

Participation for Sustainability in Adult Literacy and Skills Acquisition Centers

Yusuf Mohammed and Mahani Mokhtar

Abstract--- *The success of every society depends on the quality and quantity of education of its citizens. Literacy centers were established mainly to empower adult members with the right type of literacy and functional education needed for their improvement. This review attempts to highlight the mechanisms of participation for sustainable adult literacy and skill acquisition program. This review considered the concept of adult literacy and skill acquisition participation mechanisms. Relevant literature was identified and scrutinized. These mechanisms are not entirely new but are often neglected and improperly utilized, mainly because the practitioners are less motivated to care about them. Results indicate that the rate of adult participation in many countries across the globe seems not to be hopeful especially the developing countries. The concept of participation, type, role, and factors that inhibit/facilitate sustainability in adult literacy and skills acquisition programs, were discussed. This review pointed out that barriers such as situational, institutional, and dispositional are some of the principal inhabitants to participation in adult education. Lastly, the connection between participation and sustainability was deliberated. This was flowed by suggestions on how to improve participation for the sustainability of adult literacy program(s). However, additional studies are required on the subject of adult literacy, because the topic is suffering neglect in educational research.*

Keywords--- *Participation, Adult Literacy, Skill Acquisition and Sustainability.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Participation in adult literacy and skills acquisition is a topic of great concern [1], [2]. In September 2015, the sustainable development agenda by 2030 was officially signed and formally approved at the summit held in New York, the United States of America. The aim of this agenda is to ensure the well-being of humanity [3]. By 2030 United Nations aspires to achieve equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality, technical, vocational education with a specific focus on widening participation in literacy programs [4]. Hence, the need for a proper understanding of the concept, types, roles, and factors that affect participation in adult literacy and skills acquisition centers become necessary to gain an understanding of barriers that prevent participation [5], [6]. The most frequent Critical words for development workers and literacy experts in the twenty-first century are thus: participation, employment, environment, social equality, and sustainability [4], [7]. These suggest that some general guidelines which might help in determining what mechanisms or skills are appropriate for enhancing the participation of learners in literacy and skills acquisition in any project.

These mechanisms are not entirely new but are often neglected and improperly utilized. Because the practitioners and facilitators in adult literacy and skill acquisition centers are less motivated to care about them [8],

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[9]. There also seems to be an implicit belief that the participation rates of adults in a wide range of countries are looking not promising. Despite recruitment efforts that include surveys, flyers, community gatherings, and collaborative community group attempts, adult literacy, and skill acquisition centers have not recorded much enrollment of the targeted number of learners [10]. The objective of this review is to examine the concept of participation, the role of participation, and factors that inhibit/ facilitate participation for the sustainability of adult literacy and skills acquisition programs.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The selection of studies was retrieved from Google Scholar and other online databases. The keywords for searching were “participation, role of participation in adult learning, factors inhibiting/influencing participation, and sustainable participation in adult education.”

