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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

Human resource development (HRD) is central to the quality, relevance, and sustainability of teaching and learning in adult education programmes. Adult education serves learners with diverse educational backgrounds, occupational experiences, social responsibilities, and learning needs. Meeting these needs requires competent teaching and non-teaching personnel who can plan, facilitate, manage, and evaluate inclusive learning opportunities. This conceptual paper examines HRD as a means of strengthening the delivery of adult education. It discusses the meaning and scope of HRD, the personnel involved in adult education, the contribution of education and professional learning to staff development, and the role of training in improving programme performance. It also considers major constraints, including inadequate funding, shortages of qualified personnel, weak infrastructure, insufficient learning resources, and discontinuity in public policy and programme support. The discussion indicates that HRD should be continuous, needs-based, adequately financed, and linked to measurable programme outcomes. The paper recommends sustained public investment, systematic staff development, improved learning facilities, stronger partnerships, and regular monitoring and evaluation. These measures can strengthen personnel capacity and improve the effectiveness, accessibility, and responsiveness of adult education programmes.

Keywords: adult education, human resource development, professional development, teaching and learning, training.

Introduction

Learning contributes to individual, community, and national development by expanding people's knowledge, capabilities, and opportunities to participate in social and economic life. Adult education is particularly important because it responds to the learning needs of people who are already engaged in family, occupational, civic, and community responsibilities. Its programmes may include adult literacy, continuing education, vocational and skills training, community development education, distance learning, citizenship education, and other forms of lifelong learning.

Adult education programmes are expected to respond to learners' immediate and changing needs. Mbalisi and Ephraim (2021) emphasised the relationship between adult education and the social, occupational, civic, and economic interests of adults. Such programmes can support personal development and community participation when their content, methods, and learning environments are relevant to the circumstances of participants. However, the quality of provision depends not only on curriculum and materials but also on the competence of the personnel who design, facilitate, administer, and evaluate learning.

Human resource development (HRD) therefore has an important role in strengthening adult education. Personnel require appropriate professional knowledge, practical skills, digital competence, communication abilities, and an understanding of adult learners' diverse circumstances. This paper examines HRD as a tool for improving teaching and learning in adult education programmes. It discusses the concept and scope of HRD, the personnel who contribute to programme delivery, relevant educational and professional development areas, the role of training, key implementation challenges, and strategies for improvement.

Concept and Scope of Human Resource Development

Human resource development refers to planned and continuing processes through which individuals acquire and improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and capabilities needed to perform roles effectively and contribute to organisational and community goals. In adult education, HRD includes the development of teaching personnel and the wider workforce responsible for programme planning, administration, learner support, resource management, monitoring, and evaluation. Orobor (2008) described HRD in terms of activities and programmes intended to build human capabilities for personal, organisational, and community goals.

HRD is broader than the provision of occasional training. It may include induction, mentoring, professional development, continuing education, peer learning, workplace learning,

leadership development, performance appraisal, and opportunities for further study. These activities should be based on identified capacity needs and linked to the responsibilities of personnel and the objectives of adult education programmes. Anyim et al. (2011) discussed the importance of human resource management in developing strategies for organisational objectives; this reinforces the need to plan personnel development in a systematic manner.

In adult education, the scope of HRD extends beyond classroom facilitators. Relevant personnel may include adult education teachers and facilitators; programme administrators and coordinators; community development workers; lifelong-learning and continuing-education facilitators; vocational and livelihood-skills instructors; distance-learning tutors and support staff; nomadic education personnel; rehabilitation and reintegration educators; citizenship and civic education facilitators; workforce trainers; and personnel involved in women's, family, consumer, and poverty-reduction education. The precise mix of personnel depends on the programme's purpose, target population, and delivery context.

The development of these personnel should enable them to work collaboratively, use learning resources responsibly, adapt instruction to adult learners' needs, and evaluate whether programmes are achieving their intended outcomes. It should also strengthen their capacity to identify barriers to participation, including barriers related to literacy levels, disability, gender, language, location, income, work schedules, and access to technology.

Education and Professional Learning as Systems for Human Resource Development

Education and professional learning provide structured opportunities for adult education personnel to acquire the knowledge and competencies required for effective programme delivery. The development process should include both foundational preparation and continuing professional learning. It should also address the responsibilities of managers and administrators who coordinate staff, finances, facilities, learning materials, and partnerships.

