

The development and state of adult learning and education

Sub-Saharan Africa

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In 2007 all UNESCO Member States were asked to prepare national reports on the situation of adult learning and education and on salient developments since 1997, the date of CONFINTEA V, in preparation for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI). A set of [Guidelines for the Preparation of National Reports](#) was produced, asking questions to assist in the compilation of the reports, which were completed and submitted to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

These national reports are accessible on the Institute website at:
<http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/nesico/confintea/confinteacountries.htm>

This report, compiled by John Aitchison and Hassana Alidou for the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, attempts to synthesise a fair summary of these Member State reports, supplemented where necessary by other sources, reports and research documentation.

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

- The sub-Saharan context
- Challenges and constraints

Frameworks

- Policy frameworks
- Legislative frameworks
- Governance frameworks
- Administrative frameworks
- Financial frameworks

Provision and participation

- Statistical data on participation rates and trends since 1997
- Participation in different types of programmes
- The learning content

Literacy

- The literacy situation
- The problem of literacy terminology
- Literacy provision
- Ways forward

Qualifications

- National Qualifications Frameworks

Quality assurance

- The assessment of learning outcomes
- Monitoring adult learning and education
- Programme evaluation

Professional development

- The situation and status of practitioners
- The issue of professionalisation
- Prospects for professional development

Research

- The data desert
- Recent African research studies: findings and impact
- Research capacity and institutionalisation

Expectations of CONFINTEA VI

- Expectations of the Conference itself
- General expectations
- The home country impact expectations

Conclusion

Recommendations

References

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Introduction

This report on the development and state of adult learning and education (ALE) in sub-Saharan Africa is necessarily framed within the context of global development and change and in particular with the policy agendas of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). The role of ALE is explicitly or implicitly addressed in these initiatives and this challenges the field to examine what has been done since CONFINTEA V to foster and develop democracy, communities, societies and human rights through adult learning.

The report synthesises the Member State reports submitted in response to a request by UNESCO, supplemented where necessary by other sources, reports and research documentation. The limitations of this report include its necessary brevity and lack of data in certain key areas.

There is a need for some pan-African standardisation of the terminology relating to literacy, adult basic education, non-formal education and lifelong learning, not in any restrictive or prescriptive way, but simply to aid understanding and comparability of data and research emanating from countries in Africa. Clarity is also needed in distinguishing adult education from more general community development.

The sub-Saharan Africa context

In spite of the region's immense human and natural resource potential, some three-quarters of the world's poorest people live in Africa. In 1981 some 200 million people in Africa lived on less than US\$1 a day. By 2005 this figure had risen to 380 million. Latest World Bank estimates suggest that 39.9 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa now subsists at or below this income level. Adding 25 cents a day increases the proportion to 51.2 per cent (Chen and Ravallion, 2008). By every major poverty indicator Africa is a disadvantaged continent that is also challenged by the educational and livelihood needs of its rapidly-growing population.

After decades of sustained efforts to eradicate illiteracy in Africa, illiteracy rates of adults remain high with continuing gender and urban/rural disparities. Illiteracy has several correlations with low productivity, low incomes and poorer health (and susceptibility to HIV/AIDS). It hampers national development efforts. It is a bar to much adult education. The enormous growth in free universal primary education in Africa will gradually alleviate this problem, but drop-out rates from primary schooling remain high. The number of people needing adult basic education still grows and few resources are left over from primary education for children. The adult education sub-sector of state education systems remains

relatively marginal and under-funded, in spite of the good economic progress in many countries since the mid-1990s.

Apart from poverty, African states also may have the difficulty of provision in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic situations compounded by the often rural and subsistence economy of large proportions of the population. Nigeria, for example, has about 300 languages and dialects, and Chad some 120, of which only about 12 are codified. The Anglophone/Francophone division in Africa also provides its own difficulties for cooperation.

Statistics summarise illiteracy, under-education and the need for adult education and learning in sub-Saharan Africa.

Countries of sub-Saharan Africa	Whole population	Adults who are illiterate	
		%	Number
Angola	16 557 050	32.6	2 401 000
Benin	8 759 653	59.5	3 022 412
Botswana	1 858 162	17.1	211 010
Burkina Faso	14 358 500	71.3	5 683 797
Burundi	8 173 070	40.7	1 938 000
Cameroon	18 174 696	32.1	2 764 000
Cape Verde	518 566	16.2	52 925
Central African Republic	4 264 804	51.4	1 107 000
Chad	10 468 177	74.3	3 206 000
Comoros	818 434	24.9	122 325
Congo	3 369 299	13.2	289 065
Côte d'Ivoire	18 914 476	51.3	4 733 000
Democratic Republic of Congo	60 643 888	32.8	8 901 000
Equatorial Guinea	495 640	13.0	33 000
Eritrea	4 692 115		
Ethiopia	81 020 610	64.1	26 632 000
Gabon	1 310 818	13.8	119 859
Gambia	1 663 032		
Ghana	23 008 442	35.0	5 076 804
Guinea	9 181 338	70.5	3 507 804
Guinea-Bissau	1 645 528	35.4	314 203
Kenya	36 553 490	26.4	4 480 000
Lesotho	1 994 888	17.8	182 000
Liberia	3 578 922	44.5	880 942
Madagascar	19 159 010	29.3	2 609 000
Malawi	13 570 714	28.2	2 084 641
Mali	11 968 377	76.7	4 961 234
Mauritius	1 251 528	12.6	121 420
Mozambique	20 971 446	55.6	6 620 659
Namibia	2 046 553	12.0	156 047
Niger	13 736 722	69.6	5 146 003
Nigeria	144 719 951	28.0	23 282 769
Rwanda	9 464 240	35.1	1 471 000
Sao Tome and Principe	155 125	12.1	11 191
Senegal	12 072 475	57.4	4 147 528
Seychelles	84 932	8.2	5 000
Sierra Leone	5 742 694	61.9	2 072 988
Somalia	8 445 395		

South Africa	48 282 459	12.0	3 977 459
Swaziland	1 133 613	20.4	3 977 459
Togo	6 410 428	46.8	1 391 000
Uganda	29 898 598	26.4	4 147 908
United Republic of Tanzania	39 458 708	27.7	6 236 744
Zambia	11 696 161	32.0	1 797 000
Zimbabwe	13 228 195	8.88	725 387
Totals	745 840 185		146 740 320
	Total population		Illiterate adults

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2008. *Literacy Statistics Metadata Information Table and Adult (15+) Literacy Rates and Illiterate Population by Country and Territory, 2007*. Both April 2008 Data Release (Reference years 1994-2007).

Challenges and constraints

The country reports list a number of challenges, constraints and problems that face the field of adult learning and education (ALE) in their respective countries. It is with these challenges that this regional synthesis begins.

Poverty, joblessness and HIV/AIDS	Adult education must address these, especially amongst youth as there has been minimal improvement in human development indicators
Political will	Adult education needs more prominence
Governance and coordination	The lack of effective yet flexible governance and/or coordination structures
Policy and legislation	The lack of comprehensive adult education policies/legislation (and lacking in harmony with other legislation affecting adult education)
Curriculum	No core curriculum or an irrelevant curriculum, especially in basic education. There is a need to diversify curricula to meet appropriate vocational needs
Materials	In great demand but needing to be developed
Literacy	High rates of illiteracy demand intensive work and campaigns
Ending discrimination against women	
Meet special needs	The lack of access for and provision to disabled, elderly and other special needs groups
Hard-to-reach areas and groups	Meeting the needs of learners from these groups
Funding	Funding is inadequate and erratic and is needed for priority areas such as educator training, monitoring, evaluation as well as generally

Infrastructure and resources	The need for infrastructure, resources and sites near to where adult learners live and work
Professional development	There is a clear need for investment in capacity development, having a full, adequately paid and well trained professionalised staff, and increasing the demands for adult education professionals. The majority of adult educators are untrained, especially in basic literacy programmes. Governments often employ schoolteachers and others in adult education posts rather than experienced adult educators.
Management	General improvement needed
Information management	Needed at institutional and central level as it is difficult to access information and data on all ALE providers
Assessment and quality assurance	Need for improvement; frameworks lacking
Monitoring, evaluation and research	General lack of a participatory monitoring and evaluation system is evident and more university input is needed
National qualifications framework and qualifications	Needed in most countries and changes are needed in public esteem for various types of qualifications (foreign/local; formal/non-formal)
Open and distance learning (ODL)	Should be used to diversify means of delivery
ICT and internet and electronic mass media	High cost and poor national connectivity inhibit use
Research	There is a weak culture of adult learning and education research; it is under-funded, not comprehensive, and is poorly disseminated.
Sectoral participation	Wider participation needed, especially from the private sector

Frameworks

What are the policy, legislative, governance, administrative and financial frameworks that provide the foundations for the provision of adult education in African countries? How have these frameworks developed since CONFINTEA V in 1997? This chapter looks at Africa's answers to these questions. It also looks at the constraints and problems that continue to impede the effective setting up and working of these frameworks.

Policy frameworks

Are there specific adult education policies?

A few countries have specific, ratified, national adult education policies – Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Madagascar, Namibia, Niger and South Africa. Zimbabwe has a lifelong education policy. In some the right of adults to education is enshrined in the constitution (for example, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe) and many other countries see adult education as a right (but in practice this may be unenforceable – and some constitutional rights to adult education are 'subject to resource availability').

How are adult learning and education defined in policy?

Adult education tends to be conceptualised and defined as literacy, basic education, and livelihood-related skills training. Thus, for example, Eritrea's *National policy on Adult Education* (2005) defines it as "literacy and continuing education that embraces literacy and post-literacy, advocacy and civic education, life skills and follow up vocational training programmes." Cape Verde, Uganda and Zambia are rare examples of broader, more comprehensive, conceptions of adult education (as adopted by CONFINTEA V). The general focus in policy is towards the literacy-basic educational end of the adult learning continuum.

What is the status of adult education policies?

Where ALE is specifically mentioned, it is invariably aligned to other development policies (such as health, economy, labour and rural development), social goals (such as gender equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, and cultural and linguistic diversity) and sometimes (usually rather rhetorically) international conceptions of the learning or knowledge economy society.

The overwhelming impression is that adult education policy is a marginal element of education and development policies. Where specific adult education policy documents do exist they tend to be in draft form and as yet unratified (often for years), as in Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho and Malawi. This failure to ratify ALE policies seems to be a serious problem and indicative of their marginalisation.

The lack of recognised national ALE policy has an obvious impact on the flow from policy to legislation to regulations and funding. There are many unfunded mandates and often policies propose adult education governance or coordination structures that are not then set up. Adult education policy development also appears to be hampered and confused when government adult education programmes are scattered among several ministries.

What are the key policy features?

Very few countries make specific reference to post-CONFINTEA V follow-ups that have influenced policy or planning. Botswana is an exception, with a follow-up committee that developed a National Plan of Action for Adult Learning in 1999. An analysis of all the submitted country reports shows the following key features of the policies that relate to adult learning and education:

Lifelong learning	This is a general aim but without much substance except in a few countries which have a comprehensive view of ALE and a vision of the learning or knowledge society.
Development	All countries' policies link ALE with development, whether narrowly conceived in relation to economic development and specific sectors such as agriculture, through to broad conceptions including nation-building, active citizenship and personal development.
	Some countries specifically link ALE with human development in the context of globalisation and global competition.
	Several countries refer to the importance of ALE in reaching the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All targets.
Poverty alleviation	Many countries see ALE as a component of poverty alleviation.
Gender	Virtually all policies see ALE giving special access to women.
Inter-sectoral	ALE is generally seen as necessarily inter-sectoral and requiring inter-ministry and state/civil society collaboration and partnerships.
Literacy and basic education	There is a dominant focus on literacy (alphabetisation and numeracy), functional literacy (literacy plus life and livelihood skills) and basic education (equivalent to general or primary education)
	This is largely targeted at those who missed out on formal schooling (or dropped out of school) and at women.
	It is often seen (especially in East Africa) as a support to the achievement of universal primary education.
	Literacy/basic education is seen as the basis for continuing education and may be supported by post-literacy programmes and support for a literate environment.
Non-formal education and the formalisation of adult basic education	This is a major policy and programme focus in many countries.
	However, in most cases non-formal education policies refer to what is really an under-resourced variant of primary schooling provided to out-of-school children and youth and some adults.
	An interesting policy development in Ethiopia and Tanzania is the setting-up of separate programmes for out-of-school youth and for adults.
	In a number of countries there are new policies attempting to formalise non-formal basic education and/or to allow for certification and equivalence and articulation with mainstream formal education.
	Some recent policies relate to developing a fast-track adult basic education curriculum to enable adults to achieve an equivalent of primary education in a few years.
	Genuine non-formal education is only present in a very few policy documents and then usually in relation to such as health matters (especially HIV/AIDS), agriculture and civic education.

Language	The importance of mother tongue literacy is usually endorsed.
	Francophone Africa policies tend to pay special attention to national language issues.
Further education	Some policies deal with further education provision, usually secondary or vocational in orientation
Continuing education	Implicitly present as a conception in many policies but specifically used in only a few.
Vocational education	Important in some policies and implicit in income-generation and sustainable development.
Qualifications frameworks	Several countries have new policies or are making policies on a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the registration of qualifications and globally acceptable standards (and in some cases providers) and which are seen as means to gain better recognition for ALE. South Africa is the leader of this development.
Governance and co-ordination	A limited number of policies are about the setting-up of ALE units or departments and in a few cases, multi-sectoral para-statal agencies, councils or boards.
Use of state facilities	The main linkage between much adult and non-formal education and the formal system is the free use of state facilities (usually schools).
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL)	A few countries have policy on these (notably Seychelles, Namibia and Tanzania).
Disabled and other disadvantaged groups	Some policies refer to special provision to be made for the disabled, prisoners, migrants, refugees, nomads and so forth.

Do policies provide for linkages between formal and non-formal education?

A number of policies make provision for the part-time use of school resources and school personnel for literacy and continuing education. In some countries (for example, Mozambique) formal school officials have direct responsibilities for adult education. Some state or para-statal institutions offer both formal and non-formal courses (for example, Seychelles).

Recently there has been increasing pressure for the mainstreaming of so-called non-formal education (really a shadow schooling system for children and youth who have either dropped out of school or started attending long past the normal age) as in Tanzania.

There are few official policies or regulations for the movement of learners from non-formal to formal systems (or *vice versa*) (for example, Cape Verde) though many reports speak of the desirability of this. Burkina Faso and Cameroon have unofficial practices allowing this

Existing and developing National Qualifications Authorities hold out the promise of regulating the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (though practice is, as South Africa has discovered, fraught with implementation difficulties). Systems to recognise previously gained knowledge and skills have not yet been developed or are not yet fully functional.

There is a number of relatively new policies allowing for the certification and provision of national awards to learners in literacy, basic education and non-formal education.

Legislative frameworks

Very few countries report any legislation that is directly about adult or non-formal education and most of it was enacted before 1997. Cape Verde is among the few countries to have systematically developed post-CONFITEA V policy, legislation and administrative frameworks for the development of ALE. Several laws recognise adult education as one of the sub-components of basic education.

Where specific legislation exists it has addressed the following matters:

Adult Basic Education	Mali, South Africa
Adult educators	Côte d'Ivoire
Adult and continuing education	Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Kenya, Madagascar, Zambia
Correspondence colleges	Zimbabwe
Decentralisation (local implementation of literacy and continuing education)	Cameroon
Human Resource Development	Seychelles
Lifelong learning	Seychelles, South Africa
Literacy	Benin, Chad, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique
National language development	Benin, Mali
Non-formal education	Sierra Leone
Semi-autonomous agencies or institutes	Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania

Governance frameworks

The direction that ALE provision takes and the status it enjoys may depend critically upon the particular ministry or department of government which has responsibility..