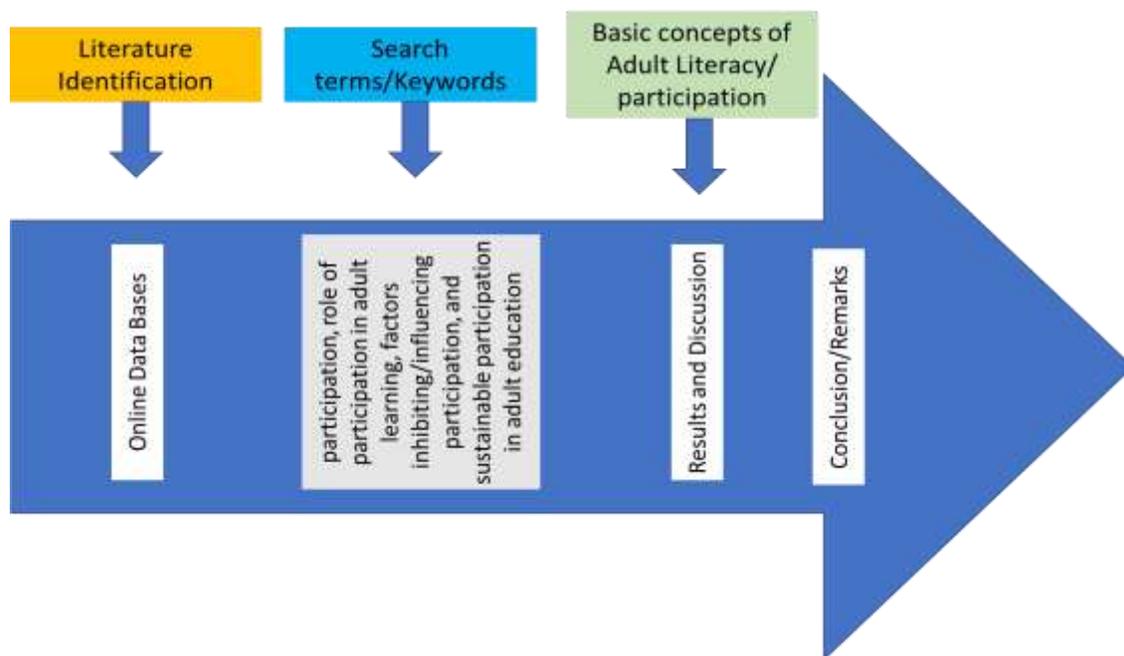


Figure 1: Procedure for Literature Review

Consequently, the concepts of participation, theories of participation, role of participation in adult literacy and acquisition programs and sustainable participation in adult literacy and skills acquisition programs were considered. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

III. RESULTS

This review identified the and discussed the key concept of adult literacy and/or participation as follow:

3.1 The Concept of Participation

Participation could be seen as sharing or taking part in something [10], [11]. Adult education when related to participation implies taking part and enrollment in any class or program of adult education [6], [11]. Participation in adult education has been defined as, attending adult education training and courses. Nevertheless, a review of

available literature revealed that the participation of adults in learning is one of the most thoroughly studied fields [12]–[14]. Thus, participation underpinned into so many issues such as enrollment, motivation, social stratification, retention, ideology, and attrition [15]. Economic logic and human survival cover the path that participation and learning in adult education are going in the sense of globalization.

3.2 Theories of Participation

There are numerous theories of participation in adult education [10]. However, only six of them were scrutinized in this review. They are Theory of Andragogy, Theory of Margin, Theory of Proficiency, Theory of Reason Action, Adult Learners characteristics Theory, and Chain of Response Model.

Andragogy theory initially was coined based on some postulation by Knowles[16]. He developed the theory, as a result, is the observation of the pedagogical resistance of the adult learner that led to dropout and non-participation. There is also a, need to always learn new things faster due to the changing speed of the global society that rapidly renders new learning outdated. He posited that: (a) adult are self- directed and autonomous, (b) they poses hoarded life experiences including mistakes that was probably gained from family responsibility, previous education and activities at workplace, (c) the need to see relevance in all activities, (d) they are internally motivated and practically oriented (e) they possess higher level of self-esteem, therefore, show them respect.

Cross [17] introduced what is known as the Theory of Adult Learner characteristics (CAL). He built the theory on two main classes of variables. These are the situational characteristics and personnel characteristics. According to Cross[17], the interplay between these variables forms the basis for the learning of the adult is important. He then further explains that personal characteristics are those developmental changes that occur to a person from childhood to adulthood. On the other hand, he described the situation characteristics as the variable that triggered the participation of adult learners in adult learning activities. Lastly, he conceptualized participation into compulsory, full-time and part-time participation. Despite its popularity, some scholars criticized theory as not empirically tested [15], [18]–[20].

