Full Length Research Paper

The attitudes, knowledge and skills of district literacy coordinators in three regions of Zimbabwe

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This study was conducted to investigate the attitudes, knowledge and skills of District Literacy Coordinators (DLCs) in Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland Provinces of Zimbabwe, with a view to determining their training needs. A descriptive survey design using data collection instruments involving face-to-face interviews and questionnaires was adopted. Thirty conveniently sampled DLCs participated in the study. The findings established that while the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture still recognized the services of the DLCs who were recruited during the 1980's and 1990's, these had gradually become disillusioned with the literacy programme due to lack of motivation by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, lack of a clear career path and poor remuneration. The study findings also indicated that the DLCs did not show credible knowledge and skills of approaches originally commensurate with those used in such literacy programmes elsewhere. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture conducts training workshops on attitude change and employs professionally qualified Adult Educators as Administrators in the Non-Formal Education Division.

Key words: Adult literacy, literacy coordinator, attitudes, skills, knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited an adult education system which was largely inappropriate to the needs of the majority of the black population. At the same time, a serious educational discrepancy was apparent, for out of an entire population of 7 million people then, about 2.5 million (36%) of adults were either illiterate or semi-literate. The majority (64%) of those affected were women in rural areas (Zimbabwe Census, 1982).

To overcome the problem of illiteracy, the government established the Department of Non-Formal Education under the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture. The educational structures were made up of nine regional offices countrywide and fifty-five district offices which had their headquarters in Harare (Ministry of Education, 1985). Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East Regions, chosen for this study, had seven districts each and every district was monitored by

two District Literacy Coordinators (DLCs), making a total of forty-two DLCs in the three regions.

Despite government efforts and Non-Governmental Organizations' endeavours to financially and materially support the literacy programme, there appeared to be a mismatch between the DLCs' performance in their core-business, field-work and their personal interests such as pursuing their private work at the expense of the literacy programme. It is against this background that the current study examined the DLCs training needs with regards to their attitudes, knowledge and skills of the Adult Literacy Programme in Zimbabwe.

Most studies on Adult Literacy Programmes in Zimbabwe have tended to focus on situation analysis (Mpofu, 1994, 2000, 2002) and participation by students of literacy classes (Makoni, 1985; Kiire, 1986; Nhliziyo, 1992; Munodawafa, 1994; Sigauke, 2002). This study sought to investigate the knowledge, attitudes and skills of DLCs with a view to identifying their training needs. According to the Principal Director's Circular No. 1 of 2011, these DLCs are now known as District Lifelong Learning Coordinators (DLLCs).

It is important that a study to determine the training

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needs of the DLCs be undertaken in order to determine ways and means of improving performance and rapport between the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) on one hand and the DLCs on the other. The likely beneficiaries of this study are largely the literacy clientele (men, women and children particularly in rural areas), then the DLCs themselves and the Education policy makers.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

(i) Determine attitudes, knowledge and skills of the DLCs focusing on the demands of today's literacy clientele.

(ii) Identify the training needs for DLCs and suggest appropriate training ideas which would help to ameliorate the identified attitudes, knowledge and skills shortcomings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of literacy education

There is no single agreed way of defining the term "literacy". At the Jomtien Conference (1990), on "Education for All", it was observed that any attempt to define the term "literacy" is like a walk to the horizon whereby as one walks towards it, the horizon continues to recede, and by the same scenario, as groups of people achieve the skills formerly defined as literacy, some altered circumstances through technological development often render such definitions obsolete (Knowles et al., 2005). For instance, Harman (1987) defines literacy as the ability to communicate ideas and information in the right way at the right time, as well as to use computers and other types of problem-solving techniques that may involve mathematical calculations. In the Zimbabwean context, literacy refers to the ability to read, write and enumerate (Strategy Document, 1989). However, this is claimed to be a narrow view of literacy since literacy now covers such areas as the use of information and communication technology (ICT), health and environmental literacy (Principal Director's Circular No. 1, 2011).