Generally responsibility is placed (particularly in Anglophone countries) in the Ministry of Education or equivalent (usually Education allied to fields such as Human Resources, or Culture or Sport). Other possibilities include a ministry dealing with aspects of development such as Gender, Social Development or Youth. Other countries lodge it in Human Resource Development or Labour ministries. Benin is unique in having a new ministry (2007) dedicated to literacy and the promotion of national languages. In some cases (for example, Uganda) adult education seems to be uneasily (and often dysfunctionally) answerable to two or more ministries.

The actual provision of adult and non-formal education may be scattered over even more ministries (in Zambia at least eight). Most ministries responsible for ALE in theory cooperate with many other ministries active in the provision of various (mainly non-formal) adult learning activities but the actual mechanisms for cooperation, liaison and coordination between the ministries seem to be weak and poorly defined.

The impact of decentralisation

Decentralisation of has been pursued as part of the solution to various education management challenges in Africa. In practice, most decentralisation of educational provision takes place in situations of significant economic constraints and often entails a shifting of financial responsibilities to lower levels. However, often it is unclear from country reports whether what is being talked about is real decentralisation of decision-making or simply the normal extension of a line management system downwards.

Where ALE provision activities are decentralised and expected to be funded at the lowest level of government (for example, in Kenya where 25 per cent of ordinary government revenue is disbursed at the local level), resources seem to be provided erratically. In most countries even if there is some decentralisation of implementation and administration of ALE, functions such as policy, planning, standards-setting and regulation seem to remain centralised. Only a very few countries, such as the Gambia, have outsourced much literacy provision to NGOs.

In all the Francophone national reports it is highlighted that the decentralisation process is undermined by three main factors.

- Administrative processes in Francophone African countries are highly centralised.
- There are insufficient personnel at both central and local levels to implement literacy

and adult education programmes.

- When responsibility for promoting literacy and adult education is devolved to regional and local levels, but without the requisite funds, problems inevitably arise. Resources tend to remain in urban areas, benefiting only those who live there.

The “Faire-Faire” strategy, taken up by ten countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) is designed to develop an effective partnership between government and civil society to mobilise resources for literacy and non-formal education provision. Learners and local authorities are expected to contribute to the implementation of literacy and adult education programmes. Government literacy and non-formal education officials allocate funds, ensure quality, and evaluate the programmes.

Burkina Faso’s “Fond National pour l’Alphabétisation et l’Education Non Formelle” (FONAENF) is a partnership between government and some civil society organisations which receives grants from the government, bilateral and multilateral institutions for literacy and non-formal education. From 2002 to 2005 FONAENF mobilised about US\$ 8.6 million, of which about US\$1.6 million came from the government, the rest from development aid. Some 91 per cent of this has been allocated to the implementation of programmes executed by private operators. Enrolment from 2003 to 2005 nearly doubled each year and the proportion of women rose from 40 per cent in 2003 to 59 per cent in 2004.

The positive effects of Faire-Faire appear to include:

- an increase in resources allocated to non-formal education by government and by international technical and financial partners;
- the creation of a national fund for literacy and non-formal education;
- the involvement of civil society in the provision of literacy and non-formal education;
- a significant increase in participation levels of adult learners, including women; and
- the promotion of literacy and adult education programmes with curricula increasingly responsive to the specific needs of learners.

However, shortcomings include failures to re-organise responsibilities for different services within the ministry of education, the lack of strong political will to delegate decision-making to the national committee for literacy (composed of government, civil society and private sector representatives), the limited financial resources and weak communication among the different stakeholders. When literacy/non-formal education programme implementation is decentralised, it often has the effect of making the sector more invisible. What might have been visible at the central level vanishes when the literacy department is displaced to district or local primary education department offices. Often these are headed by managers from the formal schooling sector who are not so sensitised to adult education needs.

Administrative frameworks

Usually the host ministry has a Department, Directorate, Centre or unit that then manages adult and/or non-formal education and which may itself be organised into divisions or sub-units. Sometimes these departments are not solely dedicated to adult education, and it is not always clear how much autonomy these units have.

The briefs that these Departments have in relation to ALE tend to be narrow – usually managing the provision of literacy and basic education/non-formal education programmes and, less frequently (or weakly), various forms of continuing education. Only Zimbabwe has a Department of Lifelong Education.

Usually there is system of regional or district support, with staffed offices. These units, where the main ministry runs the formal education system, are often housed in formal education facilities, often staffed by schoolteachers working after hours. The administrative structures for these programmes mirror the formal ones. One reason for some of their failings is that the higher level managers are over-burdened with this additional work.

In some cases there are also specialist bodies that are linked to the national coordinating department. Benin has a Centre for Publishing Literacy Manuals (CEMA), a Mission for the Promotion of National Languages, a Project for the Generalisation of Literacy and a Support Fund for Literacy and Education in National Languages.

Vocational, technical and entrepreneurship education and training tend to have different implementing institutions, usually controlled by the appropriate ministry and sometimes supported by quite elaborate management systems. The Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia are good examples of this. South Africa has a system of 23 Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), each one responsible for some sector of public or private industry, and funded by a skills levy on businesses. Zambia has a Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) which oversees 23 institutions, most of which are run by management boards. TEVETA has registered some 319 technical and commercial training institutions. Smaller and poorer countries may have set-ups like that in Swaziland where government supports a non-governmental organisation to run a number of Swaziland Skills Centres.

A few countries have multi-sectoral, stakeholder representative Councils or Boards that share in the governance of ALE (though several policy documents, draft policy documents and reports strongly advocate them). In Kenya the Board of Adult Education is seen as a very effective body and Zambia has an Adult Literacy Technical Committee with members from line ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and academics. The Seychelles has an overarching National Human Resources Development Council. Swaziland's Sebenta National Institute runs literacy programmes. Burundi has a National Centre for Literacy (CAN). However, policy proposals to set up such semi-

autonomous councils or agencies for coordination, curriculum and programme formulation, training and evaluation, are sometimes not implemented, to the dismay of the field. A small number of countries, for example, Cameroon and Tanzania, have inter-ministerial coordination committees to link the various ministries who have responsibility for different areas of adult education provision. However, it is clear that in many countries the various adult education structures operate in isolation. In a few countries the coordinating state departments outsource much implementation to NGOs and the private sector, for instance, in the Gambia and increasingly in South Africa.

Some countries mention adult education associations of organisations or practitioners. Though they appear to be valued, little is said about their effectiveness or lobbying power. Examples are the Kenya Adult Education Association and Kenya Adult Learners Association, the Namibian Coalition for the United Nations Literacy Decade (NCUNLD), the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), Botswana's Adult Education Association (BAEA) and South Africa's Adult Learning Network (ALN).

What and who is targeted in implementation?

Programmes implemented include literacy and basic education, non-formal education (primary-school equivalent education for out-of-school children) and generic adult education (often particularly aimed at women). In addition, there are programmes in livelihood-related training (in some cases packaged with literacy or basic education), specialised vocational training (for example, agriculture), environment-related education, and various forms of health (especially HIV/AIDS), cooperative, and civic education.

The target groups are predictable – women, adults aged 15 to 45, out-of-school youth, people in rural areas and in particularly disadvantaged areas, and personnel in the public sector and businesses requiring continuing education, and also disabled people, prisoners, refugees, migrants, nomads and former soldiers.

What kinds of programmes are implemented?

Some country reports are rich in detail on the programmes provided. In general the documentation is fairly sparse with the exception of literacy/basic education/non-formal education equivalency programmes and some vocational training. Only a few countries give details on continuing professional education and training.

The first reason for this is that many of the state adult education departments were set up precisely to run these literacy and adult basic education programmes and therefore focus on them. Second, data on other forms of ALE are harder to gather or are non-existent. The consequence is that the richness of adult learning activities, though acknowledged, is poorly depicted. Details of the various categories of programme provision are given in the next chapter.

Financial frameworks

Generally the data available is inadequate, very partial and confusing. A further common difficulty is the lack of specification of what the budgetary allocations noted are for. It is unclear whether the funds are for all expenditure, staffing only, programmes only or for central headquarters only. Overall, it is hard to discern any comprehensive framework for financing, which is frequently characterised by an uncoordinated, *ad hoc* and episodic nature related to short-term programmes and the whims of donors. There is evidence of duplication and wastage of scarce resources. Given the needs and requirements, the financing of ALE remains inadequate.

How is adult education funded?

The best-reported data on funding relates to adult literacy and basic education/non-formal education programmes. Funding for continuing education, either academic or vocational, is provided and reported on, but little data is provided on its financing. Funding may come from public or private sector sources. International and foreign aid is also likely to be substantial. The promotion of technical and vocational education and training is considered an important component in reducing poverty and often has considerable funding but the portion that is directed to adult learners is unclear.

The costs of much adult education seem to be kept artificially low by the use of state facilities (such as schools for non-formal education for out-of-school young people) and by the extremely low salaries and stipends paid to many adult education practitioners.

What are the sources and scale of funding?

Because adult learning and education is such a diverse and multi-sectoral field it is very hard to ascertain how much is in fact spent each year by each country on adult education or to make intelligible comparisons, for example, of the amount spent on adult education as compared to that on formal education (schooling and initial vocational and higher education). Some countries have, bravely, tried to make such estimations. Unfortunately the comparisons reinforce the impression of the marginal nature of adult education in the national budget. Gambia estimates that the equivalent of 0.3 per cent of the national education budget went to adult education, Zambia 0.2 per cent, Kenya between 0.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent, Malawi 0.48 per cent, Senegal about 1 per cent (though it is planned to reduce this to 0.7 per cent!), South Africa about 1 per cent, Nigeria 2.43 per cent, Mozambique 3.5 per cent, and Botswana (including vocational training) 5.6 per cent. Cape Verde is a notable exception, investing 8.71 per cent of its national education budget in ALE.

Public funding

Public funding is the major source for literacy, adult basic education and alternative schooling (non-formal education), though foreign aid or other donor funds may subsidise it. Clearly large but unquantified amounts of money go into a broad range of communication and development activities sponsored by various government ministries and other institutions. Decentralised local government funding is poorly documented. Government is also the provider of facilities used by adult learners (in Kenya about 41 per cent of adult learning facilities are government-owned and 73.5 per cent of learning centres are government-sponsored). Countries without a national policy or coordination institutions, such as Cameroon and Central African Republic, understandably have difficulty harnessing such funding. Sometimes a small fund for a non-formal and adult education component comes as part of education sector development programmes (as in Ethiopia).

Government budgets for adult education are sometimes not fully released for expenditure (suggesting that adult education funding is seen as an optional extra grafted on to the normal education budget – and that when there is a shortfall in the school sector the funds are redirected there). Funding is also often erratic which makes long-term planning and implementation difficult.

Some states fund some ALE through tuition fee exemption or scholarships schemes for individuals, particularly for post-secondary vocational and academic training (for example, in Seychelles). Some ministries and other organisations have in place a tuition refund scheme for employees who successfully complete courses, or provide salary increments on completion. In addition subsidies may be paid to education and training institutions to cover the shortfall between income from fees and actual costs. Thus, for example, the Seychelles Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre (ALDEC) receives subsidies ranging from 19 per cent to 29 per cent of the cost of its academic and modular courses for which students pay tuition fees.

Donor funding

United Nations agencies, World Bank and foreign bilateral/multilateral donors provide significant investment as “development partners”, sometimes accompanied by technical support. An example of this is Senegal where about 93 per cent of the adult literacy budget comes from such external sources.

In many countries the total amount of bilateral/multilateral donor financing for ALE is not known due to the use of the general budget support system which requires donors to provide financial support to enable the government implement its planned activities as a whole.

Private sector funding

Substantial investment is being made in countries with large industrial and commercial capacity in training in and for the workplace (South Africa is a good example here) but data on this provision is notoriously hard to collect. Many companies in the private sector organise and sponsor their staff for training programmes at various levels. In some countries private sector companies may directly sponsor community ALE activities, programmes and learning materials through their corporate responsibility initiatives. Examples of such initiatives are specifically noted in the reports from Kenya, Seychelles and South Africa.

Non-governmental, community and faith-based organisation funding

Civil society organisations (religious institutions, unions, NGOs and CBOs) have always been supporters of adult learning. On the whole, civil society contributions are modest, but in Cameroon it is estimated that it supplies 95 per cent of ALE-related funding – but the total amount is small, about US\$ 1.4 million. In Gambia, civil society provides about US\$ 2.1 million. In Senegal NGOs contribute about 40 per cent of all ALE expenditure.

International NGOs have been particularly important supporters of certain types of literacy and basic education work for both adults and out-of-school youth. ActionAid International is a good example of general support and advocacy for literacy and in particular for the REFLECT method and networks of organisations that use this method. NGOs have been instrumental in supplementing and promoting innovative approaches to literacy education. They have established literacy centres, initiated new strategies and mobilised citizens for participation in ALE. But many countries report that NGOs are finding it more difficult to get grants or that the funding starts to be cut after an initial period. South African literacy NGOs experienced a massive decline after foreign donor aid was redirected to government after democratisation in 1994.

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) have also played a major role for some time. (In Kenya FBOs own 31 per cent of adult learning facilities and sponsor about 15 per cent of current learning centres.)

Learner funding

In some of the poorer countries learners and local communities are largely responsible for meeting their own literacy and non-formal education needs (for example, Burkina Faso). An interesting survey statistic from Cameroon is that, in 2000, families in urban areas spent about 6 per cent of their budget on non-formal education (3.7 per cent in rural areas). In Senegal learners contribute about 5 per cent of ALE expenditure in cash, in kind or through services.

A number of countries provide literacy education free to learners, but not for secondary or tertiary continuing education. In South Africa about 80,000 people have paid to study for an adult basic education practitioner training certificate through the distance education University of South Africa. Such fees are a way of supporting the providing agency to meet the running costs, though it is important to note that such cost recovery seldom meets the full expenditure (for example, in Ghana it is estimated that income seldom covers more than 20 to 25 per cent of the budget).

Are there policy benchmarks or targets on financing?

Policy benchmarks or targets on financing seem to be rare. Where they exist they seem to be ignored and they tend to be rather unrealistic pious hopes or attempts at advocacy. In this respect the ActionAid International/Global Campaign for Education's *Writing the Wrongs: International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy* (2005) rallying call has caught the imagination:

“Governments should dedicate at least 3% of their national education sector budgets to adult literacy programmes as conceived in these benchmarks – with additional contributions being made from other relevant ministries (for example, gender / women, community or rural development, agriculture, health, etc).”

However, this has yet to be put into practice in the vast majority of African countries. Very few countries come anywhere near reaching a 3 per cent benchmark or even a 1 per cent benchmark for either literacy or adult education as a whole.

What other trends are revealed in the financial data?

Although it might be assumed that the amount (and real value) of money dispensed to ALE has increased in recent years (in line with growth and economic productivity in many sub-Saharan states), such a finding cannot be confirmed given the limited financial data provided.

Foreign bilateral and donor funding remains largely time-bound and project-based. It is invaluable for the start-up of projects and programmes but the lack of continuity creates severe sustainability problems.

There are very few regional or transnational investments. Where they do occur they are often small and related to research or professional development. There was the positive development in 1997 of the signing of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) *Protocol on Education and Training*, which included sections on adult literacy and numeracy and lifelong education. This was followed in 2001 by the setting-up of a range of technical committees, including ones on lifelong education and distance education. However, since then there has been a funding crisis and the restructuring of the SADC secretariat. It is also unclear to what extent the mainly West African body, the Conseil Régional pour l'Éducation et l'Alphabétisation en Afrique (CREAA), a 16-country organisation established in 1974, has been able to galvanise resource procurement.

Policy documents and development plans often assume that the necessary funding for ALE will be available from public, private and corporate sectors as well as from bilateral and multi-lateral development partners. They tend to posit that the funding of ALE is a multi-sectoral collective responsibility of all agencies, organisations and governmental bodies. The downside of this is that in many cases it results in unfunded mandates with unpleasant consequences.

