

EXPANDING NOVEL ORBITS OF ADULT EDUCATION BASED ON HUMANISTIC PRINCIPLES: EMERGING PHENOMENA AND AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Adult education, now commonly referred to as Adult Learning and Education (ALE) by UNESCO and other international development partners, was initially perceived in a limited scope without a well-defined structure. For instance, at its inception, UNESCO did not give specific attention to Adult Education. Instead, it was seen as a means to address social and political gaps, focusing on literacy and basic education, especially in response to crises in developing countries. In the 1980s, adult education was almost exclusively associated with literacy (Knoll, 2014).

The first UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education, held at the International People's College in Elsinore, Denmark, in June 1949, highlighted three significant challenges: (1) Adult Education was not widely accepted as a distinct entity in national educational frameworks; (2) its relevance in addressing contemporary issues was not made explicit; and (3) Adult Education was largely defined by Anglo-American notions of utilitarian education (Ireland, 2014). In this early phase, it was predominantly viewed as a second-chance opportunity for illiterate adults to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills.

However, perceptions of adult education have evolved significantly. Today, it is seen globally as an essential part of lifelong and life-wide learning (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2017). The field has expanded its scope through various mechanisms, gaining recognition and legitimacy as an academic discipline. This paper discusses the mechanisms through which adult education has been promoted globally and in Nigeria, while also exploring the need to expand its scope to address emerging phenomena within contemporary human existence. The paper further argues for grounding these novel orbits in humanistic values and principles and concludes with recommendations for implementing these novel approaches within the Nigerian context.

The Concept of Adult Education

The concept of Adult Education (AE), often referred to as Adult Learning and Education (ALE), has been subject to varied interpretations across different contexts. Scholars, researchers and practitioners worldwide approach the concept from multiple perspectives, leading to a divergence in definitions. In developed countries, ALE is often associated with

bridging skills gaps, improving employability, and promoting active citizenship. It is seen as contributing to social inclusion, personal growth and economic competitiveness (Council of the European Union, 2011). For instance, Bélanger and Tuijnman (1997) argue that ALE is essential in industrialized nations for maintaining a skilled labour force capable of innovation in rapidly changing employment markets.

Conversely, in developing countries, ALE focuses on community development, health education, basic literacy and addressing urgent social and economic needs while fostering social change. This duality has led to differing views on what ALE entails, making it necessary to harmonize definitions for a unified global approach.

The call for a clearer definition began at the 1966 International Congress on Comparative Research of Adult Education. As a result, Okedara (1981) defines adult education as: "A process involving people no longer enrolled in regular full-time school, engaging in structured activities aimed at identifying and resolving personal or community issues, or changing information, knowledge, skills, attitudes and undertakings."

While Okedara's definition has been criticized for assuming that all individuals have attended school, the definition was further refined in subsequent international conferences. The Nairobi Recommendation, endorsed by UNESCO in 1976, defines adult education as: "A process that helps adults, as defined by their society, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, participate fully in socio-economic and cultural development" (UNESCO, 1976).

Though this definition has also faced criticism for being idealistic, further adjustments were made at the Fifth and Sixth International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V and VI), broadening the scope of adult education to include formal, non-formal and informal learning processes. This updated definition emphasizes that adult education is a core component of lifelong learning, integral to societal and individual growth.

Scope of Adult Education

The scope of adult education is broad and encompasses a wide range of programmes designed to meet various learning needs. According to UNESCO (2015), adult education includes all lifelong learning programmes, underscoring that learning is a continuous process that spans a lifetime. Below are some key areas of adult education:

1. **Civic Education:** Civic education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for active participation in civic life. It plays a vital role in promoting democratic values, social cohesion and political stability. Effective civic education addresses issues related to globalization, curriculum integration and political influence. Key components of civic education include civic knowledge, civic competencies, and civic values, all of which aim to develop informed and engaged citizens.
2. **Vocational Education:** Vocational education in the context of adult learning focuses on providing adults with the skills and competencies required to enter, re-enter, or progress in the workforce. It encompasses training programmes tailored to specific industries or professions, aimed at enhancing employability and career transitions. Vocational education also plays a crucial role in lifelong learning, helping adults

retrain and upskill in response to changing economic and technological demands. Key characteristics of vocational education include its occupation-specific focus, practical skills, workforce preparation and flexibility to accommodate adult learners' needs.

