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Effective Literacy Programs

Parallel Session A-1

**Vision, Policy and Strategy :
Analysis and Prospects for
Future Development**

**What makes Visions, Policies and Strategies
in the Field of Literacy in Africa?**

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**Working Document
DRAFT**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	4
1. Abstract	5
2. Executive summary.....	6
3. Introduction.....	8
3.1 <i>Definition of Literacy</i>	10
3.2 <i>Conventional and Transformative Approaches</i>	11
3.3 <i>Benefits of Literacy</i>	12
3.4 <i>Funding for Literacy</i>	12
3.5 <i>The African Renaissance: between development, modernization and globalization</i>	13
3.6 <i>Revolution in Gender Relations through Literacy</i>	14
3.7 <i>Revolution in skills, literacy policies and strategies</i>	16
4. Visions and Contexts	16
4.1 <i>Revolution in Values: African Visions for Literacy</i>	17
4.2 <i>Literacy and NEPAD</i>	18
4.3 <i>Literacy and National Visions</i>	18
5. Analysis of Policies and Literacy Practices in Africa.....	20
5.1 <i>National Planning and Literacy Delivery</i>	20
5.2 <i>Support of Literacy and Education For All in Africa</i>	21
5.3 <i>Government and NGO Partnerships</i>	23
5.4 <i>Literacy and Language Policy</i>	24
5.5 <i>Literacy Teacher Training and Support</i>	25
6. Literacy and HIV and Aids.....	26
7. Literacy and Lifelong Learning	29
8. Recommendations and Conclusion.....	31
9. Selected References	33

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ADEA	Association of the Development of Education in Africa
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALF	Adult literacy facilitators
ALAZ	Adult Literacy Association of Zimbabwe
ANFE	Adult and Non-formal Education
AU	African Union
BAEA	Botswana Adult Education Association
CCE	Centre or Continuing Education
CE	Continuing Education
CICE	Centre for In-service and Continuing Education
CIRAC	Circle for International Reflect Action and Communication
EFA	Education For All
ESP	Education Sector Policy
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GNP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
ICAE	International Council of Adult Education
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LGA	Local Government Areas
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFLP	National Functional Literacy Program
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMEC	National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PROLIT	Project Literacy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme
RNPE	Revised National Policy on Education
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Fund For Population
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNIVA	University Village Association
UNLD	United National Literacy Decades
UPE	Universal Primary Education
ZALA	Zimbabwe Adult Learners' Association

1. Abstract

The paper explores the synergy between visions, policies and strategies of literacy education in Africa and gives examples of countries that have demonstrated a link between the three. It argues that UNESCO and other agencies have provided global visions; and that the NEPAD and the AU serve as sign posts for the value and critical role of literacy for african development. Countries formulated plans of action for both adult learning and education for all based on their national contexts and the international agreements made at UNESCO conferences. Donors have funded some literacy project emphasizing UPE that excluded adult learners.

Countries have used campaigns, programs and projects to enable community members to acquire skills needed for decision making in their contexts and being able to participate in the broad development issues of their nations and globally. Consequently, literacy policies are either separated from or embedded in the general education policy. The provision of literacy in these nations increased adult learning opportunities and efforts to attain the goals of Education For All. One of the most significant developments has been to acknowledge and incorporate lifelong learning principles in the national policies though it is not effectively planned for. The other has been the recruitment and training of literacy teachers which is generally satisfactory though their conditions of service are poor. The example of Namibia where they are hired on a yearly contract basis is instructive. Finally, the role of NGOs such as PAMOJA and PROLIT in complementing national efforts in the delivery of literacy in Africa is somewhat impressive and needs to be complemented with reduced bureaucratic bottle necks since NGOs go beyond prescribed reading and writing skills and provide transformative literacy.

2. Executive summary

1. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien 1990), the fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg in 1997, and the *Dakar Framework For Action* in 2000, all called on the international community to make a commitment to meet the educational needs of children, youth and adults, and frame a conducive political context for attaining the MDGs and EFA goals through literacy education. The Dakar World Education Forum (2000) set specific Education for All (EFA) targets and charged UNESCO with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating adult learning initiatives. However member nations, particularly in Africa, still need to convert visions into policies and concrete programs of action, and identify appropriate sources of investment for these.
2. Literacy is seen as an essential right for full participation in development and a powerful tool for poverty alleviation, but different ideological perceptions exist as to what it entails. Narrowly conceived it incorporates the skills of reading, writing and calculating in order for individuals and communities to fit in to a broader political context and to assist with the state's economic development. More broadly defined it is seen as an empowering and transformative process, which enables individuals to challenge existing power structures and to have more control over their destinies. This study looks at the various literacy campaigns, programs and projects in sub-Saharan Africa, and discusses rationales and justifications for investing in these bold initiatives. It places literacy provision within the context of the current United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012).
3. The paper argues that evidence of increased funding for literacy programs, for instance since 1998 (launching year of the Paolo Freire Literacy Decade for Africa), confirms strong political and governmental support. Indeed, where nations have increased funding they have generally also recorded an impressive move towards meeting their EFA goals.
4. The study demonstrates that there is a global vision for the provision of literacy which has been developed from the Hamburg CONFINTEA V Declaration (1997) to the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), which could serve as a basis for strengthening both policy making and strategic planning in Africa. As used here the term "Vision" encapsulates the perceived relationships between program objectives and future outcomes. The development of a long term vision entails an in-depth philosophical and political analysis of the kind of society and citizens African leaders wish to develop. The African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) appreciate the value of literacy in achieving an accountable, democratic, transparent and peaceful Africa and the critical role of education in national development with regard to key priorities and emerging challenges such as poverty elimination, HIV and Aids prevention and mitigation, as well as good governance for democratic societies.
5. Based on this assumption the study analyses a number of national visions to illustrate their importance in achieving national development goals. It highlights disparities that exist between the current state of affairs and what is desired and intended in the future, between majority and minority cultures, male and female participation as well as resulting gender issues, and rural and urban contexts. It shows how grandiose African visions, such as that of NEPAD and those of individual states, translate into policies and strategies for implementation. However it concludes that in many cases the often inadequately documented link between vision and practice is still unclear in operational terms and rarely fulfilled.
6. The priority given to literacy programs within educational policies is disturbingly low and overlooks large sections of society, namely youth, adults, and marginalised groups. Despite agreeing to the EFA goals, in practice African states have concentrated their efforts towards achieving universal primary education at the expense of adult education, and literacy in particular. In spite of this problem the

study illustrates that some countries such as Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cape Verde, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Senegal and Uganda are making efforts to link the national vision to policies and strategies for education. It makes a critical assessment of literacy practice to illustrate efforts made by some African nations to attain a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015.

7. One of the foremost challenges in realising this fourth EFA goal is rooted in the way that policies are designed in Africa. Nations such as Rwanda have developed separate policies for basic education and literacy, and this makes it easy for literacy not to be overlooked in budgetary allocations. Others such as Botswana have incorporated literacy into broader educational policy and this makes it less of a priority as bureaucrats treat it in a 'business as usual' manner without any sense of urgency. Some African nations have demonstrated relative success in reconciling their policies with visions, showing that with increased political will, strategic planning and monitoring, and adequate funding, literacy delivery in Africa could be improved. Governments such as that of Kenya for example have increased school enrolments. In Senegal, the use of public private partnerships to deliver literacy has had some impact on literacy rates, and the state has increased its share of the education budget allocated to literacy as a sign of its commitment to attain the EFA goals.
8. South Africa decentralised and outsourced all of the delivery of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in order to allow partners such as the non-governmental organisation Pro Literacy (PROLIT) and the University of South Africa (UNISA) develop materials, train teachers and run classes. The benefits of outsourcing mean that specialists meet deadlines, work under a clearly defined regulatory regime and legal framework and free up time for literacy education staff to effectively supervise and coordinate their other activities. The disadvantage is that it might lose its political tone and become a technocratic machinery that is complex to coordinate and synergise, as well as costly, playing into the hands of World Bank and other agencies who argue that literacy is not cost effective.
9. These choices are made by African governments on the basis of ideological differences. Conventional programs have been criticised for providing literacy for domestication, to enable learners to fit into national agendas and to serve their designated place in society better. Campaigns on the other hand, often claim to provide literacy for liberation, to transform society, to build on indigenous knowledge, to empower learners and to destabilize the status quo. Governments ultimately need to agree on a vision of what a literate population might entail, and to back this up with strong policies and efficient systems of implementation. This entails being clear on the priorities behind programs and the resources and approaches that are likely to deliver on these. In some countries these priorities are associated with economic gain and the inclusion of income generation activities, in others it is increased citizen participation and democratisation.
10. Literacy in sub-Saharan Africa as elsewhere has also proven to be an effective mechanism for behavioural societal change regarding gender equality. It has empowered women. Literate African women do better in all measurable ways, including health and well-being, age of childbearing, ability to control fertility, reported sense of happiness and sense of power in the household and in the community. Their children are healthier and almost 100 percent more likely to go to school. For literate women, the potential freedom of wage labour may mean that they work fewer hours for far greater economic returns, evading the strenuous life of some forms of subsistence farming for instance. Importantly, they can also save wages and get loans based on their job status that provide capital for investment in small businesses.
11. Educational campaigns have therefore linked literacy to social change as well as to poverty alleviation. Indeed, poverty is associated with weak endowments of human and financial resources, such as low levels of education with associated low levels of literacy and few marketable skills, generally poor health status and low labor productivity as a result. Poor households typically have few if any financial assets and are often politically and socially marginalized. These conditions of social exclusion increase the problems of reaching these populations through programs aimed at changing sexual and other behaviors. Even more fundamental to the condition of poverty are social and

political exclusions. HIV-specific programs are neglectful of the interests of the marginalized and are rarely if ever related to their needs, as are also unfortunately other non-HIV related programs activities - such as those relating to agriculture and credit. More generally it is the absence of effective contextualized state supported literacy programs aimed at sustainable livelihoods, which limit the possibilities of changing the socio-economic conditions of the poor. Unless the knowledge capital and reality of the lives of the poor and marginalized are changed, they will persist with behaviors which expose them to HIV infection (and all the consequences of this for themselves, their families and communities). Literacy can be a powerful leveraging tool in this regard; it allows a negotiated behavior towards diverse forms of risks to the social fabric (HIV, child labor, gender inequality, social fractures, the challenges of globalization etc.), as well as catalyses a proper gender equality perspective embedded in a secure and stable environment.

