

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICS FOR ADULT EDUCATORS: REBUILDING TRUST IN ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICE

Emmanuel Tayo Daramola

University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Nigeria

Email: emmtayo@gmail.com

Abstract

Professional development is the strategy use to strengthen practice in any careers, it also use to apply new knowledge and skills that will improve performance on the job. Ethics serve as a basic foundation for responsible practice in any field with a strong service orientation, it serve as guideline for individual collective responsibility in response to societal need for competent, accountable practitioners, enhancing credibility for a field of practice by functioning as a means of self-regulation. This paper, therefore, highlight ethical issue and its relationship with adult education profession and need for professional development in adult education practice. It was concluded that professional ethics are an integral part of adult education profession and to rebuild the profession to be relevant in this 21st century, scholars in the field of the adult education need to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues.

Keywords: Adult Educator, Professional Development, Ethics, Rebranding

Introduction

Over time, there has been considerable discussion and general agreement about what defines the core values of the field and what provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work or what it means to be an ethical, what does it mean to be an ethical instructor? As ongoing professional development becomes established, it can be beneficial to think critically about what it means to be an ethical educator of adult education practice.

An adult educator or instructor may know the topic and use appropriate adult learning strategies without being an ethical educator in the field. It is entirely possible to follow the rules of teaching and adult learning without an understanding of the ethical considerations behind the rules. A basic tenet found in the field of research, the “fundamental ethical imperative behind the rules is that researchers [and teachers] seek to do their jobs in a manner that will not cause unjustified harm to anyone” (UM, 2002). Literature in the field is increasingly reflecting awareness of and discussion about the variety of professional development and ethical issue that arise from broadly diverse practice of adult education. This increasing focus and recognition of professional development and ethics are not limited to the field of adult education. The importance of this consideration in both personal and professional behavior has clearly become a current and relevant discourse in this 21st Century.

Current Position of Adult Education Practice in Nigeria

Adult education in Nigeria has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Originally aimed at providing basic literacy skills, the scope of adult education has expanded to include vocational training, life skills, and continuing professional development. Historically, Adult education in Nigeria began as a colonial initiative aimed at educating the indigenous population to support colonial administration and economic activities. Post-independence, the focus shifted towards national development, with adult education seen as a tool for eradicating illiteracy and fostering socio-economic growth.

Currently, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) is the primary body overseeing adult education in Nigeria. NMEC's mandate includes developing policies, coordinating programs, and ensuring quality standards in adult education across the country. The key components of Adult Education in Nigeria includes literacy programme, vocational training, continuing professional development programme, health education, civic education, financial literacy, community development, women empowerment programme among other.

Adult education plays vital roles in development of a nation particularly, Nigeria. The roles includes;

- I. **Lifelong Learning:** In an era where continuous learning is essential, adults expect education systems to provide opportunities for lifelong learning. This includes upskilling, reskilling, and gaining new competencies to remain relevant in a rapidly changing job market.
- II. **Economic Empowerment:** Many adults look to education as a pathway to better job opportunities and economic stability. They expect adult education programs to offer practical and vocational training that can directly improve their employability and earning potential.
- III. **Personal Development:** Beyond professional benefits, individuals seek personal growth through education. They expect adult education to enrich their lives, enhance their critical thinking, and provide a deeper understanding of the world.
- IV. **Social Inclusion:** Education is seen as a tool for social integration and cohesion. People expect adult education to bridge gaps created by socioeconomic disparities, providing marginalized groups with the skills and knowledge to participate fully in society.

As Adult education been recognized as a critical component in fostering personal growth, social development, and economic progress. As societies evolve and the demands of the modern world shift, the expectations placed on adult education practices continue to grow. The people expectations are as follows;

- I. **Accessibility and Flexibility:** Adults need educational opportunities that fit into their busy lives. This means flexible scheduling, online and blended learning options, and local access points. Programs should be designed to accommodate the diverse circumstances of adult learners, including those with jobs, families, and other commitments.