3.

Mechanisms Through Which Adult Education Has Been Promoted Globally

The global importance of Adult Education was recognized as far back as 1960, when UNESCO stated that "Any system of education nowadays must cater for more than the instruction and education of children and adolescents. Education must continue in adult life, planned in an atmosphere of freedom and enlisting the active participation of those who benefit from it" (UNESCO, 1960). Since then, Adult Education has been actively promoted through various mechanisms. Ojokheta and Edeh (2024) documented several global mechanisms for the promotion of Adult Education, including:

1. **Clear Definitions:** UNESCO has played a leading role in providing precise and constructive definitions of Adult Education at different times, emphasising its role in reducing inequality, fostering social cohesion and building sustainable societies. This has helped establish Adult Education as a fundamental human right globally (UNESCO, 2009).
2. **Conferences:** International conferences, such as the UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), have been significant platforms for discussing and advancing Adult Education. These conferences have shaped policies and provided frameworks for expanding Adult Education's scope.
3. **Publications:** The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) has been a key tool for monitoring the progress of Adult Education worldwide. Since its first publication in 2009, GRALE has provided comprehensive status reports, helping to inform public policies and track international commitments to Adult Education.
4. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The inclusion of Adult Education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development further solidified its relevance. SDG 4 specifically calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Targets such as promoting technical and vocational education, increasing literacy rates and ensuring equal access to education for marginalised groups directly relate to Adult Education (United Nations, 2015).

HUMANISTIC PRINCIPLES OF ADULT EDUCATION

Humanistic principles in adult education emphasize the growth of the whole person, highlighting the inherent worth, dignity and potential of each individual. The following scholars and their works reflect these core humanistic ideas:

1. **Carl Rogers:** Rogers was a pioneer of humanistic psychology and emphasised a learner-centred approach. He argued that education should focus on the needs, interests and experiences of the learner, not on the teacher or institution's agenda. Learning is most effective when learners are actively involved, with an environment characterised by empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1983). This approach promotes autonomy and self-direction, crucial for adult learners.
2. **Malcolm Knowles:** Known for popularising the concept of andragogy, Knowles identified that adult learners bring life experience to education and are self-directed. His work emphasised that adults are motivated by internal factors and learn best when they can apply knowledge to real-world problems (Knowles, 1984). This aligns with

- the humanistic value of respecting the learner's autonomy and fostering individual growth.
3. **Paulo Freire:** Freire introduced a critical humanistic perspective by emphasising education as a tool for liberation and social justice. His focus was on dialogue, critical thinking and the development of consciousness, arguing that education should empower learners to challenge and transform oppressive structures (Freire, 1970).
 4. **Jack Mezirow:** Transformative learning theory, advanced by Mezirow, is fundamental to humanistic adult education. Mezirow stressed that adult learning involves critical reflection, helping individuals challenge assumptions and experience personal transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

MEANING AND SCOPE OF NOVEL ORBITS OF ADULT EDUCATION BASED ON HUMANISTIC PRINCIPLES

Meaning:

"Novel orbits" in adult education refer to innovative, evolving approaches that prioritise holistic development. These orbits emphasises learners' personal growth, autonomy and well-being, aligning with humanistic principles. Rather than focusing solely on imparting specific skills, these new approaches incorporate learner-centered, experiential and transformative learning methods, encouraging critical thinking and ethical understanding. This ensures education extends beyond vocational training to foster well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to himself and the society. Humanistic adult education seeks to empower adults to reach their full potential as human beings. It promotes learning as a means of self-actualisation and personal development, contributing to both individual fulfilment and societal advancement.

