Conceptualizing the Benefits of Adult Literacy Education in Namibia: A case of the Caprivi Region

Author: Likando
University of Namibia, Windhoek

Abstract

This article aims to examine how adult literacy learners and policy makers conceptualise the benefits derived from adult literacy leaning in Namibia, using the Caprivi region as a case study to understand how community's needs can be addressed through adult literacy. Both qualitative and quantitative designs were used in the process of data collection and analysis. A stratified sample of 100 adult literacy learners and purposive sample of five policy makers participated in the study. The findings revealed that there is a narrow conception of the benefits derived from adult literacy as participants conceived literacy as a neutral skill, other than a social practice embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. The article concludes by making recommendation that due to this narrow conception of the benefits derived from adult literacy learning, there is a need to revisit the relationship between policy, practice and outcomes in the exiting National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN).

Background

Literacy is an essential life skill, which enables individual to participate more fully in the practices of their respective communities (Durgunoğlu, Öney, & Kuşcul, 2003). To underscore this point the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the launch of the UNLD (2003-2012) remarked:

> We are here because we know that the 21st century begins
> with one in five adults unable to read and write…. We are
> here because we know that literacy is the key to unlocking
> the cage of human misery; the key to delivering the poten-

tial of every human being; the key to opening up a future of freedom and hope. We are here to open a decade and that must translate that hope into reality (UNESCO, 2004a, p. 21).

In keeping with this notion, the Director General of UNESCO Koïchiro Matsuura, noted that "…while not a universal panacea for all development problems… literacy is both a versatile and proven tool for development" (UNESCO, 2004a, p. 21).

The positive consequence of these rhetoric was the direct support of the launching of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) - (2003-2012) with the aim of making significant progress towards the 2015 Dakar goals (goal 3, 4, and 5). Goal 4, that specifically deals with adult literacy states, "…achieving 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 3). The implication is that in a country with an adult literacy rate of 40% for instance, the goal would be to achieve 60 % by 2015. While for countries with rates above 60% such as Namibia, the goal of 2015 is universal literacy (UNESCO, 2004b, p. 127).

It should be noted that goal 4 has posed a challenge to many developing countries globally, including Namibia. Thus, Namibia has set itself a new target (undoubtedly in quantitative terms) of achieving 90 % literacy rate by 2015 (Directorate of Adult and Basic Education, 2006). The justification advanced for setting new targets is the promotion of social, cultural, political and economic development of which adult literacy has a role to play. However, in the case of Namibia the following pertinent questions beg for answers. To what extent would the achievement of 90 % literacy rate contribute to social, cultural, political and economic development? How would the attainment of 90 % literacy rate in Namibia be measured qualitatively?

No country in the world has doubted the contribution literacy can make to human development (UNDP, 2001), but the achievement must be conceived in a framework that measures the qualitative aspects of literacy learning rather than quantitative aspects. It is therefore plausible to argue that for literacy learning to be meaningful, the literacy process should find its expression in engaging and participating in authentic social change that leads to one's improved standard of living. Authentic social change as Freire, (1990)

maintains is achieved when literacy education is designed to promote 'critical consciousness' that leads to empowerment.

Although in the Namibian context the value of literacy is not doubted, debates have loomed regarding its relevance and specific benefits to participants. Particularly in the Caprivi Region which is regarded as the poorest of all the 13 political/educational regions in Namibia in terms of regional poverty profiles (National Planning Commission, 2006). Despite the education policies' emphasis on literacy as a catalyst for economic development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993), the transferability of skills from classroom into regular use in the daily life of the participants in the National Literacy programme has been characterised by Rogers, (2001) and Kweka and Namene (1999) as a major problem. The key element in the argument on transferability of skills seems to reside in the lack of proper articulation of the benefits of adult literacy in both the policy frameworks and curriculum development of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN). In these policy documents adult literacy is being treated as a neutral skill with effects experienced afterwards (Street, 2003). Major proponents of New Literacy Studies (NLS) such as Rogers (2005), Openjuru (2004) and Street (2003) argue contrary to this assertion. Instead they view adult literacy as a social practice rather than a technical and neutral skill and its benefits go beyond narrow economic concerns.

