 and 6 have mean scores of (2.06, 2.09), and (2.11, 2.29) as rejected. The 66.67% of acceptance reveal that lecture, simulation, drama and project methods are mostly used in adult teaching in Nigeria.

**Table 2. Mean ratings of respondents on most effective adult teaching methods used in adult teaching**

| S/N | Items | Male $\overline{x}$ $n = 175$ | Female $\overline{x}$ $n = 180$ | Decision | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Adult learners are excited covering wide range of topics in a moment | 2.58 | 2.59 | *Accepted **Accepted | 4th 4th |
| 8 | The introduction of models to teach certain topics relating to the topics encourages active participation of adult learners | 3.08 | 2.82 | *Accepted **Accepted | 2nd 2nd |
| 9 | Learners' urge to learn is motivated by the assignment of topics for independent study | 3.32 | 3.22 | *Accepted **Accepted | 1st 1st |
| 10 | When adults are assigned certain functions to perform in the class, they tend to learn faster | 2.73 | 2.65 | *Accepted **Accepted | 3rd 3rd |

* and ** represent male and female respondents.

Respondents in Table 2 indicate that with varying mean scores above 2.50, various teaching methods are mostly used in adult teaching in Nigeria. Prominent among these teaching methods are the project method ranked 1st, followed by simulation, then drama and lecture method as 4th position.

**Table 3. Mean ratings of respondents on factors that inhibit effective use of teaching methods in adult teaching**

| S/N | Items | Male $\overline{x}$ $n = 175$ | Female $\overline{x}$ $n = 180$ | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Instructional aids provided in adult learning do not encourage effective use of teaching methods for learning | 2.90 | 3.16 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 12 | Most facilitators of adult learners lack the andragogical skills to teach | 3.09 | 2.96 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 13 | Funds are thinly provided for the acquisition of facilities | 2.79 | 3.02 | *Accepted **Accepted |
| 14 | Adult learning environment is unconducive for effective learning because of lack of adequate structures | 3.09 | 3.12 | *Accepted **Accepted |

* and ** represent male and female respondents.

Data on Table 3 show that items 11(2.90, 3.16), 12(3.09, 2.96), 13(2.79, 3.02) and 14(3.09, 3.12) are accepted for both respondents respectively. The 100% acceptance of the items reveal that inadequate instructional aids, inexperienced facilitators, poor funding and poor adult learning environment are some of the factors that inhibit the effective application of teaching methods in adult learning in Nigeria.

**Table 4. t-test analysis of significant difference in the perception of respondents on adult teaching methods mostly utilised in adult teaching**

| Gender | No of respondents | $\overline{x}$ | SD | df | t-cal | t-crit | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 175 | 2.66 | .24 | | | | |
| Female | 180 | 2.59 | .30 | 353 | 2.44 | 1.96 | Rejected |

Table 4 indicates that the t-cal (2.44) is greater than the t-crit (1.96) at df (353) and .05 level of significance, hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that significant difference was found in the perception of male and female adult learners on adult teaching methods that are mostly utilised in adult teaching in Nigeria.

**Table 5. t-test analysis of significant difference in the perception of respondents on most effective teaching methods employed in adult teaching**

| Gender | No of respondents | $\overline{x}$ | SD | df | t-cal | t-crit | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 175 | 2.75 | .25 | | | | |
| Female | 180 | 2.83 | .33 | 353 | -2.65 | 1.96 | Accepted |

Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value (-2.65) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at df (353) and .05 level of significance, indicating the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that significant difference was not found in the perception of male and female adult learners on the most effective teaching methods employed in adult teaching in Nigeria.

# 4. Discussion of Results

Findings in research question one revealed that adult teaching methods mostly employed in adult teaching in Nigeria are many. Respondents noted that some of these methods used by facilitators in their teaching- learning process included lecture method, simulation method, project method and drama method. The use of these methods is not unconnected with the varying characteristics of the adult learners and their needs as stipulated by Anyanwu [4] that the adult learner exhibits sense of purpose and commitment as one of the characteristics. In addition, Brookfield [6], Sitler [15], Knowles [13], Kerka [12] identified that various adult teaching methods can be used for adult teaching.

In research question two, findings of the study identified various levels of utilisation of the adult teaching methods in Nigeria. Respondents noted that prominent among the effective adult teaching methods is the project method which is rated as first. This is not surprising since it promotes both individualised and small group learning.

Thus, Zuofa [21] affirms that the method encourages cooperative study of a real life situation by a class under the guidance of a teacher or facilitator. The finding also identified simulation as the second most effective adult teaching method in adult teaching in Nigeria. This is most probably because of its incorporation of discarded materials and models for practical teaching. Informed by this, Imhabekhai [11] noted that adults learn better and achieve more when learning tasks are practical and highly participatory.

In research question three, findings indicated that various factors are responsible for non-use of appropriate adult teaching methods in adult teaching in Nigeria. Some of these factors as revealed by respondents included inadequate provision of instructional materials, use of inexperienced facilitators, poor funding and poor learning environment. It is not unlikely that the absence of these resources will distort the use of appropriate teaching methods by facilitators. This obviously retards the enrolment rate of adult learners. The non use of experienced facilitators may have been informed by Tough [17] who stated that successful facilitators should view themselves as participating in dialogue between equals, be open to change and new experiences to learn from helping activities, be genuine in entering into personal relationships with the adult learners.

The existence of significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on adult teaching methods mostly utilised in adult teaching is attributable to the fact that both respondents share different views on the

utilisation of various teaching methods that are used. In terms of the most effective teaching method employed in adult teaching, significant difference was not found. This is because they share similar ideas on teaching methods mostly used in adult teaching in Nigeria.

# 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion was drawn.

Various adult teaching methods are employed in adult teaching in Nigeria. Prominent among these teaching methods are lecture, simulation, project and drama methods. However, the application of these methods varies according to the needs and characteristics of the adult learners. Project method was identified as the most effective adult teaching method used in adult teaching in Nigeria. Next on the ranking is the simulation, followed by drama and the lecture method. Factors inhibiting the non use of appropriate teaching methods by facilitators in adult teaching in Nigeria comprised inadequate instructional facilities, the use of facilitators with no andragogical skills, poor funding and unconducive learning environment.

# 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study

1. Government and other providers of adult education programmes should ensure that adequate facilities are provided for effective adult education delivery.
2. Funds should adequately be provided by the government for enhanced management of programmes.
3. Facilitators should be engaged in adult education delivery on the basis of their andragogical prowess.
4. The use of lecture method should be integrated with teaching aids to encourage active participation of learners.

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