

# Adult Education as an Agent for Socio-economic Change in Tanzania: Evidence from Institute of Adult Education Graduates

Subiri Katete

Assistant Lecturer, Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

E-mail: [mwashiutwe@yahoo.com](mailto:mwashiutwe@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

One of the most essential pillars of community development is education. A community with access to quality education can advance academically, economically, and socially. In this sense, adult education among learners is crucial to meet this requirement of improving the community's well-being. This paper investigated the role of adult education in socioeconomic change among graduates. The participants involved graduate students from the Institute of Adult Education. Data were collected through interviews. The results show that adult education improved self-employability among graduates, adult education improved the standard of living, adult education improved production capacities, adult education enabled graduates to get basic needs, and adult education helped to discard bad cultural practices in society. Therefore, this study recommends that to ensure socioeconomic transformation, efforts must be made to raise awareness or consciousness for students to enroll in such classes.

**Keywords:** Adult, Adult Education, social-economic, Community's transformation, Tanzania

**DOI:** 10.7176/JEP/14-21-09

**Publication date:** July 31<sup>st</sup> 2023

## 1. Introduction

Researchers and governments in both developed and developing nations have continuously shown interest in the relationship between relationships between adult education and the socio-economic conditions of their population as well as the implications these have for self-development and the nation as well (Akello, Rukundo & Musiimenta, 2017; Ng'umbi, 2022; Zuofa, 2017).

In order to build social capital, promote social inclusion, and combat both overt and covert costs of social exclusion, adult education is essential (OECD, 2016; URT, 2018). Adult education is a crucial pillar in enhancing active citizenship. For many people in both developed and developing nations, fundamental and critical skills are now acknowledged as vital unmet needs (Grant, 2017; Jinna & Maikano, 2014; Kway, 2016). Olori (2022) asserts that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is centered on education. Among other things, Sustainable Development Goal number 4 guarantees opportunities for lifelong learning for all, from early childhood to adult education, and ensures effective learning and the acquisition of pertinent knowledge, skills, and competencies to transform society for a better way of life (Mollel, 2019) Anyanwu (2021) argues that understanding the significance of adult education in development requires understanding the intricate connections between all of its forms and the economic, political, social, and cultural determinant factors. The economic contribution that adult education makes to the creation of human capital is apparent in the development of the community. Additionally, a highly educated populace offers a more appealing investment environment. Therefore, investing in the growth of human capital through adult education is essential for creating a workforce and management expertise capable of competing in the modern global economy (Oni & Bello, 2017; Machumu, Kalimasi, Msabila, Zhu & Almasi, 2015).

According to Coker and Obo (2012) and Seya (2014), adult education is a large subject involving numerous aspects of human learning. The fundamental concept of adult education is the belief that learning should not be limited to a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The lives of various civilizations have changed significantly over time, thanks mainly to adult education (Akubuilu, Okorie, Onwuka, & Uloh, 2014). Through adult education, many adults have discovered new learning paths, made up for the lost time by realizing their potential and developing new talents, and accomplished feats they never imagined possible (Kway, 2016; Mollel, 2019; Mwaikokesya & Mushi, 2017).

Some fundamental criteria must be followed by adult education programs that aim to alter communities (Youmans, Godden, & Hummell, 2017). The first principle, according to Johnson (2013), is involvement. This idea holds that adult learners should actively participate in their education. The second concept is holistic, according to which three aspects of self-management or contextual control, self-monitoring or cognitive accountability, and motivation are crucial to meaningful and desirable self-directed learning of adult learning holistically (Ng'umbi, 2022). The third principle is the flexibility of its program, which allows adults to make choices and contextualize their learning in a manner appropriate to their professional practice while also developing as a member of a learning community. The fourth principle is contextualization, where both the physical and social contexts in which an activity occurs are an integral part of the learning within situation cognition (Niwagaba (2017).

The literature has generally shown that there is agreement that the universal definition of adult education as the education of adults in society has placed heavy demands on it in its effort to spur sustainable social change through the acquired skills. This is true of both developed and developing countries. In Tanzania, little is known about how graduates from adult education benefit from adult learning, especially on how they use acquired skills in personal socio-economic well-being and to their entire communities. Therefore, this paper aims to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the following question: How is adult education an agent for socio-economic change in Tanzania?

