

Perspective on Internationalism in Comparative Adult Education in Nigeria

¹Patricia Tonukari & ²Jonathan E. Oghenekohwo

*Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria*

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijiretss.v10.i1.01

Abstract

The paper situates comparative adult education in Nigeria in the milieu of global alliance and partnership for the benefits of expansion in knowledge frontiers. Various dimensions of opportunities and leverages formed the fulcrum of the discourse as contained in this paper. It was suggested that to enhance comparative efficiency, multi-level international engagement must be sustained among adult education practitioners at local, national and global interface.

Keywords: *Adult Education, Comparative, Globalization, Internationalism and Perspective.*

Corresponding Author: Patricia Tonukari

Background to the Study

Adult education programmes for employed and unemployed workers underscore the commitment of global collaboration, networking, synergy and partnership in all effort towards the attainment of a literate society. International interest in adult education dates back to 1945 after the Second World War that witnessed deficits in skills exhibited by foreign military soldiers, and actors in the war, particularly, among Africans through poor communication skills and inability to interpret codes of military instructions. This led to the institutionalisation of literacy education among the officers and men for the acquisition of basic skills for reading and interpretation of codes and scripts.

Besides, the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century also necessitated the demand for workers and labour education for active participation in the industrial or technology driven work environment. Right from the 19th century, international agencies have continued to intervene in both developed and developing countries in adult and non-formal education programmes particularly for national literacy development. Hence, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) instituted September 8th of every year as international literacy day (UNESCO, 1997). As a result of this international effort, many international agencies such as: non-governmental, voluntary, religion and civil society organisations among others have engaged actively in the development and deployment of adult literacy education programme across the frontiers of knowledge through international cooperation, collaboration and engagement in Nigeria among other nations. This paper presents internationalism in comparative adult education in concept, content and context of global collaboration, frameworks and benefits of multi-level international engagements in adult education for comparative efficiency.

Internationalism in Adult Education

The term 'internationalism' refers to global legal engagement between states, institutions or associations for the objective of reaching agreements, mutual support and alliances on politics, science, education and economic matters... Internationalism is the advocacy of cooperation and understanding between nations (UNESCO, 1997). The most prominent of such system include Inter Governmental Organisations (IGOs) such as the European Union, African Union, World Bank, USAID; CIDA; UKAID; among others which provide learning opportunities and engagements among citizens of international communities (Oghenekohwo, 2019).

Internationalism in adult education means the involvement of international communities, bodies, agencies and institutions in the promotion of comparative adult education (Oghenekohwo, 2019). Hence, internationalism is the principle of cooperation among nations to promote comparative adult education practices, programmes, and research for the achievement of a common good. It also refers to the activities of nations in terms of the development of adult education through various agencies of international orientation that engage in the promotion of adult education.

Comparative Adult Education

Comparative adult education had some antecedents in comparative education, and both may be seen within the framework of similar operations in meanings, theories, systems, and processes. The first international conference on comparative adult education was in 1966 at Exeter, USA, where group of scholars, mainly from North America and Europe converged to conceptualise a framework for understanding adult education activities, programmes and institutions on comparative basis and underscoring similarities and differences in adult education activities across international frontiers (Bray, 2013; Burbles & Torres, 2000).

Since Exeter, a number of events have nurtured works in comparative adult education. There have been an increase in the activities of international agencies with interest in adult education either from policy or research standpoint (Ticky, 2001). These developments have promoted interchanges of ideas which have fostered scholarship and cultural diffusion as well as attempts at modeling the development of adult education in Nigeria (Oghenekohwo, 2013). Therefore, comparative adult education is a critical study of similarities and differences in the various systems of adult education among societies and cultures through data collection (Epstein, 1994; Anyanwu, 1999; Oghenekohwo, 2019). It is about intersections between adult education and society at international space over time for goals of understanding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and weaknesses in adult educational provisions and to provide responses to adult educational, questions, problems, both locally and universally (Oghenekohwo, 2019).

