An argument for the professionalization of literacy facilitators for quality education in Southern Africa

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Abstract

Training adult literacy facilitators is essential for in the delivery of quality literacy programmes. Such training underscores a commitment to literacy as a human right, a source of equity and social justice. Since the 1990s, Southern Africa has attended to literacy as part of regional commitment to the ideals of the Jomtien Declaration on education-for-all. This paper provides an overview of the region's literacy facilitator training policies. Based on the premise that facilitators are the fulcrum of quality literacy, the paper argues that it is regrettable that despite policy rhetoric, literacy facilitators receive little remuneration, are not considered as professionals and lack job security. The paper examines the nature of their training and concludes that they receive minimal training that is inadequate for transforming them into professionals and, as such, this compromises the quality of their service delivery. The paper recommends the use of participatory training methods, the involvement of NGOs in training, the hiring of facilitators on contract, and the co-training of adult literacy facilitators and primary school teachers.

Key words: literacy facilitators, inadequate training, professionalization, participatory training methods.

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Introduction

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report singled out Sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and East Asia and the Pacific as regions with the lowest literacy rates (UNESCO, 2006). The report noted that since independence, Southern Africa has experienced economic stagnation and regression, which were partly a result of the colonial mis-education and dubious policies promulgated by the African leadership. The UNESCO (2006) report associates illiteracy with extreme poverty, cultural, political and socio-economic disempowerment. It demonstrates that literacy is crucial to the delivery of essential life skills to enable disadvantaged children, youth and adults to address their life challenges. The report further suggests that countries need to adopt explicit literacy policies, scale up literacy programmes, provide rich literacy environments and, more importantly, adequate training for literacy teachers. I therefore argue that teacher training is a critical component of a comprehensive literacy policy. Southern Africa needs to train high quality adult literacy facilitators (ALFs) as a sign of its commitment to the provision of quality literacy education in line with the 1997 SADC Education and Training Protocol. The protocol views literacy education as a human right and its delivery as a source of equity and social justice, especially for minorities and all historically disadvantaged communities.

The 2000 Dakar World Education Forum reaffirmed the international commitment to education for all. The forum focused on the disadvantaged in each of its six goals. For example, it aimed to achieve 50 percent improvement in the level of literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (UNESCO, 2000). The drive to reduce adult illiteracy was also reinforced by the Millennium Development Goals adopted by a special United Nations assembly, which viewed adult literacy as essential for poverty reduction, and called on nations to strategically design education that would impact on the cultural, socio-economic and political life of the population, especially the poor (UNESCO, 2006).

Paradoxically, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report indicates that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty when assessed against the Human Development Index (HDI) – (according to UNDP, an acceptable HDI measure is characterized by experiencing a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living). The report noted

that deprivation in sub-Saharan Africa ranges from as low as 3 percent in South Africa to 93 percent in Niger. About half of the world's poor resides principally in South Asia, 51 percent (844 million people) and more than a quarter in Africa 28 percent (458 million). Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the slowest progress in human development because it is the epi-centre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic while countries in the former Soviet Union suffered increased adult mortality. It also indicated that HDI for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Zimbabwe, all of which are in Southern Africa, are worse off now than they were in 1970 (UNDP, 2011). It is against this backdrop that quality literacy, spearheaded by highly qualified teachers, needs to be delivered to reduce poverty and give SADC societies a better chance to improve their HDI, reduce HIV infections and transform their cultural, socio-economic and political situations. SADC countries need to formulate policies that are responsive to local contexts and take into cognizance issues of gender equality, reduction of absolute poverty and the attainment of equity.

The concept of literacy

Conceptually, there are two major views of adult literacy; namely, conventional and transformative literacy. The conventional approach tasks the state with engaging in planned development change, equates growth with efficiency and provides literacy as a welfare package. The programme is often centralized and literacy is not treated as an urgent matter. The curriculum is carefully defined in terms of what the elite consider permissible to be taught and the methods and materials are centrally prescribed. Literacy programmes under neo-liberal states like Botswana embody a powerful hegemonic block that dispenses 'time tested knowledge' that has to be 'legitimately' imparted to all sections of the society. However, because of social inequality, such programmes have failed to develop themes that resonate with the fears, hopes and aspirations of all people (Apple, 2009). The transformative approach, in contrast, frames literacy as intended for critical reflection and facilitates dialogue between teachers and learners (Maruatona, 2004). This approach assumes that literacy should empower learners, raise their consciousness, and help them take control of their lives. It attempts to balance positions of power between adult learners and teachers in order to facilitate personal and collective transformations (Apple, 2008).

