

Later life learning in Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa: A contextual analysis

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Abstract. Learning will continue to remain a major national resource of immense value in the contexts of individual, community and national development in most African countries for a long time to come. For that reason, denying any segment of the population the right to learn at any point in time during their lifespan, would not only be a controversial issue but one that needs continuing visiting. Therefore, this paper aims to explore selected dimensions of learning in later life in Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa from the perspective of a contextual analysis. The analysis reveals some elements of similarity in policy frameworks adopted in the three countries, but with noticeable differences in terms of established structures, programmes, participation, achievements and challenges. Based on this observation, some recommendations are made that might be useful in working towards maximal and effective programme designs and implementation strategies that could help in enhancing later life learning.

Keywords: adults, adult literacy, contextual analysis, learning, later life learning, sustainable development, Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa.

Introduction

Learning in later life in Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa has a very long, vast and rich history that can possibly defile any deep and scholarly treatment in one single paper. Focusing on the most recent advances that have been made in the area from late the 1990s is therefore desirable. This is especially so because valuable data relating to the subject might have been lost largely from two decades of over specialized research and scholarship in adult and non-formal education in the three countries (Omolewa, 1987, 2006). The phrase over-specialized research and scholarship is used because there is evidence in the literature to suggest that scholars in the field have been preoccupied with issues relating to adult literacy and numeracy, open and distance learning, continuing professional development, community education and development, women's and girls' education and adult vocational development to mention just but a few. That is not to say that other issues relating to the economics, history,

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sociology and psychology of adult learning are of less importance (Bown, 1977, 2000; Boshier, 2006). The fact remains that any attempt to explore the vast field of learning in later life in general, can only lead one into the challenge of interrogating a critical mass of information that must have been evolving from about 1640, for example when the first European explorers arrived on the coastal region of Nigeria and initiated Western type education to the present (Omolewa, 1987). Yet, the terms of our commissioning certainly do not allow us such a luxury. Therefore, this paper is limited to selecting for a possible contextual analysis some major aspects of learning in later life in the three countries. The choice of the three countries was made because of my own direct personal and professional practice and experience. The aim is to describe how learning in later years has been conceptualized, structured and implemented with the hope that we can derive some useful lessons that are capable of informing transformations such that this often neglected and under-valued domain in the education system remains a major contributor to building the knowledge economy that is urgently needed on the African continent.

Learning, at whatever stage of life, is planned and implemented as a major national resource (Lengrand, 1975; Bown, 2000; Martin, 2001, 2006). This reality is attested to by the huge investments the three countries make in education annually prior to and after the introduction of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1960, Botswana in 1966 and South Africa in 1994. All three countries use the English language as the official language of communication, but their experiences and contexts may differ in some ways. For example, the introduction of democratic rule occurred at different times, and whilst Nigeria and Botswana were former British colonies and therefore introduced into their curricular heavy doses of the British educational system until they underwent reforms, South Africa had a mixture of the Dutch educational system and later some elements of the British system. Also, prior to the enacting of democratic rule in South Africa in 1994, the apartheid government ensured that Afrikaans was imposed as the main official language of instruction and indeed communication. So, the South African educational system had a much more mixed experience in terms of factors influencing its design and implementation, than has been the case with either Nigeria or Botswana. Nigeria's population is estimated to be about 260 million people which almost doubles the population of Botswana and South Africa put together. That implies that the costs of providing open-access to learning for all, can differ significantly from what prevails in Botswana and South Africa. Whilst educational reforms needed and implemented in Botswana and Nigeria aimed at adding and dropping what they inherited from the British colonial legacy, this is not quite the case with South Africa's experience which was much more of an educational 'pot-pourri'. While Botswana and Nigeria were admitted into membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) much earlier following upon their independence, South Africa had its admission after 1994. For that reason, the extent to which UNESCO's agreements, memoranda and communiqués might have influenced learning in later life in all three countries should differ in length of exposure and expected impacts.

