

THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN PROMOTING ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

DR. (MRS.) C.O. OLOMUKORO

Department of Adult and non-formal Education
Faculty of Education, University of Benin
Benin City, Nigeria

carolomukoro@yahoo.co.uk
08023451585

AND

MRS. ORONSAYE RITA OSAYEMWENRE

Department of Adult and non-formal Education
Faculty of Education, University of Benin
Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract

The mass media has played several roles in promoting the political, economical and especially the educational aspect of the nation. Mass media has been a veritable tool in giving out information in Adult Education. It has helped in mobilizing programme participants in adult education. This paper examined the role of mass media in promoting Adult education programmes. To this end, the paper discussed the relevant concepts of mass media and adult education, the various forms of mass media. It went further to highlight the role of mass media in promoting adult education programmes and recommended that government should be supportive in setting up television viewing centres, mobile libraries, internet services in the rural areas, provide radio sets to deserving communities and above all furnish media houses with all the necessary infrastructure and equipment.

Introduction

Education is a human right that should be given to all human beings to improve their productivity, health and reduce negative features of life such as poverty and ignorance. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis, particularly in recent times, for all citizens to have access to basic education. Maduaguru & Mohammed (2006) cited in Asemah & Olumuji (2013) noted that the importance of education in the life of an individual cannot be overemphasized this is because without education, the realization of all other rights socio-economic and political rights becomes impossible. In the typical Nigeria setting, education for all has not received serious attention which has led to serious impediments towards realizing self realization and self-development among citizens especially the adults, (Asemah & Olumuji, 2013). Thus the media have a crucial role to play in the promotion of Adult Education Programmes in our country. The mass media has been a veritable tool in giving out information in Adult Education. The use of mass media is not new in our society. From time immemorial, different means of media have been used to communicate and disseminate information to people in the society. The media according to Asemah (2013) are agents of social change that can bring about positive, attitudinal change in the audience. They set agenda for the people to follow in any society. Media is the vehicle that carry message to the large audience. Corroborating this view, Namrate & Onakargounda (2012) posited that media involves helping to put information at the disposition of people and also bring about transformation in socio-economic and technological sectors.

The growing trends in the utilization of information technologies for the promotion of adult education depicts that institutions and people respond fast to the challenges of educational globalization. Traditionally, the use of the print media, radio materials, radio, television and video has continued to be the main stay of every society's literacy teaching and learning especially by distance. On account of easy

access, economy of cost and wide coverage, high importance is placed upon the ability to understand and use ICT by the learners and educators, (Sarumi 2007). The various types of technology could be used to promote literacy, either independently or in combination; hence the need for appropriateness and affordability of the technology. Generally, it has been established that both the Television and radio are important and crucial media for lifelong and life wide learning. The importance of these two media in education and learning is underscored by the fact that most adult learners who have benefited little from formal education which is of not much relevance in the area of practical applicability, stand to gain the invaluable experience from education and learning through these media premised on ICTS. Although with little or no reading materials in their homes, most adults have regular access to radio and Television. In light of the above Aderinoye (1999) describes the educational uses of TV and radio as follows:

- generating awareness of the literacy problem
- helping to retain learners in a programme
- helping to reach wider audience; and
- stimulating adult learning

UNESCO (1997) Bisham & Wood (1999) pointed out that the internet can be used in improving literacy programmes. Through it, adult learners can be provided with higher quality materials and have access to information in homes, work places, and public libraries. Internet encourages fast learning, particularly in global knowledge and information coupled with enhancing access to almost unlimited resources in a multidisciplinary dimension for the sharing of professional ideas and problem solving.

Mass media has been employed as a means of instructing and mobilizing the people for participation in various communal work, educative programmes that will promote development. Mass media is an agent that serves as a mirror in our society. It serves as mirror as it reflects what takes place in the society. Basically, the media are described as performing three functions or roles of information, education and entertainment. These are conventional social functions the media render to the public which is equally applicable in broader sense in national development pursuit (Isa, 2007). It is against this backdrop, that this paper attempts to examine the role of mass media in promoting adult and non formal educational programmes. To achieve this objective, this paper is organized as follows: the first section focuses on the introduction, the second section deals with the explanation of relevant concepts of mass media and adult education, the third section discusses the different forms of mass media. The next section highlights the role of mass media in promoting adult education programmes and lastly the recommendations and the conclusion.

