

THE STATUS OF POST-LITERACY PROGRAMME IN MASS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper tries to identify the very important place of post-literacy programme in the context of mass education. In doing this, the writer traces the genesis of Adult-Mass Education in Nigeria showing that mass education comes under the umbrella of adult education, and post-literacy programme as one of the programmes in Mass education. The programme is designed for adults who have mastered some skills in reading writing and numeracy. The curriculum of the programme is analysed and the writer also assesses the qualities expected of post-literacy instructors and the various techniques that could be used to teach in the post-literacy programme to reach most of the adult students.

Introduction

It has been realised that no true progress can be made by any government or country without the education of the masses. In Nigeria, the period between 1950 – '60 will always be remembered in the history of Nigerian education, as Fafunwa (1974) puts it, as one of the most dynamic eras in educational innovation. He observed that during this period, the Nigerian leaders made bold attempts to bring education to most adults because of the felt need for mass education by the government and the people.

While the West and the East were engrossed in provision of free primary education for their people, the aspect of education which received the greatest attention in the then Northern Region were mass education, adult literacy and crafts (Taiwo, 1980). In 1952, a committee – Yaki da Jahilci (War against Ignorance) – was set up in the North to boost adult literacy throughout the nooks and corners of the region. So, by 1960, while adult education scheme in the East and West was at its lowest ebb, in the North it was intensified (Fafunwa, 1974p. 181). Now, after over 3 decades, it is disappointing to know that majority of the masses are still illiterates. The illiteracy rate in Nigeria and in this part of the country in particular is still very high. This, therefore, calls for a good reason to encourage literacy among the masses especially among the relatively young people who could otherwise form an important resource for national development.

The Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education now Agency for Mass Education, which was established in 1989 in Sokoto State is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating literacy and adult education in the State.

Adult Education And Mass Education

Adult education is regarded as any education given to adult persons, men and women or what makes it possible for them to learn to read and write. It offers adults who are denied the facilities of exposure to formal education an opportunity to go back and provide for themselves.

Anyanwu (1982) sees adult education as that which enables people to be aware of both individual and community needs and provides the type of learning that enables recipients to cope successfully with current problems.

In the adult education classes especially at the literacy class level, the adult person is taught the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The skill of reading and writing is, therefore, the most basic and most believed that without literacy, people cannot learn the useful information needed for survival and happiness throughout life. There is no upper age limit in adult education. In this country, the target age-group for adult education classes should be between 15 years to 45 years old. But at times, people older than 45 years do attend the literacy classes.

Mass education comes under the umbrella of adult education and it is intended to give the masses of the people opportunity to participate in the conduct of their own affairs. Mass Education, which is provided for every category of the population, is geared towards making every member of the society literate, in order to promote the productive power of every citizen towards national development.

In other words, it aims at developing among the masses enlightenment, public opinion, and encouraging the people to take initiative and display an active interest in the administration of their own affairs. It is believed that people should be competent to debate and decide on matters of local, national and international importance. This demands a degree of mental cultivation which mass education can offer. Public awareness has an important role to play in national development.

Nigeria launched a ten-year mass literacy campaign in September 1982 to help every citizen to learn to read and write in a comparatively short period of time.

The illiterate, according to Anyanwu (1987), is at a disadvantage as his country is entering the modern world at a high speed. He has to depend on what he is told or shown to him since he cannot read and write. He could not go into certain occupations, read materials that affect him vitally, such as letters, labour contracts, what was written on tickets, road safety signs and regulations from the government. Knowing how to read and write will boost his morale since he will know that learning to read and write is nothing difficult. Literacy was expected to be an instrument for opening the eyes of men and women to the advantages of development. It was intended to help people appreciate the need for better life in the various communities. The hope was that this will urge people to work towards the development of their communities.

Post-Literacy Programme

Post-literacy Unit is a unit under the Department of Continuing Education, which is one of the six (6) departments created under the agency for Adult and Non-formal Education since its establishment in 1989. The post-literacy programme is meant for adults and youths who had acquired basic literacy through the adult education programme or other institution of learning but could not proceed for further studies due to certain reasons.

It is not enough to teach the adult person to read, write and be able to make simple calculation. After mastering a basic programme in literacy and numeracy, the result is that he may want to acquire more hence the need for a post literacy programme. In other words, an adult person who has learned to read and write can improve his/her newly acquired ability through what is known as post-literacy programme.

In the Mass Education programme, post-literacy programme is therefore, introduced on the assumption that adult education cannot be limited to literacy and numeracy or to only one level of education but can embrace other levels too. So, once a student has mastered a basic programme in literacy and numeracy he is urged or he can come back to take the post-literacy programme depending on his aptitude and intelligence.

The post-literacy education aims at making the individual who attends it self-reliant and someone who is responsible for his own development and for the development of the society.

The Target Group

The post-literacy programme caters for:

- (i) Graduates of basic literacy
- (ii) Primary schools drop-outs,
- (iii) Junior Secondary School drop-outs, and
- (iv) Those fully literate adults who want to acquire officially recognised certificates or higher levels of education for the purpose of employment or promotion within their institution. Their main interest is to acquire knowledge and skills, which will enable them to improve their performance at work or achieve better yields. Better education could be a ticket for movement from one job to another.

The essence of the programme as mentioned earlier is to enable them improve on the already acquired skills and knowledge and prepare them for further studies in the extra-moral class or remedial classes for G. C. E. 'O' Level and Teachers Grade II Certificate.

