The Criticality of Adult Education in the Matrix of Development

Pasipanodya Taddious Morgan[1], Mufunani Tungu Khosa[2]

[1]*Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Zimbabwe Open University*
[2]*Senior Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University*

*Corresponding Author: *Pasipanodya Taddious Morgan,* Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Zimbabwe Open University*

Abstract: *Governments, the world over, invest heavily in the formal education of children from the early years. In an ideal situation, a child is expected to go through the primary system of education, transit to the secondary level and finally to the tertiary level. Tertiary education is geared more toward professional or vocational specialization of an individual while the primary and secondary education,, to varying degrees, deal with basic and general aspects of knowledge which every educated person should have. Given what has been noted with regard to the contextualised nature of adult education in terms of both the definition and the aims, it is not easy to fit adult education into a hierarchy of levels. Instead, scholars recognize that adult education exists in a variety of forms and this is evidenced by the different terms used to refer to adult education programmes. These terms include evening classes, mature entry programmes, out-of-school education, literacy programmes and agricultural extension. Others include in-service training, distance education and non-formal education. Most of these terms point to variations in how adult education is understood*

Keywords: *Relationship, adult, quality, educational experiences, satisfaction levels*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO (2016) 'Education is a powerful driver of development and is one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.' Education contributes to development by transforming individuals. Through education, people become empowered and their capacities for innovation and productivity are enhanced for their participation in the social, economic and social aspects of society. This means that an educated person is not a recipient of development programmes but a critical and dynamic participant in the development of society. Jinna and Maikano (2014) note that the potential benefits of adult education are multi-dimensional adding that the contribution of adult education to development to society happens at the intersection of the social, economic, political and cultural determinants of progress in any society. The social benefits of adult education range from improved sanitation, health care and nutrition in the wider population to reduced mortality rates. The major economic benefit of adult education is the development of human capital: individuals get skill and knowledge that make them productive and thus dynamic partners in development efforts rather than just passive recipients. This is critical if African countries such as Somaliland are to move from a donor centred development paradigm to one anchored in the innovativeness and hard work of the African people. The potential political benefits are equally significant. Peace and political stability have been elusive on the African continent and this has stifled all other efforts at development. This can partly be explained by the fact that the cultivation of an environment where peace can thrive, the inculcation of values of tolerance and acceptance of diversity as well as the strengthening of democratic ideals can effectively be done within adult education programmes. Finally, in a world that is increasingly becoming global, local communities can only retain their traditional values and customs through conscious efforts that seek to highlight these values and the threat modernity poses to them. Education remains the key. Moreover, there is always the danger of individuals and whole communities being left behind due to rapid developments in technology. Adult education programmes can help ensure that all in society are updated of scientific and technological developments that affect their lives. If all these are the potential benefits emanating from investing in adult education, one would expect that African governments give priority to its provision.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A good quality education arises from the interaction between three inter-related enabling environments: policy, the university, and the home and community. Creating enabling environments requires a mix of inputs such as financial resource, human resources in the form of lecture and manager, subject matter content and processes like the teaching/ lecturing and learning that interact to produce desired outcomes. Such as a competent secondary school teacher in the case of this study. What the mix might be for a particular context can only be determined through continuous monitoring and evaluation. Existing evidence suggests the following quality inputs such as infrastructure, lectures and content delivered and content delivery through lectures and feedback provision and student interaction during tutorials as processes are particularly significant.
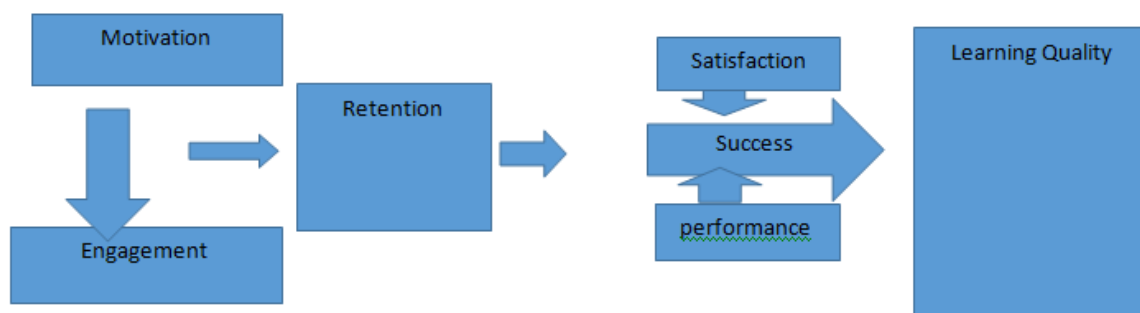
Figure1. *Conceptual framework*

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within human capital approaches, a good quality education is associated with cognitive achievement and improvements in scores in standardized tests.

