Misconceptions about adult education innovations in the United Republic of Tanzania

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The need to provide education to adults in the United Republic of Tanzania, has been the major concern of the Party and government ever since the Adult Education Year of 1970. In spite of various adult education innovations that have been introduced in the country to date, the majority of the recipients are functionally illiterate. These innovations which are, *inter alia*, functional literacy, post literacy, workers' education, and para-literacy have not enabled the adult learners to improve their living conditions. In the countryside, poor housing and health conditions, conservative cultural beliefs, deforestation as well as soil erosion are the order of the day. While it is true that the national literacy rate is 85 per cent, the figure refers to the acquisition of the three Rs (reading, writing and simple arithmetic) and not to the functional aspects. This explains why adult educational innovations have failed to transform people's living conditions, for they have tended to be conceptualized at the level of literacy *per se* by the implementors. The way the innovations are introduced and understood, determine to a larger extent the way such innovations are implemented.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it shows how adult education innovations have been misconceptualized and, second, it analyses the source of this misconception to pave the way for a better understanding and interpretation.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section examines the theoretical procedures of introducing an educational innovation; the second analyses and discusses various adult education innovations that have been introduced and their misconceptions, and the third section traces the source of this misconception and provides some concluding remarks.

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Educational innovations

Innovation is anything new, which could be a new social practice, a new idea or a new instrument that reflects or implies a departure from the prevailing practice in a given situation (Ishumi, 1978). There are various procedures

for introducing a new educational idea which could be a new programme. Rogers identifies five critical stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption (see, for example, Ishumi, 1978). In the awareness or exposure stage, an individual or social system is first exposed to a new idea which could be a new teaching unit. This is the initiation stage at which decision about the new educational package is made and the participants are informed about it. If programme objectives are made clear to the participants, then they could easily be matched with their own, for fruitful learning. The second is the information or interest stage, in which an individual or the system becomes interested in the idea and seeks more information about it. The third is the evaluation or application stage in which the individual or the system applies the idea and seeks more information about it. The fourth is the trial or experimentation stage in which the innovation is tried on a small scale and if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The final stage is the adoption stage. At this stage, the idea is adopted wholesale if the small-scale results are favourable. This is the implementation stage.

Educational innovations have a number of problems. According to Mosha, the most serious problem lies in the identification and analysis of decision-making in the light of the prevailing models of decision-making in Western countries. This is done without trying to see whether the model of policy-making reflects national political objectives or realities. This presents problems in the planning process and at the implementation level (for details see Mosha, 1976). On the other hand, Havelock argues that, innovations are too often ambitious or too rapidly implemented because they are new to the environment. He further points out that, the tendency to respond to the urgency of a problem through bypassing the pilot phase leads to innovations with which the country has little or no prior experience. (Havelock et al., n.d.)

Innovations are affected by barriers which hinder diffusion. Such barriers might be long distances, availability of resources or opposition from a key group of individuals who might not be willing to change in response to the innovation in question. If the agents (participants) are not adequately motivated, the implementation of the innovations might be a long way from being effected.

Adult education innovations

Since the adult education innovations that have been introduced in the United Republic of Tanzania are many and varied, an attempt will be made to review the most misinterpreted ones, beginning with adult education itself.

ADULT EDUCATION POLICY

One of the major problems that the implementation machinery faces as far as adult education is concerned is the diversity of meanings and implications which different categories of people seem to attach to the whole question of adult education (see Mlekwa, 1975). For one thing, the way individuals understand the meanings and implications of any adult education innovation, determine the way they implement the innovation. Educational innovations become true and correct if they are correctly implemented.

An adult education innovation may appear clear and therefore correct to those who have designed it witouht necessarily being clear in the same way to those who have to implement it. Table 1 shows how adult educators and learners have interpreted adult education policy.

