

Milestones in Tanzanian Adult Education: Factors for its Success amidst Challenging Setbacks

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Abstract

Upon attainment of independence of Tanganyika in 1961 and thereafter the unification that brought Tanzania into existence, the country embarked on strategic offering of adult education to a by then, senior but predominantly illiterate populace. What was initially a simple literacy and numeracy programme for adults, culminated into a wider subsector with a smorgasbord of purpose. Today, the diversity of adult education is manifested into programmes such as ICBAE, COBET and IPPE. Based on a meta-analysis of literature, this paper highlights the milestones of achievements for the past 50 years, what made it happen and what acted as setbacks against what could have been excellent performance. The analysis will also serve the purpose of shedding light on what should be done from now on.

Keywords: *adult education, functional literacy, Tanzania*

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been increased attention and rapid advances in the field of adult education both in developed and developing countries. The advances range from efforts to eradicate illiteracy to the urge for zealous lifelong learning, as put forward for instance by advocates of the knowledge economy construction. The current concern traces its connection to a significant history of Adult Education (AE) that dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries when the world witnessed a plethora of activities aimed at providing education for adults in various ways (Hall, 1985). For example, in Northern Europe (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) various Nordic folk high schools were launched to facilitate the provision of holistic education to adults, which could cater for the demands of their communities. Similar reforms were introduced in the United States of America, England, Germany, India and Southern America that allowed more provision of AE.

European and American countries might have had their own reasons, which are not necessarily the same reasons for erecting AE in African countries such as Tanzania. In the latter, upon attainment of independence of Tanganyika in 1961 and thereafter the unification with Zanzibar that brought Tanzania into existence, the country embarked on strategic offering of adult education to the then senior but predominantly illiterate populace. It is noteworthy here that related efforts started as early as 1946 when Tanganyika, while a British protectorate, had established community development centres for ex-army people's welfare in towns. These centres grew up into youth clubs and adult education centres. In 1952, centres with similar services were extended to rural areas to provide more room and access to education for rural communities.

Eight years later, in March 1960, the then Department of Extra-Mural Studies of Makerere College (from Uganda) started working in Dar es Salaam (Mbunda, 1974). However, the concern of this department was giving an opportunity to adult learners who already had some form of formal education. Thus, it was not for people's literacy. According to Fox, Fordham, Mlekwa and Bwatwa (1989) the concern for literacy in Tanzania came later on, and the country was the first in Africa to mount a successful literacy campaign and first to do so before aiming for Universal Primary Education. Further, it was the only country in Africa to create a large cadre of general adult educators mainly but not exclusively as part of the literacy programmes.

As years passed by, what was initially a simple literacy and numeracy programme for adults, culminated into a wider subsector with a smorgasbord of purpose. Today the diversity of adult education is manifested into programmes such as ICBAE, COBET and IPPE.

Based on a meta-analysis of literature, this paper highlights the Tanzanian AE lane and milestones of achievements for the past 50 years, what made it happen and what acted as setbacks against what could have been excellent performance. In other words the subject of discussion in this paper is on what was achieved in Tanzania, when and how, as well as what was the secret behind the achievement and what have been the factors that undermined the achievement. Therefore, the paper attempts to shed light on initiatives, experiences, and reforms made as well as setbacks which were encountered during the struggle for strengthening the provision of adult education in Tanzania. In short, the milestones are in terms of the institutionalisation of AE, programmes that were established, models adopted, mode of delivery, enrolments and outcomes. The analysis will also serve the purpose of shedding light on what should be done from now on.

Methodology

This paper is based on a study that employed meta-analysis method, whereby different studies in which Tanzanian adult education is recorded were reviewed. Further, a desk research aided the collection of records that are for instance available in the media (newspapers in particular) to depict the trend, milestones and explanations. The reviewed documents include published research reports by Institute of Adult Education (IAE), Mwalimu Nyerere presidential speeches, Adult and Non-Formal Education Medium Term Plans, scholarly journal articles on Tanzanian adult education, Basic Education Statistical (BEST) reports and newspapers.