Scope:

The scope of these novel orbits is wide and includes several key dimensions:

1. **Transformative Learning:** As articulated by Jack Mezirow, transformative learning involves helping adults critically reflect on their experiences, challenge assumptions and develop new perspectives. This humanistic approach encourages education to foster personal transformation and growth.
2. **Learner-Centered Approaches:** Programmes informed by humanistic principles prioritise learners' needs and experiences. The educator acts as a facilitator, guiding the learner's self-directed journey rather than dictating content. This approach emphasises collaboration, empathy, and mutual respect.
3. **Lifelong Learning and Personal Development:** Humanistic education extends beyond formal classrooms, promoting lifelong learning. This includes self-initiated education, professional development and informal community engagement, enabling adults to continuously adapt to societal changes while pursuing personal growth.
4. **Ethical and Emotional Development:** Humanistic frameworks emphasise emotional intelligence and ethical understanding, making education not only a cognitive process but also an emotional one. This includes fostering empathy, emotional health and moral reasoning.
5. **Community and Social Change:** Adult education under humanistic principles encourages learners to be active, responsible members of society. It promotes civic

engagement, social justice and ethical responsibility, encouraging learners to apply their knowledge for the betterment of their communities.

Novel Orbits of Adult Education Based on Humanistic Principles

1. **Community-Based Education Programs:** Establishing community learning centres that operate within local contexts, recognising and incorporating local knowledge systems and cultural practices and promoting collective problem-solving. These centres could offer flexible modular learning options to accommodate the diverse schedules and responsibilities of adults and youth.
2. **Integration of Digital Literacy and Technology:** Many out-of-school youth and adults face challenges due to a lack of digital literacy. Humanistic education programmes must integrate technology to bridge this gap, making learning more accessible and empowering individuals with the skills needed in the modern workforce.
3. **Vocational Training with Humanistic Values:** Training programmes should incorporate social responsibility. For example, adult learners can engage in community service projects as part of their training, allowing them to apply their skills to real-world issues.
4. **Mentorship and Peer Learning Models:** Establishing mentorship programmes where experienced adults or peers guide learners through their educational journey. This humanistic approach builds relationships and fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, which is often missing in formal education systems.
5. **Inclusivity and Equity in Curriculum Design:** Programmes must be designed to be inclusive, recognising the diverse backgrounds, languages and experiences of learners. Humanistic principles advocate for education that is accessible to all, especially marginalised populations such as women, minorities, and people with disabilities.

Rationale for Humanizing Adult Education in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, adult education needs to shift towards a more humanizing approach that recognises the holistic development of learners not merely as economic agents but as individuals with complex social, emotional and cognitive needs. This approach aligns with the rapidly changing global landscape characterised by technological advancements, shifting job markets and evolving societal expectations. Below are key reasons for this shift, supported by relevant literature:

1. **Adult Learners as Autonomous Individuals:** Humanizing adult education acknowledges that adults bring a wealth of life experiences, prior knowledge, and intrinsic motivation to learning. Paulo Freire (2000) emphasised the importance of education being dialogical, where learners are active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This perspective enhances adult learners' autonomy, critical thinking and agency, which are crucial for lifelong learning in a fast-evolving world.
2. **Emotional and Psychological Well-Being:** The mental and emotional well-being of adult learners is crucial for effective learning. Studies suggest that learning environments that are compassionate, inclusive and respectful of individual differences lead to higher levels of engagement, retention, and success. A humanizing approach in adult education incorporates emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) and