- II. **Quality and Relevance:** High-quality education is paramount. Learners expect well-structured programs with qualified instructors who can provide relevant, up-to-date information and skills. Curricula should be aligned with current industry standards and societal needs.
- III. **Recognition and Certification:** Adults expect that the education they receive will be recognized and valued by employers and educational institutions. This includes the expectation of earning certificates or qualifications that can be easily translated into career advancement or further educational opportunities.
- IV. **Support Services:** Effective adult education programs should offer support services such as career counseling, mentorship, and financial aid. These services help learners navigate their educational journey and maximize their chances of success.
- V. **Community and Networking Opportunities:** Many adult learners value the chance to connect with peers, build networks, and participate in a learning community. Education programs should facilitate these opportunities, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support among participants.

Despite the progress, adult education in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. The challenges includes;

- I. **Funding and Resources:** Inadequate funding is a significant challenge. Many adult education programs are underfunded, leading to issues such as insufficient learning materials, poorly paid educators, and inadequate infrastructure.
- II. **Quality of Education:** Ensuring the quality of adult education is difficult due to a lack of standardized curricula and trained educators. Many programs rely on volunteer teachers, who may not have the necessary skills or training.
- III. **Access and Participation:** Despite efforts to expand access, many adults, especially in rural areas, are unable to participate in educational programs due to distance, cultural barriers, and socioeconomic factors.
- IV. **Technological Barriers:** The integration of technology in education has not been fully realized in adult education. Limited access to digital tools and the internet, particularly in rural areas, hampers the effectiveness of online learning initiatives.

Ethical Issue and its Relationship with Adult Education Profession

The issues of ethics have been impeded in adult education practice because of the field's diversity and the tendency focus only on its learner-centered nature rather than its practices. Recently professional in adult education practice begun to consider the role of ethics and its relationship to practice. In describing the importance of ethics to the field, Sork (1988) cited in ERIC Digest (2015) suggests that "a consideration of the ethics of practice is inescapable if anything approaching a complete understanding of practice is ever to be achieved". By its nature, the practice of adult education is an endeavor in which "ethical choices are not some abstract ideal but are embedded in the very fabric of practice". Because ethics is the process of deciding what should be done, the choices adult educators continually make such as what individuals are to learn or how programs are to be developed reflect the ethical nature of their practice (Cervero 1989). Many of adult

education practice are characterized by ambiguity and conflicting values which preventing adult educators from applying standardized principles as solution. Instead, educators begin to make choices that are based on their beliefs about the way things ought to be (Cervero, 1989).

In other to think about decision making relative to ethical issues in adult education profession, Brockett (1990), has proposed a model. The model describes a process that allows adult educators to draw upon their basic values in making practice decisions. Rather than providing prescriptive guidelines, the model helps people discover the best course of action for themselves, which is better than telling people what to do (Brown, 1990). The dimension of the model has three dimension, the first dimension is personal value system which helps adult educators answer questions on what do I believe and how committed am I to those beliefs. This reinforces the individual the fact that ethical practice begins with an understanding of personal value. Because of the nature of the adult profession, adult educators are responsible to the whole society ranging from learners in the class to the entire people in the society and as a result of this the second dimension of the model is consideration of multiple responsibilities which the question is around "To whom am i responsible as an adult educator?". This dimension adult educators to consider the options or choices available in meeting what are frequently conflicting needs. Adult educator professional is expected to have this in mind that a way of putting values into practice help to identify basic moral principles that lie at the heart of one's practice and the third dimension was based on this which is operationalization of values, asks "How do I put my values into practice?". Brockett (1990), suggesting the following six principles to guide practice:

Respect--Do I respect the learners with whom I work?

Justice--Is there equity in service to learners?

Obligations to clients--Are the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved shared and considered?

Beneficence--Are harmful outcomes minimized and positive outcomes maximized?

Caring--Do I really care about the learners with whom I work?

Self-awareness--Am I able and willing to reflect on my own adult education practice?