Provision and participation

What ALE provision is actually happening in sub-Saharan Africa, of what type, for whom and on what scale and complexity? The national reports attempt to answer these questions with varying degrees of detail. Understandably, state provision is prominent, particularly of literacy and basic education for adults (sometimes under the misnomer of ‘non-formal education’). Some countries, particularly the larger and more industrialised ones, also give details of a wider variety of adult education provision, both formal and vocational. There is, however, some uncertainty in whether higher education and industrial training can be unambiguously described as part of adult learning and education.

Statistical data on participation rates and trends since 1997

It is clear that most countries have difficulty generating straightforward statistics on provision – on the number and types of programmes, formal and non-formal, and on the number of learners involved, and on what their learning achievements are. Only two countries, the Seychelles and Cape Verde, contain in their reports an estimate of the ALE participation rate. In Seychelles in 2007 some 7.4 per cent (4,543) of the adult population took part in courses run through para-statal organisations. A Cape Verde study found that 12 per cent of the population participates in ALE programmes. National data are unable to show trends. Longitudinal data covering the last decade is rare, and background information is usually absent. It is therefore impossible to make informed judgements on whether provision has been expanding relative to need and demographic change.

Many countries now routinely indicate the number of women participating in programmes. Access for women has clearly improved with most countries reporting that equal educational opportunities have been given to men and women. Many countries have programmes or projects specifically targeted at women, and some adult education provision is governed from ministries dealing specifically with gender matters.

Some countries report special livelihood or vocational training projects for women, though most of these seem to be on a very small scale. Data on participation (and non-participation) as influenced by age, class, ethnicity, language and educational background is very limited. The same applies to the extent to which those with special learning needs – disabled people, prisoners, migrants, refugees and nomads – are catered for in adult education programmes.

Most of the detailed information is on relatively formal provision through structured systems. Genuine non-formal education is not well presented. There is almost absolute silence on facilities for the guidance of adult learners or on the actual experiences, motivations, expectations and opinions of adult learners.

Participation in different types of programmes

Categorising the variety of adult education programmes is difficult, made worse by the lack of precision in trying to differentiate between those that are formal and non-formal (and even those whose impact is largely informal). Non-formal education is a particularly slippery term as it can mean any education carried on outside the formal school and higher education system, except vocational training, or any education that is not certificated, or education that is delivered in a non-formal or informal style (but which may be quite formal in the system or certification sense).

Literacy

Literacy and numeracy programmes are organised primarily to impart reading, writing and numeracy skills in a home language or the dominant language of the workplace (the latter also require language teaching and conversational skills instruction). They may include other learning areas such as health and income-generation. Literacy programmes are often simply the first phase of an adult basic education/non-formal education programme.

Many programmes claim to mix a rights objective (the constitutional right of all citizens to be literate and to have a basic education) with more lifeskills or income-generation objectives. There is renewed stress in some countries on the necessity of the fundamental skills of reading, writing and numeracy as against “skills” training – the argument being that in the modern world the “skills” of reading, writing and numeracy are central.

Literacy is provided by all provider sectors. Styles of teaching range from very formal and traditional in government-run programmes (where most teachers are still ordinary school teachers doing another shift) to more innovative business and NGO practice. Further details on literacy provision are given in the next chapter.

Post-literacy

These programmes consolidate literacy skills and try to prevent their attrition through non-use. In many cases post-literacy may actually be adult basic education, in which case it is usually overseen by Departments of Adult Education or similar units in Ministries of Education and run at local facilities (often part of the formal school system). NGOs play an important role in post-literacy, often by way of producing reading materials for new literates, in some cases generated by learners themselves (for example, Kenya, South Africa). Library and resource centre supply is an important component of post-literacy support.

The consolidation of literacy skills in environments that are not particularly conducive to reading is often supported by the establishment of rural libraries or reading centres.

In Kenya the Post Literacy Programme (KPLP) did provide opportunities for literacy graduates to continue learning after the basic literacy programme. At the end of the project life in 2002, it was expanded to cover the rest of the country as a national post-literacy programme fully funded by the government. The establishment of community learning resource centres (CLRCs) was also undertaken to help develop a literate society. Members of the community provide physical facilities, reading materials, and manage the centres while government assists with reading materials, furniture, and supervision.

In 2006, the ministries of basic education from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Togo initiated a sub-regional training programme (Projet DEELMA OIF UNESCO). This involves the training of authors and publishers for the production of multilingual materials used in literacy programmes. The project is run with local publishers in collaboration with Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

Adult basic education

Adult basic education is frequently and confusingly conflated with literacy, post-literacy, functional literacy or non-formal education. Literacy, in the narrowest sense (which in certain circumstances can be achieved relatively quickly), is the starting point for adult basic education – an essential but not sufficient component. The latter includes, *inter alia*, quantities of content knowledge as well as life skills and which in Africa can be defined in formal terms as being equivalent to the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned in general schooling (Grades 1 to 7 or 9).

Adult basic education is aimed at and designed for adults to provide a conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development. It comprises knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. It may be conducted in mother tongue or, more frequently, in a dominant language. In some countries it may be certificated. The current trend is for it to become more formal and certificated and equivalent to formal schooling.

As with literacy, many basic education programmes claim to mix a rights objective (the constitutional right of all citizens to have a basic education) with more lifeskills or income-generation objectives. Where it is firmly linked with various forms of skills training it is labelled Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

Most countries have state-run programmes overseen by Departments of Adult Education or similar units in Ministries of Education or other employment- or development-related ministries. These programmes tend to be run at local facilities (often part of the formal school system) or with provision sometimes outsourced to commercial or NGO providers). In many countries NGOs play a substantial role but funding shortages may mean that they can no longer deliver services to the most disadvantaged groups. Outcome statistics are usually poorly and often inaccurately documented. Where evidence is available, successful outcomes seem limited and drop-out rates are high (for example, South Africa).

In several countries learners are mobilised by income-generation activities, skills training, micro-loans, support from community leaders and training of participants as health auxiliaries and development agents, for example in Gambia. Interesting and innovative programmes and developments include:

- Botswana's entire adult basic education curriculum and materials are being overhauled, with the aid of an international team. South Africa may well follow suit.
- South Africa's Department of Labour funds some adult basic education for workers and the unemployed *via* a skills levy with actual delivery outsourced.
- The REFLECT approach is used by a number of projects and programmes in Africa. In Malawi it is used by the Sustainable Social and Economic Empowerment Programme (SSEEP) which has a component where learners are funded to run livelihood activities. The perception of potential economic gains has greatly increased enrolment and participation of adult learners, particularly men.
- In 2002, World Vision Ghana collaborated with the Non-Formal Education Division on a functional literacy programme to enhance a water and sanitation programme.
- Nigeria has encouraged the use of interactive teaching and learning and has also developed Ajami (Arabic) Integrated Education in which Arabic education is integrated into western education, a situation thought to be impossible before.
- In Senegal the TOSTAN project has improved the educational situation of women learners not only by reducing the rate of illiteracy but also by improving health and living conditions. The curriculum includes instruction in a local language (Wolof), a participatory approach to training, traditional culture, community ownership and problem-solving, health modules related to the use of oral rehydration, which prevents the dehydration caused by diarrhoea, a frequent cause of death among young children in Senegal.
- Between 1990 and 2007 Uganda enrolled over 2m participants (75 per cent women) in the functional adult literacy (FAL) programme. The Family Basic Education (FABE) programme was active in 18 schools by 2005, reaching over 3,300 children and 1,400 parents. This is a successful family literacy intervention whose impact at household, school and community level has been evaluated.
- In Tanzania curriculum revision has led to the development of a more effective Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE).

Equivalency, 'second chance' or alternative schooling

School equivalency programmes are organised for youth and adults who did not have access to, or withdrew from, formal primary/basic education or secondary education. These programmes are distinct from literacy and numeracy programmes in that they provide equivalence to the general education provided for primary schoolchildren and/or secondary schooling. For many adults they are perceived as the only route to gain a qualification for upward career mobility. The content may be identical to that in formal primary or secondary schooling or may be specifically designed for adults. It is often confusingly misnamed as non-formal education.

The main providers are Departments of Adult Education or similar units in Ministries of Education or other employment- or development-related ministries. They are run at local facilities (often part of the formal school system). NGOs may play a role in this provision but candidates usually sit public examinations. Commercial schools or distance education correspondence colleges also often provide such courses. There is little information on the enrolments, throughput and success of these programmes. Drop-out is very high in both face-to-face and distance education settings.

Examples of interesting and innovative programmes and developments include:

- In South Africa the Adult Secondary Education Curriculum for Adults (ASECA) is an NGO-developed high school equivalency programme specifically tailored for adult and out-of-school youth with officially recognised exams (administered by the Independent Examination Board). The Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) is interested in a major redevelopment of this programme.
- Angola and Liberia both have “accelerated” programmes for young people who are too old to enrol in primary schools.
- Namibia runs a three-year Adult Upper Primary Education (AUPE) programme. The learners take six courses in all; four core courses and two optional courses. They study two courses each year. The curriculum has been designed to be equivalent to the upper primary programme in the formal system. The complexity of the learning tasks, skills and competencies acquired will be equivalent to those of children in upper primary school, but more relevant to adults’ daily activities.
- In Tanzania open and distance learning is used in some secondary school equivalent programmes. The Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) programme addresses the educational needs of youth who, for various reasons, could not enrol in or dropped out of the formal primary school system. While enrolment was high in 2003/2004 (466,018 learners), it has steadily declined since then (to 185,206 in 2006/2007) as many youth were mainstreamed into formal education.

Higher education

This is not normally considered part of adult education but can be when looked at in terms of being accessible to adult learners as distinct from school-leavers. There are various initiatives to enable adults to have easier access to traditional higher education programmes and more recently to various forms of upgrading of professional qualifications (for example, for school teachers) often delivered via distance education or mixed-mode instruction. Adult education enables higher education institutions to gain another source of fee income. Outcome statistics are hard to obtain as the adult learner statistics are not usually disaggregated from those of traditional students. Impressions are that output is good though quality may be uneven.

Examples of interesting and innovative programmes and developments include:

- Ghana has used distance education since 1997 to widen access to tertiary. Until 2006, the development of courses and training of lecturers were borne by the Ministry of Education and today there are over 30,000 teachers and adults pursuing distance education programmes. In Accra part-time studies have grown tremendously due to flexibility of classes and duration. In 2006, the University of Ghana converted part of Accra Workers' College into a "City Campus" to offer BA and BSc courses in Administration to workers.
- In Kenya the University of Nairobi provided extra-mural programmes from the 1950s. It is now possible for working adults to study virtually anything at the university, from certificate courses to specialist programmes at Master's level. Prior learning is recognised; and courses are available in various modes that include evening and weekend schools as well as open, distance and online learning or any combination of these.
- In South Africa there is a growing cohort of adult learners in higher education, particularly through the distance education University of South Africa, where over a ten-year period some 80,000 people have been enrolled for the Higher Certificate for Adult Basic Education and Training, with materials and a tutorial system to support them.
- Seychelles has a mature student policy that stipulates a quota of places in post-secondary education and training institutions.

Continuing education and professional development

This covers a wide spectrum of activities. It includes professional qualification upgrading, refresher courses and so on, provided by in-house company training in the business sector. Government departments and public service training academies are also providers, as well as NGOs, commercial training organisations and professional bodies. At tertiary level, universities, polytechnics and training colleges are involved. Although all levels are targeted, in many countries it is mainly the higher and middle levels of government and business sector employees who benefit. In Anglophone countries a number of universities still run non-formal extra-mural programmes.

Early childhood care and education

Early Childhood Care and Education (also known as Early Childhood Development, ECD) is included here because of its various forms of childcare staff training and its influence on parents. In most countries this is the preserve of NGOs, CBOs and religious organisations though some countries, now seeking to establish a school-readiness system, run a number of government ECD training programmes. Often ECD centres and networks are involved in training practitioners.

Technical, vocational and entrepreneurship education and training

These are vocationally-related skills programmes run in the workplace or in training institutions serving the workplace. They seek to provide skills for employment or self-employment and to solve skills shortages and generally raise skills levels to meet global competition. Some programmes are specifically targeted at youth. They may include some income-generation programmes of a more non-formal nature.

Government, business and industry are usually all involved. In many countries the Ministry of Labour or Employment is a major driver of vocational training through technical colleges and other training institutions (including the military and police), apprenticeship systems and agricultural extension services. Examples of interesting and innovative programmes and developments include:

- Kenya has an extensive National Youth Service in which young men and women are taught discipline and self-reliance, besides skills in agriculture, secretarial services, building, motor mechanics and more.
- Namibia has an Adult Skills Development for Self Employment (OASTS) scheme, a business (entrepreneurial) skills development programme which has motivated many learners to join the National Literacy Programme in Namibia. The main beneficiaries of the project are unemployed adults over the age of 18 who wish to set up small businesses. Namibia has a comprehensive set of state, private sector and NGO programmes to improve skills.
- Seychelles has a comprehensive system of support for adults engaging in vocational education and training.
- Tanzania's Folk Development Colleges and other technical skills programmes have reached some 125,272 people from 2000 to 2006 with rising enrolments each year from some 6,000 in 2000 to 28,000 in 2006. The colleges were established in the mid-1970s to meet the socio-economic challenges of rural communities, with courses ranging from one day to two years.
- Zambia runs a number of Youth Training Centres and National Service Camps.

ICT training

Though simply a form of technical training, this new field is of great importance to developing African economies. Africa suffers from shortages of ICT equipment and internet bandwidth. Access to international networks is relatively expensive. Open source software may reduce costs. ICT training is done mainly by private commercial providers, though government departments and larger businesses may also provide in-house training. Some countries have a number of ICT training firms and academies, some supported by foreign ICT and software firms. Some adult basic education programmes are beginning to use ICT for instruction.

- An interesting innovation in Seychelles was the launch of the National Open and Distance Learning Policy in 2003 with related workshops since 2006 aimed at training in the creation of e-learning materials.

Life skills and community development

These are the multitudinous programmes and materials that provide various forms of public education on health (particularly HIV/AIDS prevention and care), family planning, community development, rural development, environmental issues, citizenship, human rights, participation in government programmes and local government.

Government ministries, departments and institutes and NGOs prepare courses and general informational materials so that they are accessible to people with low levels of literacy and education or develop them for radio or television broadcast. Some NGOs and adult education centres at universities are active in this materials development work.

Some interesting examples include the following:

- In Eritrea radio programmes are broadcast in four local languages to support literacy, post-literacy, agriculture and health programmes as well as targeting teachers.
- A number of countries have programmes that have effectively integrated HIV/AIDS and other health-related issues into adult basic education. Examples are Operation Upgrade in South Africa and the REFLECT-related STAR programme.
- Ghana's innovative "Women in Local Governance Fund", launched in March 2006, was used for capacity-building and training for women aspiring to participate in local assemblies.
- Uganda has a wealth of practical life skills, health and community education initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Health, NGOs and CBOs. These include the campaign for HIV/AIDS prevention and environment education. Other initiatives include civic education by the Human Rights and Electoral Commissions, cooperative education by the Department of Cooperatives, as well as workers' education by trade unions.

Income-generation programmes

These are mainly non-formal vocational training and rural and community development (all related to livelihoods and poverty alleviation). Various government departments and institutes often link particular training (for example, on gardening, poultry care, craft making, basic home care, and so on) to more formal adult basic education/functional literacy programmes and sometimes provide equipment or micro-loans. Outcome statistics are poorly documented. Many of the projects that report successes are small-scale. Some projects of interest are:

- In Nigeria a number of adult education programmes empower women through vocational improvement programmes. There are girl-child vocational centres and women's skills acquisition and functional education centres, to bridge the gap between basic education and livelihood earning. Here they are given opportunities to compete favourably with their male counterparts (40,000 participants in 2006). There is a Women's Education Department and Special Education to cater for women.
- Uganda provides practical non-formal agricultural education through the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAIADS) and the Uganda National Farmers' Association, funded by the government, NGOs and development partners. There is also a Basic Education for Integrated Rural Development Project.