- social-emotional learning (SEL), acknowledging the emotional landscapes of adult learners often shaped by work, family and societal pressures.
3. **Digital Literacy and Human Connection:** The rise of digital education platforms has transformed adult learning, yet there is a need to balance technological advancements with human connection. While digital tools can expand access to education, they must be integrated with personalised, meaningful interactions that foster a sense of community and belonging (Zhao, 2012). Humanizing adult education ensures that technology enhances rather than detracts from human connection.
 4. **Cultural Relevance and Inclusivity:** Humanizing adult education also involves creating culturally responsive pedagogies that respect and incorporate the diverse backgrounds, identities and perspectives of learners. The demographic landscape of adult learners is increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status and educational backgrounds. Brookfield (2013) argues that adult education must dismantle barriers to participation by fostering inclusivity and ensuring that content is relevant to learners' cultural and social contexts.
 5. **Lifelong Learning and Personal Development:** The 21st-century economy demands continuous skill development, but humanizing education goes beyond vocational training. Adult education should also foster personal growth, ethical decision-making and social responsibility. Illeris (2009) advocates for lifelong learning as a holistic process integrating personal development with societal and economic needs, allowing adult learners to adapt to changes in the job market while developing a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

The New Orbits or Emerging Phenomena of Adult Education in Contemporary Human Existence

The new orbits, or emerging phenomena in contemporary human existence, in which adult education needs to play a prominent role, include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Climate Change:** Climate change is a long-term shift in temperature and typical weather patterns that may cause weather patterns to be less predictable. It can make it difficult to maintain and grow crops in regions reliant on farming. Adult education has a crucial role in educating the public on climate change through programmes that cover its causes, human contributions, consequences, and sustainable mitigation measures. The focus of adult education discourse and practice-based initiatives must encompass climate change.
2. **Environmental Degradation:** The 21st century has witnessed unprecedented environmental degradation, including pollution, biodiversity loss and global warming. Adult education must educate the public on environmental degradation, focusing on its causes, human contributions and sustainable mitigation strategies. This emphasis should be integral to adult education in the 21st century.
3. **Public Health Emergencies of Pandemic Nature:** Public health emergencies, such as HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, pose significant threats to communities. Adult education programmes must prepare individuals for public health emergencies by educating them on recognising pandemics, emergency preparedness and protective measures.
4. **Rising Cases of Insurgency:** Insurgencies often emerge from violent political struggles for control over resources. In Nigeria, for instance, groups like Boko Haram and IPOB have highlighted the need for education on conflict resolution. Adult

education should focus on building knowledge and capacities related to insurgency issues, constituting a vital component of its discourse and initiatives.

5. **Hunger, Poverty and Food Insecurity:** With a significant portion of Nigeria's population living in poverty and facing food insecurity, adult education plays a vital role in equipping individuals with knowledge and strategies to ensure food security. Educational programmes can empower communities, particularly vulnerable populations, to navigate these challenges effectively.

Premising the Novel Orbits or Emerging Phenomena on Humanistic Values and Principles

The humanistic perspective holds the dignity and autonomy of human beings as sacred. Given that the discussed new orbits are human-centered agendas requiring adult education inputs and programme development, they must be premised on humanistic values and principles, which include:

1. **Individuals are the Designers of their Own Being:** People are not "ready-made"; rather, they shape their essence and identity through their choices and actions.
2. **Attainment of the Highest Good:** The ultimate goal of all human striving is the pursuit of the highest good, both individually and collectively.
3. **Personal Responsibility for Realizing Dreams:** Individuals bear responsibility for realizing their dreams and have the power within themselves to achieve them.
4. **Inherent Goodness of Humans:** Human beings are inherently good and, when given a loving environment and freedom to develop, will grow in ways that are beneficial to themselves and society.
5. **Freedom of Choice:** Humans are free beings, and a person's behaviour is the result of choices that individuals can freely exercise.
6. **Education as a Means for Growth and Change:** Education should aim at developing individuals who are open to change, continued learning, and striving for self-actualisation.
7. **Learning as a Personal Endeavour:** Learning is premising the Novel Orbits or Emerging Phenomena on Humanistic Values and Principles.
8. **Learning as a Personal Endeavour:** Learning is a highly personal process. People engage in learning programmes that they perceive to be necessary, important, or meaningful. The meaning people derive from learning is influenced by their personal goals, interests, attitudes, and beliefs.
9. **Intrinsic Motivation:** Motivation to participate in a learning programme comes from within. It is intrinsic, meaning that it emanates from the individuals themselves, rather than being imposed externally.

