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Full length research paper

Evaluation of the National Adult Education Strategy Implementation Success: The Case of University Trainee Issues in different Regions of Ethiopia

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Abstract

Undertaking a critical evaluation on the implementation of Ethiopia's National Adult Education Strategy of (2008) was the purpose of this study. A convergent parallel design with mixed, qualitative and quantitative approaches was used. Data gathering instruments were self-administered questionnaire and structured-interview guide. The questionnaire and the interview guide were prepared out of the evaluated National Adult Education Strategy. The populations of the study were 140 school leadership masters summer students who are working as principals in primary, secondary and preparatory schools coming from Amhara, Tigray, SNNR and Oromiya regional states, at the Faculty of Education in the University of Gondar and six lectures of Adult Education and Community Development in the same faculty and university. From the 140 school principals, 32 were selected proportionally through simple random sampling technique. Whereas, from 6 lecturers through purposive sampling only 4 were selected for interview sessions. The data collected through questionnaire and structured-interview guide were analyzed through frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and thematically through narrative respectively. Results indicated that the strategy formulated in 2008, did not solve those challenges it has identified in its formulation, unachieved all the strategic directions/objectives it has set out and was judged by both principals and lectures as unsuccessful in its implementation and attaining its objectives in the year 2018. Responsible ministry/agency need to be established, collaboration among different ministries in the country, professionalism and the like have been forwarded in alleviating the problem as recommendations.

Keywords

Challenges, Adult education, Ethiopia, Implementation, Strategy

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Introduction

Ethiopia, known for its own alphabet which dates back to the last millennium, the development and educational attainment is not to a desired level. Except in the primary level where the country is progressing well, enrolment rate is relatively low at others, particularly in adult education. Although policy documents (for example, Education and Training Policy 1994,) state the importance of adult education for the attainment of other development agendas including the education of children, its provision and quality remained low. After the reaffirmation of EFA Goals, the country issued policies and reforms in order to achieve them (Genet, 2014). Though some scholars argue that the policies focused on education of children and youth at the cost of adult and non-formal education (Ambissa, 2009), the progress made even with limited effort of the government are appreciable; for instance, the development of National Adult Education Strategy (2008) that opened the way for different sectors to rethink their role in adult education is a good example. In fact, before the strategy was developed, the Education and Training Policy had given recognition to non-formal education (Ministry of Education, 1994). However, subsequent implementation program of the policy has failed to give it adequate attention (e.g., Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) I 1997/8-2001/2 and ESDP II (201/2-2004/5) (Genet, 2014).

Unlike ESDP I and ESDP II, ESDP III (2004/5-2010/11) gave relatively adequate attention for adult education. For instance, during this period, the National Adult Education Strategy was developed and the Ministry of Education has introduced the concept of Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) for implementation in collaboration with international agencies. Emergence of the strategy in this period also paved the way for the expansion of adult education programs and increase in the number of adult education professionals in the country. Although some programs existed before the adoption of the strategy, the strategy set the momentum for the expansion of adult education programs in various higher education institutions

(Genet, 2014). For example, Public Higher Education Institutions were encouraged to open Adult and Community Development programs at Bachelor to Masters levels (for instance, Bahir Dar and Haramaya Universities).

Regardless of what is on the policy, strategy, and programs, the practice seems however weak and blurred at the same time; the practical observations of the writer of this paper [Genet] witnessed that the education of adults continued to be seen as a secondary issue and hence, is far from being achieved. The same notion has been reflected by researchers in the area. For instance, (Samuel 2012, p. 331; as cited in Genet, 2014), appreciating the progress Ethiopia's government is making in other types of education, expresses the condition of adult education as "a forlorn child". Similarly, the master plan for adult education, affirmed that Ethiopia need far more work to be done in adult education (MoE, 2011a).

Hence, the issue of adult education in the country is yet unachieved matter. Thus, the area should get keen interest of researchers, that is why the researcher of this study hold high regard for the area and undertook an evaluation on the implementation success of the National Adult Education Strategy (2008) of the country.

