

Chapter 4

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Paramount to the growth of any discipline and indeed, nation and organization is research and scholarship. In fact, how well any discipline will become relevant and worthy of attention and the investment of scarce resources should depend, to a large extent, on the quantity and quality of its research and scholarship. Fortunately, adult and continuing education researchers, scholars and practitioners are very much aware of this reality.

In 1994, researchers, scholars and practitioners meeting in Montreal, Canada under the auspices of the UNESCO institute for Education emphasized the important role research must and should play in advancing the frontiers of adult and continuing education in the world. And, this is in terms of exploring how adult and continuing education research and scholarship could be applied to development processes. This is so because research based knowledge should be more effective in terms of application.

Adult and continuing educators and educationists in Africa fully realise what UNESCO sought to achieve in hosting the Montreal, Canada meeting. For from 3rd to 7th December, 1995, the Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA) based in Dakar, Senegal, co-sponsored and organized a seminar which was geared towards examining the state of adult education research in Africa (Omolewa et al, 1998). Part of the objectives expressed at that meeting was the desire to ensure that research and scholarship in adult and continuing education is injected into the improvement and resolution of problems, progress and development in Africa. Much more than merely achieving such an objective, the sponsors of the seminar had hoped that adult and continuing education scholars, researchers and practitioners in Africa could be brought together to articulate more regularly and collectively strategies for applying research and scholarship in the discipline. It was and pasted that doing so should would ensure effective entry of Africa into a world community that is witnessing more and more globalization of scientific, technological, socio-economic and political processes.

It is now five years since the 1995 *Ibadan Africa Adult Education* meeting. In the years before and after 1995, the communication gap between colleagues in the different language blocs in Africa has painfully remained. For example, the 1995 Ibadan meeting did not succeed, much as the organizers would have wished, in bringing into the center stage of discussions, researchers, scholars and practitioners from the Portuguese, French and Arabic-speaking blocs in Africa. Even from within the English-speaking African countries, there was not too wide a representation. This is not unexpected. Africa has been inundated by profound economic and political crisis. Indeed, the debt burden is such that sub-Saharan Africa is heavily dependent on international assistance or inputs in the conduct of research which is normally based on bilateral and multilateral cooperation and partnership (Afrik,1998). As Africa makes significant steps to get out of the chaotic socioeconomic and political crisis that has held it almost prostrate for many decades, one might be hopeful that research and scholarship in adult and continuing education may be better appreciated and funded. When that time arrives, it might be possible as well to bridge the wide communication gap among the major language blocs.

In spite of the restrictions imposed on the quality of this present discussion by the circumstances just described above, it is still possible to attempt a summary analysis of the state of research and scholarship in adult and continuing education in Africa. For one thing,

The participatory research approaching particular, has been emphasized as a veritable means of "relegitimizing people's knowledge" as their capacity to engage in research is continuously refined in the process (Afrik, 1998:14). And the transformative research approach which had been a major theme in the discoursed by Paulo Freire has come on stage to strengthen further the gain brought in by the participatory.

The transformative research approach which stresses critical reflection, dialogue and praxis has sharpened the need for the positive utilization of the product of research. It is a dynamic and humanistic approach which Africa has been trying very hard to apply to its process of social change. It has been emphasized probably because of its appeal to the need to create in the local people intense critical awareness of the power may and power relationships that have tended to dictate the quantity and quality of life that is available to them at any given point in time.

Transformative research approach should have much attraction to Africans because of the several decades of inequality and social injustice a significant proportion have had to experience, and this is unfortunately so.

Before the era of propagation of transformative research approaches, the survey of literature revealed a concentration on adult literacy. This is not surprising for the continent harbors the world's second largest population of illiterates. Within the context of this research concentration, studies on demographic characteristics, geographical space and participation have been predominant.

Coming next to research in literacy are the numerous attempts scholars in Africa have been making to articulate the provision of distance learning. It is not equally surprising that scholars have shown immense interest in distance learning. It is not equally surprising that scholars have shown immense interest in distance learning. The continent is presently experiencing very acute problems in the gap between space and the number of people who qualify for admission. For example, in the 2000/2001 academic year, the University Of Botswana received over 12,000 applications for admission. More than 80% of the 12,000 applicants were qualified but the University was unable to absorb up to a third of the figure. That is what prevails in most parts of Africa, especially Nigeria. In the face of such difficulties distance learning becomes very handy, and that explains why it is receiving research and funding attention.