Jarvis and Griffin (2003) posit that literacy as a skill can be best defined in its functional form through gaining possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups in order to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as a family, job-holders or members of social, religious or set of other associations of their choices. The United Nations Development Programme (2004) recognizes that functional literacy is an entry point to empowerment hence it brings together

components of literacy skills development and income generation. For the Zimbabwean community, literacy for people living in rural areas would ensure that they become self-reliant through engaging in income generating projects.

Structure of literacy programmes in Zimbabwe

Basic adult literacy

This comprises the initial basic adult literacy courses aimed at teaching the illiterate adult learners the concept of the '3Rs'- reading, writing and arithmetic. The course is based on a pre-packaged PRIMER on reading, writing and numeracy in the mother tongue. The learners of this programme write a national test in October of each year and those who pass are eligible to proceed to do post literacy programmes such as functional literacy and the Zimbabwe 'adult basic education course'.

Functional literacy

Activities include topics on primary health care, civic education or peasant education. The topics are derived from needs identification or a base-line survey carried out with the established clientele in their original settings. Gained literacy skills are put into use and consolidated through projects and other income generating activities.

Zimbabwe Adult Basic Education Course (ZABEC)

This course is a primary school equivalent course specifically designed for adult learners who choose to take the academic root after having successfully passed the 'basic adult literacy' course. Normally, the programme takes three years to complete instead of the seven years that are needed for normal primary school.

ROLE OF THE DISTRICT ADULT LITERACY COORDINATOR

According to the Missouri Literacy Coordinators' Handbook (2006), the overall focus of a Literacy Coordinator is the coordination of activities for assisting those adults who lack sufficient academic and social skills to function in communities as employees, parents and literacy learners. The Daily Monitor (2006), however, argues that these necessary skills differ from country to country. The role of the Adult Literacy Coordinator cannot be exhaustive, but it is important to note that the roles in each country are commensurate with selected academic qualifications set by the respective country. A Literacy Coordinator is therefore an invaluable component of any

successful programme. In the broadest sense, a DLC in Zimbabwe is a cadre who plays a vital role in an effective Adult Education Literacy Programme. The duties of the DLCs in Zimbabwe include the following, among others:

(i) Mobilizing learners and establishing more Literacy and Adult and Continuing Education Centres;
(ii) Recommending policy positions, changes and innovations concerning Adult and Continuing Education;
(iii) Planning, recommending and mounting staff development courses for all personnel in the wards and villages;
(iv) Reviewing, editing and monitoring the quality and suitability of teaching/learning materials in the programmes;
(v) Compiling and submitting statistical returns on the participants involved in each of the stages of non-formal education outlined above on a quarterly basis.
Source: (Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2011:5).

The above roles, also spelt out by the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (2006), call for a DLC who is competent in order to implement them effectively.

THE CONCEPT OF ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Attitudes

Kaufman and Herman (1991) contend that Education has a purpose. For this reason, Education intends to supply learners with the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills for them to be self-reliant and self-directed in their world of work. Attitudes, as defined by Merriam and Simpson (1997) are a set of beliefs which cause an individual to act selectively towards certain things or persons such as ethnic groups, races, institutions, religious sects and political issues. Accordingly, the DLCs (subjects of this research) who work with the community of different political persuasions, different ethnic groups such as people of Malawian or Mozambican origin, need to develop an attitude that promotes development. The issue of educational institutions is also paramount with regard to their attitudes towards the Adult Literacy Education and their personnel. Lissord (1995) points out that those educators, especially educators of adults, must have positive attitudes towards their learners and encourage their learners to be responsible for their learning especially when learners are all asked to determine the content of their curriculum which is relevant to their socio-economic needs.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge may be seen as a level of awareness, consciousness or familiarity gained by experience, learning or thinking (Tight, 1996). A Literacy Coordinator should possess the requisite knowledge and skills commensurate with today's clientele (Literacy Coordinators' Handbook, 2006). Rogers (1997) believes that adults enter learning activities with perceptions about themselves which influence the learning process. These very perceptions are regarded as their individual experiences which are valued by them. Freire (1972) argues that every adult has some form of knowledge of something, which can be shared with others when the learning environment allows them to talk or dialogue on a topic.

