

# Adult Education and Social Transformation in the South: The Botswana Experience

Tonic L. Maruatona

**Abstract.** The article argues that, historically, universities have served a select few individuals as part of modernist not transformative agenda. This highly selective process guarantees students good life. The article argues that university education helps to redress colonial inequities through creating opportunities for graduate employability. However, university education has also served conflicting roles of adhering to the global capitalist imperative and attempting to inculcate social inclusion in developing nations. The roles of university-based adult education is analyzed in terms of its curricula, teaching, and research to demonstrate that adult education serves officialdom and has strayed from the initial adult education focus of social transformation. Drawing some illustrations from the Department of Adult Education at the University of Botswana, the article argues that programs serve state interests through engaging in a neoliberal modernist curriculum that excludes the learners. Finally, it is suggested that adult education should rethink the curricula, strengthen civil society, and mobilize community for social transformation.

## Introduction

Adult education (AE), denotes a field of educational practice in higher education that is organized to address the learning needs of persons whose cultural, socioeconomic, and political roles define them as mature, nontraditional, or adult students in their contexts (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). As used here the generic concept of the South refers to developing nations, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Africa has suffered setbacks as a result of the corrosive effects of colonialism lack of good leadership after independence. According to the New Partnership For Africa's Development (NEPAD; 2001), the African continent has been impoverished, ravaged by the legacies of colonialism, civil wars, and shortcomings of ill-conceived policies pursued by neocolonial states. Postcolonial African states inherited weak political structures and dysfunctional economies,

which were further aggravated by poor leadership, civil wars, nepotism, a rampant bureaucracy, corruption, and bad governance in some countries. Some of them have bloated beruacracies that are unwilling to freely provide basic educational services but instead endorse cost-sharing and cost-recovery measures imposed by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Funds (IMF) (Nyamnjoh, 2004). The challenge for African leadership is to understand that development is a process of self-reliance therefore, "Africans now must be the architects of their own sustained upliftment" (NEPAD, 2001, p. 6). This can be attained by providing proactive adult education programs driven principles of social change, democracy, equity, and social justice.

First, the article uses the Botswana context to analyze, critically, the role of university-based adult education programs in maintaining the status quo and facilitating social

change. Second, the article argues that adult education programs at universities have drifted from a redistributive rhetoric to a market-led practice. Third, it addresses critical issues in planning the curriculum, teaching, learning, and research with a focus on the relationship between national rhetoric on increasing national productivity and delivery of quality university-based adult education for all. Finally, the article suggests that AE should focus on community mobilization, strengthen civil society, sharpen its curriculum, and retool its research and teaching activities to focus on equity and social change issues in order to help Africa to break free of the vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, and preventable diseases plaguing the this natural-resource-endowed continent.

### Botswana Context

At independence from Britain in 1966, Botswana was deemed to be one of the 10 poorest nations in the world. Today, Botswana has a population of 1.7 million inhabitants and is rated as a middle income country along with South Africa, Swaziland, and Namibia. Currently, 49% of the population is defined as living in the rural areas and surviving on different types of agricultural activities. Seventy percent of the population speaks Setswana (the national language), while 30% of the population speaks a variety of minority languages that are prohibited from being used in official communication. This amounts to cultural exclusion because language embodies one's identity. Politically, the country is a multiparty democracy. However, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party has won all of the successive elections since independence, which renders the state a de facto one-party system. The ruling elite has taken advantage of the weak opposition to concentrate on improving its economic interests, resulting in the advancement of private enterprise system and foreign investment (Youngman, 2000). However, Sen (1999) uses Botswana as a case to demonstrate that democracy in theory presents opportunities to citizens through enhancing their participation and oppositional dialogue. However, this depends on the opposition's capacity to force the state to work to reduce oppositional appeal among the voting population. Furthermore, oppositional docility in Botswana, to some extent, contributed to a basic shift from welfare state policies of the 1970s and 1980s to neoliberal free market capitalism in the late 1990s with a decreased expenditure on health, education, and water. Government reintroduced school fees in secondary school and demanded payment on health in spite of the rising unemployment and poverty levels. Botswana has recently been cautioned by the World

Bank to be more efficient in the provision of public services (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010).

Botswana's economy was one of the weakest in the world during the 1960s, but it has expanded rapidly, reaching a gross national product per capita of \$3,700 by 1998. It rose exponentially to an estimated \$6,436 by 2006 qualifying Botswana to be a middle-income country. Two major investment services rank Botswana as the best credit risk in Africa (IME, 2006). This phenomenal growth was attributable to the discovery and exploitation of mineral wealth, especially diamonds. However, this growth has been accompanied by disturbingly high rates of income inequality and persistent poverty in urban and, more markedly, in rural areas. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 1993/1994 showed that the distribution of disposable income among persons was such that the poorest 40% earned only 11.6% of the total national income, while the next 40% and the top 20% earned 29.1% and 59.3% of the national income respectively (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1994). Poverty was more prevalent in rural areas, where 60% of the poor and 70% of the very poor female households live. Unemployment is estimated at 17.5% and is estimated at 30% after factoring in discouraged job seekers (Bank of Botswana, 2006). Social services, such as adult education, assumed a reproductive character. It served to legitimate capitalism, and it increased social inequality and hindered social transformation (Schriber-Barsh, 2009; Youngman, 2000). Schriber-Barsh (2009) argues that education employs the Mathew principle of giving those who already have and consolidates inequality and social exclusion. Ideally, adult educators have to be engaged in teaching and learning experiences that would empower learners in impoverished rural communities to question their practices. In Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia resource distribution is skewed in favor of a few, and extension workers in such contexts should strive for social change and community empowerment. For example, Namibia has a gini coefficient of 0.70, which is one of the highest levels of inequality in the world. Botswana has 0.63. These are unacceptably high levels because they exceed the average level of 0.3 or 0.4, which represent an ideal distribution. Adult education in Botswana needs to organize responsive programs that address critical personal, rural, national, and global needs such as poverty and unemployment.