12. By analysing both policies and strategies for literacy, this study makes some suggestions on how to enhance political will to deliver demand-driven literacy programs. The study also identifies a number of promising practices such as decentralization for increased learner involvement and improvement in the recruitment, continuous training of literacy teachers, such as in Namibia, which has moved away from using volunteers to hiring them on an annual contractual basis. It stresses the importance of considering the gender bias of particular literacy approaches, of lifelong learning as an educational strategy, of the use of mother tongue as a mode of delivery such as in Mali, and of working in partnership with civil society and NGOs. These coherent policies have had a profound impact on the acquisition and the effective use of literacy in sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Introduction

13. This study provides a critique of African national vision statements, development and educational policies and strategies to determine how far they place literacy at the centre of development discourses at national, sub-regional, and continental levels. This includes assessing the role of international conventions and protocols and their impact on the national process of planning for literacy delivery. It will highlight the role of literacy in the changing African situations with regard to its response to globalisation and structural adjustment policies, and initiatives such as the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The contributions of umbrella networks responsible for literacy in Africa such as PROLIT, and PAMOJA will also be assessed.
14. The study analyses national visions and policies to determine whether there is a discernable trend in the relationship between vision, political rhetoric and the practical realities that guide adult literacy provision. Based on this analysis, a model will be developed to assess progress in building political and social consensus on making literacy a priority in national development. The use of national educational policies, evaluation and national literacy survey reports will determine the importance of literacy in an international or national vision for education, and what it is intended to achieve. The study also provides some examples of promising practice from across the continent and attempts to evaluate their impact on learners.
15. This report deals with vision, policies and strategies for literacy and its effective implementation in sub-Saharan Africa. Literacy is seen as a fundamental human right, with political and social instrumentality; and as an essential foundation for development. It is considered a pre-requisite for the development of skills and competency for better work and employment, control of fertility, reduction of mortality, and fostering improved quality of life and increased life expectancy (UNESCO, 1995).

16. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development (March, 6-12 1995) highlighted the importance of education for social equity and social justice. Education was viewed as critical in the fight against poverty, to create productive jobs, strengthen social fabric and achieve human security. The programme emphasised the need for access to education through provision of literacy, basic education and primary health care (United Nations, 1995).
17. Africa faces tremendous challenges, some of the most critical being poverty and the spread of HIV. According to the United Nations (2000) Report more than 2.8 billion people are living on less than the equivalent of US\$2 per day and more than 1.2 billion people live on less than US\$1 per day. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of people who are poor with poverty affecting 46.3% of the population. Poverty has been described as not just a lack of material wealth but a lack of power to address the circumstances that have people in poverty. (Daubon, 2005).
18. At the same time the region has nearly 26 million people who are living with HIV and Aids. 70% of the global population that are infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. The levels of HIV prevalence in parts of Africa are extremely high - in Southern Africa there are now many countries with HIV infection rates in adults in the range of 20-25%. The gap between rural and urban HIV rates -- previously substantial -- is now narrowing rapidly in many countries. One consequence of the high HIV infection rates among women is the increasing number of children with HIV (through mother to child transmission). It is estimated that there are presently some 12 million children in Africa who have lost one or both parents to HIV-related illnesses, and that by 2010 these numbers will have increased to some 40 million. In many countries the proportion of children who have lost one or both parents will be as high as 20-25% by the end of the first decade of the new millennium. These trends have direct implications for intergenerational poverty and impose immense challenges for policy makers.
19. The CONFINTEA V Conference (1997) enlarged the vision of literacy by stressing its central role in facilitating participation among all citizens of the world. It also stressed the importance of engaging men and women from all walks of life if humanity is to survive and meet the challenges of the future (Conference Declaration). It portrayed education as a gateway to an enhanced social, cultural and economic life (UNESCO, 1997). Given the magnitude of the problems of illiteracy, poverty and disease inflicting the continent, literacy is still an indispensable priority in most African countries. Problems of high general and infant mortality, high school drop out rate, low life expectancy, low rates of economic growth, low school enrolments and high illiteracy rates could be ameliorated by well conceptualised and effectively implemented literacy campaigns, programs and projects. Subsequent to CONFINTEA V, UNESCO and the international community were invited to launch, starting as early as 1998, a *Paolo Freire Decade on Literacy For All* in the perspective of learning throughout life together with the *African Decade for Education for All*

3.1 Definition of Literacy

20. Literacy is a dynamic concept. Formerly understood as just reading, writing and basic numeracy, the concept has been enlarged to encompass a whole range of “more complex and diverse skills and understandings” (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p. 50). The Global Monitoring Report (2006) defines literacy as a “ contextually bound continuum of reading, writing and numeracy developed through the process of learning and application, in school and in other settings appropriate to youth and adults” (UNESCO, 2006 p.30).

21. In Africa, as in other continents, there has been a proliferation of literacy definitions and models, contingent upon the schools of thought of the different proponents and what they were interested in achieving. These have had implications for models of provision as well as for assessment of outcomes. For example, some definitions focus on the skills needed by individuals for work, education, social interaction and negotiations of every day living. Such an approach adopts a cognitive, individual-based model associated with a psychometric tradition, quantifiable levels of ability and a deficit approach. Illiteracy is assumed to be both an outcome of individual inadequacy, and a casual factor in unemployment (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004). Such conceptualisation attracts models that are “economics driven, associated with workforce training, productivity, functional literacy and notions of human capital” (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p.14). Other programs aim to empower individuals and communities to change their status quo and adopt “socio-cultural models associated with contextualised and multiple literacy practices, valuing of the ‘other,’ and a strong critical element” (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p.14).
22. Literacy can also be understood as focused on imparting reading, writing, numeracy and oracy skills, and thereby emphasizing cognitive abilities, independent of the social context in which such skills are acquired and used. As such it is seen as a single, autonomous skill and an indispensable component of social and economic development in society. Alternatively it can be viewed as applied, practiced and utilized according to the social and cultural context in which it is organized, and therefore governed by different rules and conventions (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996; Street, 1995). In the former approach, literacy is seen as a neutral decontextualised skill necessary for the survival of the recipient and which can therefore be organised by technical experts. Learners need cognitive abilities to acquire reading and writing skills. When viewed as practices (Street 1995) literacy focuses on the social context of the learners, the different uses they make of literacy and the meanings and the norms which surround these uses. A social practice model sees it as unrealistic to make claims for literacy as a single autonomous skill, and tends to use the term literacies to indicate the range of diverse uses and meanings people associate with reading, writing, numeracy and oracy, and the values drawn from these. Taxi drivers in Johannesburg, fisherfolk in Sierra Leone, female traders in Burkina Faso may all need different kinds of literacies for different purposes. In a social practice model, programs should be designed locally by people who understand the context and with the active involvement of learners.
23. Most literacy programs in Africa focus on the provision of basic or rudimentary skills of reading, writing and numeracy but there are differences with regard to who designs the programme and how the content responds to the learner’s needs. Lonsdale and McCurry, (2004) define literacy as follows:

Literacy is a responsive and context specific multi-dimensional lifelong learning process designed to equip beneficiaries with specialised knowledge, skills, attitudes and techniques to independently engage in practices and genres involving listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, technical functioning and critical thinking required in real life.

This definition is adopted here because it captures the view that literacy in Africa should be viewed as a continuous and lifelong process that will move individuals, families, and communities from acquiring basic reading and writing, and numeracy skills to wanting to use it to empower themselves and transform their lives.

3.2 Conventional and Transformative Approaches

24. Conventional literacy proceeds from the assumption that governments can engage in planned development change, equating growth with efficiency. Literacy programs are often centralized though a stated goal and literacy is not treated urgently. The curriculum is carefully defined in terms of what is to be taught and methods and materials to be used are centrally developed (Weber, 1999). The

program is carried out in accordance with demands for social accountability and assumed needs of the individuals and the nation, without properly understanding the diverse needs among the people involved. (Hearth, 1999). For example, in Kenya the objective of the literacy programs claims it is to increase people's participation in development. It enables adults to read development information in agriculture, health, co-operatives, his or her party, and the government (Abdullah, Gachanja, & Mujidi, 1999) and provides utilitarian skills, which farmers are expected to use immediately in their lives. The goal of the state is to use literacy to facilitate orderly personal and national development to meet the broader development goals of society. This is not dissimilar to a number of other African countries, especially those that endorsed the capitalist approach to development. Programs are intended to help people acquire basic prescribed literacy and numeracy skills considered essential for their survival with the assumption that individual concerns can be reconciled with national political goals (Wagner, 1999).

