

ADULT EDUCATION AS A PROGRESSIVE CATALYST IN BOTSWANA ORGANISATIONAL SETTINGS

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Abstract

Adult education is multidimensional and multidisciplinary, which makes it more accommodative and more responsive to learning challenges that besiege societies, hence its multiple providers in Botswana and other parts of the world. It is defined by (Kasworm, 2014 and Houle, 1995) as the practice of teaching and educating adults or process by which men and women (alone, in groups, or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge, or sensitiveness. The adult population in almost all nations has exigencies that should be met, mostly in the age of advanced technology and intricate challenges that require the complex decision making processes. As noted by Frimpong (2013), adult education is huge, diverse and so broad that any attempt to “box it in” creates more confusion and complexities. It is about anything that makes learning take place among anybody perceived as an adult by his/her society. In the world of rapid changes in the people’s lives on all the continents, all citizens should have an opportunity to develop themselves through acquiring knowledge and know-how, so as to better pilot their life transition, to improve their quality of life, to develop their potential and to experience the joy of learning (Belanger, 2011). This conceptual paper examines the economic, social, technological and political impact that adult education has in various organisations in Botswana. The main question that this conceptual paper seeks to answer pertains to the relevance and aptness of adult education in the modern age.

Key words: Adult Education; multidimensional; multidisciplinary; learning; providers; knowledge

1.0 Introduction

In Botswana the graduates of adult Education function within different entities that offer formal, informal, and non-formal forms of education and those that do not immediately identify with the discipline, but deal directly and indirectly with those people who qualify as adults in their milieu or professions. As observed by Frimpong-Kwapong (2013), most adult education activities take place in institutions that are not primarily intended for adult education purposes such as museums, libraries, social agencies, voluntary associations, churches, industrial organisations, labour unions, professional societies, and governments at all levels. The same can be said about adult education in Botswana, because it is offered by the private sector, parastatals, public service and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and is offered in various forms.

The providers of adult education are many because it is a discipline that seeks to improve living conditions of the people through providing them with skills, knowledge and appropriate attitudes that make them more active in their lives (Rose, 2013). As noted by Jarvis (2010) education occurs in many fields of practice, of which the education of adults- whether it is adult education or lifelong learning – is one. Knowledge of the practice of education can be learned from watching the practice of experts; it is grounded in the field of practice. It is meant to enhance human capital, which is observed by Kasworm (2014) to mean the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to labour so as to produce economic value.

This paper examines the numerous providers of adult education in Botswana, and how their contributions have strengthened and contributed to the discipline over the years.

2.0 Public service Adult Education providers

Most public service offers adult education provisions that are directed at ameliorating the living conditions of Botswana citizenry in all the areas where civil servants are based, such as in the Police Community Service, Prisons and Rehabilitation Department, Civil Aviation, Department of Out-of-School education training (OSET), Botswana Defence Force, Agriculture Department, Botswana Cooperatives, churches and other organisations. This situation is chiefly as a result of adult education having been state, private and parastatal controlled and directed. It is however worth noting that adult education has predominantly been state run. As noted by Youngman as cited by Lekoko and Maruatona (2006) adult education in Botswana is predominantly sponsored and controlled by the government and is treated as part of the national development effort intended to enable individuals to grow personally and take part in the national development activities. It is important to note that adult education is often for purposes of individuals to become more functional within their respective communities, nations and globally. As observed by Negm (2013) the power of adult learning lies in the assumption that adults have great impetus for learning and developing their life skills because they feel the need for knowledge and understand its benefits.

3.0 Department of Out of School Education and Training (DOSET)

As noted by UNESCO (2009), the provision of universal access to basic education, including adult literacy training has been a key element and priority of Botswana's national development, social empowerment and human rights agenda since 1966, when the country attained its independence. The National Literacy Programme, which was officially launched in 1981 as the largest government sponsored programme for non-formal education has played and continue to play a pivotal role in the provision of adult education in Botswana.