In view of these cultural and economic disparities, university education can play a crucial role in assisting individuals and groups to break free of the cycle of poverty. Adult education performs contradictory roles; for example, it can develop and transform the learners' skills in addressing

their impending sense of insecurity and uncertainty (Grayson, 2005). By contrast, in Botswana, like the rest of Africa, the focus of adult education is to improve national productivity and enhance the growth of the economy through producing competitive human resources (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010). This is in line with the conventional view that adult education should facilitate change, accompanied by growth with efficiency (Bhola, 1999; Gough, 1995). Gough (1995) contends that basic education should contribute to personal improvement and mobility, social progress, better health, and cognitive development and need not be politicized. The following is a brief outline of AE provision in Botswana.

#### **Adult Education Provision at the University of Botswana**

The Department of Adult Education (DAE) at the University of Botswana was established in the 1960s and 1970s primarily with a social change agenda of training personnel for extension, especially for the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. It trained local level supervisors, called literacy assistants, for DNFE and provided a distance-education-based certificate in adult education for entry-level staff. Its aim was to introduce skills of organization and management of basic education provision at village level and to provide knowledge of academic and practical principles of adult education among grassroots adult educators (DAE, 2006). In line with the desire to expand access as dictated by government, DAE has since extended its diploma designed for DNFE staff to direct entrants from high school both on and off campus, offered by distance mode by the Centre of Continuing Education. The DAE started offering a bachelor's degree in adult education in the mid-1980s. It has since added a master of adult education degree and MPhil and doctorate degrees in adult education to its course offerings.

According to DAE undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks, the department reinforced its activities in view of an expanded national demand for its services (DAE, 2006). Social change and grassroots level training for transformation is fading away from the focus of the program. Recently, the department started offering a diploma in NGO Management by distance mode. It is currently exploring the possibility of offering a master's degree in nongovernmental organization (NGO) management as demanded by the NGO and private sector. All of these programs have attracted learners from as far away as Lesotho and Swaziland. The mission of the Department of Adult Education is to provide a center of excellence contributing to teaching, research,

advisory, and consultancy services for professionals in the education and training of adults within the perspective of lifelong learning. Its implementation strategy stipulates that it intend to offer quality academic and professional programs that ensure a commitment to and mastery of lifelong learning skills as well as encourage the spirit of critical inquiry. The reference to critical inquiry is at the end, but in practice the focus is on training for national human resources development in extension services. However, among the highlights of its success is that it was the first department at the University of Botswana (UB) to introduce a course on gender issues. The course explores how women are constructed in language and practice and how this affects their position in African societies. Otherwise, it offers all typical foundational adult education courses. In addition, it offers clearly market-oriented courses such as adult education and the world of work, organization and management, which explore global and African issues and trends concerning adult education and the world of work. On the other hand, in its bid to make adult education and training relevant, it offers such courses as community project planning and management, integrated skills projects, participatory development methods, vocational education and training, computer application in adult education and adult education and special groups (University of Botswana, 2006). These indicate how the Department of Adult Education attempts to address national issues in Botswana.

As a way of responding to the current discourses on lifelong learning, it offers two courses such as lifelong learning at second year, counseling in lifelong learning in the third year, and policy development in lifelong learning at level four. All these go a long way to illustrate the department's commitment to lifelong learning policy and practice. However, the department still excludes some extension workers who do not meet the standard requirement for admission of a minimum of five credits in Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE), with preference given to those with experience in adult education. The department's admission policy does not have mature entry as part of its entrance requirement to allow more work-based adult educators without BGCSE. Hence, Merriam and Brockett (2007) observed that in most cases, adult learning attracts those who did well in their earlier learning paths. In spite of the efforts at being inclusive of the mature students, older learners and disabled persons are still underrepresented. Including all of these would indicate that the department seeks to take into account both nonformal, informal, and experiential learning experiences rather than sticking to nationally prescribed forms of quality control measures, which excludes some potential

adult learners. Consequently, the major challenge for this program remains, like its contemporaries in other parts of Africa, it excludes manual workers, unqualified people, industrial class workers, and people with disabilities. In real terms, in this context, the gap between those who are poorly educated and those who are well educated is not narrowed through adult education. Class, occupation, previous education and employment status are the most critical drives for potential participation in education and training as opposed to the desire for inclusion (Gorard & Rees, 2002). In spite of its exclusionary nature, some courses, such as DAE 204, "Gender Issues in Adult Education," offered at DAE attempt to prepare students for sensitivity to gender issues and explore best practices in community development work. The program seems to exploit the rather narrowing academic freedom in which teachers do not advocate for social change or teach freely and critically because they are afraid of secret agents among their own students. However, genuine social change can be attained only if teaching and learning enable learners to think and act democratically, and this requires creating democratic spaces for engaging in inclusive teaching and learning.

University rhetoric in Africa portrays them as liberatory institution, yet they mostly share the same vision of training for human resources development and global competition with their oppressive state. For example, the University of Botswana Strategic Plan to 2009 and beyond aims to advance the intellectual and human resources capacity of the nation and the international community. The university purports to espouse liberal values such as academic freedom through upholding the spirit of free and critical thought and enquiry, tolerating a diversity of beliefs and understandings, and facilitating an open exchange of ideas and knowledge. They also value cultural authenticity, by organizing cultural days to celebrate the cultural heritage of students. The university considers this to form an important part of the academic and organizational life of the institution. One crucial value is that the university remains an autonomous self-governing structure that is independent in action while being responsible to societal needs (University of Botswana, 2006). The major limitation of this dual value system is that it privileges certain forms of knowing over others, and there is no evidence of academic openness to challenge accepted beliefs, ideas, and visions during teaching and learning. The extent to which the student community is infiltrated by state secret agents parading as students makes such action insurmountable risky for staff.