After distance learning professional continuing education gets a significant research attention. The rate of change in the world requires rapid re-learning on the part of professionals. The only way Africa can successfully harvest the grains inherent in professional continuing education is to devote research policy and funding inputs into its development as a veritable aspect of adult education.

Like continuing education, women's empowerment, income generation, extra-mural studies, gender and community development and education are receiving significant research attention as well. Even though it might be impossible to highlight all the findings that have emerged there from in all these cases, it is important to note the big role. University adult and continuing education is playing in research, this has been one of the guarantees of continuous engagement in research.

Thus far, sociological and psychological, environmental and computer focused, nomadic education research studies have not been too profound. So also are sustained studies on trends in participation in the different programmes. But it is encouraging to observe that

(2000) and many other African scholars too numerous to name, have given us some insight into what has prevailed to date beginning from the 1980s.

Distance education has been an area of research for many scholars. The foundation of studies into distance education in Africa has been laid by Omolewa in the 1970s. But this foundation has been built upon by several other scholars among whom are Adekanmbi (1999), Braimoh (2000), among others. These scholars have been studying how distance learning provides effective alternative modes to school-based learning in Africa.

Professional continuing education has been the major area of research by the scholar to whom this book has been dedicated. I refer to Professor Jones A. Akinpelu. He has been a pioneer in this area of research and scholarship and has been ably followed along the path by others who are combining equally well the exciting aspects of extra-mural studies and work place training. Again, this is a growing field which has attracted the attention of many other scholars, including Fasokun (1981) and Groener (2000) in the context of Africa.

Among the other less researched fields of gender, prison education, women empowerment, income generating projects and psychology, community education and development appear to have attracted some attention. Youngman and Maruatona (1998) have shown particular interest in extension workers and building on earlier works done by Okeem (1972), Karani (1984) and Anyanwa (1988). As government funding of community development may dwindle with the immense economic difficulties being experienced in Africa, research in this area might become more sustained and vigorous. The other less researched fields in nomadic education pioneered by Chike Ezeoma and extended by Gidado Tahir as well as that of prison education pioneered by Evakuoma Eneku are expected to receive a boost in Africa.

In spite of this challenging initial probing effort, there are numerous gaps in the picture. I have tried to paint of research in adult and continuing education in Africa. The first of such gaps has been the relatively profound difficulties I have experienced in getting a rich source of information, which could enlighten our analysis. The second stems from the relatively slim nature of incisive research attributes in Africa adult and continuing education. Much of the research that has been done appears to have been geared towards the award of diplomas and degrees. A relatively slim proportion of the research are undertaken by scholars struggling hard to apply themselves in the academic context of "publish or perish." Moreover, Mpofu (1998) has lamented the obvious research - practice gap that should have been attached to research.

In spite of the weaknesses that have been inadvertently allowed in the analysis above, some scholars have been laboring to identify "academic lighthouses" in the largely unexplored vast "ocean" of research possibilities in Africa. For example, James Draper has recently edited a useful entry titled *Africa: Adult Education Chronologies in Commonwealth Countries*. At the same time, Oduaran has applied his research interests to identifying research directions as well as the application of the computer to the improvement of the field in Africa (Oduaran, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1999). Even if incisive research in the field has been slim, the scholarship is exceptional. It is rewarding to summarize the focus of this scholarship thus far.

Direction of scholarship

Scholarship and research are inseparable. Thus, what we are attempting to do here is to summarize the writings by different scholars that have bordered more on theoretical analysis. As the case was with research, there has been no pretence towards having done an exhaustive search of literature and information source. This obvious gap can really render useless our intention. The weakness inadvertently tolerated in this brief analysis, notwithstanding there has been profound and vigorous scholarship by scholars from inside and outside Africa. In this regard, the usual "friends" of Africa in the profession of

adult education have been very active.