The Department of Out of School Education and Training (DOSET) formerly known as Non-Formal Education department is an entity that exists to provide training programmes for the adult population in Botswana. It has personnel that benefited from the training programmes offered by the University of Botswana through its Department of Adult Education (Maruatona, 2007). According to UNESCO (2009), all facilitators are provided with formal induction/formative training and on-going in-service training and mentoring in various aspects of adult education including participatory adult education teaching methodologies, the theory and practice of adult education, class management, the use of teaching modules to conduct lessons and to moderate the learning process and assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes.

As noted by Maruatona (2007) the Department of Non-formal Education of the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing adult literacy education through Botswana National Literacy Programme. The national literacy programme as averred by UNESCO (2009) is aimed at eradicating historical socio-economic inequalities and high adult illiteracy rates, which had been engendered by a colonial education system that had only been accessible to a privileged few. In addition, the national literacy programme also aims to create a cohort of educated people with skills to meet the demands of a developing, rapid changing society and economy as well as to empower previously disadvantaged and marginalised communities in order to enable them to be self-reliant and to improve their standard of life.

It is important to note that adult literacy was not the only responsibility that the national literacy programme was designed to fulfil, but it was also aimed at producing citizens that can actively take part in the development of their country by utilising skills and knowledge acquired through the programme. The provision of adult education of this form is geared towards political, economic, social and technological advancement of the citizens of Botswana. The provision of adult education by DOSET is important for the economy of Botswana through the promotion of political, economic, social and cultural development (UNESCO, 2009). As noted by Vermaak (2008) education plays an important role in development, especially in a developing country. To develop the skills and knowledge of the large percentage of the people outside the reach of formal education, and to offer education programmes which can easily adapt and respond to the specific and immediate needs of a developing community, out-of-school programmes are crucial.

At the end of it all, education must support the task of making people aware of their self-identity, their problems, needs and aspirations, their resources, and various forces and structures that hinder the progress of their communities thereby the nation (Reddy, 2004). It is important to note that DOSET has over the years provided opportunities for individuals and groups to learn the necessary skills such as weaving and basketry, which has improved their capacity to improve their lives both economically and socially (UNESCO, 2009).

4.0 Prisons and Rehabilitation Department

As noted by Frimpong-Kwapong as cited by Mosweunyane and Montsho (2015) Botswana's first encounter with the formal system of imprisonment for purposes of punishment dates back to mid-1880s, when the then Bechuanaland was declared a British protectorate. It can be safely stated that since the establishment of formal prisons in Botswana the training of prisoners has characterised the institution. This is because the training of prisoners is important for their rehabilitation so that they can be integrated into society being better people than before their incarceration (UNESCO, 1995).

Since one of the aims of the basic criminal justice system is to promote justice and facilitate the appropriate reintegration of offenders into society, nobody can deny that prisoners need education; but what should be taught in prison and how to do so is not an easy question to answer. For example, in a society where illiteracy still remains one of the main obstacles for the reintegration of offenders, learning how to read and write may provide offenders with what they need most. However, in a society where illiteracy has already been almost overcome, such education is not cost effective and may not be necessary for successful integration. Thinking about what should be taught in prison also means thinking about the society to which the offenders belong.

The Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation offers both basic literacy and functional literacy programmes that are necessitated for purposes of rehabilitation of inmates. It is important to indicate that some prisoners are incarcerated without the necessary literacy skills, which is often viewed as having contributed to their aberrant behaviour whilst outside. The Prisons and Rehabilitation department has adult education trained officers who are responsible for both the security of their respective prisons and rehabilitation of prisoners. According to Motlalekgo (2009) rehabilitation of prisoners involves helping them to identify their weaknesses, which led them to prison, to be able to avoid them in future and also learn to build on their strong points in order to face life with confidence and positive determination after release from prison. It is important to note that according to Ferner (2015) for some prisoners, especially those that have spent years or decades of their lives locked up, getting out comes with a mixture of overwhelming joy and anxiety. In Botswana prisoners are enrolled

to pursue training in partnership with the public sector, business community and individuals in order to prepare them for the world outside, which in some cases make them feel anxious.