## 2. Methodology

The study investigated how adult education is an agent for socio-economic change in Tanzania. The study employed the qualitative approach as a method of inquiry to get in-depth insights from the participants on adult education as an agent for socio-economic change in Tanzania. Data were collected through interviews because it allowed for open-ended responses from participants for more in-depth information on the study under investigation. Also, it encouraged two-way communication between the researcher and participants, enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interview sessions took between forty to sixty minutes and were recorded through digital voice recorder devices, and hand note-taking was used. Before recording, participants were asked for their consent. Data for the study were collected from Dar es Salaam and Arusha. These regions were purposively selected because they anticipated getting enough graduates from the Institute of Adult Education who participated in the study. A total of 16 participants were interviewed. The data were analyzed using the thematic approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013), whereby appropriate themes were identified, described, and illustrated by the quotes of participants. Before commencing data collection, a research permit was obtained from the respective authorities. After that, informed consent to conduct the study was also obtained from the respective sources. Confidentiality of the information gathered and anonymity of the respondents was ensured.

## 3. Results

Several issues emerged from the interviews regarding adult education as an agent for socio-economic change in Tanzania. These are organised into five themes: ensured self-employability, improved standard of living, improved production capacities, discarding bad cultural practices in society, and provision of basic needs. These are discussed below.

### 3.1 Adult education ensured self-employability among graduates

When designed well to fit the learners' demands, adult education programs lead to the learners acquiring essential skills which help them get self-employed at the end of the course. During interviews, participants disclosed that self-employability was very important for them as they could run various activities for earning. The participants gave the following explanations:

During my studies, I dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur. I made an effort to acquire entrepreneurial skills so that when I start my economic venture, I become well-informed on conducting business. I am grateful to the Institute of Adult Education because their teachings have instilled in my mind up to the day I became economically independent through self-employment (Interview, Graduate student on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023).

On my side, I have managed to establish a money transaction business. I have a lot of customers as you see in this area I am the only person with such a service. I was taught this skill at the Institute of Adult Education, where entrepreneurship is an introductory emphasized course for graduate self-employment (Interview, Graduate student on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023).

I don't think I could be seeking government or private employment anymore. This is because, currently, I have established myself by engaging in self-employment. With little capital that I had, I managed to set up a shop where I supplied goods for the villagers. As you see, villagers are proud of me as I managed to make the essential goods available at nearby their doors, contrary to the past when they used to go to the following villages to look for those essential items. Thank you to the adult education I attended to pursue my diploma course in entrepreneurship (Interview, Graduate student on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2023).

These testimonies are the pieces of evidence to show the importance of adult education in transforming individuals into economic well-being. Learners acquired basic skills which enabled them not to wait for government employment opportunities; instead, they got involved in self-employment by establishing various economic ventures which transformed their lives.

### 3.2 Adult education improved standard of living

Findings revealed that adult education was intended to help appreciate the need for a better life in various

communities. Participants disclosed that adult education implies changes in the way things are done to bring relief, security, good health, and improved economies to the communities. The participants argued as follows:

In fact, the adult education curriculum is well-designed to suit our demands. Look, for example, issues regarding nutrition, sanitation, and quality health for the learners are being taught. As we graduated, I, for example, managed to have a campaign for the villagers to eat a balanced diet. This has been successful; as you know, most pastoralists depend upon only one type of food (Interview, Graduate student on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023).

Like me, graduates who participate in learning activities from the Institute of Adult Education have a healthier lifestyle and enjoy life more. This is because adult education contributes to personal development and self-realization. As a graduate, we are playing a part in transforming our communities by educating them on all issues about their health, including sanitation and suitable housing (Interview, Graduate student on 10th May 2023).

The voices above show that well-designed adult education programs positively impact learners after they graduate. Since health education was provided among the learners, it was easy for them to impart such knowledge to the individual communities so that they could stay healthy and engage in production.

### **3.3 Adult education improved production capacities**

Findings revealed that one of the remarkable impacts of adult education is based on the fact that learners used skills acquired during their learning to improve production capacities. Participants disclosed some of them used skills such as poultry production in a modern way contrary to what they used to do in their households. This helped them to double their production and increase their incomes. Graduate students who participated in the study gave the following explanations:

From my childhood to this adulthood, I have witnessed community members from this village using very primitive ways of poultry production. Imagine, for example, pigs were not given any vaccination, not given food that would double their weight, and so on. As a result, no good profits were attained from this art of keeping poultry. After attending two years diploma at the Institute of Adult Education, I decided to use poultry production skills to support them through modern methods (Interview, Graduate student on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023).

