



WWJMRD 2021; 7(3): 50-53

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

Impact Factor SJIF 2017:

5.182 2018: 5.51, (ISI) 2020-

2021: 1.361

E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Blessing Chinyere Elekwa PhD

Department of Adult and

Continuing Education,

Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka, Nigeria.

Motivation as an Enhancement Strategy for Adult Learning in a Learning Process.

Blessing Chinyere Elekwa

Abstract

Learning in adulthood has been besieged by several negative factors that result in demotivating adult learners in the learning process. This negative factors maybe lack finance, pressure of time, anxiety, unfavourable learning environment, lack of respect for adult learners personality, culture and beliefs. It is quite discouraging as the consequences of all these affect the adult learners interest in learning. It therefore becomes necessary to enhance adult learning through motivation. In this paper, the researcher x-rayed the concepts of adults, adult learner, learning and motivation respectively, strategies for enhancing adult learning through motivation, challenges to effective adult learning and way forward.

Keywords: Adult, Adult learner, Learning and Motivation.

Introduction

Learning is a lifelong process that is voluntary in adulthood. It provides adult learners the opportunity to increase their knowledge, skills and competencies, so that they can be able to adjust and cope with the constantly changing world. This implies that adults need to enhance their skills throughout their adult lives. This will enable them to cope with the modern life both in their work place and also in their individual lives (OECD, 2007). As people grow in age, there is always the tendency of having an increase in individual differences. This condition which adult education has already made an ideal provision for, as observed, by Le Noue, Hall & Eightmy (2011) maybe in terms of style, time and rate of learning of an adult learner.

In this study, an adult learner is an individual who enjoys and prefers learning by participation. Svetina & Perme (2004) noted that an adult learner is a matured and understanding individual that participates in any adult learning opportunities. Adult learners can be grouped into young and older adults based on their ages. Kahu, Stephen, Leach & Zepke (2013) defined an adult learner as persons who are usually older than twenty two (22) years and who proceed with their education by adjusting family & work. These features make adult learners to be completely distinct from the regular learners, especially in terms of their everyday obligations which affect their academic training (Cercone, 2008).

With adults various academic training and targets, Karge et al (2011), maintained that adults learn best by participation in experiences that are relevant with practical knowledge. Thus, adult learners appreciate it more when their abundance of experiences and knowledge are being respected and valued. This explains the intricate life of an adult who always engage in learning from concrete situation (Merriam, et al 2007). In view of this, Hannah (2016) pointed out that Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in adult learning enumerated 4 (four) characteristics of adult learners, thus:

- Adult are independent beings and cannot be controlled
- Adults have a lot of experiences
- Adults are relevant and resolute
- Adults are pragmatic and therefore deserves respect.

Based on this, Bash (2003), noted that the theory of Malcolm Knowles which is from the learners perspective covers five areas. These areas are the learner, the learners knowledge,

Correspondence:

Blessing Chinyere Elekwa PhD

Department of Adult and

Continuing Education,

Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka, Nigeria.

learners willingness to learn, guidance to learning and stimulation to learning. Most times, adults are stimulated to learn by their “need to know”. This “need to know”, according to Russell (2006), is based on factual practical situation of life events that deals with individual, competence and experience. Consequently, the abundance of experiences these adults bring to the learning environment is central and essential to their learning process (Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler 2000). Therefore, in designing a programme that will motivate adults in a learning process, continuous assessment and timely feedback becomes necessary. Feedback is useful as it reinforces motivation. Motivation is important to a successful adult learning. It is what induces a person to make certain choices, participate and persist in action. Motivation may come from within or without. Motivating factors that come from within is intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is the desire an individual possesses in order to attain self-esteem, self-confidence, have increased Job actualization, better quality of life and opportunity for self-actualization (Obidiegwu, 2011). In consonant to Obidiegwu’s idea, Legault (2016) posited that intrinsic motivation is a commitment in conduct, that is naturally satisfactory. Moreso, Longhurst (2019) noted that intrinsic motivation is the act of performing an activity without any clear external benefits. Supporting the idea of Longhurst, Parenting for Brain (2020), stated that intrinsic motivation is an inward force that moves a person to pursue an activity, for outward rewards, because the activity is satisfactory. Therefore, intrinsic motivation is based on an individual’s self-respect, work fulfillment and standard of living (Knowles cited in Scherling, 2013).