Tight (1996) again observes that skill is viewed by labour economists as a property of an individual, made up of various combinations of education, training and competence. Accordingly, competence is the ability to perform a particular activity to a prescribed standard such as teaching, training, driving and monitoring. In other words, a skill is concerned with what a person can do rather than with what one knows.

There are several assumptions that a DLC as an educator of adults should be aware of with regard to characteristics of adult learners (Knowles, 1980). For example adult learners possess a rich resource of experience such as having been a full time worker, a spouse, a parent, a professional or a leader of an organization. Such characteristics impact heavily on the self-directedness of the learner in problem-solving during the teaching and learning process. Adults are motivated to learn through various internal pressures like wanting to learn self-help skills such as reading, writing and enumerating. Adults are oriented to learn through wanting to learn new skills, new knowledge such as computers, new attitudes (accepting and respecting others) and new values (coping with constant change in life such as social, political, economic or cultural issues). Adults also have a strong self-concept which demands the need to be treated by others as being capable of self-direction, otherwise they always resent where they feel others are forcing their will on them. They can change from dependent personalities to independent ones, capable of self-directing such as finding work for themselves.

Approaches used in facilitating literacy

There are several approaches that can be used for facilitating literacy. This study focuses on four approaches whose knowledge is crucial for DLCs to function effectively in their work.

Frank Laubach's school based literacy approach

Using a basic instructional approach, Dr Laubach found that even the most impoverished people could gain

control of the written and spoken word. While in the Phillipines, he discovered the potential of volunteers, as newly-literate Maranoes taught adult learners through a one-to-one institutional programme that became known as 'Each One Teach One'. The 'Each One Teach One' literacy teaching approach was based on the premise that anyone who can read and write can teach some one else to read and write. Laubach also demonstrated that literacy is an effective means for positive community mobilization and change. In fact, this school-based type of the literacy approach used the banking concept of knowledge, whereby the teacher says: "…I know, you do not know, I will tell you and then you will know" (Rogers, 1997: 21).

To effectively utilize this approach, the DLCs need to be trained in developing positive attitudes, knowledge and skills that help to meet aspirations of today's clientele. In the Zimbabwean context, Frank Laubach's approach is the typical traditional learning approach where the teacher or trainer defines what a particular set of learners needs to learn and establish how the learners' needs can be met. The DLCs need to be informed of such major assumptions associated with traditional teaching that training or teaching is the responsibility of the teacher/trainer, so one has to be very resourceful and skillful in teaching techniques and also knowledgeable in content of the subject taught. Acquisition of subject matter leads to action, that is, DLCs can only be effective when they teach what they are knowledgeable about. In this Approach, the teacher is the central point around whom all the teaching and learning revolve. The strength of this approach rests on the ability of the teacher/ DLC to impart the knowledge and motivate the learners, while the weaknesses manifest when learners' needs are not addressed possibly because of negative attitudes or lack of skills.

Participatory literacy approach

The latest revolutionary literacy teaching approaches use participatory approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The PRA is indeed a participatory semi-structured and inter-disciplinary methodology which is characterized by objective dialoguing by participants with the sole purpose of solving problems of their lives. The adult educator who uses PRA is called a facilitator or animator. According to Tilakaratina (1987), facilitation means assisting the people to acquire practical skills and helping them to improve their access to material resources and create space for action. Participatory literacy approaches which use PRA, or Participatory Rural Development (PRD) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) are renowned for their empowering and sustaining development capacities. The PRA uses tools such as maps, diagrams, calendars and graphics drawn by participants during the learning process through the

guidance of the facilitator.