Ethical dilemmas are an inevitable part of adult education practice. Caffarella (1988), examines Brockett's model. According to her, personal value system, affects how individuals teach, what they teach, and how they interact with their students. The personal value systems facilitator in any adult class will influence whether they emphasize learners' strengths or inadequacies; whether they treat students equally regardless of race, gender, age, social class ethnic origin, or creed and previous learning experiences. Adult educator faced with this dilemma must decide whether to abandon, modify, or stay on course with the approach that is consistent with his/her personal view of human nature. She further points out that teaching adults is seldom a full-time occupation. Ethical dilemmas may occur when other responsibilities conflict with teaching or are given a higher priority than the teaching role. Any adult educator whose teaching role is secondary to other responsibilities may need to examine his motives for teaching adults as well as whether he can take time from his major roles to prepare adequately for teaching.

In addition, she suggests that adult educator also need to model ethical behavior in teaching. According to Caffarella, this practice "requires all participants in the learning activity, facilitator and learners alike, to be willing to question what is being taught and how the subject matter dis being addressed"

Brockett (1990), also suggests the following ideas for promoting ethical practice in adult education.

Self-examination. The starting point for understanding the ethics of practice is found in personal value systems but these must be articulated. Writing down and reflecting on one's personal philosophy of adult education is a helpful process for helping clarify personal beliefs.

Reflect on ethics in practice. Finding time for personal and group reflection on ethical issues is important because it helps uncover ethical dilemmas and resolve conflicts before they arise.

Examine the practices of other professions. Learning how other professions deal with ethical dilemmas can lead to more insights about the ethics of adult education practice. Although this approach may be helpful, Brockett warns against uncritical adoption of practices that are incompatible with adult education's philosophical approaches.

Adult Practitioners need to understand that some of their learners can be in a liminal space where they' are re-examining their conventional ethical and professional actions to reshape or re-build their actions to be more ethical and professional. Occasionally, they get lost in the liminal space because they get confused, frustrated, and emotional due to their transitional and transformative processes. (Misawa, 2022). So, adult practitioners can guide adult learners through the metamorphosis and transition from liminal spaces to the coming place or phase for a better understanding of ethics and professionalism. While adult practitioners and educators are creating similar surroundings, they also need to consider how they can produce and sustain safer and further regardful surroundings so that they and their learners are suitable to witness mutually developed and understood ideas about ethics and professionalism and practice ethical decision- making chops. In similar surroundings, adult educator professional need to be humane because they need to understand the vulnerability of their learners. When addressing ethics and professionalism in education and training for adult learners, adult education professional can use an ethics- centered practice. The ethics- centered practice can be enforced in a mutually regardful and humane literacy terrain to integrate critical tone- reflection, learners ' life gests , and an understanding of surrounds. When enforcing the ethics- centered practice, adult preceptors and interpreters also need to be apprehensive that they bring their own particular belief systems into the literacy space and that they can display their own actions that were shaped by their particular life gests into the literacy terrain (Misawa, 2017). So, it's important for adult education professional to have a clear description of ethics through critical tone-reflection and to gain mindfulness of how their value system could impact their tutoring. By establishing and maintaining an mindfulness of particular ethics and how these may impact tutoring and learning through the ethics-centered practice, adult preceptors and interpreters can more navigate conversations about ethics, ethical practice, and professionalism with adult learners without unconsciously impacting or investing particular beliefs into the discussion.

The ethics-centered practice is also an important element of educating grown-ups about ethics and professionalism at colorful situations including classrooms, institutions, and associations. As stated over, it has decreasingly come more delicate and grueling to educate ethics and ethical actions in professional settings due to putting value more on individual or micro position of different testaments on ethics and ethical actions than institutional and organizational or meso and macro situations of understanding of ethics and ethical actions (Hansman, 2020; Misawa, 2022). Presently, there isn't a lot of guidance available regarding clear ethical norms for interpreters of adult literacy and some in the field are also resistant to having a policy or sanctioned law of ethics. While a policy or law of ethics may be unrealistic in terms of accommodating such a different field of practice, having a companion for ethics and professionalism in the field could grease growth and invention. Ethical norms of practice within adult education could also serve as a foundation and grease the tutoring of ethics and professionalism in the classroom to our adult learners.

Encourage and support a research agenda on ethics. Research can lead to greater understanding of ethical issues in adult education and provide information that will help adult educators respond to them.