In Ethiopia high level of illiteracy in the adult population is still one of the major barriers to achieving development goals by 2025. Regarding the status of adult education, the federal Ministry of Education in 2008 pointed out that the program had remained low in terms of accessibility and relevance; it had not been geared towards problem solving and had failed to address the immediate life of the adult community (Sisay and Yilfashewa, 2017). ESDP-IV in the same way revealed that the figure of adult illiteracy has remained high, and the issue has become the main challenge and priority agenda in ESDP V (MoE, 2015; Sisay and Yilfashewa, 2017). "Researchers (for example Genet, 2014) do not critically investigate the causality and extent of all these problems for policy makers, program designer and implementers as a

gap. Furthermore, the contribution of adult education program to improve the livelihoods of the people is not checked, and research based solution for the challenge encountering the program has not yet recommended for further improvements” (Sisay and Yilfashewa, 2017).

However, this study focus on evaluating the success implementation of the National Adult Education Strategy (2008) of the country, primarily focusing on two major points; whether the strategy solved the challenges it has identified and whether the strategy is successful or not in its implementation in attaining its objectives. Thus, the following research questions were raised: 1) To what extent the strategy solved all the challenges of adult education in the country identified in the strategy formulation? and 2) To what extent the strategy is successful in its implementation? Therefore, the objective of this study was to evaluate the implementation success of the National Adult Education Strategy (2008) of the country in the year 2018.

Materials and Methods

The study applied pragmatism paradigm where divergent parallel design was adhered. The study used mixed both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaire

The study used self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 4 items asking biographic data (sex, age, work experience and regions), 5 items of dichotomy nature on “yes/no” basis about whether the challenges identified by the strategy are still challenges or not in the implementation process. 12 items asking whether the strategic directions of the strategy’s are achieved or not and 1 item (13th item) asking the success of the strategy in its implementation. The items were 5 point-likert-scale in nature.

Structured-interview interview

The study employed structured-interview guide to illicit information from lecturers on the current adult education practice in the country. The interview guide was developed out of the strategy’s strategic directions (set objectives) consisting of 9 items. These were the adult education coverage expansion in the country, required budget and human resource allocation for the implementation of adult education, quality and relevance of adult education system, capacity of facilitators, supervisors and other experts, management and organization of adult education and establishment of sustainable and effective network creation of partnership for adult education, monitoring and evaluation system of adult education, challenges of adult education and implementation success. The latter one is an added item by the current researcher of the study.

Population, sample and sampling technique

The total population of principals working in primary, high school and preparatory schools attending their master education in school leadership in summer program in 2018, in the department of EDPM, at the Faculty of Education of the University of Gondar were 140 students. From these principals using probability proportional simple random sampling method, 32 principals were selected to fill out the self-administered questionnaire.

In the department of Adult Education and Community Development in the faculty of Education of the University of Gondar, there were 6 active teaching members. Among them, 4 teachers were selected for the interview using non-probability sampling technique through purposive sampling technique. Holding a masters degree in adult education was a criteria for the selection.

Method of data analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed in descriptive ways using percentile, mean and SD by employing SPSS IBM software version 20. While the qualitative data were analyzed theme by theme in narrative ways.

Results and Discussion

Table1. Background information of the school principals/school leadership masters students who filed out the questionnaire (N=32).

Item	Categories	Frequency	percentage
sex	Female	2	6.25%
	Male	30	93.75%
	Total	32	100%
Age	28-32	17	53.13%
	33-39	12	37.5%
	40-56	3	9.37%
	Total	32	100%
Work experience	3-10	15	46.88%
	11-18	15	46.88%
	20 and above	2	6.24%
	Total	32	100%
Principal in	Primary school	7	21.9%
	High school	19	59.4%
	Preparatory school	6	18.7%
	Total	32	100%
Region	Amhara	7	21.9%
	Tigray	9	28.1%
	SNNR	5	15.6%
	Oromiya	11	34.4 %
	Total	32	100%

As can be seen in the above table, the principals who participated in the study are well experienced and composed of coming from different corners of

Ethiopia with their lived experiences to get the insight to understand the bird's eye view on the current adult education practices in the country.