In the Zimbabwean context, DLCs need to know that participants work best when they source information or knowledge by themselves on whatever they are familiar with. Participants are supposed to be encouraged by facilitators to develop their own strategies in order to change their own situation for the better (Malicky and Norman, 1995). People are always open to seek more knowledge when they actively share in a collective responsibility (Lee and Wickert, 1994) as is evident in many self-help projects such as farming communities who build their own dams to irrigate their own crops. The participatory approach indeed proves that learning as a process is controlled by participants through involvement.

The Freirean socio-cultural based approach

This Freirean approach to adult literacy education bases the content of language lessons on learner's cultural and personal experiences. Named after Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, the approach has also been referred to as the problem-approach, the psycho-approach, the liberatory approach and the participatory approach (Hope et al., 1984; Wallerstein, 1986; Shor and Freire, 1987). It has been used in the developing world in successful native and second language literacy projects sponsored by governments and international voluntary organization in both rural and urban settings, just like in Zimbabwe too. Freire argues that unjust social conditions are the causes of illiteracy and that the purpose of adult basic education is to enable learners to participate actively in liberating themselves from the conditions that oppress them.

In rural Zimbabwe, this liberating education can be enhanced through assisting learners to do self-help projects such as market gardening, small scale farming ventures, cooperative ventures where people can raise chickens, pigs or goats for sale. According to the Freirean philosophy, sometimes regarded as the problem-approach, every individual should be regarded as human, and human is dignity. So people have to respect and treat each other with a human face, hence the socio-cultural approach. The DLCs should be taught to be creative and appreciative of their work through promoting team work among learners.

Regenerated Freirean literacy through empowering community techniques (REFLECT) approach

The REFLECT approach is defined by the Participatory Learning and Action Notes (1998: 34) as "a structured participatory learning process which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development". Through the creation of democratic spaces

and the construction and interpretation of locally generated texts, people build their own multi-dimensional analysis of local and global reality, challenging dominant development paradigms and redefining power relationships in both public and private spheres. This approach gives learners ownership of the acquired knowledge as opposed to regurgitated material which is often temporarily remembered. This kind of knowledge helps the rural folk to be confident as they discover that what they have to implement is what they have ever known before but not aware of utilizing such knowledge. The REFLECT approach was initially pilot tested in seven districts of Zimbabwe, namely, Mazoe, Glendale, City of Harare, Guruve, Centenary, Chiredzi and Plumtree in 1996. However, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture has not yet shown its willingness to adopt it, despite the fact that the trained participants and learners have found the approach quite interesting and more motivational as compared to the traditional Frank Laubach Approach (Muti and Marango in Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 1998).

Training needs of DLCs

Knowles (1980) defines training needs as those changes required in employees through educational techniques, to further the efficient and effective operations as well as proper accomplishments of the organization's mission statement. Boydell (1991) adds that a training need is the mere existence of a shortfall in performance. Accordingly, the rationale for identifying training needs as advanced by Neuman (2006) is to identify the specific problem areas prevailing in an organization in order to establish the most appropriate responses required.

