

Conceptions and Misconceptions of Adult Education in Contemporary Tanzania

Blackson Kanukisya
University of Dar es Salaam, School of Education
Department of Educational Foundations, Management and Lifelong Learning
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
E-mail: bkanukisya@gmail.com / bkanukisya@udsm.ac.tz

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study conceptions and misconceptions of adult education and their sources in Tanzanian context and to suggest a common framework for conceiving adult education which is acceptable both in research and in the conventional usage of the term. Methodologically, the paper uses desk research. The study found misconceptions of adult education among Tanzanians and their respective sources. The study further unveils that the definition of adult education hinges on three aspects: the purpose and utility of adult education; the providers of adult education; and the duration and formality of adult education. The study recommends for improving clarity and sensitization of the concept of adult and adult education in Tanzania.

Keywords: *adult, adult education, categorization definition, philosophy of adult education*

Introduction

The area of definitions in adult education is one of a considerable difficulty. More ink has been spilt on trying to determine what we mean by these words than on other aspects of the subject, yet there is still much confusion (Rogers, 1996). The definition of adult education is not straightforward due to different meanings of the term adult and education attached to different people and societies. By its very nature, adult education is characterized by diversity of practice, flexibility in the organization and operation, the complexity and heterogeneity of the organizations offering the programmes and multitude of actors, players, and stakeholders.

What is this thing called adult education that laymen/ women politicians, academicians and practitioners would wish to dissociate from? Do they have a

common understanding of what adult education is? Do they have common criteria of what constitutes an adult education programme?

The concept of adult education is elusive and has brought confusion among politicians, educators, educationists and professionals in adult education. This confusion then leads to a question: what is the meaning of adult education in contemporary Tanzania? Using documentary review, the paper answers, in a substantial manner what is adult education in the present Tanzania. The various conceptions or misconceptions of adult education and the inherent debates are presented in this paper. The conclusion is that the definition of the concept adult education is never static but rather it varies with time, space, demographics and economic characteristics of the community or nation states.

Definition of adult education: a leaf from philosophy

Philosophy of (adult) education

As it is well known, philosophy is a lens from which we filter concepts, representations, images and meanings. What we see is a function of the lenses we use to see. The aim of philosophy is, after all, to explain and make sense of the world. As Merriam and Brockett (2007) rightly put it:

A philosophy of education is a conceptual framework embodying certain values and principles that render the educational process meaningful. A philosophy of education typically includes discussions of terms, aims and objectives, curricula, methods, the teaching-learning transaction, the role of society, and the roles of student and teacher. Adult education has various philosophical perspectives, together forming the foundation for the discipline.

When discussing the philosophy of adult education, Apps (1973, p.5) argues that “a well-developed working philosophy can provide the adult educator with an approach for dealing with such long - standing and basic questions.” Further,

Apps formulated the following six critical leading questions to explain what philosophy of education deals with.

- a. What is reality; how do we know what is real?
- b. What is of value in society?
- c. What is the nature of man?
- d. How is knowledge acquired?
- e. What is education?
- f. What is the purpose of education?

Several scholars have laboured in developing the philosophies of adult education. The philosophical differences among scholars may also suggest the different conceptions and definitions of adult education among scholars. For the purpose of this paper, philosophies of adult education from four authors are presented in a tabular form. For further clarification and elaboration of the philosophies the reader is requested to consult the respective scholars' works.

Table 1: *Philosophies of Adult Education from Different Perspectives*

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Philosophies of adult education</i>					
Apps (1973)	Essentialism	Perennialism	Progressivism	Reconstructionism	Existentialism	
Beder (1989)	Liberal-progressive	Behaviorist-humanist	Criticalism			
Elias & Merriam (1994)	Liberal education	Progressivism	Humanism	Behaviorism	Radicalism	Philosophical analysis
Nyerere (various years)	Liberal education	Progressivism	Humanism			

Source: Apps (1973); Beder (1989); Elias and Merriam (1994); Nyerere (various years)

Categorization

Categorization may also assist in defining adult education. In the famous typology of education – the formal, non-formal and informal education, adult education is equated to or treated within non-formal education (Coombs, 1968). The way the three categories are treated is like they are discrete and separate entities which are not supposed to interact and complement one another. The separation of education into three main categories which are discrete and do not interact is more relevant to the classical theory of categorization and does not reflect the nature and characteristics of adult education. For the purpose of defining adult education it is hard to treat non-formal education (where adult education assumedly belongs) as discrete and separated from other forms of education. In this regard the modern theory of categorization (also referred to as prototype) will assist.