Table2. Responses of participants on research question 1, (N=32), "Policy implementation level"

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low Level of Implementing Adult Education	Yes	22	68.75%
	No	10	31.25%
	Total	32	100%
Non-equitable Distribution of Adult Education Resources	Yes	20	62.5%
	No	12	37.5%
	Total	32	100%
Low Level of Relevance and Quality of Adult Education	Yes	22	68.75%
	No	10	31.25%
	Total	32	100%
Unavailability of Appropriate Organization to lead Adult Education	Yes	26	81.25%
	No	6	18.75%
	Total	32	100%
Imbalance Resource Allocation for Adult Education	Yes	21	65.63%
	No	11	34.37%
	Total	32	100%

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As can be seen in the above table all most all the respondents agreed that the challenges of adult education that were identified by the strategy makers prior 2008 are still challenges in 2018. Twenty two (68.75%) of the respondents responded as there is low level of implementing adult education in the country.

In the structured-interview with teachers in the adult education and community development department all explained the challenges are acute and they agreed the policy did not solve the challenges it has identified in the beginning. Teacher A explained that;

The current challenges of integrated functional adult education are: the board and technical committees are not functional, there is no coordination among Ministry of

Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women and Youth and Ministry of Education, the facilitators are not trained, the budget allocated to this sector is very low, lack of awareness about the value of it within the community, absence of ownership of the program, etc.

Teacher B added quite worrisome fact, he said that;

There is low political commitment of the government. This may be due to the emancipation power of adult education on the rural community. I think political elites fear its contribution to concentrate the rural community (85 % of the country), they may challenge the government in different ways

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Table 3. Responses of participants on research question 2, (N=32), “The implementation status of the strategy’s objectives”

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Increment of Coverage Expansion	14 (43.75%)	7 (21.88%)	6 (18.75%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (3.12%)	2.09	1.201
Awareness on the Significance of Adult Education has been Created	10 (31.25%)	12 (37.5%)	6 (18.75%)	2 (6.25%)	2 (6.25%)	2.19	1.148
Adequate Budget and Human Power Distribution	16 (50%)	9 (28.1%)	5 (15.65%)	2 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	1.78	.941
Quality and Relevant Adult Education System has been Established	18 (56.25%)	6 (18.75%)	4 (12.5%)	3 (9.38%)	1 (3.12 %)	1.84	1.167
The Capacity of Facilitators, Supervisors and Other Experts have been Built	12 (37.5%)	14 (43.75%)	5 (15.65%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	1.84	.808
Favorable and Sustainable Learning Environment has been created for Adult Learners	13 (40.63%)	9 (28.12%)	7 (21.87%)	3 (9.38%)	0 (0%)	2.00	1.016
There is Improved Adult Education Delivery Strategy/Methodology and Techniques	11 (34.38%)	13 (40.63%)	4 (12.5%)	3 (9.37%)	1 (3.12%)	2.06	1.076
Adult Education Coverage and Equitability has been Expanded	13 (40.63%)	12 (37.5%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (3.12%)	2 (6.25%)	1.97	1.121
Establishing and Capacitating Institutions for Continuous Adult Education	16 (50%)	11 (34.38%)	3 (9.37%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.25 %)	1.78	1.070
There is Management and Organization of Adult Education	6 (18.75%)	12 (37.5%)	7 (21.87%)	5 (15.63%)	2 (6.25%)	2.53	1.164
Establishment of Sustainable and Effective Network and Creation Of Partnership has been Created	12 (37.5%)	13 (40.62%)	5 (15.63%)	2 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	1.91	.893
Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System has been Established	10 (31.25%)	15 (46.88%)	5 (15.63%)	1 (3.12%)	1 (3.12%)	2.00	.950

As can be seen in the above table all most all the respondents Strongly Disagree/Disagreed that the policy did not achieved the strategic objectives it outlined in the beginning. For example, to the question/statement “The Adult Education Coverage Expansion has increased” twenty one (65.63%) of the respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed. This was supported by teachers in the department of adult education and community development. Teacher B clearly depicted the scenario;

It is a fact that adult education was better provided during the military regime in the Derg Era. However, when EPRDF current government took power the issue of adult education was sidelined. For instance during the implementation of the two programs (ESDP I & ESDP II), the issue of adult education was not the concern. Relatively, after ESDP III, adult education has gained attention and three programs (FAL and IFAL) were implemented and IFAE (Integrated Functional Adult Education) program is being implemented. But, these programs were not successfully implemented. This was because the government itself gave little attention for the programs. There were not enough awareness creation efforts and the budget deployed was also very minimal. MoE made adult education the shared responsibility of other development ministries (Ministry of agriculture, education, women and child affairs, youth and sport, health etc.), but they are not engaged.

