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CONTENTS

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Humanistic Model in Adult Education and Science and Technology: Challenges of the 21 st Century Developing Nation.....	1
<i>Francis M. Isichei and Blessing E. Anyikwa</i>	
Sexual Abuse and Self-Concept Among Senior Secondary School Students in Cross-River State, Nigeria.....	10
<i>Ajake Uchenna E., E.M. Ukpong and A. Jamabo</i>	
The Teaching of Mass Communication Through the use of Computer- Assisted Picture Presentations in Cross River University of Technology, Calabar – Nigeria.....	20
<i>Ndoma J. Brown, Offiong Okon and Veronica Ehidiame Bassey-Duke</i>	
Some Demographic Predictors of Adolescent Sexual Abuse: Implications for Non- Formal Education and Social Work.....	27
<i>Akpama Simon Ibor and Omori Anne Emmanuel</i>	
Actualizing the Goals of the Nigerian Association of Physical and Health Education and Recreation, Sports and Dance.....	36
<i>R. O. Okaka, D. E. Ejidarior Omoifo and J.O. Okosun</i>	
Analysis of Item Difficulty Parameters on Item Characteristic Curves as A Function of Changes in WAEC and NECO Examination Instruments and Students Ability Parameters in Mathematics Objective Test in Cross River State, Nigeria.....	47
<i>G. E. Anagbogu, S.M. Akpan and N. I. Ashibi</i>	
Comparative Job Performance Effectiveness of Teachers in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.....	54
<i>Peter Bassey, Nonso Bisong, Isaac Ubi, and Abang Isangedighi</i>	



Humanistic Model in Adult Education and Science and Technology: Challenges of the 21st Century Developing Nation

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ABSTRACT

That humankind overcomes the terrible threats of boredom, meaninglessness and dehumanizing state of contemporary world is the result of the scientific and technological advancement, this paper considers humanistic model in adult education as liberal education appropriate for adult age. Using the humanistic model, we discussed an adult education that is a deliberate and systematically planned educational activity targeted at and designed around the interest and self-expressed concern of, the adult for solving his immediate problems with educational activity that is part-time. We proposed an integrated education for an integrated humanism in this age of science and technology. An integrated humanism education liberates humans for self-awareness which is the sum of consciousness with intelligent active nature, free-will with the drive towards self-actualization, social dimension, self-maintenance and self-enhancement. This education sets humans apart from other animals and must bring to an end the cleavage between work or useful activity and the blossoming of spiritual life and disinterested joy in knowledge and beauty, which is to perceive the genuinely democratic character of education in an age of science and technology. The paper did recognize the challenges of the 21st century developing nations in terms of infrastructures and educational management.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary higher education is extensively concerned with the needs of the industrial system rooted in science and technology. The schools, colleges, Faculties of Business Administration, Engineering and Science are preparatory academics for the techno-structure. The great prestige of the pure and applied mathematics in contemporary age, and the support accorded

Humanistic Model in Adult Education and Science and Technology

them, reflect the needs of the techno-structure. The funds available for research and related graduating training in these areas reflect specific adaptation to such need, whereas the lesser prestige and lesser support for the arts and humanities suggest their inferior role. No university of this age would insist, in fact as distinct from speech, that the study of the theater, fine arts or music had the same claim to funds in the same amount as an electronic accelerator or computer center. Such is the influence of the industrial system in a technological age (Galbraith, 1967).

This influence has not gone unchallenged. Too complete an orientation to the needs of the scientific and technological age is resisted, at least in the more mature and self-confident educational communities who seek liberation from the industrial system of boredom and the demand of high scale production. The business and engineering schools are valued for their reassuring aspect of utility as are the scientists and mathematicians for their association with often alarming change. But the service of the university to the aesthetic, cultural and intellectual enjoyments of the individual is still asserted. Indeed, such assertion comprises, by a wide range, the largest part of the ceremonial literature of contemporary higher education. We tend to believe that no university Vice Chancellor/President is inaugurated, few speak, only rarely is a commencement address given, no anniversary is celebrated, and no great educator is retired without a reference to the continuing importance of liberal education for its own sake. This is the liberal education that the contemporary scientific and technological culture creates havoc against given the fragile security and peace that guarantee nothing but meaninglessness in life of the contemporary humans.