Need for Professional Development in Adult Education Practice

Professional development refers to many types of educational experiences related to an individual's work. Doctors, lawyers, educators, accountants, engineers, and people in a wide variety of professions and businesses participate in professional development to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job. Many fields require members to participate in ongoing learning approved by the profession, sometimes as a requirement for keeping their jobs. Professionals often also voluntarily seek new learning. In education, research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. For teachers to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices. Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels. Professional Development is critical for maintaining continuous improvement in quality of adult education profession and also help to increase availability and volume of information arise with regard to best practice of adult education.

There are a great number of theories about how and why adults learn. As with theories about how and why children learn, nearly all are based on either the behaviourist or cognitive approach from a psychological point of view. Stein, McRobbie and Ginns (1999) identify some common themes underpinning several theories and models of adult learning principles, namely those of Shulman (1987), Hargreaves & Fullen (1992) and Guskey (1986). Most pointedly they refer to the need for existing beliefs and knowledge of learners to be considered, non-critical assistance with personal reflection, engagement in professional dialogue and a feeling of personal responsibility for learning. Teachers also need time and opportunities to test new ideas. This is a very humanistic approach to Professional Development. Burns cited in Paulia (2008) pointed out that adult learners come to any learning environment with personality traits and values and attitudes that all affect the learning that takes place. These values and attitudes affect the way the trainer is perceived by the learner and also the way in which the learner perceives the content. This point is supported by Sternberg's theory of thinking styles (cited in Paulia, 2008). He defines three different styles of "self-government". The legislative style, when planning and organising and creativity are more important than actually carrying out the plan, the

executive style, when following an established plan in a structured environment is important, and lastly the judicial style, when analysing and evaluating a plan is at the forefront of thought. Sternberg indicates that while all three styles function in most people, one will dominate. These three very different styles of thinking would certainly influence individual perceptions of any given situation. An example of such a difference springs to mind that occurred at a recent Professional Development day. The facilitator asked participants to compile a list of things they hated about such days. About half the group agreed that butchers paper exercises were boring and the other half agreed that these types of activities were useful and even fun. Another Professional Development day focused on spirituality and asked participants to share some defining moments in their life or career. Some participants found the stories inspiring and interesting, while others, once again, bored. (Paulia, 2008)

As a way of rebuilding adult education profession, it would be a benefit for adult educator to involve and participate in networking days for Professional Development. Reflection can be either personal or collaborative, with both kinds offering a different degree of benefit, and some recommend a combination of collaborative reflection and the use of narrative. In support of this, Gillentine's study cited in *Journal of early Childhood Teacher Education* (2006) considers the impacts of narrative and reflection, on teacher's "beliefs, values and practice, and sense of professionalism". He asserts that the study confirms that this is a valid method for Professional Development because the participants shared teaching knowledge and "validated participants as experts within the context of their own teaching". Attard and Armour (cited in *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, 2004) presented similar findings. In their research, A case study of one teacher's early-career professional learning, they found that although the beginning teacher found the process of critical reflection difficult, he benefited "because it gave him a powerful sense of control over his professional learning and his professional life". Professional Development is also the key to any educational reform. Change can take place if Professional Development is relevant and systematic. Change and reform are inevitable with constantly developing ideas of what constitutes best practice in teaching and learning and societal changes. Information and computer technology in the classroom is a typical example. As little as twenty years ago many classrooms and in fact teachers did not use computers. Today that situation has changed radically. Computers are used in lesson preparation, lesson delivery, research and communication to name just a few applications. This type of paradigm shift demands a systemic approach to professional development for adult education profession.