On the other hand, motivating factors that come from without are external or environmental. These include ventilated classrooms, good lighting, good sitting arrangement, appropriate furniture, facilitator’s attitude and proximity of the learning centre. These motivating factors help to create a safe and welcoming learning environment. Keillor&Littlefield (2012), noted that an authentic, approachable and conducive learning environment, promotes empathy and respect among facilitators and adult learners. Adult learners always bring past experience and prior knowledge to the learning environment and relate it to new learning (Merriam, et al 2007).

Therefore, the abundance of experiences adults bring to the learning environment helps them to identify their learning needs, develop the learning objectives and planning of instruction. These procedures make the adult learners to engage more in the learning process than younger learners (Russell, 2006), in order to attain a higher level of motivation. Thus, the higher the level of motivation the greater an adult learners readiness to learn. Therefore, the view of this paper focuses on motivation as an enhancement strategy for adult learning in a learning process. For better understanding of this paper, efforts were made to explain some of the main concepts of this paper.

Adult Learning

Adult learning is a compound word, with two variables ‘adult’ and ‘learning’. There are a number of parameters that can be used to determine who an adult is. Such parameters, maybe biological, social, economic, legal, psychological, historical and chronological. Yet, there is no known parameter, for defining who an adult is. According

to Williams (2018), an adult is a matured, full grown person that is firmly established. Similarly, Kapur (2019) noted that an adult is a person that is above 18 years of age, who has responsibilities towards his home, family, friends, community, career and above all, himself. Also, Nzeneri (as cited in Onyenemezu, 2012) opined that an adult is an individual who has matured physically, psychologically and is socially, economically, politically, environmentally as well as culturally responsible. The author further noted that in advanced countries like USA, United Kingdom, an adult is a person who has reached the voting age of 21 years, whereas in developing countries like Nigeria, an adult is an individual who is 18 years, and is ready to exercise his voting franchise. Therefore, from the above definitions of an adult, it can be summarily said, that an adult is a full grown, matured person that is responsible. Based on this study, an adult is a matured, responsible person who performs civic duties and becomes motivated towards enhancing his knowledge, skills & competencies through learning.

Learning is an organization of experiences. It is a procedure that imparts, repositions and shapes an individual’s knowledge, skills and competencies. According to Bonk (2010), Learning is an open, informal, continuous and self-directing process that improves the self-worth of an individual. Self-worth is indispensable to an adult learners happiness. In relation to this, there is need to appreciate and respect the abundance of experiences adults bring to the learning environment. Therefore, learning in the context of this study, is a continuous process that boost the self-confidence and enhance the quality of life of adults, especially in adult learning.

Adult learning is believed to be experiential learning. In other words, adults bring a wide life experience and intelligence to the learning environment in order to reason and build new ideas for positive action. Hence, the importance of learning in adulthood cannot be over-emphasized. According to Merriam & Caffarella (1999), understanding learning in adulthood is similar to fixing together a problem that has different parts, which must be joined together before the entire picture surfaces. In the same vein, Merriam (1993), defined adult learning as a sticker that stabilizes the field of adult education, that is multifarious in content, participants and consignment system. This implies that the adult learner, the learning needs, context and process of learning add relevance to adult learning. Moreso, Knowles (2005) defines adult learning as the activity whereby adults gain understanding and skills. This shows that adult learning is a process that creates knowledge. Furthermore, The European Commission (2006), defines adult learning as the whole variety of informal, non-formal & formal learning activities engaged by adults after completing primary school and basic training which leads to attainment of novel experience and expertise. In another development, Adult Learning Statistics (2020), stated that adult learning is the involvement of adults between the ages of 25 to 64 in schooling and basic training, which means lifelong learning. This shows that adult learning is diverse, deep and independent. Hence, it is important to note that adult learning in this context, empowers and motivates the adult learners.

Motivation is an indispensable tool in adult learning. According to Johnson & Johnson (2003), motivation is the

extent to which individuals devote their efforts and realize the purpose they consider as relevant and valuable. In other words, any learning process that increases the adult learners readiness to learn is valued and relevant. Also, Rake & Dunn (2010) viewed motivation as an activity through which an individual's wants and aspiration are put in progress. This implies that adult learners are interest-driven and are always motivated towards actualizing their set goals. Moreso, Penny & Steve (2014), noted that motivation means aspiring to achieve a target or reach a satisfied level of performance that will lead to a self-driven behaviour. Furthermore, Kendra (2020) defined motivation as the act of initiating, leading and encouraging a high reaching behaviour. This means that motivation is a booster. It ignites the interest of adult learners in a learning process.