Whereas Nigeria has the largest market because of the size of its population, South Africa with its long history of apartheid governance features a more endowed economic infrastructural system that is needed for growing and modernizing its economy. Botswana, with its smaller

population and closeness to South Africa and much more stable political system, has managed since 1969 to plan and implement much more modern and well-regulated economic infrastructure and system (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, 2008). But this paper is really not about a detailed analysis of the ways in which the socio-economic and political systems of the three countries differ as such. I have gone this length to briefly highlight these differences in so far as they can possibly influence the nature or contents, policies and actual implementation of programmes of learning in the three countries. That being the case, this analysis will feature programmes and practices of learning in later life in contexts and attempt to discuss, thereafter, the major ways in which they are similar or dissimilar. In particular, learnings from the experiences of the three countries are highlighted. The contextual analysis is foregrounded by the nature of learning in later years in a changing world and in particular, the radical social change driven by globalization and the remarkable near revolution in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs') both of which have been embraced as part of the daily experience of seniors in all three countries. As rightly observed by Peter (1999), globalization and ICTs' have not only influenced daily living, but, predominantly, the management and delivery of all major social policies. Since issues in the provision of learning can no longer be studied in a vacuum, it will be necessary in this paper to explore briefly relevant external and internal influences.

Common Grounds

As members of UNESCO, Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa have embraced the 1990 popular declaration known as 'Education for All' (hereinafter, EFA). In 1990, UNESCO organized a world conference on education in Jomtien, Thailand. Both Botswana and Nigeria were represented and were signatory to that declaration. Unfortunately, South Africa was not then a member as democratic rule had not been introduced but as soon as it became a democratically governed nation in 1994, it embraced lifelong learning as the cornerstone of its educational policy and framework. That implies that South Africa also adopted EFA. For this reason, it is necessary to premise our discourse on how EFA has partly influenced the design and implementation of learning in later life in all three countries. By learning in later life, one is referring to all learning programmes and processes designed and implemented for Botswana, Nigerians and South Africans who are or have exceeded 50 years of age. These learning programmes could be formal, non-formal and informal in nature and are aimed at making available the critical mass of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, aptitudes and interests that could enhance the people's individual, community and national development in some specific ways (Bown, 2000).

Adopting this concept and description of learning in later life does imply an attempt to paint on a rather large canvass which could turn out to be complicated. This is the main reason this paper has been limited only to programmes in literacy and numeracy, women's capacity building, open and distance learning and continuing professional development. Even so, it must be noted that the choice of 50 years was deliberate as it is possible that adult persons in all three countries, could have elected to enrol in numerous formal education programmes that have been conspicuously left out in our selection of programmes. Another limitation here is that the documentation of activities in the selected programmes is not necessarily strongly

supported in the presentation of data. What this means, therefore, is that this paper is an approximation of the true reflection of what has occurred or is occurring. The value of this discourse comes out in highlighting major experiences in the three countries and the component implications they have for many other African and developing countries. Then issues are raised that point the way forward for further studies by scholars in the area of adult and lifelong learning.

Problem Statement

The UNESCO 2010 EFA Global report on Reaching for the Marginalised, there were 153 million adults globally who lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills needed in everyday living (UNESCO, 2010). UNESCO (2010) suggested that whereas Botswana had achieved an adult literacy rate of 83 per cent as at 2007 with a projection of 87 per cent by 2015, it harboured close to 211, 010 adult illiterates with 50 per cent of them being females. That was the situation that Maruatona (2003) had drawn attention to in the mid-term review of adult learning in Botswana. For Nigeria, the adult literacy rate stood at 72 per cent as at 2007 with a projection of 79 per cent by 2015. South Africa, on the other hand, has recorded an adult literacy rate of 88 per cent as at 2007 with a projection of 91 per cent by the year 2015. The emphasis placed on adult literacy in all countries can be justified by the fact that it remains the foundation for structured and relatively unstructured learning in later life. The advances made in the three countries might have been outcomes of the many years of investment in adult basic education and literacy as the foundation for learning in later life and the global action to open the doors of learning for all, beginning, perhaps, with the 'Education For all' (EFA) project.