Physical and mental relaxations, plays, movies and games, are good and necessary. Only that leisure however, is suitable to what is most human in man and woman, and is of greater worth than work itself, which consists of an expansion of our inner activities in enjoying the fruits of knowledge and beauty. Gutek (2009) sees Maritain's integral humanism this liberal education that enables man and woman to enjoy these fruits of knowledge and beauty. Adult education, with its humanistic model, is most appropriate to bring about the liberation of man and woman from the new slavery of the scientific and technological age to thirst for (liberal) knowledge and social liberation and find personal fulfillment, not only with regard to labor but also with regard to social and political activities in the civil commonwealth and the activities of leisure.

The Humanistic model

Edwards (1989) admits that humanism is a school of thought that believes human beings are different from other creatures and possessed capacities not found in animals. Humanists, therefore, give primacy to the study of human needs and interests. A central assumption is that human beings behave out of intentionality and value (Kurtz, 2003). They (humanists) believe that it

necessary to study the person as a whole, especially as an individual grows and develops over the little span of life. The Humanistic model roots are as far back as the classical China, Greece and Italy, but it became a movement as it is known in the U.S in 1950s-1960s through the works of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and others. In this movement are Erasmus, Rousseau and McKenzie amongst others with practices covering self-directed learning project, human relations training, and group dynamics. Their philosophy derives its authority from key concepts such as freedom, feelings, individuality, self-directedness, interactive openness, co-operation, authenticity, etc. The purposes of this humanistic model are to develop people to be open to change and continued learning, enhance personal growth and development, facilitate self-actualization and reform the society. Therefore, the learners are expected to be highly motivated and also self-directed, assume responsibility for learning and self development, while the facilitators are expected to be a helpers, promoters or partners, who sets mood for learning and acts as a flexible resource persons for learners.

Humanistic principles and objectives

Huitts (2009) points out that the systems framework of human behavior, is the primary emphasis of humanistic education in which the regulatory system and the affective/emotional traits play vital role in the education of the adult. The development and use of the systems framework of human behavior is often overlooked in our present education system (Am, 1995). The regulatory system acts as a filter for connecting the environment and internal thoughts to other thoughts as well as connecting knowledge and feelings to action. The affective/emotional system colors, embellishes, diminishes or otherwise modifies information acquired through the regulatory system or sent from the cognitive system to action (Huitts, 2009). In our present scientific and technological environment of constant change and uncertainty, the development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills as shown above in the systems is especially important. Gage and Berliner (1991) throw more light to the importance of the systems with the five basic objectives of the humanistic view of education:

- Promote positive self-direction and independence (development of the regulatory system);
- Develop the ability to take responsibility for what is learned (regulatory and affective system);
- Develop creativity (divergent thinking aspect of cognition);
- Curiosity (exploratory behaviour, a function of imbalance or dissonance in any of the system);
- An interest in the arts (primarily to develop the affective/emotional system).

Some authorities (Whetzel 1992; Naisbitt, 1982; Toffler, 1970; 1981; 1990) point to the significance of these objectives for success in the new

Humanistic Model in Adult Education and Science and Technology

age of science and technology. It is important to realize that no other model or view of education places much emphasis on these desired outcomes as does the humanistic model. According to Gage and Berliner (1991) some basic principles of the humanistic approach that were used to develop the objectives were:

- Student learners will learn best what they want and need to know – That is, when they have developed the skills of analyzing what is important to them and why as well as the skills of directing their behaviour towards those wants and needs, they will learn more easily and quickly.
- Knowing how to learn is more important than acquiring a lot of knowledge. In our present society where knowledge is changing rapidly, this view is shared by many educators, especially those from a cognitive perspective.
- Self-evaluation is the only meaningful evaluation of a learner's work-The emphasis here is on internal development and self-regulation.
- Feelings are as important as facts- Much work from the humanistic view seems to validate this point and is one area where humanistic oriented educators are making significant contributions to our knowledge base.
- Students learn best in a non- threatening environment- this is one area where humanistic educators have had an impact on current educational practice. The orientation espoused today is that the environment should be psychologically and emotionally, as well as physically, non – threatening.