The notion of adult literacy as a 'social practice' as propounded by NLS brings closer home the need for understanding the practical and conceptual contexts of adult literacy. The aim of this study was to examine these contexts to create an understanding on how benefits derived from adult literacy could be conceptualised by adult literacy learners and practitioners and/or policy makers.

Theoretical and conceptual context

The theoretical thrusts reviewed in this article are based on a humanistic approach. The essence of a humanistic approach concerns the freedom, dignity and autonomy of a learner (adult) in the process of learning (Rogers, 1996). Humanists in meeting goals of developing the well-being of the individual and promoting the well-being of humanity have always placed a great value upon education. Elias and Merriam (1980) maintain that humanistic education is about the development of persons; persons who are open to change and continued learning; persons who strive for self-actualisation, and persons

who can live as fully functioning individuals. In the same vein Fasokun, Katahoire and Oduaran, (2005, p. 53) assert that "free will and drive" is central to the humanists position that an individual is compelled to explore ways of achieving self-actualisation, self-maintenance and self-enhancement. The better known of these theoretical thrusts reviewed in this article are Vygotsky's *social constructivist theory* (Gravett, 2005), and *critical social theory* (Fasokun, Katahoire and Oduaran, 2005).

Drawing from Vygotsky's work Taylor, Marienau and Fiddler (2000) cited by Fasokun, Katahoire and Oduaran, 2005, p. 58) argue that *social constructivism* involves three key propositions: the first is that knowledge is derived from an individual's interaction with social processes and contexts; the second is that knowledge should be seen as a creative construction in which the individual learner is an actor or active participant or subject rather than a passive object, and the third is that the way in which people construe meaning can change over time on the basis of prevailing experiences. In contrast with the constructivist views of Piaget, in which more emphasis is placed on the mental processes of the individual than on the context in which the individual learns, Vygotsky gives prominence to social factors in learning. Thus, the emphasis on social processes and contexts (Thompson, 2002) makes this theory applicable to adult literacy learners whose learning is shaped by the social contexts in which literacy is used. These contexts refer to socio-cultural environments as they may have influence on how individuals interpret ideas and events about learning, and build frameworks of meaning (Fasokun, Katahoire and Oduaran, 2005). It is argued from the social constructivist perspective that "as people develop and mature they build a frame of reference that acts as a perpetual filter through which they observe experiences and evaluate events…" (Gravett, 2005, p. 14). From this, it can be inferred that experiences of adult learners determine to a larger extent the reasons for their participation in literacy programmes. Some recognise literacy as important in the acquisition of skills in business and as a factor to improve their lives, others, simply acknowledge the role literacy plays in socio-economic development (Oluoch, 2005).

Notwithstanding the above, there is a social aspect that is emphasised by the social constructivists which says, adults learn through social interaction and collaboration (Gravett, 2005). According to Gravett, (2005, p. 21) "…the meaning–making activities of the individual do not take place in isolation, instead are shaped by the context, culture and tools in the learning situation". Vygotsky refers to the role of language, dialogue and shared understanding as

elements of culture that shape the learning situation (Gravett, 2005).

From the social constructivist perspective, we surmise that adults acquire literacy with a specific purpose and their literacy is situated in specific contexts. According to Barton (1992) cited by Thompson (2002, p. 116) "…people do not read in order to read, or write in order to write; rather people read and write in order to do things, in order to achieve other ends". It is this urge 'to do things' that drive them to participate in literacy programmes, and it is within this context that the benefits derived from adult literacy should be conceptualised.

The *second* theoretical thrust used in this article is the *critical social theory*, sometimes called *critical educational theory* or *critical literacy* (Maruatona and Cervero, 2004; Degener, 2001). The theory combines both critique and the possibility to empower participants to become agents of social transformation. Departing from this premise it is credible to argue that literacy is an avenue of expressing the learners' realities and their values. According to Lister (1994, p.3) this orientation includes, "…seeing the world in a new way" and "reading political situations" both of which are aimed at the empowerment of learners and helping them acquire new knowledge and develop other life skills beyond alphabetical abilities.