25. While some conventional programs start with mother tongue and use national languages, their goals are often not transformative. This approach can therefore be contrasted with transformative literacy that engages learners in social action with the intent to use literacy skills to improve the quality of their lives and exercise their freedoms as citizens (Beder, 1991; Giroux, 1995). In this approach literacy is viewed as an empowering experience, bringing about critical reflection and problem solving skills facilitated by dialogue between teachers and learners. As in the REFLECT programs in Uganda and the Gambia, Participants may be assisted to critique 'discourse maps' of society in order to transform it (Gee, 1996). This approach assumes that literacy provides people with the tools to understand society, and that by understanding it they are in a position to change it.
26. Transformative literacy often adopts a campaign approach, as when a state needs to foster transition after a revolutionary war and Bhola (1999) observes that states treat campaigns as a priority undertaking. Lind and Johnston (1990) argue that with decolonization, literacy came to be seen by the state as a tool in economic growth. Transformative literacy uses multiple languages and consultative strategies. For instance, in Tanzania, the program was built into the cultural life of the people through the use of locally relevant materials and the state established links with the people through performance arts and crafts (Rassool, 1999). This resonates with Amartya Sen (1995) who observed that development occurs when people see the possibility to achieve what makes their lives valuable and worthwhile.
27. These different conceptions of literacy have implications for how literacy is planned and implemented in different African countries. While both conventional and transformative programs are sponsored and controlled by governments, the purposes for literacy education in each case are different (Torres, 1998). Overall, most government sponsored programs in Africa fit the characteristics of the conventional approach. Whatever approaches a given nation adopts, the bottom line is that literacy should go beyond basic reading, writing and numeracy to ensure that people acquire life skills and knowledge essential for their development. Literacy has to address the negative impacts of illiteracy which has been linked to poverty, disease and exclusion. It inhibits progress and productivity, hinders cultural and spiritual advancement, and fuels the chronic dependency of entire societies, Africa suffers these challenges more than any other continent and literacy is seen an essential element in the struggle for justice, human dignity and equality.
28. This study believes that literacy could be beneficial if certain conditions are met and endorses the view that in order for economic change to improve lives, people need to be involved in the development process, they should be assisted to define their needs and involved in the planning, organising and implementing of programs that meet them.

3.3 The Benefits of Literacy

29. Literacy is a source of economic equity and cultural identity, essential for creative citizen participation and sustainable development (UNESCO, 1997). Consequently, the fourth goal of the

Dakar Framework of Action projects that the world should achieve a 50 percent improvement in literacy provision by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. It assumes that furnishing individuals with the ability to read, write and undertake certain practical skills enables them to become active participants in their socio-economic and cultural development. The aim of literacy work has moved from the desire to eradicate illiteracy to the need to create a literate environment supportive of literate societies based on the principle of lifelong learning.

30. Literacy provision is seen as a human right. In the foreword to the 2002 Global Monitoring Report, the Director General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, noted that not only did nations recognize the need to extend the provision of education to all children, youth and adults but national governments agreed to serve this goal and international agencies pledged that no committed country would be prevented by lack of resources (UNESCO, 2002). However, as Torres (2003) observed, such declarations and commitments remain on paper lacking technical and financial support. Governments and donors must invest more not less if they expect literacy to improve the lives of children, youth and adults. Countries in the South are entrapped in conflicting investment priorities such as military spending, HIV/AIDS and poverty, through to providing education for all. In view of the potential benefits of education and the contributing role of literacy, the United Nations declared 2003-2012 as another Literacy Decade.

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) endorses the expanded notion of literacy to include the generic skills of reading, writing and calculating; and as a culturally and linguistically diverse lifelong learning process.

The UNLD is particularly important for Africa: it provides a framework for action, strategies, plans, forums, initiatives and research during a decade period which should experience sustained international and regional momentum that can be harnessed to support national and international policies. It also requires the ability to identify processes that will command strong public and private supports, utilize sound technical expertise and implement approaches that match the challenge of the scale (EFA Monitoring Report 2004-5).

3.4 Funding for Literacy

31. Societies if they wish to follow the path of knowledge based growth and development need to make a very thorough reconstruction of their institutions. It suggests that African leadership should realise the need to invest more resources in education in order to achieve the goals of the African Renaissance. Among other things Dakar recognised that investment in quality education is a prerequisite to the empowerment of Africans. It acknowledged that the provision of basic education must be transformed for inclusiveness, relevance and gender responsiveness. In a joint statement ministers of education committed themselves to removing all barriers that hinder African children, youth and adults from gaining access to quality education (UNESCO, 2000). The recent Global Monitoring Report (2006) challenges the assumptions by nations and the international community that investing in school going children is more important than in education and training for youth and adults, and argues that claims for greater cost effectiveness of primary education as compared to that of literacy, adult and other forms and level of education are unfounded. There has been a proportional reduction in investments in youth and adult education as more resources went to achieve universal primary education (UPE). However according to Abadzi (2005) available studies by the World Bank do not provide categorical and conclusive evidence on the unit costs of providing literacy to youth and adults to be usefully compared to unit costs in primary schools. She argues that since literacy education uses volunteer teachers, cost per participant may underestimate the real cost of literacy instruction. In a comparative analysis of Indonesia, Ghana and Senegal, it was found that in both Indonesia and Ghana administrative costs were higher compared to Senegal, while NGO programs have lower unit costs than government programs. This indicates that because evidence is inconclusive, there is no basis to justify low investment in literacy compared to primary education. There are some signs that youth and adult education could cost less in some cases and more information on these

success stories needs to be documented. The bottom-line is that the more funds states are willing to spend on literacy education, the better their chances of achieving the fourth goal of the Dakar Framework of Action. As the former South African minister of education, Kader Asmal reminded, literacy is a strong weapon through which Africa could claim its rightful place among the continents of the globe. It is therefore imperative that every child, youth and adult in Africa learns to read and write. African leaders and experts must commit themselves to making this happen. The investments in literacy today, will over time, decrease the need for foreign aid by creating income-generating capacities in communities. Through providing the necessary ground for professional training, literacy leads to the improvement of local economies. Only through increasing the rate and the average level of literacy and education nation-wide, can African hope to ease serious public health, demographic and environmental problems (Asmal, 1999).

3.5 The African Renaissance: between development, modernization and globalization

32. The African Renaissance concept was first used by President Nelson Mandela in 1994 at an OAU summit in Tunisia. It has since been used by thinkers and academics. Ali Mazrui states in his keynote address at the Fifth General Conference of The African Academy of Sciences (Tunisia, 1999), that the Renaissance requires three major revolutions - a revolution in skills, a revolution in values and a revolution in gender-relations, i.e. in relations between men and women. He further provides one possible definition of development that the African Renaissance has to deal with as being modernization minus dependency. “But what is modernization? One possible answer is that modernization is change which is compatible with the present stage of human knowledge, which seeks to comprehend the legacy of the past, which is sensitive to the needs of the future, and which is increasingly aware of its global context. This is the positive interpretation of modernization. Skills and values are at the core”, (Mazrui, 1999).

33. This echoes Kader Asmal’s view that one of the challenges facing the African Renaissance is ensuring that children are given the best possible opportunities to tackle the future in a fast globalizing world, while addressing the distortions and inequalities of the past. He stressed that the promotion of literacy should be accompanied by a sense of a common citizenship in a caring society where the development of all people, rather than a privileged elite, is given prominence. In a world where competitive practices marginalize the poor, the unemployed, women and people living in rural areas, the westernized notion that literacy leads to wealth and prosperity is as misleading as the assumption that illiteracy is the only primary cause of poverty and degradation.

“That illiteracy breeds dependence cannot be denied. It alienates individuals from socio-political and economic activities, rendering them unable to contribute to the development and growth of the nation. Neither can they make informed choices and exercise their basic rights. It is therefore important that Africa should become a caring society where all people have a basic reading skill.

Women in Africa face many difficulties as a direct result of poor literacy levels. Ironically, they are often left to care for the education of their children. It is neither accident nor coincidence that women in Africa lead the way in the campaign to promote literacy and education on the continent,” (Asmal, 1999).

3.6. Revolution in Gender Relations through Literacy

34. Indeed, since the 1970s there has been a focus on women’s literacy projects throughout the developing world, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Bown, 1990). Many of the EFA goals reflect

this with targets aimed at the participation of girls and women in school and adult literacy programs, and the end of gender disparities by 2015. Accompanying statistics showed that in sub-Saharan Africa the gap between male and female literacy rates (19%) had narrowed only slightly between 1980 and 1995, but further to 16% by 2005. Reports claim that between 50 and 75 % of women from different states were still classed as illiterate by 2004.

Such reports are difficult to verify and depend on a huge range of different definitions and measurement of literacy across different states. However while the reasons for male/female disparities are closely associated with traditional and cultural attitudes to schooling and not difficult to understand; huge claims have been made in support of women's literacy. These include:

Women's literacy is the single most important factor in development.

One out of every three women in the world is illiterate. Infant mortality and malnutrition are significantly lower with mothers who have completed primary education.

Women are responsible for 70 percent of food production in Africa.

Women who are literate are more likely to use contraception, family planning and to have their children vaccinated.

Literate women support their own children, including their daughters throughout their schooling and assist with homework, significantly raising attainment

With the increase of HIV and Aids women are becoming heads of households and responsible for supporting their families

Women are generally responsible for marketing and for a range of income generating activities

35. Robinson-Pant (2004) points out how the policy discourse surrounding women's literacy, has remained largely unchanged since 1990 and International literacy year. She also indicates that since the 1970s evidence has begun to emerge that shows there is not necessarily a causal link between education and health, women's literacy and fertility rates. Recent research has also highlighted the danger of focusing on women's behaviour in isolation from men. Many men share concerns for the health and welfare of their family, and have an influence on the family environment, though the amount of time they spend with their children varies in different cultures. The early Women in Development approaches of the 70's are gradually being replaced by 'Gender in Development (GAD) perspectives, but women still tend to be viewed as a homogeneous group. Bown (in Robinson- Pant 2004) emphasises the need for policy makers to respond to diversity rather than seeking to 'solve mass problems with mass solutions'. Ethnographic research into women's literacy indicates that a range of coping strategies influence women's behaviour at home and their response to health or welfare messages, and that literacy is one of a range of factors to take into account.

36. Similarly changing understandings of literacy, and a move from an autonomous to a practices approach, highlights the need to understand what kinds of literacies women need, when, and whether these do indeed form part of the literacy curriculum. McCaffery, (in Robinson-Pant 2004) among others, observes that the single the undisputable claim for literacy acquisition is that it evokes new confidence in women. As a vision for the future it is this confidence that should inspire policy makers to take women's literacy seriously.