3.1. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

According   to (Mezirow, 2016; Cranton, 2018) transformative learning is the process of effecting changes in a frame of reference. In this theory , adults coherent body of experience, associations, concepts , values conditioned responses and feelings which define the world in which live are considered. The frame of reference are structures of assumptions through which our experiences are understood. They help in shaping and delimiting   expectations, perceptions and cognition and feelings. These frames of reference set lines of action triggering motion from one specific activity to another. This theory alludes to four processes of learning. First is the view that one process is to elaborate on existing point of view, the second is that we learn to establish new points of view and the third way is that we learn is to transform our point of view. For example, one can have an experience of another culture that might result in critical reflecting of one's culture.

Mezirow, (2016) acknowledges that transformative learning engages learners in thinking as autonomous and responsible agent which is essential for full citizenship in democracy and moral decision making in situation of rapid. This is good fit for the purposes of post graduate learners whose programme is rapid and the fast changing environment they work in, especially in the advent of fast technological changes taking place. In the light that the post graduate learners are undertaking professional development in order to respond to inherent practical needs of teaching like the transformative learning theory one of the   relevant theories through which one can analyse the learning quality of adult learners.

The choice of the transformative theory as one of the lenses that can be used for analysing and measuring the perceptions adult learners in post graduate programmes is to that:

It is situated in the adult education context and therefore speaks well to a range of adult learners characteristics, among which include, experiential learning, immediacy of application of knowledge and skills, autonomous and self-directed learning, (Boyer, 2020).

Fosters critical reflective thinking, imaginative problem posing and discourse learner, participative and interactive and involves group problem solving, Mezirow (2016). It also promotes   discovery learning.

It aligns well with other processes of the this study, that is the research questions and methodology

3.2. Human Capital Approach (1948)

The second theory which the study will use in combination with the transformative learning is the Human Capital Theory (HCT). It focuses on human capital which is defined as combined knowledge, skill, innovativeness, and ability of the company's individual employees to meet the task at hand, (Kucharčíková, 2011). Some scholars and researches criticize mainly for a having linear pathway on the complex passage between heterogeneous education and work. However, it has its strength in that it receives a lot of interest from academic who feel they want to uncover the jigsaw that links education and the labour market. Xu (2018) argues that:

"…… although it is an old school of thought, it remains relevant in the education context because the fourth industrial revolution is building on the third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the last century, it is characterized by a fusions of technologies is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres."

This theory is relevant to this study because it makes reference to the fact that people go to school, a training course of teaching in this case because they hope to strengthen their economic base.

3.3. Human Rights-based Approaches (1948)

This basically takes the human based approach and focuses on the policy of taking everyone on including adults as they are perceived to contribute a lot in social and economic development. When looked at from the adult education context this theory provides a lens to analyse quality in adult education the light of sustainable development goal 4. Its relevance to this study is that it alludes to the need to re-look whether or not we are on track regarding adult education outcomes and how adult education as a field of study and practice is preforming, (Stanistreet, 2019)

3.4. Empirical Evidence on Perceptions of Students on Quality

Under this section, empirical studies on perceptions of students on quality will be examined in order to bring out current trends and identify gaps in theory and practice.

3.5. Student Perceptions of Quality in Developed Countries

There is abundant literature on studies that explored students' perceptions of quality in online course, for example, (Zlateva, 2014; Young & Norgard, 2016). In the past two decades researchers have had an interest on the perception of adult learners regarding quality and their learning. In New Zealand, Wilson (2017) undertook a study to examine the best practices in supporting tutors in academic quality and found out tutors with more experience would benefit from regular clear constructive feedback and these tutors needed support during any programme changes.Within the context of Global report on Adult learning and Education (GRALE 4), Stanistreet (2019) states that, putting the learner at the centre acknowledges the importance of supporting the adult learners' needs hopes and expectations if quality is to be achieved in adult education. Other researchers like Seyoum and Basha (2017) analyzed the extent to which andragogy serves as a means to achieve quality in adult education and found out that the implementation of active methods was not satisfactorily done. This implies that both the processes done and the outcomes had some gaps which, if addressed, will raise the quality of adult education instruction as well as the outcomes. An analysis of the above reveals two important points to take note of. First, there is an acknowledgement that contrary to the general assertion that there is lack of quality in in adult education initiatives is on one hand dismissed because inherent in the argument above is evidence of quality management in practice within the field of adult education. On the other hand it is plausible to suggest that an argument may be advanced that if the implementation of active adult education instructional methods are yielding desired results and the process is flawed, then it is justified to make claim that there is lack of quality in adult education initiatives. l would prefer you use short sentences which are clearer. It is very difficult to follow your point in these unnecessarily long sentences.

Martin, Wang and Sadaf (2018) examined a study on student perception on the helpfulness of twelve different facilitation strategies used by instructors on establishing instructor presence, instructor connection, engagement and learning. The finding of the study revealed that instructor's presence and

facilitation are crucial in helping students to engage in their courses and brings about higher levels of learning, which in the light of this study may be considered as a quality dimension. Yet again, we see evidence that illustrates the level of effort towards addressing quality in adult education. Thus, it is justified and plausible to suggest that quality in its various manifestations or and as a proxy has an influence on student engagement and helps to influence from a perceptive point of view.

