

An insight into an African perspective on lifelong learning: towards promoting functional compensatory programmes

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This paper argues that lifelong learning can be a torch for education that is relevant, appropriate and appreciated by many Africans if conceptualized within the African Indigenous Learning (AIL) framework. Such learning is entrenched deep in the practices, cultures and ways of knowing of many Africans. The fundamentals or the ideals of lifelong learning in AIL can be presented in three dimensions of time, space, and I/We. Woven together, these concepts present a context in which lifelong learning is defined by aspects such as learning-in-action (immediacy of application); interactive methods; and a time that is only valued in respect of events that constitute it. Generally, an understanding of lifelong learning from the western perspective hinges on the linearity, economics and individualism of learning and these concepts may not be well promoted within the framework of AIL. It is not difficult to imagine the impact of borrowed concepts of learning on Africans if applied uncritically. Africans cannot afford to be oblivious of the differences in contexts between them and the western world. Context, therefore, is central to the application of lifelong learning. The authors of this paper have a full understanding that people in different parts of Africa may view lifelong learning in different ways. Thus, the term 'African' is used to underscore the importance of context. The authors also note that the advantages of lifelong learning to Africa are obvious vis-à-vis learning as a human right and a social justice. While these ideals are helpful, Africans cannot be subservient to how lifelong learning comes packaged from the western perspectives. To illustrate some differences, some ideals of lifelong learning in the AIL are introduced through the case of an adult education compensatory programme, and a three dimensional model is proposed for applying these ideals.

Introduction

This paper starts with a general background to the rationale. It then provides a western/African comparative perspective for lifelong learning before moving on to suggest a model for understanding lifelong learning from an African perspective. The paper then elaborates on a three-dimensional model with five ideals for lifelong learning from an African indigenous lifelong learning perspective, using the case of an adult education compensatory programme.

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Many parts of Africa, for example Botswana, have hope that the philosophy of lifelong learning can contribute to social justice, acceding to the ideals of conventions like World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien (1990), the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg (1997), the World Education Forum, Dakar (2000), and the International Conference on Lifelong Learning, Beijing. It is also clear, however, that behind what seems to be a simple term, lifelong learning is a complex phenomenon especially when discussed in relation to its role in and for development of the so-called underdeveloped nations. Some authors (Houtondiji 1985, Teffo 2000, Mgadla 2003, Preece 2009) decry the repression of philosophies of indigenous learning or education in the western conception of lifelong learning. These philosophies have contributed to the development of African communities. African Indigenous Learning (AIL), for example, is generally functional, preparing young people to fit well into the society at large ... 'teachers and instructors existed both informally and formally' (Mgadla 2003: 3). To illustrate, McWilliam and Kwamena (1975, cited in Higgs 2003) inform us that:

A goldsmith apprenticeship might start at age 8 or 9, learning the names of particular tools, followed by a periods of observation, perhaps moving from village to village in order to perfect the skills, and learning the significance of each item so that by the end of his course the apprentice had acquired not only the artist's knowledge of everyday activities, but also an understanding of the history and right use of the language and proverbs of his community. (5)

Preece (2009) reiterates that such traditional education was 'characterised by the goal to produce useful members of society—educating for good character, health and knowledge about the community's history and beliefs' (39).

While not all Africans may share the view that the indigenous education has been marginalised by the entrenchment of the western learning models, leading to some Africans undermining the value of their own learning systems, this paper reaffirms this position based on our personal experiences as educators and the available literature. There is a sufficient body of literature that explores African philosophical world views which attest that values of relevance, functionalism and communalism have been eroded (e.g. Teffo 2000, Preece 2009). These fundamentals of the traditional systems should be reinstated instead of moving towards more westernised world views; indeed we concur with Preece (2009) in this position and many others writing from the African perspectives. A refocus on the African Indigenous Learning philosophy is to view lifelong learning as education or learning that is grounded in the experiences that Africans have as a result of living within their own societies. The call for an African voice in their education has continued over nearly four decades of African post-independence (see Diop 1999; Maloka 2000; Muiu and Martin 2002, cited in Higgs 2003) by such movements as the African Renaissance:

A call which insists that all critical and transformative educators in Africa embrace an indigenous African world view and root their nation's educational paradigms in an indigenous socio-cultural and epistemological framework. This implies that all educational curricula in Africa should have Africa as their focus, and as a result be indigenous-grounded and orientated. (Higgs 2003: 11)

Advocates of the African Renaissance educational discourse such as Vilakazi (1999), Teffo (2000), and Seepe (2001) argue that much of the educational curricula in Africa is in fact not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa.