37. Nonetheless the picture is complex and beginning to change. The recent UNDPF report on gender equality in primary education (2004) shows that in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole the enrolment of girls in primary schools lagged only slightly behind that of boys (83% compared to 86% of boys). In some countries figures are worse and in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea only 75 girls are in school for every 100 boys at primary level. But although this figure becomes the norm across the continent at secondary level, this is partly historic. As children currently enrolled in primary move on to secondary level, the differentials may begin to change (UN MDG report 2005). Drop outs among boys far

exceed that of girls and the youth literacy rates only vary by 11% between young women and young men. When adding to this the fact that across the world the majority of participants in literacy classes are female, it is possible that in the future literacy rates will begin to reverse.

38. At the same time changing household patterns through migration, failing harvests and shifting economies can alter power relationships between men and women. Lind (2004) points out that 'women seem to be more interested in literacy learning than men' and this is true globally, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa. Lind argues that new trends 'have a tendency to marginalise men' and in Zambia for example the proportion of women who have completed basic education exceeds that of men. While the most common approach to gender analysis is to target women in most countries, (e.g. Zambia and Senegal, ICAE 2003) women constitute three quarters of adult literacy learners. It may be that programs need to look as seriously at barriers to male participation. An evaluation in Namibia (Lind 1996) found that cattle herding, negative attitudes among other men and female dominated classes were all contributing factors. While innovative approaches were used among the national literacy program – including male classes run under different names these are isolated cases. It is only in very male areas, such as the work place or the armed forces (projects in Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa etc) that men seem to outnumber women in classes. Studies in Uganda showed how economic and political changes, including affirmative action and new legislation had helped to promote education and employment among women. As a result of the Aids pandemic single women have become more acceptable, and female headed households more common. Women are showing themselves to be better prepared for the new market economy than men, and more able to operate within it. These shifting patterns of gender norms and relationships are related to education, health and economics and the complex relationship between them.

39. In turning a vision that includes gender equity into national policy and a clear strategy for the future it is crucial that planners and policy makers do not oversimplify the situation in an attempt to reach international targets. In promoting gender equality it is necessary to look closely at regional as well as national and continental contexts, and at how patterns of literacy need and literacy acquisition vary between generations. It cannot be assumed that women or men are a homogeneous group, as it cannot be assumed that literacy is a single concept, equally measurable and relevant to all contexts. Between vision and policy and implementation lies an ongoing need for research.

3.7. A revolution in skills: literacy policies and strategies

40. Research informs policy which in turn affects practice. Some countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe have a declared policy on literacy built into either their national development plans or separate policies on adult basic education or literacy. Botswana for example, has no separate policies on literacy but it is part of the overall Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) and literacy is subsumed under basic education. In South African it is part of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). Zambia on the other hand, have no clearly articulated national policy on adult education but have adopted specific programs on literacy, thereby creating a different understanding of the concepts and use of literacy education on the continent (ICAE, 2003). However, what is even more critical is the conspicuous lack of documentation on literacy campaigns and programs and more so the qualitative and quantitative longitudinal research on the impact of literacy on participants (Torres, 2003; Walters, 2001).

41. There is no single way to develop policy, and the way policies have evolved varies across nations. In Botswana, it was a result of two national commissions on education, the first in 1977 convened by the President, to look into the problems of education and suggest what could be done to improve its delivery. A second commission was convened in 1992 to revise the achievements of the previous commission, and suggest the way forward for all spheres of education including literacy. The process involved extensive consultations with communities around the country to elicit their views on the

future direction of education (Ministry of Education, 1994). In South Africa, it involved democratic participation of all the nine local provinces and other stakeholders culminating in the development of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) program (McKay, 2004). The policy framework in this regard places learners at the heart of literacy delivery. Policy making acknowledged the diversity of learners in terms of their individual and community circumstances. The focus was on determining learners' needs and resources in order to help them improve their lives through literacy. The policy framework has to assume a heuristic framework where the emphasis is on the recognition of context, learner characteristics, the process of teaching and learning and articulating tangible outcomes (UNESCO, 2005).

4. Visions and Contexts

42. One of the best illustrations of UNESCO's global vision for literacy was the 1997 Hamburg conference which persuaded other partners of the need to involve all stakeholders if literacy was to effectively facilitate democratic participation. The notion of setting an agenda for adult education demonstrates UNESCO's concern with the present state of literacy delivery, where declarations are not followed up with concrete action. However at times there are contradictions between visions and the focus of UNESCO and its partners, for example the World Bank. The World Bank's vision for exclusive attention to Universal Primary Education in practice undermines funding for youth and adult literacy. In its 1994 review, the World Bank decried the fact that literacy shows poor results for the money invested. The poor performance of adult literacy programs in the 1970s and 80s led to the World Bank's decision to focus on primary education. The basic argument was that the effects of literacy acquired through childhood or schooling influenced quality of life while those of adult literacy were not known (Abadzi, 1994). In fact, a study carried out in Uganda by the World Bank and at the Makerere University, comparing learning results between government Functional Literacy Programme and one ran by REFLECT-based community based organization found no difference between participants in both programs. On the contrary, they found adult literacy programs to be cost effective in terms of reading and other basic competencies (Carr-Hill, *et al.*, 2001). Torres (2003) also argues that there is no basis to sustain the argument that school literacy does better than out of school literacy. If anything the evidence suggests that there is poor performance in school literacy acquisition, retention and use. In Africa, the World Bank sends contradictory messages in countries where it funds some literacy programs whilst at the same time requiring them to fulfil UPE goals at the expense of adult literacy as a condition for assistance. In spite of this, Africa has developed its own regional and national vision(s), policies and strategies to combat illiteracy as illustrated below.

4.1 Revolution in Values: African Vision for Literacy

43. As indicated above, vision entails the formulation of realistic, credible, attractive statements of intent encapsulated in a document about future projections of a region or country or organisation. African nations through the African Union and its predecessor organizations have evolved visions, which have informed their then future developments in the continent. For example, in the 1960s visionary anti-colonial leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, envisioned African economic growth, fruitful social development and peace and clearly linked that to an eventual establishment of a united states of Africa. Several years after him, the African Union modelled themselves around the ideals of a plausible future continent set up as he then envisioned. Most current leaders have a vision for adequate education, housing and healthcare to improve the welfare of their people.

African Vision for EFA

44. The most explicit statements on the African leaders' vision of literacy and education in general were articulated at the regional conference on Education for All for Sub-Saharan Africa held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1999. President Mbeki of South Africa noted that nowhere has sustainable development been attained without a well-functioning system of education or equality of educational opportunity (UNESCO, 2000). This is a clear statement connecting Sub-Saharan African problems and education. The leaders decried the fact that Africa is beset by atrocities such as wars and conflict situations, which are hindering their continental vision for education. They noted that some Southern Africa countries with gender parity such as Botswana and Lesotho have attained near universal primary education and higher adult literacy. Ministers of Education, representatives of civil society and international development agencies crystallised the African vision by noting that education is a basic human right for all African children, youth and adults and investment in education is a prerequisite for empowerment of Africans to participate in the global economy. They recognised the need for all Africans to have access to and use information and communication technologies. All these are viewed as essential visionary positions that would influence the way African leaders and civil society agencies would view the role of education in future. Very clearly, if this Sub-Saharan vision were to be implemented, it would place Africa in a better position to pursue policy options and strategies that would create opportunities for a better future for all. The areas of focus they suggested for the new vision of African renaissance are as follows; improving access and equity, quality and relevance of education, capacity building for professionals and institutions and the need to improve partnerships (UNESCO, 2000). Leaders also participated in the publication of a visionary document entitled the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD), outlined below.

4.2. Literacy and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

45. The grand vision for the development of the African continent has been articulated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Given the challenges besetting Africa discussed above, NEPAD, was founded by African political leaders to have a common platform to reverse these problems. First, their goals include achieving a 7% growth in GDP over the next 15 years, to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2005, and to reduce by half, the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, reduce infant mortality by two-thirds, and reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters (NEPAD, 2001). The basic thrust of NEPAD is that, unlike its predecessors, African leaders have accepted responsibility to confront and deal with complex issues stifling the attainment of national and continental goals, and pledged to learn from each other and work together to implement NEPAD goals and strategic objectives. They envision a vibrant, rich, culturally diverse continent in terms of language and the arts, standing united to end its oppression and striving for progress and development, a democratic Africa triumphant over colonialism, Apartheid and oppression. They advocate the use of knowledge of the local environment and modern management to address problems of poverty, diseases and misrule. Education is seen as a means to prepare people to take charge of their destiny, liberate them from dependency and enable them to engage in critical thinking, which has more in common with a critical/transformational approach. They viewed the provision of education as a partnership between government, civil society and other development partners and identified infrastructure, information and communications technologies, transport, water, agriculture and health as priority sectors.

46. NEPAD in this regard offered a new vision of development for Africa, since for the first time, African countries adhere to the values of peace, security, good governance and offers to collaborate with civil society, hitherto viewed as a rivals and a contender for power and control of the political sphere. In as far as education and literacy are concerned, NEPAD provided leadership by endorsing most of the strategies articulated above, and participating in the formulation of the World Education Forum and Millennium Development Goals. NEPAD could be criticized for lack of clear articulation of benchmarks for education, and in particular literacy education, but their vision provides a broad view of what could be done to alleviate the problem of illiteracy and attain more democratic dispensations.

47. NEPAD has been widely criticized, in particular by the South African Churches for setting its eyes on global integration and failing to galvanize popular local participation. They argue that the vision can only be restored and motivating if Africa's leaders enter into a new partnership with their people. They fear that Africa's hope for integration into the global economy ignores the fact that currently integration is to its detriment and Africa can not develop unless it institutes a massive anti-poverty effort to ameliorate the suffering of the poor. In spite of these challenges, it has set a pace for the development of a long term vision from which some productive plans for better literacy delivery could emerge. These ideals can only be achieved if the NEDAD vision allows African citizens to participate actively in the running of the affairs of their nations in consort with their governments and civil society. Below is a summary of how some countries have integrated continental and global goals within their vision for literacy.