Critical theorists such as Paulo Freire argued that adult literacy should not be confined to teaching specific literacy skills, but rather should contextualise instruction within a framework of social activism and societal transformation (Degener, 2001). In other words, for Freire (1990), a critical literacy programme is designed around the backgrounds, needs and interests of learners. Such a programme does not simply teach literacy and other basic skills but also show learners how they can use these skills to transform their lives and the society in which they live. Although some practitioners within adult education often view the ideas of critical theorists as too theoretical and impractical (Kanpol, 1998), it should be noted that within the critical literacy framework there is not just one literacy but many and an individual may need to practice many kinds of literacy to fulfil his or her roles in society (Street, 1993). Lankshear and MacLaren (1993, p. xviii) in contributing to this debate remarked:

> …these literacies are socially constructed within the political con-texts: that is, within contexts where access to economic, cultural and political and institutional power is structured unequally. Moreover, these same literacies evolve and are employed in daily life settings that are riven with conflicting and otherwise competing interests.

Critical analysis of the benefits derived from adult literacy in Namibia shows a strong indication in the policy documents of the commitment for social, political and economic mobilisation. Despite the noticeable commitment these policy documents lack clear articulation of how knowledge about issues that may be regarded as critical to learners, for example health, sanitation, safe drinking water, HIV and AIDS and so on can be disseminated.

Although the Namibian government views education as one of the means by which transformation from a previously oppressed to a democratic society could be achieved (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993), Tegborg, (1996) observed that it did not choose the path other countries took. Literature reveals that in, Mozambique and Cuba the literacy curriculum was primarily used to create critical consciousness and national identity. The emphasis on 3Rs (reading, writing and numeracy) in National Literacy Programme (NLPN) on the expense of other type of literacies has superficially stressed the benefits of adult literacy in Namibia. A case in point is the promotion of a course-bound curriculum in the NLPN that puts emphasis on the 3Rs as panacea for socioeconomic and political development without considering social contexts in which literacy is used (Thompson, 2002; Reder, and Davila, 2005), and/or without integrating it with other forms of learning and basic reading, writing or life skills. Considering this point, critical social theory highlights the difficulties of conceptualising the benefits of adult literacy in Namibia, especially if conflicting and interlocking curriculum and policy issues are not properly harmonised. Therefore, it is plausible to argue for a policy that puts emphasis on a broad framework that views literacy as a social practice (Rogers, 2005; Openjuru, 2004; and Street 2003), rather than a neutral skill with effects experienced afterwards (Street, 2003), as seen in the policy guidelines of the NLPN.

With these setbacks in the policy guidelines of the NLPN, two major questions remain unanswered. How do participants view the connections between reading and writing in the everyday life and the forms of adult literacy introduced in the classroom of the NLPN? What kinds of literacy practices find their way into the classroom? These are pertinent questions. However, it is not within the scope of this article to interrogate them in detail, but rather, emphasise that there is a need to critically look at the relationship between policy and practice. In the absence of the *National Council on Adult Learning* whose mandate among other things is "…to promote and coordinate adult learning, policy development and implementation…" (Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, 2003, p.

38), it is not clear how the policy issues will be harmonized to inform practice.

Research problem

Although several studies have been conducted in the Namibian education sector on the impact of adult literacy learning on the lives of the participants, these studies were limited to the providers' perspective (Kweka and Namene, 1999; Lind, 1996). To date no in-depth study has been carried-out to understand how adult literacy learners and policy makers conceptualize the benefits of adult literacy learning in terms of skills and knowledge needed by adult literacy learners to function effectively and efficiently and barriers to adult literacy learning. Furthermore, how these barriers could be mitigated. The researcher considered this investigation to be of value, and that the benefits of adult literacy learning and associated factors should be understood both from the adult literacy learners' and policy makers' perspective.