Humanistic orientation and adult education

A great deal of the theoretical writings about adult education in the 1970s and 1980s drew on humanistic psychology. In this orientation, the basic concern is for the human potential for growth. As Tennant (1997) notes the concern with 'self is a hallmark of humanistic psychology'. Education in this regard is really about creating a need within the learner or instilling within the learner self-moderation. Perhaps, the best known example is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Motivation/Needs which places humanism at self rewarding end hierarchically. Only when the lower level is met is it possible to fully move on to the next level. A motive at the lower level is always stronger than those at the higher levels. Tennant (1997) summarizes these as follows:

- Level one: *Physiological needs* such as hunger, thirst, sex, sleep, relaxation and bodily integrity must be satisfied before the next level comes into play.
- Level two: *Safety needs* call for a predictable and orderly world. If these are not satisfied, people will look to organise their world to

provide for the greatest degree of safety and security. If satisfied, people will come under the force of level 3

- Level three: *Love and belongingness needs* cause people to seek warm and friendly relationship.
- Level four: *Self – esteem needs* involves the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence. They also involve confidence, independence, reputation and prestige.
- Level five: *Self-actualization* is the full use and expression of talents, capacities and potentialities. Self-actualized persons are able to submit to social regulation without losing their own integrity or personal independence. They may on occasion transcend the socially prescribed ways of acting. Achieving this may mean developing to the full stature of which they are capable.

Learning can, thus be seen as a form of self-actualization. It contributes to psychological health (Shahakian, 1984 in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). Yet while self actualization may seem as the primary goal, others (linked to the other stages) are also around. These include a sense of accomplishment and the controlling of impulses (Maslow, 1970). The idea of a hierarchy of needs, the identifying of different needs, and the notion of self-actualization did, however, exert a powerful hold over the adult learners and given them a sort of control over their own destiny and seemingly, unlimited learning possibilities for individual development. However, the most persuasive exploration of a humanistic orientation to learning came from Rogers (1983) with his passion for education that engaged him to the whole person and with the experience of learning that combines the logical and intuitive, the intellectual and feelings, which found a ready audience in the adult learner. He said that the following elements are involved in a significant or experimental learning:

- It has a quality of personal involvement- the whole person in both feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event.
- It is self-initiative – even when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery of grasping and comprehending, comes from within.
- It is pervasive – it makes a difference in the behaviour, the attitude, perhaps even the personality of the learner.
- It is evaluated by the learner – the learner knows if it is meeting their needs, whether it leads towards what she wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance they are experiencing. The locus of evaluation, definitely resides in the learner.

Humanistic Model in Adult Education and Science and Technology

- Its essence is in the meaning - when such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience (Rogers, 1983).

Humanistic model in the new age of science and technology

The humanistic model is a broad term that encompasses three main approaches.

1. Humanistic content curricula - teaching topics that are directly relevant to the students' life. (e.g., drugs awareness).
2. Humanistic process curricula - focuses on the whole adult learner and can include teaching assertiveness training.
3. Humanistic school and group structure - restructuring the whole time-table and school environment in order to facilitate humanistic teaching or just individual classes. The approach includes:
 - On a school level - open classroom, class meetings and finding alternatives ways of assessment.
 - On a class level: (a) Student exercise choice and control over activities; (b) Curriculum focuses on what the adult learner is concerned about; (c) Focus on life skills - thinking skills combined with social skills e.g. sharing and communicating, co-operative learning; (d) Self-evaluation and self monitoring; (e) Teacher becomes facilitators. Three approaches can be used.
 - Open classroom - the goal is basically individual growth, self-reliance, commitment to life-long learning. It is not age or grade locked and de-emphasises schedules, control or competition. The learners have better self-concept and are more creative.
 - Learning styles - The learners are allowed to use learning styles that suits them. It can make use of highly structured lesson, peer teaching, Computer Assisted Instruction and self learning. Subject rotation can be encouraged, to be taught at different times of the day.
 - Co-operative learning- this combine cognitive and affective aspect of learning, as well as emphasising participation and active engagement. It also stresses on academic achievement and clearly defined curriculum goals.
 - This approach decreases dependence on teacher, decisiveness and prejudice;
 - It improves academic performance;
 - Eliminates feelings of alienation, isolation, purposeless and social uneasiness amongst students;
 - Promote positive attribute to school;