Meaning of Mass Media

The media has been variously defined by scholars of mass communication among which media is referred to as a collective means of communication by which general public or populace is kept informed about the day to day happenings in the society. The media is also said to be an aggregation of all communication channels that use techniques of making a lot of direct personal communication between the communicators and the public. While talking of mass media however, the word 'mass' means a large number of people. Media means organs or channels. Hence mass media is a collection of organs of communication and information dissemination that reaches out a large number of people (Isa, 2007).

Mass media are diversified media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. These technologies through which this communication takes place vary. Broadcast media such as radio, recorded music, film and television transmit their information electronically. Print media use a physical object such as newspaper, book, pamphlet or comics (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2014) to distribute their information. Public speaking and event organizing can also be considered as forms of mass media (Uttara, 2011). Uttara further stressed that mass media refers to communication devices, which can be used to communicate and interact with a large number of audience in different languages. Be it the pictorial messages of the early ages or the high-technology media that are available today.

Onabanjo (2004) cited in Omoruyi, (2013) referred to mass media as having the function of informing and educating mass audience with individual imbibing what is consistent with their belief and ways of perceiving the world among the constant barrage of information available to them. In the same

vein Ezenirilo (1980) cited in Omoruyi, 2013, stated that media basically have three principal function it performs. These functions are:

- To inform,
- Educate,
- And to entertain

According to Onabanjo (2004), the mass media can create new perspectives which clear the ground for improved new skills and better education. It can also accelerate the social transformation required for socio-economic development. Onabanjo maintained that the mass media can help in spreading and smoothing the arduous task of mobilizing the human resources responsible for the nation's development efforts. In this regard, the information necessary to stimulate action in adults towards a programme that will make their level of participation in adult and non-formal education high is disseminated quickly and widely through the mass media.

Meaning of Adult Education

Adult education is basically any education programme specially designed for people regarded as adult in the society to which they belong. These are people according to Bown (1979) that are physiologically mature and socially and economically responsible. Adult education is a microcosm of the macro concept education. Adult education can be defined as the education designed for adults so as to enable them become self reliant and contribute meaningfully to the society to which they belong. It is any educational activity designed for adult to bring about changes in knowledge, skill and attitude. Okeke (2002) viewed Adult education as a vital facet of the gigantic national educational enterprise and an important source of social, economic and political development.

Adult Education is a specialized educational system which is targeted at the adult who desires an education either as a medium of furthering educational pursuit or starting afresh from the beginning. Perhaps, the greatest value of Adult Education is that it provides an avenue for bringing about change in individuals, communities, societies and nations. In other words, adult education is change-oriented. The foundation of Adult Education is to:

- provide a fresh beginning in learning
- build on what has been learned
- promote recurrent, continuing and life long learning. (Omolewa; 2006)

UNESCO as quoted by Omolewa (2006) regards adult education as a form of education that is given to those who are regarded as adults, the adult in simple terms is a physiologically mature, legally, socially, economically and politically responsible individual who has been so recognized by members of his/her community. According to Verner & Booth, the term adult education is used to designate all those educational activities that are designed socially for adults. Whatever the form, content, duration any activity is identified as adult education, when it is part of a systematic, planned and instructional programme for adults.

Adult education is seen as an instrument for creating awareness and consciousness for all adults of the society to enable them have more critical views of social, economic and political conditions in their environment. Thus removing obstacles and impediments that hinder the full realization of each adult's potentialities.

Forms of Mass Media

Mass Media is used to mobilize people in the society. By mobilizing people, it makes them an important tool that will participate actively in the total development of their communities and society at large (Omoruyi, 2013). Mass Media provides great opportunities to introduce desired innovations, and provide adequate enlightenment that usually sensitize the people towards developing interest in participating in educative and various developmental programmes. Tiwari (2013) describes mass media as comprising institution and techniques by which specialized groups employ technological devices including press, radio, television, films, internet to disseminate knowledge; to large heterogeneous dispersed audience.