Religious, cultural and political education

Various forms of religious, cultural and political education reach the entire population, including the most disadvantaged.

Provision for special needs

Many countries in their reports mention provision for learners with special needs such as disabled or elderly people, prisoners, nomads, people in inaccessible rural areas, street children, migrants and refugees.

Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho and South Africa have special programmes for prisoners. Ghana has special programmes for the elderly.

Disabled people have access to adult education in many programmes. In South Africa's new literacy campaign special efforts and extra resources were devoted to this constituency.

The learning content

The learning content of adult learning and education is clearly of fundamental importance – but is remarkably difficult to describe or synthesise because adult learning is, of course, about everything. Most content stated in Member States’ reports echoes the major provision foci – literacy, primary school equivalence basic education, vocational and technical, professional and development (the latter obviously being an enormous area).

The national reports do not give much information on the content of the adult education programmes that operate in their countries. In most cases the general name of the programme is as much content detail as is given. Curriculum and curriculum content do not seem to be prominent issues in the continent, nor are curriculum approaches matters for great debate. Some countries mention the adoption of a more outcomes- or competency-based approach to education and training (sometimes in tandem with the innovation of a National Qualifications Framework) but, except in South Africa, this notion is weakly presented. The jargon of outcomes and competencies that is so rampant in other parts the world seems hardly present in the reports. In the literacy field there have been two trends of note. One is an argument that literacy instruction is best packaged with income-generation or skills training activities. The other is that literacy instruction may best be done inter-generationally – the family literacy approach.

Although a majority of countries speak of non-formal education very little is actually said about genuine non-formal education (most so-called non-formal education is thoroughly formal school equivalence instruction whose only distinction from formal schooling is that it is done cheaply by less qualified instructors under more difficult circumstances). Clearly an enormous range of non-formal content exists – in development activities in health, agriculture, the environment and civic and democracy learning.

Literacy

Adult literacy is the foundation for lifelong learning in a world in which texts are important. Low levels of literacy are one of the most severe barriers to adults gaining knowledge and skills. Because of the high levels of illiteracy in Africa, the provision of literacy has often, understandably, become a key, if not the dominant, form of adult education provision.

The literacy situation

In sub-Saharan Africa there is a gradual but slowing increase of literacy levels, from about 54 per cent in around 1990 to about 59 per cent around 2000. In the same period there has been a minor increase in the number of literate women from about 61 per cent to 62 per cent of the male rate (EFA *Global Monitoring Report*, 2008, p. 63). However, the absolute number of illiterates is growing. In sub-Saharan Africa the total now is about 62 million men and 102 million women, 164 million in total. The recent unprecedented growth in primary school enrolments in Africa may have a decided impact on future literacy figures. However, in the short-term it will not reduce the need for literacy programmes for the totally unschooled, the funding for which will come under pressure precisely because of the growth in primary schooling.

Statistics on literacy levels are provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on the basis of demographic and household surveys, censuses and estimations (the UIS uses the Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model (GALP) for the latter). In all but one or two countries people or households self-report on whether they are literate or not. On the basis of these statistics it is clear that adult literacy programmes are not achieving the aim of improving adult literacy levels. More accurate statistics based on direct literacy assessments, such as that of the Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey of 2006, suggest that the real situation is worse.

The problem of literacy terminology

There are a number of definitional problems with the terms used for *literacy* and associated concepts such as *adult basic education* and non-formal education. At Dakar in 2000, the World Education Forum's Education for All commitment was to "achieving a 50 per cent

improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.” In order to know when this literacy level target is reached requires a clear idea of what “adult literacy” is. Moreover, this concept must be amenable to measurement. Though most definitions of literacy stress the ability to read and understand printed text and to communicate through writing, many recent definitions note that literacy is always relative to varying contexts and to skill and knowledge requirements. In this connection the definition in the Global Campaign for Education’s *International benchmarks on adult literacy* (2005) is helpful and comprehensive:

Literacy is about the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality. The goals of literacy programmes should reflect this understanding.

This definition combines both the simplicity of UNESCO’s 1958 definition

A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life

with more recent ones, such as that of the World Declaration on Education for All of 1990, which see literacy as an essential learning tool to enable people to survive, participate and develop in the world. Literacy is, for most people, an essential prerequisite for gaining access to education material inscribed in texts and for communicating knowledge to others. Above all, such literacy is a prerequisite for gaining access to formal and non-formal education and training in modern societies.

Forms of literacy provision

When it comes to literacy instruction, the problem of definition worsens. When is a literacy programme a “literacy” programme (teaching fundamental reading, writing and numeracy skills)? When is it an “adult basic education” programme (providing the equivalent to the primary education in schools)? The latter is much more than reading and writing and doing sums, for it involves gaining a whole body of what is considered useful knowledge, skills and attitudes.

There are also distinctions to be made about different types of literacy programmes. There have been five main types of literacy provision in African countries:

Literacy campaigns have strong political backing and are usually centrally-controlled. Typical of the immediate post-independence period in Africa, they were often inefficient and poorly-targeted but had successes in countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mozambique. A major problem with short literacy campaigns is sustaining the literacy levels achieved (as discovered in Tanzania).

Functional literacy programmes (as distinguished from the basic literacy or alphabetisation campaign or programme) often seek to link literacy with livelihoods, skills training and development. Though clearly useful, often their scale of operation is quite small.

Formal primary school equivalence basic education is increasingly being introduced alongside basic literacy programmes in Botswana, Uganda and South Africa (post-apartheid provision is dominated by this form, which has not been particularly successful in quantitative terms and is currently being reviewed). Confusingly, sometimes so-called non-formal education or functional literacy programmes are actually this formal adult basic education.

Innovative participatory programmes are usually run by NGOs or agencies. There is not much evidence of these operating on any scale. The REFLECT (Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) method pioneered by the international NGO ActionAid appears to be increasingly used in a number of countries such as Burkina Faso, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, South Africa and Uganda. It mixes Freirian pedagogy with participatory rural appraisal techniques (PRA) and is used for not only literacy but also general development purposes.

Family literacy programmes are a recent development and provide mother-child or intergenerational literacy instruction and support to families with pre-primary and primary school-age children and are based in schools or community centres.

In Africa many countries have so-called **post-literacy** programmes. These are usually equivalent to adult basic education. It needs to be argued that there should be no false dichotomy between literacy and post-basic literacy adult basic education, as literacy is a continuous process that requires regular and sustained learning and use and a conducive literate environment. There is little point in a process that produces a “literacy” that soon withers away. All literacy initiatives should ensure that a sustainable level of literacy can be attained. The near-universal conclusion from research is that this requires 300 to 400 hours of regular learning (Global Campaign for Education, 2005, pp. 19-20). This means that, though this literacy instruction could be delivered in phases, learners need to engage in a campaign or programme that can deliver this overall quantum of instruction and be actively stimulated through appropriate methods and relevant content.

Literacy is often spoken of as the foundation for all lifelong learning. This is an obvious truth but has a danger of encouraging complacency if it is thought that this is all that has to be done in respect of lifelong learning.

How do countries define literacy?

Official statistics on literacy tend to use simple definitions of literacy that see it as equivalent to a particular level of formal basic education (illiterate people are those who have never been to school or have not reached a certain grade of schooling) or as the capacity to read and write simple statements (in any, or one of a set of official or dominant, languages). But even such simple definitions of literacy are problematic. Some countries classify as illiterate only those who have never been to school (as South Africa’s official UNESCO statistics do), some define as illiterate any person who has not reached a chosen level of schooling, and some actually test certain literacy and numeracy skills (as Botswana and Kenya have done). Even

the official UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) definition of an adult illiterate as being a person aged 15 years and over who cannot both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his or her everyday life is therefore not necessarily followed by the countries submitting their literacy statistics.

Another definition of functional literacy was approved in the UNESCO General Conference in 1978 that stated that a person was considered functionally literate who could engage in all activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development. However, this latter definition is infrequently used for statistical counts.

Definition of literacy used in national statistics	Countries
The ability to read easily or with difficulty a letter or a newspaper	14
A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.	15
Read, write and numerate with understanding [There are a number of quite complex variations on this statement.]	7
Ability to read and write in any language or one of a set of specified languages	12
Based on the results of a reading and writing test	3
Persons are functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning and also for enabling them to continue to use reading, writing [in at least one national language] and calculation for their own and their community's development.	1
Literacy is about the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality. [Global Campaign for Education benchmark 1]	2
An illiterate is a person who never attended school even if that person can read and write	1
Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <i>Literacy Statistics Metadata Information Table</i> . April 2008. (Reference years 1995-2004, 2005-2007) and country reports	

In most cases literacy counts take place during national censuses and surveys and make use of a 'self-declaration' method: respondents are asked whether they and the members of their household are literate and are not required to demonstrate their literacy capabilities. Other countries take completion of a certain level of education as a proxy for being literate.

In spite of the growing interest in direct assessment of literacy skills, few countries have made use of the UIS-developed data collection instrument, Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), or the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) instrument. Both these instruments aim to provide literacy data of higher quality and conceptualise literacy skills as a continuum rather than as a literate/illiterate dichotomy.

Two countries, Botswana with its national household surveys on literacy in 1993 and 2003 and Kenya with its National Adult Literacy Survey of 2006, should be commended for having already run surveys which have tested literacy competency. A commitment to hold such surveys should be encouraged. In particular, the way Kenya conducted its survey deserves wide emulation.

The Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey

The Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey of 2006, published in 2007, sought to establish the magnitude, levels and distribution of adult literacy for persons aged 15 years and above; obtain comprehensive data and information on adult literacy from literacy providers and stakeholders in both private and public sectors; and identify issues of concern which need to be addressed.

It was established that Kenyans are more numerate than literate and that though the national adult literacy rate is 61.5 per cent, only 29.6 per cent have the desired mastery of literacy and numeracy skills.

The survey recorded the low visibility of adult education programmes in the country. Despite a general decline in support for adult and continuing education and other social services programmes in the last two decades, it was clear from the survey that the needy adults continued to patronise the programmes offered by the Department of Adult Education and by many other stakeholders. The survey revealed that there was need to make the ALE programmes relevant to the needs of adult learners and also guarantee effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation to ensure quality.

The study has influenced the initiation, development and implementation of Department of Adult Education programmes in the country. Special focus is now being given to marginalised and hard-to-reach groups. The low participation of men, for example, is being addressed through the initiation of male-only classes in every district. The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET 1) curriculum has been reviewed to make it relevant to the needs of learners and the next level (ABET 2) curriculum is under review. A literacy centre has been established in every administrative location to ensure increased access and enhanced visibility. At stakeholder level, there has been renewed interest in literacy programmes resulting in increased collaboration and sharing and the development of regional-based action plans.

Defining the actual programmes

When it comes to literacy instruction, the definitional problem worsens. When is a literacy programme a “literacy” programme (teaching fundamental reading, writing and numeracy skills)? When is it an “adult basic education” programme going beyond reading and writing and doing sums, gaining a whole body of what is considered useful knowledge, skills and attitudes)?

Every sub-Saharan country appears to have some form or other of literacy programme, though they differ widely in size and form. A number of generalisations can be made about these programmes:

- most of them are “non-formal”, in that their relationship with formal educational provision and certification is weak or limited, though they may be formal in style of delivery;
- they are generally staffed by poorly paid and poorly qualified/trained people (variously called facilitators, instructors, tutors) who are employed on a temporary part-time basis (there are few genuinely unpaid volunteers, although their stipends or incentives may be very small);
- many of the programmes are run not by the Ministry of Education but by another Ministry (usually dealing with Women or Development); and
- most learners in these programmes are women and the lack of participation by men is a significant failing (though programmes often commend themselves as rectifying gender imbalances).

Literacy provision

Every country report describes some form of literacy provision. Countries are worried about the extent of illiteracy and, in spite of evidence of progress, the slowness of its reduction and the growth in the absolute number of people who cannot read and write. This situation is blamed on the inadequacy of primary schooling, funding shortages and low literacy teacher morale and effectiveness.

There are only a few overt, ratified national literacy policies – Mozambique (which has a raft of strategic, funding and curriculum policy documents) and Namibia among them. However, some countries are drafting policies (for example, Burkina Faso) and most have at least some reference to literacy in general development policies and plans. A few have detailed strategic plans for literacy, such as Uganda’s *National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan 2002/03 – 2006/07* but its original target of target of 3.5 million learners was reduced by a later ministry plan to 1.2 million because of resource constraints.

Most countries have some form of national literacy programme (though it may be called non-formal education and it may also include adult basic education/primary school equivalence components). These programmes and the structures that house them are usually controlled by central government, with varying degrees of consultation with and participation by NGOs,

religious bodies and the private sector. A minority of states have outsourced provision of literacy to NGOs or the private sector or have public-private partnerships (as in the West African Faire-Faire model). Organisationally, national programmes usually make use of existing education facilities, with a cascade down to the delivery sites, at which point some programmes have community liaison or similar committees. Namibia provides an instructive example of such an organisational structure.

The approaches taken for literacy instruction are not clearly specified in country reports. Most talk of using a functional literacy approach, but this is itself a highly ambiguous and unhelpful term. In reality most functional literacy programmes seem to deliver the basics of reading and writing and some primary school equivalent content. There is relatively little genuine skills training, as the costs appear to be relatively high and hence tend to be run on a small scale. Adding a skills training component also appears to work best when the participants already have basic literacy. Probably the best known and most widely distributed of the specific, often NGO-originated, participatory methods or approaches is REFLECT. A growing trend is the start of family literacy programmes in, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda.

Only a couple of countries mention methods. Mauritius uses an eclectic mix of both ‘phonetics’ and ‘whole language’ methods. Guinea-Bissau uses the Cuban *Yo, sí puedo* (in Portuguese and French versions). There is virtually no information provided on the literacy materials used by either learners or facilitators. Koranic literacy education takes place in a few countries, including Nigeria and Gambia.

The current dominant view that learning to read and write is best done initially in the mother tongue is generally adhered to, except in countries where there are many languages and dialects and where a national language or lingua franca (such as kiSwahili) or an official language (such as French, English or Portuguese) is taught. Many programmes do move rapidly into the use of an official language in the post-literacy/adult basic education stages.

There is a limited amount of language and orthography development in small languages (for example, in Kenya, Liberia and Togo).

There is general silence about the quantum of hours necessary to teach literacy. Namibia teaches basic literacy and numeracy over one year that has 240 hours of instruction, the same number as in South Africa’s new literacy campaign.

Most literacy initiatives seem to be programmes and projects rather than campaigns, though the campaign mode is now very prominent in South Africa with the launch of the *Kha ri gude* Literacy Campaign in 2008 after a well-researched planning, materials and assessment instrument development process (though one not unscathed by bureaucratic problems). It plans to reach 4.7 million people over a five- or six-year period and relies on volunteer educators, supervisors and coordinators, all of whom are paid modest stipends. Liberia had an “each one teach one” campaign that was replaced by an “each one teach ten” initiative in 2004. Ethiopia planned to reach 5.2 million learners by 2011 through a functional adult literacy campaign but this target seems to have been scaled down because of funding constraints.

A few countries have invested in comprehensive training, curriculum and materials support for their literacy initiatives, for example, Seychelles and Namibia. The Commonwealth of Learning Programme (CLIT) in Zambia aims to use ICT to teach illiterates to read and write and develop materials. Generally there are no national standards for literacy learning achievement and curriculum. There is a lack of information on the roles of the various players and programmes and a lack of clarity about goals, outcomes, outputs, targets and activities, leading to a weak basis for measuring consistency and performance.

There does not seem to be much real investment in creating a more literate environment. Some countries have units that produce newspapers and newsletters for learners. Botswana has set up rural reading rooms. Cameroon has Regional Educational Resource Centres (CARE) that produce literature on literacy and post-literacy and run local newspapers and correspondence networks for new-literates. Cape Verde has mobile libraries for the promotion of literacy and reading culture and in order to prevent the relapse into illiteracy among adult learners and young people. Eritrea has set up 70 rural community libraries/reading rooms and plans more. Senegal's Associates for Research and Education for Development has published 150 titles in African languages and South Africa has a couple of projects producing reading materials for new adult readers.