The prototype theory requires possession of some but not all common qualities for membership in a category (Wittgenstein, 2009; Rosch, Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Furthermore, the theory considers category membership a matter of degree; and that categories do not have clear boundaries. From these assumptions of the prototype theory, it is easy to understand the three types of education as operating in integrated and collaborative manner. As Torres (2006) put it, adult education is a

broad field that includes basic and continuing education, vocational and technical education, higher education and professional development, and is offered through formal, non-formal and informal education means, and by a variety of actors such as the state and civil society organizations.

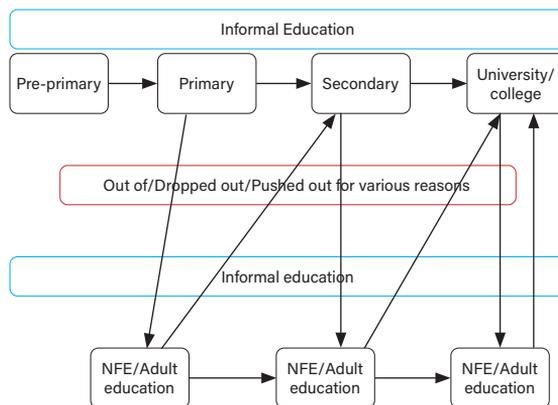


Figure 1: The relationship between formal, informal and non-formal education
 Source: compiled from different sources

Knowledge representation

Knowledge representation refers to the relationship between the real word and the representational forms. One source of the challenges in defining adult education is how adult education is represented. While knowledge representation seems a source of challenge, it may also assist in defining adult education. The way scholars and sometimes policy makers represent adult education is far from what adult education is. Therefore, the narratives and sometimes models are used to represent adult education in an incomplete manner. There is always underrepresentation, overrepresentation and misrepresentation of adult education. To avoid all these anomalies, there is a need to represent adult education in a deserved manner in order to attain construct validity.

Methodology

This study is a desk review, hence its data largely depended on review of documents. To use documents as a source of data in research is common in the social sciences. Patton (2002) recommends that documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing. Documentary review was considered a necessary method for data collection because there was a need to study the documents that define adult education. Also, it was seen desirable to execute documentary review in order to make comparisons and matches regarding

what have been written on adult education over time (temporal aspects) and spatially. The following are the main themes that guided the selection of materials/documents:

- a) Adult
- b) Adult education
- c) Definition of an adult
- d) Definition of adult education
- e) Philosophies of adult education
- f) Purposes of adult education

To delimit the study the following criteria were used to select the documents:

- a) Spatial dimension/ regional representation. In this aspect, the materials were drawn from America, Europe, Africa and Asia.
- b) Materials in Kiswahili and English languages: Only materials written in Kiswahili and English were consulted.
- c) Quality: selection involved books published by reputable publishing houses/ and academic papers published in peer-reviewed journals.

Using the aforementioned criteria, the following databases and libraries were consulted:

- a) Web of Science
- b) SCOPUS
- c) BRILL
- d) Google Scholar
- e) University of Dar es Salaam Library
- f) EBSCO

The accessed and cited materials are as they appear in the reference list.

Findings

Who is an adult?

One of the challenges in defining adult education is the qualifier adult due to the fact that the term means different things to different people. As part of the human developmental process, under normal circumstances adulthood covers, probably, the largest part of the lifespan. Based on the different aspects by which a term adult might be defined, Knowles (1990) argued that the concept of adult has four definitions or dimensions: biological, social, legal and psychological.

Biological definition of an adult

Biological definition relates to human development and growth. It is about maturity. According to Knowles (2005), biologically, we become adults when we reach the age at which we can reproduce (that is in early adolescence). This biological maturity or

adulthood is at times contradicting with other definitions of an adult. For example, while the Tanzania Law of Marriage Act of 1971, states that the age of consent for marriage is 18 years for males and 15 years for females, the recommendable age for having a child (for female) is above twenty years (from maternity health point of view). It is worth noting that when one marries in Tanzanian context, it means he/she is ready to socially and economically handle family responsibilities.

Legal definition of an adult

Legally, we become adults when we reach the age at which the law says we can, for instance, vote, get a driver's license and marry without consent. In Tanzania, for example, a person of 18 years is regarded as mature enough to vote: Article 5 (1) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) states, "Every citizen of the United Republic who attained the age of eighteen years is entitled to vote in any public election held in Tanzania" (URT, 1998, p.15).