Table 1 shows that, while professional adult educators consider adult education as continuing education, the leaders on the other hand see it in terms of functional literacy. However, adult learners conceptualize the policy at the level of literacy alone. When the learners were asked why they were attending adult education classes, the general answer was 'Because we have been told to'. In reply to another question as to how they thought adult education would

TABLE 1. People's interpretation of adult education policy

Policy	Professional adult educators		Party, government para-literacy and religious leavers		Adult learners	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Continuing education	5	100	3	11	—	—
Literacy mainly	—	—	—	—	10	100
Functional literacy	—	—	25	89	—	—
Improving living conditions	3	60	20	71	—	—
Providing political education	5	100	13	46	—	—
Raising productivity	—	60	3	11	—	—
Remedial training	—	—	4	14	—	—

Source: Mlekwa, 1975.

benefit them the general response was 'We don't know' (Mlekwa, 1975).

In most cases there has been a tendency to equate adult education with formal education of children. Adult education in its broader context has not been understood, for adult education is more than literacy. It is no wonder, therefore, that this conception has reflected the way adult education has been implemented, for greater thrust has been on literacy. Evaluations have also centred on the national literacy tests *per se*.

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The way functional literacy has been introduced, has rendered its broad dimension unclear as Table 2 indicates. The table shows that most of the adult learners, village leaders and adult education co-ordinators understood functional literacy as the learning of the three Rs (literacy) *per se*. On the other hand, most of the literacy teachers understood it as solving socio-economic problems. Some of the adult education coordinators understood it as implementing the Party's and government directives. Therefore, functional literacy is generally construed to mean learning the three Rs by the majority of the adult educators and learners in the two districts. Thus in reply to a question put across to seventy adult educators and learners: 'In your opinion do you think that poor understanding of the functional literacy objectives could account for low level of socio-economic development in the districts?' The general response was 'Yes' (Mushi, 1986). In actual fact, the broader dimension of functional literacy such as that emphasized in Mpogolo (1980) has not been understood. The notion of functional literacy therefore lacks conceptual clarity.

WORKERS' EDUCATION

Workers' education was introduced in workplaces in the United Republic of Tanzania with the purpose of raising the educational level of the workers for intelligent participation in their own development on matters pertaining to advisory roles to the management, planning and decision-making, production (its quality and quantity) as well as discussion of balance sheets (Kassam, 1978).

But Presidential Circular No. 1 of 1970 and the Prime Minister's Directive of 1973 have been misinterpreted. Workers' education has been reduced to the learning of the three Rs and most of the learning activities taking place at workplaces are of a literacy nature. Workers' education at its advanced stage, integrated with

TABLE 2. The objectives of functional literacy as indicated by adult learners and educators in Moshi Urban and Rombo districts

Type of objective	Responses																	
	Moshi Urban									Rombo								
	Literacy teachers		Adult learners		Adult education co-ordinators		Village leaders			Literacy teachers		Adult learners		Adult education co-ordinators		Village leaders		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Learning three Rs	5	63	8	50	2	67	7	88	22	4	51	2	75	2	67	7	88	25
Participating in national activity	1	13	—	—	1	33	2	25	4	4	50	—	—	1	33	—	—	5
Solving socio-economic problems	7	88	—	—	1	33	2	25	10	8	100	2	7	2	67	1	13	13
Employment	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	25	—	—	—	—	4
Government and Party directives	6	—	2	13	1	33	—	—	3	2	25	1	6	1	33	2	25	6
Don't know	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	33	—	—	—

Source: Mushi, 1986.

actual workers' activities is not conducted. Poor conceptualization of this innovation has made managers refuse to set aside one hour for workers' education, as directed, or even let workers attend workers' education classes because of interference with production targets.

POST-LITERACY

Post-literacy was introduced in the United Republic of Tanzania after the first national literacy test in 1975. The aims were threefold. First, it was intended to enable adult learners to acquire skills and knowledge which they would need to solve problems in their daily lives. Second, it proposed to enable adult learners practise their literacy skills so as to prevent relapsing into illiteracy, and, third, to advance adult learners' literacy skills to enable them to search for further knowledge towards self-fulfilment (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

According to Mpogolo (1980), there have been misconceptions concerning the post-literacy stages 5, 6 and 7 whereby some adult learners confuse them with Standards 5, 6, and 7 of primary education! Replying to a question as to why they were joining post-literacy classes, the students' general answer was: 'Because we know how to read and write, and we don't see any point in joining it' (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Other post-literacy graduates expected to be employed in public sectors after the course. The post-literacy learners therefore, understood the innovation at the level of literacy, formal education and employment, the aspects which do not even appear to be part of the post-literacy objectives.

