Inclusion and Effectiveness in Adult Education and Orientation in Less Developed Countries: Case Study of Cameroon

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Abstract Concepts of Adult education and orientation remain conspicuously absent in the curriculum at all levels of education in Cameroon. This situation has obscured the understanding of complex efforts on connecting adult education to the increasing adoption of a widening range of educational services and mechanisms that would lead to more effective and adequate results .This paper sets to redefine adult education through the lens of Less Developed Countries (LDCs) in general and the Cameroon context in particular. The paper equally underscores the pertinence of the implementation of a twin-track scholarly and community approaches to speed up development in LDCs.

Introduction

The changing dynamics of long life learning obscures an understanding of how the requirements of community development are to be met under the new and increasing technological changes in education. Building on the works of Kapoor (2007) and others, this article is a path model of connecting adult education to the increasing adoption of a widening range of educational services and mechanisms that would lead to more effective and adequate results oriented objectives. It sets to redefine adult education through the lens of Less Developed Countries (LDCs) in general and the Cameroonian context in particular. The paper equally underscores the pertinence in the implementation of a twin-track scholarly and community approaches to speed up development in LDCs. By applying a cross cultural analysis frame, the paper will be contributing to a better understanding of the fundamental changes in the nature and goals of adult education under conditions of de-centralisation and de-nationalisation.

National Policy on Adult education

Basing on the present state of adult education in Cameroon, it is worth mentioning that there is no national policy that clearly articulates the purpose and objectives of adult education. Though still considered largely to be a government issue, none of the seven state universities in Cameroon run adult education programs. The communities have been socialized to thinking that adult education is of sub standards, good only for school-drops or the marginalized groups and this justifies why only Non Government Organizations (NGOs) carry out adult education

projects in Cameroon. These programs offered by NGOs are not much likely to succeed because there is no custom of non-governmental education in Cameroon, and since NGO programs including those on adult education depend on grants from institutions to operate, adult education, supposedly to display continuity is caught by the syndrome of no longevity. This explains why sub Saharan African countries have been very slow to progress since the 1990s with very little innovations in connection with adult education.

In an era of increasing globalization, adult education would have significant potentials to contribute to achieving development goals, if inadequacies in organizational and administrative skills are adjusted to create avenues for participating in democratization processes and to ensure that meaningful and long lasting values are sustained. In the Cameroonian context, new avenues consist of stimulating and organizing for natural resources. If the management of natural resources is directly linked with the people, it creates a holistic concept of development.

Sustainable development can only be meaningful if it is framed locally. That is development concepts are conceived using international languages (English, French Spanish etc) which over the course of time have gained unquestionable strength within the global context through the technological influence they have over less powerful linguistic codes usually refereed to as local languages. Whereas concepts of development are based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interaction, LDCs operate under specific conditions that are context bound commonly known as a sociocultural context. Our argument is that , it is through language and culture that the operational values of mindset of a community is established and reflected in their ways of thinking ,behaving and interacting with the outside world. The concepts of sustainable development as experienced in LDCs as of now does not take this into consideration. Whereas this is fundamental in creating a sense of belonging which enhances awareness, or a sense of not belonging which engenders dejection and non commitment. It is along this paradigm that the whole process of emancipatory education operates in Cameroon

Rethinking Adult Education for LDCS
Our concept of adult education for LDCs is going back to the community levels to engage and renovate sensational agriculture projects. It would be important to create a holistic approach by involving Universities to validate the concepts created by communities while NGOs provide capacity building and journalists disseminate well packaged information so that policy makers should recognize agriculture as the heart of the economy. As statistics hold, 85% of Cameroonian depend on agriculture for livelihood and 80% of their produce is exported, yet less than 4% of air time Radio/television programs in agriculture. We hear of sports reporters, crime wave, annalist , political desk specialists but nothing on agriculture reporting, yet demonstration techniques are easy to learn when they are seen on video communicated as often to the people.

Developing an interconnected framework where institutions network with communities will enable NGOs, and journalists via information technology to collectively participate in decision making wherein, a mechanism is built up using the most powerful tool to intensify the process of emancipatory education. This will stimulate and relocate paradigms that adult education should explore if the ultimate objective of change must be achieved. The bilingual nature of Cameroon requires certain adjustments within such a frame work. Training in cross-cultural communication will open further channels of development towards well-being of people and ecosystems through endogenous development practices. Power balance in the sub region and Cameroon in particular is an impediment for effective development. In resorting to a participatory decision making approach, issues of gender imbalance, customs and tradition, often

criticized in the management of human capital end up as community assets on which adult education can successfully build.

If development is a generic term, why rethink it? From our perception, development as it is conceived by the North is wrapped up in a generic concept of improving on the living conditions and building infrastructure in the LDCs. Basing their experiences either consciously or unconsciously to what earlier happened to the West and the solutions applied to achieve successful results, Northern development leaders inadvertently created a form of neo-colonialism in their concept approach to the problems of the South. It must have been in their thinking that the same approach will work in the South forgetting that approaches developed by European workers in the course of their history cannot just be imposed on a community with its own cultural specificity. There is every reason to think that such an approach will face a real dilemma which only the people of the South have the solution.