In addition to the Constitution, the Tanzania Penal Code section 130 (2) as amended by section 5 of Sexual Offences Special Provision Act of 1998, states: — the consent for sexual activity is eighteen years of age and above. On the other hand, but on a more related issue, the Law of Marriage Act of 1971, states that the age of consent for marriage is 18 years for males and fifteen years for females. It seems that in the Law of Marriage Act of 1971, males and females are given different age limits for marriage implying different age for adulthood in the same country let alone in other countries. When it comes to education, according to the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014 (MOEVT, 2014) the official school attending age is 5 year for pre-primary, 6–15 years for basic education, 16-17 years for upper secondary and 18 – 21 years for higher education. While such provisions for ETP 2014 are not implemented, the provision in the ETP 1995 are the ones being implemented in which the official school attending age is 5 year for pre-primary, 6–12 years for primary education, 13-16 years lower secondary education, 17 -18 for upper secondary and 19 – 22 years for higher education. Notably, a deviation of more than five years above the official school attending age may result into non-formal education. For example, a person with the age of 26 may attend lower secondary education in Tanzania but with non-formal arrangements.

Social definition of an adult

Socially, we become adults when we start performing adult roles, such as the role of being a full-time worker, spouse, parent and a voting citizen. Socially responsible adults are expected to relate with others in an acceptable manner and handle or meet all the responsibilities as an adult. We normally question the adulthood of a person who does not conform to roles and responsibilities as a spouse, parent,

and a citizen. Failing to meet social responsibilities as an adult is used as a disqualifier to someone's adulthood. Therefore, as it has been stated above, for example, different people may define the term 'adult' using different criteria such as age, assumption of social and economic responsibilities or the biological and psychological development stages.

Defining adult education: difficulties, distortions and misconceptions

Difficulties in defining adult education

Apart from the difficulties inherent in adult as a qualifying concept in adult education, there are other sources of challenges in defining adult education. Defining from the Norwegian context and comparative and international education context, Nordhaug (1986) argue that there are three issues when it comes to defining adult education:

First, [...] universal concept that both reflects the very substance of adult education and clearly emphasizes its specific features vis-a-vis related activities. The universal concept must in addition attract a certain minimum of acceptance within the scientific community. Such a claim may probably be met without too great difficulties on a national research arena. In international contexts, however, it is hard to imagine the possibility of broad consensus on a universal concept of adult education, primarily because worldwide there are a considerable variety of traditions in this field. Second, the institutional patterns vary greatly. Third, groups of nations are at highly dissimilar economic and political stages of development, thus, it seems more meaningful to imagine that different definitions might be elaborated within groups of countries which are on the whole similar regarding economic and political structures.

While these three issues (which are more spatial) Nordhaug discusses are sources of controversy and harmony in defining adult adult education, there are others which are non-spatial issue which impact on the conception of adult education. First, academic disciplines. As we know there are several disciplines (some well established while others are in the making and emerging) in the world. Most of the scholars are working within their disciplines of their specialties. There is a tendency of some scholars in one discipline to undermine other disciplines. In so doing they end up demeaning other disciplines. Thus, at some point scholars from other disciplines may give different meaning of adult education not because they are ignorant but rather in order to discredit and belittle adult education. The scholars may be within the same spatial boundaries but differing on their perspectives with regard to how adult education should be conceived.

The second issue in defining adult education is having an international, comparable and universally acceptable definition of adult education. Adult education is inherently flexible making it context-dependent. The definitions and programmes will vary greatly based on the context where adult education is operating. This makes adult education a very complex concept when it comes to research and international comparison. Thus, it seems easy to deal with selected adult education programmes which are easily and readily comparable, for example adult literacy than comparing and researching adult education as a whole.

Distortions and Misconceptions

There have been consistent claims in Tanzania that adult education is no more. The most cited reasons for the claims include the death of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and the historical achievement in the reduction of adult illiteracy rates in Tanzania led people to question the relevance and rationale for adult education in the country today. Again, with coming up of EFA and MDGs and consequently massive investments in adult basic education in most developing countries people reiterated questioning if contemporary Tanzania still needs adult education.

Another distortion and misconception is related to equating adult education to adult literacy. In developing countries, due to the socio-economic situation at independence, the concentration was to reduce illiteracy rates (ignorance among adults) hence people narrowed adult education down to adult literacy. However, Nyerere tried to unpack the misconception:

...adult education is not something which can deal with just “agriculture”, or “health”, or “literacy”, or “mechanical skill”, etc. All these separate branches of education are related to the total life a man is living, and to the man he is and will become. Learning how best to grow soybeans is of little use to a man if it is not combined with learning about nutrition and/or the existence of a market for the beans. This means that adult education will promote changes in men, and in society. And it means that adult education should promote change, at the same time as it assists men to control both the change which they induce, and that which is forced upon them by the decisions of other men or the cataclysms of nature (Nyerere, 1978, p. 29).