Lalage Bown could almost be described as the "mother" of adult and continuing education research and scholarship in Africa. Having spent the most of her youthful years in Africa, Bown has known our people's pains and cries. In response to this circumstance, Bown, has laid incomparably solid foundation for scholarship in Africa's adult and continuing education. As early as 1966, Bown had attempted to compile a bibliography of African adult education, thus heralding the intentions and visions we have sought to "mid-wife" in this present ambitious text which has been much more localized and representative of the continent than any other previous efforts that came across in my search of literature.

Bown's efforts have transcended bibliographical survey through psychology, literacy, development to generic issues like women's empowerment and periscoping the future (1966, 1972, 1975, 1989 and 1990). Other than scholarship, Bown has laid solid example of administrative practices and human resource development in African adult and continuing education. These apparently useful initiatives are to be difficult for anyone to easily obliterate for a long time to come.

Following in the steps of Bown are Fordham and Bhola. It will be difficult to fully explore the writings of all the friends of Africa, including those who are currently making immense contributions. Suffice it to say that Fordham had been productively engaging in "mentoring" young Africa scholars as well as shedding light on aspects of the field as it obtained on the continent (1970 and 1988). Like Fordham, Bhola has been doing some research and scholarship that is relevant to Africa. Apart from having been rigorously involved in evaluating research and scholarship in Africa, Bhola has profoundly engaged in comparative studies and policy analysis and development in adult and continuing education in some Africa countries. Prominent among such countries are Botswana and Namibia (Bhola, 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1999). When one considers the value of the contributions by scholars working outside Africa but who have reflected seriously, the enormity of the challenges facing scholars working from within can only be best imagined.

Scholars of African descent and those living and working from within have not yet failed to live up to the challenges facing them in regards to research in adult and continuing education in Africa. At the risk of having inadvertently missed some of the prominent entries in the field, let me attempt to highlight scholarship in selected aspect of Africa's adult and continuing education.

Expectedly, literacy has again dominated the focus of scholarship attention. And within the context of discussions on literacy there are works which deal with slight broader titles but whose substance has been literacy. These may be taken together as one. To effect, Omolewa (1983,1997), Oduaran (1999b), Mwansa (1995), Tabir (1986a 1986b, 1992) Obanya (1999), Wangola and Youngman (1996), Youngman (1990 and 1997, 2000a 2000b) Wangoola (1996), Filson et al. (1991) Indabawa (1991, 1993) Thompson (1996), Osuala, Aderinoye (1997) and Okedara (1989) among numerous others have been very active. In particular, scholars like Wangoola, Youngman and Indabawa have been profoundly interested and involved in policy studies and political economy of literacy. And more scholars among those listed above have been engaged in very incisive reviews of the progress of literacy work in the continent, and almost all of them have concluded by lamenting the "pitiable" rate of progress and utility. And yet others have been keenly interested in studying how the ideas of the famous Brazilian scholars, Paulo Freire, can be applied in Africa.

Continuing education, training and youth come on the heels of distance learning in terms of scholarship. In this regard, the ground patron of scholarship in this aspect can easily be said to be Akinpelu (1998 and 1996). But even at that, Amyanwu et al. (1988), Braimoh, Adeola, and Mohasi (1995), Indabawa (1994), Walters (1997), Kgobe (1997), Gush and Walters (1995) and Sets'abi (1997) among others have provided

useful information in this aspect.

In a spectacular way, community development and education as well as lifelong learning in the context of globalization have been receiving attention recent. And in this regard Walters (1987, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1994 and 1999) has been taking the lead. But she is not alone for numerous others have been writing on this aspect in different and challenging ways in an attempt to expand and extend its frontiers of knowledge (Oduaran and Okukpon, 1997, Oduaran, 1999; Thompson, 1994, 1996; and Youngman and Maruatona 1998). These scholars are making significant contribution to scholarship such that reading through their entries one is easily convinced that Africa certainly has a well-articulated direction for growth in this aspect.

The present shift to lifelong learning is particularly significant for many reasons. Outwardly, some critics may criticize this as an abandonment of the scholar's previous vigorous promotion of adult and continuing education. But this should not quite be the case. Lifelong learning implies learning across the life span. If lifelong learning is therefore pursued to its logical conclusions it means that some segments of the population in Africa that had been neglected in educational provisions can now be adequately catered for. Let us take the case of children who were supposed to be in school but for one reason or the other are not there. Their circumstances

interest in community development spans the components of democratic participation, community organization, women and community education (Walters, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1993a, 1993b and 1994). Even though Walters current interest is moving towards lifelong learning, gender and empowerment, it should be noted that her thoughts had always been geared to making Africans take their destinies in their own hands.