The scale of the programmes and projects seems on the whole to be modest, given the dimensions of the illiteracy situation. It is very difficult to extract clear data from the country reports on the annual number of adults learning to read and write. Some examples from the most recent years are: Eritrea (101,737), Kenya (126,724), Malawi (about 200,000), Mozambique (about 410,000), Namibia (about 30,000), Nigeria (386,685), South Africa (about 400,000), Tanzania (1,296,484), Uganda (about 232,000), Zambia (41,894) and Zimbabwe (20,554). Enrolment is dominated by women, usually at least 70 per cent of learners.

It is impossible to estimate average costs per learner in literacy programmes from the data provided. It is likely to be very low. At the Bamako African Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy various cost estimates were given for literacy programmes, suggesting that to be effective an annual *per capita* cost of US\$ 70 to US\$100 would be needed.

Literacy teachers are the least qualified and the worst remunerated of adult educators. They are nowadays invariably part-timers on short-term contracts. The acute shortage of well qualified literacy teachers undermines the effective promotion of literacy. Any future mobilisation of more learners depends on the availability of teachers, and despite the policy of reducing the government personnel bill in many countries, only the employment of more teachers can guarantee the sustenance of the gains so far achieved against illiteracy.

Information on how literacy achievements are assessed is scant. Non-formal education and literacy for youth and adults is not governed by any standards, quality assurance mechanism or national assessments covering all programmes. Some programmes use tests and in-class continuous assessment (Namibia). South Africa's new literacy campaign uses a portfolio of literacy and numeracy exercises. Mauritius has a "non-formal examination", the Seychelles has an annual examination and in-class continuous assessment, and in Tanzania a more informal process of observations, interviews, discussions and informal meetings enables the

facilitator to make an assessment of the impact of the acquired basic literacy skills in the day-to-day lives of the learners. Uganda produced *Guidelines for Continuous Assessment of Functional adult Literacy Learners* (2004) which involves strong participation of civil society organisations, some of whom have modified these guidelines to suit their interests and objectives. The programmes using the REFLECT method do not administer examinations, as assessment of participants' achievement is based on the assumption that a minimum of six months and a maximum of 10 months is enough for a person to know how to write, read and count. There are no national norms or standards since implementers of REFLECT vary them according to situations in which they operate.

Several countries report regular evaluations of the literacy/non-formal education programmes (for example, Botswana, Namibia, Seychelles, Uganda) and in some cases include wider impact studies. Uganda reports that evaluations have been useful in informing government decisions about the Functional Adult Literacy programme and for mobilising more resources for it. Uganda is also notable in that the evaluations of the functional adult literacy programme and a comparison between it and the REFLECT method have been published. Findings are particularly interesting on the effectiveness of these adult programmes in comparison with the outputs of primary schooling and the impact on people's life skills and income-generating capabilities. (The REFLECT method itself places key importance on evaluation.) There has also been an interesting evaluation of a family literacy programme and its impact at household, school and community level. The recent publication of a comparative study of literacy in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, *Adult literacy: putting Southern African policy and practice into perspective* is a good example of the evaluative studies needed more widely. Angola's literacy programme has been evaluated by consultants.

Regional cooperation in literacy work is promoted among some providers. Benin, for example, uses the TIN TA literacy method from Burkina Faso. Users of the REFLECT method have a variety of effective national and regional PAMOJA networks.

Ways forward

Currently literacy education and the allied adult basic education/non-formal education are largely marginalised within the education sector. Even within multi-sectoral development initiatives, its presence is low-key, in spite of the arguments for the beneficial trade-offs resulting from literacy in health, poverty reduction and children's participation in schooling. Given that many African formal education systems do not perform well, adult literacy and basic education are still immensely important tools for national development.

International support for literacy comes from the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), but there is little mention of these initiatives in the country reports. The question of whether sub-Saharan Africa can reach the Dakar Goal Four of reducing illiteracy by half by 2015 is encapsulated in the title of the Global Monitoring Report 2008: *Education for All by 2015. Will we make it?* Some country

reports bravely admit the national failure to deal with the intractable problems of illiteracy, as the Malawi report states:

The goal of the National Adult Literacy Programme at its launch was to reach out to at least 2 million of the 4.6 million illiterate adults by the year 2000, but by 2006, the programme had only reached about 860,000 learners. These statistics clearly underlie the magnitude of failure of the set of interventions and programmes that have hitherto been carried out to fight illiteracy in the country.

The cost of meeting the 2015 deadline would of course be high, probably as high as US\$12 billion. Raising this funding will be difficult, particularly when the World Bank's Africa Action Plan favours shifting support towards secondary and tertiary education and skills development (UNESCO, 2007, p. 191).

The Bamako Call to Action

The African Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy, *Renewing the Commitment to Literacy to Face African Challenges*, was held in September 2007 at Bamako, Mali. It succeeded in generating a genuine momentum and reviving commitment to literacy in Africa. Ministers stated their determination and desire to integrate literacy into all aspects of their development programmes and to work in close collaboration with all stakeholders involved.

The final report on the conference, *Recommitting to literacy to face African challenges: the African regional conference in support of global literacy* (2008) presents an analytical overview of the lessons learned, as well as the recommendations and consensus as to the ways forward. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is, in cooperation with other bodies, developing a plan of action and preparing a review of measures already underway.

The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) Maputo Strategic Platform

LIFE is a collaborative framework, which aims to coordinate policies, action, resources and ideas and speed up the acquisition of literacy and basic education in countries most in need (that is, having a less than 50 per cent literacy rate or at least 10 million people without basic literacy skills). LIFE currently works with the following African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. It adopted a strategic platform at the Regional LIFE meeting in Maputo, Mozambique in January 2008. This platform deals with advocacy and communication, capacity-building for policies and programmes, and the sharing of knowledge and innovative practices.

Qualifications

The move to have National Qualifications Frameworks is likely to sweep Africa in the next decade, a perhaps inevitable consequence of globalisation and the internationalisation of standards in education and training and, in particular, the influence of a competency- or outcomes-based approach to learning. Adult education is not exempt from the impact of these trends and is attracted to the idea (yet to be proven in practice) that they will facilitate the entry of adults to the various levels of formal education.

National Qualifications Frameworks

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) can be seen as an organising principle for both formal and non-formal education. In developing countries it can be seen as the necessary framework to enable people with low levels of basic education to gain validation of what basic learning they have (formal or non-formal) and to go beyond it.

Adult education needs to have systems for learning validation which are equivalent to those in systems of formal education, regardless of where and when the learning has occurred. Basic and non-formal education need to be included within the NQFs so that they can access the “ladders” and “bridges” which avert educational dead-ends. This requires articulation between the different levels and kinds of learning.

Presently, South Africa (in particular), Namibia and Seychelles have gone some way towards establishing their qualifications framework. Botswana, Cape Verde, Kenya, Lesotho and Zambia are currently engaged in the development of their qualifications frameworks, and Zimbabwe may follow suit. These countries believe that the NQF will be useful for integrating education and training, recognising prior learning, and making it easier for adults to plan their careers and gain access to formal systems of education from which they have previously been excluded. They also believe the standard-setting and outcomes/competence-based approaches in such NQFs should be responsive to both social and economic demands. It is also argued that basic or non-formal education can be accommodated within an NQF.

South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework

One of the major achievements of the last 13 years is the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which was to be central to driving the policy of lifelong learning which was implemented after 1994. The NQF brings together education and training

as well as skills development. It encompasses early childhood development (ECD), general education and training (GET), adult basic education and training (ABET), further education and training (FET) and higher education and training (HET). Philosophically it endorses the coupling of a qualifications framework with lifelong learning.

Outcomes-based approaches are used by all components of the system to aid integration.

After ten years of operation the NQF system was reviewed and a number of general and technical changes were made. These included increasing the number of levels and changing the number of bodies responsible for standards-setting and quality assurance.

Over its period of operation, many lessons have been learned in relation to ALE:

- The intellectual technology of level descriptors, unit standards, specific outcomes, assessment criteria and cross-field outcomes is complicated and often mystifying (contrary to the rational intentions of an NQF) and it takes an inordinate amount of training to equip an educator or trainer to understand what the unit standards require and how to apply them in the learning environment.
- The effort required to develop standards and courses and qualifications based upon them and to be registered as a provider is incredibly resource-intensive. Those resources go inevitably towards the mainstream and profitable sections of the education and training enterprise. NGOs providing adult education tend to be further marginalised in such a set-up.
- Many unit standards have exit levels that are over-ambitious and become formidable and unachievable obstacles to further learning.
- Integration and moving between academic and vocational qualifications and between formal education and the world of work remain difficult.
- Not all adult learners want accreditation. Many come to learn focussed skills, yet it is becoming increasingly difficult for providers to gain resources for anything other than so-called accredited programmes.
- The process of implementing the recognition of prior learning (RPL) is proving to be complicated and cumbersome and more work must be done to render it “operational” on any meaningful scale. Problems with regard to RPL relate to its inaccessibility (and the self-interested refusal of educational providers to engage with it).
- An NQF encourages the overwhelming dominance of a discourse of standards and certification that, quite literally, renders formal most education and training provision which can have dire consequences for genuine non-formal education and its providers.

Kenya

The government has decided that the growing complexity and diversity of learning opportunities, curricula and providers at various levels requires an overall coordination mechanism for well-articulated progression paths and quality assurance – in other words, a National Qualifications Framework. Other proposed reforms are for the harmonisation of legal provisions dealing with education, adult and continuing education (ACE) and non-formal education (NFE), the Children's Act and the Board of Adult Education Act. The Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) are to establish standard setting mechanisms for Literacy and Adult Upper Primary Education (AUPE).

The Board for Adult Education is itself proposing national policy to guide the curriculum, content delivery and certification in the ALE sub-sector because currently it lacks a centralised mechanism of verifying the quality and appropriateness of the materials developed and the quality of the teaching. While appreciating the need for ALE to remain innovative, flexible and free to respond quickly to the many needs of adult learners, a centralised accreditation system is necessary to help the standardisation and equivalency of qualifications offered by the multitude of agencies. This would provide synergies and linkages between formal and non-formal education systems and between academic and vocational/technical education sectors, creating possibilities for entry and re-entry at all levels between formal and non-formal sub-sectors.

Some adult education providers support the enactment of a National Qualifications Framework as they see it as enabling them to design and offer adult-friendly examinations and other assessment systems that would ensure equivalence with the national school examinations taken by adults in non-formal education.

Namibia

Although there is presently no standard-setting body for non-formal and literacy programmes it is envisaged that the National Council on Adult Learning, once established, would work closely with the Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA) which was set up following South Africa's example and which will register qualifications (at various levels according to defined descriptors for various occupations), standards and performance benchmarks, accredit education providers (persons, institutions and organisations) and courses, and evaluate competencies learned outside formal education through an RPL process. It will also evaluate whether any qualification (for example, foreign qualifications) meet national standards. Currently the system of accreditation for adult basic education is in the process of development, with equivalences between the school-based system and non-formal education being established.

Seychelles

The Seychelles Qualification Authority (SQA) was created in 2005 under the Seychelles Qualifications Authority Act as the para-statal body to formulate and administer a Seychelles Qualifications Framework (SQF), and to assure quality in education and training. The policy of the SQF is informed by a competency-based approach to education and training. The regulations for the Qualifications Framework were to have been finalised in the first quarter of 2008 and benchmarks for all education and training were due to have been developed by the end of 2008. Thereafter, all providers of education and training programme that may lead to the achievement of a unit standard or qualification) will be accredited and courses will be validated through the quality assurance process by a representative Validation Board.

The SQA is in the process of developing guidelines to promote access to ALE, especially as they relate to vocational areas where a dead-end-ceiling system currently exists. With the launch of the RPL policy in the future, non-formal learning will be considered for the purpose of certification through an RPL process.

Botswana

Botswana is developing an NQF. The intention is to put in place a system that ensures recognition of equivalency and that will give status and recognition to both formal and non-formal learning.

As the entire education system gears itself up for a National Qualifications Framework, non-formal education is in a phase of curriculum revision and the new adult basic education curriculum is being developed.

Lesotho

All technical colleges provide nationally-recognised vocational qualifications that have parity with South Africa's National Qualifications Framework. A Lesotho Qualifications Framework is in its final policy draft stage. All tertiary institutions are planning for bridging programmes that will facilitate entry to tertiary programmes through non-traditional routes.

Zambia

A Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) was established in 1998 to regulate all forms of technical education and vocational training. All training providers, regardless of ownership, are required by law to register with the Authority. The TEVETA is supposed to facilitate the drawing up of national curricula as well as provide guidelines for the development of local curricula.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance frameworks that, through assessment, monitoring and evaluation activities, enable the achievements (and failures) of adult and non-formal education and training to be examined and determined are of vital importance for a field that has to demonstrate its value more energetically than more mainstream and traditional ones. The data from the country reports is, however, rather meagre in displaying this component of ALE. Undoubtedly much work in assessing, monitoring and evaluating ALE is simply unrecorded.

The assessment of learning outcomes

The country reports say very little about adult education learner assessment methods and mechanisms (other than the fairly obvious that it is normally done by tests, assignments and examinations) and equally little about aligning assessment with standards or benchmarks.

Methods of assessment

Several countries see even the routine assessment of literacy learners and standardisation of the process as a major challenge. Various means are adopted. Generally what seems to be viewed as the best model is “continuous assessment” (itself guided by guidelines and regulations) in the classroom, backed up by annual proficiency examinations for the learners and by periodic reviews and impact studies by external evaluations of the programme.

Generally there is a lack of national standards, quality assurance mechanisms or national assessments of learning achievement and curriculum in non-formal education and literacy for youth and adults. Several countries, however, do have central bodies that assist in assessment. Kenya’s Department of Adult Education conducts literacy proficiency tests every year to determine the level of acquisition (between 2003 and 2006, a total of 56,132 adults sat the literacy proficiency tests and passed) and adults in non-formal education programmes take the same national examinations as schoolchildren. In Lesotho all literacy providers can have their participants assessed by the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. In Uganda annual proficiency examinations are prepared with the involvement of district-level supervisors of adult literacy programmes, and instructors participate in originating questions in all key learning areas. There are *Guidelines for Continuous Assessment of Functional Adult Literacy Learners* (2004). South Africa has state adult basic education examinations as well as state-recognised ones provided by two NGO assessment agencies. Gambia’s Adult and Non-formal Education Unit has developed a set of learner assessment tools at three levels and validated them for use by all providers, but cannot propagate their wider use because of a lack of resources.

Certification after assessment

Certification is a contentious issue in sub-Saharan Africa because of the number of countries whose non-formal education programmes are in an ambiguous relationship with the formal certificated assessment done in schools. Where certification is available it is normally provided by the relevant ministry. Other countries have no national certification as there are no standardisation mechanisms in place, though Gambia reports that some literacy providers award grades and certificates after some form of assessment after two or four years of functional literacy. In other countries certification can be obtained from both government ministries and NGOs (as in Malawi), though this raises challenges in ensuring that this is well-coordinated and controlled.

For the Seychelles all nationally-certified qualifications must accord with the regulations of the new National Qualifications Framework. They usually entail a common-sense understanding of the number of hours of formal instruction with assessment leading to credits. In general, the long courses offered in Seychelles lead to national or international certification. For the short courses that have an assessment component, a Certificate of Successful Completion is issued. A Certificate of Attendance is issued for short courses that do not entail formal assessments.

Monitoring adult learning and education

In the context of adult education monitoring means the process of checking on the smooth running of programmes and activities, at whatever level, to see that everything is happening as intended. In practice this means the systematic collection and analysis of information on programmes.