The two broad categories of media are:

- (i) the print media comprises of Newspapers, magazines, journals and periodicals and
- (ii) the electronic media includes the Radio, television and all related modern means of communication such as computer and the internet

The electronic media have been excessively used in the mobilization of people for various social, economic and political education programmes in Nigeria and all over the world (Imhabekhai, 2009). There have been quite effective for mobilizing people since they can reach the people with the message as soon as it is broadcast.

The electronic media have made it possible for the people to be brought closer together by the globalization of communication. The world has now become a global village. Information is brought down to the people and discussion about event and issues are generated worldwide thereby serving as an agent of empowerment, education and equality.

Television

Television is a powerful medium in the electronic media. It almost succeeded in quickening the pace of development and education. It has enormous strength to attract both literates and illiterates adults and has equal strength in effective communication. According to Namrate & Onakargounda (2012). It can be said without any hesitation that television has greater influence on society. It has proved itself, as a very potent instrument in education for teaching and learning process. The television is used for public mobilization of people for adult and non- formal education programmes.

In addition, Haludu (2005) asserted that television has a greater pulling power than radio because of its magical power of combining sound with vision. It is a potent instrument of communication and its efficacy in education is impressive. Today, apart from formal education, both National and States' television stations broadcast specially designed programmes for the education of adults.

Radio

The radio has been found to be a very useful instrument for transmitting educational programmes to the masses. There are certain qualities which make it a suitable medium for the promotion of basic and functional education on a mass scale.

The main strength of the radio lies in the fact that ability to read and write is not required for one to take advantage of the benefits offered by this media as pointed out by Sanda (1988). Accessibility of the radio is another of its advantages. The low cost of purchasing radio sets and batteries makes it affordable to all groups. Radio has the ability to overcome barriers especially those of distance and time.

The strength is further boosted by the fact that it covers almost all parts of our country reaching public everywhere. It does not require any expertise to operate, nor does one need to know how to read and write to understand what is being transmitted. Information relayed are often transmitted in the local language or dialect of the people. Radio remains a paramount communicator. It may not be an exaggeration if it is said that in post-independence era, radio served as a sole carrier vehicle of development and education (Namrata & Onakargounda, 2012).

The educational radio has far reaching advantages in teaching/learning process. Radio enriches Adult education programmes – if properly used and efficiently organized, radio service can help in enriching and sustaining existing programmes in Adult Education such as Agricultural Extension, Adult Literacy and Distance Learning.

Educational Films

Educational films are very powerful medium of education as well as entertainment. Films have much in common with television as they make use of both light and sound, films attract a lot of people. Films in a sense brings the world into classroom. Films can be used in introducing new programmes and innovations in existing programmes. It can also develop insights, skills and understanding, which will be necessary for enabling adults to assume suitable roles in the society. Film shows are also useful in mobilizing people for agriculture and health extension programmes and other programmes directed at creating mass awareness (Imhabekhai, 2009). Films combine drama, sound, colour, music, action and emotion to exert a strong impact on an audience.

Internet

The Internet (also known simply as “the Net” or as “the Web”) is a more interactive medium of mass media and can be briefly described as a Network of networks. Specifically, it is the worldwide, publicly accessible network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard internet protocol (IP). It consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business and governmental networks; which together carry various information and services, such as email online chat, file transfer, etc. globally. The internet has become the centre of mass media. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2014).

The Print Media

The role of print media in the process of education is of special importance. Print media are the basic oldest channels of communication between one source and the other. Print media can effectively be used to arouse the consciousness of people to adult and non formal education programmes. These are:

Newspapers

Newspapers are a set of large printed sheets of paper containing news articles, advertisements, etc and published every day or every week according to Hornby (2010). Newspapers are also becoming a very popular and wide spread means of communication and information dissemination. This is as a result of their localism of states and their efforts to attract and hold readers in a competitive market. In the modern context, newspapers cannot compare with radio or Television as being first and fast with news but can however serve independently and as supplementary to other media by giving more balanced account of news.

Bulletin

Bulletins are printed and used by some literacy centres to make necessary information available to a group of people with a view to mobilizing them for action. The bulletins which could be in series are written and sent to the people at intervals to provide up-to-date information on a course of action as well as for instructing them.

Handbills

A small printed advertisement that is given to people by hand (Hornby, 2010). Some literacy centres produce handbills which are distributed to members of the public or the intended participants with useful information on the activities of the centres. Handbills can be distributed in form of tracts and leaflets which are intended to mobilize people for participation in their programmes.