Theory of Margin was postulated, arguing that for an adult to participate in learning and continue learning activities there must be equilibrium between the adult load of life and his power of life. He further elaborated that a load of life for adult denote individual developmental task, issues, challenges and his various responsibility in persons' life. Similarly, the power of life implies the sort of knowledge, values, and skills which an adult need in other to assist in overcoming his immediate life challenges. Therefore, in such a situation adults strive to get margin in life by making his power of life greater than a load of life [15], [21]. The Proficiency Theory by Knox [22] views the participation of the adult learner in learning programs as a given the opportunity to be capable of performing a task satisfactorily. The adult feels unease if there are imbalances between his current situation and his desired proficiency level. Consequently, it triggered in him the desire to strike a balance between the two. Knox posits that adult motivation and his desired achievement of both life responsibility and learning activities be influenced greatly by these inconsistencies. Hence, the essence of adult learner participation in learning activities is to augment proficiency as well as to enhance performance and effectiveness in life situations.

Other theories assumed that for an individual to participate in learning activities there must be a certain condition. This condition to them they refer it as intended, that a will to perform certain tasks or behavior. They further illustrated that certain beliefs led to the formation of certain behavior. It then directs the cognitive base which intention follows towards the perceived behavioral control, subjective norm, and behavior, custom that was determined and influenced by attitudes. They argued that the control, normative and behavior belief, of a given behavior, is determined by a series of experiences, exposure, knowledge, personality, income, information of persons, societal and educational factors. Some scholars criticized the theory based on the intention that may change over and over again [21], [23].

The chain of response theory was developed by the cross [17], the theory view adult participation forms the viewpoint of the essence why do adult participate, and others do not participate. He argues that for one to understand the reason for the participation of adult learning certain activities must begin with knowing the learner's attitudes and self-perception towards learning activities. Knowing these psychological connections of an individual adult leads to understanding other external factors such as opportunities and barriers. Then followed by the attached values and expectations for participation [24].

3.3 Role of Participation in Adult Literacy and Acquisition Programs

The literacy centers were established with the aim to serve as an approach towards empowering adult members in their society. The governmental and non-governmental organizations sponsored the programs by building, funding and monitoring the adult literacy centers. It was believed globally that doing this will help greatly in achieving Goal 4.4 of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The equal access to quality education of youth, adult men and women. This attracts greatly the interest of many researchers and practitioners across the globe to conduct a study on how to increase access to quality adult education as well as widening their rate of participation in literacy centers [25]. Therefore, below are some of the roles that participation in literacy and skills acquisition could play for sustainable elopement.

- i. Knowledge and skills.** Participating in literacy by an adult will lead to the acquisition of skills and information needed to enhance the economic aspects of learners. These will assist greatly in human capital development.
- ii. Development of health:** adult participation in literacy is crucial for their intellectual and physical health development, its effectiveness strengthen by parental and community involvement [26].
- iii. Good writing and reading habits:** taking part in adult literacy and skills acquisition centers assist the learner to cultivate in them the ability to read and comprehend personal documents text independently, such as bank statements, clinical appointments, text messages, and other related personnel issues. It also built-in them good writing habits by enabling them to send messages, signed their cheques and effectively use media and ICT within the life-long learning context. It can also lead to seeking employment as sales boys and girls.
- iv. Parents education:** enrolling in adult literacy programs triggered the education of parents, especially the mother help in a greater way in the reduction of infant motility and enhance the health care of the child. Well- educated parents have the potentials of raising literate children. Research indicates that there is a

connection between parents' educational background and the educational achievements of their children [27].