Tanzanian milestones in Adult Education after attainment of independence to 1980s

Like other countries in the world, Tanzania formally embarked on provision of pro-people AE in the 20th century under the influence and leadership of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (Hall,2020; Hinzen, 2006), the founding president of the country. The main goal for having AE programmes in the country was to provide adults with basic education (reading, writing, arithmetic), and functional skills such as environmental education, civic education, carpentry, livestock keeping and agriculture (Kanukisya, 2008; Mlekwa, 2001). Generally, Mwalimu Nyerere as the founder and advocate of adult education in Tanzania emphasised on the provision of AE as an alternative means to prepare and involve adults in development of their villages, regions and the country at large (Heisel, 1979).

As a result of introducing AE, literacy rate among the Tanzanian population grew tremendously from 15% (in 1960) up to 90.4% (in 1986) but dropped gradually from 90.4% to 75% at different intervals, particularly in 2000 (UNESCO, 2006). Table 1.1 presents the trend.

Table 1: Trends in Literacy Rates in Tanzania (1960-2015)

Year	Male	female	Total
1960	20%	10%	15%
1967			31%
1975	66%	56%	61%
1977	79%	67%	73%
1981	85%	73%	79%
1983	90%	79%	85%

1986	92.9%	88%	90.4%
1992	87%	81%	84%
1995	86.9%	81.5%	84%
2000	84%	67%	75%
2002	81%	76%	78%
2010			67.8%
2012			78.1%
2015			77.9%

Source: UNESCO (2006) and World Development Indicators (2021)

Such a trend was made possible through the use of different efforts across years. Historical records show that in 1961, the Extra- Mural Department was incorporated within the University College in Dar es Salaam (Mbunda, 1974). In 1963, the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) was installed as a department of the then University college of Dar es Salaam. IAE concentrated on formal courses in subjects such as English, Political Science or Economics for the English-speaking government officials, and left mass education to other agencies. A year later (1964) IAE was mandated to train adult education facilitators, promote AE, undertake research in this area, provide advisory services as well as library services to adults.

By 1965, Tanzania had 7250 literacy classes with over 50,000 participants. The country also had 440 follow-up classes in English and arithmetic with 15,900 participants including males and females.

AE was further given more push when the government made a declaration that 1970 Adult Education year. Within 6 months (since the declaration), Tanzania succeeded to have 324,664 adults registered in AE classes. This year also saw the placement of AE officers in every district of Tanzania mainland. The officers worked together to increase space for AE. Again, it was in this year that national, regional and district AE committees were formed.

Between 1970 and 1974 there were major changes in the country's outlook towards the place of education that culminated into widening the scope of providing AE to the masses. Notable changes in this period included mass campaigns which were initiated to conscientize and promote awareness among individuals and communities, for example, there were national campaigns such as *Kupanga ni Kuchagua* (To Plan is to Choose) in 1969, *Uchaguzi ni Wako* (The Choice is Yours) in 1970, *Wakati wa Furaha* (Time for Rejoicing) in 1971, *Mtu ni Afya*

(Man is Health) in 1973, as well as *Chakula ni Uhai* (Food is life) in 1975 (Bwatwa & Kamwela, 2010). Generally, all these campaigns aimed at creating a sense of awareness and calling forth members of the communities to participate holistically in fighting against poverty, ignorance and diseases.

In 1973 (on 18th of December), the directorate of adult education was formed within the Ministry of Education, with sections for “*Kisomo Chenye Manufaa, Elimu ya Wafanyakazi, Mipango* and *Ukaguzi*” (Mbunda, 1974). Later on, the IAE Act of 1975 was enacted and it established the present Institute as a parastatal organisation and set out a new and comprehensive range of objectives to be pursued. The most important objectives of the legally formed IAE were to: coordinate the full range of adult education activities in Tanzania; provide its own public education programmes; promote professional training including diploma and degree programmes; and produce teaching materials.

Thereafter, on 21st June 1976, Tanzania hosted an International Adult Education Conference in Dar es Salaam. The country’s efforts for AE were partly the reason why this conference was organised in Dar es Salaam.

It is generally evident that, across these years, Tanzania made notable efforts and adopted different models of AE which include UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Model, adopted in the 1960s focusing on literacy for community development and Functional Literacy model in 1970s (Mushi, 2010).

Explanations of Tanzania’s success story in Adult Education

Indeed, from a few years prior to independence and creation of the union to 1980, Tanzania made remarkable achievements in promoting and provision of adult education, which led to rapid increase in literacy rate (pointed out earlier). Such achievements have several explanations including: the country’s dire need for educating adults who were left illiterate by colonial rulers; the political will and government’s determination to use education for development; as well as making AE relevant to the people- allowing people to learn what they wanted; the country’s decision to institutionalise AE; diversifying programmes (going beyond literacy); and readiness to learn from what other countries have gone through such as the hosting of a conference was an opportunity for Tanzania to learn. Other explanations are as follows.