For the question/statement, “required budget and human power has been allocated for adult education implementation,” twenty five (78.1%) of the respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed. In the interview teacher C affirmed that;

The government does not allocate the required budget for adult education programs. The required materials for the facilitation process are not provided adequately. Sometimes the facilitators of the IFAE program provide the teaching materials like pen, pencil, exercise

books by their own money. In most of the centers that I have visited there is/was only one facilitator per IFAE center. In general, though the adult education has an immense role for the overall development of the country, the government sidelined it, there is no adequate budget allocated for the IFAE program.

For the question/statement, “quality and relevant adult education system has been established,” twenty four (75%) of the respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed. This phenomenon is also witnessed by all interviewed teachers. Teacher B on his part stated that:

The organization and the management of adult education have been given for different sectors of which the education sector is supposed to facilitate and organize other sectors. However, experience show that the involvement of sectors is low. Even the education sector does not play its facilitating role. This is because the education sector is over burdened with different programs. Regarding this different stakeholders argue that the system may function if independent sector is established for adult education.

For the question/statement, “the capacity of facilitators, supervisors and other experts has been built,” twenty six (81.25%) of the respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed. All the interviewed teachers also supported the fact. Teacher C depicted the problem with very clear picture;

The facilitators are recruited from their community who are grade 10 complete. After they are recruited, they directly join to teaching without taking both pre-service training. Supervisor and experts requirement is bounded by a problem of recruitment of non-adult educators. Based on my observation, the adult education experts are not graduates of adult education.

Furthermore, for the question/statement, “there is management and organization of adult education,” Eighteen (56.25%) of the respondents strongly

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disagreed/disagreed. The interviewed teachers also expressed similar opinion. Teacher C said;

As it is stated in the national implementation guideline for IFAE many government sectors (education, women and child affairs, labor and social affairs, technical and vocational enterprise, etc.) are the members of the board of adult education. However, there is no a clear guideline that shows the roles and responsibilities of each sector for the implementation of adult education programs. When the program fails to achieve the objective, there is no single institution accountable for the failure.

For the question/statement, “establishment of sustainable and effective network and creation of partnership has been created,” Twenty five

(78.12%) of the respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed; which was also supported by interviewed teachers. They all replied, “There is no good network.” For the question/statement, “effective monitoring and evaluation system has been established,” twenty five (78.13%) respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed. The interviewed teachers have also explained the same. Teacher B said;

The monitoring and evaluation system of adult education implementation is very weak. The program has been monitored and evaluated during the official start of FAL program during ESDP III period. However, gradually responsible bodies sidelined its issue. Experiences show that even at regional level in 2018 adult education is not evaluated.

Table 4. Responses of participants on research question 3, (N=12), to what extent the policy is perceived in terms of success of implementation?

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
The strategy is participatory in line with economic, political and social development of the country	14 (43.75%)	10 (31.25%)	7 (21.88)	0 (0 %)	1 (3.12%)	1.88	.976

As can be seen in the above table, respondents were asked as if the policy was implemented successfully and has attained its objectives. Twenty four (75%) of the respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed. This was affirmed in the interview with the professional teachers in the area. For example, teacher B stated his conviction that;

The National Adult Education Strategy is not effective. The main objective of the strategy is to create effective collaboration system so that different challenges which are identified in the strategy are illuminated and have better provision of adult education. However, the adult illiteracy is not solved even now it is alarming. The country through the strategy plans to have illiteracy in the year 2015. However, the Global Adult Education monitoring report show that the country failed

to achieve this goal. Our practical experience also shows that adult learning centers in each Kebele are not functional and the numbers of participants are too low.

