

Refocusing Adult Literacy, Non Formal Education and Long Life

Learning Education for Multiliteracies in Africa

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Abstract

There is need for some African standardization of the terminology relating to literacy, adult basic education, non-formal education and lifelong learning, not in any restrictive or prescriptive way, but simply to aid understanding and comparability of data and research emanating from countries in Africa. Clarity will be done in this paper to distinguish adult education from more general community development. After decades of sustained efforts to eradicate illiteracy in Africa, illiteracy rates of adults remain high with continuing gender and urban/rural disparities. Illiteracy has several correlations with low productivity, low incomes and poorer health (and susceptibility to HIV/AIDS). It hampers national development efforts. The adult education sub-sector of state education systems remains relatively marginal and under-funded. In spite of the good economic progressed in many countries since the mid-1990s. This paper examines difficulties in some African states that is being attributed to multi-linguistic situations compounded by the often rural and subsistence economy of large proportions of the population. Nigeria for example has about 300 languages and dialects, and Chad some 120, of which only about 12 are codified. The Anglophone/Francophone division in African also provides its own difficulties for co-operation. This paper will therefore provide statistical summary of illiteracy and under-education in African countries. The paper therefore concludes that, adult education should be introduced to all teacher education programmes in African states to enhance multiliteracies.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, Non – Formal Education, Lifelong Learning Education, Multiliteracies.

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Introduction

Education plays an important role in the development of any society, and it is recognized as an active agent for the achievement of speedy socio – economic, political, scientific and technological advancement and development in any nation (Harry and Godfrey; 2012). Education promotes the quality, effective citizenship of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an essential role in developing the society to which he belongs.

Education according to Harry and Godfrey (2012) has been described as a process of developing and cultivating ones mind. In the same vain, Okoh (2003) defined education as a process in activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another. Osokoya (2003) saw education as the tapping of qualities, potentials of the individual in the society and acquisition of skills, attitudes and competencies necessary for actualization and for coping with day to day life problem.

Adult education, tend to be conceptualized and defined as literacy, basic education, and livelihood – related skills training. Thus, for example, Eritreas national Policy on Adult Education (2005) defined it as literacy and continuing education that embraces literacy and post-literacy, advocacy and civic education, life skills and follow up vocational training programme”. Most countries take completion of a certain level of education as a proxy for being literate. In spite of the growing interest in direct assessment of literacy skills, few countries have made use of UIS-developed data collection instrument, Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), or the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) instrument. These instruments aim to provide literacy data of higher quality and conceptualize literacy skills as a continuum rather than as a literate/illiterate

dichotomy. Based on the above definitions, poverty and illiteracy can be reduced through effective implementation of adult, non – formal education and long life learning education programmes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to:

- (1) Enable adults to know their civic rights and duties in their countries.
- (2) Help the adults to influence the society in which they live by contributing to its effective running.
- (3) Acquire political knowledge and the system of government that will help them to understand how government works.
- (4) Enable adult take active part in the affairs of the government that affect their daily lives.
- (5) Enable the adults acquire literacy skills of reading/writing and numeracy that help them in their daily dealings.

Concepts of Adult and Non-Formal Educational Programme

Mass literacy according to Harry and Godfrey (2012) had been identified to have encompasses adult and non-formal education. Literacy, which is the ability to read, write and calculate, has been recognized both as a human right in itself and as a crucial instrument for the pursuit of other rights. According to Fasokun (2005) quoted by Harry and Godfrey (2012).

Literacy is not just about adapting to existing condition but having the problem solving and critical skills necessary to bring about any changes needed.

Adult education is frequently and confusingly conflated with literacy, post-literacy, functional literacy or non-formal education. Literacy, in the narrowest sense is the starting point for adult basic education, an essential but not sufficient component. The latter includes, inter alia, quantities of content knowledge as well as life skills and which in Africa can be defined in formal terms as being equivalent to the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned in general school. Adult basic education is aimed at and designed for adults to provide a conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning development (Chen and Ravallian 2008). It comprises knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of context. It may be conducted in mother tongue or, more frequently, in a dominant language. In some countries, it may be certificated. The current trend according to Glanz (2008) is for adult education to become more formal and certificated and equivalent to formal schooling. As with literacy, many basic education programmes claim to mix a right objective with more life skills or income generation objectives, where it is firmly linked with various forms of skills training it is labeled adult basic education and training. Adult education could be viewed as all educational activities or processes that adult are engaged throughout life to keep their knowledge up to date, broaden their horizon so as to understand to live a fulfilled life. Therefore, adult education according to Harry and Godfrey (2012) could be seen as educational activities that will equip adults to life, education for social purpose, political awareness and economic progress.

Mass literacy is given prominence perhaps due to the nation's high percentage of illiteracy. Therefore, NPE (2004) captioned mass literacy, adult and non-formal education encourages all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. It also emphasizes the need to provide adult basic education for millions of Africa adults and youth.

Lifelong Learning Defined

Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It occurs through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime. These experiences could be formal through training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprentices, higher education, etc or informal experience, situations etc. Lifelong learning also known as LLL is the “lifelong voluntary, and self-motivated” pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. As such, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability (Thumbadoo 2008).