Botswana correctional system shares the same view with that of the United States, which regards prison education as an important vehicle for the transformation of prisoners into responsible and empowered citizens (Botswana Prison Service, 2011). As noted by United Nations and UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) if it is purposeless to enforce imprisonment without basic education for those who have not reached a level at which they can function adequately in society, then arrangements are made for its delivery. There are already widely differing models, but all have certain common requirements. United Nations and UNESCO Institute for Education further notes that it is clear that basic education is an indispensable part of prison education and prevocational training for those with the lowest educational attainment, who cannot enter directly into a course which presupposes skills that they do not yet possess.

The Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation provides various forms of training programmes some of which are meant to let prisoners continue to learn as they serve their sentences that are imposed by different courts of law. The prisoners do register for formal courses that they undertake through distance mode with institutions such as University of South Africa and Botswana Open University (BOU), which are charged with the responsibility of offering courses by distance and part-time, to an array of consumers including prisoners. The most appreciated understanding is that prisoners who undertake training whilst serving their sentences behave in an acceptable manner compared to those who are not into any form of training. As noted by United Nations and UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) it is possible to see the effect of prison education on behaviour of prisoners during their sentences.

The Revised National Policy on Education stresses the need to conceive education not just as schooling but as a lifelong learning process for all Batswana (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008). The policy further emphasises that it is necessary to provide access to learning opportunities outside the main structure of schooling, which will benefit both those who lack basic education and those who wish to further their elementary education. In compliance with this policy demand, the Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation established a unit of adult learning and education to meet educational needs of offenders by offering them a variety of programmes, including literacy education and skills development.

It is worth noting that some prisoners attain qualifications that allow them to live better lives at the end of their prison terms. As observed by Boston University (2017) prison education gives prisoners the intellectual leverage they need to revise their view of themselves and leave prison better equipped to contribute positively to their families and communities. As stated by Motlalekgosi (2009) who is the current Commissioner of Prisons and Rehabilitation Department in Botswana, Prisoners are offered training in various trade skills to make them competitive in the labour market after release from prison in an effort to reduce the incidence of crime and re-offending. The prisoners are offered training through adult education in the areas of theology, agriculture (both pastoral and arable) tailoring, carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, welding, building construction, plumbing and basic literacy. The provision of adult education in Botswana prisons mirrors that of the USA federal prisons, which according to Wormley (1945) reflects intelligent and careful planning-planning for men and women who must someday resume their places in society equipped to make honest livings and to lead richer lives.

5.0 Agricultural Extension

Botswana agriculture extension services provides training for farmers with the aim of promoting food production in the country because as observed by Osborn (1995) the crisis in African agriculture is reflected in its inability to provide food security for rural families and adequate food supplies for the growing urban populations. Since farmers are adults, it is through adult education that various programmes are run in order to meet their training exigencies. The training centres that are designed for farmers such as Denman Training Centre, which is situated in Sebele in the outskirts of the capital city of Botswana, has since it was founded played some pivotal role in providing adult education to farmers, so as to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for the enhancement of food production for food security (Sebadieta *et al*, 2017). As indicated by Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2008) The then Botswana College of Agriculture responded to the demands for the training of farmers by establishing a Centre for In-service and continuing Education (CICE) in 2000, aimed at providing short courses and continuing education courses on agriculture. It also develops and publishes materials on agricultural extension activities in Botswana.

The agricultural Demonstrators and veterinary officers have over the years provided adult education to farmers through various avenues, such as national radio broadcasts, workshops and kgotla meetings (traditional fora for decision making by communities). As noted by Frimpong Kwapong (2013):

There has always been a connection between adult education and agriculture. As a key traditional activity, agriculture is the mainstay of most economies in the world. Efforts have therefore been made over the years to keep the farmers and all people who work in the sector up to date with the needed information so that they can keep increasing their productivity. There is a strong relationship between adult education and agricultural development. One of the core wings of agriculture is extension service, which is the channel that links up to farmers and supports them to improve agricultural production.

It is important to mention that in Botswana as in other developing countries, adult education has played and continue to play some crucial role in providing farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills in an effort to improve food production. Linked to the provision of knowledge and skills to farmers are also the training of agricultural extension officers who serve to empower farmers through providing them with opportunities to know emerging farming methods and modern techniques that are necessary for increasing food production (UNDP, 2012). According to Rivera (2006) agricultural extension is generally considered by adult educators to be one of the many different providers of adult education. Agricultural extension's pragmatic, specialized content and its task-oriented field-directed methodologies for providing information and technology transfer is viewed as relevant for adult education.