Pro-people political ideology coupled with strong and visionary leadership

In the 1960s Tanzania had a couple of challenges and issues to be set clear since it was the time when it had just got her independence. Based on such a context, Mwalimu Nyerere

emphasized adult education through his political messages before, during and after independence to stimulate and mobilize participation of community members in national development. Being both the leader of a political party that led the struggle for independence and the first President of the nation, Nyerere created and imparted party and national ideology to his followers and other leaders including members of the parliament and government. For example, in 1964 when addressing the parliament he said:

People's lives can only be improved by their own efforts and through their own understanding and, against the background of ignorance and poverty which we inherited at independence, this means that adult education of all types is of vital importance for rapid development (IAE, 1969, p. 8-9).

Mwalimu Nyerere was a true champion and pioneer of adult education in Tanzania and he believed in socialism that could be built through, among other means, educating the mass. It is under such belief that his administration declared 1970 to be adult education year in Tanzania. Further, being at the frontline of adult education, Mwalimu Nyerere had summarized mainly three objectives of adult education to be: rejecting bad houses, *jembes* (hand hoes); and protecting adults from diseases, teaching how to improve people's lives and lastly; enhancing the understanding of national policies of socialism and self-reliance.

The role of the work-oriented adult literacy pilot project (WOALPP) from 1968 to 1972

Another explanation for Tanzania's achievement is the role that was played by the work-oriented adult literacy pilot project in the country. In 1965, UNDP and UNESCO through the Teheran Conference of Ministers of Education launched a World Experimental Literacy Programme, which brought about the project. The overall purpose of this programme was to test the concept of functional literacy as an efficient means to make people acquire reading, writing and arithmetic skills (3Rs), raise production, adopt better health practices, and participate more in civic affairs. Among other countries, Tanzania was privileged to attend that conference which brought together delegates from 12 member-countries. This project had multiple benefits and impacts on adult education in Tanzania which included training of 13,500 literacy teachers, establishing 16,800 literacy classes, establishment of 90 rural libraries, introducing rural four newspapers, construction and introduction of rural Radio education programme, and development of adult learning literacy materials (Kadege, Keregero, Mlekwa & Mushi, 1992). This project stimulated the growth and widespread access of adult education in different regions of the country such Mwanza, Kagera and Mara.

The role of functional literacy curriculum and material development project (1973-1976)

Another explanation is functional literacy curriculum programmes and material development project, which was introduced to Tanzania as a complement of the former WOALPP that had ended in 1972. The programme operated at macro level with the purpose of supporting national literacy campaigns. The aims of this project were elaborating and producing curricula, functional literacy, primers and additional teaching and reading materials, studying ways to improve the teaching and enrich the literacy class curriculum, organizing and supervising the training of regional trainers' teams and supervisors, developing and producing radio programmes as support to literacy campaigns, carrying out continuous research and evaluation, and ensuring the retention of literacy skills gained. Generally, this project facilitated a couple of trainings for teachers through radio programmes, and rural libraries. In 1976, the project resulted in establishment of the National Literacy Centre (NLC) that was typically based on training of personnel for production and publication of literacy and supporting materials. Eventually, NLC became a special Adult Education Research Centre.

The of national literacy campaign in 1970

Campaign is one of the powerful approaches and effective means to sensitize and conscientize masses or groups of individuals in the community (Mlekwa, 1990). In Tanzania, adult education campaign and delivery was organized into different phases. The first was dealing with literacy and related activities which was officially announced by Mwalimu Nyerere in one of his speeches in 1970. His speech stressed the importance of literacy as a first step to acquire modern knowledge. This campaign was further emphasized in 1971 during the TANU Biennial Conference which declared the mission to eradicate illiteracy by 1975. Both political leaders and government officials campaigned to eradicate illiteracy. Eventually, these efforts contributed to rapid increase in number of literate people from 261,000 in 1970 to over five million in 1975 (Mpogolo, 1980). Moreover, through these campaigns, the number of voluntary facilitators rose from 5% in 1970 to 71% in 1975. Generally, mass campaigns contributed to successful implementation of adult education programmes (Johnson, Nystrom & Sunden, 1983).