The use of a critical friendship or mentorship is a powerful Professional Development strategy needed to rebuild adult education profession, this would allow to learn directly from more experienced colleagues that will provides opportunities for frank and confidential critical discussions, and fosters reflection and goal setting, and also enhances career guidance, and provides a unique opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships with colleagues. Koro-Ljungberg and Hayes (2006), agree that "mentoring is an important vehicle for immersing new members into a community of practice and ensuring their success". Experienced teachers have a wealth of knowledge to pass on to new teachers and also teachers that are experienced themselves but are new to any school. The role of mentor is multifaceted and must be so for successful induction of both new teachers and staff new to any school. A close relationship between an experienced teacher and a beginning teacher may assist in identifying the likelihood of beginning teacher

burnout. The rate of attrition is high among new teachers and is largely attributable to the pressures of the job. In equipping mentors with the necessary skills for mentoring this should be considered. What about teachers that need help and are not new to the profession? Apparently mentoring and reflection can be useful for these individuals too. (Paulia, 2008). Professional Development opportunities in adult education profession may take many forms, ranging from mentoring, induction, external study for higher qualifications, reflective studies of facilitated learning. Whatever the delivery method the major consideration should be how relevant the instruction to the building of the profession.

Conclusion

The development of Adult education profession is a key function within adult education practice. It would help to develop into more effective practice in the field of adult education. Professional development is development of competence, and the acquiring of skills to improve performance. Adult educator professional need to be open to change and adapt andragogy teaching method appropriately so that they can adapt to the changing nature of environment and the learner's needs. There is rapid changing in teaching and learning with the emergence of own your device, E-learning, and other technology which are changing the approach to teaching and learning process. Professional ethics are an integral part of adult education profession and to rebuild the profession to be relevant in this 21st century, scholars in the field of the adult education need to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues.

Recommendation

Based on the above discussion, this paper therefore recommends that;

- I. Using an ethics-centered approach to facilitation and practice in adult education practices should maintain the integrity of the profession as well increase learners' understanding of the integral role of ethics within daily life, professionalism, and future opportunities.
- II. Ethical standards of practice of adult education should be used as a foundation to facilitate the professionalism of adult education practices.
- III. Adult education as a profession, it is important to maintain professionalism and an ability to evaluate appropriate and inappropriate conduct.
- IV. There is need to encourage and support a research agenda on ethics. Research can lead to greater understanding of ethical issues in adult education and provide information that will help adult educators respond to them.
- V. Scholars in the field of the adult education need to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues.

References

- Brockett, R. G. (1988). *Ethics and the Adult Educators: Ethical issues in adult education*. Brockett, R.G. (ed). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Brockett, R. G. (1990). Adult Education: Are We Doing It Ethically? *Journal of Adult Education* 19 (1) 5-12.
- Brown, M. T. (1990). *Working ethics*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Caffarella, R. S. (1988). *Ethical dilemmas in the teaching of adults: ethical issues in adult education*. Brockett, R. G. (ed) New York, Teachers College Press.
- Cervero, R. M. (1989). *Becoming more effective in everyday practice: Fulfilling the promise of adult and continuing education new directions for continuing education*. Quigley, B. A. (ed) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Winter
- Ferrier-Kerr, Jenny; Keown, Paul; Hume, Anne. (2009). The Role of Professional Development and Learning in the Early Adoption of the New Zealand Curriculum by Schools. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 14, 123-137.
- Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hansman, C. A. (2020). Mentor concepts to further leadership development in adult education contexts. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 167-168,
- Koro-Ljungberg and Hayes. S (2006) “The relational selves of female graduate students during academic mentoring: from dialogue to transformation. *Mentoring and Tutoring*. 14(4) 389-399.
- Misawa, M. (2022). Transformative learning as a passageway to social justice in higher education: An Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) perspective on anti-bullyist practice in a North American Context. In A. Nicolaidis, S. Eschenbacher, P. T. Buergelt, Y. Gilpin-Jackson, M. Welch, & M. Misawa (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of learning for transformation* (pp. 571-589). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Misawa, M. (2017). Investigating technology usage and perceptions on cyber-mobbullying in higher education in the United States among college-age youth: A correlational study at a research institution. *Annali Online Della Didattica e Della Formazione Docente (International Journal)*, 9(13), 279-299.
- Paulina P. (2008). Professional development as a critical component of continuing teacher quality. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1). 37-45
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2008v33n1.3>
- Sork, T. J. (1988). *Ethical issues in program planning: ethical issues in adult education*, Brockett R. G. (ed) New York, Teachers College Press.