Purposes of adult education

Literature review has found that there have been deliberate efforts within the political arena and in the academia to play reducible techniques so that adult education purposes and programmes are narrowed and lack place in the public discourses and debates. To that end, several authors have developed schemes to highlight the

purposes and objectives of adult education (Bryson, 1936; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Grattan, 1955; Liveright, 1978; Mpagolo, 1984; Rachal, 1988). According to these authors, what appear in Table 1 are the purposes and objectives of adult education.

Table 2: Purposes of Adult Education According to Different Scholars

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Purposes of adult education</i>			
Bryson (1936)	Liberal	Occupational	Relational	Remedial Political
Grattan (1955)	Liberal	Vocational	Informational and Recreational	
Liveright (1968)		Vocational/ Occupational / Professional	Self-Realization, personal and family	Civic and Social Responsibility
Darkenwald and Merriam (1982)	Cultivation	Personal and social improvement		Social transformation Organizational effectiveness
Apps (1985)		Career development	Personal development	Remedial Cultural criticism and social action
Rachal (1988; 1989)	Liberal	Occupational	Self- help	Compensatory Scholastic
Mpagolo (1984)		Application	Communication	Remediation Continuation
Nyerere (various years)	Liberal	Community improvement	Communication	Remedial Civic and Political Responsibility

Source: Merriam and Brockett (2007); Rachal (1988; 1989); Mpagolo (1984); Bryson (1936)

Rachal (1989) came up with an adult education tree (see Appendix 1). The branches of this tree carry the purposes and objectives of adult education while the roots are the organizations offering/ programmes of adult education. The purposes are as listed in Table 2. The typologies of organizations offering adult education programmes as listed in the roots of Rachal's

tree include: Government agencies, cooperative extensions, junior colleges, public schools, universities, military, libraries, individuals and organizational social actions, health agencies, professional organizations, industry, civic and religious organizations and self-directed learning. With the exception of few, most of the organizations are operating in Tanzania and most of the learners are adults. With that in mind can we still claim adult education is no more in Tanzania? Table 2 draws from Rachal’s tree to present a summary of adult education organizations and the corresponding programmes in Tanzania.

Table 3: Summary of Adult Education Organizations and the Corresponding Programmes in Tanzania

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Examples of programmes or activities in Tanzania</i>
Government/ University/ University Colleges/ Institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Non-traditional” students in university degree programmes - Continuous professional development programmes to staff in universities (workers’ education) - Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) - Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE) - Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) - Adult literacy programmes/ campaigns - Foundation programme at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) - Integrated Post-Primary Education (IPPE) at the Institute of Adult Education - Various Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes
Middle-level colleges (education colleges, medical and/or health colleges, accountancy colleges, etc – Folk Development Colleges, colleges under Vocational Education and Training Authority, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-traditional students in the formal/ diploma or certificate programmes - Continuous professional development programmes to staff in colleges (workers’ education) - Vocational education and training
Cooperative extension (Cooperative unions, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperative education - Agricultural extension
Primary and secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open schools - Non-formal secondary education (Qualifying Test – QT, etc) - Public school buildings as centers of adult education
Military and army (TPDF, Police, Migration, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous professional development programmes (workers’ education) - Military training

Libraries (TLS, institutions-based libraries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous professional development programmes (workers' education) - Adult learning centres
Organizations and companies (Banks, VICOBA etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous professional development programmes (workers' education) - Sensitization programmes - Entrepreneurship education
NGOs and CSOs (TWAWEZA, HAKIEIMU, TENMET, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowerment programmes - Education on income generating activities - Civic education/ voters education
Health agencies (Hospitals, health centres, dispensaries, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hygiene and health behaviour - Education on maternal health - Sanitation - Sensitization and conscientization on pandemics
Professional bodies/ organizations (NBAA, TAPSEA, ERB, MAT, TLS, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous professional development programmes (workers' education) - Ethics and professionalism training
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous professional development programmes (workers' education)
Religious organizations (BAKWATA, TEC, ELCT, CCT, CPCT, etc))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitization and conscientization on various matters of relevance to believers and followers - Faith-based education

Towards a new framework for defining adult education in Tanzania

As Merriam and Brocket acceptably suggest that defining adult education depends to some extent upon where one stands or what count (Merriam & Brocket,1997). Nordhaug (1986) developed criteria which may assist in defining adult education. The criteria are time, formality, intentionality, normality and organization. With reference to Merriam and Brocket there are other relevant criteria that influence how one defines adult education. In the framework (Figure 2) the criteria are grouped into external and internal criteria. In the external criteria we find academic disposition of the person defining adult education, the education background (people who have not studied adult education or used that path may have a different view of adult education), the philosophies and the cultural context also shape how we define adult education. Moreover, political context, level of development of the country, and socio-economic context matter in defining adult education.