4.3 Literacy and National Visions

48. Quite evidently a number of African countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Rwanda, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Senegal have different visions for literacy, which serve to guide their future development planning processes. In each case, this is a fairly realistic, credible, attractive future projection of what they seek to attain at the end of a set period. Each national vision aims to develop educational policies that will transform Africa and the nation into a vibrant and engaged continent, and rid itself of dependency and oppression. To a varying degree nations have endorsed the priority areas identified by Ministers of Education, civil society and international partners cited above. National visions therefore are not a mere reflection of broader global visions but connect available and projected resources for education with identified future goals. National visions seem to incorporate the UNESCO declarations and guidelines from Hamburg and Dakar and reflect the NEPAD educational priorities and MDGs. A review of the seventeen PRSPs, some of which are in Africa, revealed that EFA and the MDGs related to education were receiving considerable attention in poverty alleviation and education plans (Bagai, 2002 cited in UNESCO, 2006).

49. Botswana *Vision 2016* was developed in 1996. Critical to it is the need for equal access to educational opportunities regardless of a person's socio-economic status. One of the seven pillars advocates for the creation of "an educated and informed nation", and a flexible mode of educational delivery, which will allow people to enter and learn at all points of their lives without being inhibited by age or by structural limitations. (Presidential Task Force, 1997). This is in line with the Revised national Policy on Education (RNPE), which argues for learning as a lifelong process that should be accessed by all regardless of their circumstances and age and reflects aspects of the EFA goal on increasing access to learning opportunities for youth and adults. Hence, the vision provides citizens with a widened mechanism towards the development of a comprehensive advocacy for the provision of adult education and literacy. Botswana's vision contrasts with that of other countries such as Rwanda which has developed a six pillars Vision 2020, intended to shape the development path for the country. Its main pillars include the promotion of good governance, decentralization and popular participation in decision-making processes. The third pillar indicates the nation's broad perception of human development and its role in the over all national development initiative. The vision document states that "emphasis should be put on literacy and numeracy to the maximum benefit of the majority of the Rwandan people" (Vision 2020, 2000, p.11). The vision therefore provides an overarching frame for the delivery of the Rwandese development of a futuristic agenda and also guides its educational policy.

50. South Africa's vision for the delivery of literacy education and training has been encapsulated in its Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) program. It states that the nation seeks to create a literate South Africa within which all its citizens have acquired basic education and

training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation. The concept of adult basic education and training' subsumes both literacy and post-literacy. It seeks to connect literacy with basic adult education on the one hand and with training for income generation on the other hand. This furthers the South African vision of using education to facilitate reconstruction, and build a just and equitable system with good quality education and training for adults throughout the country. In South Africa, learners can progress through an integrated system from non-literacy through to accessing general, further and higher education and training opportunities presented in the country (McKay, 2004). While on the surface its National qualifications framework can be seen as an exemplary way of achieving it, in practice its basic education programme has suffered from some of these processes (see Aitchinson, 2006).

51. In Nigeria, Vision 2010 initiated by government, like that of Botswana, was led by a Committee that comprised of 248 members aimed at implementing a concerted action in order to make Nigeria a developed nation by the year 2010, its 50th independence anniversary. The vision developers concluded that by 2010 Nigeria would have transformed into a united, industrious, caring and God-fearing democratic society, committed to making the basic needs of life affordable for everyone, and creating Africa's leading economy. Set up in 1996, it looked at all aspects of Nigerian society, helping to define the country's future bearing and direction. Its implementation is anticipated to help the nation compete in a highly competitive technology and globalization driven world. In so far as education is concerned, visionaries indicated that in 1996, only about 50 per cent of children between the ages of 5 to 24 years were enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, with the enrolment ratio being highest at 88 per cent for primary school children. By the year 2010, primary school enrolment should be almost 100 per cent and at least 26 per cent of government budget (at federal, state and local levels) should be devoted to education. The Vision's commitment to primary education delivery is commendable but currently does not extend to adult and youth literacy in Nigeria. All these visions were developed prior to NEPAD and probably helped to inform its development.

52. Overall, these cases demonstrate that visions are rooted in the historical conditions of each people and reflect the economic and social transformations needed for each nation if their ideals are to be given a measure of success. It also bares testimony to ways in which they learnt from the global vision and its anticipated outcomes as stipulated in the *Dakar Framework of Action* and the MDGs. Beyond the rhetoric, the true social transformation advocated by each of these documents, should be dynamic and dedicated leadership backed by political will and preparedness to secure resources for education. However, without evidence of actual deliverables, the above vision pillars do not go far beyond rhetoric. Ideals need to be translated into reality by comprehensive policy development that encourages popular participation if literacy is to be transformative. As indicated above, the successive Global Monitoring Reports since 2002 reflect some movement in this direction.

5. Analysis of Policies and Literacy Education Practices in Africa

5.1. National Planning and Literacy Delivery

53. The thrust of current discourse on planning and implementation of literacy education in Africa is, as else where in the world, shifting towards assessing what planners can or ought to do to be more inclusive. Educators stress the need to improve the planning and implementation of policies in order to make them participatory rather than technical. Jan (1999) explained that planning shapes the aspirations, hopes and desires of people to fulfil their socio-political, economic and ideological goals depending on their political persuasion. Consequently, nations are exploring ways to expand primary

schooling, literacy campaigns and programs and other adult learning opportunities. Literacy delivery is mostly integrated into the national planning framework through expanding formal schooling. Schools in Africa are the major source of acquisition of basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Africa has various forms of formal education, which were established before the advent of colonialism and Western schooling. These were called initiation schools where individuals were initiated into adulthood in their respective societies. According to UNESCO (2006) these schools were destroyed, assimilated or transformed by missionary education. The Europeanization of education in Africa brought about massive quantitative expansion and consequently, some countries have continued to expand provision along the same lines, resulting in increase in the rates of literacy. Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique had expansive formal schooling during the colonial period because of large settler populations and a stronger support for education mostly from Churches. This increased adult literacy rates (UNESCO, 2005), as did initial exposure to primary schooling to up to at least four years.

Botswana

54. Botswana provides an example of combined government and NGO effort to implement international conventions. After Hamburg, in 1997, the country's delegates convened a national stakeholder workshop to develop a *country plan of action* for the attainment of the *Agenda for the Future*. They examined the ten themes endorsed at Hamburg to determine, which of them could be implemented. Based on that, they developed a *National Action Plan for Adult Learning* composing of 23 action items. Each were assigned to organisations and set a time frame within which the task should have been initiated or carried out. The plan provided a national road map in the provision of adult learning activities. These activities were to be carried out by NGOs, private sector organizations, the Botswana Adult Education Association (BAEA) and other local and central government departments (Botswana National Commission for UNESCO, 1999).

The nation also organised a working group to develop a country report on efforts towards the attainment of the EFA and a national stakeholder workshop to harmonise national education goals with those of the *Dakar Framework For Action*. The plan focussed on the expansion and improvement of early childhood education for vulnerable groups, improving the quality and relevance of education and training. It explored ways to expand early childcare and education programs and improve response mechanisms to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Ministry of Education, 2003 indicating national commitment to international agreements. However, the major limitation is that both plans lack indicators of success and clear time lines for anticipated delivery.

5.2. Support of Literacy and Education For All in Africa

55. Literacy planners in Africa have a choice with regards to which delivery mode they choose depending on their context and its political expediency. Below the policies and programs pursued by different African nations to expand formal schooling and adult literacy are analysed. Literacy delivery in Africa is framed by the vision, policy and availability of resources from states or NGOs. In their efforts to meet EFA goals, nations have organized campaigns, programs or projects depending on their political persuasion, availability of human resources and their general perception of literacy.

Literacy Campaigns

56. Some African nations such as Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Tanzania, resorted to the use of campaigns to address the problem of illiteracy or to provide literacy opportunities to their citizens who have missed schooling during colonialism and to address the EFA goals. According to Bhola (1999) campaigns are primarily motivated by a sense of urgency and combativeness in post-revolutionary settings on the part of the political leadership to redress past injustice. Nations have reformed literacy policies and decentralized decision making to give campaign leaders freedom to be innovative. Campaigns are a crucial part of literacy for transformation described above. They have

been organized both as one offs and as successive campaigns. In Africa they demonstrated potential for learner empowerment in such countries as Algeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and Tanzania in the transitional period after independence. For example, Mozambique organized four campaigns from 1978-1982 while in the first two 500, 000 people participated, there were far fewer in the last two campaigns (Lind, 1988 cited in UNESCO, 2005). Consequently, mass literacy campaigns are viewed as “constituting forms of strategic state intervention to redefine the social character in terms of specific development goals identified [with] society as a whole at a particular moment in its development” (Rassool, 1999, p. 101). Campaigns are viewed as critical for literacy delivery in Africa because they involve people in on going dialogue and debate about choices of language and other aspects of their lives. However, a major limitation is that they tended to work better in monolingual societies such as Cuba, rather than in African nations with multiple languages. Currently there are a large number of health or HIV awareness campaigns that might benefit from closer association with literacy work. Other states such as Botswana, Kenya and Nigeria have chosen a program approach.

Literacy Programs

57. In most countries literacy programs that have recorded impressive increases in literacy have been built in as part of a broader national planning framework and articulated in *National Development* and *District Development Plans* or decrees. Both primary education and adult learning in these cases are almost exclusively planned and sponsored by Governments and treated as part of the national development effort (Youngman, 2000). In these contexts educational provision is centralized and the language and content of instruction in both formal and literacy programs are prescribed by the state. In some cases, literacy provision is a planned and systematic process that could be large scale and time bound just like a campaign that is intended to eradicate illiteracy. The provision of large scale adult literacy programs in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Kenya and Zimbabwe clearly sought to gradually provide literacy as part of national development plans and human rights initiatives (Lind and Johnston, 1990). Planners are governed by the principles of efficiency because the provision is part of a government effort to address other development objectives. One language or two are chosen for use. Usually, in relatively stable nations such as Botswana the language is intended to reflect an underlying nationalism and cultural integration based on principles of unity and efficiency. This may be at the expense of recognition of learner identity and minority communities (Maruatona, 2004).