Research questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were adult literacy learners and policy makers' views regarding the practical benefits of adult literacy learning to participants?

2. What kind of skills and knowledge adult literacy learners needed to function effectively and efficiently?

3. What were the barriers in providing literacy education to adult literacy learners?

4. What should be done to mitigate the barriers to adult literacy learning?

Significance of the study

Although several studies have been conducted in the Namibian education sector on the impact of adult literacy learning on the lives of the participants, the researcher is unaware of systematic and in depth studies on how adult literacy learners and policy makers conceptualize the benefits of adult literacy learning in terms of skills and knowledge needed by participants to function effectively and efficiently and barriers to adult literacy learning. These findings

form an important basis for understanding how adult literacy learners and policy makers conceptualize the benefits of adult literacy. Furthermore, it will help in designing specific recommendation (s) to mitigate the identified barriers to adult literacy learning.

Methodology

Research design

Both quantitative and qualitative designs were applied to conduct this study. Whereas quantitatively, a structured questionnaire was used to explore adult literacy learners views pertaining to benefits derived from adult literacy learning, skills and knowledge needed by adult learners to function effectively and barriers adult literacy learning, qualitatively, an interview schedule was used to capture policy makers' views on the benefits derived from adult literacy learning as well as the relevance of the existing NLPN policy guidelines in providing framework for practice.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all adult literacy learners who participating in the National Literacy Programme in the Caprivi region and all policy makers at the national level from the Ministry of Education (MoE), Directorate of Adult Education (DAE).

Sample

A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 adult literacy learners which were drawn from the population using stratified sampling. Out of this sample 80.0% were female and 20.0% male. This pattern replicates the normal representation of the gender distribution in the NLPN (Kweka and Namene, 1999). In terms of the age category the majority (29.0%) of the adult literacy learners was between 51 - 60 years, 24.0%, over 60 years, (20.0%) between the 31 – 40 years, while 18.0% were between 41 - 50 years old. In addition, five (5) policy makers were purposefully selected to participate in the study.

Research instruments

A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 adult literacy learners. In addition, an interview schedule was used to capture policy makers'

views on how they conceptualized the benefits derived from NLPN as well as how perceived the relevance of the existing NLPN policy guidelines in providing framework for practice.

Pre-testing research instruments

To enhance reliability and validity of instruments, the questionnaire items and interview questions were pre-tested on some adult literacy learners in the Caprivi region and policy makers in Windhoek respectively who did not participate in the main study.

Results of the Pre-test

The results of the pre-test demonstrated that all the questions were understood by the respondents and that the instruments were valid for the study. On the basis of these results no items in the research instruments were revised.

Procedure

After obtaining official access to the adult literacy districts, arrangements were made to administer questionnaires to 100 adult literacy learners in the identified adult literacy centers in Caprivi region. This was followed by in-depth interviews with 5 policy makers at the national level.

Ethical considerations

According to Gordon (1997), a discussion of the ethics of practice is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of adult education. The recently identified literature in this area focuses on specific area of practice, such as programme planning (Brokett and Hiemstra, 1998); teaching (Merriam and Cafferella, 1999); and evaluation (Brookfield, 1998). A broader discussion on the issue of ethics has been advanced by Jarvis (1997), who argues for the universal good of respecting persons as an overriding moral principle that should guide all educational practice, including research.

Consistent with Jarvis' (1997) argument, the researcher took into consideration the respondent's right to anonymity in the data collection process. The

researcher made sure that informed consent was obtained and the purpose of the study was explained to all respondents before the structured questionnaire was administered and in-depth interviews were conducted. Finally, participants were reassured of the confidentiality of their responses, as these could not be used for any other purpose except for understanding how adult literacy learners' and policy makers conceptualize benefits derived from adult literacy learning.

Data analysis

Whereas the questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics, interview data from in-depth interviews were categorized and content analysed.