History informs us that the western perspective on education or learning has not fully taken cognizance of African functionality and relevance. The model that we present in this paper calls for a lifelong learning system that recognises African indigenous knowledge systems that move along a path of self-learning, experiential learning, immediacy of application of learning and focusing more on the local than the regional and global environment. As Higgs (2003) states, the African voice in education at the end of the twentieth century is a voice calling for academic disciplines towards what is organic and alive in Africa, to have a future built on new foundations. Hoppers (2001: 1) argues that:

It also seeks to make a contribution to the momentum for a return of humanism to the centre of the educational agenda, and dares educators to see the African child-learner not as a bundle of Pavlovian reflexes, but as a human being culturally and cosmologically located in authentic value systems.

Our contribution towards this future academic discourse is a model that includes a dimension of time as events acted and learned (learning in action), the concept of I/We and spaces that portray lifewide/lifelong learning as scholarship that germinates from within interactive societies/environment. It is argued that learning philosophies which are designed to separate learning in schools from interactive societies cannot prepare Africans like Batswana (citizens of Botswana) to be productive in their respective environments/communities and thus lifelong learning is impossible if today's education or learning cannot be used to address current and tomorrow's life challenges of Batswana or any African. In a nutshell, lifelong learning and its practices must be synchronized with the ideals of African Indigenous Learning, a context that we believe is different from the western one. This perspective is one of the many that attempt to give Africans the right to 'name the world for themselves, rather than be named through the colour-tinted glass of the Europeans' (Wa Thiongo 1993: xx).

A comparison of western/African perspectives

The African communities seem to have become familiar with the concept of lifelong learning through contact with the western ones. As a concept, it became attractive because of its potential to direct reforms and address pervasive problems of education such as the challenges of educating the marginalised, rural poor and illiterate. Scholars and researchers (e.g. Wa Thiango 1993, Vilakazi 1999, Teffo 2000, Preece 2009) cast doubts on whether its early adoption was informed by an understanding of what it entails, in terms of processes (applications). For example, questions are raised as to whether its early adoption indicated a connection with the local African environment in which it was applied. However, in the midst of these questions, one thing seems certain. The concept as used now carries the connotation from the western perspective. Table 1 below provides a conceptual comparison between western and African perspectives.

While not all westerners subscribe to the perspectives indicated in Table 1, the general literature indicates that such perspectives exist. The table indicates just

Table 1. Analytic perspectives on lifelong learning beyond the confines of western perspectives

<i>Western</i>	<i>Non-western/African</i>
Lifelong learning as the existence of a single-ordered world (Kim 2004)	Learning as unstructured, e.g. learning by observation which may entail 'moving from one village to the other in order to perfect the skills' (McWilliam and Kwamena 1975, cited in Higgs 2003)
Knowledge as private intellectual property; accumulated and jealously guarded for personal gain (Suite 101.com)	Learning in and for community ways of life. knowledge is a shared resource (Busla 1968, Semali 1999)
Respect for individual space, getting close is viewed with suspicion and discomfort (Miller 1994)	Face-to-face learning accompanied by gestures indicating the importance of closeness and interaction (Mgadla 2003)
Knowledge as a simplistic progression from one state to another, leading to certification (Hager's 2001 minimalist view)	Learning as unstructured and seamless (McWilliam and Kwamena 1975, cited in Higgs 2003) leading to holistic forms of knowledge
Theorising is an integral part of learning (Fordjor 2003)	Learn-by-acting, e.g. outside the four walls of the classroom as in modern education (Mgadla 2003)
Western education is fragmented and taught in segments (Preece 2009)	Education is not compartmentalised as is the case in contemporary systems (Mgadla 2003)
Capitalist notions of individual fulfilment and wealth creation for profit. Learning promoted for employability and personal gain (Preece 2009)	Humanistic view of lifelong learning (all participate fully). Emphasises the self and its interconnectedness with community and a much more spiritual context for living as important (Preece 2009)
Competition-directed lifelong learning (learn for the sake of self not others) independent relationship from others (Kim 2004)	Individual cannot be divorced from kinship (Mbiti 1988)
The individual is a separate entity from his or her surroundings (Preece 2009)	What happens to an individual happens to the whole group and vice versa (Fordjor 2003). Individual 'exists for society and society for the individual' (190)
Learning rooted in schooling—learning as book learning (Kim 2004)	A practical philosophy of lifelong learning— learning from social living—i.e. learning through life occupations (Busla 1968)

some examples and does not capture in detail the circumstances surrounding such thinking. The table should therefore be read with an understanding of its limitations and any misrepresentation or misinterpretation is regretted.