Administratively, the state president is the ceremonial head of the university, who appoints a chancellor and

chairperson of council and the vice chancellor. The chairperson of council wields a lot of statutory power in the policies of the university (University of Botswana, 2006). Autonomy is hardly realized because the university largely organizes experiences that conform to the aspirations of the social and economic elite. The problem is that needs are not collectively defined by the broader society. In addition, higher education serves the needs of global capital and adult education in Botswana and like the rest of Africa lacks a clear social change agenda. For example, the University of Botswana vision is implemented through expanding access and participation, use of information and communication technologies within the framework of lifelong and open learning. In spite of the commitment to the use of communication technologies, the university-based Centre for Continuing Education fails to use new technologies to reach remote communities (Adekanmbi & Modise, 2000). Access to quality education is a national priority for advancing the economic development of the nation as part of the global economy (University of Botswana, 2006). The point is that the educational endeavour is geared toward meeting the needs of the global economy which contradicts the rhetoric about promoting national, social, and cultural heritage. All indications suggest that the state does not question global economic expansion. Finally, the university pledges to expand its part-time continuing education programs. This will be realized through the strategy of engagement, which calls on the university to be a contributing partner to national development. This probes some scholars like Cruikshank (2008) who notes that the university serves the needs of the state and global capital and, only secondarily, those of the students and the society at large.

## University-Based Adult Education and Globalization

This section argues that the universities in the South uphold their traditional role of training individuals who have completed high school education. They often represent the cream of the national elite and some highly gifted members of other social and cultural groups in society. Higher education has come to act not only as a source of gender disparity but also as a midwife for the induction of developing states into globalization (Taylor, 2001). Adult education is a late development in African university education. According to Gorard and Rees (2002), the emphasis of state sponsored university education in developing nations, just like in the developed world, is so selective that it leaves one third of all students who completed high school out of

any form of further learning. University education prepares individuals for employability in order for the nation to meet its economic and social imperative. It is part of the state's attempt to be socially inclusive, yet the outcomes invariably exclude those who are not included by the stringent selection procedures. As a result, political movements of all persuasions recommend state-sponsored education as a means to institutionalize some kind of social mobility for a select few. They view education as creating economic and social opportunities. But in all respects, they mostly ignore a collective agenda of providing an equitable cultural and intellectual experiences for the all citizens. For example, in spite of the fact that available data suggest that there are equitable numbers of men and women in higher education, there is still a discrepancy in enrollments for subjects such as science and technology. Women tend to be concentrated in the humanities and service professions (Taylor, 2001). University education in this regard performs a dual role of instilling the culture of *individualism* and also cascades developing nations into being competitive participants in the global village (Barr, 1999; Cheru, 2002). However, Torres (2003) suggests that universities have to needs to update and transform their knowledge systems and content in favor of the majority if they are to continue to contribute to personal, national, and global development.

University education in developing nations continues to be intricately tied to human capital development theory, which focuses on how individuals and their organizations acquire essential prescribed knowledge and skills and how those are applied for a civilizing and not transformational mission. For example, in Botswana, the mission of the university is to enhance the human resource capacity of the nation and the international community (University of Botswana, 2006). University education is related to rapid changes in available job opportunities, therefore the security of workers depends on maintaining skills and knowledge that several employers find desirable in their contexts. Sperling and Tucker (1997) argue that the acquisition of university education qualifications becomes a *sine quo non* for the good life, enjoyment of the privilege of being part of a select elite group in their nations and the global market. The market-oriented nature of university education in the South leads to divisions between two types of worlds: one well educated and affluent, the other essentially ignorant, silenced, poor, rural, and deprived of the capacity to make decisions at personal and global levels (Cheru, 2002). Consequently, Torres (2003) notes that developing nations are at the whims of structural adjustment policies and other forms of deprivation that result from lack of access to university education for most

of their citizens with the few educated ones drifting to the North through brain drain (Nyamnjoh, 2004).

In spite of that, Deng and Zartman (2001) observes that after independence, most governments in Africa postured as benevolent guardians of the welfare state intended to improve the welfare of the African masses through the provision of mass education, health, and other welfare services. Welfarist states such as Botswana bought into this rather naïve view of equating rapid industrialization to development without deliberately focusing on developing the people. Unfortunately, after several decades it dawned on the leadership that Africa was not developing, that the decade of "development" resulted in stagnation characterized by rising levels of poverty, unemployment, high infant mortality, and a general collapse in the social infrastructure (Ake, 1995). In spite of the poor development record, the traditional notion that development has to lead to raising standards of living for African people has been downplayed in favor of being happy with an increase in trade flows, stock prices, and profits for a few local appendages of multinational corporations. The outcome was that the majority of the people in developing nations are now far worse off than before the advent of globalization (Amin, 1997; Finger & Asún, 2001). However, universities in Africa perform conflicting roles of training national elite on the one hand and facilitating social inclusion of traditionally excluded groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and the poor and undereducated on the other. These conflicting conceptions invariably affect the conception and delivery of university-based adult education.

#### **University-Based Adult Education in the South**

Most university-based adult education programs in the South emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s with the desire to facilitate education for social change and transformation. Unfortunately, they have since strayed away from that original mandate and are now preoccupied with the human capital model or dancing to the dictates of the marketplace. Adult educators then ensured that learning facilitated discussion, debate, and dialogue among citizens. They provided a forum for the practice of democracy, equity, and social justice in order to strive for common good (Crowther, Galloway, & Martin, 2005; Good, 2008; Gouthro, 2007; Welton, 2001). Based on the previous argument, it could be that adult education in Botswana also has drifted to pursue a human capital model as it blindly follows the university vision outlined before, which pits concern with social inclusion against economic imperatives. University-based adult education can effectively work only if the responsibility for learning

does not lie only with the learners but is a joint venture between the learners, employers, and the institutions (Hall, 1997). Adult education should critique the human capital model in order to enable learners to engage in lifelong and lifewide learning experiences as opposed to reducing learning to a simplistic economic calculus (Gorard & Rees, 2002; Taylor, 2001). Taylor (2001) observed that in the global South, university education is still exclusive to the elite and late adolescence groups mostly drawn from higher social class and mostly excluding adult poor and marginalized out of school populations.