Therefore, programme development for these new orbits must be anchored on these humanistic principles, especially the idea that individuals are the designers of their own essence. It is essential for programme developers to convey that these educational initiatives are for the learners' own growth and benefit. Moreover, the programmes must be structured in ways that show they are necessary, important and meaningful to the participants. When learners perceive a programme as meaningful, their intrinsic motivation to engage and participate will naturally emerge.

Pathways for Implementing Novel Orbits of Adult Education Based on Humanistic Principles: Emerging Phenomena and Agenda for Development

Adult education has evolved from a traditional focus on skill acquisition to a more complex system that integrates humanistic values, emphasising personal growth, critical thinking, and transformative learning. This paradigm shift is driven by global trends such as technological advancement, social equity, and lifelong learning. To implement novel approaches based on humanistic principles in adult education, we must address emerging phenomena and establish clear agendas for development.

1. **Humanistic Principles in Adult Education:** Humanism as an educational philosophy posits that education should develop individuals' full potential, foster a sense of agency, and create conditions for self-actualisation (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015). Key humanistic principles such as autonomy, respect for the learner's experience and the promotion of democratic values are crucial in shaping adult education models.

Key Components:

1. **Learner-Centred Approach:** Adults bring vast life experiences to the learning environment, which should be integrated into the curriculum to foster relevance and engagement.
2. **Self-Directed Learning:** Encouraging autonomy and responsibility in the learning process is essential, allowing adults to pursue knowledge based on their individual needs and aspirations (Tennant & Pogson, 2002).
3. **Transformative Learning:** Mezirow (2000) emphasises that adult learning is most impactful when it transforms a learner's worldview, leading to personal and societal change.
4. **Emerging Phenomena in Adult Education:** Globalisation, digitalisation, and evolving social dynamics are key forces reshaping adult education. These changes present both challenges and opportunities for incorporating humanistic values.
5. **Lifelong Learning and Digital Literacy:** The rapid technological shifts necessitate that adults continuously update their skills. Integrating digital literacy with humanistic principles requires the development of critical thinking and the ethical use of technology (Bennett & Maton, 2010).
6. **Social Equity and Inclusion:** There is growing recognition that adult education should promote social justice and inclusion, addressing the needs of marginalised populations (Freire, 1970). Programmes must be designed to empower underrepresented groups through equitable access to education and the development of skills that promote social mobility.
7. **Globalisation and Cultural Diversity:** As societies become more interconnected, adult education must foster intercultural competence. Humanistic education encourages respect for diverse perspectives, promoting global citizenship and understanding (Jarvis, 2004).
8. **Pathways for Development:** Implementing a humanistic approach to adult education requires systemic and structural changes across various sectors.
9. **Policy Development:** Governments should integrate humanistic principles into national education policies, promoting equitable access, inclusive curricula and

- lifelong learning opportunities. UNESCO's Education 2030 agenda emphasises the need for policies that address these global education challenges (UNESCO, 2015).
10. **Institutional Support and Professional Development:** Educational institutions must provide ongoing professional development for adult educators, focusing on learner-centred methodologies and transformative learning practices. Institutions should also create flexible learning environments that cater to the needs of diverse adult learners.
 11. **Technological Integration with Ethical Considerations:** While leveraging technology is vital in expanding access to education, it is equally important to ensure that technological solutions align with humanistic values, promoting ethical use and fostering critical reflection among learners.
 12. **Collaboration and Global Partnerships:** Building collaborative networks among educational institutions, governments, NGOs, and the private sector can help pool resources and share best practices. Global partnerships can promote innovative educational models that address local and global challenges (UNESCO, 2015).