This paper frames the training of adult literacy facilitators in Southern Africa within a critical education tradition, which appreciates that literacy is delivered within a context of unequal social power

relations. The ruling elite have control over cultural capital, which allows them some leverage over knowledge production. Arguably, knowledge is contested and negotiated within any existent socio-economic setting, and all its aspects need to involve all stakeholders (Maruatona 2006). First, the paper provides an overview of the policy frameworks for contexts of ALF training and its evaluation in SADC. Second, it looks at some enablers and challenges encountered in the training of facilitators. Then it suggests the use of participatory training methods for the involvement of qualified NGOs in teacher training. Finally, it recommends the use of contracts in the hiring of teachers and advocates for establishing equivalences between literacy and primary education teachers in Southern Africa.

The Southern African context

The Southern African sub-continent consists of fourteen countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC member states historically shared economic, political, social and cultural bonds based on the struggle against Apartheid South Africa. South Africa became independent in 1994 and SADC was formally launched to replace the Southern African Development Coordination Community (SADCC). SADC governments made an effort to improve the welfare of their people through providing education, health and other essential services.

In terms of data collection, I accessed some data on literacy training at varying levels from nine (9) SADC countries, excluding Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Madagascar, and Lesotho. These were left out of the sample because of lack of contacts, or language barriers or a combination of both. However, I trust that the sampled countries sufficiently represent the spectrum of adult literacy training in the sub-continent. In all these countries, the provision of literacy is considered a basic social service to be delivered to all citizens (Ellis, 2002). In pursuit of this ideal, member states signed the protocol on education and training, and in all these countries, adult literacy facilitators are viewed as performing a central role in the provision of literacy. Regrettably, policy frameworks on the training of facilitators are uncoordinated. Below, I discuss the training of literacy facilitators.

The training of literacy facilitators in SADC

The training of ALFs is considered to be indispensable in the provision of literacy education. The success or lack thereof exhibited by any literacy programme depends on the quality of its instructors. ALFs are essential for the attainment of national goals such as education for development and the provision of education for all as a human right (Torres, 2004). In most SADC countries, literacy is viewed as involving more than basic reading, writing and numeracy skills to addressing entire social issues in a holistic manner. It addresses issues of family planning, health care, civic responsibilities and socio-economic development, thereby requiring very versatile facilitators (Kishindo, 1992; Mudariki, 2002; Saadat, 1998). Consequently, all SADC countries have a desire to train ALFs as part of a wider regional intent to deliver quality literacy education. This ideal can be achieved through employing highly qualified trainers.

Trainers of adult literacy facilitators

In Botswana, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Namibia the training of adult literacy facilitators is carried out by various agents such as district or regional adult educators or by professional educators or officers responsible for literacy education. According to available evidence, the qualifications of the trainers of ALFs in the region vary according to the sponsorship of the programme. In most government literacy programmes, district level officers conduct the training of instructors and also are their immediate supervisors. The exception is in Zimbabwe where NGOs (Adult Learners of Zimbabwe Association) have been mandated to train teachers even for government programmes. The only time when teachers are trained by outside staff is when they are trained on participatory methods, such as the Regenerated Freirean Literacy Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT), which requires special skills that are not locally available. However, some conservative NGOs such as churches in Zambia are content with government trained teachers and primer materials in their programmes.

Most trainers have a Certificate, Diploma or Degree in Adult Education, or related field, from local universities. For example, in Botswana, adult literacy facilitators are mainly trained by certificate, diploma or degree holders in Adult Education from the Department of Adult Education, University of Botswana. The course exposes the trainers to courses such as Psychology of Adult Learning, Adult

Education and Society, Introduction to Adult Education and Practice, Planning Programmes for Adult Learners, History and Philosophy of Adult Education, Teaching Methods for Adult Education and Adult Education and the World of Work. None of these courses necessarily teaches them how to train literacy facilitators. They gain the experience of teaching adult learners in the field. The courses only expose them to essential educational principles.