Rogers (1986) suggests that training is crucial for the systematic development of the attitudes, knowledge and skills required by an individual in order to perform adequately on specific tasks. The DLCs, being community development agents, need a continuous programme of in-service training and refresher courses to keep them abreast of the new trends (Fordham, 1995). The need for the training of the DLCs is considered vital for improving knowledge of their job, attitudes towards their work and environments and their skills as demanded by their clientele. The main objective of this study therefore was to determine attitudes, knowledge and skills of the DLCs with a view to addressing irregularities for the purposes of improving performance in direct dealing with the Adult Literacy Programme in the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was used in this study as it was found to be most appropriate in covering a wide range of issues related to the problem at hand (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1997) in determining attitudes, knowledge and skills of DLCs on the current literacy programme. Owing to inaccessibility of most rural areas due to the tense national security situation in the three regions in 2008, convenience sampling was used. Cohen and Manion (1994) explain that convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained. Researchers came up with some of the DLCs who turned up for their respective Adult Education programmes during the residential session at the University of Zimbabwe while others were contacted at their work places in urban and peripheral urban areas of the selected regions. Thirty respondents out of 42 DLCs from the Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Manicaland Regions of Education were chosen. A structured questionnaire and face-to-face interviews were the data collection instruments meant to establish impressions, opinions and beliefs of the DLCs on the programme (Neuman, 2006). All the 30 respondents answered questionnaires while interviews were conducted with 6 participants, 2 from each of the 3 regions selected for the study. The cross validation of results maintained validity and reliability of the study. Quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaire while qualitative data came from interviews. Analysis was employed thematically to describe the aspects of the findings. The findings were thus stated and presented on the basis of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The personal attributes of the respondents indicate that 90% (27) were males while 10% (3) were females. On the age distribution, 63% (19) of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years, 23% (7) were in the age range of 41 to 50 years while 14% (4) respondents were above fifty years. With reference to marital status, 90% (27) of the respondents were married while 10% (3) were not married. On secondary education qualifications, 67% (20) did four years of secondary education while 33% (10) did six years secondary education. The findings further established that 67% (20) of these DLCs had already acquired Diplomas in Adult Education, 20% (6) had degrees in Adult Education while 13% (4) did not further their education. The implication of these qualifications and length of service is that these DLCs are potentially self directed practitioners whose training should focus on attitudinal changes resulting from lack of encouragement (Verner, 1973). Seven percent (2) of the DLCs had worked for less than 2 years, 33% (10) had served for 11 to 20 years and 60% (18) had been in the service between 21-25 years.

There were more men than women DLCs, a situation that manifests a gender imbalance and likely to result in a negative impact on the attitude of these DLCs towards needs identification which affect men or women. Most of the DLCs were between 31 and 40 years and were therefore recommendable to work effectively with adult learners since they had accumulated a lot of experience in working with adults, a situation which should auger well in their performance. The DLCs are potentially hard working people who have high qualifications and should be trainable in new innovative approaches.

Attitudes, knowledge and skills of the DLCs in adult literacy education

On whether they thought their roles were still valued by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 70% (21) DLCs disagreed. This view was echoed by one respondent in the interview who said, "The Ministry of Education does not recognize our role. There is lack of a career path for us except that of the DLC post". Most respondents added that their experience was not recognized as they were not being promoted as compared to their counterparts in the same Ministry.

On the DLCs' attitudes towards conditions of service, 80% (24) of the respondents indicated these as most unfavourable. These findings revealed a deplorable state of affairs on general conditions of service for the DLCs in the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture. Reasons given for negative attitudes on the conditions of service included the Ministry's mere lip service to the funding of the literacy programme with limited action. The views were demonstrated by one respondent who expressed that, "Most literacy groups in the field are not viable because of lack of reading material, lack of viable functional projects and lack of professional supervision by the DLCs". Another respondent said, "There is decreased political support on the literacy programme as well as poor government financial allocation of the programme". These sentiments seem to point towards frustration by DLCs mainly due to non-commitment on the part of government towards the programme, to an extent that some respondents indicated that they engaged in extra jobs elsewhere in order to eke out a living, at the expense of availing themselves fully.

Effects of DLC transfers

From an analysis of data on the rate of transfers, it appears that 40% (12) of employee transfers were through employer requests while 60% (18) of the employees requested the transfers. Transfers that were effected on employee requests were far greater than transfers effected on employer requests. Such transfers like these might have been necessitated by the need for change on the part of the DLCs having stayed in one place for over 18 years, in some cases doing the same thing with the same people, using the same teaching method within the same environment. Verner (1973) observes that attitudes exist in a functional interdependence with other elements (feelings, beliefs) that compose the individual's personality.

The majority of the DLCs 90% (27) felt that the literacy programme should continue. The major reason given was that the current Zimbabwean education system was unable to afford every child an opportunity to go to school due to adverse economic hardships. Accordingly, illiteracy shall always be a common variable which will need to be reduced through such an institution of the department of adult literacy in the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.

In analyzing responses on each item in Table 1, the indication is that most of the DLCs agree with most assertions expressed in the statements given. The findings seem to indicate a serious lack of positive attitude yet the DLCs and the Ministry of Education officials should both work towards realizing the achievement of the Educational goals of the government, propounded through its policy of 'Education for All' (Director's Circular No. 1 of 2011).