Drawing distinctions between the western notion of lifelong learning and its application to the African context serves several functions. On an important level, this distinction helps us to look into the past regarding the application of western ideology of education. We have learned and understand that the western perspective on lifelong learning has been criticized for being, 'premised on assumptions of a universal way of seeing the world, or one superior knowledge system' (Preece 2009: 43). This corresponds with history that makes us aware that, 'western policy-makers and social scientists drew upon the experience of their own societies as they then understood it' to inform education in Africa (Farrel 1992: 107). This paper is thus part of attempts by some Africans to call for more appropriate and relevant education for African societies because to date much educational theory and practice in Africa is overwhelmingly either European or Eurocentric in origin (Vilakazi 1999, Teffo 2000, Higgs 2008). African Indigenous Learning (AIL), it is argued, can bring quality to education in respect of the above argument. It is education that promotes 'an indigenous African world view and roots educational paradigms in an indigenous socio-cultural and epistemological framework. This implies that all educational curricula in Africa should have Africa as their focus, and as a result be indigenous-grounded and orientated' (Higgs 2003: 7). It is clear that quality learning, which in the past was mostly defined in terms of the amount of information one has acquired and recorded in examination percentages ranging from 100% to zero, is now measured by the amount of learning that can be applied in real life situations. Adult educators have and continue to take this position seriously. In sum, lifelong learning and its practices are better synchronised with the ideals of African Indigenous Learning and this paper offers just a few dimensions that can represent an African context that is different from the western one.

A model for understanding lifelong learning from an African perspective

Below is presented a model of lifelong learning that defines the three dimensions of lifelong learning that this paper proposes. This model encompasses the concepts of time, space and the I/We. The time-concept seeks to argue that lifelong learning is all about presenting continuous/unending opportunities for validating learning rooted in societal practices. In this way, educators are encouraged to view lifelong learning as event-in-action and to question the logic and consequences of linear and numerical perspectives. As Longworth (2003) states, 'the term suggests something linear, but it's far more, it's lifelong, lifewide and life deep' (vii). If the learning that takes place is causally related to the needs and experiences of the community, then willingness to learn from successful practices and projects through interaction and continuing learning dialogue with the more experienced members of the societies is a true understanding of this concept from an African perspective. Learning envisioned in this manner allows the accumulated knowledge of the locals to be tapped, rather than ignored hence making the locals have a voice in their educational decisions rather than being mere echoes of leaders' or bureaucrats' voices (Swee-Hin 1997).

The realization of lifelong learning as validation of experiences especially in the local environment calls for the need for a closer interaction between the learner and the learned. We conceptualise this interaction by presenting the concept of space, which renders the process of lifelong learning through social interaction as a continuing dialogue. Critical studies alert us to the discrepancies and discontinuity between schooling and the real needs of the African people. For example, some schools are still bookish and emphasize western cultures (Yeakey 1981) while the model presented below counteracts this anomaly.

The third dimension of lifelong learning relates to support provision systems for the learner. The key success factor in learning is the support that surrounds the learner. We refer to this dimension as the I/We in the proposed model. The African philosophy of 'I am because we are' (Mbiti 1988) encourages a culture of learning in which the learner's success is attributed to the entire situation within which she/he learns and lives. This response disassociates itself from an observation made by Longworth (2003) that they 'have a tendency, especially in the Western world, to build 'silo' structures and models'. Longworth proposes breaking down the silos, not only acknowledging, but, 'embracing the notion of integration whole heartedly and whole mindedly' (vii). The dimensions of lifelong learning from an African perspective are detailed in Figure 1.

In a nutshell, lifelong learning takes place within a specific context in which acquisition of relevant skills never stops. It is fully experienced through the functional concept when individuals demonstrate intentionality to learn and use learning in a productive manner. Improvement in the relevance, the quality and access to learning for lifewide application is at the core of lifelong learning envisioned in this paper. This model can be expanded to encompass five ideals that are embedded in the dimensions. The five ideals are described using the case of Lentswe La Odi Weavers in Botswana.