In West Africa, Anyanwu, Indabawa (1983, 1995) and Thompson (1994 and 1996) have been addressing the issue of how development needs to be extended and expanded to deal with the problem of participation and excruciating poverty. This may not explore how much havoc poverty has inflicted on Africans. Be that as it may, if there is any subject that Africans should like to see properly addressed, it is poverty. Poverty has been held responsible for numerous ills afflicting our people. These ills are commonly believed to range from destitution, ill-health, illiteracy, ignorance and corruption amongst others. It should not therefore be surprising that our scholars have been addressing the subject of poverty and its alleviation very vigorously. Poverty is a bone in the continent and its "overthrow" is paramount in the schemes of programming for community development.

Apart from poverty, participatory rural appraisal and development is receiving scholarship attention. Among numerous others, participatory rural development has been addressed by Youngman and Maraaton (1998). They have both examined this concept and its application more in the context of Botswana, but their efforts have implications for the rest of Africa. What Youngman and Maraaton (1998) have done for Botswana had similarly been the concern of Moletsane and Braimoh (1995) who are viewing rural transformation from the perspectives that apply in the New South Africa. These and other ideas will definitely attract more attention by other scholars on the continent.

Although scholarship has been directed at the major areas indicated above, it needs to be noted that the balance in terms of coverage is yet slim. For example, Prison education is yet to receive the vigorous attention it deserves. Apart from the useful pioneering efforts of Eneku at the University of Benin, Nigeria, other scholars in Africa are yet to adequately identify the value in this aspect of adult and continuing education. Again, gender in adult and continuing education in Africa is not yet receive the prominent attention it deserves. This is not to say that Walters and some other scholars in Africa have not identified the subject.

From the forgoing, it is clear that there are many neglected themes in research and scholarship in adult and continuing education in Africa. When the environment for research and scholarship becomes much more stimulating in Africa, it is anticipated that we might have incisive or penetrating efforts on the part of scholars and practitioners. In this regard, the University will have a big role to play.

University adult and continuing education

Universities in Africa had to play a vigorous role in the development of different aspect of adult and continuing education. For example, they have often played a prominent role in the promotion of mass literacy campaigns. Oduaran (1986) studied the role of Universities in promoting mass literacy campaigns in Nigeria and came up with conclusion that they have done very well in the aspect of research, manpower and development, advocacy and materials development.

African Universities have actually been at the forefront of strengthening the growth of adult and continuing education more through their various personnel development programmes. This is what the Universities seems to have been doing even as they equally invest in research and material development.

In a discussion of the role of the universities in personnel development of adult and continuing education, one would have preferred to indicate which University is doing what. The gap in knowledge of this aspect would make the preferred option almost impossible. But we can attempt to do a selected highlighting of which University is offering which professional programme in the field.

Table 1: Selected list of African Universities offering adult and continuing education programs.

Universities		Selected programmes						
S/No.	—	Ph.D	M.Ed.	B.Ed.	Dip.	Cert.	Dist. Educ.	Conti. Educ.
1.	Nairobi				X			X
2.	Tanzania			X	X			X
3.	Swaziland			X	X		X	X
4.	Lesotho			X	X	X	X	X
5.	Zimbabwe			X	X		X	X
6.	Zambia			X	X		X	X
7.	Botswana	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8.	Namibia	X	X	X	X		X	X
9.	South Africa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.	Cape Town				X		X	X
11.	Ghana			X	X	X	X	X
12.	Ibadan, Nigeria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13.	Benin, Nigeria		X	X	X			
14.	Nigeria, Nsukka	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
15.	Bayero Kano, Nigeria			X	X	X		X
16.	Ahmadu Bello Zaria, Nigeria			X		X	X	X
17.	University of Maiduguri, Nigeria			X	X	X	X	X
18.	Uthmanu Dan Fodio, Sokoto, Nigeria				X	X	X	X
19.	Obafemi Awolowo, Ile-Ife, Nigeria	X	X					X
20.	Port Hercourt, Nigeria		X	X	X	X	X	X

Legend:

X= Indicator of the availability of the programmes.