The United Nations' Agenda 21 recognises education as important to sustainable development and to strengthening people's capacity to address development challenges (United Nations, 1992, as cited in Dokubo & Okorie, 2017). Applied to adult education, this perspective highlights the importance of developing the knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills of both learners and the personnel who support their learning.

The following areas are particularly relevant to the professional development of adult education personnel.

Teacher Education and Facilitation

Teacher education prepares educators with the knowledge, professional attitudes, instructional skills, and ethical responsibilities required to facilitate learning. In adult education, preparation should include adult learning principles, participatory teaching methods, learner-centred curriculum design, assessment, inclusive practice, and the ability to connect learning to adults' prior knowledge and everyday experiences. Continuing professional development can help facilitators respond to changing learner needs and developments in educational practice.

Learning Technologies and Digital Competence

Learning technologies can support the design, delivery, communication, and assessment of adult learning. Relevant tools may include computers, laptops, mobile devices, learning management systems, video-conferencing platforms, digital libraries, electronic presentation tools, and assistive technologies. Artificial intelligence may also support selected learning and administrative tasks when used responsibly. Personnel need training not only in operating technologies but also in selecting accessible, relevant, safe, and affordable tools. Technology should complement sound teaching practice rather than replace meaningful interaction between facilitators and learners.

Education Policy and Programme Management

Knowledge of education policy helps personnel understand the laws, standards, institutional responsibilities, funding arrangements, curriculum expectations, and accountability mechanisms that shape adult education. Programme managers need the capacity to translate policy into operational plans, allocate resources, coordinate stakeholders, monitor implementation, and use evidence to improve provision. Policy literacy is also important for identifying gaps between stated commitments and the resources or services available to adult learners.

Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling contribute to learner support by helping adults clarify educational, personal, social, and vocational goals. Trained personnel can assist learners to identify strengths and learning needs, make informed decisions, address barriers to participation, and access appropriate support services. In adult education settings, counselling should be respectful, confidential, culturally responsive, and attentive to the pressures that may

arise from employment, family responsibilities, financial constraints, or previous negative educational experiences.

Psychology and Learning in Adulthood

Knowledge of psychology and adult learning helps educators understand how adults acquire and apply knowledge, develop skills, solve problems, make decisions, and respond to different learning environments. Professional development in this area can improve facilitators' understanding of motivation, prior experience, individual differences, memory, confidence, and the social conditions that influence participation. This knowledge can inform the selection of teaching strategies and the creation of supportive learning environments.

Training as a Tool for Human Resource Development

Training is a planned learning process designed to improve the knowledge and skills required for particular roles or tasks. Within HRD, it can strengthen the ability of adult education personnel to plan programmes, facilitate learning, manage resources, support learners, and assess performance. Oloyede (2023) described training as the acquisition of job-specific knowledge and skills. In adult education, training should be practical, relevant to identified needs, and followed by opportunities to apply and reinforce learning.

Training activities may include workshops, seminars, short courses, professional conferences, mentoring, peer observation, supervised practice, online learning, and workplace-based learning. Their content should reflect the actual responsibilities of participants. For example, facilitators may require development in participatory methods and assessment, while administrators may need training in budgeting, staff supervision, data management, and programme evaluation.

An effective training cycle should begin with needs assessment, followed by the design and delivery of appropriate learning activities. It should then provide opportunities for participants to apply for new competencies and receive feedback. Finally, the programme should be evaluated to determine whether the training improved staff performance and contributed to better learners and programme outcomes. Orobor (2008) similarly linked human resource development with analysing organisational goals, designing and implementing actions, and evaluating results.

Training should not be treated as a one-off event. Adult education programmes operate in changing social, economic, technological, and policy environments. Continuous

professional development enables personnel to update their knowledge, share effective practices, and respond to emerging challenges.