As a matter of fact, Oghenekohwo (2019), documented that any comparative study in adult education must involve careful analysis of data on adult education systems, issues and problems in one or more countries. Such data analysis would naturally fall within the prisms or optics of historical, socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, geographical, environmental, and other predicated variables that examine adult education in one country or group of countries by using data and insight drawn from practices and situations in another country (Noah, 1985; Jourbish, 2009). In light of the above, there are elements associated with the conceptualisation, namely: it is an academic field of study; reliance on the collection of data; existence of two or more domains; and study that exist over space and time (Oghenekohwo, 2019).

In other words, comparative adult education is based on comparison with emphasis on data on adult education programmes that exist in one or more domains. Such programmes must have specific objectives to be achieved for the aim of promoting comparative efficiency and performance. These objectives of comparative interest include but not limited to what Noah (1985) and Joubish (2009) highlighted as:

- i. Description of educational systems, processes or outcomes.
- ii. Development of adult education institutions, structures and practices.
- iii. Highlight of the relationship between education, development and society; and
- iv. The establishment of generalized statements about adult education that are valid in more than one country.

Besides, Oghenekohwo (2019), advanced that comparative adult education focuses on:

- i. Identification of dynamics of adult educational practices, processes and systems at the global scale;
- ii. Establishment of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats associated with the global adult educational systems and practices.
- iii. An understanding of predictors diffusion of adult educational innovations on the development, growth and sustainability of comparative adult educational systems;
- iv. Analysis of various challenges facing adult education practices through comparison of systems, processes, structures; and outcomes; and
- v. Establishment of best practices in countries' adult education systems for the purpose of change and innovations among others.

UNESCO (1997) as was reported organised a comparative adult education conference in Hamburg with theme on basic education, lifelong-learning, adult literacy and adult non-formal education programmes within the framework of international cooperation. Other well-known adult education associations that promote comparative activities through multi-level international cooperation include but not limited to:

- i. Adult Education Association of America (AEAA)
- ii. Australian Adult Education Association (AAEA)
- iii. European Adult Education Association (EAEA)
- iv. Canadian Adult Education Association (CAEA)
- v. South American Adult Education Association (SAAEA)
- vi. South Africa Adult Education Association (SAAEA)

Comparative Adult Education in Global Era

Many scholars have noted ways in which the field of comparative adult education can grapple with issues of globalisation (Anove & Torres, 2007; Marginson & Mollis, 2001). Crossley, (1999, 2000) and Watson (2001) have presented insightful on the field of global comparative adult education and have stressed the need for re-conceptualization. The forces of globalisation, it was suggested, provide both imperative and opportunity in comparative adult education. Imperative arises from the changed environment brought by globalisation while opportunity arises from the increased interest in international affairs among academics, researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field of comparative adult education.

The field of comparative adult education, they argue, can be revitalised and also secure fresh relevance within the new environment over space and time with reference to five implications of globalisation for a refined comparative adult education namely:

- (a) **Frameworks of Analysis:** Scholars locate adult education nation-to-nation comparisons in wider frameworks. At the same time, it is noted that global effects are contested and uneven, and vary among nations, regions and institutions. Important work by comparativists has already been conducted along these lines, but more are needed.
- (b) **Contents of Analysis:** The traditional comparative map of the world, in which all nations are formally similar and ranked according to the level of development on a

- single scale, is more now inadequate than ever. It fails to explain power relations between nations, and it hides qualitative national differences. Globalisation requires a new geographical and cartography that traces the flows of global effects and the pattern of imitation, difference, domination, and subordination in adult education policies, processes, practices and outcomes.
- (c) **Interest on International Adult Education:** Cross-border transactions in adult education have become an important subject of research in itself. Such transactions raise questions about the identities of mobile learners, and about the attributes required for adult educators, institutions and systems. Sub-themes in this discourse include tensions between pedagogical and andragogical practices and national cultures, and the mushrooming of on-line distance education communities in cosmopolitan learning settings.
 - (d) **Natures of Identity:** Globalisation opens up new potentials for natures of identity other than national identity in comparative adult education. The traditional focus on the nation-state downplayed supranational culture and religious identities, and obscured intra-national and regional varieties in adult education participation, resourcing and outcomes.
 - (e) **Benefits of Globalisation at the National Adult Education Level:** Modern adult education systems and models are still organised locally and nationally and are still subjected to national regulation. The trends of increased mobility and cosmopolitanism, Marginson and Mollis (2011) suggest have major implications for policies on the preparation of citizens in adult education. Researcher now focus on the extent to which international agencies shape national adult education programmes, policies and systems.