58. In Nigeria the state made several efforts such as establishing the *National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) in 1991 by Decree 17 of 1990* to try and address adult literacy concerns. It was aimed at actively involving the State agencies for Adult and Non-formal Education (ANFE). It was also inaugurated in all the states of the Federation including the Federal Capital, in order to expand the program and to reduce administrative bureaucratic bottlenecks in its promotion. The Local Government Areas (LCA) were equally involved in the delivery of literacy education, reaching people at the grassroots level but sustaining government control of what is taught in the programs. Nigeria had an initial Universal Primary Education [UPE] which was developed into the Universal Basic Education [UBE] in 1999.

59. The major limitation is that literacy in these cases is often out competed by formal schooling in the allocation of both the development and recurrent budget allocations. For example, in Botswana the national literacy programme receives about only 1.1 % of the recurrent budget (Youngman, 2000). Some countries were more innovative in the way they increased school enrolments for example, Kenya introduced free primary education, targeted school meal programs, a textbook fund for poor households and a bursary fund to help students from poor families. Unfortunately, others such as Botswana are regressing by announcing the re-introduction of school fees 2006, after almost two decades of free but not compulsory education up to tertiary level. This is an unfortunate development though justified under the pretext of cost-sharing and cost-recovery (Maruatona, 2003). Benin's comprehensive approach for instance is reported to have included measures to increase demand,

improve the quality of literacy programs, increase funding and strengthen decentralized management systems (UNESCO, 2006). All the above cases point to the value of organising literacy programs that are complementary to the effort to achieve universal primary education.

Literacy Projects

60. Bhola (1999) distinguished between a program and project. A project tends to be small scale, less bureaucratic with more capacity to respond adequately and with stratified and clearly defined objectives restricted to a small group of people. Projects are decentralized, participatory and include some local and NGO institutions. In Mali the use of projects enabled the state to provide literacy in Banbaram, Mandé, Peul, Sonhay and Tamasheq. In Burundi, the Niger, and Togo, literacy materials were prepared in local languages. In a given context, projects primarily depend upon the needs and motivation of the people served and the essential flexibility to provide literacy learners with what they need. They will invariably need to be supplemented with larger scale formal schooling to increase their impact.

61. The three different approaches to the planning of literacy policy depend on the state's willingness to expend resources on literacy provision. Planning literacy education in each case is a political act, representing beliefs and values cherished by policy makers and planners. Overall, while the gains of campaigns were short lived in some cases, their drive, to mobilize resources was unprecedented. Programs, through gradual and long term, suffer a major set back of being too centralized and mostly not reflective of the reality of the learner. Finally, projects seem to be the most appealing since they are not only complementary to programs and primary education, but reach the most difficult to reach and should be encouraged in communities where there are indigenous people or remote area dwellers. In general, policy makers should be more flexible and apply those strategies that are best suited to address the needs of literacy learners.

5.3 Government and NGO Partnerships

62. Since CONFINTEA V there has been a clear and concerted effort by NGOs and civil society to collaborate with willing governments in the delivery of education. Data reveals that in some countries, NGOs play such a prominent role that their contributions over shadow that of government, which plays a more coordinating role. A key strategy identified at Dakar as critical to achieving EFA is the continued engagement of civil society and NGOs in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national literacy strategies. There is some evidence that various countries have accepted their role in educational policy formulation and the preparation of national EFA plans (UNESCO, 2000). Two regional literacy organisations namely, PAMOJA, and PROLIT played major roles in helping to further the goal of literacy education in Africa.

63. PAMOJA, established in 2002 by African Reflect practitioners, facilitates learning, sharing and continuing evolution of Reflect practices in Africa. It is part of **CIRAC** (Circle for International Reflect Action and Communication), which is a global organization of Reflect practitioners, set up in 2000. **CIRAC** won the UNESCO literacy award for the year 2003. Its vision is to strive to see that the poor men and women in Africa are able to take control of their destiny by influencing policy makers to listen to their voices, and to challenge all dominant power structures to build a wealthy self sustaining African society. Its task is to help communities fight poverty and engage in sustainable development, thereby serving to play a generous role of fulfilling one of the goals of the MDGs.

64. Project Literacy on the other hand, has a longer history of involvement in literacy work in South Africa dating back from an individual initiative in 1973 intended to provide literacy to live-in domestic workers. Founded then by Jenny Nesor, Prolit has played a crucial role in the provision of literacy over the years. It was one of the first organisations to be accredited as an Adult Basic

Education and Training (ABET) literacy provider. Its role in administering funds from different organisations testifies to its credibility as a provider of literacy education.

65. The implementation of literacy education in Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia to mention but a few, depends heavily on NGOs. In Kenya, ACTIONAID, Plan International, Literacy and Evangelism, Bible Translation and Literacy, Kenya Adult Education Association and Kenya Adult Learners Association made significant contribution over the years in promoting adult literacy. In Senegal, literacy provision is based on a wider support of all sections of society for the eradication of illiteracy. These programs are planned and implemented with the active participation of NGOs that work among communities. NGOs in Nigeria have supported literacy programs at the state and local government area level, thereby stabilizing literacy centres, initiating new strategies and mobilising citizens for participation in adult literacy education. Some examples of NGO involvements in Nigeria include the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan, which won the UNESCO Literacy Prize in 1989 and the University Village Association [UNIVA]. Started by Michael Omolewa and supported by his colleagues at the University of Ibadan, UNIVA organised an information shop since most people did not know where, how and when to access interactive literacy learning (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005). It was the runner-up in the UNESCO Institute for Education Literacy Research competition in 1992 and won the Honourable Mention of the Malcolm Adeseshiah Literacy Prize in 1999. This illustrates how individuals and groups can take charge to provide literacy to members of society who are not as privileged as they are, even under a very hostile military regime.

66. South Africa on the other hand, already experiences the problem of NGO fatigue and only some NGOs such as PROLIT have continued with their literacy activities on a small scale. The state is trying to establish a fairly elaborate policy where they take over different aspects of ABET such as the training of teachers in order to ensure the few NGOs that are left continue to support the country's efforts to deliver literacy as a basic human right and essential service (Mangena, 2002).

67. In Zambia most literacy work is undertaken by NGOs. There are over 40 NGOs especially churches involved in the provision of adult basic education who are working along side the national program in places that are difficult for the state to reach (Mwansa, 2002). It could be argued that national policies in Africa allow for collaboration with NGOs, which was a direct off shoot from their extensive involvement at the CONFINTEA V deliberations in 1997. What is needed is a clear policy for how NGOs and Governments can work together. Abadzi (2005) argues that NGOs and grassroots organizations are indispensable in the delivery of literacy but donors can only accept and work with them if there are strong central government institutions in charge of their work. Governments must at least supervise these voluntary and community associations closely for them to develop the capacity to reach program participants, train teachers, produce and distribute large quantities of materials, supervise, and monitor. This study endorses some of her concerns about NGOs mishandling funds but recognises that African governments may also be inefficient in the use of resources.

68. Abadzi (2005) cautiously indicates that literacy funds could be outsourced by government to some providers, but governments need to make the process of outsourcing more transparent and tenders should be awarded to organisations in the best position to deliver literacy. For example, the *faire – faire* scheme that has been in operation in Senegal since 1995, involved the state and civil society in an alliance where NGOs were implementers of public policies with state guidance. In spite of their success, Torres (2003) cautions against the state's absconding its responsibility to provide basic education to all as a right. This negative trend in Africa has resulted in adults and youth being made to pay for their education as part of cost-sharing and privatization of literacy delivery. The following section looks at the strategies employed by government and NGOs to deliver literacy in Africa.

5.4 Literacy and Language Policies in Africa

69. In recent years, African countries have become increasingly aware of the value of their linguistic inheritance. Language policies that are being developed nowadays are mostly aimed at

multilingualism. For example, all African languages are considered official languages of the African Union “The official languages of the Union and all its institutions shall be Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Kiswahili and any other African language”. The choice of language policy therefore continues to be pivotal in making programs accessible. It plays a crucial role in the choice of teachers and availability of materials.. Provision is not homogeneous across languages and has implications for access to power. Most languages in Africa are spoken but do not have a known orthography.

70. However despite the NEPAD’s rhetoric of wanting to be democratic, certain choices such as the designation of official or national languages are made arbitrarily. Nations choose the language of instruction in schools and literacy programs, campaigns and projects without clear policy guidelines. Most of the time official languages are imposed by the political elite because they are languages of the former colonial powers such as English, French and Portuguese (Maruatona, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). School languages are often a combination of a national *lingua franca* or a national language that is associated with powerful groups in society and an official language. In most cases, learners start with a national language and later transfer to an official language, which is used up to the highest level of education in a given African country. Many organisations claim mother tongue to be the preferred language of instruction in literacy programs as it allows for creative teaching in a familiar language. (UNESCO, 2005). It would be beneficial if learners could start literacy education in mother tongue and later shift either to national or official language depending on what they prefer. The most critical consideration should be that there should be teachers and materials that facilitate teaching in mother tongue. The greatest challenge is that learners might prefer to learn in national or office language to open opportunities for themselves (Maruatona, 1998). One of the crucial things to consider in literacy delivery is the training of literacy teachers and their support.