Challenges Affecting Human Resource Development in Adult Education

Several interrelated constraints can weaken HRD and reduce the quality of teaching and learning in adult education programmes. The major challenges identified in the source manuscript are discussed below.

a. Inadequate Funding and Shortages of Qualified Personnel

Insufficient funding can limit the recruitment, preparation, retention, and continuing development of qualified adult education personnel. It may also restrict access to professional learning, teaching materials, transport, digital tools, and learner-support services. Where programmes rely on inadequately prepared facilitators, the quality and consistency of instruction may be affected. Funding plans should therefore include realistic provision for personnel development as well as programme delivery.

b. Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Effective teaching and learning require safe, accessible, and adequately equipped learning environments. Inadequate classrooms, furniture, electricity, internet connectivity, sanitation, assistive devices, and instructional materials can limit participation and reduce learning effectiveness. These constraints may be particularly serious for learners in rural or underserved communities. Infrastructure planning should consider accessibility, local conditions, maintenance, and the actual needs of learners and facilitators.

c. Policy Discontinuity and Changes in Government Priorities

Changes in government and administrative priorities can interrupt programmes, alter funding commitments, and weaken institutional continuity. When adult education initiatives depend heavily on short-term political support, staff development and programme delivery may become inconsistent. Sustainable HRD requires policies, institutional arrangements, budget commitments, and monitoring systems that continue beyond individual administrations. Partnerships with communities, educational institutions, civil society, and relevant private-sector organisations can also support continuity.

d. Weak Coordination and Limited Monitoring

HRD may be less effective when responsibilities are unclear, staff development is not linked to identified needs, or programme outcomes are not monitored. Without reliable

information, institutions may be unable to determine whether training has improved staff competence or learner outcomes. Clear roles, coordinated planning, appropriate performance indicators, and regular evaluation are therefore necessary.

Strategies for Strengthening Human Resource Development

Governments and adult education providers should establish sustainable funding arrangements for personnel development, including budget lines for recruitment, induction, continuing professional development, learning materials, and infrastructure. Funding should be allocated transparently and aligned with programme needs.

Adult education institutions should conduct periodic training-needs assessments and prepare professional development plans for teaching and non-teaching personnel. These plans should identify required competencies, appropriate learning activities, responsible units, timelines, and indicators for evaluating progress.

Institutions should strengthen partnerships with universities, teacher education institutions, professional associations, community organisations, and relevant employers. Such partnerships can provide expertise, mentoring, practical learning opportunities, technology support, and access to specialised training.

Programme providers should improve the accessibility and quality of learning environments by investing in appropriate facilities, reliable utilities, digital infrastructure, teaching materials, and assistive technologies. Decisions about technology should consider affordability, connectivity, staff capacity, learner access, and data protection.

Finally, HRD initiatives should be monitored and evaluated regularly. Evaluation should consider not only the number of personnel trained but also changes in professional competence, instructional practice, learner participation, retention, achievement, and programme responsiveness. Findings should inform subsequent planning and resource allocation.

Conclusion

Human resource development is an essential component of effective teaching and learning in adult education programmes. The quality of adult education depends on the capacity of teaching and non-teaching personnel to plan, facilitate, administer, and evaluate learning opportunities that respond to adults' diverse needs. Professional preparation, continuing education, training, digital competence, guidance and counselling, and knowledge of adult learning can strengthen this capacity.

However, inadequate funding, shortages of qualified personnel, weak infrastructure, limited learning resources, policy discontinuity, and insufficient monitoring can undermine HRD. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment, needs-based professional development, effective institutional coordination, partnerships, and evaluation focused on measurable improvements. A continuous and adequately supported approach to HRD can contribute to more accessible, relevant, and effective adult education programmes.

Recommendations

1. Federal, state, and local governments should provide sustained and adequate funding for adult education, including dedicated allocations for staff recruitment, training, professional development, learning materials, and programme evaluation.
2. Adult education institutions should conduct regular training-needs assessments and implement continuous professional development programmes for teaching and non-teaching personnel.
3. Relevant authorities should recruit and retain qualified adult education personnel and provide clear role descriptions, supportive supervision, mentoring, and opportunities for career development.
4. Governments and programme providers should improve learning infrastructure, including accessible classrooms, electricity, internet connectivity, digital tools, assistive technologies, and appropriate instructional materials.
5. Adult education providers should establish partnerships with universities, professional bodies, community organisations, and employers to strengthen training, resource sharing, and programme continuity.
6. Institutions should monitor and evaluate HRD initiatives using indicators that measure changes in staff competence, teaching practice, learner participation, retention, achievement, and programme effectiveness.

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