The post-literacy programme has no boundary; i.e. to say that it is not limited to what is given in centres designed for it. Post-literacy programme is organized for workers or those in prison. Workers who registered for post-literacy programme are the fourth group in the identified target group mentioned above.

Currently, there are 36 post-literacy education centres spread all over Sokoto State. Be one a housewife, farmer, technician, industrialist, labourer, civil servant, school drop-out, or a religious teacher, the post-literacy programme can, therefore, be employed to achieve better performance and greater productivity.

The Adult Learner

Since the learners in the post-literacy programme brought themselves to the classes, there is every tendency that they will exhibit a sense of purpose and commitment to whatever they are being taught. From experience, in some of the classes here in Sokoto, they are found to be most motivated. They know that they are voluntarily subjecting themselves to the post-literacy programmes, they therefore must have developed a specific need and thirst to be literate.

There is every tendency that they will attend to their duty with a meticulous sense of purpose and dedication. As a result, they are bound to learn better and probably faster. It is assumed that because of their age and experience in life, they will tend to grasp the meaning and relevance of subject matter quickly.

Post-Literacy Curriculum

A 6 years programme of post-literacy education had been designed for Sokoto for those adults who have become literate recently, primary school dropouts, J.S.S. drop-outs and the adult workers. The programme as it was designed is meant to help the recipient to understand himself and his environment better improve the social and economic status of their family and community and enhance and consolidate unity. The post-literacy education is in 3 stages:

- The first stage is for those who had completed the basic literacy programme and those who dropped out of primary school and it will last for 2 years.
- The second stage is for J. S. S. drop-outs. This will also last for 2 years.
- The third stage is for those fully literate adults who are aspiring to get the SSCE or G.C.E. 'O' level and it will last for only a year.

Stage I – What is designed for adults in this stage is what will give them the equivalence of primary school learning certificate. English, Mathematic, Social Studies, Health Education, Integrated Science and Religious Knowledge will be their main focus.

In the first 6 months, they will concentrate on English, Mathematics and a review of Hausa. In the next 6 months, apart from English and Mathematics, Social Studies will be introduced to the adults with some basic areas in Health Education and Religious Knowledge.

In the 2nd year, English, Mathematics, Hausa; Social studies, Integrated science and religious Knowledge will be their main focus. At the end of the 2nd year, they could sit for the Primary school Leaving Certificate.

Stage II – This state is equivalent to Junior Secondary School and it will also last for 2 years at the end of which the adults can write the J.S.S examination. subject to be taught at this stage include: English Language, Mathematics, Hausa, Social Studies, Health Education, Integrated Science, religious Knowledge, Home Economics (for women), Typing, agricultural science and economics. Each adult student is expected to offer at least 9 subjects from this list.

Stage III – In the 5th year, subjects to be studied include: English Language, Mathematics, Hausa, Religious Knowledge, Agric. Science, Home Economics (for women), Biology, Commerce, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, Typing, Book-keeping, History or Government and Geography. Each student is expected to offer a maximum of a subjects from the list.

At the end of the year, however, the adult student will be ready to join the Remedial class or Extra-moral studies that will prepare them for Senior Secondary Certificate Examination or G. C. E. 'O' level.

Qualities Of Post-Literacy Instructors

The post-literacy instructors are appointed on a part-time basis. Instructors in this programme, to be effective must have some basic qualities like:

- (i) There is every need for the instructor to be experienced and matured in age comparable to the age-group of adults that he is about to teach.
- (ii) The instructor must be able to relate to his students. He should try to know their background and needs, be aware of the individual differences among the members of the adult group. Since the students could be truck drivers, electricians, shop-keepers, farmers, labourers, house wives and teachers, as the case may be, there will be a need for the instructor to try to identify the various groups in his class especially in his discourse and narratives.
- (iii) The instructor should also be patient, tolerant, humble, and hardworking in order to contribute effectively to the demands and needs of the adult group. His students are bound to be more experienced, more demanding and critical than young children. Most of them know why they are there in the class and if they are not satisfied they will complain.

The instructor will need constant feedback from his class to find out if he is reaching his audience or not.

Method Of Teaching The Post-Literacy Students

Methods to be used in teaching the students should be informal which will allow for interpersonal contact. The teacher should be able to draw on the experiences of his adult students by relating whatever he is teaching to them.

Team teaching and not turn-teaching should be used with adults where there is enough money to employ the instructors. This is to expose them to more than one instructor in the same subject area.

The discussion method will be useful to these sets of students since the essence of post-literacy programme is to help the adults to re-organize in a more meaningful way, the store of experiences they might have acquired at the literacy level. Self expression and self-assertion should be encouraged among the students who will tend to ask a lot of questions in an attempt to clarify or confirm already held views about events and life experiences.

The instructor has to be very personal with his adult students, explain and discuss with them many things related to what he is teaching them. Homework should be given to the student to encourage them to produce written-work.

Conclusion

In this part of the country just like in other parts, one sees a mass illiteracy among adults and knowing that no country will develop where the majority of its population are illiterates, this calls for a good reason to encourage mass education through adult education programme, where majority of the masses will be encouraged to get some basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Since knowing how to read and write could change one's status within his community, bring him material benefits, the illiterate adult will not mind pushing himself to learn how to read, write and make simple calculations at least to be able to place himself on the same level with the so-called enlightened people. And he may need to be taught further to use his acquired ability at literacy to perform his daily work better and to improve his skills in his particular work hence the need for a post-literacy education or programmes.

Since most of the students are matured and experienced, any instructor who will teach them must also be matured, patient, tolerant and hardworking to be able to reach most of his students.

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