The Role of Mass Media in Promoting Adult Education Programmes in Nigeria

The various organs of the mass media, be it, radio, television, cinema and newspapers are very vital to the modern social process according to Sanda (1988). They broaden out knowledge and understanding of the world around us. By bringing information to us, they help to stimulate our individual and group responses to issues. The role of mass media in society can be summarized as that of information, entertainment, persuasion and education. Any of these four roles cannot be operated in isolation. Education is a common variable to all activities of the media generally and Adult education in particular. (Haladu 2005)

Mass Media enable the people receive vital information quickly thereby putting people into a state of readiness for active participation in a programme. The level of participation in adult education programmes is a function of the level of awareness created in the adults. Mass media is used as a medium to achieve this. Therefore Mass Media help in mobilizing programme participants in adult education programmes.

Mass media has helped in the promotion of distance education. One of the programmes of Adult education that imparts education to learner who are removed in space and time from their teacher. This has really played a vital role in the lives of a great number of people by making them to learn at their own pace at their own time. Mass media enable the adaptability of the educational process to the individual

student's differences in pace, temperament background, and style of learning. Besides, mass media can store information until it is needed or wanted. They can present the information to adult learners through various senses and in many modes. Thereby making the learners to have a sense of belonging (Tiwari, 2013). Adult learners learn better if they are incorporated in the learning activities.

Mass media can be used as aid to demonstration in adult education programmes. As adults learn better in a practical environment. For example mass media like the Television can teach classes in cookery better than it can be taught by the demonstrator in an adult education class, so it helps in skills achieving. In our society today or in the world at large there is the need for lifelong learning for the growing number of people. Mass media has been used as a vital instrument in achieving this. In many countries, between a quarter and a half of all adults are already taking part in organized learning, through a single action of broadcasting. This has thereby helped to shape personalities, change the way many adults perceive and understand the world and its immediate reality.

The attraction of mass media to extension services is the high speed and low cost with which information can be communicated to people over a wide area.

The role of mass media in promoting extension education taking Agricultural extension programme are as follows;

- Spreading awareness of new ideas and creating interest in farming innovations.
- Giving timely warnings about possible pest and disease outbreaks; and urgent advice on what action to take.
- Multiplying the impact of extension activities. A demonstration will only be attended by a small number of farmers, but the result will reach many more if they are reported in newspapers and on the radio.
- Sharing experiences with other individuals and communities. The success of a village in establishing a local free plantation might stimulate other villages to do the same if it is broadcast over the radio. Farmers are also often interested in hearing about the problems of other farmers and how they have overcome them.
- Answering questions, and advising on problems common to a large number of farmers.
- Reinforcing or repeating information and advice information heard at a meeting or passed on by an extension agent can soon be forgotten. It will be remembered more easily if it is reinforced by mass media.
- Using a variety of sources that are credible to farmers. Instead of hearing advice from the extension agent only through mass media farmers can be brought into contact with successful farmers from other areas, respected political figures and agricultural specialists. Mass media communication requires specialist professional skills. Few extension agents will ever be required to produce radio programmes that will contribute to the successful use of mass media. (Crouch, 1981).

Nigeria's nomadic people though small, need access to basic educational provisions to acquire literacy skills as education is considered as an authentic and necessary tool for national development. Nigeria's nomadic people are typically described in terms of what they do not have. They do not have access to adequate food, clean water, health care, clothes, or shelter. They do not possess basic literacy skills. Their children do not have access to basic education. So educating them via mass media (using mobile learning methods) can be viewed as a positive step towards educating them. Mobile learning has been identified as any service that supplies a learner with general electronic information and educational content that aids in acquisition of knowledge regardless of location and time (Lehner & Nosekabel, 2002).

Current education provision provided for the nomadic people is the literacy by Radio. This is an educational programme that has been implemented throughout the country. Radio provides instructions and relays messages to Nigeria's nomads, who are typically on the move while grazing their cattle. The provision of tele-centres that provide Nigeria's rural and nomadic peoples with practical skills acquisition are currently being used to teach topics such as health and socio-economic issues that affect their daily lives.

Here are some perceived benefits of mobile learning to the nomads.