5.5 Literacy Teachers’ Training and Support

71. All global visions and policies and those of Africa, especially NEPAD, point to the value of well trained teachers in the delivery of literacy. The relative success exhibited by different programs depends on the quality of its instructors and proper training is crucial. Many facilitators are local people or volunteers with no formal qualifications; others are fulltime or part time NGO or development workers. Full time teachers from other sectors of education also teach adults on a part time basis (such as in Tanzania) and full time qualified adult educators are employed within the programme of basic education and training (UNESCO, 2005). However the majority of teachers are unqualified and which has negative implications for the kind of teaching they provide, though motivated and dedicated, they might not have the requisite skills to teach . In countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia instructors are trained to teach literacy through being exposed to principles of teaching adult learners. In Botswana teachers are recruited from different ethnic and language communities before being trained and the recruitment of literacy teachers involves community leaders. After recruitment, individuals are given an *initial training* at district level and are assessed during the training, if they fail they are discontinued (Maruatona, 2001). The teachers are volunteers and given a small honorarium per session taught.

72. The training of literacy educators is primarily the responsibility of Government Ministries, Departments or Directorates responsible for adult basic, literacy and non-formal education. These trainees are posted to both governmental and NGOs providers (Ellis, 2002, Torres, 2003). The only exception to this was found in Namibia and Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, NGOs such as the Adult Literacy Association of Zimbabwe (ALoz) and the Zimbabwe Adult Learners’ Association (ZALA) are responsible for the training of instructors (Mudariki, 2002). Most of these are hired as volunteers. It is only in Namibia, where after training, they sign an annual contractual agreement with the Directorate of Adult Basic Education, of the Ministry of Basic Education Sports and Culture. This gives instructors the opportunity to test their interest and their supervisors to test their commitment (Ellis, 2002). In the Ghanaian National Functional Literacy Program, teachers are recruited from among their local communities and after completing a literacy batch are given a bicycle or sewing

machine publicly in recognition of their contribution (Lauglo, 2001). It has been noted that in all these cases teachers are provided with refresher courses to ensure that their teaching skills are sharpened every year and to enable them to share successes and frustrations in their work. The challenge is for these people to be hired on relatively permanent basis or, as in Namibia to be properly contracted..

73. Closely related to poor teacher training is lack of inbuilt assessment and evaluation mechanisms. What characterizes Adult Basic Education delivery in Africa is the lack of a system to determine internal efficiency and to establish a consistent measure of performance. UNESCO, national governments and other competent partners in evaluation need to establish assessment mechanisms that are flexible enough to allow teachers and other national agencies to determine the impact of literacy.

Teacher depletion and HIV and Aids

74. One of the most worrying developments is the severe impact of the HIV epidemic on education and training in sub-Saharan Africa, worsening the performance of an already underperforming sector (Cohen, ILO, 2002). Among secondary school teachers in Malawi, for example, the rate of excess mortality due to AIDS is nearly double expected mortality due to non-AIDS causes, while among primary school teachers, 60 per cent die due to the epidemic. UNAIDS estimates that annual per capita income of half the countries of sub-Saharan Africa is falling by 0.5-1.2 per cent, and that GDP in the hardest hit countries may decline by 8 per cent by 2010.

75. The ILO report (Cohen, ILO, 2002) points out that "it is hard to see how the stock of human capital can be maintained given the erosion of capacity in the education sector presently underway. The implications of this for sustainable development in the region cannot be assessed accurately given our present knowledge of the complex interactions that are involved. However, even the most optimistic assessment is that indicators of social and economic development are significantly lower as a result of the epidemic."

In the public sector, for example, overall mortality in some countries has risen by ten times over the past decade largely due to AIDS and will result in governments losing the ability to supply essential goods and services. In Botswana, for instance, increased mortality of healthcare workers is reducing the capacity to meet higher demands for care for people with HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, among police officers in Malawi, the epidemic is having a severe impact on junior officers aged 20 to 40, thus affecting the quality of service and the structure of security.

In the non-formal education sector and in the informal sector, which in most African societies accounts for the majority of workers, especially in agriculture, data on the impact of HIV/AIDS is limited due to lack of research. However, studies in Kenya and the Côte d'Ivoire found that sickness and mortality due to AIDS resulted in the dramatic depletion of savings, the loss of key skills and organizational capacity and a fall of up to 50 per cent in food production in households where only one member was sick with AIDS.

6. Literacy & HIV and Aids

76. Indeed, while claims are made about the impact of literacy on poverty, disease and exclusion - HIV prevention has, until recently, been less of a priority for literacy than income generation and poverty eradication. In recent years, particularly in Southern Africa, such programs have begun to appear.

77. Literacy for Livelihood's definition commonly used includes the importance of communication and access to information as an aim for literacy, and it is in this sphere, as well as the empowerment of women to take control of their lives and their sexuality that improved literacy has the potential to impact on HIV. IFAD (IFAD, 2000) participatory rural appraisals show that Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) classes are "one of the most effective means of empowering women to learn and to acquire self-confidence". They also have a very positive impact on women's lives. "Women acknowledge that functional adult literacy classes have an important role in empowering women and reducing ignorance and poverty. They identified the following benefits: they gain new knowledge, learn how to read and write, generate income through modern farming methods, improve agricultural techniques and methodologies, control crop pests, improve sanitation and hygiene at household level, learn about care and nutrition of children, improve food planning and preparation, get to know each other, creating networks and forming groups, learn to work together and establish poverty reduction strategies."

78. Thus, literacy has empowering effects that go beyond merely learning to read and write: it can foster self-esteem and self-confidence, which are necessary to introduce lifestyle changes and cope with stress more effectively. In view of these findings, FAL programs – if linked with productive activities such as access to credit, income-generating activities and nutritional gardens – are potentially suitable entry points for HIV prevention and mitigation education. Such activities are unlikely to be effective where women are illiterate: illiteracy tends to be accompanied by lack of self-confidence, fear of learning and fear of change which are key obstacles to behavior change among women. Illiterate women are also more likely to fear confrontation with their husbands or partners and shy away from negotiating safe sex. In addition, women whose spouses are living with HIV/AIDS can greatly benefit from the social support of a FAL group, which can also prepare them to face the impact of their spouse's death.

79. As argued in IFAD's 2001 Regional Assessment and Strategy for East and Southern Africa: "Any drive to include the poor in the development process that fails to address the specific problems of inclusion of poor women is likely to have a limited impact: addressing gender relations is an essential aspect of all development activities", (IFAD, 2001).

80. Postma (2004) has drawn attention to the similar visions that surround both Literacy and HIV prevention programs. Definitions and constructs of literacy and health both refer to the attainment of specific abilities, with the common objective to cope with or change their environment (Vygotsky (referred to by Ewert, 1990) and Bhola (1992)). Critical literacy has been defined as the ability to negotiate meaning within all forms of information and communication, and as such is concerned with more than the passive reception of messages. Transformative programs that focus on literacy practices have the potential to both inform people of health risks, and work with them to understand and to change harmful behaviours.

81. Research in South Africa (Postma 2003) into the failure of many early HIV prevention programs indicated that this was related to the one way messages that many of them employed. The assumption of programme leaders was that high risk behaviour was the problem, and that health messages were needed to make people aware of this. However such messages often failed to appreciate the context in which behavioural decisions were made, and as a result were seen as one sided and rejected. Like literacy programs that aim to teach development messages, where no attempt is made to contextualise these or to encourage people to critique and to own them, they ultimately hold less meaning for participants.

82. Action Aid's REFLECT approach, piloted in Uganda, is based on methods of Paulo Freire and encourages learners to both compile and critique local social, economic and environmental information. Rather than presenting previously formulated messages and materials literacy circles attempt to map and to rank seasonal behaviour, local resources, individual wealth or patterns of migration. By compiling and then reading this information learners become active participants in the

creation of knowledge, rather than passive recipients of it. Stepping stones, also piloted in Uganda is a participatory approach to HIV, sexual health and gender. It has since spread to over 100 countries and has been recognised as 'best practice' by UNAIDS for the way it addresses the gender equity aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In REFLECT circles, problems relating to sexual health, including dealing with the impact of HIV and AIDS, frequently arise. However, literacy facilitators may not be equipped with the skills to help community members explore these very sensitive issues. Similarly, Stepping Stones facilitators often find that through the process of gender analysis and empowerment, women in particular become aware of their need and right to have a voice on other issues, including literacy. Stepping stones facilitators with limited literacy lack the ability to help group members develop their reading and writing skills and have difficulty in accessing additional health information.

83. Since 2003 the two programs have experimented with a combined approach, (known as STAR – Stepping Stones and REFLECT), in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal in West Africa as well as in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Initially this met with a number of challenges. Although both use participatory, learner centred methods, REFLECT has in the past dealt with issues outside the household and looked at socio economic structures. Stepping Stones has a focus on individual behaviour and an open exploration of this. However there is huge potential in bringing them together.

The overall aim of STAR programs is community empowerment in the face of HIV with a particular emphasis on gender equity. This involves not only increased access to information but the ability to negotiate and participate in the design of this information and those services set up to combat Aids. It seeks particularly to empower women to make informed choices about their sexual behaviour and to be active, rather than passive recipients of health messages.

While it is too early to assess the impact of STAR programs, they constitute an interesting example of the difference between conventional and transformative approaches. Indications are that in tackling issues as deep rooted as sexual taboo, female assertiveness and behaviour change conventional programs have limited impact.

84. Given the impact of the epidemic worldwide, with nearly 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, the role of literacy and non-formal education needs to be fully acknowledged and promoted as part of the overall response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. To be effective, literacy programs must take into account the specific social and cultural characteristics of each country, and the personal and social aspirations of individuals.

85. Globally women and girls are becoming infected with HIV at a faster rate than men and boys. Nearly 50 percent of people with HIV/AIDS in the world are female, 57 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. A recent United Nations report says, "Despite this alarming trend, women know less than men about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and how to prevent infection, and what little they do know is often rendered useless by the discrimination and violence they face." (*Women and AIDS: Confronting the Crisis*, a joint report from UNAIDS, UNFPA, and UNIFEM, 2004) This is already beginning to have a profound affect on the structure of households and implications for those caring for the next generation. Grandparents as carers are needing to engage with the schooling of their grandchildren, many of whom have no literacy and feel out of touch with the demands of the 21st century. A learner driven literacy programme designed for older people in South Africa by an international NGO saw this as a priority. (Millican, in Robinson-Pant 2004). Other similar programs in Mali and Burkina Faso designed for parents of school children attract large numbers of grandparents acting as carers. In these situations the provision of reading glasses for older people is a necessary consideration in programme design.

