PROMOTING AND SUSTAINING ADULT EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA: A CASE TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

It is estimated that in the year 2000 there were 862 million illiterates in the world. This represented a reduction of 2% over the decade and a further reduction (around 7%) is expected by 2015 (EFA global monitoring report 2003/4). From the same source the Gambia is noted as one of the nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa whose adult literacy rates were below 40%, and this has far reaching implications for the Government of the Gambia, development partners and the society as well.

This study is devoted to examining a critical but largely hidden dimension of Education for Adults in The Gambia: the social circumstances under which people are both motivated to acquire literacy of different kinds and are actually able to put these skills to use and to retain them.

The purpose of the study therefore, is to find out on developing adult education program to what extent are the community consulted in the processes of the development of valid adult education activities.

The study was carried out to test the following questions:
1. Who are being involved in basic education need identification and planning processes? That is the institution concerned, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations whether they highly involve the community in these processes fully.
2. In basic education need identification and planning processes in non-formal education activities what procedures or approaches were adopted to elicit information at the community level?
3. Who provided the material and financial support in basic education need identification and planning processes at the community level?
4. What is the attitude of the community towards adult education activities?

On these, data was collected using a questionnaire and unstructured interview and the results were analysed in tables. The findings indicate that 57.14% of NGOs agree that the community is involve in basic education need identification and planning process. Among active participants, 66.67% indicate government involvement while 61.11% collaborate government involvement. While 83.33% of the active participants showed that participatory approach had been utilized and 16.67% view out non-participatory approach. The question as to who provided material and financial support, 57.14% of the technocrats indicated government as the provider while 47.86% pointed out NGO support. Finally, 72.22% of respondents agreed that community showed positive attitude towards adult education activities, whilst 27.78 percent indicated community have negative attitude towards adult education activities.

Keywords: Education, adult, skills, community, need identification, planning process, attitude.