Framework of Internationalism in Adult Education in Nigeria

In adult education, international efforts are evident in different forms, particularly in developing countries, such as Nigeria. The impact of these engagements according to Oghenekohwo (2019) is explicit,

(i) Data Generation

International adult education agencies with interest in adult education programmes play important roles in sponsoring series of conferences that provide the required information and statistics needed to build a robust data base for tracking growth and development trends in adult education globally. International agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank which undertakes research and generate data on literacy especially on enrollment, gender, age cohorts, attrition rates and graduation among nations for policy decision and planning. The outcomes of such research enable nations to know their levels of performance and efficiency in terms of investment needs and achievements in adult education. Examples of such conferences with attendant results for such assessment are International Conference of Adult Education held at Elsinore, Denmark (1949), International Conference of Adult Education held at Montreal, Canada (1960); International Conference of Adult Education held at Tokyo, Japan (1972) and International Conference of Adult Education held at Paris, France (1985)

Apart from these international conferences on adult education, there were other conferences held on Comparative Adult Education include International Conference on Comparative Studies in Adult Education held at Elsinore (1946); International Conference held at Exeter in the United States of America (1966); and International Conference on literacy and self-help, held in Ibadan (1991) These international engagements play major role in agenda-setting for data generation through research as well as the development of policy and practice across member countries on adult education initiatives.

Advancement of International Engagement, Participation and Capacity

education literacy facilitators in Nigeria are given the opportunity by international agencies to develop their skills by providing capacity building for field workers in areas of literacy campaign, mobilisation, orientation and sensitisation campaign. These capacity building programmes are carried out through workshops, seminars and conferences, thus promoting capacity building through international engagement and partnership among nations.

Funding

International Organizations such as: UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, USAID, UKAids, CIDA, World Bank etc provide funds for mass literacy campaign programmes, workers education, girl child education and establishment of rehabilitation or drop-in centres for out of school children. UNICEF zonal offices in Abuja, Dakar and many other countries, assist in the co-ordination of adult literacy programmes for empowerment of citizens on health care delivery and safety practices, income generation, self-help development and civic capacity building with emphasis on skills and know-how in relation to the 17-point Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets.

Provision of Adult Education Literatures

The development and publishing of adult education literatures, documentaries and compendium for the expansion of knowledge is one of the major components of programme development. As a result, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank reports are major documents that assist in the planning and programming of adult education especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Facilitators of adult literacy programmes rely on primers and other thus, helping to leverage on international adult education practices that facilitate local access to learning of adaptable and problem-solving skills.

Fellowship and Exchange Opportunities

International impact is also evident in the area of networking, scholarship fellowship and exchange activities through sponsorship, where personnel in adult education and community development are often exchanged between countries for the purpose of diffusion of adult learning practices and extension services. Those who benefit from exchange programmes are field workers in environmental adult education, distance learning, extension education/services workers, community development workers, social welfare officers and adult learner instructors.

Provision of Equipment, Instructional Materials and Logistics

International agencies provide computer, vehicles, machine, equipment, electronic and instructional materials for the delivery of adult literacy education. Such equipment are used for the dissemination of information, movement of learning materials, storage and documentation purposes. Through the provision of these equipment and materials, interventions are extended to the most remote parts of the country for the purpose of extension (reaching out) to the very distant people who do not have access to literacy education, thus promoting the implementation of distance education in Nigeria.