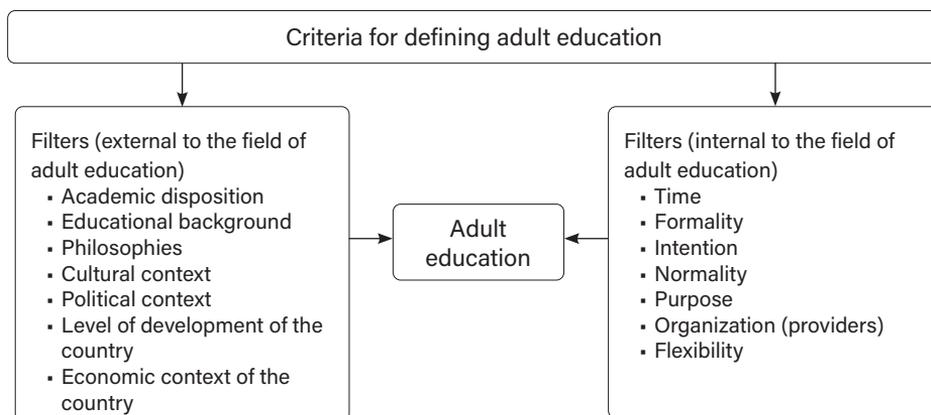


Figure 2: The criteria for defining adult education

Discussion of the criteria for defining adult education

Academic disposition and educational background

Several people have defined adult education in the context of their academic disposition. People with formal disposition define adult education differently from those with informal and non-formal disposition. Definition of adult education from a person with adult education background may be different from the one given by a person without adult education background. For example, people within the field of adult education may have a more refined definition of adult education compared to people from outside the field. For instance, Nyerere’s definition of adult education is not strict in the sense of the term. It is more on the purpose of adult education. A closer look at Table 2 suggests that there are several definitions of adult education which are not tied up and tightened to warrant adult education a scientific construct to be investigated. Even some scholars within adult education end up with the same standpoints.

Philosophies

As highlighted in the preceding section, philosophy acts as a mirror or lens of what to see and even how to see it. Positivism may see it difficult to believe and even to define adult education. Since positivists believe on structured entities, adult education which is not structured may carry a very different meaning compared to those who believe in constructivism or interpretivism, for example. It may thus be difficult to situate a particular definition offered by authors in a certain philosophical orientation.

Cultural context

By cultural context I mean norms, traditions and customs governing the conduct of education in the country or area. If, for example, adult education is a norm rather than an exception then the definition may be different in the cultural context where adult education is exceptional, something second.

Political context

According to Johnsson, Nystrom and Sunden (1983), the importance of adult education cannot therefore be adequately discussed without first making reference to the national ideology. The second postulate is that large scale literacy campaigns and similar programmes are most effective when social and political philosophies encourage both maximum mobilization of institutional resources and maximum participation by the adult population. Political will and commitment are crucial in adult education. Indeed, it is the political context that defines adult education. For instance, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere defined adult education with political power at his disposal. Perhaps, the definition of adult education during his time is different from the current definition of adult education in Tanzania. Adult education, as it is for education in general, is a political issue. Essentially, politicians define who is an adult and therefore what adult education is or what should be. As such, Budgetary allocations and overall commitment of resources to adult education is a function of political will and context.

Socio-economic context of the country

In developing countries, adult education is generally defined as adult literacy. This is not surprising taking into account the role played by adult education during independence in most of developing countries, particularly African countries. At independence in 1961 Tanzania mainland (Tanganyika by then) had illiteracy rate of 80 percent. Diseases were rampant and people attributed them to witchcrafts and poverty was raging in the country, yet people attributed it to the will of God (Bhalalusesa, 2004). Seeing that situation, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (the first President of Tanzania) launched a national campaign against what he considered three national archenemies (ignorance, diseases and poverty). Thus, by 1970 Tanzania had remarkably invested in AE and consequently it was one of the models for successful AE policies and practices in the independent African countries by then. Since the concentration of adult education was on adult literacy then most people equated and continue to equate adult literacy with adult education. No wonder, after heavy investments in the formal education system especially at primary and secondary levels, people start to question the relevance and rationale for adult education programmes. The concern is that, with increased investments in those levels, illiteracy will be no more, then do we really need adult education?