'Education for All' and thereafter

The 1990 Jomtien, Thailand 'World Conference on Education' was revolutionary in some ways. Indeed, as soon as the declaration popularly tagged as 'Education for All' was made, many pundits were quick to see it as a tall order and impossible in terms of sustained quality and relevance (Kearney, 2001). From whichever perspectives, EFA was viewed, it became apparent that both rich and poor countries needed to appreciate and adopt it as a necessity for moving rapidly forward towards cultivating the knowledge economy and society that was needed for the 21st century. To make better meaning of this discourse, it should be remembered, as pointed out by Kearney (2001:11), that EFA affirmed the following fundamental premises, essentially:

- the recognition of the basic human aspirations and needs of people everywhere;
- the grave dangers caused by injustice, poverty, disease, violence and social exclusion in terms of satisfying these needs;
- the obligations of each and every society towards its citizens which recall the foundations of good governance;
- the bonds created between people and their communities in terms of their rights and duties, which are enhanced by solid education.

It was on this basis of the affirmation above, that member nations of UNESCO further identified the six EFA targets of:

1. Expanding early childhood education.
2. Providing universal access to primary education.
3. Improving learning achievements.
4. Reducing adult illiteracy.
5. Providing life skills.
6. Creating an awareness of the social values which underpin sustainable development via sound citizenship.

It should be observed that the last four targets have direct bearing on the design and implementation of learning in later life, especially as they relate to the programmes selected for our discussion. Meaningful and relevant as these affirmations and targets appear to be, it would be observed that many member states, including Botswana and Nigeria and even lately, South Africa, have had some difficulties in attaining them. For example, Nigeria has experienced serious debt burden, uncontrolled population growth, increased migration, inflation, unemployment, decline in the provision of infrastructures, environmental degradation and the abuse of children, women and girls' rights to some extent. The Botswana economy has been hard hit by decline in the exportation of beef to the European Union and the problematic decline in the demand for diamonds, the two pillars of its economy. And South Africa has not fared much better as it battles unemployment and decline in demands for diamonds, platinum and gold in the global markets. What these experiences imply is that even though the three countries might have had valuable intentions in providing relevant and sustainable programmes for learning in later life, the problematic economic challenges and other socio-economic and political issues they constantly have to grapple with have meant that they significantly determine how much to invest in which segments of education. The experience in many cases is that adult education is the first to be hard-hit when there are intense financial difficulties. The implications for seniors is that they would be denied needed access to learning.

Whatever advances that Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa might have made in making allowances for learning in later life could have been partly influenced by external forces probably led by UNESCO's consistent drive for the recognition of the role education plays in social development. Such dominant UNESCO efforts are easily indicated in its commissioning monumental educational task teams and conferences. For example, the 1996 'International Task Force on Education in the XX1st Century - Learning: The treasure within' - that was chaired by Jacques Delors (Delors, 1998), President of the European Commission, the 'Fifth International Conference on Adult Education' held in Hamburg, Germany in 1997, the 'World Conference on Higher Education' held in France in 1998, and the '2000 EFA 2000 Assessment' conference convened by UNESCO in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. Since then, there have been numerous major world conferences on Education organized by UNESCO to draw attention to the urgent need to open the doors of learning to all within member-states. It is reasonable, then, that we review what has happened to learning in later life in Botswana, Nigeria and

South Africa against the background of the rapid drive towards enhancing the ability of their citizens as participants in the emergent knowledge economics and societies of the 21st century.

The objectives

This paper has been structured to explore briefly and using illustrative cases the historical antecedents of learning in later life in the three countries selected for this purpose, the theoretical frameworks, the existing contexts and challenges and mitigations. Based on this exploration, some conclusions can be made. By exploring these issues listed above, it is hoped that some preliminary light could be shed on the subject, gaps in knowledge identified and propositions made as to how scholarship in this area could be extended for the benefit of other African countries and developing countries that might be in the same position as the three countries selected for analysis.