The qualifications of trainers vary considerably. For instance, in Zimbabwe trainers require a Masters Degree while in Namibia they only require a Certificate in Education for Development, and some can study for a diploma by distance education. Some undergo training that ranges from a diploma to a doctorate at the University of Namibia in order to serve as ALFs certified trainers. They are also expected to have a basic knowledge of adult education (Ellis, 2002). Mozambique provides trainers with a taught course on Literacy Methodology. In South Africa, the state established qualifications for Adult Basic Education practitioners. The government established the Standards Generating Body (SGB) in 1999, which produced unit standards for four Adult Basic Education (ABET) qualifications. The standards were necessary for ensuring competence and quality of ABET practitioners and trainers (Mckay, Mokotong and Morr 2004).

Such training makes trainers professionals because in each country training is undertaken at universities either by the Department of Extra Mural Studies or the Department of Adult Education. Trainers acquire their training up to diploma level or further by distance education. In terms of status, they are full time employees of departments and/ or directorates responsible for literacy education. These have varying impact on the performance of these professionals but as the courses of university study they undertake indicate, they are exposed to ways of teaching adults and understanding the personality and characteristics of adult learners. It appears, therefore, that these professionals are competent to successfully train adult literacy facilitators.

Recruitment procedure, training and qualifications of ALFs

The recruitment of adult literacy facilitators (ALFs) across the region is based on the requisite qualifications. Participants are nominated by community leadership and professional educators. For example, in Botswana facilitators are recruited and trained by District Adult Education Officers of the Department of Out of School Education and Training.

They are trained to teach in Setswana, the only officially recognized medium of literacy instruction. The recruitment of literacy teachers in Botswana involves community gatherings (or *Kgotla* meetings) called by District Adult Education Officers to inform the community about the need to hire literacy facilitators. They work with chiefs and Village Development Committees (VDCs). The leadership is involved in recruitment because of their knowledge of potential trainees. The village leadership is provided with criteria for the selection of ALF facilitators (i.e. Standard Seven certificate or higher) in order for them to help with the selection of potential teachers. Each training session involves about 20 trainees per annum. Selected individuals are given initial training at the district level. The trainees are assessed, and if they fail, they are discontinued. Beyond the basic qualification, some are chosen for their loyalty to the village leadership (Maruatona, 2004). After training they are hired and paid a very small *honorarium* per session taught. Similarly, in Malawi, the community is involved in the recruitment because the community directly initiates the idea of establishing a learning centre. The Ministry of Community Services establishes it and is expected to select someone as an instructor (Kishindo, 1992).

Most literacy facilitators in the region do not have any previous experience in teaching literacy. They are exposed to initial training immediately after successful recruitment as volunteers. However, in Tanzania, Namibia and Swaziland primary school teachers are encouraged to teach adults as part-time staff after some training on principles of adult learning. However, these teachers use school-based and teacher-centred methods (Bhalalusesa, 2002). In all the cases, the trainers are not employed on a full time basis and are free to move off to greener pastures any time, which negatively impacts on the programmes. It is only in Namibia where literacy facilitators sign an annual contractual agreement with the Directorate of Adult Basic Education in the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture. This gives instructors the opportunity to test their interest and for their supervisors to test their commitment (Ellis, 2002). Overall, the recruitment of adult literacy facilitators depends on their level of education, recognition by the community or its leadership, and their ability to speak and write a local or national language. They are paid only a small *honorarium*. It is only in Namibia where they were reported to get N$409 in the 1990s (Bhola, 1995).

It is observed that in spite of active government involvement in all the countries, adult literacy facilitators are still not hired as civil

servants, but as volunteers. They are free to leave the programme at any time. This profoundly affects the quality of literacy education. For example, in Botswana and other countries, each time a teacher deserts the programme, the group either disbands or, if it does not disband, it takes a long time before a substitute teacher is found (Maruatona, 2006; Mwansa, 2002). This arrangement is convenient for the government because of the low budgetary allocation for basic and literacy education. However, it is a major constraint in the facilitation of adult literacy. The government seems to be unwilling to hire adult literacy facilitators on a pensionable basis, which leaves the adult literacy programme in a very unstable position; and this, in turn, threatens the quality of the delivery of literacy education.