The role of supportive programmes in 1970s

International Conference to Celebrate 50 Years of Adult Education in Tanzania

Eradicating illiteracy among Tanzanians was not an easy task in a sense that, no single approach would have been relevant and accurate to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in implementation of adult education programmes. This is due to the fact that, some places were still inaccessible (in terms of infrastructure), shortage of human resources and other related facilities. That being the case, the government introduced four major supportive programmes namely: a rural newspaper “*Elimu Haina Mwisho*”; film education; radio programmes and; rural libraries. The establishment and launching of these programmes contributed massively to increased access to adult education. For example, the distribution of newspapers in villages enabled community members to gain knowledge through reading and doing some written assignments whereby each newspaper had an exercise for the reader to attempt. Nearly 2,500 rural libraries were built in rural primary schools. Likewise, through radio and film education programmes, individuals were being taught various skills. Moreover, villagers were gathering for group discussion in their library to exchange and share knowledge with peers.

Establishment of Folk Development Colleges in 1975

Folk education is a non-formal learning programme, which intends to equip learners with knowledge related to technical subjects (tailoring, cookery, animal husbandry, knitting and embroidery, moulding, painting, carpentry, plumbing, shoemaking, etc.) and supportive skills subjects (Kiswahili, English, Civic Education, Health Education, Life Skills, etc.). Folk development colleges (FDC) were established in Tanzania following official visits by both Mwalimu Nyerere and officials from Tanzania’s Ministry of National Education to Sweden (Hanemann, 2017). Sweden had been and remains a significant supporter of the Tanzanian government in facilitating the provision of adult education for community development through provision of funds and technical consultation. FDC programme intended to support individuals from villages with regard to their contextual needs. By 1978, Tanzania had successfully established 52 FDCs with a mission to achieve one college in each district by 1980.

Generally, from the 1960s to 1980s (Adult Education revolution period), a couple of things were put forth to strengthen the quality and access of adult education by majority of Tanzanians (Bhalalusesa, 2020). In addition to the aforementioned factors, other things which supported the growth of adult education were establishment of the Institute of Adult Education, and the National Correspondence Institute, training of Universal Primary Education (UPE) teachers, and mass education campaigns.

Nevertheless, AE in later years started to go down as measured by the level of illiteracy. As claimed by Mushi (2010) for instance, in the 1990s illiteracy increased by 25%.

Constraining factors against the progress of Adult Education in Tanzania

Along the lane of determination and success story, there emerged issues that constrained adult education in the country, hence the noted deterioration. The following are vivid.

Tanzania - Uganda war of 1977/78

It has always been evident that whenever and wherever there is no peace and harmony, development efforts face critical moments. During the war between Tanzania and Uganda (Kagera War), some priorities, plans and projects related to adult education were in trouble particularly those along the interlacustrine regions of Mwanza, Kagera and Mara. This challenge resulted in poor performance in most of programmes in those areas since the majority changed their attention from learning to security matters (Ministry of National Education, 1981).

Economic crisis of 1980s

In the early 1980s, Tanzania experienced a severe economic crisis that resulted from oil crisis and extraordinary drought and floods which led to famine and other instabilities (Bhalalusesa, 2020; Ishengoma, 2013). These tragedies shifted the government's attention from normal proceedings with long-term projects to immediate precautionary measures to curb the situation. During this era, all systems were deteriorating due to inadequate funds to finance various economic and social projects, insufficient sensitization and mobilization from political leaders for adult education participation and attendance, low motivation among learners to attend classes, inadequate support and supply of required facilities and poor follow up on teaching and learning (Mlekwa, 1990).

Retirement of Mwalimu Nyerere from leadership in 1985

It is clear that, the role and contribution played by Mwalimu Nyerere in initiating and managing various educational reforms in Tanzania was quite significant. His commitment, dedication and visionary mind were the catalyst for fruitful implementation of various educational projects, plans and programmes at both macro and micro level. A study by

Kanukisya (2008) that investigated contemporary Adult Education Policies and Practices in Tanzania found out that some Tanzanians believed that both the retirement and death of Nyerere contributed to the weakening of long-time vested efforts in promoting adult literacy among learners. Kanukisya quotes one Tanzanian complaining:

Since his retirement as a president and later on his death in 1999, the status of Adult Education has been deteriorating. This can mean that Nyerere retired and died with AE as now is evidently seen and witnessed all over the country (p. 63)

Mwalimu Nyerere did whatever it takes to accomplish his goals, as he was the pioneer and outstanding leader to champion various national strategies, which could boost the development of people and the nation at large. He was always in the frontline especially when he communicated his vision and ideology of education for socialism and self-reliance (Kassam, 1978; Lema, Omari & Rajani, 2004).