The learning context

Time. As Nordhaug (1986) had rightly put it, the time aspect refers to the amount of time participants spend on participation. The strictest definitions of adult education in this respect include only part-time education (see, for example, Bryson, 1936). In other contexts, part-time study is a necessary requirement when the learning activity lies above a certain level within the educational system. In this aspect, most of the definitions of adult education focus on the time aspect – when adult education programmes are offered. Due to its nature, adult education programmes are less often offered on the time as in the formal system. As a result most of the definitions of adult education embrace the time aspect in the definition. For example, Liveright and Haygood’s definition captures the time aspect in defining adult education. Liveright and Haygood (1968) define adult education as a process in which persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full- time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention to bring about change in information, knowledge, understanding or skills appreciation and attitude for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems.

Formality. One of the debates surrounding adult education is formality and non-formality. Some authors consider adult education programmes as necessarily non-formal, hence any programme with formality does not qualify to be termed as adult education. It is important to note that adult education ranges from informal, non-planned and unconscious learning on one’s own initiatives to tightly organized credit-giving educational programmes. Hence, the distinctions may be made between formal and informal, organized and non-organized activities (Nordhaug, 1986).

From Figure 1 we learn that adult education may be offered in three institutional settings namely: formal institutions (*independent adult education institutions* – for example the Institute of Adult Education, *education institutions of public schools and post-secondary institutions* that serve youth and adults, *quasi-educational organizations* which consider the education of the general public to be an integral part of their mission – for example, cultural organizations such as libraries, museums, and the mass media, and *community organizations* like service clubs and religious also civic organizations, and non-educational organizations, whose educational opportunities are geared to the organization’s employees rather than the public); non-formal institutions – for example, trainings organized by various organizations, and government agencies; and informal settings (informal or self-directed leaning activities).

Rogers (1992) defined adult education as all planned and purposeful learning opportunities offered to those who are recognized and who recognize themselves

as adults in their own society and who have left the formal initial education system (or have passed beyond the possible stage of initial education if they were ever in it) whether such learning opportunities treat the learners as adults in decision making, use appropriate adult learning methodologies and styles and purpose to meet their own need. On the other hand, Verner (1964) declares that “adult education is a relationship between an educational *agent* and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for people whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society (p. 32)”. Verner’s definition acceptably serves better as a definition of adult education in relation to formality.

Formality is also related to the Rogers’ notion of the icebergs of learning. According to Rogers (2014), adult education or learning takes place more in the informal settings compared to formal and non-formal settings. However, with increased certification, there is a sizeable increase in the demand for formal and non-formal education compared to previous times when no certificates were given to very few learners and programmes.

Nature of participants

Normality. Most of the learners in adult education are part-timers. Learning is supplementary or second activity after the ‘normal’ routine of life. Therefore, adult education may be defined according to the nature of activities of learners in the sense that learning is not the primary occupation of the learners. A good example of a definition on normality is the definition by Liveright and Haygood (1968): adult education is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full-time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention to bring about change in information, knowledge, understanding or skills appreciation and attitude for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problem.

Intentionality. One of the characteristics of adult learners is that they are goal-oriented (Knowles, 2005). Adult learners participate in learning with intentions in their head. It is, therefore, unsurprising to find that most of the literature on the participation of adults in learning is based on motivation and other psychological traits. According to Nordhaug, “one representative of adult education scholars who define adult education according to intentional aspect is Houle. Houle regards adult education as a process in which the participants - alone, in groups or through organizations - try to improve themselves or society, or, in which individuals, groups or organizations attempt to help participants make progress on behalf of themselves or society (Houle, 1972, p. 32, cited in Nordhaug, 1986).

Purposes

The purpose of adult education is perhaps the most used criterion for defining adult education. Most adult educators define adult education in relation to the purposes adult education serves. Adult education may be defined differently by an agricultural extension officer based on the purpose adult education is serving. Below are selected definitions with emphasis on the purpose.

Bryson (1936, p. 3)

All the activities with an educational purpose that are carried on by people engaged in the ordinary business of life.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982, p.9)

Adult education is a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills.

Long (1987, p. viii)

Adult education includes all systematic and purposive efforts by the adult to become an educated person.).

Merriam and Brockett (1997, p.8)

Adult education is an activity intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults.

Rogers (1992)

Adult education includes all planned and purposeful learning opportunities offered to those who are recognized and who recognize themselves as adults in their own society and who have left the formal initial education system (or have passed beyond the possible stage of initial education if they were never in it) whether such learning opportunities treat the learners as adults in decision making, use appropriate adult learning methodologies and style and purpose to meet their own needs.