Ludden (1996) observed that some adult learners believe that they cannot learn, this in spite of their increased ability to judge what could work in their contexts. The truth is that other learners are willing to provide them with support and encouragement, and they have their personal and professional experience, which are rich resources to draw from in class discussions and dialogue (Gouhro, 2007). The myths about adults as learners discourage some learners from accessing university adult education. The challenge is for adult educators to organize programs that are responsive to the experiences of adult learners. In planning adult learning curricula, teaching and research, and helping learners articulate alternative views that might be opposed to the status quo, these issues need to be taken into account. Adult educators have to address social issues pertaining to unemployment, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality in their teaching and learning discourses (Ludden, 1996; Mariatona, 2006).

Unfortunately, in some cases, adult education practice has substituted its emancipatory discourse and politically inspired model of collective welfare with a narrowly focused agenda on individualism, self-actualization, and technorationality as the sole determinants of success (Hall, 2001). In this regard, AE serves as an instrument of the market intended to facilitate personal and organizational competitiveness in the global market. Adult education has become a commodity and is promoted and marketed based on its perceived benefits and contribution to the capitalist culture. For example, in North America, university-based adult education programs experienced an unprecedented restructuring and were arbitrarily appended to "more powerful" formal school-based programs such as curriculum and instruction, human resource development, and policy studies, and recently AE has been pushed into a marriage of convenience with schools of lifelong learning. Consequently, neoliberal states in Africa are constantly under attack from Bretton Woods Institutions for promoting adult education with a focus on social service and not efficiency and effectiveness (Finger & Astún, 2001).

States in developing nations continue to cut down funding at the dictates of structural adjustments policies of the IMF and technical advice from the WB. The thrust of the structural adjustment policy lifted the populist view where governments felt obliged to provide social services to their communities. The adjustment policy tends to ignore the socioeconomic fabric and objective realities of the African situation (Youngman, 2000). University education in this respect serves to widen economic disparities between the elite and the majority of the people. The whole process invariably alienates the ruling elite from their communities (Deng, 1998). The state and to some extent university education lose their legitimacy when they fail to mediate between global pressures for market economics and the legitimate local demands for people-centred adult education. The curriculum and teaching programs also espouse this rather narrow view.

### **Planning Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning in Adult Education**

Theoretically, teaching and learning in adult education should expose learners to sensitive ways to respond to the needs of adults when they begin to serve as extension workers. Adult education programs therefore should provide skills of tolerance and acceptance of diversity measured by quality deliverables in learning, teaching, promotion of social inclusion, and disdain for exclusion in order to encourage social cohesion and inclusion (Newman, 2005). However, in practice, lecturers in AE treat adult learners as any other students in higher education. The knowledge systems and experiences of adult learners from the field are ignored. The curriculum focuses on preparing them to be active participants in national and global markets, to the neglect of local African situations. University-based adult educators have become active agents and conveyers of "essential" knowledge, neglecting to help learners to be responsive adult educators. The process of teaching and learning emphasizes the need to impart prescribed knowledge rather than the potential benefits derivable from working with the experience of the students. University adult educators in Africa succumbed to the myth that adult learners lack essential learning experience and skills to study in higher education (Von Kotze, 2005). Quite clearly, such a view ignores the fact that people learn on a lifelong basis. In Botswana, this occurs in spite of policy commitment to lifelong learning engraved in the university and departmental mission and vision statements. Ultimately, adult learners do not get the support they need to express their intellectual efficacy and to relate what they learn to their prior knowledge and experiences. In

spite of all these challenges, Richardson (1994) observes, "Older individuals tend to be more proficient in aspects of cognition, which have to do with their experience" (p. 383). University adult educators have demonstrated little flexibility to accommodate the trajectories of the life experiences of their learners as parents, workers, and active citizens (Newman, 2005). In adult education classes, educators have attempted to avoid politically controversial issues. They failed to determine the needs of adult learners and their motives for participating in programs and, in the process, failed to plan contextually appropriate courses (Chevallier, 2002). Adult education programs in democratically constricted settings in developing countries become conveyors of sanitized noncontroversial official knowledge where learners are expected to learn without questioning (Tisdell, 2001).

However, the quality and experiences of adult educators in Botswana can improve their work if they are willing to learn from teachers who have committed themselves to the principles and practice of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy assumes that learners should analyze their discourse maps because individuals strive to subvert oppressive aspects of the social order and are not just acted on (Gee, 2003). hooks (1994) maintains that learners and teachers strive to resist oppressive social structures. Critical theory encourages extension workers to engage their clients in a critical analyses of activities as policy-makers and implementers. They comment on curriculum development processes, planning of programs, teaching, and the selection of texts. Apple (2001) argued that practitioners should not only seek to recognize the place of power in their practice but also to hold the dominant elite responsible for their decisions. In some institutions where democratic culture has not been replaced by fear of secret agents, adult educators are willing to risk their careers and professorial privileges to question the essence of their practice. They engage university learners and lecturers in questioning their privileged positions in society (Tisdell, 2001). Others have continued to frame their adult education practices in the democratic and social movement traditions in their teachings in order to critique forms of adult education in academia that conform to market forces and indoctrinate learners rather than teaching to help learners to transform themselves and their future clients (Foley, 2005; Hall, 2001). Critical educational theory would help lecturers and learners in Botswana with strategies to challenge the dominant worldview and help them bridge the gap between the espoused theory of adult education in its initial mission statements with a focus on grassroots and its current practice.