86. Literacy programs that can engage women and men in effective risk assesment, in understanding and transferring health messages to others in their community and in empowering women in particular

to stand up against discrimination and violence are becoming as important in sub-Saharan Africa as those linked to income generation. Literacy provision is similarly needing to take account of the needs of new carers, whether these are older siblings who, thrown into a caring role have little time for school, or those of grandparents who may for the first time enroll in classes.

87. Women's predominant role and presence in most rural areas in East and Southern Africa, combined with their disproportionate vulnerability to HIV infection and to the impact of AIDS, make it even more urgent to address gender relations as a source of marginalization, poverty and development underperformance. In particular, to enhance rural men and women's understanding of the gender-differentiated vulnerability and burden of HIV/AIDS and address their implications.

88. HIV/AIDS is crucially about gender relations. As Chilisa and Ntseane [2] argue, it thrives on unequal power relations between men and women: to negotiate sex; women's denial of reproductive rights; segments of cultural practices that expose women to gender violence that includes sexual, physical and psychological abuse and poverty. This is exacerbated by women's minimal access and control to resources such as land, cattle, credit, technology, education and time. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is one which jolts us into understanding 'sustainable development' in very stark terms - to sustain development we must sustain life. It also reminds us why it is so important to have a holistic understanding of education and training within a lifelong learning framework.

89. Justin Ellis, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture in Namibia pointed out that "Although all strata of Namibian society are affected by HIV and AIDS, it seems that the poor are more severely affected and driven further into poverty by this pandemic. It is true that most of our adult and non-formal education programs probably already have an element on HIV and AIDS. The question may, however, be whether these activities are in the nature of imparting information or of dealing with some of the deeper issues relating to the spread of HIV and AIDS, including gender roles, negotiation skills, self-assertion, feelings of self-worth, creating a sense of hope, building caring communities," (Ellis, 2004).

90. HIV/AIDS demands a lifelong learning approach (Ellis, 2002). It is about sexuality and changing roles, and there is need to work and discuss simultaneously with children and adults in new ways. It also calls for partnerships and linkages between governments, private sector, civil society; between health institutions, schools, universities, workplaces. We have to think in much more radical ways to ensure a prosperous future in the sub Saharan African region and win the revolution of skills, value and gender relations.

7. Literacy and Lifelong Learning

91. Walters (2001) refers to lifelong education as the totality of learning activities that occur in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. Lifelong learning exists in all societies in different forms as individual and groups move through their life stages. She observed that while it is important for national competitiveness, the major challenge in Southern Africa is that countries such as South Africa, which embedded lifelong learning in its policy documents, lacks an elaborate mechanism for its delivery. Lifelong learning in Africa should not be left at policy level but elaborated in practice to respond to the needs of communities.

92. Lifelong learning should help poorer communities to develop their capacity to take control of their lives and reduce dependence on outside aid. In the foreword to the book *Integrating Lifelong Learning Perspectives*, Adama Ouane cautioned that the commitment made by the community of nations at CONFINTEA V and the Dakar Framework For Education for All are not likely to be met without a solid foundation for lifelong learning. It is against this background that Africa should be encouraged to employ effectively organized campaigns, programs, and projects to impart the skill and

spirit of learning from cradle to grave. Lockyer *et.al* (2003) indicated that lifelong learning should facilitate active citizenship by ensuring that it educates youth and adults about the democratic process, their rights and responsibilities.

93. However, while the value of lifelong learning is not disputable, apart from South Africa, Namibia and Botswana most countries do not include lifelong learning as part of their vision, and it does not inform their policies. Even those that have endorsed it find the possibility to realize its ideals dwarfed by lack of resources and broad strategies to provide lifelong and life wide learning. Literacy delivery in Africa is characterised by narrowly conceived and planned programs that need to be decentralised if they are to reflect the true reality of the user and make learning demand driven.

7.1. Literacy and Decentralization

94. One of the most critical aspects of literacy education in Africa is the centralisation of planning with limited learner involvement. In spite of the rhetoric of the national NEPAD vision statements, planning is conducted by bureaucrats with concentration of decision-making authority at the top of the organizational hierarchy. Adult literacy delivery in Africa tends to facilitate political control by the state. The curriculum thus represents the perspectives of the politically powerful. Such an approach to planning leads to teachers and learners having a minimal influence on curriculum content and choice of literacy textbooks and language (Maruatona, 2002). The centralized curriculum has also been criticized for not being customer or demand driven, and not linked to other educational opportunities (Ntiri, 1998). It is therefore argued that a centralized literacy curriculum would not serve the interests of African learners and would need to be decentralized if programs are to have any impact..

95. Ministries charged with literacy delivery tend to have a lot of responsibilities, which justifies the need for a decentralised approach. As used here decentralization denotes the transfer of authority from high echelons of the state to geographically dispersed local government agents, thereby strengthening local literacy providers to make decisions on their daily work. In the context of Africa there has been two exemplary ways in which this was obtained. First, in South Africa the planning of Adult Basic Education and Training was decentralised in ways that could be instructional for other nations both in its successes and failures. Post-Apartheid democratic South Africa instituted ABET to enable various elements to deliver literacy education and training. In so doing, it recognised the roles played by a multiple stakeholders from the public (state), non-governmental and private (economic) sectors. The process also reached a diverse range of learning constituencies including organised labour; self-employed and under-employed individuals, adults in the urban areas and rural areas and rural women. The planning was based on principles of equity, redress, democracy, development and reconstruction, development and integration. McKay (2004) notes that ABET policy sought to develop an enabling environment in which high quality programs can flourish throughout the country by providing guidance to providers, rather than through control and prescriptive measures. It is thus envisaged that policy development in this field will be an ongoing process.

8. Recommendations and Conclusion

96. Based on the above discussions the following recommendations are made towards synergizing vision, policies and strategies.

8.1 Emergence of Visions, Policy Trends and Issues

The most critical shortcoming of African literacy policies is their failure to endorse the principle of lifelong learning as a framework and to ensure that African communities are converted into future learning societies.

Most African policies that could be considered as promising shared the following features:

- 1) *Literacy as a basic human right*, which the state invests in because it is viewed as having a positive effect on personal, family, community and national development initiatives.
- 2) *Integrating literacy, training and basic education opportunities and policies.* : In South Africa, for example, ABET encompasses all learning opportunities from basic literacy to grade 10 with clear progression routes between them.. This level of integration has its limitations but helps to break the artificial categorizations of academic and practical skills. An integrated program such as ABET helps to address the needs of learners across the spectrum of society without any category of society feeling discriminated against. This would be the best strategy to address the EFA goals on providing for women and girls and reducing by 50 percent the rate of illiteracy by 2015.
- 3) *Endorse lifelong learning as an organising principle* for planning literacy policies. Quite clearly, a few countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa mention it in their educational policies but there is no infrastructure to ensure that all have access to learning on a lifelong and life wide basis. While efforts are made there is lack of genuine political commitment to effectuate educational delivery. This is reflected in Botswana's reintroduction of secondary school fees by January 2006 under the pretext of cost-sharing and cost-recovery.
- 4) Limited access to information and communication remains a real threat in Africa and the best way to deal with it is to acknowledge that schooling is critical for every nation, but that *investment should be spread reasonably between the schools and non-formal education programs, projects and campaigns.* Africa has a problem of lack of resources and needs a comprehensive policy on shared use of resources.
- 5) *Partnerships with NGOs:* Combating illiteracy is too cumbersome for the state to attempt to monopolize it. At best the state should play a more coordinating role as NGOs and other providers bring much needed resources and expertise and often take a transformative approach. It would be prudent for states to have umbrella NGO bodies that help to coordinate the activities of NGO working in the provision of literacy in each nation. Bureaucrats need to appreciate that to be empowering, learning experiences should not be prescribed but demand driven. NGOs tend to have extensive experience in dealing with communities, which national education infrastructure can not access. Government or donor funds could support such NGOs to work in disadvantaged, rural and remote sections of the Africa societies. However, governments still have to be in the fore front in the delivery of education for all and not leave it to NGOs and funded by the donors as has been the case in many nations such as Zambia. The state has to effectively supervise and coordinate literacy education efforts of NGOs in each state if the EFA goals are to be met in Africa.
- 6) *Improving the quality of facilitators:* Teacher recruitment and training generally involve communities selecting someone for their qualities. Those selected need sufficient training to teach adults effectively. The best practice in dealing with the assessment of these teachers is in Namibia, where they are made to sign an annual contract subject to renewal based on their performance and willingness to work. The current training of about four weeks on average is sufficient, provided there is in built support and refresher courses. The need for teachers could also be alleviated by university trained *Certificate in Adult*

Education holders who are unemployed in most countries. The key here is for the state to be willing to reward these people for their expertise or to encourage them to see teaching adults as a social service before assuming a commensurate job. In some countries universities students are engaged as adult literacy tutors and encouraged to see literacy teaching as contributing towards their degree.

- 7) *Decentralization of services to improve delivery* of literacy education. Decentralization overcomes the exclusion of local level cadre in the planning of programs, which in turn deprives society of the benefits of full participation in decision-making. Learners and local teachers should be allowed to participate in curriculum planning, and the teaching-learning process. It is strongly recommended that literacy delivery in Africa be decentralized to help local staff to attach appropriate emphasis on problems in their specific districts and for their learners to develop a sense of program ownership. Planners should be encouraged to integrate the socio-economic and cultural practices of their host communities and at the same time expose them to national and global issues.

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