- Mobile learning will afford Nigeria's nomadic people the opportunity to acquire literacy skills with little disruption to their nomadic lifestyles and livelihoods.
- The establishment of nomadic schools in fixed locations, appears to be a misguided educational policy. Indeed, the inherent nature of Nigeria's nomads as groups of wandering people were not taken into consideration during the formulation of this policy. Therefore, one viable option available for these wandering people is to learn through a mobile learning system.
- One major problems usually faced by Nigeria's nomads in their wandering activities, is that, they lack 'interactional' and 'transactional' skills with the people they come across during their travels. The acquisition of literacy skills through the mobile learning system will, to a large extent equip them with valuable interactional and transactional skills needed to enhance their relationship with the people they meet.
- Lastly, the modern world is knocking on their door; nomads need to develop a sense of belonging to the larger, modern world wherein learning is a key commodity for survival (Aderinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede, 2007) -

The range of mass media that can be used for literacy education includes televisions, radio, films, both mobile and theatre, various types of print media materials like pamphlets, leaflets, handbills, stickers, clothes and other materials bearing the logo or slogans of education.

In the realm of literacy education, radio and television have become formidable force through their broadcast, people pick up various facts, ideas, impressions and attitudes. Some develop an understanding and appreciation of human values, various kinds of drama broadcast are also provided for the public such as plays in the areas of reading and writing, agriculture, health and sanitation, film stripes and slides can be employed in literacy education in teaching adult learners. A film can rise above language barriers through the power of its visual images and convey the same message to a sophisticated and a gathering of illiterates.

There is also literacy-by-radio for effective literacy delivery in Nigeria. The objective is to increase access of adult and non-formal education learners to opportunities for basic literacy which in effect will lead to greater competence in literacy skills. The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) is directly in charge of this programme aimed at reducing the illiteracy rate and ensuring accessibility to education by teeming Nigerians, mostly adults and those who are no longer under the catchment's area of conventional education. (NMEC Link, 2010).

The role of print media in the process of adult education is of special importance. Print media like textbooks, charts and posters are best source of knowledge to adults in the learning processes. They can be printed in every regional language to help learners get information and knowledge in their own mother tongues. This will help in motivating adult learners' interests to learning. A peculiar advantage of the print media to literacy education is that it is easier to make a special appeal through it, the posters posted on walls convey a message to an illiterate, pamphlets and magazines are indispensable in a literacy education centres, this is because the readers can refer to them again and again to refresh their minds of what they know. This buttresses the fact that the print media is good for record keeping and reference purpose and if well preserved can pass information from generation to generation. (Imhabekhai, 2009).

It should be noted however, that mass media has some limitations. Though the radio and television are effective in mobilizing people for adult education programmes, they are one-way means of communication, lacking the possibility of immediate feedback between the communicator and the audience. Their programmes are ephemeral and short-lived. Radio programmes can only be heard and this makes them less effective when compared with television messages which can be heard and viewed at the same time. Availability of electricity limits the effectiveness of radio and television. The cost of radio and television sets reduce their effectiveness (Imhabekhai, 2009). In addition, one has to be literate to be able to read newspapers and other printed materials. A large number of people who are literate have poor reading habit and loss of interest in reading newspapers.

Conclusion

The paper examined the role of mass media in promoting adult education programmes. It has been established in this paper that the various organs of mass media are effective in mobilizing people for adult

education programmes. Programmes like literacy, agricultural extension programmes, distance and nomadic education among others have enjoyed the use of mass media in disseminating information and knowledge to programme participants. Therefore government and all stake holders in Adult education should ensure that the use of media should not be seen as mere information distribution and transmission but of participation, expression and communication.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forward to improve the effectiveness of the media in playing their roles in adult education programmes:

- Governments at all levels must strive to strengthen the capacity of their media and publicity outfits in order to utilize electronic and print-media to the fullest.
- Functional television viewing centres, mobile libraries and internet services should be provided in the rural areas and radio sets should be bought and distributed to deserving communities, literacy centres to encourage them to take advantage of the media.
- Message broadcast should be repeated at intervals for a long time so that all the people the programme is meant for can perceive the message.
- The necessary infrastructure and equipment should be provided for the radio, television and newspaper houses.

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