Qualifications for adult literacy facilitators in Southern Africa vary from country to country. The average trainee qualifications range from seven to twelve years of schooling. For example, in Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique literacy teachers are required to at least Standard Seven Certificates. The highest qualification is in Zimbabwe, where instructors are required to have completed Form Four in secondary school. In Namibia, the recruitment policy requires Standard Eight followed by five years of experience as a teacher for those who are teaching at Stages One and Two. ALFs are also expected to have knowledge of the mother tongue used in their areas of future assignment. A Form Five certificate with at least 25 points is needed for those who intend to teach Stage 3 (Ellis, 2002). The facilitators' qualifications vary according to the level at which they are expected to teach. The challenge is that throughout SADC there is no systematic evaluation of trainee performance after training.

Initial and refresher training for adult literacy facilitators

One determinant of the quality of training is its duration. Facilitators are exposed to *initial training,* which varies considerably from an average of two weeks in Botswana, three weeks in Namibia and Mozambique to three months in Zimbabwe. Upon completion of their training, Zimbabwean adult literacy facilitators are awarded certificates. ALFs in Zimbabwe are exposed to an array of skills in the design and implementation of literacy education, and they work in both government and non-governmental organizations (Mudariki, 2002). In countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia instructors are trained to teach literacy by being exposed to the principles of teaching adult learners. After graduating, these volunteers are posted

to provinces and districts. In some cases, after training, the graduates are posted to a literacy provider, which may be the government or an NGO (Ellis, 2002). In Zimbabwe, NGOs such as the Adult Literacy Association of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) and the Zimbabwe Adult Learners' Association (ZALA) are responsible for the training of instructors who are then posted to both NGOs and government programmes (Mudariki, 2002). Zambia has a combination of government training programmes and those operated by NGOs (Mwansa, 2002). In contrast, Tanzania relies on trained volunteers and primary school teachers who teach on a part-time basis. Besides that, in both countries there is an extensive involvement of NGOs such as REFLECT and others who mostly train instructors in participatory methodologies. Such variations in training pose a challenge to quality control and consistency in the delivery of adult literacy programmes. However, the advantage is that trainers are exposed to a variety of methods that enable them to determine the histories and needs of communities, and this reduces government hegemony over literacy delivery. For example, in Zambia there are over 40 NGOs involved in the provision of adult literacy and they train their own facilitators and also use state trained ones (Mwansa, 2002).

After the initial training, facilitators in different regions are provided with follow-up refresher training sessions. Such refresher training is labelled differently in different contexts but the sessions are aimed at providing further skills to the instructors and to update their knowledge after a year or so of practice. For example, in Botswana refresher training is carried out each year and focuses on problems which literacy teachers encountered during their teaching. The participating ALFs help each other come up with solutions to teaching and administrative challenges in order to enhance their performance. Before each refresher training, the training team meets ALFs and those who supervise them to establish their teaching problems. Evaluation is limited to the observation of the ALFs after the training courses. In terms of regularity of training, each person has to have a refresher training session for one to two weeks once a year, around June.

Literacy teachers in Tanzania are exposed to short-term refresher training course per year (Bhalalusesa, 2002). In Namibia, each literacy facilitator is required to spend one Saturday a month at a refresher session to be taught new skills and be provided with up to date modes of literacy delivery (Ellis, 2002). It seems, therefore, that in many SADC countries adult literacy facilitators are provided with refresher courses or short-term courses aimed at enhancing the quality their teaching.

What is not clear, though, is the quality of the content of the refresher courses. In some cases, such as in Botswana, it is extremely vague, and the agenda is centred on problems encountered in teaching. There is also lack of a clear direction for such training.

Content, methods and techniques of training ALFs

Across the region, there are differences in the content, methods, and techniques offered to ALF trainers. In Malawi for example, trainers use a conventional method where adult literacy facilitators are taught to teach learners to read vowels, syllables and to use them to construct words and sentences. The facilitators are taught to engage in discussions based on key words. The key word is identified by the trainees and they are expected to use it as the basis for class discussions. The trainees are then expected to use the same approach with their learners in their own classes (Kishindo, 1992). This method affects the potential for adult literacy facilitators to be innovative as it prescribes all aspects of their work. As they are being trained, facilitators take notes on how to teach and are only allowed to ask very few questions. Botswana operates a conventional literacy programme where ALFs are trained to use different methods because they use different teaching materials ranging from prescribed primers to data booklets containing useful information on HIV/AIDS or booklets imparting skills needed for income generating projects. The weakness of such an approach is that training that confines literacy facilitators to the use of the primers does not encourage participatory learning but fosters memorization of key syllables and words. Zimbabwean instructors, in contrast, are taught the basic skills of teaching reading, writing and numeracy as well as designing and implementing functional literacy projects (Mudariki, 2002). In Mozambique the training exposes instructor trainees to participatory methods such as REFLECT, as well as analytic and synthetic method of teaching (Laurindo, 2005).

