

Trends in Human Resource Development in Zimbabwe: A Case for Progressive Leadership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rebranding of adult learning at CONFINTEA V (1997) as an integral component of human resource development for sustainable development paved the way for greater flexibility and innovation in education provision. This chapter illustrates how this development has challenged the traditional methods of teaching and learning in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, the chapter show-cases three major trends that have emerged, namely, the formalization of non-formal education and vice versa, the “universalization” of continuing education and the non-formalization of informal education. Whereas the formalization of non-formal education has occurred throughout the education system (from school through to university) the non-formalization of formal education has been confined to university education. The “universalization” of continuing education is evident in the adoption by universities of many continuing education programs that were traditionally beyond their scope. And, informal education has been non-formalized via trade-testing of informal artisans such as carpenters and builders.

INTRODUCTION

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) that was organized by UNESCO (1997) in Hamburg, Germany, affirmed adult learning as an integral component of human resource development for sustainable development. Consequently, the late nineties (Burchfield, 1997; Comings, Smith, LeVine, Dowd, & Garner, 1998; Hazoume, 1999; Marrison, 1999; Schugurensky, 1997; Walters, 1997) and the early 2000s (Mauch, 2005; Preece & Singh, 2005; Singh & McKay, 2004; Singh, 2005; Walters & Watters, 2000) witnessed much stronger calls for the support of adult learning activities. One and a half decades into the 21st century people throughout the world have a better appreciation of the meaning, the scope and the role of adult education in the development of people, communities and organizations. Also, there is now greater consensus about what adult education entails than there was fifteen years ago. The concept has been expanded to include virtually all learning activities undertaken by adults throughout life irrespective of the particular setting of the learning activity.

The re-branding of adult learning as a lifelong integral component of human resource development has challenged traditional forms of education and consequently traditional methods of teaching and learning. The recent wave of policy formulation in adult learning that has swept across Sub-Saharan Africa is clear testimony that it has become increasingly evident that formal education alone cannot meet all the educational needs for the overall national human resource development strategy that will meet the challenges of the twenty first century. Countries such as Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe now have a declared policy on adult education built into their national development plans or have separate policies on adult learning. Adult learning through both non-formal and informal modes is equally instrumental in the formulation of the national human resource development strategy and, as such, deserves equal attention. Accordingly, progressive African governments such as those cited above have developed comprehensive and specific policy guidelines for the adult education sub-sector within the educational sector.

Although the process of developing an encompassing policy for adult education has taken many forms the intention is the same, namely, the development and adoption of a comprehensive policy instrument that meets the wide and varied nature of adult learning needs in a dynamic world. In each case, the policy is intended to put adult education into a proper perspective as a broad field of activity that includes, among others, literacy, continuing education, life skills and vocational training. In this regard, the policy addresses such issues as the current situation of adult education, challenges and constraints of adult education, the concept of adult

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