PARA-LITERACY

This innovation was introduced in the United Republic of Tanzania to support the post-literacy programmes. Para-literacy programmes include rural newspapers, radio programmes and folk development colleges (FDCs). Taking FDCs as an example, the spreading of the message about FDCs to the people in order to make them aware of the programme objectives had percolated to the district leadership, but there was still confusing information about intended courses and the kind of students needing training (Mosha, 1985). This has resulted in the theoretical nature of the programmes which are not geared to solving known local problems as well as admitting students other than Stages 3 and 4 of literacy. One serious outcome of this misconception has been the failure of the graduates of the DFDCs to go back to the villages to utilize the acquired skills instead of spending most of their time looking for employment.

It is evident therefore, that adult education innovations introduced in the country, including adult education itself have not transformed the life-styles of people as was initially envisaged, as the major focus has been on the literacy. Even the national literacy tests have concentrated on the evaluation of the three Rs.

Sources of the misconceptions

The major source of these misconceptions arise out of the nature of the initiation of the innovations. This is to say that the innovations have not emanated from the people who are to implement them. The innovations have come from the top down and not from the bottom up, that is, from the few technocrats at the Ministry of Education to the masses. Innovations of this kind are likely to be incompatible with the life-styles of the people they are supposed to change. The pattern of introducing educational innovations indicates that the few technocrats at the Ministry of Education arrive at a decision with very little or no consideration of the masses, and that innovations of this sort are bound to fail (Mosha, 1985). It is important therefore that concrete needs, interests or aspirations of the people are considered.

Even at the top, a diversity of meanings and implications are evident among the technocrats due to the ambiguity of the innovations. Sometimes the innovations are simply suggested by party bureaucrats with no elaboration as to how they should be implemented. If the innovation is ill-conceived and formulated, it is likely to cause misinterpretations at the implementation level.

The second course of misconception is related to the nature of the innovational delivery system. This implies that, the communication of innovation from the top down (Ministry of Education to the masses) is not effective, thus leading to inadequate publicity and emphasis. In most cases, the masses are brought into the picture when it comes to mobilizing them for implementation of innovations whose objectives and outcomes they do not understand (Mosha, 1985). Most of the literacy teachers are volunteers who are inadequately trained to communicate the objectives to the learners as they themselves do not know them.

Another source of these misconceptions arises out of the nature of the innovational packages. This is to say that adult education is so broad in its objectives and scope that people have attached different meanings and implications due to the duplication of some innovations.

For instance, post-literacy and para-literacy programmes imply almost the same thing. One may note that the role played by, say, FDCs and post-literacy work-oriented programmes is quite similar. It could be asked, therefore, why there should be so many and varied innovations. Indeed, this has contributed greatly to the semantic confusion which has accounted for differences in the interpretations. These innovations have therefore been dominated by a sense of urgency, because most of them appear to be new in the environment.

The article has tried to show how adult education innovations in the United Republic of Tanzania are misconceived by both adult educators and learners. It has traced the major sources of the misconceptions which were noted to be the nature of the initiation of the innovation, weaknesses in the innovational delivery system as well as the scope of innovations in which some duplicate others. The article suggests that, for a better conception of the innovations, the masses who are to implement the innovations need be involved in designing them, for they have their own experiences and values which could be incorporated in them. Equally important, is the need to improve the innovational delivery system, from the top down to the grassroots, such a goal could be effected through special radio programmes newspapers, public meetings, seminars and workshops. Last, but not least, is the need to re-examine the nature of the existing adult education innovations to merge or drop some which are repetitive and avoid misinterpretations. ■

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