Organizations (providers)

Apart from adult education gained informally, adult education taking place formally and non-formally can also be offered by and through various institutions. And once offered institutionally, then comes the question who defines and develops the content/programme/curriculum? This is because at the centre of adult education are adult learners whom are supposedly developers and crafters of their own curriculum. In any case there are several definitions focusing on the organization or institutions providing or offering adult education. Nordhaug (1986) noted that adult education may be defined institutionally by focusing on the characteristics of providers.

Gboku and Lekoko (2007)

All adult educational activities provided to learners through a variety of channels, including face-to-face interactions and distance-learning mode, using both print and nonprint teaching and learning materials or aids.

Liveright and Haygood (1968)

Adult education is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full- time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention to bring about change in information, knowledge, understanding or skills appreciation and attitude for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems.

Verner (1964, p.32)

Adult education is a relationship between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for people whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society.

So, what is adult education in Tanzania?

The struggle for defining adult education is not a novel undertaking. Perhaps, this paper is a duplication of vast effort and investment in the field of study. In Table 1 and 2 are selected definitions. Using the criteria can we have a universally accepted definition of adult education which may be also of importance and relevance to comparative adult education and research? Table 4 and 5 presents definitions by scholars and practitioners and organizations respectively.

Table 4: Definitions of Adult Education by Scholars and Practitioners

a. Materials with reference to America

<i>Scholars</i>	<i>Definition of adult education</i>
Darkenwald and Merriam (1982)	Adult education is a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills (p. 9).
K n o w l e s (1980b)	In its broadest sense adult education is the process of adults learning. In its more technical sense, adult education is a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives (p. 25).
Liveright and Haygood (1968)	Adult education is a process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full - time basis undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention to bring about change in information, knowledge, understanding or skills appreciation and attitude for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems.
Long (1987)	Adult education includes all systematic and purposive efforts by the adult to become an educated person (p. viii).
Merriam and Brockett (1997),	Adult education is an activity intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults (p. 8).
Verner (1964)	Adult education is a relationship between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for people whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society (p. 32).

b. Materials with reference to Europe

<i>Scholars</i>	<i>Definition of adult education</i>
Rogers (1992)	Adult education refers to all planned and purposeful learning opportunities offered to those who are recognized and who recognize themselves as adults in their own society and who have let the formal initial education system (or have passed beyond the possible stage of initial education if they were never in it) whether such learning opportunities treat learners as adults in decision making, use appropriate adult learning methodologies and style and purpose to meet their own needs.

c. Materials with reference to Africa

<i>Scholars</i>	<i>Definition of adult education</i>
Bhala l u s e s a (2006)	Adult education encompasses all forms of planned and systematic learning which adults experience in the process of their lives. It is the provision of educational opportunities to adults that happens in so many and varied places in the lives of adults.
K a n u k i s y a (2008)	Adult education entails all educational activities planned for adults outside or parallel to the formal education school system.
K n o w l e s (1980b)	In its broadest sense adult education is the process of adults learning. In its more technical sense, adult education is a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives (p. 25).
Gboku and Lekoko (2007)	Adult education refers to all adult educational activities provided to learners through a variety of channels, including face-to-face interactions and distance-learning education, using both print and nonprint teaching and learning materials or aids.
Nyerere (1978)	Adult education is anything which enlarges men's understanding, activates them and helps them to make their own decisions and to implement those decisions for themselves (p.30).

d. Materials with reference to Asia

<i>Scholars</i>	<i>Definition of adult education</i>
Xiao (2003)	Adult education is defined as encompassing a broad scope of planned learning activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in knowledge, skills and attitude.

Definitions of adult education by international or local, and bilateral or multilateral organizations

There are several organizations that have defined adult education. Table 5 presents a summary of definitions by the selected organizations.

Table 5: Summary of Definitions by Selected Organizations

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Definition of adult education</i>
UNESCO (1977)	Adult education is the education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes what may be referred to as 'continuing education', 'recurrent education' or 'second chance education (p.4).