On the contrary, a complete loss of interest due to fear, threat, noise, stress and lack of self confidence in any learning process as observed by Turner (2018), causes distraction and affects the level of concentration of the adult learner. This demotivates them from the learning process. According to Chong, et al (2019), demotivation are those internal and external impacts that reduce the motivation of an individual to study. This suggests that demotivation brings bleak outcome and causes negative effects in adult learning. Perhaps, demotivators maybe lack of finance, time pressure, unconducive learning environment, among others. As a corrective measure to demotivation, Kendra (2020) stressing on the components of motivation, noted that when a conducive learning environment is activated, it enhances the adult learners persistence to learn, thereby intensifying timely feedback. Therefore, in the context of this study, motivation increases the desire, aspirations and needs of an adult learners towards acquiring new training, knowledge, skills and competencies for the improvement of their quality of life.

Strategies For Enhancing Adult Learning Through Motivation

The following ways can be adopted in enhancing adult learning through motivation in a learning process. They are as follows: Quality curriculum, interactive classroom management, the use of relevant instructional materials, assessing performance through appropriate feedback, showing respect for adult learners and conducive learning environment.

- **Quality Curriculum:** According to Rodriguez (2012), Malcolm Knowles enumerated steps that should be considered in the planning and developing of curriculum for the adult learners. These are creating an enabling climative environment, building an organizational framework where learners can take part in the planning process, identification of learners needs, sequential methodology of teaching, expanding and processing the outline of programmes to accommodate the learners demands and interest, as well as evaluation. This implies that the curriculum for adult learners who choose to be self-directing should be learner- centered. This will accommodate the needs and interests of the adult learners. Also, it will engage the facilitators in a process of investigation, scrutiny and decision making, using the learner-centered approach, instead of transmitting knowledge.
- **Interactive Classroom Management:** Creating an interactive classroom, that is, flexible, precise and

intellectually challenging, encourages sharing of experiences, thoughts and the use of everyone as a resource. Due to the unique characteristics of adult learners, a variety of methods of teaching should be introduced. These methods of teaching include the use of role play, electronic communication, group discussion, e-learning, brainstorming, questioning, audio-visuals and visual aids. This will stimulate the adult learners interest, enhance their skills to communicate effectively and accommodate their individual differences, thereby adding relevance to their learning experiences.

- **The Use of Relevant Instructional Materials:-** In adult learning process, effective teaching-learning cannot take place without the facilitators use of relevant instructional materials. According to Akanbi (as cited in Awolaju, 2016), instructional materials are materials arranged to improve the teaching and learning activities of adult learners, in order to increase their participation in active learning. Active participation of adult learners increases motivation, especially when they display commitment to what is being taught. This implies that the use of relevant instructional materials such as audio-visuals and visual aids, including other creative learning materials, encourages the adult learners greater use of their senses in a learning process. This will help to broaden the adult learners understanding, increase their knowledge and skills, stimulate their willingness to learn more and make the learning to be lively and interesting.
- **Assessing Performance through Appropriate Feedback:-** This is a motivating factor in adult learning that determine the effectiveness and performance of adult learners in a learning process. Providing timely feedback empowers adult learners and guarantees an interactive learning environment. This will enhance the learners retention, get them involved and promote a feeling of resolution and acceptance.
- **Respect For Adult Learners Personality, Culture And Beliefs:** Adult learners are competent-based and need to be encouraged. As they participate in a learning activity, their abundance of experiences, culture as well as beliefs, should be appreciated, recognized and respected. Therefore, showing respect through open dialogue and communication helps to build a strong relationship among the adult learners and facilitators within the learning environment.
- **Conducive Learning Environment:** This is another motivating factor that affects adult learning. Adults prefer a learning environment that triggers their learning ability with strategies that are modified in order to enhance effective teaching. On this basis, Keillor & Littlefield (2012), maintained that creating an enabling learning environment that is mutual, safe, inclusive, authentic and approachable will promote empathy and respect. This may be the reason, Turner (2018) affirmed that a comfortable and conducive learning environment, that is devoid of distractions, such as noise, fear, threat, will motivate adult learners and increase their level of concentration in the learning process.

Challenges to Effective Adult Learning.