Lifelong learning according to Dalbera (2006) is the provision or use of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout peoples lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfillment.

Lifelong learning means education resulting from integration of formal, non-formal and informal education so as to create ability for continuous lifelong development of quality of life. Learning is therefore part of life which takes place at all times and all places. It is a continuous lifelong process, going in from birth to the end of our

lives, beginning with learning from families, communities, schools, religious, institutions, work places etc (UNESCO 2007).

Stages of Lifelong Learning

Stages of Lifelong Learning according to Delbera (2006) are as follows:

- (a) Learning in the 6-24 age groups: learning of the 6-24 age group primary takes place in educational institutions, from primary and secondary to tertiary levels.
- (b) Learning in the 25 – 60 age groups: learning during the working life of the 25 – 60 age groups can learn informally through the use of instructional media, mostly from their occupying work-places, colleagues, touring, mass media, information technologies, environment and nature. Adults learn from experiences and problem solving. They therefore need continuous development of intellect, capability, and integrity.
- (c) Learning in the 60 + age group: Learning in old age (over 60years old) elderly people can learn a great deal from activities suitable to their age e.g. art, music, sports for the elderly, handicrafts and social work. They can also carry out voluntary work in community organizations, clubs and associations.

Benefits of Adult Literacy, Non-Formal Education and Lifelong Learning in Africa

For any nation to achieve socio-economic development according to Harry and Godfrey (2012), eradication of poverty, illiteracy, and promotion of national unity, education should not be confined only to the formal school setting but should be extended to less privileged persons in order to equalize educational opportunity. It is necessary for any nation wishing to keep pace with changes in modern society to appreciate the need for adults to learn and continue to learn to be able to adjust to a rapidly changing world.

The relevance of adult education cannot be over emphasized, that is why in Nigeria, over population, unemployment and wide spread poverty, hunger, illiteracy disease and ignorance have produced a situation in which the formal school alone cannot meet all the desired needs or development of the country. Therefore, adult education, no doubt has a prominent role to play. If proper development is to be realized, rapid and momentous changes in scientific and technological fields make it necessary for adults to continue their education. (Harry and Godfrey 2012).

Lifelong learning core values of learning exploring, and serving, coupled with benefits for the mind, body and spirit make it an incredible powerful tool for personal transformation and enhancement. Lifelong learning according to UNESCO (2007) helps fully develop natural abilities, opens the minds creates a curious hungry mind, increases peoples wisdom, makes the world a better place to stay, helps people to change help people to find meaning to lives, make people involved as active contributors to society, help people make new friends and establish valuable relationships and also leads to an enriching life of self – fulfillment. Adult education should be perceived in a wider context to embrace a wide range of education activities for adults which should be recognized as indispensable and be promoted as an essential agency for the progress of every society.

Curriculum Content of Adult Literacy, Non Formal Education and lifelong learning in some African countries:

Most countries in Africa have state – run programmes over seen by departments of adult education or similar units in ministries of education or other employment or development related ministries. These programmes tend to be run at local facilities or with provision sometimes out sourced to commercial or NGO providers. In many countries in Africa according to Aitchison (2006), countries NGOs play a substantial role but funding shortages may mean that they can no longer deliver services to the most disadvantaged groups. Outcome statistics are usually poorly and often inaccurately documented. In several countries, learners are mobilized by income generation activities, skills training, micro – loans, support from community leaders and training of participants as health auxiliaries and development agents for example in Gambia (UNESCO 2008). UNESCO institute for statistic (2001) Botswanas entire adult basic education curriculum and materials are being overhauled, with the aid of an international team. South Africans Department of labour funds some adult basic education for workers and the unemployed via a skills levy with actual delivery outsourced. In Malawi it is used by the sustainable social and economic empowerment programme which has a component where learners are funded to run livelihood activities.

In 2002, world vision Ghana collaborated with the non – formal education division on a functional literacy programme to enhance a water and sanitation programme. Nigeria has encouraged the use of interactive teaching and learning and has also developed Ajami (Arabic) integrated education in which Arabic education is integrated into western education, a situation thought to be impossible before. In Senegal the TOSTAN project has improved the educational situation of women learners not only by reducing the rate of illiteracy but also by

improving health and living condition. The curriculum includes instruction in a local language (wolof), a participatory approach to training, traditional culture, community ownership and problem solving, health models related to the use of oral rehydration, which prevents the dehydration caused by diarrhea, a frequent cause of death among children in Senegal.

Between 1990 and 2007 Uganda enrolled over 2million participants (75 percent women) in the functional adult literacy (FAL) programme. The Family Basic (FABE) programme was active in 18 schools by 2005, reaching over 3,300 children and 1,400 parents. This is a successful family literacy intervention whose impact at household, school and community level has seen evaluated.

In Tanzania curriculum revision has led to the development of a more effective integrated community – based Adult Education (ICBAE) school equivalency programmes are organized for youths and Adult who did not have basic education or secondary education. These programmes are distinct from literacy and numeracy programmes in that they provide equivalence to the general education provided for primary school children and/or secondary schooling.