<p>The Belem Framework for Action (2010)</p>	<p>Adult education embraces the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society (p.1).</p>
<p>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (1992)</p>	<p>Adult education is any learning activity or programme deliberately designed by providing agent to satisfy any training needs or interests that may be experienced at any stage in his or her life by person that is over the statutory school -leaving age and whose principal activity is no longer education. Its ambit thus spans non-vocational, vocational, general, formal and non-formal studies as well as education with a collective social purpose.</p>

A closer look at the definitions by the selected organizations suggests that almost all of the definitions have limitations. For example, while the definition by UNESCO captures almost all important aspects of adult education, it does not specify the uniqueness of adult education since adults have some unique characteristics that distinguish them from children. By implication, the definition has much to do with issues such as how to formulate objectives and conduct facilitation of the programmes. Looking at oECD definition also we note some limitations. With regard to OECD definition, this was conceptualized in the context of developed countries in which very few individuals are excluded from the education system. In developing countries like Tanzania one might be within the statutory school leaving age but still outside the education system for various reasons (see for example URT, 1995).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The challenges of defining adult education and hence its identity have occupied scholars in adult education for decades. In this article, the aim was to highlight the efforts of scholars and situate the debate and discourses on adult education in the Tanzanian context. The article may not be a magic bullet to the long -lasting debate on what is adult education. In conclusion, it is worth reiterating the question: *What is this thing called adult education?* But more significantly, we should be able to suggest whether the question has been answered. In this article, different approaches have been used to discern the controversial definitions of the concept of adult education. The framework has been offered to ease the formulation of adult education. Is it possible now to come up with the definition of the concept of adult education which fits all contexts–political, historical, economic, cultural and geographical? The nature of the concept of adult education is against developing a universal definition of the concept. It is perhaps easy to define adult education

for general use and application, but when it comes to research and comparative analyses the concept of adult education poses challenges. It is equally easy to deal with similar or comparable programmes within adult education (for example adult literacy) than to deal with adult education as a single unit of analysis. This is not to suggest that adult education has no identity. Adult education has a clear identity as manifested in the clear philosophies, purposes and objectives, programmes and theories of teaching and learning. Advocating a one-size-fits all definition of adult education at this point may not be realistic taking into account the very nature of adult education but also the criteria and framework for defining adult education. Adult educators, practitioners in adult education researchers are advised to develop operational definitions that are sensitive to construct validity.

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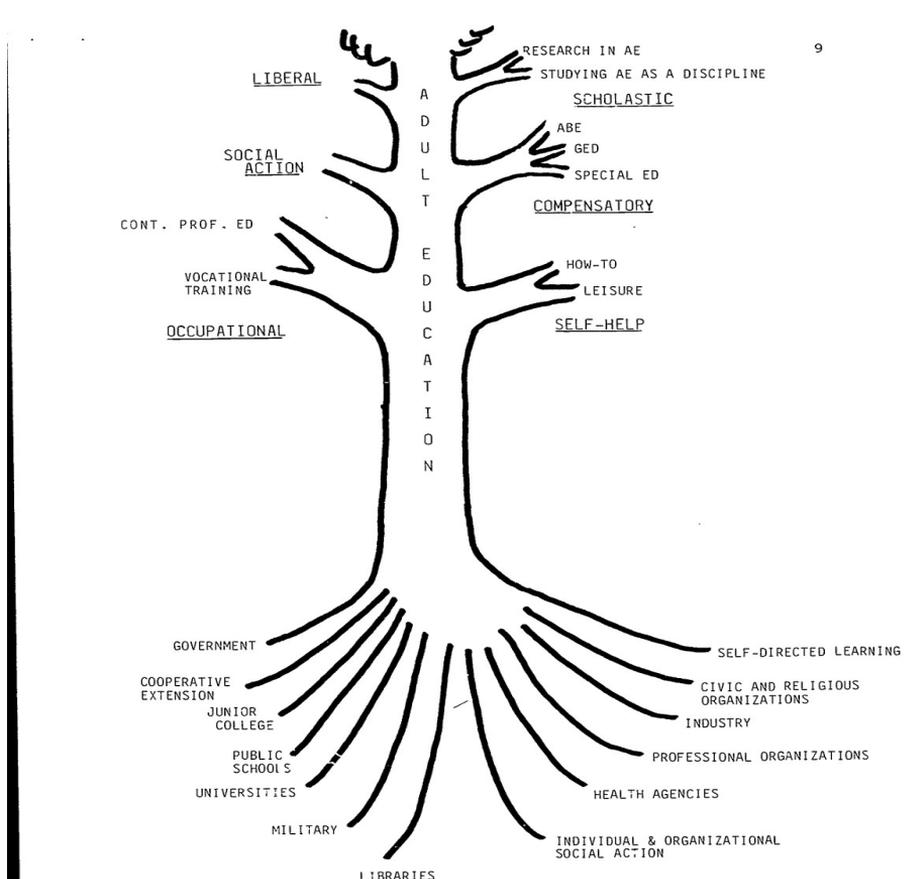
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Appendix 1: The adult education tree



The Adult Education “Tree” (Rachal, 1989)