As indicated, universities play complex roles. They are to promote background training for new generations of leaders in society. They imprint differences, based on class, ethnicity, and gender, on new generations. At the same time, they are also a possible site of class struggle over deciding on issues such as whose histories are taught on the one hand and whose reality is left behind on the other, who has access to university education and who is excluded (Maruatona, 2006). Adult education could offer learners an opportunity to serve as guardians of local and national sites of struggle among workers and other agents of civil society. Hall (2001) questions why teachers should remain aloof and instead teach about aspects that further the cause of globalization without helping the learners to question it. He suggests that, as adult educators, teachers cannot afford to give globalization and capitalism consent or remain silent in their teaching of grassroots workers; they should work with learners to create a humane world where there will be peace, clean water, fairness, and good health for all over the profiteering.

University-based faculty have questioned some aspects of their practice through focussing on *positionality*, which refers to how aspects of one's identity, such as race/ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation or ability, significantly affect one's position relative to the dominant culture (Tisdell, 2001). Tisdell (2001) observed that, for a long time, education has been focused on rational forms of knowledge that are predominantly created by White males and unquestionably transmitted to all learners. She argues that adult educators should question their power relations in the construction and dissemination of knowledge. Finding answers to such issues would help adult educators facilitate teaching in a manner that would turn adult education graduates into liberal minded, democratic, and freedom oriented persons. This would help to create an equitable and just society in developing nations. University education classes should be sites of resistance to the dominant culture. They should help extension workers to fight against exclusion of women and minorities in communities and not encourage elitism.

Adult educators intending to teach for transformation should create a community of learners who would engage in a critical pedagogy. Hart (2001) challenges adult educators to reassess their institutional and personal privilege and how, as teachers, they fail to appreciate knowledge that is generated by individuals who have historically been violated and nearly destroyed. According to hooks (1994), adult educators can teach to transgress only if they admit that their students' collective political identities are rooted in the experiences of oppression. As hooks puts it, "Identity

politics emerges out of the struggles of oppressed groups and exploited groups cultures" (pp. 88–89). Hart (2001) suggests that university staff should view themselves as part of the typology of power, which accords them academic power and privilege. They need to critique their privileged social position in class and help their learners to be conscious of their privileged position as extension workers at the grassroots. The key feature is to develop capacity to listen to silenced voices in our classes in the developing world. Clearly, in the context of the South, teaching should go beyond transmitting time-tested knowledge to include questioning the taken-for-granted-truths that are based on continued silencing of the oppressed. Critical theory makes recourse to how we could help learners find their voice in an adult education classroom. In addition, adult educators can contribute to adult learning through research that is rooted in the practice and experiences of their students.

Research in adult and higher education is crucial to teaching in the sense that it exposes university adult educators to the working conditions and political realities of their field-based adult students. Teachers need to engage in participatory action research to acquire the kind of experience that challenges the researcher to spend some time with participants in the rural areas, learning from extension workers and, more importantly, the affected yet silenced majority of the rural people. This would help teachers work with extension staff to develop a positive attitude toward the knowledge and experience of rural communities. The proposed interactive research process would enable teachers to work from real issues confronted by the learners rather than to depend exclusively on Western textbooks. Hart (2001) indicates that a responsible combination of local knowledge and the available theories could transform adult learning into a cultural and intellectual project and could open a form of public dialogue in the classroom. Effective teaching requires the use of locally relevant materials and the endorsement of lifelong learning policies (Maruatona, 2006).

Hildebrand (2001) noted that in Africa, 95% of the textbooks currently used in universities made no specific reference to African contexts. Unfortunately, the use of these decontextualized Western textbooks inhibited effective interaction with the learners. Fortunately, in 1999, Frank Youngman, then a professor of AE at the University of Botswana, suggested the idea of writing appropriate, African series textbooks as part of the post-CONFITEA V activities, to reform adult education in Africa. The argument was that such textbooks would be responsive to the contexts of African adult educators and learners. Thus far, a series of four textbooks are already published: *Psychology of Adult*

*Learning in Africa, Foundations of Adult Education in Africa, Research Methods for Adult Educators in Africa, and Social Context of Adult Learning in Africa.* Some of these are used in some adult education courses across Africa. These textbooks will ultimately infuse local content materials that reflect African situations and inspire discourses on local realities in class (Hildebrand, 2001). Fortunately, the DAE played a leading role in the publication of the series along with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning.

The Department of Adult Education at the University of Botswana endorsed the principle of lifelong learning, which was partly ignited by the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future and was rekindled in 1998 at the University of Mumbai in India and further developed at the World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris, France, in 1998. The notion of lifelong learning was given a further impetus through the International Conference on Lifelong Learning, Higher Education and Active Citizenship held in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2000. It underscored the fact that men and women are agents of their own histories, and participants called on higher education institutions to open up their doors for adult and nontraditional learners and adapt their programs to meet the needs of their participants. Hildebrand (2001) asserts that university education institutions should develop mechanisms to recognize and value learning outcomes from different contexts. Researchers are being encouraged to establish joint community/university research projects in order to bring the benefits of higher education research to outside groups. They should create opportunities for adult learners, in flexible, open, and creative ways, taking into account the specific needs of the participants. For example, the University of Botswana Department of Adult Education reorganized its curricula at diploma, degree, master's, and PhD levels in 2001–2002 to prioritize some of the themes espoused by CONFITEA V. The department added new courses, such as participatory development methods, at undergraduate level to address issues of gender and ethnic inequalities. It strives to train extension officers who would use the knowledge and practice to improve the conditions of traditionally excluded rural communities. The department further introduced new courses—such as participatory approaches to rural extension, youth and development, and theory and practice of community development at graduate level—as part of their efforts to train for social change. These courses would hopefully provide extension workers and managers with new approaches to adult learning. The reorganization of the programs would certainly help to keep adult educators up-to-date with the best community-based practices. The succeeding paragraphs discuss ways

to enhance university-based adult education in providing responsive adult learning experiences.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The role of higher education based adult education is very complex and contradictory in that it could serve both conservative and transformative ends. Adult education programs in Africa would play a leading role in facilitating social transformation if they reconsider to reject efforts to fit people into state-prescribed roles and rather train them to think independently and critically about their practice as extension workers. The following are some suggestions of how to strengthen the practice of adult education in Africa in order to enable it to play a meaningful role in the recruitment and training of effective future adult educators who would facilitate social change in their assigned communities. Adult educators need to be trained to pursue community mobilization, focus on civil society and the general NGO community, and reshape curricula and teaching of university based adult education.