From Table 2, 80% (24) of the respondents were not familiar with the use of Frank Laubach's approach. Rogers (1997) views Frank Laubach's approach as similar to the school-based method of the 'banking' concept which serves to transfer knowledge from the teacher to the learner without the learner's initiative. Further observations indicated that those 80% unfamiliar with the use of this method in fact were using the traditional approach of teaching each other, but oblivious of the fact that this was Frank Laubach's approach they themselves were exposed to during their formal schooling days.

On the use of the Freirean-Socio cultural approach, 73% (22) were familiar. This Socio-Cultural approach of recent times developed by Freire for teaching adults was the opposite of the Laubach's traditional approach (Rogers, 1997). This approach promotes learning through involving active participation by the learner, including reflections through continuous testing of oneself until the learning process becomes fully part of one's own life. Apparently, this Freirean socio-cultural approach was adopted by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (Strategy Document, 1989), but was not fully utilized by those pioneer DLCs. The policy makers might have become aware of the radical philosophy of this approach and deliberately decided to play it down. Consequently, they resorted to the traditional approach of teaching reading, writing and numeracy through producing primers of pre-determined reading materials chosen by the planners without the involvement of the learners.

On the "each-one-teach-one" approach, 60% (18) were familiar. However, further observations indicated that this approach, originally used in Nigeria, was not popular in Zimbabwe. A few DLC's who once had a chance to be taught the method in their initial training as DLCs indicated having seemed to have forgotten all about it. In effect, the method was simply a one-to-one instructional approach by Frank Laubach.

The REFLECT method was familiar to only 40% (12) while 60% (18) were not familiar with it. Though this method was introduced to the Zimbabwe Literacy Programme as late as from the mid 1990's, most of the DLCs were not trained in this approach. Some research findings indicate that most Ministry of Education officials

Table 1. DLCs' Responses to Literacy Development in Zimbabwe.

Statement	Frequency and percentage (%)					Total (%)
	SA	A	NS	DA	SD	
Lack of value for adult literacy education by policy makers	18 (60)	8 (27)	4 (13)	-	-	30(100)
Lack of qualified administrators with adult education skills and knowledge	24 (80)	4 (13)	-	-	2(7)	30 (100)
Lack of advocacy by government	10 (33)	7 (23)	5(17)	4(13)	4(13)	30 (100)
Lack of planning by government	22 (73)	8(27)	-	-	-	30 (100)
Lack of support by government	19 (63)	11(37)	-	-	-	30 (100)
Failure to address real issues on literacy	12 (40)	6(20)	7(23)	3(10)	2(7)	30 (100)
Lack of continuous research on literacy by specialists	19 (63)	11(37)	-	-	-	30 (100)
Lack of innovative approaches	25 (83)	5(17)	-	-	-	30 (100)

SA= Strongly agree, A=agree, NS = not sure, DA=disagree, SD= strongly disagree, N=30.

were reluctant to accept the use of this method possibly because it was too radical (Muti and Marango in Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 1998).

Knowledge of DLC roles

When asked to come up with what they thought were their roles, ninety-three percent 93% (28) of the respondents indicated having knowledge of their roles. The majority stated that their main responsibility was the mobilization of the learners and implementation of the adult literacy curriculum which comprises: writing project proposals, initiating and indicating in-service training for adult literacy tutors, ensuring the teaching of reading, writing, numeracy, distributing reading and writing materials then monitoring and evaluation. Apparently, the observation of reports by DLCs indicated that these were last done ten years before the current study was conducted, after which the section seriously deteriorated in its functions.

The DLCs indicated that their roles had been negatively affected by the abolition of the Writers'

section of the Adult Literacy Department without offering any substitution to the traditional production of reading materials. Accordingly, the need for training becomes apparent in the light of the DLCs becoming obsolescent or old fashioned in a world of other innovative approaches which they are not competent to use (Fordham, 1995).