Angola and Liberia both have “accelerated” programmes for young people who are too old to enroll in primary schools.

Namibia runs a three year Adult upper primary education (AUPE) programme. The learners take six courses in all, four core course and two optional courses. They study two courses each year. The curriculum has been designed to be equivalent to the upper primary programme in the formal system.

In Tanzania open and distance learning is used in some secondary school equivalent programmes. The complementary basic education in Tanzania (COBET) programmes addresses the educational needs of youth who, for various reasons could not enroll in or dropped out of the formal primary school system. While the enrolment was high in 2003/2004 (466,018 learners), it has steadily declined since then (to 185, 206 in 2006/2007) as many youth were mainstreamed into formal education.

In Kenya the University of Namibia provided extra – moral programmes from 1950s. It is now possible for working adults to study virtually anything at the university.

Seychelles has a mature student policy that stipulates a quota of places in post secondary education and training institutions. In Anglophone countries, a number of universities still run non formal extra moral programmes.

Programmes Offered to Improve Literacy and Eradicate Poverty in Adult Literacy, non formal and lifelong Learning in Africa

In order to meet the needs of improving multiliteracies and eradicate poverty from African continent. Adult literacy offers among other disciplines the following basic literacy, post literacy, women’s education, functional literacy, nomadic education, continuing education, Ajami (Arabic) integrated education, literacy for the blind, workers education, vocational education, literacy for the disabled and prison education.

These programmes are fine – tuned and offered in various African countries under the supervision of the agencies for mass education and that have literacy and numeracy at the core with life skills as a bonus package for the more informed and non-formal education project (Harry and Godfrey 2012). Thus, the functional elements as specified in the national policy appears sub-summed under the heavy literacy and numeracy tilt. The functional subject include home economic, hygiene or health education etc (Makoju et al 2006).

These programmes are offered to improve the living standard of the people of Africa through the mass literacy programmes. This content of the programmes on offer is essentially based on what can continue to appear to the interest of the learners. A number of countries have programmes that have effectively integrated HIV/AIDS and other health – related issues into adult basic education. These include the campaign for HIV/AIDS prevention and environmental education. Other initiatives include civic education by the human rights and electoral commissions, cooperative education by the department of cooperatives, as well as workers education by trade unions.

These are mainly non – formal vocational training and rural and community development (all related to livelihoods and poverty alleviation). Various government departments and institutes often link particular training for example, on gardening, poultry care, craft making, and basic home care, and so on to more formal adult basic education /functional literacy programmes and sometimes provide equipment or micro – loans (UNESCO 2008). These types of educational programmes remain relevant if functional elements are integrated into them.

Challenges of Adult Literacy, Non Formal Education and Lifelong Learning, Programme in Africa

There are many challenges facing adult literacy, non formal education and life-long learning programme in most African countries. These challenges according to Harry and Godfrey (2012) are as follows:

- (1) Lack of funds and low priority: Low priority accorded to adult and mass literacy programmes contributed to the factors militating against the proper implementation of the programme.
- (2) Problem of access and drop outs of school: A study concluded by action aid published in 2003 according to Harry and Godrey (2012) showed the reasons why people refused to go to school as cost of schooling, opportunity cost, illness and hunger, limited economic cost of education and low quality of school.
- (3) Problems of irrelevant curriculum being used. These are curriculums that are not relevant to the mass literacy programme hence not meeting the objectives of establishing the adult literacy programme (Fasokun and Pwol 2008).
- (4) Unstable political system: Unstable political system in most African countries had hindered the effective implementation of the programme, hence this has frustrated the laudable ideas of establishing the mass literacy programme.
- (5) Problems of poor infrastructure:

Conclusion

From the reports of the countries that responded to UNESCO's survey with regard to the state of adult education and implementation of the recommendations made. It is clear that very few countries have enacted laws and implemented policies which promote adult education in a significant way. Though, adult literacy is integrated in broad education and development policies in almost all the countries, very limited financial resources are allocated for the implementation of adult literacy programmes. The various scholars emphasized on how to provide education for all be it formal, non – formal or informal education, irrespective of religion, tribe, sex and economic status. That is government should try and find all the possible ways of implementing adult literacy programmes.

Recommendations

- (1) Government of every African country should try as much as possible to implement the programme, they should provide the infrastructural facilities for modern facilities and other materials needed. For effective management, teaching and learning in adult, non formal and lifelong learning centres.
- (2) Employment of qualified teachers to teach in the adult, non formal education and lifelong learning centres.
- (3) Adequate measures should be employed by stakeholders of education supervising and monitoring of the programme.
- (4) Non – governmental organization should assist to make the classroom environment for adult learners conducive for teaching and learning.
- (5) Policy makers of education should intensity effort to implement the statement of the countries policy on education regarding free education for less privileged person.
- (6) In order to provide funds for improving on the standard of adult learners performances, collaborator effort should be made between public and private sectors.
- (7) For the environment to be conducive for learning, banks and relevance organization should provide the required learning materials lacking, such as dilapidated buildings and facilities for the programmes.

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