Influence of international institutions on national socio-economic policies in 1980s

Due to hardship experienced during the era of economic crisis in Tanzania, the government had no feasible alternative other than agreeing with international financial organs (IMF and WB in particular) to seek loans and accept the attached terms and conditions to secure the loans (Ishengoma, 2013). Such terms and conditions, which were put forth included redirecting of public expenditure from social services to health and infrastructure facilities, privatization, deregulation, decentralization, liberalization and transparency or adopting democratic principles which were mainly influenced by the capitalist block led by European Nations and The United States of America (Tomasevski, 1995). Due to various dilemmas and policy reforms in the nation, adult education was no longer a central priority in the national development strategy, and adult learning classes stuck instantly thereby leading to dropout and decline in retention rate (Bhalalusesa, 2020).

Weaknesses inherent in models adopted

As stated earlier Tanzania adopted AE models which were certainly prone to limitations. The adopted Fundamental Education Model was, for example, criticised for not only its inability to motivate adults such that it failed to eradicate illiteracy in the country, but also for having no link with socioeconomic activities (Mushi, 2010). The Functional Literacy Model (also adopted) was simply top-down.

Recent Milestones in Tanzania’s Adult Education

Despite issues that impeded early efforts, Tanzania has continued to honour AE to the present. For instance, hitherto, the IAE has its centres in more than 20 regions in Tanzania mainland, more than 500 full time and 2000 part time staff. The institute continues to conduct education by correspondence, evening courses, diploma and degree courses, seminars and workshops, rural mass education and it provides consultation services. It also monitors and supervises more than 600 *Open Schools* countrywide owned by the government (Torres, 2004).

Today, Tanzania has numerous vibrant Adult Education programmes. Unlike earlier on programmes whose main concern was literacy, the current ones are tailored along contemporary needs of the beneficiaries. The programmes are such as Integrated Post Primary Education (IPPE) which caters for adults who want to pursue secondary education alongside technical and/or vocational training; Integrated Community -Based Adult Education (ICBAE); Open and Distance Learning (ODL); and Complementary Basic Education (COBET). According to Mushi (2010), ICBAE is actually yet another model that was introduced in Tanzania in 1995. These programmes have a notable record in enrolling people who would have otherwise failed to access opportunities to be educated. Available data shows that, during the period of 2003/04 to 2007/08, the enrolment of out –of - school children (11-13 years) surpassed the target by 223%, while the number of adults enrolled in ICBAE centres surpassed the target by 12% (URT, 2010).

However, more recently, enrolment in adult education programmes has been once again going down across years, as indicated in Table2.

Table 2: *Enrolment into Adult and Non-formal Education Programmes*

Programme	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Annual Growth
ICBAE	387,593	217,088	242,371	130,132	131,204	-23.7%
COBET	82,339	65,989	68,949	67,008	56,560	-9.0%
ODL	5,439	7,052	5,898	5,631	10,886	18.9%
Total	12,484,298	13,034,447	14,000,223	14,575,827	14,975,461	4.7%

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2020

Way Forward for AE in Tanzania

All what made Tanzania succeed by then ought to be cherished and the pitfalls avoided. Most importantly, efforts to keep AE going must learn from what Tanzania believed and still believes in - that *education is endless*. Today, young and adult people have new things to learn. In other words, the dynamic nature of everything and the continued advancement of knowledge make it necessary for every human to learn more and more. Such a way forward was of course captured very well in Mwalimu Nyerere's speeches on AE.

I emphasized last year, that education has no end. Even if a person is highly educated to whatever level, he can still continue learning, everyday there is a new thing to learn ... everyone who can read and write must continue learning, whoever knows something must teach others. (Nyerere, 1971)

Since there are various models of AE and the Tanzanian story makes us pretty aware that these models have their shortcomings and they may not stand the test of time. Thus, there is a need to continue assessing the performance of current models.

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