Results and discussion

To appropriately address the research questions posed in this study the researcher presented the findings of the integrated questionnaire and interview data according to identified three thematic categories namely; the benefits of adult literacy learning, knowledge and skills adult literacy learners needed to function effectively and efficiently and barriers to adult literacy learning and how these barriers could do to mitigated.

Benefits derived from adult literacy learning

It emerged from the analysis of data that an effective way of measuring practical benefits derived from a literacy programme is by asking respondents to determine whether the literacy programme had been significant in their lives. It was also useful to find out from policy makers as planners how they perceived the practical implementation of the NLPN policy guidelines in relation to addressing the needs of the participants. Table 1, below indicates how adult literacy learners perceived the benefits derived from adult literacy learning.

Table 1: How adult literacy learners perceived benefits of adult literacy in their daily activities? (n=100)

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Bring about empowerment/enables one to help him/herself	42	42.0
Enable one to read and write	24	24.0
It helps one to engage in income generating projects	6	6.0
It helps one to have knowledge about diseases	3	3.0
It helps one to be educated	19	19.0
It helps one to get a job	2	2.0
No response	4	4.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

With regard to the benefits derived from the NLPN, in the Caprivi region, the results in Table 1, show that 24.0% of the respondents view the benefits as simply enabling them to read and write. This is consistent with the main goal of the NLPN that of providing basic skills (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture/ UNICEF, 1997). Contrary to this, it is argued that adult literacy programmes should no longer be regarded simply as the acquisition of basic skills but rather a response to the diverse needs of the participants (Street, 2003). Agreeing with this assertion Odora Hoppers (2006) argues that the translation of goals of literacy programmes into desired outcomes remains very much open ended, and depends on the mechanisms, methods and teachers in such programmes. As such, the current state of the NLPN cannot escape the criticism leveled against many literacy programmes in developing countries, that of not attempting to diversify the content and techniques in accordance with the needs of the various clientele (Mpofu, 2005).

What is interesting in the results presented in Table 1, above is the percentage of the respondents (42.0%) who indicated that literacy brings empowerment and that it enables one to help him/herself. The observation here is that participants in the NLPN in the Caprivi Region perceived the acquisition of basic skills as a source of empowerment that leads to development. This general perception of adult literacy in many countries has influenced participation in literacy programmes (Akinpelu, 1990). Borrowing from Openjuru (2004), the perception that participation in literacy programmes automatically leads

to improved livelihoods and development is different from the new notion advanced by NLS that sees literacy as embedded in social practices with social meanings. Even though literacy is regarded by Akinpelu (1990) as a *sine qua non* factor in development, necessary and indispensable, it should be noted, it is not a sufficient factor for development even beyond the basic skills.

Further analysis of what changes adult literacy may bring in the lives of the participants revealed that change in people's lives cannot be evaluated effectively by using a single measure. Venezky, Bristow and Sabatani (1994) argue that it is generally agreed that for adult literacy programmes to be effective, they must be based on the 'felt needs' of the learners (Rogers, 2004). Concomitant to Rogers' (2004) assertion 77.0% of the adult literacy learners indicated that it was important to examine adult learners' aspirations, intentions, and expectations for participating in the NLPN. In particular, the majority (80.0%) of the participants (women) indicated that they participated in the literacy programme to achieve some purpose. Togberg (1996) in her evaluation of the literacy programme in the Caprivi region came to a similar conclusion that the main reason adults participated in the NLPN in the region was to solve practical problems experienced in everyday life.

Based on these findings it could be argued contrary to the perceived significance of adult literacy in the lives of the participants, that NLPN needs to be revised in order to successfully implement the current programme objectives as outlined in the National Literacy Policy Guidelines. The concepts 'self-reliance and empowerment' seem to have been compromised. Arguably, the lack of post-literacy programme that integrate literacy and other forms of learning and basic skills into all appropriate development projects (UNESCO, 1997) has been a setback to the NLPN's effort to respond to the adult literacy learners' diverse needs.