Brief historical antecedents

In African society, it is part of traditional life that after the day's work, adults organise themselves into series of learning processes under the moonlight. The adults, for example, engage themselves in the acquisition of knowledge that might lead to the development of the community with the traditional head facilitating the process that was in many instances intellectual. Babs Fafunwa quoted in Omolewa (1981:20) observed that "if by intellect we mean the ability to integrate experience and if by intellectualisation we mean the ability to reason abstractly, traditional African education provided a forum for intellectual growth and development". This intellectual growth and development was not limited to any segment of traditional African society. Learning in later life in traditional Africa responded to the general quest for harmonious co-existence, peace and improved quality of life. The destiny of every African was generally accepted by all as an important issue for the society, and it was in response to this belief that steps were taken to ensure that lifelong learning responded adequately to the need for everyone to ascertain and attain their locus in the spiritual realm (Omolewa, 2006, Preece 2009, Amutabi & Okech, 2009). Within this non-formal provision, learning was broad-based, effective, enjoyable, challenging and equitable from the preliminary stage until old age and beyond (Omolewa, 2006). In essence, the foundation of lifelong learning practices and programme was reflective of the challenges facing the people at that time and even now. Lifelong learning placed strong emphasis on individual personal development and fulfilment as a pre-requisite for community and societal development and was comprehensive in the sense that it was directed at the spiritual, cultural, social, economic, and political development of the individual and their communities. For example, Africans were required to specialise in a profession, vocation or trade to which they directed their time, energy and resources for their own and community development, as was the case before the introduction of Western type education.

Contextual analysis

Botswana has its Vision 2016 official document that features lifelong learning as the bedrock of its educational provision and included the major principles of lifelong learning in its national education policy that was revised and approved by Parliament in April, 1994. Botswana could be described as an epitome of stability and rapid socio-economic transformation, guided by meticulously implemented, monitored and regularly evaluated national development plans and policies (Republic of Botswana, 2008; Botswana Review of Commercial Industry, 2007, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2003). On its part, Nigeria has chosen to express its own vision and mission for lifelong learning within the philosophical objectives of her education policy. Firstly, the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly stated that every citizen has a right to equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the development initiatives of the country without any form of discrimination (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979). Deriving from that Constitution is the National Policy on Education (1977) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1977). The policy re-emphasized the fact that no citizen is discriminated against on any grounds, and consequently, both official legal frameworks laid down the provision for pursuing learning in later life in Nigeria.

Like Botswana, Nigeria has a National Policy on Education (1977) that has continued to revamp its educational provision to ensure that the doors to learning are opened to and for all. In fact, the fundamental guiding principle of Nigeria's Policy on Education is the right to learn, and adult and lifelong learning are clearly highlighted as 'uncontestable' expectations in the design and implementation of national education. Consequent upon the enacting of Nigeria's Constitution and the National Policy on Education, programmes in adult literacy, and in particular, those targeting women's literacy and capacity building for national development, educational mobilization programmes like the Mass Mobilization for Social Empowerment and Reconstruction have been structured and implemented to meet the needs of all, including those of citizens aged 50+ years (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1992). It was partly with a view to promoting learning in later life that Nigeria has established structures like the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, the National Commission for Nomadic Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission and the National Commission for Women. These structures are all having official links down to the state and local governments in Nigeria, and the idea is to ensure that all comply with the need to open the doors of learning to all. In addition, there are structures like the National Open University of Nigeria, Federal Universities Departments of Adult Education, Centres for Continuing Education, and Women's Education Units in all states' Ministries of Education and in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, that have been designed to provide specialized programmes designed to meet the learning needs of all, including seniors (Oduaran & Okukpon, 1997). At the core of these offers are literacy, numeracy, vocational and technical skills.