The contribution of adult education to our lives cannot be underscored. I have been engaging in goat keeping. Instead of using the local breeding, I decided to buy the modern breeding, which has been giving me profits three times the local one. We learn skills of how to keep such goats for commercial benefits and food; as a result, many villagers are engaging in keeping them. I am happy that I have used my skills acquired through adult education to transform my community (Interview, Graduate student on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023).

The quotations indicate that communities were transformed through engaging in economic activities which yield products. Shared knowledge on keeping livestock among communities was vital to bring about financial relief among communities. This shows that investing much in adult education is important.

### **3.4 Adult education enabled graduates to get basic needs**

Participants during the interview disclosed that engaging in production as a result of skills acquired from adult learning classes enabled them to get basic needs as they could sell the products at reasonable prices. They further disclosed that they could now get food, shelter, and clothes. Participants argued as follows:

As you see, our economy has been improved. By using the imparted skills from adult classes, for example, I can sell my crops. As a result, I have managed to build two houses, and as you see, I dress decently. This is a good step for our socio-economic development due to adult education programs (Interview, Graduate student on 11th May 2023).

### **3.5 Adult education helped to discard bad cultural practices in the society**

Findings revealed that some individual graduates were an agent towards the community's discarding bad cultural practices which hinder their development. During interviews, participants argued that they were the social change because of the education they received in classes. One of the issues identified during their learning that hindered their development was the entertainment of harmful cultural practices. Participants argued the following:

I use the skills acquired during my training at the Institute of Adult Education to fight against outdated cultural practices in our area. For example, we have female genital mutilation, whereby a good number of our young girls have been affected by such culture. We thank God that nowadays, society is changing slowly to discard those bad cultural practices. This has been the fruit of our efforts as young graduates; many of us have attained formal schooling, especially from the Institute of Adult Education (Interview, Graduate student on 12th June 2023).

During our studies at the Institute of Adult Education, we were taught to use drama to educate our societies about bad cultural practices that have long been taking place and have had many impacts on community members. Indeed it works as the communities have been slowly changing, and many are no longer engaging in it. This is a significant community transformation in socio aspect (Interview, Graduate student on 8th June 2023).

Adult education in developing countries like Tanzania, where bad cultural practices occur, is essential for transforming communities into civilized societies. This can be done if a strong emphasis is done on many people joining it.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study found that adult education is also seen as an instrument for the socio-economic transformation of the society in Tanzania. One of its contributions is that adult education ensures self-employability among graduates. Through their skills attained during class learning, they could employ themselves in various economic activities for income. The findings align with Usman (2022), who reported that adult education is geared towards the graduate's contribution to socio-economic development as they found engaging in economic production using skills acquired in classes during the learning process. The findings are also similar to UNESCO (2016), which reported that other programs of adult education to economic development that aid the development of graduates include entrepreneurial education, where the graduates get involved in self-employment. MoEST (2019) concluded that with proper skills utilization from adult learning classes, the country would solve some challenges associated with employment as graduates will get self-employed.

Moreover, most graduates who participated in the study acknowledged that adult education improved the standard of living of the graduates and the entire community where those graduates were living. Similar findings are reported by Festus and Adekola (2015), who argue that vocational education for adult learners helps graduates improve the standard of living of their lives. Akinpelu (2022) adds that adult classes always teach learners about staying healthy by eating a balanced diet, good sanitation, and environmental preservation. All these issues improve the living standard of the communities. The findings also revealed that adult education improved production capacities. This was due to better methods and skills taught in adult classes. Akoyunlu (2015) maintains that rural entrepreneurship education programs as a result of adult education appeared to be an excellent tool for enhancing rural livelihoods. This is because rural people used scientific and modern methods of production.

