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Challenges Facing Adult Learners in the Management of PNCE Sandwich Program in University of Port Harcourt Nigeria: The Way Forward

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Abstract:

The study examined the challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE sandwich program in University of Port Harcourt. Three research questions were postulated and answered in the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the sandwich students of 2018/2019 session. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 students from the total population. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Challenges facing Adult Learners in the management of PNCE Sandwich Program Questionnaire' (CALMAPSAPQ). Mean statistics was used to answer the research questions. The study revealed among others that, students are faced with both dispositional and institutional challenges in the management of PNCE sandwich program of University of Port Harcourt such as; inability to manage time to face studies squarely since adult learners tend to have more responsibilities, delay in the start of the program as students do not start lecture on time and lecturers not regular in class due to other work commitments. The study also revealed strategies for managing PNCE program among others; provision of adequate classrooms to enhance effective teaching and learning and school fees payment policy should be reviewed so that these learners can pay half of it in each semester rather than paying in bulk. The study therefore concluded and recommended that when the strategies are adopted it will help to reduce the challenges facing adult learners and yearly intake and enrolment will be encouraged.

Keywords: PNCE, sandwich programme, adult learners, education facility

1.Introduction

Education is the process of facilitating learning or acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, belief and habits. It is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at school or university. Education is the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life. It is often said that we are learning all the time. Learning is both a process and an outcome. The cultivation of learning is a cognitive, emotional and social activity (Ilais 2012).

Education is a lifelong process. The constant development and change of social life, the surrounding environment, knowledge and information are in a circle of constant transmission, supplement and update, which requires people to keep learning to adapt to the changes in the world.

This continuous learning enables us in this context to divide education into two categories which are child and adult education or learning. Adult education is distinct from child education. Adult education is a practice which adults engage in, in a systematic and sustained self-educating activity in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. (en.m.wikipedia.ng).

Adult learning is a systematic engagement into the learning experience in adulthood. It is any course or type of knowledge that can be sufficient for lifelong learning. (Ibenegbu, n.d)

An adult learner or more commonly called matured student is a person who is older and is involved in form of learning. Malcolm (2020) distinguished between adult learner as distinct from adolescent learner and child learner. The practice of adult education is referred to as Andragogy to distinguishing it from the traditional school-based education for children pedagogy. Adult learners according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1998) are considered non-traditional students in higher education who are typically above 25, attend part time, work fulltime while enrolled in course and do work for fulltime while having other responsibilities.

In US according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1998) adult learners must meet some of the following criteria;

- Attends part time for at least part of the academic session
- Works full time (35 hours or more per week while enrolled
- Is considered financially independent for purpose of determining eligibility for financial aid.
- Have dependents other than spouse.

Adult learners have also other characteristics such as;

- Considered to be in a state of transition trying to improve themselves by achieving higher level of education in order to move up in the professional environment.
- Their expectations are greater than those of traditional students because they have a better idea of what they want and what they expect from their education.
- They also have higher level of anxiety and pressure to fulfill the required expectation in a shorter amount of time while navigating other responsibilities (Conrad, 1993).

Other characteristics of adult learners as put down by Conie (2019) are as follow;

- Autonomy: The adults prefer and believe in themselves. They prefer a sense of control and self-direction.
- Goal oriented: Many adults have specific goals to achieve. They prefer to partake in learning activities that will help them reach their goals.
- Practical: Adults prefer practical knowledge and experiences that will provide important information to enable them have personal relevance in learning activities.
- Competence and mastery: Adult learners like to gain competence in workplace skills to boost confidence and improve self-esteem.
- Learning by experience: Adult learners prefer to learn by doing rather than listening to lectures.
- Wealth of knowledge: Adult learners bring depth and breadth of knowledge to learning situation
- Emotional barriers: through experiences adults may fear subject, have anxiety about a subject or feel anger which can interfere with learning process.
- Results- oriented: they have specific expectation for what they will get out of learning activities and may drop out of voluntary learning if their expectations are not met.
- Responsibilities for self: adult learners often take responsibilities for their own success or failure at learning. Adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn, that they are able willing to take responsibility for that learning and that the learning itself should respond to their needs.
- Self-motivated: Most adult education is voluntary, in which case the participants are generally self-motivated, unless required to participate by an employer. Adults are seen as more self-directed, rather than relying on others for help.

The aim of adult learning/education cannot be overemphasized. The World Bank (2019) on world development report argues that adult learning is an important channel to help readjust workers skills to fit the future of work.

Adult education according to Okediran and Abidoye (2001) is a tool that frees people from poverty hardened situations. Adults are matured and therefore have knowledge and have gained life experiences which provide them a foundation of learning. An adults' readiness to learn is linked to their need to have information. Their orientation to learn is problem-centered and their motivation to learn is internal (Knowles, 1984.)

According to Margolis (1970), the primary purpose of adult education is to provide a second chance for those who are poor in society or who have lost access to education for other reasons in order to achieve social justice and equal access to education. Adult education is the form of continue education which can help adults maintain certifications, fulfill job requirements and study up to date on new developments, in their fields.