### ***Invigorating Community Resilience***

A close analysis of adult education practice in Botswana since 1979 suggests that it has evolved to position itself well to pursue effective community mobilization. First, it has expanded from training only nonformal education junior and senior staff to training for the whole extension staff—from the Ministry of Agriculture to that of works and transport. Second, the department is exemplary because it has relevant courses, such as gender issues in adult education, development policies and adult education, adult education and sustainable development, political economy of adult education and development, to mention but a few; this clearly illustrates its commitment to the pursuit of community mobilization. The point is that if effectively implemented these courses would help the department train people who will be willing to invigorate community mobilization. University-based adult educators in Botswana should therefore be encouraged to take advantage of the relative autonomy of the university to work with adult learners in exploring aspects of student experiences that would help them facilitate change and social transformation in their future work. Adult educators at the university should help their trainees to engage in the politics of the possible, where they would work astutely to conscientize communities to react against negative influences of the country's unbridled pursuit of free market economy without jeopardizing their work. The pursuit of such an agenda would enable the program to transcend market-driven curricula and give way to adult education for social transformation (Barr, 1999).

The training of extension staff at DAE and, indeed, the rest of Africa should encourage them to work deliberately for social change in order to engage communities in action against any form of social injustice. They should strive to frame their practice within what Hall (2001) refers to as the tradition of democracy and social movements rather than consenting to the dictates of market pressures. Adult education practice should constitute an extension of community aspirations and values in pursuit of common purposes. The basic assumption behind training for community mobilization is that given an opportunity to engage freely in discussions and constructive dialogue individual learners can participate in their own and their community's transformation. To work for social change, adult educators in Africa will have to work with rural communities, the unemployed, and workers through teaching and organizing democratic workshops and action research projects to help participants critically assess their situation in order to strive for facilitating positive change in the lives of their communities.

Community mobilization can never to be taken for granted. Extension educators have a responsibility to mobilize communities to help them engage in social dialogue about issues affecting them. Mobilization would help to raise the learners' consciousness and get them to challenge assumptions and slogans of the political elite (Freire & Macedo, 1995). African communities need to be reassured that they can assert control over their lives—beyond the rhetoric of NEPAD—through helping them appreciate and develop a criterion for the election of effective representatives into parliament and other statutory bodies in central and local governments. This process would help them hold their political representatives accountable. Here again, well trained adult educators should use their expertise and experience to mobilize communities to assist them in making informed decisions. Adult educators should use their expertise to assist their communities in bringing about people-centred development. They should help people make choices based on the limited human and natural resources that communities have at their disposal. Working with the community would also reinvigorate the community's resilience and develop their capacity to take an active part in the negotiation of their development agenda. This is a major challenge for university-based adult educators in Botswana and elsewhere in the South. Adult educators have to assist communities with strategies on people-centred development approaches such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA), which could be used to assist communities develop community action plans.

### ***Focus on Civil Society Empowerment***

Civil society includes such associations as the church, trade unions, and burial societies. They are voluntary and endure across generations even though some are formed for a limited purpose to represent its members. University based adult education in Botswana should play a vital research and teaching role in the training of effective actors in the arena of civil society. This is more so in Africa, where civil society is still relatively weak (Maruatona, 2006). While the state represents the broader polity in society, civil society represents purposefully identified interest grouping, which makes their mobilization easier in that they have a common agenda and purpose. Civil society organizations are formed on free pursuit of personal and cultural interests located between the family, economy, and the state. It helps people find value in redressing oppressive social structures. This justifies the need for university-based adult educators in Botswana as elsewhere in Africa to take advantage of the rather limited academic freedom and effectively train civil society leaders who shall impart profound change in communities where they work (Welton, 2001). The Department of Adult Education at the University of Botswana currently offers a distance-based diploma in NGO management and is working on approving a master's degree course on NGO management intended to empower NGO field-workers. Welton (1997) argues that adult educators can strengthen civil society through the provision of effective adult education designed for empowerment.

Unfortunately, most of the time, the state elite in developing countries (such as Botswana) use their power (hegemony) to limit the capacity of civil society to participate in democratic institutions (Maruatona, 2006). In spite of this, the extent to which civil society agents would actively participate in the structures of popular democracy would be testimony to their empowerment and their communities. In Botswana as elsewhere in Africa, civil society is still weak, and therefore the inverse is the case. The imposition of Western democracy accompanied by global capitalism and rampant corruption of the African elite has reduced civil society functionaries into docile and submissive hopefuls. Civil society functionaries are silenced by being offered lucrative positions by the ruling elite and their global allies, therefore they serve to stifle rather than empower civil society agencies. Striving to mobilize civil society is one of the gravest challenges for university-based adult educators in the South. Adult educators in Africa, like their Western counterparts, should take a deliberate stance to fight on the side of civil society and other marginalized interests in the face of unequal power relations and state repression and dictatorship even under the so-called democracies

such as Botswana (Good, 2008). African adult educators can live up to this expectation only if they are willing to serve as change agents. They need to work with the civil society organizations to challenge state hegemony and to help rebuild the failed state (Cheru, 2002)