Analysis of the DLC's training needs

Analysis of data in Table 3 shows that (47%) (14) DLCs received initial training in 1982, then 33% (10) were trained in 1983. After the 1982 / 1983 training results show what looks like sporadic training of these DLCs. In an interview with the DLCs under study, they indicated that they did not experience in-service training after their initial training. The newly appointed DLCs were trained through reading circulars. This laissez-fair type of training for leadership could impoverish performance of the DLCs and create more illiteracy among the innocent potential clientele of the literacy programme.

The analysis of the training courses undertaken by the 30 DLCs between 1982 and the year 2000,

show that three training agents participated in the training of these cadres, providing initial or in-service training. Courses provided by the Ministry of Education appear to be conventional courses. Fordham (1995) describes conventional training as trainer-centered whereby learners are coming to be taught. Those courses offered by Non Governmental Organizations were based on the participation of the learner, whereby he or she would be involved more and more in the process of learning. Unlike the conventional approach, the participatory techniques such as human resources maps which show water sources or fuel, household maps which show population/housing, well being ranking which show local causes of poverty, tables of participation and many others, are all done by participants under the guidance of the facilitator (Table 4).

The courses offered by the Government Ministries, including the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture appear to be rigid and hardly relate to the needs of the DLCs or their clientele. The adult literacy learners would like to engage in developmental activities and wish to cope with literacy situations by using their own strategies. The participatory techniques can be

Table 2. DLCs' familiarity with the use of approaches for teaching adult learners.

Approaches/Methods	Familiar		Unfamiliar		
	F	%	F	%	Total (%)
Frank Laubach's approach	6	20	24	80	30 (100)
Freirean Socio -Cultural approach	22	73	8	27	30 (100)
Each-one-teach-one approach	18	60	12	40	30 (100)
REFLECT approach	12	40	18	60	30 (100)

N=30.

Table 3. Periods DLCs received training in adult literacy education.

Period trained	Frequency	Percentage
1982	14	47
1983	10	33
1984	2	7
1991	1	3
1992	2	7
2000	1	3
Total	30	100

N=30.

Table 4. Analysis of Agents who participated in training DLCs and Courses offered between 1982 and 2000.

Training agent	Frequency (%)	Courses done
Ministry of Education	8 (27)	(i) Duties of DLC (ii) Networking (iii) Supervision (iv/) Report writing
NGOs (Farm Community) Trust of Zimbabwe, Save the Children Fund U.K	10 (33)	Participatory approaches
Ministry of Public Service	12 (40)	(i) Trainer of Trainers (ii) Rural development (iii) Sociology of rural development (iv) Political economy
Total	30	100%

N=30.

interpreted as enabling approaches which allows participants to see themselves as sources of information through shared experiences and knowledge for they (participatory techniques) recognize that every person has the ability to know and is capable of changing his or her situation (Fordham, 1995).

Analysis of data given above indicates that 60% (18) of the DLCs received initial training while 40% (12) were able to receive in-service training. Further probing during interview revealed that most of those who received their initial training from 1982 up to the year 2000 had either had one in-service course or not more than three. Those who joined after the year 2000 testified that while they did not attend in-service courses, their counterparts who were instructors of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programme who joined at the same time with them, had their initial training and had since had several follow up in-service courses. The respondents were further requested to state their reasons for not having attended such in-service courses. Some of the reasons or problems variously given by the respondents were that:

Table 5. DLCs' suggestions which can help improve the identified shortcomings.