At the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris, South Africa made it clearly known that lifelong learning was the key element in renovating its educational system (UNESCO, 2000). To that effect, everything that was conceived in providing education to adults was within the framework of lifelong learning. So then, in all three countries, there are visions and missions of lifelong learning, but implementation is a different matter altogether,

and that is why a paper in this direction with a clear focus on analysis is very timely, especially because the literature on the subject remains weak, thin and largely ignored. With regards to adult basic education within which literacy and numeracy is the bedrock, South Africa made significant strides through the dedicated implementation of the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign. South Africa launched its mass literacy campaign appropriately tagged as The Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign in February, 2008. Kha Ri Gude which is Tshivenda phrase for “Let us learn” has been planned to ensure that between 14th April, 2008 and the end of 2012, South Africa is totally rid of its burden of 4.7 million adult illiterates (Department of Basic Education, 2008; Kha Ri Gude, 2006; Mckay, 2015).

The design and implementation of the campaign that was informed by ‘Education for All’ (EFA) Goal 4 (UNESCO 2000), The Bill of Rights (chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996), the United Nations Convention in the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UN 2007) as ratified by South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) turned out to be a continuum of Grades 1 to 9 of formal schooling. It meant therefore that adult citizens could enrol in formal education programmes using the medium of non-formal education and still obtain the highest educational qualifications possible. In a major way, then, the campaign was in line with the expectations of a lifelong learning framework. By the end of the campaign in 2015, it was said to have reached its target of 4.7 million adults. Mckay (2015) has reported that the UN has been instrumental to improving the levels of education of the poor, creating jobs for volunteer facilitators and responding adequately to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015 before the benchmark of 2015. For those reasons and based on the fact that the campaign assessment procedures, according to Ovortrup and Keiding (2015), included globally acceptable portfolios with diagnostic and accountability functions, the national initiative aimed mainly but not exclusively at adults was successful and remains a model for other developing countries.

Other than adult literacy programmes, South Africa’s remarkable vision is to keep the doors of learning open for all South Africans with regard to higher education and training institutions (hereafter HEI’s) and even employers of labour, which strive to adopt to changing experiences challenges and situations in the society and workplace. This intention partly responds to the commitment contained in the South African Higher Education Policy, (Department of Basic Education, 2008) to the effect that the education system would open its doors in the spirit of lifelong learning, to workers and professionals. Although workers may not fit appropriately into our characterization of later life, it is rewarding to know that there are no known age limitations for those who want to remain professionals after 60 years. For that reason, therefore, the kind of offers reported by Walters, Witbooi and Abrahams (2015) featuring librarians’ juggling their work and studies and in which the adult student workers are allowed ten days (80 hours) per annum for all class and tutorial attendance and ten days (80 hours) study time for assessment activities, with each year reflecting the desire to provide learning at the later stage of life. To a large extent, provision for learning in later years in South Africa seems to respond to the seeming global drive to widen access to learning by distant and on-line modes. In addition to widening principles, the introduction of flexibility, active learning experiences, participation, the social media interactive, collaboration learning, self-regulatory learning, responsive curricular designs, implementation and assessment have been

widely suggested by Zimmerman (2002); Lai & Chong (2007); McLoughlin & Lee (2010); Green, Woldoko, Foskey & Brooks (2013) and Gordon (2014) as remarkable in the case of South Africa.