In Africa, there is a progressive loss of power among civil society organizations, especially trade unions that are being co-opted by capital under "privatization." There is a loss of the civil and social efficacy and collective benefits associated with union membership. Macdonald (1997) views the relationship between civil society and adult education as essential for the launching of an inevitable culture of democracy in Africa. He notes, "In the Third World, societies are characterized by histories of repression . . . some form of popular participation is essential in order to build more durable and legitimate democratic institutions" (p. 2). Macdonald's assertion is predicated on the assumption that institutions, such as a progressive department of adult education at a university, can draw on their relative autonomy to transform themselves into sites of struggle for democracy in order to train adult facilitators who would help to strengthen civil society in their nations. One of the most crucial things adult educators in Africa need is to facilitate citizen participation in decisions affecting their lives. Adult educators should mobilize people to work across all structures of social and political governance, from village development committees to the highest possible level of representation, such as being a member of Parliament or Senate. University based adult educators should work with extension staff to assist communities with information to enable them to elect representatives who share their commitment to good governance as opposed to those who are striving for self-aggrandizement. Adult education programs would invariably have to sharpen their curricula and pedagogical strategies.

### ***Sharpen Curricula and Pedagogy in Adult Education***

While we have indicated that the Department of Adult Education (DAE) at the University of Botswana curriculum reform has made some progress since 1997 in terms of taking the CONFINTEA V resolutions on higher education into account, a lot still needs to be done. The department still has to work on ensuring that curriculum development is not only driven by the national vision but is based on extensive consultations with current and prospective learners. Currently, the marketing officer at DAE consults with stakeholders through workshops and seminars intended to expand ways the department would best articulate and serve the needs of actual and potential clients. However,

the activities of the department have also been boosted by political factors, such as the endorsement of participatory approach by the government. The department accordingly restructured its programs to train people in the use of participatory approaches, such as the community based development strategy and the participatory rural appraisal (PRA), in direct response to state endorsement of the two approaches for facilitating planning national development (Youngman & Maruatona, 1998).

The argument is that the department should push further beyond state reforms and introduce new approaches so that they lead the way (being proactive) rather than reacting to government changes. It should transform its curriculum with a desire to bring about a social change in the broader society. It should adopt strategies and techniques such as the use of dialogue, discussions, and effective use of group work during teaching and learning. African adult education, therefore, should be in the forefront in challenging the assumptions of state-sponsored innovations. Adult education curricula in Africa should enable its beneficiaries to develop critical minds and closely analyze and astutely implement state policies to benefit the poor and historically excluded groups such as women and minorities.

The curricula should put social change and resistance back on the agenda and work toward training extension workers who will help rural communities to develop voices (Barr, 1999; Hart, 2001). Barr (1999) argues that adult education should enable facilitators to work with rural communities on reevaluating their knowledge systems in order to enhance their self-esteem and self-respect. University-based adult education practice should enable extension workers in Africa to navigate the trajectories between their lives, communities, and workplaces. Consequently, it is argued that—as exemplified by the Botswana adult education program—there is potential for adult education to rescue the field from training people who are willing to sustain unjust social and political systems, generating instead those who would rather focus on working with community members to produce knowledge and facilitate social change and transformation.

### Conclusion

This article has argued that adult education in higher education could play a transformative role, provided there is a deliberate return to the initial social action and transformative agenda characteristic of adult education. The context of Botswana is analyzed to demonstrate that the society is polarized along social, ethnic, and economic

lines. University education in Africa is viewed as primarily an elitist experience, which in spite of the rhetoric about inclusiveness is still highly selective. The role of a university based adult education program is contradictory and depends on the commitment of its teachers, curriculum, teaching, and research to the principle of social change. It argues that it is still possible to work within and to get universities to play a meaningful role in providing adult learning opportunities for students intending to serve as extension workers. The task for educators is to critically assess their own work and not to remain silent in the face of globalization, capitalism, and state sponsored intimidation of university staff through planting secret agents in university classrooms and other forms of covert strategies of oppression. It also provides an overview of the provision of adult education in Botswana. It indicates that adult education in Botswana is undergoing changes that hold hope for those working for social change. Some courses could allow lecturers to help learners develop a will to facilitate social change and transformation. It argues that teaching and research have to reinforce progressive values in order to address the needs of traditionally excluded adult students. Finally, the article suggests that university can play meaningful roles in adult learning only if adult educators work toward focusing on invigorating community mobilization, work with civil society functionaries to strengthen their fight for justice, and sharpen curricula and pedagogy to make university adult education in the South a truly transformative experience.