Suggestions from DLCs	Frequencies	Percentage
Introduce and use innovative approaches to teach literacy e.g. REFLECT	27	90
Motivate all adult literacy personnel by recognizing their job statuses	30	100
All adult education administrators to hold adult education professional qualifications	28	93
Remunerate all full time bona fide civil servants accordingly	30	100
Regularize training of adult literacy personnel at all levels	29	97
Avoid discriminatory practices in education e.g. frustrating adult literacy personnel	30	100
Create career path and promotional opportunities to DLCs and other employees of the department who excel	30	100
Treat adult literacy as non-formal only without ever formalizing its operations	27	90
Promote exchange visits at all levels of non-formal staff	26	87
Provide initial follow up and in-service training to be done by every member of the department	30	100
Scale up monitoring and evaluation of the adult literacy programme	28	93
Education Act on adult education to be vigorous and more encompassing to include literacy.	30	100

(i) There was no funding for training hence lack of logistics or resources for training.
(ii) Ministry of Education and Culture regional officials are well bent to frustrate the adult literacy section by deliberately marginalizing the DLCs and their tutors through denying them opportunities to do training courses while they sanctioned training courses for the personnel of the formal Education Section such as the ECEC, Remedial Tutors and District Education Officers.
(iii) The DLCs were in turn unable to orientate their adult literacy tutors again due to lack of funds.
(iv) Most of the funding agents like (UNICEF) had since withdrawn from funding the Non-Formal Education Division.
(v) The Ministry of Education and regional officials denied DLCs access to use infrastructural facilities meant for the Non-formal Education Division such as motor cars, and motor cycles.

The DLCs further indicated that the morale in the Adult Literacy Section had sunk to its lowest level largely because the DLCs' conditions of service, particularly salaries and career paths, were frustrating when compared with those of their ECEC counterparts. The implications of these findings are that there is protracted antagonism between the entire regional education officials and the DLCs, which continues to impoverish the performance of the DLCs due to continued lack of training and subsequent lack of effective performance. On the question of what aspects of their work the DLCs would prefer training, when given the opportunity to do so, the following areas were suggested:

(i) Participatory approaches
(ii) Counseling to improve attitudes
(iii) Characteristics of adult learners
(iv) Writing project proposals

The study observed that almost each and every one of the DLCs from the aforesaid three regions would require a full-scale training programme involving adult literacy facilitations. There were several important shortcomings which needed redressing through instituting a comprehensive training programme (Boydell, 1991). The study found that the DLCs' knowledge of the adult literacy facilitating techniques was questionable because the respondents hardly knew the Frank Laubach approach which happens to be the most common traditional approach. The DLCs, being the hub of the adult literacy programme in terms of implementation effectiveness, are expected to know all these facilitation approaches in and out so that they become competent enough to deliver their services to the people (Rogers, 1986).

The DLCs were asked to suggest possible ways through which these shortcomings could be overcome. Their responses are shown in Table 5. The respondents suggested that the adult education personnel needed to be motivated by creating career paths for them, remunerating them like other civil servants and providing professional development opportunities through in-service training and exchange programmes. The suggestions would go a long way towards improving the identified shortcomings in the entire organization.

Conclusions

Findings revealed that the DLCs in all the three regions lack the expected attitudes, knowledge and skills required to meaningfully meet the challenges bedeviling the literacy programme in these regions. There was lack of a career path for the DLC post and this has been singled out as a major cause of frustration in the DLC's work, resulting in many of them resigning or becoming engaged in extra jobs to eke out a living. The Adult Literacy

Education supervisors do not appear to value the adult literacy programme. Most DLCs of these three regions are potentially self-directed and hard working employees who have committed themselves towards improving their educational levels despite working conditions which are not conducive to that. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture should:

(i) Hold constant needs assessment of the incumbent adult literacy field personnel in order to keep these cadres fully equipped with the relevant attitudes, knowledge and skills of their work.
(ii) Institute training procedures that uphold conducting of initial (induction) of new recruits, then periodic in-service or follow-up workshops as well as on-the-job training of all personnel of the Non-Formal Education Division.
(iii) Uphold the use of the Freirean socio-cultural philosophy and other relevant upcoming participatory and empowering approaches which have been shown to motivate the adult learners.
(iv) Employ professionally qualified adult educators as administrators in the Non-Formal Division with recognized skills and knowledge in adult education.
(v) Consider provision of a career path for DLCs who academically excelled to rise to higher positions across other Public Service segments involving use of adult education skills, knowledge and attitudes.

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