The challenges facing effective participation of adult learners in a learning environment includes the following: Lack of finance, lack of time factor, Anxiety, lack of respect for adult learners personality, culture and beliefs, often demotivate them from learning.

Firstly, lack of finance is another inhibitor to adult learning. Money is a great influence, when it comes to adult learning. Goto and Martin (2009), noted that the financial difficulties adults experience as they go back to school could reduce the resources needed to keep the home. Despite these family problems and other issues bothering adults, they still perform many functions such as parenthood, paying bills, being a husband/wife and at the same time a student. This situation as Thompson & Porto (2014) observed, means an extra obligations and work load on the adult learner.

Secondly, another challenge to effective adult learning is time factor. This is called pressure of time. It is a major factor that affects adult learners in a learning process. According to Stevens (2018), in Canada, 70% of employers give support financially to their workers for career education, but only 22% of workers use it. This is caused by time pressure and uncertainty, on how, precisely, to improve their skills.

Another challenge is anxiety. This is a barrier to adult learning. According to Bigdeli (2010), anxiety is when a person has a definite strong feeling of life. Adult learners, who are individually distinct, go back to learning with a view to improve themselves financially and be more successful in their jobs. This puts a lot of pressure on them. Consequently, an unsafe and insecure learning environment that lacks openness, trust and honesty on the part of the facilitators, also increases the level of anxiety experienced by adult learners. This may cause them to lose interest, thereby abandoning the learning.

Moreso, not recognizing or showing respect for adult learners personality, culture and beliefs, may hinder adult learners from learning. Adults learners are autonomous and prefer self-directed learning. They bring an extensive life knowledge to the learning environment, which accommodates the adult learners individual differences. Disregarding these individual differences which could be the learners experiential background, learning style, motivation, needs and interests may affect and demotivate them from the learning process.

Lastly, the challenge of not applying learning to actual life situation, may pose a threat to adult learners in a learning process. In view of this, adults take part in learning that are based on concrete situation which support the use of well organized instructional strategy from the learners perspective. This is ideal and appropriate for adult learning. Considering adult learners abundance of experiences and expectations, the use of teacher-centered approach will not only restrict them from practical learning, but will also cause them to lose interest and become demotivated towards learning.

The Way Forward

In other to enhance adult learners readiness to learn through motivation, there is need for collaborative learning to exist among the adult learners and their facilitators in the learning environment. Facilitators should promote the use of learner-centered instructional strategy, that is interactive and democratic as regards the demands, interests and

feelings of the adult learners. This will encourage respect, mutual understanding and improve their well being.

The adult learner who brings abundant source of experience to the learning environment appreciate a conducive learning environment. Therefore, the learning environment should be well ventilated, with good lighting, good sitting arrangement and appropriate furniture. This will motivate adult learners and increase their desire for learning. Relevant learning materials and competent facilitators will equally enhance the adult learners skills and competencies.

To promote competency in adult learning, timely feedback becomes imperative. This will enable adult learners assess the extent of progress in learning. Assessing the progress of learning, will lead to an improvement in future learning, work fulfillment and building of self-confidence.

Conclusion

This paper has established the fact that motivation is an enhancement strategy for adult learning. Thus, the importance of motivation in enhancing adult learners readiness to learn cannot be overemphasized. However, adult learners do not just engage in a learning activity without a reason. The reason, which maybe, for fun or job satisfaction will actually lead to the fulfillment of adult learners demands and interest. Unfortunately, adult learners may experience lack of finance, time pressure, anxiety, non-recognition of their personality, culture and beliefs in the learning process, but they still learn best by participation. This is observed especially when their abundance of experiences and knowledge are valued and respected. Moreso, this will not only boost their self-confidence, but will make them to become more self-esteemed.