Challenges for Developing Nations

Education is facing obvious challenges, the response to which will be one of the major factors in determining whether mankind moves forward, or whether humanity destroys self on this planet (Rogers, 1983). Accordingly, with the ever growing effect of science and technology, the following questions are raised:

- Can education free itself from the past goals and prepare individuals and groups to live in a world of accelerating change and is it possible for adult learner to do so?
- Can education deal effectively with increasing racial tension?
- Can education prepare the world to deal responsibly and communicatively with increasing irrational nationalism and international tension of this century?
- Can educators and educational institutions satisfy the revolt and objections of youths against the imposed curriculum and impersonality of secondary and higher education?
- Can the conservative, traditional, bureaucratic rigid educational system break shackles of pressures for social conformity and deal with the real problems of modern life?

These are the philosophical, social and psychological issues challenging the developing nations in particular that clearly relate to the personal development and interpersonal relationship that if not address with some measures of seriousness would hinder humanistic education. That these issues pose serious challenges for developing nations are seen from the state of learning environment adequate for adult learners in terms of infrastructure, conditions of work and earnings for financial capabilities of adult learner. In most developing nations of the world, educational infrastructure and enabling learning environment are not adequately provided for young learners for basic intellectual and skillful development, so how can one imagine the provision for adult learner? The conditions of work and earnings for financial capabilities in developing nations become a major challenge to humanistic model for adult learners because of poor income and acute unemployment. Given the poverty level in developing nations, it is impossible to expect educational subsidy at this level in a nation's educational need for adult learners. As part of the challenges, it is important not to fail mentioning the burden of unskilled work force that is the bane of developing nations that even denies the sense of leisure to such grade of workers. In the 21st century, where e-learning has been found to be adequate for all categories of learners, the developing nations face the challenge of providing adequate regular and constant electricity without which e-learning would be absolutely impossible. While this energy challenge hinders all categories of learners, its impact affects humanistic mode of learning that is more of independent and self-directed adult learning.

CONCLUSION

The living conditions of the modern world having raised the concern in relation to humanism, adult education and science and technology age, demands an educational implementation as key point that would make educators interested in the ways in which they can provide opportunities for a humanistic learning environment. This would majorly relate to the style and professionalism of the educator. The educator should build upon problems perceived as real by the adult learner. The real problems derived from learners would enable educators to be willing to respond to and seek solutions to those problems or issues which relate to the courses or subjects being taught. In providing resources, the educator instead of wasting time organizing lesson plan and lectures, can devote time to discovering, obtaining, and making easily available the kind of resources relevant to the needs of the adult learners. These resources include not only articles, books, tools, maps, films but also human-resources who may not force their knowledge and experience upon the learners. Use of learner's contracts or educational service directory can give security to learners as well as place responsibility upon them. Learners can have a contract with educators on what courses they are ready and willing to offer and indicate willingness to be examined on such courses. This approach gives adult learning the humanistic face and makes class participation and discussions easy and satisfactory.

The humanistic model considers conduct of inquiry which differs from the traditional educational method in which learners are less autonomous, less open, and less creative as they progress but the conduct of inquiry leads to independent thinking and openness, as well as new insight and deeper lasting understanding. Simulation as a type of humanistic learning model represents a real situation such as family, school, corporation, nations and the world at large. A simulation experience requires some preparatory training before engaging in it. This can provide the learners with the experience of complex real-life processes making them to be involved and having a feeling that they have learnt something about the real life situations. The importance of these factors in decision making becomes impressed upon the learners. Programmed instruction is an adequate humanistic learning model that facilitates self-initiated learning. The need for information or knowledge acquisition is real in adults, and the motivation to acquire it is present in humanistic model, as learners are able to obtain the educational materials on their own, when they need it, at their own rate efficiently and with a positive experience in learning.

The application of humanistic education in the age of science and technology will liberate adult learners in the search for self-actualization and enhancement of their capabilities skillfully and professionally. It gives learners direction and focus in the learning endeavor. It encompasses beyond the ability to read and write, it covers social, political, economic, cultural and religious dimensions of human life and raises the conscious human

awareness to the sense of knowledge pursuit for its sake – the intellectual leisure the distinct mark of rationality.

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