### References

- Adekanmbi, G., & Modise, M. (2000). The state of adult continuing education in Botswana. In S. A. Indabawa, A. Oduaran, T. Afrik, & S. Walters (Eds.), *The state of adult continuing education in Africa* (pp. 65–93). Windhoek, Namibia: Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, University of Namibia.
- Ake, C. (1995). *Socio-political approaches and policies for sustainable development in Africa*. Paper presented at the biannual symposium of the African Development Bank, Abuja, Nigeria, May 23.
- Amin, S. (1997). *Capitalism in the age of globalisation: The management of contemporary society*. London: Zed Books.
- Apple, M. W. (2001). Foreword. In R. Cervero & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Power in practice: Adult education and the struggle for knowledge and power in society* (pp. ix–xiii). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Barr, J. (1999). *Liberating knowledge: Research feminism and adult education*. Leicester, UK: NIACE.
- Bhola, H.S. (1999). Literacy campaigns: A policy perspective. In D. Wagner, R. Venezky, & B. Street (Eds.), *Literacy: An international handbook* (pp. 288–293). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Cheru, F. (2002). *African renaissance: Road map to the challenges of globalization*. London, UK: ZED books.
- Chevallier, T. (2002). Higher education and its clients: Institutional response to change in demand and in environment. *Journal of Higher Education*, 33, 303–308.
- Crowther, J., Galloway, V., & Martin, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Introduction: Radicalising intellectual work*. In J. Crowther, V. Galloway, & I. Martin (Eds.), *Popular education: Engaging the academy, international perspectives* (pp. 1–10). Plymouth, UK: NIACE.
- Cruikshank, J. (2008). Lifelong learning and the new economy: Limitations of a market model. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 27(1), 51–69.
- Deng, L. (1998). *Retinking African development: Towards a framework for social integration and ecological harmony*. Eritrea, Africa: African World Press.
- Deng, L., & Zartman, I. (2001). *Strategic vision for Africa: The Kampala movement*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.
- Department of Adult Education. (2006). *Undergraduate and graduate handbooks 2005/2006*. Gaborone, Botswana: University of Botswana.
- Finger, M., & Asún, M. (2001). *Adult education at crossroads: Learning our way out*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Foley, G. (2005). Emancipatory organisational learning: Context and method. In J. Crowther, V. Galloway, & I. Martin (Eds.), *Popular education: Engaging the academy, international perspectives* (pp. 214–222). Plymouth, UK: NIACE.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1995). A dialogue: Culture language and race. *Journal of Harvard Educational Review*, 65(3), 377–402.
- Gee, J. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. London, UK: Falmer Press.
- Good, K. (2008). *Diamonds dispossessed and democracy in Botswana*. Oxford, UK: James Currey.
- Gordon, S., & Rees, G. (2002). *Creating a learning society? Learning careers and policies for lifelong learning*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Gough, P. B. (1995). The new literacy: Caveat emptor. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 18(2), 79–86.
- Gouthro, P. (2007). Active and inclusive citizenship for women: Democratic considerations for fostering lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), 143–154.
- Grayson, J. (2005). Social movements and free spaces for civil society: The case of the British Tenants Movement and Northern College. In J. Crowther, V. Galloway, & I. Martin (Eds.), *Popular education: Engaging the academy, international perspectives* (pp. 181–191). Plymouth, UK: NIACE.
- Hall, B. (1997). *Transformative learning and democracy: Whose vision, whose planet and whose learning?* Paper presented at the SCUTERIA International Conference, London, England, July 1–3.
- Hall, B. (2001). Politics of globalization: Transformative practice of adult education graduate program. In R. Cervero & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Power in practice: Adult education and the struggle for knowledge and power in society* (pp. 107–125). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hart, M. (2001). Transforming boundaries of power in the classroom: Learning from mestiza. In R. Cervero & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Power in practice: Adult education and the struggle for knowledge and power in society* (pp. 164–183). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hildebrand, H. (2001). Past and future aspects of IIZ/DDV project: Initial and “in service training of adult educators in Africa.” *Journal of Adult Education and Development*, 56, 101–108.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- International Monetary Fund. (2006). *World economic outlook*. Washington, DC: IMF.
- Ludden, L. (1996). *Back to school: A college guide for adults*. Indianapolis, IN: Park Avenue Production.
- Macdonald, L. (1997). *Supporting civil society: The political role of NGOs in Central America*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Maruatona, T. L. (2006). Deliberative democracy and social engagement in Africa. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 22(1), 11–27.
- Merriam, S., & Brockett, R. (2007). *The profession and practice of adult education: An introduction* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. (1994). *Household income and expenditure survey*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printer.
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. (2010). *2010 Budget speech: Transforming our economy after the crisis and beyond*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printer.
- NEPAD. (2001). *The new partnership for Africa's development*. Abuja, Nigeria: Interlink print.
- Newman, M. (2005). Popular teaching, popular learning and popular action. In J. Crowther, V. Galloway, & I. Martin (Eds.), *Popular education: Engaging the academy, international perspectives* (pp. 22–31). Plymouth, UK: NIACE.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2004). Globalization and popular disenfranchisement in Africa. In J. Maku & C. Saxena (Eds.) *Africa at the cross roads: Between regionalism and globalization* (pp. 315–336). London, UK: Praeger.
- Richardson, T. (1994). Mature students in higher education: Academic performance and intellectual ability. *Higher Education*, 28, 373–386.
- Schriber-Barsh, S. (2009). Raising participation or furthering exclusion? Regional LLL strategies under scrutiny. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(1), 41–55.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Sperling, J., & Tucker, R. (1997). *For profit higher education: Developing a working class workforce*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Taylor, R. (2001). Lifelong learning in higher education in Western Europe: Myth and reality? *Journal of Adult Education and Development*, 56, 127–146.
- Tisdell, E. (2001). The politics of positionality: Teaching for social change in higher education. In R. Cervero & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Power in practice: Adult education and the struggle for knowledge and power in society* (pp. 145–163). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Torres, M. (2003). *Life long learning in the south: Critical issues and opportunities for adult education*. Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
- University of Botswana. (2006). *University of Botswana strategic plan to 2009 and beyond: Shaping our future*. Gaborone, Botswana: University of Botswana.
- Von Kotze, A. (2005). People's education and the academy: An experience from South Africa. In J. Crowther, V. Galloway, & I. Martin (Eds.), *Popular education: Engaging the academy, international perspectives* (pp. 11–21). Plymouth, UK: NIACE.
- Welton, M. (1997). *Civil society as theory and project*. In D. Wildemeersch, M. Finger, & T. Jansen (Eds.), *Adult education and social responsibility: Reconciling the irreconcilable?* (pp. 189–213). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Welton, M. (2001). Civil society and the public sphere: Habermas's recent learning theory. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 33(1), 20–34.
- Youngman, E. (2000). *The political economy of adult education and development*. New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Youngman, E., & Maruatona, T. L. (1998). A departure from the past? Extension workers and participatory rural development: The case of Botswana. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 17(4), 238–246.