Mubayrik (2020) acknowledges the need to do a pre-assessment of learners' perspectives and attitudes in Distance Learning (DL) if the delivery of such teaching and learning mode is to be used with adult learners. The pre-assessment will assist in providing learners' needs and expectations so that the facilitator will give adequate support and facilities.

There is a lot of work that has been documented on the perception of adult learners regarding engagement, motivation, retention, performance, satisfaction and completion rates and general quality learning.

3.6. Empirical Studies on Quality in Adult Education

This section will focus on some empirical studies on engaging adult learners to improve the quality of Adult education with a particular emphasis on PGDE pre-service adult learners' perceptions and experiences. This discussion is divided into three parts. The first part will focus on trends of adult education and quality in developed countries and will cover, USA, England, Scandinavian countries. The second part will look at Asia. The third Africa and Zimbabwe.

McCallum and Constance (2012) conducted a study to examine the relationships between adult learners and educational experiences and their satisfaction levels. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between adult learners' educational experiences and their satisfaction levels, the study revealed that with their educational experiences by recognizing the differences within the adult learner population.

Wang and Garansiri (2019) conducted a study on the perspectives of adult learners on the effect of digital and mobile technology on continuing education activities and the findings of their study revealed that technologies emerged as important resources supporting the self-directed learning of health and human service profession.

Mezirow (2016) looked at business and academic quality basing his research on seminal learning themes, on learning quality and academic persistence with the hope of establishing core components in higher education to determine the effects of these components. The results were significant and suggested that academic quality can be used to predict student's intention to persist. In addition the study found out that adult learners rated both the academic quality of their programme and their intention to persist

Mezirow (2016) undertook a study to examine quality indicators for web-based adult education by gathering data from a sample of adult educators. The study found out that there were six quality dimensions for web based adult education: instruction, administrative recognition, advisement, technical support, advance information and student input.(Cranton, 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is worth mentioning that in a world that is increasingly becoming global, local communities can only retain their traditional values and customs through conscious efforts that seek to highlight these values and the threat modernity poses to them. Education remains the key. Moreover, there is always the danger of individuals and whole communities being left behind due to rapid developments in technology. Adult education programmes can help ensure that all in society are updated of scientific and technological developments that affect their lives. If all these are the potential benefits emanating from investing in adult education, one would expect that governments, especially in developing countries should give priority to its provision.

REFERENCES

Brookfield, S. (1984). *Adult Learners, Adult Education and the Communityaa*. London: McGraw-Hill Education

Cranton, M. P. (2021). *Enhancing risk management skills at a municipality using an adult education approach* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).

Jina L.H. B.& Maikano L. (2014). *The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: a holistic measurement approach, Studies in Higher Education*, 46:6, 1207-1224, DOI: 10.1080/030750 79.2019.1672647.

Kucharcikora, G. K. (2011). Quality in higher education from different perspectives: a literature review. *International journal for quality research*, *11*(1), 17.

McCallum, Constance L., "*The Perception of Adult Learners Concerning their Satisfaction of Their Educational Experiences in a Midwestern Community College*" (2012). Dissertations. 30. https://scholarworks. wmich.edu/dissertations/30

Mezirow, T.A. How do learners view adult education? Women learners' perception on the Ethiopia's adult education programme. Heliyon. 2022 Apr 12;8(4): e09272. doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon. 2022.e09272. PMID: 35497043; PMCID: PMC9038553.

Mubayrik, M. (2020). Limitations of human capital theory, Studies in Higher Education, 44:2, 287-301, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2017.1359823

Sadaf, J. (2018). *The Relationship Between Student Engagement and Student Retention of Adult Learners at Community Colleges* (Doctoral dissertation, Franklin University.

Stanistreet, R. D. (2019). Human Capital Theory in Respect to Cultural, Digital Implications and Integrated Communication. *Ovidius University Annals, Economic Sciences Series*, *21*(2), 527-531.

Wang, M. Y. & Garansiri, B. (2019). *Quality Improvement of Early Primary Education in Ethiopia: A Mixed Methods Study of Save the Children Supported Schools in Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regions* (Master's thesis).

Wilson , A. (2020). COVID 19–school leadership in disruptive times. *School Leadership & Management*, *40*(4), 243-247.

Xu, S. (2018). Students 'perceptions about a distance learning programme: A case of the open, distance and E-learning programmes. London: Longman.

Young, A. & Nogard, R. (2016). University students' perceptions of the learning environment and academic outcomes: implications for theory and practice. *Studies in Higher education*, *27*(1), 27-52.

Žlateva, R. (2014). Managing higher education in Lithuania: new challenges in the new millenium. *Pedagogika*, 24-28.