In Botswana the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food Security has a long lasting relationship with the Department of Adult Education of the University of Botswana, which provides training for the extension officers in the use of best approaches in teaching adults. This is done directly through enrolment of agricultural extension staff on formal programmes such as Bachelor of Education (Adult Education) and through the Basic Extension Service Training (BEST) programme. As noted by Nafukho *et al*, (2005) in all African countries, ministries of agriculture have a major role to play in adult education efforts. Most African countries are primarily agricultural, and their economic development depends on improved agricultural methods and the introduction of new crops while improving on those already in existence. The veterinary and agricultural extension officers are all adult education teachers in this regard. It is important to note that what the aforementioned authors mentioned is relevant to what

obtains in Botswana's agricultural ministry, since it utilises adult education in training for improving food production.

Agriculture is an important vehicle for poverty eradication and human development and this connects very well with adult education, which cannot be divorced from human and sustainable development. As noted by Olinga and Lubyayi (2002) the importance of adult education in development cannot be overstated. Adult education is one of the pillars for sustainable development. In agreeing with Olinga and Lubyayi, it is notable that adult education is significant in food production on a sustainable basis, which is itself important in poverty eradication. It is so because the population should be well fed if it has to take active participation in the economic, political and social spheres of the national development process. What comes out clearly is that adult education cannot in anyway be detached from agriculture, because if people are to produce more food there is a need for them to know the best approaches that would enable them to realise that goal. It is through adult education that such approaches are often relayed. As observed by Frimpong-Kwapong (2013)

Agricultural extension contributes to improving the welfare of farmers and other people living in rural areas as programmes strengthen the farmers capacity to innovate by providing access to knowledge and information. It is important to note that farmers are adults and participate in any form of training on their own volition, hence the need to utilise adult education strategies, which acknowledge that non can participate in adult education without having made the positive choice to do so themselves (Illeris, 2004).

Extension today goes beyond technology transfer to facilitation, beyond training to learning, and includes assisting in the formation of farmer groups, dealing with marketing issues, addressing public interest issues in rural areas, such as resource conservation, monitoring of food security, and agricultural production, food safety, nutrition and family education. It is very important to note that what Frimpong-Kwapong (2013) advanced presents adult education as truly relevant for agriculture.

6.0 Department of Social and Community Development

The Department of Social and Community Development (S&CD) absorbs a significant number of graduates from both Departments of Adult Education and Social Work of the University of Botswana and other institutions such as Institute of Development Management (IDM). The development practitioners within S&CD are trained on community development, which is aimed at enabling them to train their beneficiaries on issues of development. As noted by Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2008) the Department of Social and Community Development is responsible for community and social welfare. It operates closely with Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), which focuses on people living in the remote and arid areas of Botswana by providing them with extension services like food rationing and community development projects, which include the keeping of cattle, small stock and feathered stock. The keeping of cattle and goats and provision of food to the needy requires a lot of training for the beneficiaries to deal with the ever present challenges that characterise the rearing of livestock for commercial reasons, with the aim of eradicating abject poverty. For instance, there are policies that guide farmers and practices that are important and cannot be ignored if animal husbandry is to be employed as an avenue for poverty eradication, such as control of animal diseases.

The provision of services by Social and Community Development is fundamentally geared towards the improvement of the living conditions of the underprivileged sections of the population, which necessitates adult education for knowledge provision, imparting of skills and attitudinal changes

that are necessary in the fostering of transformation. According to Ntshwarang *et al*, (2013) Community Development provides an effective method of service delivery as it involves the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population in decisions that intimately affect their way of life. It is important to note that people do make decisions that are informed if they are knowledgeable and skilful, hence the aptness of adult education in fulfilling the necessary requirements for knowledge provision through the Department of Social and Community Development.

Adult education helps people to acquire the vision, the knowledge, and the skills which are needed by them in their efforts toward community improvement (Adult Education, 1955). It helps them to understand more fully the process of community development, which is often described as a process of self-discovery by which people of a community learn to identify and solve their community problems.