It has been observed that learning in later life has been designed to partly address the racially induced inequality and poverty that are legacies of the apartheid system of government which was repudiated in 1994 (Adato, Carter & May, 2006; Zeelen, Rampedi & Van der Linden, 2014). One very interesting aspect of learning in later life in South Africa is the emphasis placed on community education directed at enhancing community development (Zeelen, Rampedi & Van der Linden, 2014). There are no age restrictions in this regard. In fact, community education and community development promote the notion that the older you are, the more knowledgeable you become with regards to cultural history and traditions that are very valuable to South African communities. Non-credential based learning in later life extends beyond community education and development to adult health education as HIV and AIDS continue to affect especially poor citizens (Human Science Research Council, 2014) and there are worrying levels of crime, violence, unemployment and xenophobia (Cox & John, 2014). Like other South Africans, adult South Africans, particularly those disadvantaged by apartheid, reportedly face and continue to grapple with stress at what Cox & John (2014) describe as 'exceptionally high levels', (pp. 303-318). Learning related to reducing stress, violence, crime health, unemployment and xenophobia are clearly located in Mezirow's (1991, 1998) formulated transformative learning theory. This kind of learning is designed to help adult learners make meaning of their life experiences using new frames of reference to develop across the later segment of life-span development. Although Mezirow's theory has been critiqued for failing to pay adequate attention to context and culture (Merriam, 2004), the cognitive processes it was alleged to have over emphasized are probably desirable in post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa needs so much deconstruction and reconstruction of learning activities to effectively proceed. South Africa is in dire need of absolute reconciliation, peace and unity and transformative learning for social action is desirable.

Discussion

Botswana has made progress in implementing relevant policies and legislations governing the provision of adult learning and education. The Vision 2016 Policy (Republic of Botswana-Ministry of Education, 1997) document complements other policies such as the Revised National Policy on Education, National Development Plan 9 (2003-2009), and the Millennium Development Goals. Whilst Vision 2016 Policy spelled out a number of strategies for the development of critical sectors such as the education system, the economy, communities and culture by the year 2016, the National Development Plan 9 identified lifelong learning as a critical component of a national human resource development strategy. It gives an overview of the national educational policy framework (Republic of Botswana-Ministry of Education, 2008: 5). On the other hand, the 1997 National Policy on Vocational Education and Training (Republic of Botswana-Ministry of Education, 1997) is an integral part of the overall strategy to respond effectively to the adult vocational and technical learning and other educational needs of the country (Maruatona, 2003). And then, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlighted adult learning and education-related objectives aimed at the achievement

of universal access to education, the improvement of relevance and quality in adult basic education and reduction of gender disparity by 2015. As in Nigeria, where national programmes such as the national industrial skills, training, women's and girls' vocational skills training and apprenticeships in mechanical, electrical, plumbing and masonry skills are made available to all who might want to learn, adult vocational education is provided in Botswana. Programmes are designed to improve the skills of Botswana through structured work-based learning in response to the skill needs of industries and small-scale businesses, and although adults covered in this analysis may not fully qualify for enrolment in such programmes, the door to learning is opened to all who wish to acquire vocational skills, including older adults.

Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa have extension programmes that are provided by national government structures, Non-Governmental Organizations as well as Community Based Organizations. Some of the programmes are in the area of agriculture, cooperatives, consumers' enlightenment and public health education programmes which are open to seniors. In some instances, seniors are both learners and facilitators where their experiences, educational background and training qualify them to play the relevant roles. Continuing professional development in all three countries receives significant attention as it enables adults at whatever age to improve on the initial learning they might have received. For that purpose, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) at the University of Botswana, the former Botswana Agriculture College (University of Agriculture) and most public universities in Nigeria and South Africa, are indeed private providers, the latter two being the main providers. They offer a number of continuing professional development courses leading to the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees in business management and entrepreneurial skills. Seniors most often simply enrol in the programmes just for the purpose of enlightenment. By far the most significant learning programme offered to adults willing to learn in later life in the three countries is adult basic education. Interestingly, whilst Botswana has achieved more than a 90 per cent literacy rate, making it one of the most literate nations in Africa, Nigeria and South Africa, it also have engaged successfully in actions aimed at eradicating illiteracy from their shores. Apart from this significant achievement, Botswana has been actively engaged in the diversification of adult basic education programmes and reviewed the curricula used to make learning opportunities more relevant.

Challenges and mitigations

While the three countries have made considerable progress in terms of achieving the goals expressed in their relevant policies, there are also some challenges. The challenge of securing enough national resources for the provision of more programmes remains, and that of recognizing and accrediting programmes in indigenous knowledge system has not been properly addressed in Botswana and Nigeria. Adult basic education in the South African context is equivalent to National Qualifications Framework level 1, and to some extent Level 2. As in Nigeria, adult basic education in South Africa fits into the General Education and Training (GET) component of the continuum depicted in the structure below.