There is usually some state adult education monitoring mechanism and NGOs usually have a management structure of an executive committee or board, to whom they submit annual reports for monitoring purposes. They often have their own monitoring and evaluations systems and tools. External monitoring is often part of externally-funded projects. Often this is done by contracted consultants. Universities, who often play such a monitoring role in many countries of the world, do not seem to be much involved in Africa.

Countries who report functioning monitoring systems include Cameroon (with divisional officials carrying out permanent monthly supervision), Ghana (with monitoring units in every district), Kenya (with Provincial and District Adult Education Officers submitting reports to headquarters), Lesotho (the Distance Teaching Centre undertakes learner performance progress reports and feeds the results of monitoring into programme development), Mozambique (at all levels) and Swaziland (which has an Adult Education Inspectorate).

Weaknesses include financial constraints (Mozambique reports a shortage of funding for supervision and monitoring activities, especially for transport), poorly qualified personnel (Eritrea) and data gathered by providers lacking consistency and accuracy (Eritrea, South Africa). Several countries note that there is no systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place (for example, Eritrea) or benchmarks on participation. There is, however, a Division of Monitoring and Quality Assurance within Kenya's Department of Adult Education.

Zambia has an Education and Skills Sector Advisory Group (SAG) which is a consultative forum that advises and monitors the implementation of education sector programmes in the Fifth National Development Plan. It comprises stakeholders from government ministries, cooperating partners, the private sector and civil society.

Gambia's Adult and Non-Formal Education Unit (ANFEU) has, in addition to using a set of tools for Monitoring and Evaluation in its literacy projects, adopted a number of benchmarks related to the competences to be shown by participants after 350 to 400 and 720 contact hours of learning and the proportion of participants who should achieve them.

Programme evaluation

Evaluation is a complex and contextually responsive field. It can look at learner competence, attitudes and achievements, the programmes and providing institutions, community responses to initiatives and more broadly the impact of ALE on human well-being, on the economy and on policy, legislation and programmes. It may look in particular at the quality of governance and accountability and participatory mechanisms and identify good and bad practices. When it comes to the evaluation of programmes for which there are no objectively verifiable indicators it may require comparisons at international level (though comparative evaluation is in its infancy in ALE in Africa).

It is quite clear that a lot of evaluation work is being done in Africa. Some countries (for example, Namibia) state that evaluations have had an impact on policies and strategies and have influenced the revision and expansion of programmes. However, it is also clear that the wider benefits of evaluation are hampered by the lack of broad communication of evaluation results and publications. In this respect ministries, government departments and donor bodies do little to disseminate the fruits of often expensive evaluations.

Most country reports indicate that evaluations are being done, though nothing is said about the type or style of evaluations. Only a few reports itemise some of the major evaluations, their purposes and their findings. Malawi and Lesotho are models here, and Botswana's

National Literacy Programme is one of the most evaluated, reviewed and research-critiqued in Africa.

Uganda has a tradition of evaluations and impact studies of adult literacy and basic education programmes (including studies comparing different approaches). The evaluations look at the effectiveness, efficiency (including in relation to costs), organisation, management and financing, relevance and sustainability of the programme as well as at the causes of success or failure. The impact studies look at improvement on individual, household and wider community as a result of literacy learning. The findings of previous evaluations have been useful in informing the decisions of Government about the Functional Adult Literacy programme.

Professional development

The situation and status of practitioners

Numerous countries report on the shortage of well-trained adult education staff and some, for example, Eritrea and the Gambia, report on plans to improve capacity and professionalisation of the field (an ambition often subdued by the scarcity of funding).

For literacy, the situation is particularly difficult, and the acute shortage of qualified literacy teachers generally undermines effective promotion of literacy and adult education. Kenya offers an instructive example: the number of literacy teachers has continued to drop over the years, leading to the situation where the lowest administrative units have only a few literacy classes. In 1979 the Department of Adult Education employed 3,000 full-time teachers. This figure fell to 1,792 by 2006, a 40 per cent decline, though learner numbers had increased by 27 per cent.

Professionalisation of adult education training is complicated by various factors. In some countries, for example, Ethiopia, degrees or diplomas in adult education are not recognised in the civil service. Other countries, for example, Cameroon, see a distinction between well-qualified continuing education staff in tertiary training institutions, who are considered adult education professionals, and literacy facilitators, who are not. Kenya reports a low demand for high-level training that would guarantee professionalism in the field, partly caused by the lack of definition of what constitutes an adult education professional. Many practitioners do not see themselves as adult educators and do not seek the requisite training. This lack of demand does not encourage universities to start programmes. In many cases the situation prior to the 1990s was better with officers trained by government at diploma and degree level. Often practitioners with adult education qualifications (Certificate, Diploma, or Degree) have had difficulty gaining recognition for them in the public service or formal education system.

Not all countries provide data on the number and categories of adult educators and facilitators (and in some cases the data is statistically puzzling), but a generalisation can be made that adult education practitioners tend to be of four types:

- literacy facilitators who are poorly qualified and trained and may even be volunteers;
- schoolteachers, generally not trained as adult educators, who teach after hours in literacy and adult basic education/non-formal education;

- qualified educators and trainers teaching at secondary or tertiary level in education and training institutions; and
- field workers in various development programmes who may not even think of themselves as adult educators and who have had varying degrees of adult education-related training.

The literacy facilitators

Literacy facilitators are usually not considered to be professionals (for example, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana and Liberia). They usually work on a part-time temporary basis (there has been a general decline in the employment of full-time literacy teachers).

In Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi and Tanzania some literacy facilitators are paid nothing – they are volunteers. In Uganda they are offered some incentives, including cash, T-shirts, bicycles and reconditioned sewing machines in return for dedicated service. Pay may range from US\$4 a month (Malawi) to US\$ 140 (South Africa and Seychelles). There are usually no formal terms of employment. Literacy facilitators are generally not unionised or registered with any professional council or body.

The lowly conditions often push people to leave government programmes or move to better-rewarded private sector enterprises and foreign-funded NGOs.

Their training is generally in-service and very limited, ranging from a few days to two weeks or three weeks of orientation with the possibility of some short refresher workshops later (finances permitting). South Africa is unique in that most of the volunteer facilitators in its current literacy campaign (who receive a stipend) have had a least one year of distance education training (though at their own expense) and the usual short orientation.

The schoolteacher adult educators

These tend to teach in basic education/non-formal education programmes or are supervisors of (lower level) facilitators in literacy programmes. Their remuneration ranges from US\$62 (Mozambique) to US\$180 per month (for some in Gambia) to US\$270 (for supervisors in South Africa's literacy campaign). In some countries they are paid hourly rates (US\$ 17 per hour in Seychelles).

Kenya reports 5,273 part-time adult education teachers in the country, of whom 1,650 are full-time teachers, 3,415 are part-time teachers and 208 offer their services for free, the so-called self-help teachers. Full-time teachers stabilise the programme. But in the interests of economy Kenya has, for many years, never refilled posts that have been left vacant through retirement, resignation or retrenchment. This clearly has a negative effect on the mobilisation of more learners. In South Africa only a small proportion of ABET educators enjoy full-time employment and most are employed on (renewable) one-year employment contracts without the job security or benefits that are enjoyed by other educators. In Tanzania educators in the

Complementary Basic Education and Alternative Learning programmes are either primary schoolteachers, retired primary school teachers or para-professional facilitators.

Most supervisors and coordinators in literacy programmes are trained teachers who have regular jobs. They may receive some additional training in adult education, For example, in Gambia they are given two weeks training on monitoring and evaluation of literacy classes and programmes.

Qualified educators and trainers at secondary or tertiary level

Adult educators at the secondary or tertiary level may be existing formal institution educators or trainers (with the normal requisite subject, technical or teaching qualifications) teaching part-time or are employed on a full-time contract basis.

Development field workers

These receive various forms and levels of training, some of which include fostering good adult education practice.

Support for practitioner development

The International Office of the German Adult Education Association (dvv international) has, since 1982, funded scholarships in 12 institutions in 11 different countries of Anglophone Africa to give more than 3,000 front-line adult education practitioners access to certificated training at higher education institutions, primarily at Certificate and Diploma level. The programme is supplemented by support to the institutions involved, for example, through the provision of books and the DVV journal *Adult Education and Development*. In the mid-1990s a comprehensive evaluation was undertaken of the scholarship programme and new areas of emphasis were identified, such as support to the production of teaching materials as seen in the textbook series *African Perspectives on Adult Learning*, published in association with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

The issue of professionalisation

Many of the country reports argue that professionalism is the only sure way that the adult and continuing education can claim its rightful place as a respectable sector in the education field. Yet only some countries consider adult educators (or at least some of them) as professionals. Some countries do not even have a category of trained adult educators (for example,

Seychelles). Other countries only accept highly-qualified adult educators as professionals (for example, Gambia). A few consider all as professionals (for example, South Africa, Tanzania) though this may not be so in practice.

One constraint on professionalisation is the lack of training (and training facilities) for adult educators. Gambia, for instance, has no institutions providing adult educator qualifications and at the implementation level facilitators do not receive the required training for professionalism. In Seychelles there is no higher education institution offering qualifications in adult education, which is not viewed as a specific profession. Kenya reports that the training of adult education personnel at all levels is limited and inadequate. The Department of Adult Education and many other adult education providers do not have the capacity to offer their teachers and officers the level of professionalism that they need.

Even where there are institutions, such as universities, whose mandate is to train adult education professionals, a second constraint to be overcome is the need for funds to contract these services.

Another constraint is that people with adult education qualifications may not have equal status to other educators such as schoolteachers and be eligible for full-time employment. Governments still tend to employ schoolteachers and social science graduates in adult education posts rather than adult education professionals.

A fourth constraint is that many adult education training efforts are uncoordinated and there is no unified curriculum (as in Kenya where the current location of the Functional Adult Literacy Programme within the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development deprives it of the benefit of educational professional specialisation).

Associations of adult educators, though they exist in some countries, do not seem to be strong enough to exert serious influence on professionalisation (or on unionisation for that matter). South Africa's Adult Educators and Trainers Association (AETASA) collapsed in 2001 after a period of poor management and a failure to recruit fee-paying members.

The number and qualifications of practitioners

From the data presented it is hard to determine whether the number of adult educators is growing. The most reported data is on adult literacy and basic education. Although seems to be a growth, it is largely of under-qualified part-time and temporary personnel (sometimes at the expense of the full-time and better-qualified).

In Eritrea the number has risen from 138 in 1993/4 to 2,500 in 2005/6. Gambia saw a growth in the number of state and NGO/CBO facilitators (from 59 in 1999 to 656 in 2008, of whom about 53% are women), but the facilitator:learner ratio worsened dramatically over the same period from 1:34 to 1: 53. In Seychelles' Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre the number of part-time staff teaching adult literacy, school equivalency courses and short and upgrading courses rose from 82 in 1999 to 161 in 2008.

Numbers in relation to other educators

A useful measure of a country's seriousness about adult education provision, particularly where a substantial portion of the adult population is poorly educated, is the ratio of adult educators to formal schoolteachers. Unfortunately very few countries provide the data to make the comparison between the number of adult educators in literacy, basic education and non-formal education programmes that are providing the equivalence of schooling, on the one hand, and the number of formal schoolteachers on the other. Cameroon estimated 3 per cent, Gambia 7 per cent, Eritrea 14 per cent, Lesotho 4 per cent, South Africa 3 per cent, Tanzania 20 per cent and Zimbabwe about 10 per cent.

Qualification requirements

As indicated earlier, literacy and basic education/non-formal education teachers tend to be relatively poorly-qualified, whereas adult educators in tertiary institutions have better qualifications and are better paid and sometimes regarded as professionals. However, there is great variation among countries. In vocational, technical and public service training often what is required is technical work expertise. The Seychelles reports that in the ministries, 70 per cent of the trainers have no training in pedagogy and the 30 per cent who have had training lack refresher and further training.

Literacy facilitators are usually expected to have a minimum schooling level which ranges from 6th and 7th grade (Lesotho, Mozambique), through many at 8th to 10th grade (Malawi, Gambia, Swaziland, Mauritius, Niger) to 12th grade (South Africa, Tanzania). Sometimes there is also some requirement for community endorsement and/or field experience and there is often some pre- and in-service training. Examples are Gambia which has all three, Malawi (community endorsement and induction course), Mauritius (60- to 90-hour course), Mozambique (a 30- to 45-day training course), Niger (training at the Centre for the Training of Literacy Cadres at Niamey), Tanzania (initial and in-service training) and Uganda (on-the-job and in-service training). In Seychelles literacy instructors are qualified teachers. Youth-related programmes usually require high levels of secondary schooling (as in Eritrea).

Literacy and basic education supervisors and coordinators usually have a school teaching certificate or diploma (Eritrea, Mozambique (plus a 3 to 45 day adult education training course or, for non schoolteachers, training at the National Institute of Adult Education).

Secondary and tertiary level educators usually need a teaching diploma and in some cases a degree. In technical and vocational training specialised training certification may be required. People teaching on tertiary level adult education training programmes usually require degrees (sometimes to Masters or Doctorate level) and sometimes also work experience.

Training institutions

Capacity for ALE provision is closely tied to the countries' ability to train qualified personnel who can carry out all the activities related to conceptualising training programmes, implementing them and evaluating all aspects of policies and programmes. Anglophone African countries seem to have understood this connection and they have developed some capacity for training adult educators. This capacity is very limited in Francophone African countries. Thus, though there has been some degree of institutionalisation of adult education within higher education (however marginal its proponents consider themselves to be within academia) its current positioning there is unstable and relatively weak. There is clearly also a weakness in the lack of collaboration across language, regional and national barriers. A closer synergy between Anglophone and Francophone adult education institutions is needed.

Anglophone countries

There is a fair degree of commonality in the qualifications and academic structures in Anglophone regions (with the virtue of stability but possibly also of stagnation). Anglophone universities run adult educator training within formal academic departments and centres of adult education (some of which had their origin in Extra Mural Studies centres and retained some elements of non-formal education delivery). Historically many of these departments have trained fairly large numbers of state employees such as extension workers. They tend to be stable organisationally and in curriculum (though some structural changes may result from the current higher education enthusiasm for consolidating smaller departments into larger schools of cognate disciplines). They have traditional hierarchies of Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers, most of them permanent and full-time. There is limited staff development – mainly through the gaining of further qualifications and attending conferences and seminars, going on overseas study tours, and so on.

The range of qualifications on offer is also highly standardised: undergraduate Certificate; undergraduate Diploma; Bachelors degree (usually with adult education as a component only); Postgraduate Certificate; Masters; PhD. An 11-institution IIZ/DVV survey in nine countries (Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia) in 2004/2005 (Aitchison, 2006) recorded some 3,587 students enrolled in the 2004 or 2005 academic year with 644 Certificate, 1,334 Diploma, 1,191 Bachelors, 37 Postgraduate Certificate, 287 Masters and 94 PhD. There is a notable shift towards higher qualifications in adult education, particularly in some of the older departments. However, the continued popularity of Certificate-level programmes which often have elements of bridging the gap between inadequate high school qualifications and higher education suggests that many educational systems have not reached adequate levels.

Equally standardised are the curriculum contents of most programmes. They reflect a typical and traditional set of Anglophone adult education components: adult education foundations, adult learning, curriculum and teaching methods, educational administration, with some more variable courses on professional practice, counselling, research training and studies of development and globalisation. Little curriculum revision seems to be taking place.

The relative merit of taught theory, practice, and research varies among programmes and institutions. The expectation that taught theory would diminish and research increase the higher the student goes up the qualification ladder is not well supported in several of the institutions which continue to teach theory at the higher levels. Most curricula are semesterised. Delivery may be full-time, part-time or distance or a mix of these. There are some oddities where students studying full- or part-time seem to be able to gain the qualifications in the same time period. Generally the formal success rate is high.

Several institutions have specialised departmental libraries, though some are small, in addition to general library holdings. Most institutions have very limited adult education journal holdings.

Continuing education is offered in the form of both short non-credit workshop/seminars (by six institutions) and longer formal qualifications (by four institutions). Interestingly, the target group for these latter often include people not usually considered to be adult educators, for example, schoolteachers.