Skills, Knowledge and support needed by Adult Literacy Learners

In response to the question on skills, knowledge and support adult literacy learners needed to function effectively and efficiently, learners were asked whether the skills they received were sufficient to enable them participate in income generating activities. The majority (73.0 %) indicated that skills they received were not sufficient, thus, they were not involved in income generating activities in comparison with those who did not participate in the adult literacy

programme. Although participating in the literacy programme was perceived as useful, data table 2, show that there were particular skills that participants still needed to learn even though 37.0% were at the final stages of completing the programme.

Table 2. Skills, knowledge and support needed by adult literacy learners (n=100)

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Knowledge to create business to sustain ourselves	40	40.0
Need food & financial assistance	13	13.0
Need shelter for literacy classes	1	1.0
To know how to read and write	6	6.0
Need to speak, read and write in English	1	1.0
Not sure/too old	2	2.0
No response	37	37.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

In support of the observation above, data table 2, show that a significant number (40.0%) of the respondents indicated that participating in adult literacy programme should enable participants to acquire further skills to enable them to create businesses to sustain themselves. Therefore, judging from the participants' responses it could argued that the current national literacy programme fell short of making a significant impact in the lives of the participants in the Caprivi region.

Consequently, Kweka and Namane (1999) assert that, negative views regarding the NLPN have developed among adult literacy learners in the NLPN due to the fact that what is taught in the classroom is not reinforced in the social interaction in the community. Although the role of the NLPN in the process of transformation and nation building is well articulated in the policy documents, there is very little evidence in practice (as far as the results of this study are concerned, see table, 1) to show that transformation has taken place, in relation to respondents' perceptions. In support of his observation Tegborg (1996, p. 11-12) claims:

> Namibia has not chosen the path of many countries, for example Cuba and Nicaragua, where the literacy curriculum was primarily used for creating consciousness and national identity. In contrast to these countries, it

seems that Namibia does not aim at 'revolution through literacy' but is more concerned with gradual reform. Namibia has chosen a politically cool literacy…the programme is almost politically cool.

Tegborg's (1996) claims was based on a critical examination of the learning materials and the promoters' handbooks (particularly for stage 2) which contain descriptive and factual information, but lacks critical discussion of current issues and reflection about people's past, present and future situation.

In reacting to the foregoing observation Odara Hoppers' (2006, p. 3) argument makes sense that Africa (indeed Namibia too) needs a new approach to adult literacy which she describes as:

> …a broadly based literacy that connects critical thinking with the skills of critical reading and writing in politics, economics and social relations as well as in a larger cultural sphere, literacy no longer limited to alphabetical abilities and to a historical basis….

The results of this study confirm the lack of such literacy in the NLPN, by revealing that 3 of the 5 policy makers negatively viewed the NLPN as not addressing the learning needs of the participants. In addition, besides the Directorate of Adult Education's (DAE) claims that the policy of the NLPN is organised in such a way that the curriculum content should not be seen as a narrow concept limited to practical skills and technical capacity (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture/ UNICEF, 1997), 56.0% of the respondents indicated that most of what is taught (content of NLPN) do not relate to the learners' contexts. As such, it would be a gross oversimplification to imply that there are sufficient outcomes of the programme, especially in the functional learning areas, that could be cited as useful indicators of the benefits that the literacy programme has produced.

Barriers to adult literacy learning

Literacy programmes have often been seen as programmes for failures who could not succeed in formal education. They have low quality teachers and offers only unrecognised proficiency certificates (Oluoch, 2005). As a result, these programmes have recently witnessed dismal rates of participation

(UNESCO EFA, 2006). To respond to the question on barriers to learning in the NLPN, respondents were asked to state what they thought were barriers to adult literacy learning and delivery in the literacy programme. The results show that 18.0% of the respondents identified hunger as a barrier to literacy learning and delivery, followed by 13.0% of the respondents who claimed that too many other activities prevented them from attending literacy classes regularly. Lack of motivation and lack of proper shelter and benches had also been identified by 8.0% of the respondents as barriers.