Agenda for Development:

1. **Expanding Access to Marginalised Groups:** Educational programmes must prioritise the inclusion of marginalised communities, such as women, ethnic minorities, and economically disadvantaged individuals. This will promote equity and empower all learners to achieve their full potential (Freire, 1970).
2. **Promoting Critical and Reflective Thinking:** Programmes should cultivate critical thinking and self-reflection, encouraging learners to challenge assumptions and engage in lifelong learning. This aligns with Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory, which emphasises critical self-reflection as a pathway to personal growth and societal impact.
3. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Alignment:** Adult education initiatives should align with the United Nations' SDGs, particularly Goal 4, which emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015).
4. **Research and Innovation:** Ongoing research on adult learning practices, particularly in the context of emerging technologies and social changes, is essential for developing innovative and effective educational models. Humanistic principles should guide this research to ensure that adult education remains relevant, ethical and inclusive.

Challenges of Expanding Novel Orbits of Adult Education Based on Humanistic Principles

Expanding novel orbits of adult education based on humanistic principles poses several challenges, particularly in the face of emerging phenomena and the need for a comprehensive development agenda. Below are key challenges and considerations:

1. **Technological Disparities:** Challenge: As educational technologies advance, a growing divide exists between those with access to digital tools and those without, especially in underdeveloped regions.
Consideration: Inclusivity is vital for a humanistic approach to adult education. Ensuring equitable access to educational technologies is crucial to avoid exacerbating social inequalities.

2. **Diverse Learner Needs and Experiences:** Challenge: Adult learners come from various backgrounds with differing learning needs, experiences, and motivations. Designing curricula to address these diverse needs can be complex.
Consideration: Humanistic principles emphasise individual experiences and self-actualisation. Adult education must be flexible, learner-centred, and personalised to support each learner's growth.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity and Globalisation:** Challenge: Globalisation leads to interactions between different cultures, which can cause conflicts in educational values, goals, and approaches.
Consideration: Programs should be designed with cultural sensitivity, ensuring that humanistic education respects and integrates diverse cultural perspectives and promotes global citizenship.
4. **Lifelong Learning and Motivation:** Challenge: Many adults may lack motivation for lifelong learning due to time constraints, financial pressures, or negative previous educational experiences.
Consideration: A humanistic agenda should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation through engaging, relevant, and self-directed learning experiences that promote personal and professional development.
5. **Policy and Funding Issues:** Challenge: Government and institutional policies often fail to prioritise adult education, and funding is frequently inadequate, limiting access and resources for adult learners.
Consideration: Advocating for policies that recognise the importance of adult education, along with increased funding, is essential for creating sustainable educational infrastructures aligned with humanistic principles.
6. **Emerging Phenomena in Workforce Demands:** Rapid changes in the workforce, driven by automation, artificial intelligence, and global economic shifts, require adults to continuously upskill or reskill, putting pressure on educational institutions to adapt quickly.
Consideration: Adult education must focus not only on technical skills but also on developing critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence, ensuring that learners become well-rounded individuals capable of adapting to changing environments.
7. **Mental Health and Well-Being:** Adults may face mental health challenges, especially when balancing education with work and personal life. The stress associated with these balancing acts can hinder learning outcomes.
Consideration: Humanistic education emphasises the whole person, including emotional and psychological well-being. Creating supportive environments that consider the mental health needs of adult learners is crucial.
8. **Ecological and Environmental Sustainability:** As the world faces environmental crises, adult education needs to integrate sustainability principles into learning to prepare individuals for the challenges of climate change and environmental stewardship.
Consideration: Humanistic education should encourage learners to consider their role in fostering a sustainable world, blending education with activism and responsibility towards the environment.