References

1. Adult Learning Statistics (2020). *Lifelong learning. Participation in education and training.ec.europa.eu>eurostat>index.php*.
2. Awolaju, B.A. (2016). Instructional materials as correlates of students academic performance in Biology in Senior Secondary Schools in Osun State. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, Vol. 6, No. 9, September, 2016
3. Bash, L. (2003). *Adult learners in the academy*. Bolton, Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
4. Bonk, C. (2010). For openness: How technology is changing school. *Educational Leadership*, 17, 60-65 (*Web of Science*)
5. Cercone, K. (2008). Characteristics of adult learners with implications for online learning design. *AACE Journal* 16(2), 137-159. Retrieved from <http://www.learnstechli b.org/primary/p/24286>
6. Chong, M. Y. C., Renandya, W.A, & Rong, Q. (2019). Demotivation in L2 Classroom; Teacher and Learner Factors. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal*, Vol. 12, issue 12.
7. Hannah, S. (2016). Adult learning-goal oriented & relevancy oriented. *Military Family Readiness Academy*.
8. Johnson, D.W & Johnson, R.T. (2003). Student motivation in cooperative groups. *Cooperative*

- learning: The social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups.
9. Kahu, E.R., Stephens, C., Leach, L. & Zepke, N. (2013). The engagement of mature distance students. *Higher Education Research & development*, 32(5), 791-804.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.777036>
 10. Kapur, R. (2019). The adult learner. Meaning / Significance <https://www.researchgate.net>
 11. Karge, B.D., Philips, K. M., Jessee, T. & McCabe, M. (2011). Effective Strategies for engaging adult learners. *Journal of College teaching & Learning*, Vol. 8 (12).
 12. Keillor, C. & Littlefield, J. (2012). Engaging adult learners with technology. Library Technology Conference: Macalester College. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/libtech-conf/2012/sessopms/43/>.
 13. Kendra, C. (2020). What is motivation? www.verywellmind.com
 14. Legault, L. (2016). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, USA
 15. LeNoue, M., Hall, T. & Eightmy, M.A (2011). Adult Education and the social Media Revolution. *Adult learnin*, 22(2), 4-12
 16. Longhurst, A.S. (2019)- Intrinsic Motivation: How to pick up healthy motivation techniques.
 17. McConnell, M. (2013). Six characteristics of adult learners intradiem.com> [frontline-blog](http://frontline-blog.com)> six
 18. Merriam, S. B, Caffarella, R.S. & Baumgartner, L.M (2007) Learning in adulthood; A comprehensive guide (3rd ed) San Francison; Jossey- Bass
 19. Obidiegwu, U. J., (2011). Concept of andragogy: Andragogy for non-formal Education (NFE). *A paper presented on a training workshop for NFE supervisors and facitators on newly developed primers and techniques fort effective non-formal education delivery (14th – 15th Nov, 2011)*
 20. OECD (2007). *Qualification and lifelong learning (pp1-2). Policy brief organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing. Retrieved Dec, 25, 2012*
 21. Onyenemezu, E.C (2012). Adult Education and the challenges of the 21st century in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 3, Nov. 5, 2012
 22. Parenting For Brain (2020). *What is intrinsic Motivation & how does it work?* www.parentingforbrain.com>intrinc...
 23. Rakes, G.C. & Dunn, K. E. (2010). The impact of online graduate students motivation and self regulation on academic procrastination. *Journal of interactive online learning*, 9(1) 78-93.
 24. Penny, D. & Steve, E. (2014). An introduction to organizational behaviour. McGraw.Hill Education, 3rd Edition Reviewed.
 25. Rodriguez, A. (2012) “The theory of andragogy”. Retrieved from <http://ponce.inter.edu.cai/thesis/rodrigue/cap2htm>
 26. Russell. S. S. (2006) An overview of adult learning process. *Urologic Nursing*, 26 (5), 349-370. Retrieved from <http://www.sug.org/cgi-bin/webobjects/SunaMain.woa/wa>
 27. Scales, P. (2008). Learning Theories. In teaching in the lifelong learning sector.
 28. Scherling, S. E. (2013). Learner-centered instructors’ beliefs about adult learning: A phenomenological study. Liberty University, Lynchburg, V.A
 29. Stevens, E. (2018). The challenge of being an adult learner and how to overcome them. Career foundry.com
 30. Svetina, M. & Perme, M. (2004). Adult learner. 1st Module, Retrieved August, 28th 2019 from [http://archiv.acs.si/publika/cije/Adut learner](http://archiv.acs.si/publika/cije/Adut%20learner)
 31. Taylor, K., Marienau, C. & Fiddler, M. (2000). Developing adult learners: Strategies for teachers and trainers. San Fracisco. Jossey- Bass.
 32. Thompson, J. & Porto, S. (2014). Supporting wellness in adult online education. *Open praxis*, 6 (1) 17-28.
 33. Williams, C. (2018). Adulthood. Kans State University. *Brock Education Journal*, 27 (2), 2018.