Literature on adult literacy refers to these types of barriers as internal and dispositional barriers, because they exist inside the person (Abiona, 2006). In this connection, Torres (2006) argues that dispositional barriers have major influence on adults' participation in the literacy programme. Bearing in mind that adults participate in literacy programmes in anticipation that by doing so they will satisfy their felt needs (Rogers, 2001), it seems based on the findings of this study the national literacy programme have very little impact in the lives of the participants.

Consistent with the foregoing argument is the policy makers' responses on the question of barriers to adult literacy learning. All five (5) policy makers agreed that there is a need to address barriers in the NLPN. They argue for the revision of the exiting policy, mechanisms and strategies to mitigate the exiting barriers and enable the programme to address the learners' felt needs. Whilst the policy makers' views suggest that there is no consensus on practical implementation of the NLPN policy framework, the general implication of the findings signpost the need to re-examine the relationship between policy, practice and outcomes in the national literacy programme.

Conclusion

Adult literacy has been treated in this discussion as a complex phenomenon encompassing diverse practices influenced by multiple needs. By tapping from New Literacy Studies (NLS) this discourse has highlighted the significance of adult literacy in the lives of the participants. It created an understanding on how benefits derived from adult literacy could be conceptualised. It has also revealed that acquisition of skills and knowledge alone without using them to address 'felt needs' is not helpful. While some literature considers literacy as a major factor in socio-economic development, others assert that the relations between literacy and socio-economic development should not be considered in a linear fashion. This discussion has shown that the relationship between literacy and socio-economic development should be based on the learners''felt needs' and contexts (Ribeiro, 2001; Rogers, 2005).

Thus, the theoretical thrusts adopted in this study put emphasis on the relationship between literacy and environment. An important lesson to the NLPN emerging from the findings is that mere literacisation without a context is an exercise in futility. Adults learn for a purpose (Rogers, 2001) and literacy is always contested, both in its meaning and its practice (Rogers, 2005). The findings of the study have further revealed that significantly 56.0% of adult literacy learners and all five (5) policy makers that participated in the study concur that the exiting literacy programme need to be revised for it to make meaningful impact in the lives of the participants.

Therefore, a major recommendation for the Directorate of Adult Education in Namibia is that there is a need to revisit the link between programme policy, practice and outcomes of the NLPN for it to be responsive to the 'felt needs' of the participants.

References

Akinpelu, J. A. (1990). Adult Literacy and National Development. *Literacy Voices.* 1(2), 3 - 13.

Degener, S. C. (2001). Making Sense of Critical Pedagogy in Adult Literacy Education. *Annual*

Review of Adult Learning and Literacy. (2), p. 26 – 62.

Directorate of Adult Basic Education, (2006). A *Situational Analysis of Evaluation Practices in*

Non-Formal Education Progragrammes: The Case of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia. Windhoek: Ministry of Education.

Durgunoğlu, A. Y., Öney, B. & Kuşcul, H. (2003). Development and Evaluation of an Adult Literacy Program in Turkey. *International Journal of Education Development*. (23), p. 19 – 36.

Elias, J. L., & Merriam, S. (1980). *Foundations of Adult Education*. Malaber, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing CO., INC.

Fasokun, T., Katahoire, A., & Oduaran, A. (2005). *African Perspectives on Adult Learning: The Psychology of Adult Learning in Africa*. Cape Town: David Langhan.

Freire, P. (1990). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Gravett, S. (2005). *Adult Learning: Designing and Implementing Learning Events: A Dialogic* Approach. Second Edition, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Jarvis, P. (1997). *Ethics and Education for Adults in the Late Modern Society*. Leicester, UK: National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education.

Kweka, A. N., & Namene, J. J. (1999). *Literacy for Better Communication: Second Overall Evaluation of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia*. Windhoek: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

Kanpol, B. (1998). Critical Pedagogy for Begging Teachers: The Movement from Despair to Hope. *Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. 2 (1). [On-line], Available at: http://www.lib.wmc.edu/pub/jcp/jcp.html.