Development of Research, Feasibility Studies, Monitoring and Evaluation

To activate solutions to existing development problems, international agencies carryout research, feasibility studies, monitoring and evaluation programmes in adult education practices, and programmes globally. This to ensure well-informed decision-making process, follow up on adult education activities as well as evaluate all operational programmes of adult education to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and measures of performance in the delivery of comparative adult education programmes.

Development of Models

There have been growth in the activities of international bodies with the aid of models development in adult learning. Models are specific methods used in the implementation of adult learning and practices in different countries. International agencies are concerned with such models in order to compare its objectives, contents, methods of instruction, participants, outcomes and the overall relevance of such models in achieving set learning goals. The strength of any of these models can be replicated in another country, which is an essence of comparison.

Determination of Comparative Efficiency

International agencies are interested in the determination of areas of comparative advantage of each country's adult education programmes delivery in order to focus support and strengthen such areas for efficient adult education delivery globally by leveraging on local advantages.

(ii) Institution of Global Best Practices in Adult Education Practices

The practice of adult education has suffered certain set back (funding, supervisions etc) especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Therefore, as a measure to save the situation, international agencies have put in place established guidelines and procedures that cut across boundaries to promote better ways of carrying out adult education programmes and activities in line with global best practices. Benchmarking and rapid appraisal have been instituted in the working of the support agencies.

Conclusion

Multi-level studies have demonstrated how global forces do shape patterns of adult education programmes and practices over space and time within particular countries, provinces, districts, institutions and even classrooms. The field of comparative adult education contains some hyperglobalists who, like their counterparts in other academic fields, argue that the world is

becoming borderless and that national governments, are reduced to little more than transmission belts for global capital. Majority recognises that cross-national forces point out that there have long been an important influence on adult education systems, and that national governments still retain major roles in the adult education sector for the purposes of promoting comparative efficiency and performance measures through multi-level international cooperation, engagement and collaboration which nations leverage on for the development of adult education praxis.

References

- Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture and pedagogy: International comparison in primary education*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Anore, R. & Torres, C. A. (2007). *Comparative education: the dialectic of the global and the local (2nd edn)*, New York. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Anyanwu, C. N. (1999). *Introduction to comparative studies in adult education*, Ibadan: Gabesther Educational Publishers.
- Bray, M. (2013). Comparative education in the era of globalization: Evolution, missions and roles. *Policy futures in Education*, 1(2), 209-224.
- Bray, M. & Thomas, R. M. (1995). Levels of comparison in educational studies: different insights from different interactions and the value of multi-level analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65 (3). 472-490.
- Burbles, N. C. & Torres, C. A. (2000). *Globalisation and education: Context perspective*, New York: Routledge.
- Crossley, M. (2000). Bridging culture and traditions in the conceptualization of comparative and international education, *Comparative Education*, 36, 319-332.
- Epstein, E. H. (1994). Comparative and international education: Overview and historical development. T Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds), *The International Encyclopedia of Education*. (2nd edn). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Marginson, S. & Mollis, M. (2001). The door opens and the tiger leaps: theories and reflexivities of comparative education for global millennium, *Comparative Education Review*. 45(4), 581-615.
- Noah, H. J. & Eckstein, N. A. (1984). The use and abuse of comparative education, *Comparative Education Review*, 28 (550-562).
- Ticky, L. (2001). Globalisation and education in the post-colonial world: Towards a conceptual framework, *Comparative Education*, 37. (151-171).

- Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2013). *Introduction to comparative education: An analytical discourse*. In A. A. Adeyinka; E. E. Osuji, T.T. Asuka; A. O. Orubu & A. A. Agih (eds). *Integrated Foundations of Education*, Vol. 1. Port Harcourt. University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2017). *Fundamentals of adult education practice*, Wilberforce Island: Niger Delta University Publishers Limited.
- Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2019). *Comparative education in analytical perspective*, Wilberforce Island: Niger Delta University Publishers Limited.
- UNESCO (1997). *The Hamburg declaration and the agenda for the future*, Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education.