Therefore, it seems possible to argue that the strategy is far behind in achieving its objectives it has set out in the beginning. And is possible to infer a new mechanism has to be designed to make things in order for adult education system in the country to make adults equipped with all the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to participate, contribute and benefit in all development spheres.

Brief discussion along with the theory of Conscientization and Dialogue Theory/ Critical Adult Education Freire

As has been discussed in the above, the study came up with similar findings with studies conducted nationally and internationally. For example, Nationally, Genet (2014), Sisay and Yilfashewa (2017), Tiruwark, Rogers and Tolera (2018) and Yilfashewa and Garkebo (2017) found the same challenge of adult education in the country. Internationally, in Africa for example, Mayombe and Lombard (2016), Nnazor (2005), Okafor, and Onah (2002), UNESCO (2013 and 2016) found similar challenges of adult education as has been found in this current study and forwarded more or less similar recommendations.

Theoretically, according to Freire's (1972), theory of adult education, adult education must be targeting in making awareness on the masses, eradicating oppression and mobilizing their social, economic, and cultural benefits. However, as to the study's findings the following things are not in place. First, political will (during the Derg Regime there was political will and we know what happen to the regime after the masses were aware of their rights and the situation of their country. Therefore, the current regime-EPRDF since it took power it does not want to educate the masses through adult education. Particularly masses in the rural area seem to be feared similar things can cause to the regime). Second, the masses are not allowed through adult education to be active participants in all process of the political, economic and cultural and the like activities honestly. Third, the masses are not given the opportunity to discuss about their country's scenario for example by civic societies possible to infer, least they may revolt against the regime which is unjustifiable.

Hence, the formulation of the Adult Education Strategy of 2008 of the country was not based on real theory of adult education theories for example, "Conscientization and Dialogue Theory/ Critical Adult Education Freire," which is the most common theory in adult education. That is why the challenges the policy identified before 10 years are

still challenges, the objectives of the policy's are not met, no coordination among stakeholders and there is no responsible ministry for the program. As a result, there is failed state of adult education in the country which leaves the human and democratic issues, political, economic, social, and cultural exercise of the masses and the human development of the country are under question, as experiences of the country also tell.

However, it is appreciable that the strategy could be used as a focus of educators and possible measure actions in the future can be spurred out of it.

Conclusions

Based on the empirical data and the findings of the study the following conclusions have been drawn: The National Adult Education Strategy is possible to infer unable to solve those challenges it has identified in 2008 after 10 years of its implementation in 2018. The National Adult Education Strategy is possible to infer it does not have achieved it strategic directions it set out in 2008; and generally speaking, the strategy is believed by respondents of this study as unsuccessful in its implementation and attaining its objectives too.

Future Action

Broadly speaking, to make the strategy successful the following things must be done as based on the findings of the study. Firstly, those challenges must be avoided. Secondly, there has to be coordination among all ministries (for example, agriculture, health, education, labor affairs, youth and women and the like). Thirdly, there has to be adequate budget and trained professionals in adult education. Fourthly, there has to be clear and shared objective of adult education among stakeholders in particular and the government in general and lastly there has to be effective monitoring and evaluation system.

More importantly, the theory of Conscientization and Dialogue Theory/ Critical Adult Education of Freire's recommend that the final purpose of adult

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education is to help the masses to be free from any sort of oppression and become active participants of social, political, economic and cultural activities in their country. Contextually, all ministries need to work jointly and responsible ministry has to be established. Besides, to open the unwilling political will, civic societies need to be allowed to expand and excel the adult education access and delivery in the country. In addition to these, each region, zone, woreda and kebele of the country need to have an established system of recruitment of adult learners, staffing, resourcing, financing, mobilization, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of adult education. The whole purpose should be geared by the belief that a country which has a literate and informed society will have an excellent opportunity to execute every policy in excellence and the country's global competitiveness will be guaranteed.

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Conflict of Interest

The researcher would like to declare there is no conflict of interest in this research authorship. In case, if anyone claims co-authorship the current researcher would take the full responsibility for any measure.

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