Students tend to be local nationals with a few foreigners in postgraduate studies. Overall there seem to be more women than men. Most students are already employed in jobs with some adult education connection – training, extension, development, administration and management, and in the NGO and CBO field – and they tend to stay in those jobs. Most are in government employment, including the growing number of schoolteachers studying adult education at universities. Where students are not already in employment, they often find it difficult to get jobs, an indication that the professional adult educator job market may be saturated in some places.

Research and research publications are not a strong feature of these academic departments. What research had been published is largely in the fields of literacy and adult basic education, community development, gender, learning and teaching and open learning. There is relatively little engagement in seminars and conferences. A number of institutions have various forms of collaboration with national, regional and international bodies and networks.

The University of Botswana's Department of Adult Education offers a number of qualifications to a growing number of students and trains a large number of extension workers from Southern and Eastern Africa. It has also played an active role in developing the *African Perspectives on Adult Learning* textbook series. The Botswana Training Authority accredits trainers and assessors.

In Ethiopia Addis Ababa University now offers a Masters programme in Adult and Lifelong Learning and a number of Colleges of Education are beginning to offer programmes at diploma level.

In Ghana the Institutes of Adult Education and Local Government Studies offer regular training towards certification of literacy and community development issues.

In Kenya the University of Nairobi offers programmes at certificate, diploma and postgraduate levels but these are poorly subscribed, especially at the higher level. A new

proposed Bachelors degree in Adult and Community Development may change this. The Kenya National Examinations Council, in conjunction with the Kenya Institute of Education, offers a Certificate in adult education for teachers.

In Lesotho adult education is considered as a specific profession, with the National University of Lesotho offering qualifications from Diploma to Masters (via distance education through the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), with plans to introduce a PhD programme. Graduates from these courses are recruited across many government services and NGOs. Most receive increased remuneration at work in recognition of this qualification. Continuing education is provided via the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC). Some of these courses are free for volunteer adult education facilitators.

The University of Namibia offers a two-year Diploma in adult education and community development and Bachelor and Masters programmes. Adult Education is considered by the University of Namibia as a specialised profession. For the Bachelor degree, two specialisation fields have been created after the revision of the curriculum: Community Development (which contains considerable content on literacy and adult basic education) and Human Resource Development (with a stress upon training). The Namibia College of Open Learning provides a Certificate for Development, a Higher Diploma in Adult Basic Education and Training and a Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work.

Nigeria has a variety of training institutions with many of the better education adult educators having Certificates, Diplomas or degrees in adult education. Nigeria has over 80 public and private universities and some of these have adult education-related departments which train practitioners. Universities and Polytechnics offering courses in adult and non-formal education include University of Ibadan; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; University of Lagos; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; University of Benin; University of Maiduguri; Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto; Bayero University, Kano; University of Calabar; University of Port Harcourt; the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN); University of Jos; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port-Harcourt; Niger Delta University, and Amasoma and Kaduna Polytechnics.

South Africa has 41 'adult learning' qualifications registered on its National Qualifications Framework, although 16 of these are not really aimed at educators of adults. Some 28 are higher education qualifications, 10 at Certificate level and 15 at postgraduate level. In the mid-1990s South Africa had at least 15 universities with departments or centres running training programmes. These have now shrunk to four departments or centres with some remnants left in formal schools of education in some of the others. This decline has resulted from a mix of negative forces: growing managerialism with cost-effectiveness formulae totally unsuitable for adult education, an over-emphasis on traditional formal teaching and publish-or-perish research, the capping of student numbers by the government that makes universities concentrate on traditional disciplines and students, and rampant university restructuring based on long-outdated business practices that damage energy, identity and focus. Three university centres of note are the Institute for Adult Basic Education and Training of the distance education University of South Africa, the Centre for Adult Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education of the University of the Western Cape. South Africa also has a large, but very problematic, trade

in Skills Development Facilitation and Assessor training courses aimed at industry and the public service. The latter has an institution that manages the training of the whole public service: the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA).

Tanzanian higher learning institutions which provide programmes include the University of Dar es Salaam, Open University of Tanzania, Mkwawa University College of Education and Dar es Salaam University College of Education, all of which offer degrees in Adult Education. The Institute of Adult Education, through its Department of Training and Library Services, conducts Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma programmes in Adult Education and Community Development. Most of the trainees go back to the local community to undertake planning, implementation and management of functional adult literacy, post-literacy programmes and other community-based development activities.

In Uganda the programmes leading to certificates, diplomas and degrees are provided by the Universities of Makerere and Kambogo, the Nsamizi Institute of Social Development, and also some from the National Adult Education Association. Makerere University established an extra-mural studies department in 1953. Now called the Centre for Continuing Education, it offers Certificates in adult studies as well as Diplomas (since 1988) and degrees (since 1996) in adult and community education. The Nsamizi Institute of Social Development trains multi-purpose middle- and lower-level community development agents and offers one-year Certificate and two-year Diplomas. These trainees are in charge of the Functional Adult Literacy programme. An NGO, Literacy and Basic Education (LBE), trains literacy workers, literacy trainers and civic educators. The National Adult Education Association runs a certificate course in adult education. The country report recommends the use of e-learning as a way training adult educators.

The University of Zambia and the Zambia Open University offer adult education as well as non-credit professional development courses. State employees are able to take study leave and community development officers and those taking adult education degree programmes have paid study leave. A Ministry of Education proposal has been made to Cabinet that at each level (from district upwards) there should be an officer in charge of adult literacy.

In Zimbabwe adult education is considered a profession and a degree programme is offered at University of Zimbabwe and a diploma programme at Masvingo State University.

Francophone and Lusophone countries

In Francophone Africa, the lack of qualified personnel and the lack of research and training infrastructures for adult education must be viewed as a serious problem. It is very difficult to promote adult education without the significant contribution of universities for the training of personnel and adequate research in the field.

In Francophone West Africa there are three main categories of higher education institutions that relate to adult education research and practitioner development. These are universities providing generic adult education studies, those providing more localised training of literacy

operatives, and independent institutes serving to train NGO-based development agents and citizenship education staff. The three types of institutional structures and delivery types conform also to a historical typology of adult education institutions in the Francophone countries. The first historical phase was related to post-independence literacy campaigns and had a somewhat narrow focus on literacy. The second phase sees a more general and holistic approach to adult education, and to its academic study and evaluation. The third phase is responsive to research and to the strengthening of pluralistic democracy and the need for capacity-building service in the interests of economic development. These last two phases overlap to some extent.

Programmes related to the training of literacy operatives have a strong academic stress and concern with linguistic analysis tools for training in reading and writing in local languages. With the more generic adult education qualifications the stress is on a developing interest in research and on the theoretically-informed and highly-skilled practitioner who can critically analyse educational environments. With capacity-building for economic development, the curricula encourage the development of participatory methods, specific technical development-related skills and political awareness to engage in citizenship education for pluralistic democracy.

Programmes run by non-governmental organisations include those that provide literacy practitioners and non-formal educators with various types of initial and further training to tackle development issues at local level. Admission criteria for the non-governmental programmes are much lower than for the academic institutions, where there are strong moves to raise the entrance levels even higher.

These various forms of provision have different strengths and weaknesses. The advantages of long-term higher education training are that it seeks *inter alia* to develop the ability of adult educators to analyse complex educational environments and to provide adequate responses to unsuspected key training needs and the needs for more effective and creative training practices. But it is also high cost, has limited resources and capacity, and may focus too much on theory rather than practice. It may also have inadequate access to research publications, library and ICT facilities. The advantages of short-term and more non-formal provision by NGOs are its closeness to the ground, its potential to serve large numbers and its use of practitioner experience. The disadvantages flow from the short duration of most provision, its possible lack of depth and inability to consolidate skills.

Funding for the training of adult educators varies according to the type of provider. That provided by universities and specialised academic institutions comes from the government budget supplemented by some external grants. Students have access to government and bilateral partner scholarships. Independent training institutes gain resources from private and government sources. NGOs gain funds from government grants, donors and service fees.

Instructional materials are generally inadequate and, as there is little distance education provision, there is very limited course material available.

Research and publication output is rather poor and there are no research institutes dedicated to adult education and adult educator training. However, the University of Ouagadougou is

building up its research institute for adult education and has been attracting training researchers, trainers and beneficiaries alike over the last few years. It has the potential to be a centre of excellence in West Africa.

Continuing professional development is done through research and further qualifications. NGOs have less highly-qualified personnel but use agents who have wide field experience.

Benin's Département of the Sciences of Language and Communication (DSLCC) offers training modules in literacy and development and the teaching of African languages.

The University of Burkina Faso has a Bachelor and Master Programme in adult education, developed with the assistance of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV) and the University of Ouagadougou which has the well-known centre Développement et Education des Adultes (DEDA).

In Cameroon the National Institute for Youths and Sports (INJS) and the Higher Institute for the Management of Public Administration (ISMP) run courses.

For over 30 years Niger has hosted the sub-regional initiative to establish the Centre for the Training of Literacy Cadres (CFCA) at Niamey for professional training of mid-management-level literacy practitioners. The centre accepts students who have completed lower level secondary school and it is a sub-regional training centre.

In Seychelles short training programmes for organisations are run by training institutions the Adult Literacy and Distance Education Centre (ALDEC), the Seychelles Institute of Management (SIM) and post-secondary institutions. The cost for training is usually borne by the organisation or the individual.

The general situation in Francophone countries is clearly far behind that of the Anglophone ones, with their many universities offering programmes. This indicates the need for Francophone countries to create more capacity at the higher education level for the training of adult education specialists.

Of the Lusophone countries, Mozambique has a National Institute of Adult Education (INEA), which trains professional educators/trainers. Provincial training centres (such as Matola in Maputo Province, Mutauanha in Nampula Province and Quelimane in Zambézia Province) run courses for volunteer teachers. Studies can also be undertaken at higher level through the Department of Adult Education of the Eduardo Mondlane University.

Prospects for practitioner development

Apart from the obvious constraints of inadequate funding and poor salaries, Sub-Saharan Africa's shortage of well-trained adult education staff at all levels is a situation exacerbated by the fact that most adult educators are not considered professionals. Their relatively low status is reflected in the part-time or temporary basis on which adult education staff are often

employed. In many countries adult education teachers are able to devote time to adult or non-formal education programmes only after they have completed their daytime jobs as teachers in the formal education system. In some countries there has been a decline in the numbers of full-time adult education staff, in others an increase.

Many people involved in adult education and learning activities may not be recognised, or even recognise themselves, as adult educators, given the range of training and development activities that are really forms of adult education. This situation further complicates the issue of professionalising the field.

Although most country reports speak of plans to improve capacity and professionalisation of the field, the ability to transform these from fine words to fine deeds is subject to political will as well as to financial stringencies.

Research

Most countries report, or indicate by silence, that adult learning and education is a seriously under-researched field. The Seychelles reports the lack of a culture of research as a major weakness in the provision of ALE and this observation can be generalised to the continent. The research that is done tends to be dominated by immediate programme surveys and evaluations. The lack of substantive support for adult education research centres in higher education also compromises research and it is noted that in several countries there has been a steady attrition of such capacity over the last ten years.

The data desert

The lack of research capacity is exacerbated by the reality that often the statistical data and other information obtained from the field is still unreliable, confused and self-contradictory but, more often, simply absent (the latter particularly the case from the private sector and NGOs). There is also a lack of clear conceptualisation of what data is needed (though some reports are models in this respect, particularly in the cases of Seychelles and Namibia). Few strategy plans seem to have accurate baseline data.

Though many countries have implemented an Educational Management Information System (EMIS), or see the urgent need for one, it does not necessarily follow that this will lead immediately to increased reliability in adult education data. Even a state-of-the-art EMIS is useless unless it receives reliable data. The problem remains of ensuring that providers and officials are trained and monitored in the efficient collection, timely submission, processing and analysis of data at all levels.

The literature that could contribute to research studies is very hard to find, scattered in a wide variety of physical and internet hiding places and of a very restricted or partial nature. In particular, comparative studies of adult learning and education really require a full range of documents relating to

- adult education policy (Government White Papers, policy-related legislation, policy implementation plans);
- strategy and implementation (plans, regulations, manuals, budgets);
- curriculum (syllabi, curriculum statements, curriculum outlines, standards, outcome statements);
- descriptions of content and instructional materials;
- monitoring and evaluation (enrolment and achievement statistics, impact studies, evaluations); and
- advocacy or fundraising materials.

Yet very little of this is easily (or even with difficulty) obtained. What can be located on the internet is usually restricted to evaluation and impact studies commissioned by international agencies and NGOs (UNESCO, World Bank, ActionAid, and others), some academic papers, and public relations, news, advocacy and fund raising material (NGOs, Government ministries).

Although many African states have useful Ministry of Education websites, replete with policy documents, ones relating to literacy or adult education are often not listed. What is more, the internet resources are all widely scattered over a myriad of sites. Not one country appears to have anything approaching a consolidation of digitised adult education resources accessible through one or even a few portals and a minute fraction of adult education information on Africa is available on Africa-based websites.

What this means is that any serious attempt to get accurate data on adult learning and education in sub-Saharan Africa will require increased effort and in many cases independently-funded monitoring and research.

Recent African research studies: questions, findings and impact

Generally very little is reported, confirming that ALE is an under-researched area and that research is not prioritised. Even when research is done, very little of it is formally published. Few countries could list more than a few research studies on ALE. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, names only 14 studies done in the last five years. Although a number of countries indicate important research needs, only one or two list research currently being planned. Several countries see a need for more basic research on adult education and institutional bases where such research can be supported.

Research questions and findings

The limited evidence provided by country reports on research output reveals that the questions being examined tend to be largely orientated towards the description and evaluation of ALE programmes and projects and hence both research questions and findings tend to be practical. There are relatively few policy studies and hardly any work on adult learning. The research studies reported tend to concentrate on literacy and non-formal education (and within this sub-field on evaluations, field surveys and some policy studies). Other areas – continuing education, vocational training, adult learning, women and adult education – gain very little attention. Two categories within which growth is evident are family literacy and open and distance learning.

Two surveys of note stand out: the *Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey Report* (2007), which is a model description of this important attempt to accurately gauge the status of literacy in that country, and the South African 12-volume *University of Natal survey of adult basic education and training* (2000) which provides a detailed national and provincial description and analysis of that country's new adult basic education and training system.

Comparative studies are few but the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) has ensured that some comparative studies on literacy and non-formal education are available. A recent comparative study of the literacy situation in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, *Adult Literacy: putting Southern African policy and practice into perspective* is also of note, particularly with regard to its recommendations.

Research findings and recommendations arising from them are only useful if serious effort is made to disseminate the information to all relevant parties. Though some countries say what has been done to forward findings to policy-makers and governance and funding decision-makers, generally there seem to be no or very weak mechanisms for the reporting of research, and very little is published.

Impact on policy and practice

Assessing the impact of research is invariably difficult and few country reports make any effort to do so. The evidence that does come from the reports is limited and suggests, at best, very modest impact. Impact is undoubtedly hampered by the obvious failure to widely publish and disseminate research because of the weak capacity and resourcing of the ALE research community in Africa.

Another problem is that research and evaluation findings are often bad news: inadequate policy provisions, inadequate funding, poor implementation, poorly specified goals, unplanned schemes of work, lack of materials, lack of learner motivation, out-of-date literacy primers, the need for regular training and capacity-building for personnel, inappropriate timing of lessons, poverty and lack of interest. The one positive message is that literacy awareness leads to prevention of HIV/AIDS. Understandably politicians and bureaucrats are often hostile to the research and the researchers pointing to their failures.

One obvious exception to these generalisations is the 2006 Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey which has had tremendous effects on ALE policy and practice in Kenya. It has influenced the initiation, development and implementation of Department of Adult Education programmes in the country. A literacy centre has been established in every administrative location to ensure increased access and enhanced visibility.