It has not been easy to determine the exact methods used in all SADC countries, but in Botswana facilitators mostly deliver literacy skills to passive learners. Where trainees are trained to use REFLECT, and other transformative approaches, they learned these during training. For example, Saadat, (1998) noted that in Zanzibar, ALFs use different methods guided by active participation such as discussion following a demonstration by the teacher and this forms the basis for discussions. NGOs use participatory and community-based methods. The trainees are taught to engage learners in discussions of their problems to generate

lessons for class based on training manuals. It can be argued, therefore, that the choice of method seems to depend on whether the programme was conventional, (delivers prescribed knowledge) or transformative (facilitates human empowerment).

Training by NGOs concentrates on determining the content according to the needs of trainees. Instructors are exposed to a variety of skills in effective collection and dissemination of development information. They cover critical topics such as active citizenship, civic responsibilities, combating HIV/AIDS, family planning, women empowerment, nutrition and entrepreneurship. Trainees are taught to engage in constructive adult group discussions in class, critical use of everyday information from the media and the learners' everyday life experiences. In Namibia, the content teaches them to be studious learners and critical animators rather than teachers whose job is to convey 'time tested knowledge' (Bhola, 1995).

Evaluation of adult literacy facilitators

In spite of the importance of literacy instructors in literacy education there is a dearth of data on their evaluation. The evaluation is done indirectly, especially in a few countries such as Botswana, which conducts ten year literacy surveys. This helps the nation to indirectly assess the impact of the training of literacy facilitators. There are usually some questions incorporated into the overall evaluation regarding the effectiveness of literacy facilitators. For example, in 1987, Botswana conducted an evaluation of the National Literacy Programme and concluded that the teachers were not innovative in their approaches. The 1993 and 2003 National Literacy Surveys, also noted that facilitator training does not help ALFs to interrogate the prescribed methods in the *Teacher's Guide*. According to the survey, the prescription left little room for the ALFs to broaden discussions, which also restricted their creativity (UNESCO, 2004).

In 2004 the Botswana Government commissioned UNESCO to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the literacy programme. This involved extensive observations of class sessions. The evaluation concluded that ALFs did not encourage interaction with the whole group by providing explanations and by facilitating dialogue through democratic discussions. Instead, they primarily resorted to question-answer sessions where learners reacted to the ALFs impulses. Consequently, discussions among learners were absent. The only source

of activity was the teachers' use of flashcards to encourage learner interaction (UNESCO, 2004).

Overall, in different countries there was no systematic way to determine the impact of facilitators - it could only be deduced from comments made about their performance from survey interviewees. For example, in Malawi, Chimombo and Chiuye (2002) observed that the conventional method of teaching did not actively involve the learners and, by contrast, NGOs such as the International Development Agency from Iceland and Action Aid, UK used the REFLECT approach, which actively engaged learners in the analysis of their lives. Bhalalusesa (2002) indicated that in Tanzania the programme relied on volunteers and part-time primary school teachers who had proven to be unsuitable for effectively engaging adult learners. The conclusion was that in spite of the various efforts to train facilitators, there was insufficient evidence on the actual impact of teacher training programmes.

Future directions in ALF training

There are certain practices which are considered to be exemplary and innovative in the training of ALFs in some countries, which other SADC nations could adopt. These include the use of participatory methods in training facilitators, engaging NGOs in training, considering hiring of literacy facilitators on contracts and creating linkages in the training of literacy and primary school teachers. I discuss below the way these approaches work.