2014). According to Merriam (2007) the ultimate goal of adult education might be to achieve human fulfillment and also an institution needs such as improving operational effectiveness and productivity.

The basic function of adult education is to promote the physical and mental development of adult learners. Through adult education the personal code of conduct and cultural knowledge of adult learners should be improved to gradually improve the social atmosphere and order.

Adeokun (2008) expresses the view that adult education aims in bringing about social transformation and recommending society to make it modernized, productive, pa and value oriented.

The purpose of adult education in the form of college or university is distinct. The aim is typically related to personal growth and development as well as occupation and career preparedness (Meriam, 2007). This is so with the post NCE sandwich programme in the University of Port Harcourt. It is a four-year program which takes place every long vacation of every year to prepare NCE students for higher degree. The way of managing this program to get continuous enrolment of students in good number is a step to sustain the program.

Management is the process of coordinating human and material resources to achieve organizational goals. One major purpose of management is to achieve the goal of such organization. Therefore, management has direct relationship with effectiveness of an organization. Post NCE program can be sustained by continuous intake of good number of students if proper management is taken into consideration.

Over the years there used to be good intake of these adult learners (students) enrolling in the program. But few years back till now, the intake is dropping down to the extent that a class that used to be 200 students diminishes to 30-40 students. The researcher is of the assumption that the poor intake could be as a result of some challenges facing these adult learners in the management of the program, which could not help them to cope with the program there by, withdrawing or dropping out of the program. Against this backdrop is the researcher out to investigate the challenges facing adult learners in the management of post NCE program in University of Port Harcourt and the strategies on the way forward.

1.1. Significance of Study

The post NCE program of university of Port Harcourt, Nigeria is an adult education program aimed at increasing the skills and knowledge of teachers who are already on the job and those who are willing to become teachers. It is a non NUC program being organized by the university. At the end of the program students are awarded degrees in any area in education.

For some years now it has been observed that the intake in the program is dwindling and the researcher is of the assumption that the students may have been facing some challenges that have led to dwindling numerical strength of the students.

Based on this background the study examined the challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt and the strategies to enhance adequate management for enhancing good students' intake for sustainable national development.

1.2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the challenges facing management of adult learners of PNCE program of University of Port Harcourt and the strategies to enhance effective management for sustainable national development. Specifically, the study sort to;

- Examine the dispositional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt.
- Examine the institutional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt.
- Examine the strategies to be adopted in the management of PNCE program to enhance good intake of adult learners in University of Port Harcourt.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the dispositional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt?
- What are the institutional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt?
- What are the strategies to be adopted in the management of PNCE sandwich program of University of Port Harcourt to enhance good intake of adult learners?

2. Methodology

The descriptive survey design was employed in the study. The population of the study constituted all the PNCE students of the 2018/2019 academic year. A total of 50 students constituted sample size for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Challenges facing Adult Learners in the management of PNCE Sandwich Program Questionnaire' (CALMAPSAPQ). It was based on 4 points Likert type scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Data collected were collated and analyzed using mean score to answer the research questions.

3. Results

- Research question 1: What are the dispositional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Dec
1	inability to manage time to face studies squarely due to more other responsibilities	28	22	05	0	3.56	Agreed
2	Difficulty to learn after achieving other levels of education	21	10	17	2	3.00	Agreed
3	Balancing studies with other commitment can slow learning	26	15	5	4	3.26	Agreed
4	Coping with financial needs	32	18	0	0	3.28	Agreed
5	You are not regular in attending to studies due to other work engagement	20	15	9	6	2.98	Agreed
6	Most employers do not approve being in such a program as it may affect on the job	10	8	20	12	2.32	Disagreed

Table 1: Mean Analysis on the Dispositional Challenges Facing Adult Learners in the Management of PNCE Sandwich Program in University of Port Harcourt

The results from table 1 indicate the mean scores of all the items. From the table all the items except item 6 have mean scores of 3.56, 3.00, 3.26, 3.28 and 2.98 respectively which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed on items as challenges facing adult learners of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt. They disagreed with item 6 with a mean score of 2.32 less than the criterion mean, revealing that such issue is not a problem to students participating in PNCE program.

- Research question 2: What are the institutional challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Dec
1	Inadequate desks and chairs in the classroom to support learning	17	13	10	10	2.74	Agreed
2	Inadequate classroom blocks for teaching and learning	20	13	10	7	2.92	Agreed
3	There is delay in the start of the program as students do not start lecture on time	23	20	7	0	3.32	Agreed
4	In ability to coping with high school fees	21	10	17	2	3.00	Agreed
5	Students' graduation is always delayed	28	22	05	6	2.98	Agreed
6	Lecturers are not often regular in class due to other work commitment	8	10	20	10	2.24	Disagreed
7	Poor attitudes of staff to students	20	13	10	7	2.92	Agreed
8	Lack of hostel accommodation	20	15	9	6	2.98	Agreed

Table 2: Mean Analysis on the Institutional Challenges Facing Adult Learners in the Management of PNCE Program in University of Port Harcourt

The results from table 2 indicate the mean scores of all the items. From the table all the items except item 6 have mean scores of 2.74, 3.00, 3.32, 3.00, 2.98, 2.92 and 2.98 respectively which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed on those items as challenges facing adult learners of PNCE program in University of Port Harcourt. They disagreed with item 6 with a mean score of 2.24 which is less than the criterion mean, revealing that such issue is not an institutional problem to students participating in PNCE program.