7.0 Department of Roads Transport and Safety

The Department of Road Transport and Safety is one of the six (6) Departments within the Ministry of Transport and Communications that owes its existence to the reorganization of the Ministry back in the 1970's (Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC), 2011). The reason the Department has become the provider of adult education is influenced by the need to educate people about the importance of keeping the roads safe through their proper use. A lot of lives have been lost in the roads in Botswana, which has prompted the Department of Transport and Roads Safety to necessitate adult education in the fight against such carnage.

The Department has a significant number of officials who had training in adult education and employ apt techniques in their endeavour to make the public aware of the dangers associated with improper use of roads, such as drunken driving and using vehicles that are not road worthy. The understanding is that when people are educated about economic and social problems that are associated with accidents and bad behaviour on the roads in Botswana, they will refrain from such conduct and lives will be saved.

This concept is closely related to ROSAE project, which is aimed at improving road safety in Europe with a focus upon educating adults on issues such as the effects of alcohol, medicines and other substances on driving and responsible driver behaviour (e.g. the use of seatbelts and helmets) and important road safety measures (e.g. visibility on the road) the project is working with a range of adult educators, including driving instructors (European Projects (2005). It can be safely stated that adult education has provided valuable professionals who serve in the Department of Roads Transport and Safety in Botswana. It is with such expertise that the department continue to provide the necessary knowledge to the public on road safety, which fulfils the main objective of road safety education. According to OECD (1986) Road safety education is meant to achieve an optimal use of the transportation system with optimal safety for all road users, with the ultimate aim being to reduce the number of crashes and casualties.

8.0 Repositioning the discipline of adult education

The field of Adult Education can be instrumental in bringing change in the organisations, communities and nations. If political, economic, social and technological developments are to be enhanced and made accessible to majority of the people in Botswana or any other country for that matter, adult education should be utilised accordingly. Adult Education is the most germane vehicle for

development or empowerment of the ordinary people in both developed and developing countries. In Botswana it is evident that most organisations benefited and continue to benefit from Adult Education interventions, but this often happens without full understanding that it is positively impactful, partly because of its multidimensional nature.

Thus, it is clear that Adult Education is of highest utility in the areas of development and education, yet it is least understood and often mistaken for literacy provision, which is just a narrow component that deals with the learning of reading, writing and numeracy. The lack of understanding of what adult education is presents a challenge that has negatively affected the field for years in Botswana, with less opportunities being made available for the practitioners in the field. This lack of knowledge about the activities that adult education practitioners can do has often resulted in them getting ostracised and in some cases ridiculed.

In the recent past, the government did not provide scholarships for students who were admitted in the University of Botswana to read for Adult Education qualifications. This arrangement disadvantaged not only the students, but those organisations and communities that they would serve upon completion of their respective University of Botswana adult education programmes. An excellent example is that of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which through adult education practitioners could educate the communities about the electoral process to promote their participation in political decision making. The education of potential voters on how to vote and the importance of the process, could itself lead to the strengthening of democracy in the country. It is evident that through adult education training people who would otherwise be disenfranchised has some political value. The education of potential voters can reduce incidences of voter apathy and spoilt votes.

The provision of knowledge about the field of adult education is necessary and this calls for the capitalisation of relevant adult education entities such as Botswana Adult Education Association (BAEA), whose purpose is to provide some platform through which the adult education practitioners can actively take part in the development of Botswana. The Department of Adult Education of the University of Botswana should embark on sustainable measures to sensitize the government and other development agencies about adult education with particular reference to how it can empower communities and organisations with knowledge for economic, social, political and technological transformation.

9.0 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that adult education is provided by various departments in Botswana even those that are not aware that they function in that capacity. It is evident that the provision of adult education is valuable in transforming communities through organisations to become more knowledgeable, skilful and to possess apt attitudes that bring about the necessary changes in organisations and communities.

It is crystal clear that adult education is multidisciplinary and multidimensional, which means its utility is diverse and most important. What is most crucial to mention is that adult education employs various approaches and techniques to reach its clientele, which makes it more useful for most organisations.

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