Benefits of Expanding Novel Orbits of Adult Education Based on Humanistic Principles

Expanding novel orbits of adult education based on humanistic principles offers a range of benefits that align with both individual and societal progress. Below are some key benefits supported by relevant literature:

1. **Promotes Lifelong Learning and Personal Growth:** Adult education grounded in humanistic principles fosters a focus on the learner's needs, values and experiences, emphasising personal development and self-actualisation. Learners are seen as unique individuals with the potential for growth, and education serves as a tool for realizing that potential. Carl Rogers' work on humanistic psychology highlights the importance of personal growth and self-directed learning in adulthood (Rogers, 1969). Additionally, Knowles (1980) advocates for andragogy—the art and science of helping adults learn—suggesting that educational programmes should reflect the autonomy and self-direction of adult learners.
2. **Responsive to Emerging Phenomena in the Globalized World:** Adult education must adapt to emerging phenomena such as technological advancements, shifting job markets, and evolving social dynamics. Novel educational orbits can integrate digital literacy, global citizenship and socio-cultural awareness to prepare learners for a rapidly changing world. Illeris (2014) discusses how global shifts demand new educational frameworks that prioritise adaptability and critical thinking skills. Emerging fields like sustainability education (Sterling, 2010) reflect the need for adult learners to understand complex interdisciplinary issues affecting the planet.
3. **Promotes Social Justice and Equity:** A humanistic approach to adult education emphasises social equity, creating opportunities for marginalised groups to access learning. This is vital in promoting social justice, reducing inequalities and empowering underrepresented communities. Freire (1970) argues that education must be a tool for liberation, helping individuals develop critical consciousness to challenge oppression. Programmes based on transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997) focus on empowering learners to rethink societal norms and work towards social change.
4. **Enhances Community Development and Civic Engagement:** Humanistic adult education fosters civic responsibility, encouraging learners to become active, responsible members of society. This approach promotes community engagement and social responsibility, which can enhance collective well-being and foster social cohesion. Brookfield (1987) emphasises the importance of democratic learning environments, which enable adults to engage in meaningful community participation.
5. **Encourages Adaptability and Resilience in Emerging Economic and Social Landscapes:** In an era of rapid change driven by digitalisation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, adult education initiatives that incorporate humanistic and developmental principles empower learners to manage personal and professional transitions. Theories of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) provide frameworks for understanding how adults adapt to new roles and environments through reflection and critical thinking.
6. **Contributes to Holistic Development:** Adult education rooted in humanistic principles supports the development of the whole person, addressing not only cognitive but also emotional, social, and moral dimensions. This holistic approach enhances both individual well-being and societal harmony. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) supports the idea that education should nurture human potential across various domains, contributing to self-actualisation. Nussbaum (2011) argues for the

importance of cultivating capacities such as empathy and moral reasoning through educational practices essential for democratic societies.

Expanding Novel Orbits of Adult Education in Light of Emerging Phenomena: Implications for Reducing Illiteracy

The integration of emerging trends within adult education can significantly enhance its scope and effectiveness, particularly in reducing illiteracy. Below are key areas where these trends can impact adult education, along with supporting references:

- Digital Literacy and Technological Integration:** Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), virtual learning environments, and mobile learning applications are transforming the educational landscape. Adult learners, particularly those in underserved communities, can access learning materials via mobile devices, presenting new opportunities for improving literacy.

Implications: Technology provides scalable, flexible, and accessible platforms for adult learners. Digital literacy is now a critical component of reducing traditional illiteracy, as much of contemporary learning material is moving online.
- Hybrid and Remote Learning Models:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward remote learning, which has since evolved into hybrid models that combine in-person and online learning. This shift is particularly relevant for adult learners who require flexible schedules to balance education with work or family commitments.

Implications: Hybrid models allow for self-paced learning, expanding educational opportunities for adults constrained by time, geographic location, or socio-economic factors.
- Community-Based Learning Initiatives:** Despite advances in technology, there remains a need for community-based programmes that build on local cultures, languages, and traditions. Peer learning models and localised curricula can ensure that education is culturally relevant and effective in reaching adult learners in rural or marginalised areas.