Even though our list is far from being or accurate in terms of a more comprehensive coverage, it gives the desired information to the effect that the Universities in Africa are doing much in the aspect of personnel development. It must be noted that the universities in Uganda, Egypt, Algeria, Benin, Toga, Cameroon, Mozambique, Mauritius amongst others are equally engaged in profound activities in the aspect of personnel development. At this stage, it might be possible to comment on the quality of work that is being done. However, there is no doubt that these Universities have on their staff scholars who are recognized internationally.

We can not conclude the discussion on Universities participation without mentioning even briefly, the assistance given to Africa in the aspect of staff development, research and scholarship by foreign Universities. A select list of such foreign Universities that have been active in this direction would include the following:

- University of Georgia at Athens
- University of Wisconsin
- University of Alaska
- Florida State University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Canada
- University of British Columbia
- University of Manchester
- University of Warwick
- University of Nottingham
- University of Hull
- University of London
- University of Birmingham
- University of Leeds
- University of Reading

The Universities listed thus far have provided additional support to what is going on in African adult and continuing education. This is a clear indication that Africa has been fortunate enough to receive such immense support from outside in the promotion of research

association has funded NGOs, University Departments of adult and continuing education and also publishes supplements at intervals. At different times, the association has awarded travel grants to Africans who have had to travel within or go abroad to attend conferences.

The German Adult Education Association has done so much for Africa. Fortunately, other organizations have recognized the importance of the support Africa needs in the area. Prominent among such organizations is The Commonwealth of Learning.

The Commonwealth of Learning(COL) is an intergovernmental organization which has been created by the Commonwealth Heads of Government. Its primary duty has been the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. By so doing, COL has helped a lot in widening and improving access to quality education and training. Technically speaking, COL has helped Africa in improving its adult and continuing education. The generation and distribution of knowledge using the Internet is a very significant support for Africa.

There is also some support coming from the United States for research and scholarship in Africa. This comes through so many Foundations and Organizations including the Kellogg and Rockefeller Foundations. However, in recent times, through the University of Georgia at Athens a big research and scholarship oriented program has come on stream. This is the Cyril Houle Program. It has been opening access to research funding for junior scholars from the USA, Latin America and Africa. The intervention of all these organizations has not meant that there are no problems.

Problems and mitigations

The discussion of problems facing research and scholarship in Africa can be incisive. However we will limit ourselves to a few problems. Africa is yet to witness very active and vigorous research initiatives that are of the kind one can describe as cross-cultural and international within the continent. As more and more scholar move across their home nations to others in an attempt to "blend" their thoughts with locals some improvement would be noticed. Moreover, the promotion of mentoring by older and experienced colleagues would be another opportunity for shaping and sharpening our focus.

Regular fora where scholars working in Africa can meet are rare. Consequently, scholars are as widely separated as can be imagined. This is even made worse by language barriers. One way out of this predicament could be the pooling of our resources to host academic fora. However, the poor state of economies in many African countries would make such meetings a luxury.

if our discipline is actually valued then it might be possible to go through the Organization for Africa Unity (O.A.U) and "friends" of Africa.

The problem that besets Africa in the area of communication is manifested in library development. To date, African libraries have had to rely on the West for the supply of textbooks, magazines and journals in adult and continuing education. It does not matter to us, or so it seems, if some of these Western generated textbooks and ideas are irrelevant to our culture. The situation facing us now seems to be one that we do not have too much choice. The only antidote to this over-dependence on the north for reading texts is for scholars to come together to promote a body that can sensitize and disseminate some of the rich thoughts that are now emerging in the continent in the field of adult and continuing education.

Education, generally, does not operate in a vacuum. Much of what is happening in education is dictated by government policy in the case of Africa. In this regards, we can say that the promotion of research and scholarship is weak for many countries in Africa. Therefore, if scholars and practitioners work through non-governmental policy environment to bring pressure to bear on government, it might be possible for us to have better policy and financial support for the growth of our discipline.

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