Lankshear, C., & MacLaren, P. (1993). *Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis and the Postmodern*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Lister, I. (1994). Conscientazation and Political Literacy. In P. L. Mclaren and C. Lankshear (Eds). *Politics of Liberation*. New York: Routledge.

Maruatona, T., & Cervero, R. (2004). Adult Literacy education in Botswana: Planning between Reproduction and Resistance. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 36 (2), 235 - 251.

Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, (2003). *National Policy on Adult Learning*. Windhoek: Government Republic of Namibia.

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture /UNICEF, (1997). *Policy Guidelines for the Second Phase 1996 - 2000 of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia*. Windhoek: Directorate of Adult Basic Adult Education.

Ministry of Education and Culture, (1993). *Towards Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training*. Windhoek: Germsberg Macmillan publishers (Pty) Ltd.

Mpofu, S. T. (2005). Literacy and the Natural Way to Learn. In M. L. Mostert., & C. D. Kasanda (Eds.), *Education in Namibia: A Collection of Essays (pp. 64 - 69)*. Windhoek: University of Namibia Publishers.

National Planning Commission, (2006). *2003/2004 Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey: Main Report*. Windhoek: NPC, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Odora Hoppers, C. A. (2006). *Literacy and Globalisation: Towards A Learning Society in Africa Growth Points for Policy and Practice*. A Study Presented at the Association of Development in Africa, Biennale on Education in Africa. Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006.

Oluoch, P. A. (2005). Low level of Participation in Adult Literacy Classes: Reasons Behind It. *Adult Education and Development*. 65, 7 - 17.

Openjuru, G. (2004). Adult Education and Developmental Link: A Perspective from a Non-literate's Literacy Practices and Environment. *Adult Education and Development*. 61, 10 - 11.

Ribeiro, V. M. (2001). Literacy and Attitudes: Research among Adults in the City of São Paulo, Brazil. *Adult Education and Development*. 56, 33 - 44.

Reder, S., and Davila, E. (2005). Context of Literacy and Practice. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. 25, 170 -187.

Rogers, A. (2005). Literacy and Productive Skills Training: Embedded Literacies. *Adult Education and Development*. 65, 59 - 66.

Rogers, A. (2004). Adult Literacy - Adult Motivation. *Adult Education and Development*. 61, 61 - 71.

Rogers, A. (2001). Some Contemporary Trends in Adult Literacy from an International Perspective. *Adult Education and Development*. 56, 21 - 32.

Rogers, A. (1996). *Teaching Adults*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Street, B.V. (2003). What's "New" in New Literacy Studies? Critical Approaches to Literacy in Theory and Practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*. 5 (2). [On-line], Retrieved October 10, 2009, from: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/clCE/Archives/5.2/52 street.pdf

Thompson, J. D. (2002). Putting Bread on the Table: The Effects of Literacy and Livelihood. *Adult Education and Development*. 59, 97 - 116.

Tegborg, M. (1996). *Adult Literacy and Empowerment: A Study of a National Literacy Programme in the Caprivi Region, Namibia*. Stockholm: Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm.

UNESCO (2004a). *United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)*. UNESCO, Paris, June, 2004, pp.15.

UNESCO, (2004b). 2005 *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Education for All - The Quality Imperative*. Paris: UNESCO Publication. [On-line], Available at: http:// www.efareport.unesco.org

UNESCO, (1997). Social *Development*: *Literacy, Education, and Social Development (CONFITEA, V)*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education. [On-line], Retrieved August 04, 2009, from:http://www.unesco.org/education/uie

UNESCO, (2005). 2006 *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Literacy for Life - Summary*. Paris: UNESCO Publication. [On-line], Available at: http://www.efareport.unesco.org

UNDP, (2001). *Human Development Report, 2001*. New York.

Venezky, R. L., Bristow, P. S., & Sabatani, J. P. (1994). Measuring Change in Adult Literacy Programs: Enduring Issues and a Few Answers. *Educational Assessment*. 2 (2) 101 - 131.