- v. **Enhance Democracy:** taking part in adult literacy programmed to promote the development of democracy. Adult literacy provides the basis for democracy as it conscientize the adult to their right and obligatory about democracy and democratic institutions. This nurture desire and hope to take part in democracy and justice as active citizens. Participation in adult literacy sustains development through active citizenship and democracy, and this requires new knowledge, competencies, skills, and attitudes. All these are programs under the adult literacy program. Adult learners were thought many programs such as participatory education programs, empowering communities, gender awareness, human rights as well as, Income generating skills.
- vi. **Human capital development:** enrolling in the literacy program uncovers the potentials of the learners. The level of literacy of an individual conveys the economic gains of a nation. Many kinds of literature have indicated significant relationships between per capita economic growth and levels of literacy as well as poverty reduction [28], [29]. Bangladesh, was classified among E-9 nations, become the home-based to the most recent non-formal education program, the Human Development Project for Post-Literacy and Continuing Education, which focuses on poverty alleviation, skills training, and income generation.
- vii. **Self-confidence and liberations:** participating in a literacy program builds the confidence of the learners. Some empirical studies have indicated that when having an interview session with the respondent most of the adult admit that their enrollment in literacy program give more confidence than ever before, as it gives them more hope, and in addition liberate them from sort of cultural bondage [30], [31].
- viii. **Its posters sense of belonging and belonging:** enrolling in literacy programs engender a sense of belonging and ownership in the learners. Adult learners as community members have given the opportunity to participate in the literacy programs. The feeling of ownership of the program, then this will help see the development from its real angle as an all-inclusive phenomenon [32], [33].
- ix. **It ensures goal attainment:** adult learners by their nature are goal-oriented, therefore participating in literacy and skill acquisition program which was designed to respond to their needs help them in their goal attainment

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 Factors Inhibiting/ Facilitating Participation

Researchers have conducted several studies made numerous assumption in trying to explain what makes adult notes participate in literacy programs across the globe [23], [34], [35]. They sometimes relate it to socio-economic, demographic, psychological and other relevant factors[27]. Other scholars went further to categorize them into a subclass of barriers [18], [35], [36]. These are

4.2 Situational

These include the types of barriers regarding a given period at a time. They comprise the following.

- Insufficient money to pay the studying cost, childcare cost, and other necessary expenses.

- Time factor as a result of home and employment responsibility.
- Mobility constraints to get to learning centers at a stipulated time daily.

4.3 Institutional

These relate to the institution that carried out the program to engage in manners and processes which hinder and prevent adults from participating in a literacy program. Such as.

- Scheduling inappropriate for the programs
- Lack of program relevance.
- Laying much concern and emphasis by some centers on full-time study

4.4 Dispositional

These kind barriers are related to the perception of oneself as a learner

- Experiencing high low esteem regarding learning as a result of past educational achievements.
- Perceiving learning too boring and tired of classrooms
- Having the impression of being too old to enrolled and new tricks [21].

4.5 Sustainable Participation in Adult Literacy and Skills Acquisition

The participation of learners in adult literacy and skills acquisition centers guarantees the sustainability of literacy programs. Participation guarantees sustainability, in such a way that learning fully attends the program regularly as scheduled. Currently, we are in an existing new demanding economic world that requires a continuous change in skills and knowledge to be able to cope with contemporary challenges. Therefore, enrolment and retaining in adult literacy and skill acquisition centers until completion of the program become necessary as it leads to the sustainable development of individuals and societies. Likewise, poor participation or non-participation could lead to dropout and hinder the development and sustainability of people and societies, which the global world stands to fight.

V. CONCLUSION

Adult literacy and skill acquisition centers were established to empower adult members with the right type of literacy and functional education needed for their improvement. Consequently, participation could be seen as sharing or taking part in something. When related to adult education, it means enrolment and involvement in an adult education program or class. Some scholars define participation in adult education basically as “the attendance at adult education courses”. The review also highlighted some of the relevance of participation in adult literacy such as healthy development; education of the parent; human and economic development; and knowledge skills. It Guarantees liberation and builds self-confidence; Its posters sense of ownership; It ensures goal attainment; and cultivation of good reading and writing habits. The study also revealed that barriers such as situational, institutional, and dispositional are some of the principal inhabitants to participation in adult education. Lastly, the review showed the connection between participation and sustainability. This study recommends the following:

- i. Needful efforts and measures must be put in place for the elimination of barriers to participation in adult literacy and skills acquisition centers.
- ii. Adult literacy and skills acquisition programs should be aimed to guarantee universal and continuing access to learning for acquiring the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society such as IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship, and social skills.

One of the goals of these basic skills is to encourage and equip people to participate more actively once more in all spheres of modern public life, especially in social and political life at all levels of the community.

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