OQF against 10-level NQF and other QFs

Level 10	Doctoral Degree		HEQF	National Skills Certificates	National Occupational Certificates		
Level 9	Master's Degree						
Level 8	Postgraduate Diploma Professional Qualifications						
Level 7	Bachelor Degree Advanced Diploma						
Level 6	Diploma Advanced Certificate						
Level 5	Higher Certificate	Advanced National Certificate (Vocational)	GFETQF			National Occupational Access Certificate (Mathematics and Language)	
Level 4	National Senior Certificate (Grade 12)	Adult National Senior Certificate National Certificate (Vocational) 4					Incl subject / unit certificates
Level 3		Units of learning to be accumulated National Certificate (Vocational) 3					
Level 2		National Certificate (Vocational) 2					
Level 1	General Education & Training Certificate (Grade 9)	Adult Basic Certificate of Education					

Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/bekkerd1/intro-fo-qcto>. Accessed on 12 April 2017

It is arranged in such a way that it takes place not just in the urban and rural, farm and special training centres but also in occupational, work-based training and improving programmes such as the ones catered for by the Education, Training and Development Practices/Sector Education and Training Authorities (ETDP/SETAs). In this case, NGOs, civil based organizations and like-minded organizations have developed programmes that target South Africans to benefit maximally from what they do. This means that adult basic education may not end at the level intended, but becomes a necessary entry point into the formal education system affording the individual who enrol in it an opportunity to move on to the highest level of education possible.

All three countries must strive to reverse the duplication of policies and actions as failure to do so would be unproductive. Again, whilst Botswana has properly aligned its relevant policies, Nigeria and South Africa still have to come up to that level. For example, Nigeria has far too many government structures that seem to be struggling to reach out to women as predicated in the policies and actions of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education vis-à-vis those of the National Commission for Nomadic Education. Fortunately, the three countries have aligned properly their continuing professional development programmes as indicated in the establishment of professions-based regulatory bodies like the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in the case of

South Africa and the Nigerian Medical Council. A skills shortage also constraints growth and employment creation in the three countries. Personnel within adult basic education would have to ensure that they monitor effectively its contribution to the quantity and quality of the initiatives aimed at stimulating enterprises and business.

Conclusion

The three countries studied have designed and implemented remarkable programmes for enhancing learning in later life. It is noted that significant achievements have been made in terms of participation. The caveat to this paper comes out clearly in not having been able to hold interviews with seniors in an attempt to use their narratives to inform the conclusions that can be reached in terms of impacts on their lives. It would have been valuable to reflect in the discourse their enjoyment of the programmes offered, their frustrations and the propositions that they can make towards enhancing the efforts being made to provide better learning in later life. Modernisation and the profound entrance of digital technology have almost completely eradicated the value and strong influence of non-formal learning structures and curricula in the three countries. For example, retired Africans and grandparents, in particular, play very significant roles in care-giving to those trying to cope with the scourge of the HIV and AIDS epidemic or even those caring for children orphaned by HIV and AIDS. For the effective provision and management of such services by the seniors, it is imperative to require sufficient quantity and quality of public health education curricula. Moreover, it is not just in the case of adversity that that the seniors become valuable. Grandparents in the three countries do provide care programmes for their grandchildren in and out of school. This is especially so where grandchildren's parents are working and therefore cannot cope effectively with the responsibility for raising the young ones. For this service, grandparents would normally need enhanced grand parenting skills (Bown, 2000). Unfortunately, social transfers like the ones depicted above have not been properly indicated in the available literature in Africa, and this is a major limitation. Be that as it may, this paper has provided insights into the nature and content of learning in later life in Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa with particular reference to policies and structures. It has been pointed out that in spite of the achievements recorded so far, there are challenges that still need to be addressed adequately in order to arrive at the stage that is sufficiently comparable to the situation in more developed countries.

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