Research capacity and institutionalisation

Building (or rebuilding) research capacity and networks within Africa is a vital need in a seriously under-researched field. Various urgent research tasks have been identified in several country reports, particularly surveys, participation and impact studies, national multi-sectoral database construction, and general research coordination.

Generally the country reports are remarkably silent on the role of universities in the provision of adult education, the development of its personnel, and in the output and impact of their research, which bodes ill for the whole field. It is of great concern that many higher education-based adult education centres and units in Africa seem to be weaker than they were in 1997 (though Burkina Faso and Uganda are examples of the opposite).

Expectations of CONFINTEA VI

The country reports express many and varied expectations of CONFINTEA VI, which can be placed into three broad categories:

- The form of, and follow-up after, the conference itself;
- Issues and needs expressed by several countries;
- The hope that, somehow, CONFINTEA VI, will impact positively on specific developments in the home countries.

1. Expectations of the Conference itself

Conference format: oriented for commitment and action

Most countries which submitted reports hope that the format and immediate follow-up from CONFINTEA VI would be action- and output-oriented. The conference delegations should be inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral. The conference design should relate to country expectations. A comprehensive report on the global status of ALE and its achievements and failures since 1997 should be available.

At the conference, the participating governments should make a strong commitment to revitalise ALE. Countries expect the adoption of a declaration or agenda for action which will mandate Member State governments to include adult education as a component of all development projects and programmes. They also propose the elaboration of a practical and very specific action agenda which includes attainable goals which can be transformed into concrete policies, strategies and increased financial allocations by governments. There should be sharp time frames for action.

To encourage speedy action the full CONFINTEA VI report should be published within 12 months and there should be annual progress reports from all countries. It is also suggested that the next CONFINTEA should be held in four years' time, not ten, in order to effectively monitor the progress made by the countries.

Conference partnerships: an environment for agreements and commitment

In order to make ALE one of the main goals of Education for All, some countries suggest the creation at CONFINTEA VI of an advocacy group for ALE composed of governments, bilateral and multilateral organisations and the private sector in order to mobilise funds for ALE. There should be advocacy and mobilisation of technical and financial partners to increase funding for adult education in order to increase access to and quality of adult education

The advocacy group should meet every two years in order to assess the progress made by the countries, raise political awareness and funds for ALE.

At both national and regional levels focal points should be set up for the organisation of sub-regional meetings for sharing experiences.

2. General expectations

Profile: raise the priority of adult education

The profile of adult education needs to be raised. Adult learning and education need to receive greater priority. Strategies should be developed to enhance the central role of ALE in development, rural development, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and generally in national life and to cement linkages with global agendas such as the Dakar Education for All framework of action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Policy: every country should have a national adult education policy

Several countries report that a strong political will from the governments can be demonstrated by first drafting countries' national adult education policies. These policies should view ALE as a shared multi-sectoral responsibility. ALE policies should make specific reference to programmes promoting women, youth and adults living in difficult conditions such as refugees and migrants. ALE cannot be effectively promoted without the development of effective means of communication, and the creation of a literate environment. Countries should also promote the use of African languages in programmes, particularly in literacy.

In relation to governance and institutions, countries should consider literacy and adult education as an autonomous sector and not an appendage to another (such as formal schooling). This autonomy is a means to achieve flexibility in defining and implementing literacy and adult education programmes.

In order to help governments achieve their goals, benchmarks should be developed along with strategies for mobilising funds for ALE.

Concepts: clarify and change the use of ALE concepts

Much of the terminology used of ALE is confusing and misleading. The terminology needs to be clarified and standardised, particularly when it is going to be used inter-sectorally and in regional collaboration. The concept of non-formal education is particularly problematic at present and makes it difficult to deal with issues of access to formal education and professionalisation.

Conceptual changes are also envisaged by many countries in order to promote ALE more effectively. Some countries propose that CONFINTEA VI adopts a more *holistic and socially purposeful view of ALE* instead of the more economic approach often promoted. ALE should not be misunderstood as, or restricted to, literacy or basic education and training only but be seen as a critical *part of the development of lifelong learning* which integrates or links formal, non-formal and informal education. *ALE is inclusive*. Therefore, it responds to the learning needs of all individuals not just vulnerable groups. It is also a link between children and adults' learning.

The meaning of environmental sustainability in relation to ALE needs to be given substance.

Agents: recognise the actors in partnerships between government and civil society

The partnership between government and civil society is central to raising awareness and mobilising resources for ALE. Therefore, it is important to recognise NGOs and CBOs as key policy and provision partners. It is also a necessity to revitalise the contribution of tertiary education institutions to ALE (especially in the context of a huge need for the training, re-training and professional development of ALE personnel).

Governance, management and coordination: build and maintain the appropriate structures

Given that governments are increasingly promoting policies that decentralise the management, administration and funding of education, it is important to address the slow pace of such decentralisation in ALE provision in Africa because of the weakness of its

central, regional and local structures (particularly in the management of so-called non-formal education). There should be a commitment to strengthen the structures that manage and coordinate adult and non-formal education at all levels through capacity building and professional development in both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Funding: long-term to build and sustain capacity

More funds are needed for ALE, which has not been high on the priority lists of most governments. It is expected therefore that during CONFINTEA VI governments and partners will make a strong commitment to ALE by allocating it between 3 per cent and 10 per cent of the education budgets in a sustainable manner. Donors should commit themselves to long-term, consistent funding to build and maintain capacity.

Country reports had expectations in particular for increased funding for the following:

- Access (especially for learners moving from so-called non-formal education to formal education)
- Development and piloting of quality adult education and training
- Materials development and production and integration of ICT into adult education programmes
- Capacity-building for both public and private sector adult educators
- Building or rebuilding higher education institution capacity to work in ALE
- Research (especially on innovations in adult education and training) and effective dissemination and sharing of research findings
- Networking and exchange programmes.

Curriculum: share experience and expertise

Countries are expected to learn from each other by sharing experience and expertise on the development of materials and other resources for adult literacy and out-of-school children.

Generally, adult education curricula need to be reviewed for relevance and to include international and national concerns and the encouragement of lifelong learning.

Literacy: promote and develop in national languages and build supportive environments

Illiteracy remains a massive problem in sub-Saharan Africa and ties up much of adult education capacity. Literacy needs to be profiled as crucial for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Literacy should be promoted in local languages and literate environments encouraged by mobilising linguistic communities and creating effective publishing policies.

The effectiveness of the Literacy for Empowerment (LIFE) initiative needs to be evaluated and reported.

Materials: share materials and experiences

CONFINTEA VI should lead to the greater sharing of materials and countries' experiences with developing and using them.

Provision and participation: set targets and develop strategies

Governments and civil society should develop concrete strategies to improve participation among diverse groups of adult learners and set realistic targets and benchmarks related to resources, enrolments and achievements.

Benchmarks: formulate flexibly and contextually

Benchmarks should be formulated in a way that is flexible and achievable by the countries, taking into account political and resource contexts.

Personnel: professionalise and develop

Adult educators should be seen and treated as value-orientated professionals and supported in their professional development by appropriate pre- and in-service training and continuing education. More programmes for the training of trainers are needed. Regional and sub-regional adult education training centres should be revitalised. All adult educators should be adequately remunerated.

Encouragement should be given to the use of open and distance learning and ICT in training and supporting educators and materials developers.

Research and evaluation: build and revitalise capacity

There is a need for more research, surveys, monitoring and evaluation, impact studies and effective sharing, dissemination and use of existing research. Universities must be re-engaged as vital research partners in ALE.

Data and information: collect, analyse, disseminate and use

Information is needed to improve ALE in all its forms. Data on good practice is needed. A comprehensive, systematic database on ALE provision and practice in Africa is needed.

Cooperation and networking: more needed

More networking and exchanges are required to give substance to South-South, South-North and intra- Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone cooperation in policy and other areas of ALE.

Not only should networks of state, regional and international bodies and interested parties be set up or revitalised, there should be capacity-building and professional development in communication and networking.

3. The home country impact expectations

Many countries had lists of expectations about positive changes that they hoped would occur as a result of the impact of CONFINTEA VI. As these are of a very country-specific nature they are not itemised here.

Conclusion

From the reports of the countries that responded to UNESCO's survey with regard to the state of adult education and implementation of the recommendations made during CONFINTEA V it is clear that very few countries have enacted laws and implemented policies which promote adult education in a significant way. Though adult education is integrated in broad education and development policies in almost all the countries, very limited financial resources are allocated for the implementation of adult education programmes. Indeed, the majority of the national reports state that less than 3 per cent of the budget of the national education budget is allocated to adult education.

Though the national reports indicate that a multi-sectoral approach to literacy and adult education is advocated, in practice only a very small number of countries have set up multi-sectoral, stakeholder representative Councils or Boards that share in the governance of ALE (though several policy documents or draft policy documents advocate them and many reports see them as extremely desirable). In the majority of the countries, the ministries of education are the main institutions which are in charge of ALE policies and programmes. The other ministries involved in ALE are the ministries of agriculture, health, youth and sport, women and social development. These ministries have training programmes even though graduates of their respective training programmes are viewed more as specialists of their respective fields than adult educators.

The national reports indicate that there is limited effective coordination of efforts among the different stakeholders (among governmental agencies, as well as between state agencies and civil society) involved in the provision of ALE even though a multi-sectoral approach is advocated. This situation has had a very negative impact on the promotion of ALE and the quality of the existing programmes.

Many countries report on the decentralisation of education or adult education systems. However, it is unclear whether this relates to real decentralisation of decision-making or simply the normal extension of a line-management system down to regions and districts and local centres. Where ALE provision activities are genuinely decentralised and expected to be funded from the lowest, local, level of government, resources seemed to be provided erratically. Indeed, coordination and liaison from central to local in decentralised systems can be extremely problematic. For example, the *faire-faire* strategy adopted by several countries to involve NGOs and private providers has not been the unmitigated success hoped for. Although some of the national reports mention the decentralisation of ALE programmes, none of them present clearly the programmes actually carried out by NGOs. The reports include only an assessment of the programmes carried out by the government agencies. This indicates that the role of civil society is not yet well integrated into governments' policies.

Target groups

The people targeted are predictable – women, adults aged 15 to 45, out-of-school youth, people in rural areas and in particularly disadvantaged areas, and personnel in the public service and businesses requiring continuing education, as well as disabled people, prisoners, refugees, migrants, nomads and former soldiers.

Unlike in Anglophone countries, adult education in the majority of the French-speaking countries is viewed more as adult literacy. Therefore most of these governments' programmes focus more on literacy provision. This trend is changing due to the involvement of civil society in the provision of non-formal education, and more responsive programmes have been implemented in African countries.

The focus of ALE programmes in Africa includes generic adult education (often particularly aimed at women), literacy and basic education (much so-called non-formal education is in fact primary school equivalent education for out-of-school children and youth), livelihoods-related training (in some cases packaged with literacy or basic education), specialised vocational training (in, for example, agriculture), and various forms of health (especially HIV/AIDS), cooperative, and civic education. There is a new stress on environment-related education.

Literacy and adult education programmes are offered in local centres as well as through distance education. There are also continuing education programmes in countries which have a long tradition of adult education. This is not always the case in French-speaking countries.

Capacity-building

In French-speaking countries, there are only two training institutions (in Niger and in Burkina Faso) which formally train specialists of literacy and adult education. It is clear that in these countries there is a serious lack of infrastructure for capacity-building. Therefore, in order to promote ALE in these countries it is important to create adequate opportunity for capacity-building. The existence of some genuine regional collaboration in Francophone Africa (as in the distance education project Alpha Omega, CREEA, and in Faire-Faire initiatives) should be capitalised on.

Funding

The data on funding for adult literacy and basic education/non-formal education programmes is the best reported. Funding for continuing education, either academic or vocational is provided and reported on, but little data is provided on its financing. Most of funding for adult education comes from international and foreign aid. The reports indicate that there is a need for the governments to allocate more national funds to adult education in order to develop this sub-sector.

Recommendations

From an analysis of key concerns in the country reports and from the expectations of CONFINTEA VI expressed by sub-Saharan African countries, the following are recommendations that CONFINTEA VI should be asked to support. All these recommendations are aspects of the general need to raise the profile of adult learning and education to end its marginalisation.

At CONFINTEA VI

1. CONFINTEA VI should be action- and output-orientated. Participating governments should make a strong commitment to revitalise ALE and there should be an action agenda for effective and rapid international, regional and national follow-up.
2. At CONFINTEA VI an advocacy group for ALE composed of governments, bilateral and multilateral organisations and the private sector should be set up to mobilise funds for ALE and take seriously the needs of sub-Saharan Africa.

On information and research

3. There is a need for pan-African clarification and standardisation of the terminology and concepts relating to literacy, adult basic education, non-formal education and lifelong learning.
4. There is a need for a standardisation of the data required from Member States on ALE to enable useful regional comparisons to be made. Member States should be encouraged to develop their own capacity to supply this information.
5. Universities must be re-engaged and strengthened as vital research and practitioner development partners in ALE. The current weakening of this base must be reversed. There is a general need for more research, more surveys, more monitoring and evaluation, more impact studies and much more effective sharing, dissemination and use of existing research.
6. Digitised, internet accessible holdings of ALE related reports, research, evaluations and other documentation are needed regionally and nationally. There should be a strong commitment to share documentation and materials. A comprehensive, systematic database on ALE provision and practice in Africa is needed.

Policy, legislation and governance

7. Every country should have a national adult education policy, and current draft policies should be ratified rapidly.
8. Adult education policies, though they should understandably prioritise literacy and basic education, should encompass the whole range of ALE.
9. Where appropriate there should be ALE-related legislation to give effect to policies.
10. In creating and reforming the governance and institutions of adult education it should be seen as an autonomous sector and not an appendage to another (such as formal schooling). Representative of inter-sectoral boards and councils to oversee ALE are encouraged, as are autonomous departments or agencies.
11. There should be a commitment to strengthen all ALE governance and implementation structures through capacity-building and professional development in both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Funding

12. Decentralisation of ALE governance and coordination must be accompanied by suitable funding mechanisms to avoid unfunded mandates.
13. State and donor funding of ALE should be sustained and avoid erratic flows
14. Funding benchmarks should be developed along with strategies for mobilising funds for ALE. The current attempts to establish minimum funding benchmarks as a proportion of formal education budgets should be intensified.

Qualifications frameworks

15. The inevitability of the establishment of national qualifications frameworks must be anticipated and supported to ensure access and recognition of prior learning (formal and non-formal) of adults. However, caution must be exercised to avoid cumbersome, over-bureaucratised models.
16. Qualifications framework promises of linkages between formal and non-formal education must be real and not achieved by removing flexibility from and over-formalising all education and training.

Capacity-building

17. The conditions of service of adult education personnel, particularly in literacy, adult basic and non-formal education, need to be addressed rapidly.
18. Adult education qualifications need comparable status to those of conventional educators and trainers.
19. There should be much greater sharing of curriculum and materials and the associated expertise as a means of capacity-building.
20. It is a necessity to revitalise the contribution of tertiary education institutions to ALE, given the huge need for the training, re-training and professional development of ALE personnel.
21. The use of open and distance learning and ICT in the training and support of educators and materials developers should be encouraged.

Literacy

22. The continuing need to bring literacy to all should be addressed as an urgent matter.
23. Literacy should be promoted in local languages and literate environments, encouraged by mobilising linguistic communities and creating effective publishing policies, including the subsidisation of materials for new readers.
24. The recommendations made in the Bamako 2007 Call to Action and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) Maputo Strategic Platform of 2008 should be carried out by the Member States in Africa and receive international support.
25. Literacy skills assessment should be established by surveys and the example of the Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey of 2006 emulated.
26. The impact of universal primary education on literacy levels and adult education programmes should be carefully monitored.

Out-of-school youth

27. The advantages of special programmes for out-of-school youth should be explored.

Disabled learners

28. All ALE programmes should take into account the special needs of disabled learners.

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