

## Chapter 33


# Adult Literacy Programme for Poverty Reduction: A Citizenry Approach

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Citizens who lack basic skills and knowledge end up with unemployment or low-paying jobs. This leads to existence in poverty and a lack of opportunity to even voice. Low literacy levels affect economic development, diminish citizen participation and contribution, and are burdensome on nations. To address the issue, many nations consider, adopt, and support adult literacy programmes (ALP). Namibia is no exception. Hence, in 2003, the Adult Literacy Programme was initiated and is still actively engaging the targeted community members for acquiring basic skills and knowledge, thereby reducing poverty. Thus, the objective of this study is to assess ALP's success in poverty reduction as a citizenry approach. Based on the transformational learning theory and the capability approach, the qualitative research method is adopted, and data collection is done with structured interviews using a purposive sampling technique. Findings reflect ALP has enhanced the lives of participants and, therefore forms part of the measures to inhibit several social-related evils that cause poverty.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

All Sub-Saharan African countries are striving towards the provision of education to all its citizens as part of the national priority objective by 2030 (Education, 2012) including Namibia. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education through the Directorate of Adult Education and in conjunction with

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the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), has launched Adult Literacy Programmes (ALP) (DAE, 2008). The overall goal of the ALP was to promote social, political, cultural, economic development and improvement of the living standards. The main target of the ALP are the marginalised, vulnerable groups consist of illiterate citizens, disadvantaged members of the society and forced out of formal education out of school youths due to other circumstances (UNESCO, 2011). Jauch (2012), argues that Namibia is ranked as a country with the highest measure of inequalities and has a Gini-coefficient of 70 which shows a great level of inequalities in the country in terms of gender, race, regional, educational and class dimensions of inequality. It is against this background of poverty and vulnerability of the African people especially the slum dwellers, women, orphans, the out of school youths and the chronically ill that the function of provision of information and knowledge in poverty reduction was envisaged (Mchombu & Mchombu, 2014). Namibia is neither exceptional nor immune to poverty. Poverty is defined broadly in four perspectives which are: whether the individual has enough resources to meet their needs; inequalities in the distribution of earnings across the population; consumption patterns of different groups within the society and vulnerability of people in the society. It points to the danger of one regressing into poverty even when equipped with skills and knowledge to battle poverty (Mchombu & Mchombu, 2014). The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) (2006), defines poverty as a lack of ability to attain socially acceptable standards of living. This definition implies that poverty is relative. It can be argued that information, knowledge and skills are essential to achieve poverty eradication and improve the lives of people. It is perceived that poverty eradication can be achieved through education and in this case provision of adult literacy education to those who are illiterate. This should help to close the gap and enable the community members to upgrade their skills to tertiary level.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2012) as cited in Mchombu and Mchombu (2014), Namibia in comparison to other nations in the region and beyond (Botswana 0.61, Haiti 0.595, South Africa 0.578), has a high level of inequality due to the marginalised community who have less access to education. In a study carried out in the Ohangwena Region, in rural Namibia, it was indicated that 18% of the participants opined that information and knowledge enabled the participants to access new services. It is further indicated in the same study that fourteen (14%) were able to get basic requirements such as clothes, shoes, blankets and school uniforms to mention a few examples (Mchombu & Mchombu, 2014). From the above discussion, one may deduce that the significance of knowledge, skills and information that can be acquired through education is a panacea to poverty reduction. Before independence, the South African government was ruling the country and there was a lot of discrimination in the educational sector. The money allocated to blacks' schools was far much less than that allocated to whites' only schools (Sumana, 2008). As a result, education for the black people was neglected and this was made further difficult by the apartheid education laws and employment policies which favoured whites compared to black communities (Keja-Kaerero, 2013). Since independence in 1990, the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN, 2003) has made great improvements in relation to addressing the inequalities in education that cater for all citizens. Among the projects or programmes that were introduced to reduce poverty and improve living standards among the black population in Namibia were the National Development Plans (NDPs), Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP) (Keja-Kaerero, 2013).

National Statistical Agency (NSA) revealed that in 1993, 69% of Namibians were living in poverty. This affirms the Labour Resource and Research Institute findings that most Namibians live in poverty surviving on less than US \$1 per day. However, there has been by 2010, a reduction of poverty from 69% to 29% which is a great leap towards poverty eradication (New Era 2015).

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