The colonial legacy of the English or the French language keeps reminding communities of their cultural alienation. They perceive the imposition of colonial languages as cognitive imperialism with a damaging impact as it colonizes the entire thinking process thus colonizing the mind and reducing them to a permanent state of mental slavery. This has induced psychological struggles encapsulated in the process of development. It will be illogical to think that communities will react in the same way as English and French colonists did under similar conditions because people come from different world views.

Much has been done by the West in terms of development projects or programs in favour of the South, yet the results are amazingly catastrophic - The Mali Sud IFAD funded project, British aid to Bangladesh, and the World Bank road infrastructure project in Ethiopia.(Madeley,1991) or the PASSOC European Union program in Cameroon. What can account for such a situation? Has it ever occurred to the western NGOs and development activists to offer solidarity and support to forms of struggles that differ from those which have developed in the West? Would it not be rational to acknowledge that perhaps other forms of opposition to injustice, alternative ways of envisaging and seeking liberation must be allowed to emerge from the cultural depths of Africa, from their way of thinking and from their way of projecting their future? These are some of the rhetoric questions that brought us to proposing that the concept of development for LDCs be given a second thought.

The literature devoted to project development and implementation minimize the importance of endogenous knowledge and culture. Verhelst (1990) asserts that on a complementary report compiled by a consortium of NGOs on the agricultural problem in Latin America, one south American researcher wrote the following reflection :

How long will the West continue to believe itself involved in an act of charity towards the third Word?...Whilst the North got rid of its industrial surplus and got back three dollars for every dollar lent, and now, it is to "feed" it.(p. 79)

Indigenous Knowledge as a Concept of Community Development

Indigenous cultures have within them knowledge accountable enough to give rise to communities which differ from the universal concepts claimed by western ideology. Boukema, E. & McIntyre,V.(2006) hold the opinion that innovative development approaches based on indigenous thinking have worked in many areas of the world. In Cameroon for example "Le Service d'Etude et d'Ananimation pour le Development" has brought to light new forms of self management and experiments in alternative development. Its founders -Jean Marc Ela and Achille Mbemba, in close contact with villagers who master the indigenous forms of knowledge

systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life have come up with a host of indigenous initiatives (micro projects) that are thriving well without any external funding. These are self financing institutions responding to emergencies, yet are unknown to traditional NGO's. These new types of initiatives are embedded in indigenous knowledge and the understanding of development from the lens of the communities they serve. The utilization of local resources creates a new relationship between culture and development. This is an example to show that if Africans in general and indigenous communities in particular were given   opportunities to carry out reflections and channel information at global level, they will prove their worth. Unfortunately, the lack of reflections and information explains the drying up of creative thinking in Africa. Indigenous people have skills and values which are assets and constitute a force for community driven initiatives. In these initiatives, people see themselves as benefiting from the outcomes and strive to keep it sustainable. Community talks, which are multiple generation discussions in their own language contain pedagogical insights of "how action affects realities." Such ways of knowing as Kincheloe & Steinberg (2006,p.94) in *Indigenous knowledge in education* put it, they "contribute so much to the educational experiences" but because of the rules of evidence and the dominant epistemology of western knowledge production, "such understanding are deemed irrelevant by academic issues raised about the nature of our existence, consciousness, knowledge production and the globalized imperial future that brings all people of the planet today is a challenge to western claim of knowledge."

Colonial Languages and Development in LDCs

The cardinal role that language plays in development has already been assessed. Development takes place in a community, it starts from the level of conception before moving on to implementation. The conception is first thought of at the virtual level in a particular language. The channel through which the thought process is carried out is very important in determining the successful implementation and management of the whole process.

Colonial legacies are projected through the language we speak professionally as opposed to our local languages. In the case of Cameroon, the English/French which today are considered a colonial force is still being exercised to silence communities in all aspects. It is taught throughout the educational system in Cameroon, used as the official language and considered the language of the civilized elites. This situation makes it very difficult for the national languages to cope with the power and influence this colonial languages have impacted on the communities. While some cultures (mostly Asians) have developed their local languages to the level of almost equal strength with the English/French languages, most African communities are still struggling under the yoke of colonial language forms. Medeley (1999) sees this situation as highly conflicting with the local language and culture through which peoples' life concepts are developed and passed over from generation to generation. By implication, the use of colonial language creates a kind of sociocultural imbalance and cultural alienation. This constant feeling of being culturally alienated creates psychosomatic trauma that are manifested in very unpredictable manners. Keyton (2005) argues that local religious concepts and traditional rites linked with spirituality is being greatly damaged by western concepts of Christianity. This situation is reflected in communities which still want to stick to their traditional forms of worships. The Bansoh community of the North West Region is an example of a community in Cameroon where traditional beliefs are in high conflict with the western religion. The return to a state of psychological balance requires that communities work in favour of their cultural heritage wherein the feeling of belonging and the sense of participating in the life of the community is