Furthermore, the study findings show that adult education enabled graduates to get basic needs. This was made possible because of enough capital that graduates and the entire communities had due to a better farming system. These findings correlate with the results by Grant (2017), who maintains that some rural dwellers could not get basic needs because of the low production, especially in economic activities. But the economic transformation was made in those areas where some of its people attended adult classes. This was made possible because of the new skills of production they acquired. UNESCO (2018) maintains that in those societies where adult graduates were hand in hand with their communities, especially in teaching them production skills, those societies could get basic needs, especially shelter, clothes, and food. Lastly, the findings indicate that adult education helped to discard bad cultural practices in society. Olori (2022) argues that adult education brings public enlightenment on the effects of harmful cultural practices that affect the community. Ronald (2023) adds that adult education plays a significant role in fighting against forced or early marriage, gender-based violence, and female genital mutilation among pastoralists. Mollel (2019) concluded that every society needs vital adult education to fight against bad cultural practices.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Generally, adult education appears vital in a community's transformation in social and economic aspects. A well-developed society depends more on students who have gained their skills from schooling to impart knowledge and skills to the whole community, thus, building capacity for the entire society.

#### **6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, people are encouraged to enroll in adult classes for skills that can transform them into socioeconomic well-being. Second, adult learning curricula should continue tallying with the socioeconomic demands of the communities. This will help learners to fit into their society's demands. Lastly, there is also a need for the government and other stakeholders to find a way to allocate adequate resources that would widen access to adult education opportunities to learners in the country because of its socioeconomic importance.

#### **7. Acknowledgement**

Author of this article, I would like to express our gratitude to the villages where I was allowed to collect data for

this study. Moreover, I thank the cooperation made by graduate students, who helped me diligently in the entire data collection process. Lastly, I would like to thank government authorities who assisted me in providing a research permit for this study.

## REFERENCES

- Adekola, O.M. (2015). Adult education for meaningful socio-economic development in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(2), 199-213.
- Akello, J A., Rukundo, E.L., & Musiimenta, P. (2017). Functional adult literacy: An alternative gateway to grassroots women's improved income generation in Lango Sub-region, Northern Uganda. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 67(2), 79-96.
- Akinpelu, J. (2022). *Philosophy and adult education*. Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig) Ltd.
- Anyanwu, G. (2021). *Developing adult education in Nigeria*. University Press Limited.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- Coker, M. A., & Obo, U. B. (2012). *Problems and prospects of implementing rural transformation programs*. World Publishing Company Ltd.
- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, D.J. (2018). *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publishers.
- Grant, C. (2017). *The contribution of education to economic growth*. Institute of Development Studies.
- Jinna, Y. J., & Maikano, P. N. (2014). The role of adult education in national development. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 32, 35-42.
- Kway, D.G. (2016). *Assessment of implementation of adult education, A comparative study between Tanzania and Finland*. Master of Arts in Education at Mzumbe University.
- Machumu, J., Kalimasi, J., Msabila, T., Zhu, C. & Almasi, M. (2015). Utilising secondary schools for adult learning programmes in Tanzania: A veracity of trances. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 23(8), 45-49.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) (2019). *Education sector development plan (2016/17 –2020/21) Tanzania Mainland*. MoEST.
- Mollel, E. F. (2019). *Effectiveness of adult education programme in promoting development among the Maasai community in Arusha district council, Tanzania*. Master's Degree in Education Administration and Planning, CUEA.
- Mwaikokesya, M.J., & Mushi, P.A.K. (2017). Education for older adults in Tanzania: Trends, issues and concerns. *International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries*, 2(1), 19-27.
- Ngu'mbi, W.M. (2022). Principles of post-colonial adult education: The case of adult education programmes in Tanzania. *JAET*, 24, 208-229.
- Niwagaba, D. (2017). *Adult learning in Uganda*. Sage Publishers.
- OECD. (2016). *Key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society*. Hogrefe & Huber.
- Olayiwola, O. A. (2020). *Procedures in educational research*. Hanijam Publications.
- Olori, C. N. (2022). *Concept, meaning and scope of adult education*. Harey Publications.
- Oni, D., & Bello, T. (2017). Finding solutions to challenges facing adult education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, 3(4), 23-29.
- Ronald, U. (2023). Adult education and economic development among rural dwellers. *International letters of social and humanistic Sciences*, 8(3), 208-216.
- UNESCO. (2016). *Effective approaches to adult learning and education*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Education.
- UNESCO. (2018). *International standard classification of education*. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- United Republic of Tanzania (2018). *Pre-primary, primary and secondary education statistics*. President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government.
- Usman, A. (2022). Adult education programmes and economic development of women in Sabon Gari Local Government, Kaduna State. *Journal of Adult Education*, 5(2), 78-83.
- Zuofa, C.C. (2017). Sustaining adult education and social change In Nigeria. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4(23), 146-152.