Implications: Grassroots educational initiatives are essential for addressing illiteracy in under-resourced regions where formal education systems may be weak. Community involvement enhances the retention and application of literacy skills.
- Artificial Intelligence and Personalized Learning:** AI-driven platforms can personalise learning paths for adult learners. By analysing learning habits, weaknesses, and progress, AI systems can tailor educational content to meet individual needs. This can be particularly beneficial for illiterate or low-literacy adults, as the content can be adapted to their pace and learning style.

Implications: Personalized learning pathways using AI enable adult learners to overcome specific literacy challenges, creating an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of prior education, can succeed.
- Workplace Literacy Programs and Upskilling:** Lifelong learning is essential for adults, especially in an era of rapid technological change. Workplace literacy programmes designed to enhance both basic literacy and advanced digital skills are increasingly becoming part of adult education strategies.

Implications: These programmes bridge the skills gap, allowing adults to improve literacy while enhancing their employability in modern job markets. Workplace

initiatives also motivate participation by linking education to immediate economic benefits.

Conclusion

Adult education as a field of study and practice, both in Nigeria and globally, has been enriched by numerous mechanisms discussed throughout this paper. This indicates that as long as humanity faces various challenges, adult education will remain relevant in addressing these issues. Its significance is particularly evident with the emergence of new orbits or phenomena that require the input of adult education and programme development.

Any agenda for human development in the 21st century and beyond cannot exclude contributions from adult education. The consistent attendance of representatives from United Nations system organisations and other international bodies at UNESCO-organised International Conferences on Adult Education from Elsinore, Denmark, in 1949 to Marrakech, Morocco, in 2022 underscores this point. This comprehensive participation highlights that adult education is too crucial to be overlooked in the human development agenda by international development partners.

Recommendations for Expanding Novel Orbits Based on Humanistic Principles

In this context, I propose the following recommendations to promote the merit and relevance of adult education at national, regional, and global levels:

1. **Recognition of New Orbits as Components of Adult Education:** I urge adult education scholars in Nigeria to acknowledge the new orbits that can be classified as contemporary components of adult education.
2. **Research and Conceptual Papers:** I encourage adult education scholars to write conceptual papers and conduct rigorous research on these new orbits. This will help demonstrate to the global academic community that adult education is diverse, multidisciplinary and multidimensional, countering the misconception that it is limited to literacy education.
3. **Organisation of Conferences on New Orbits:** I call upon the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) to organise conferences focused on these new orbits. This will create greater awareness and sensitise policymakers and stakeholders in the education sector, both nationally and internationally, about the significance of these components in adult education.
4. **Advocacy for Adult Education:** I urge NNCAE to engage in strong advocacy with the Federal Ministry of Education and other relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to clarify the essence of adult education. This should include highlighting its benefits, the global mechanisms for its promotion, and the humanistic principles that underpin it.
5. **Inclusion of New Orbits in NMEC Programmes:** I specifically call on the management of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) to incorporate these new orbits into their programme designs and primer developments. Aggressive advocacy should also be pursued to involve relevant government agencies in their agenda for development in Nigeria, thereby positioning NMEC as a key agency for promoting human-centred development.
6. **Inclusion of New Orbits in National Development Partners' Agendas:** I urge NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), and Civil Society Organisations

- (CSOs) working in adult education to include these new orbits in their programme designs and implementations. This will showcase the broad scope of adult education.
7. **Inclusion in the Agenda of International Development Partners:** I encourage international development partners, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO, and UNDP, to incorporate these new orbits into their development agendas, underscoring the importance of adult education.
 8. **Expansion of GRALE Publications:** I also advocate for the expansion of the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) to include these new orbits, thereby providing international reference data to support and inform public policies on adult education

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