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heightened through the use of endogenous knowledge embedded in the local language. This is seen as the only way to liberate a people from the grip of colonial masters. The dramatic progress in development witnessed in China, Korea, India today is logically linked to the development of their language and their indigenous knowledge. There appears to be in the minds of many people in "the Global South" a form of resistance to the process of development. Kapoor (2009) affirms this point when he emphasizes the centrality of culture to development in that " Development is a seamless web whose fabric contains a multitude of interwoven strands. It is culture however, which provides the colour, the texture, the weave, the resilience, the strength of the fabric." (p.49). Verhellst (1990) equally points out clearly that development which is not culturally based and/or culturally responsive is not workable.

> *Only the cultural dimension can give coherence and finality to development...*
> *stressing the cultural dimension of development means placing human beings*
> *at the centre of all analyses and initiatives. (p.160)*

The failure and limitations of development strategies such as westernization or governance and even grass roots organization which are central to piloting development processes can not be entirely explained by the socioeconomic or political factors generally advanced in numerous examples around the world. In our opinion, there are other obstacles to development and resistance to the spread of social awareness which are far beyond the tools of analysis of the economists, political scientists and even social activists like NGOs. The origin of this resistance lies in the cultural uniqueness of each community and in the need to safeguard their identity. Colonial language for this reason can only be perceived as a deterrent to development in that it alienates the native through the relegation of their world as expressed in oral tradition to the lowest level of life. In contrast, the written colonial language is elevated to a level where it becomes the reference of dignity, authenticity and development. This has created an identity crisis that has overtaken the consciousness of the indigenous communities as in the case of the Bansoh community in Cameroon. The underdevelopment or even the de-development effects that this domination is having on these indigenous populations are immense and enduring. In this era of globalization, the loss of culture as a life management centre, the disruption of locally maintained ecological and spiritual systems are having devastating effects on the holistic approach to development in Cameroon and is at the origin of our institutional stagnation and inaptness. Other people may differ with our view and argue to the advantage in using global languages since they cut across all boarders. The reality is that issues on culture from our own lens are not just problems on communication to be resolved but rather human mysteries to be explored and riches to be discovered. Different people have different frames and every community has a system of behaviour, customs, social structures and systems of knowledge on which their life concepts are bonded. Therefore, development as it goes can only really make sense to a people if their cultural values are given due considerations that constitute part of their development process. This is what inclusion and effectiveness in adult education and orientation in LDCs entails and this can only be achieved through resorting to the language of the community because it is in the local language that these values are embedded and expressed through the culture.

Inclusion as a Model for Sustainable Development in LDCs

In pursue of these objectives, inclusion and effectiveness in adult education and orientation in less developed countries provide sustainable development through sensational agriculture; that is, agricultural activities emanating from an intrinsic desire to contribute to

social and collective well-being with little financial engagement. This approach is a practical tool and method that can be used to speed up development in less developed countries in general and Cameroon in particular. By resorting to agriculture as the basics and most reliable resource on which adult education in the Cameroonian context should be based, we are recognizing the power of endogenous knowledge as self realization and fulfilment resulting from the effective use of local knowledge and practices that are proper to a given community and the strengths of organizational skills. This recognition naturally leads to a twin-track development concept which is a combination of local concepts of well-being and scholastic principles of social change in the pursue of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Obviously, this will necessitate cross-cultural communication in embracing concepts that are outlandish and at the same time adapting local beliefs for the attainment of a holistic approach to the understanding of the concepts of development. The outcome of such a system is an interconnected framework or laid down principles of technological and services exchanges between the countries of the North and those of the South within a win-win context.

Involving institutions of higher learning, media professionals and applying endogenous development practices to this concept of adult education will not only be stimulating for LDCs, but will equally sharpen our thoughts about people, the world, and ourselves for, where there is this kind of common energy dynamics and excitement, the people follow and development takes place.

This approach is not only resource centred, but equally community driven and has the advantage of focusing on assets capabilities with a logical consequence to rapidly stimulate growth. As an internal mechanism to establish linkage, the approach bridges cultural splits through contextualized inbuilt communication channels that highlight cultural values.

Conclusion

The way we see the world is related to our location , background, how we are socialized to seeing it and on our own personal intrinsic concepts. It is only through language that we can infuse diverged interests. Only mutual understanding can bring people to acting together, live together and work together. Only then can we strive for development. The goal of Adult Education today more than ever before should aim at the recognition that language and culture influence each community in a number of important ways, and makes us have different perceptions of the world. To achieve development objectives within the present context of globalization, these concepts must be merged in the process of change for the good of humanity. We have come to recognize that where concept approach intertwine with community development, it serves egalitarian education purpose with a more human and democratic appeal . This is what adult education in the context of less developed countries should strive to achieve while being conscious of adapting it to the rapidly changing conditions of globalization.

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