Participatory methods in ALFs training

The training of ALFs in SADC needs to adopt participatory methods to enhance the quality of its trainees. One of the major innovative strategies in facilitator training in Southern Africa is the use of participatory methodologies such as REFLECT. It uses integrative Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique and the Freirean approach to generate literacy materials. It was used with very positive outcomes among communities in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda between1993-1995 and has since been implemented with varying degrees of success in a number of African states by governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The approach engages learners in all aspects of the learning process and enhances their ownership of programmes. It has been used

to improve literacy delivery as part of conventional and transformative literacy programmes (Chimombo and Chiuye 2002). It has benefited programmes in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia through enabling learners to create meaningful connections between their learning, actions and concepts, thereby increasing their understanding of complex issues. The only limitation is that REFLECT has not been tried on a national scale to establish its impact (Riddell, 2001). In spite of this limitation, it is argued that its strengths far outweigh its limitations and, if adopted, REFLECT could help improve the quality of trainees and their future delivery as facilitators.

Engaging NGOs in ALFs Training

The training of ALFs seems to vary considerably in the region, and governments seem to be unable to deliver quality facilitators compared to those trained by NGOs. For example, in Zimbabwe the training of ALFs is done by NGOs, and this relieved the government of the burden of training ALFs. The trainees gained acceptance in government circles and are hired in both government and NGO literacy programmes. One feature of NGO trainers is that they are highly competent and experienced. For example, NGO trainers in Zimbabwe deliver quality training, which has enhanced the performance of its national literacy programme, making its citizens the most literate in the whole of SADC.

NGO-based training facilitates lively discussions on issues affecting learners in their daily lives. For example, REFLECT training in Malawi is done by NGOs and it focuses on the use of Paulo Freire's theory to raise consciousness among disadvantaged communities. The process draws from the learners' life experiences and realities. The topics taught during the training may include HIV/AIDS, gender equality, forests, clinics, homes and gardens (Chimombo and Chiuye, 2002). The NGO trainers need to adopt participatory techniques to strengthen the quality of their trainees and raise the profile of their training organizations and assist trainees to help learners to effectively address life's challenges**.**

The use of the contract for hiring teachers

The practice of hiring literacy teachers on a contract basis in Namibia needs to be adopted in the region to overcome the challenges of teacher exodus from literacy programmes. The benefits of such a move is that a

programme with contracted staff guarantees availability of facilitators, and addresses the challenge most countries experience where trained facilitators leave in large numbers, and desert classes to seek greener pastures elsewhere, which can lead to learners being de-motivated. While appreciating the financial challenges faced by governments, it would be worthwhile to selectively hire some facilitators on contract terms to guarantee the retention of facilitators who are doing outstanding work. This would also ensure continuity in the provision of literacy, especially in rural and remote areas. This would also help governments to evaluate the performance of facilitators over time. Contracts would help programmes to constantly have a pool of well-trained and committed ALFs and this would guarantee quality given that such teachers would be constantly trained, re-trained and evaluated to enhance the delivery of literacy education in SADC.

However, sceptics like Bhulalusesa (2002) question whether the argument that adult literacy facilitators should be hired on a full time basis employment is persuasive. But my contention is that his argument fails to appreciate that it is difficult for facilitators to commit themselves to a long-term engagement in their present volunteer status. SADC nations need to consider using multiple approaches such as hiring some staff on contract basis, or even hiring the best of them on a pensionable basis when the regional economic situation improves, to ensure that it uses high calibre staff to deliver quality literacy education.

Creating multiple progression pathways in the system

SADC nations need to seriously consider linking literacy facilitator training to that of primary education trainers so that facilitators could be flexible and move between the systems depending on their life exigencies and the needs of their programmes. SADC needs to adopt the approach used in Zanzibar where both primary school teachers and those trained for adult literacy programmes are exposed to principles and strategies of adult learning (Saadat, 1998). The strength of this approach is that it facilitates the delivery of family literacy, which motivates parents to learn with their children. It also circumvents challenges such as lack of resources for adult learning by using well adapted school teachers on a part-time basis. At times trained teachers could move between the systems depending on their circumstances such as the need to be transferred to rural or urban areas to join their families. Also, it would encourage the much desired shared use of resources between formal and non-formal education.

Creating open career pathways between primary and literacy education would serve the region well through optimum use of limited resources. Evidence suggests that quality teaching and learning depends on the professionalization of facilitators (Torres, 2004). Investing in quality facilitators is imperative if SADC is to successfully meet some of the objectives of its 1997 Education and Training Protocol. Adopting and modifying some of these innovative methodologies, resorting to flexible and innovative hiring practices such as the use of contracts and creating progression pathways for trained staff between primary and literacy education programmes would improve the delivery of quality literacy education in Southern Africa.

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