- Research question 3: What are the strategies to be adopted in the management of PNCE sandwich program of University of Port Harcourt to enhance quality intake of adult learners.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Dec
1	Adequate funding of PNCE program by the management	30	20	-	-	3.60	Agreed
2	The programs should be well designed and delivered to provide quality services	24	26	0	0	3.48	Agreed
3	Adequate provision of classrooms meant for the program to enhance effective teaching and learning	38	12	0	0	3.76	Agreed
4	School fees payment policy should be reviewed so that these learners can pay half of it in each semester rather than paying in bulk	19	10	18	3	2.90	Agreed
5	Facilitators must be motivated by reviewing up and improving their allowances.	20	9	12	9	2.80	Agreed
6	Willingness of these adult learners to manage their time in a program that will develop them	15	17	10	8	2.78	Agreed
7	Student's result must be made available when due for graduation	25	25	0	0	3.50	Agreed
8	The adult learners (students) should be made to view themselves as being very able to learn	10	10	16	14	2.32	Disagreed

Table 3: Mean Analysis on the Strategies That Can Be Adopted in the Management of PNCE Sandwich Program of University of Port Harcourt to Enhance Quality Intake of Adult Learners

The results from table 3 indicate the mean scores of all the items. From the table all the items except item 8 have mean scores of 3.60, 3.48, 3.76, 2.90, 2.80, 2.78, and 3.50, respectively which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed on all items as strategies to be adopted to manage PNCE sandwich program in University of Port Harcourt to enhance quality intake of students. They disagreed with item 8 with a mean score of 2.32 which is less than the criterion mean, revealing that such issue is not a strategy to manage adult learners in PNCE program.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that inability to manage time to face studies squarely since adult learners tend to have more responsibilities, difficulty to learn after achieving other levels of education, coping with financial needs, poor teaching and learning classroom environment, not being regular in attending to studies due to other work engagement are individualized challenges facing adult learners in the management of PNCE sandwich program in university of Port Harcourt. This agrees with Philips, Prieto and Ndinguri (2013) who posits that adults have challenges against participating in learning among which are lack of time in balancing career and family demands, finances and transportation etc.

The findings of the study also revealed the institutional challenges facing adult learners of PNCE sandwich program such as inadequate provision of classrooms meant for the program to enhance effective teaching and learning, inadequate desks and chairs in the classroom to support learning, students' graduation always being delayed, delay in the start of the program as students do not start lecture on time, poor attitudes of staff to students lecturers not regular in class due to other work commitments and lack of hostel accommodation are challenges facing adult learners of PNCE program in university of Port Harcourt. On the issue of funding the findings agree with Oyeneye (2006) and Adegbite (2007) who posit that major challenge facing the management of university is system in Nigeria is inadequate funding. On inadequate desks and chairs in the classroom to support learning, the study agrees with Ochuba (2016), who posits that lecture halls among others are seriously inadequate in universities.

Furthermore, the study revealed that adequate funding of PNCE program by the management, the programs to be well designed and delivered to provide quality services, adequate provision of classrooms meant for the program to enhance effective teaching and learning, school fees payment policy be reviewed so that these learners can pay half of it in each semester rather than paying in bulk, lecturers to be motivated by reviewing up and improving their allowances, willingness of these adult learners to manage their time in a program that will develop them and students result been made available when due for graduation are management strategies that can enhance full participation of students in the program. On the issue of motivating lecturers, the finding agrees with Akpadaka (2020) who posits that poor motivation of teachers affects their productivity as most of them are focused on their businesses. Therefore, for enhanced productivity teachers should be motivated and stimulated through adoption of administrative principles like humanitarian principles towards work life.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that adult learners (students) of PNCE sandwich program are faced with both dispositional and institutional challenges in the management of PNCE sandwich program. This could attest for the dwindling enrollment of students. Therefore, when adequate management is given to this program taking the uniqueness of the adult learners into consideration, it might affect students positively thereby enhancing yearly intake and enrolment in the program.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made;

- The school management should make adequate provision of classrooms meant for the program to enhance effective teaching and learning to attract more intakes.
- School fees payment policy should be reviewed so that these adult learners with other responsibilities may pay 50% of it in each semester rather than paying in bulk.
- Facilitators who are also lectures of the university who have other task should be motivated by reviewing up and improving their allowances for more productivity.
- Willingness of these adult learners to manage their time in a program that will develop them.
- Students' results should be submitted by lecturers when due so as to graduate students also appropriately.

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