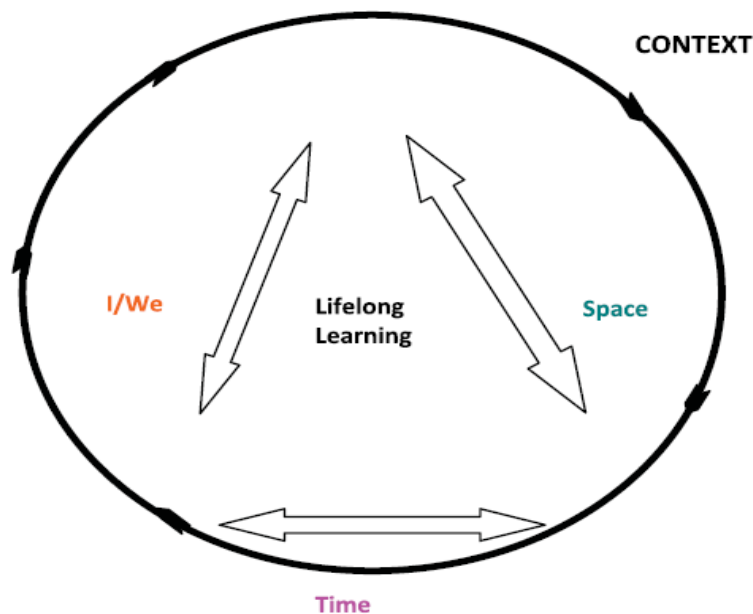


Figure 1. Dimensions of an African perspective on lifelong learning

Context that can enrich the ideals of lifelong learning from the African perspectives: showcasing an adult education compensatory programme

Below we present the five ideals of lifelong learning that we argue emanate from African indigenous learning perspectives. As Hager (2001) says:

the ideal notion of lifelong learning would embrace learning in any type of setting ranging from formal educational systems of all kinds through diverse sorts of non-formal education provision, to the limitless situations and contexts in which learning can occur. (79)

However, because of the scope of this paper, we, the authors, consider the notion of lifelong learning to include the opening up of opportunities for the provision of adult basic education, particularly, compensatory programmes. This perspective borrows much from Hager's (2001) idea of the minimalist view of lifelong learning. This view proposes that there should be reasonable adequate provision of adult basic education for all who patronize it. It is distinguished from what Hager calls the maximalist view, which seeks 'nothing less than a learning society' (79). As already indicated, this paper advances the minimalist perspective and hinges on the informal learning setting. We are aware that the informal learning context covers a wide area but the scope and intent of this paper focuses on an adult compensatory programme for women weavers of the Lentswe La Odi Weavers in Botswana. The term informal here refers to learning that can best be described by the concept of 'sitting next to Nellie'—which is basically learning by observing work in action. In this situation, learning is highly contextualized and as such cannot be conceptualized through theory. Hager (2001) describes this type of learning as the most appropriate and relates to seamless know-how. Below are the ideals relevant to this type of learning.

Ideal 1: Learning that is lifelong taps from the social context in which acquisition of relevant skills never stops and is usable

This ideal is central to any learning that recognizes that an African has a past that can be tapped into to further his/her learning. It is also important to remember that experiences in the social environment serve as an index of relevant learning and as a measure of how one applies what he/she has learned. This further validates the importance of learning for social living. To illustrate, we look at the situation of women weavers of the Lentswe La Odi Weavers in Botswana (Figure 2).

On visiting them, we learned that none of these women had been to school to learn how to weave. They have learned informally through observation and self teaching. This project started in 1977. As of now, these products are sold internationally. Therefore, reaching disadvantaged groups is an ideal that cannot be left out if lifelong learning has to make a difference. There is a need to locate knowledge that resides within a specific context (within a society), that is, indigenous ways of learning as a way of de-emphasizing 'the spurious theory-and-practice connotations that surround the declarative knowledge' (Hager 2001: 82). As Chapman *et al.* (2001) state, Africa still suffers from low-level of basic educational attainment. In most countries, the majority of the population is still considered poorly educated



Figure 2. Practical indigenous literacy

Photograph by Rebecca Lekoko with kind permission from the women weavers.

and by virtue of this lack of education is denied reasonable hope of access to lifelong learning (Chapman *et al.* 2001). Thus, lifelong learning will make a difference to some of these people if it exhibits learning from social living, which is more of learning in action, as illustrated through the women weaving tapestry.

Ideal 2: Lifelong learning is a way of validating indigenous knowledge that is mostly gained through informal and functional practices

The case of the women weavers indicates the fact that most adult learners who seek to do compensatory programmes do so because they want to validate their lived experiences for the sake of formalising their learning. They do so because 'informal learning is devalued by those with a stake in the formal education systems at whatever level' (Hager 2001: 81). Thus, they register for adult basic education to overcome illiteracy as defined in the form of the 3Rs (reading, writing and numeracy) in formal learning which is seen as being much more valuable than their informal ones. However, this paper demonstrates that the informal learning is as valuable as the formal sector and that true lifelong learning will discourage a tendency of defining informal learning by what is perceived as lack in relation to the formal one (Hager 2001). Informal learning is functional and takes place in a certain context. As in the case of the Odi Weavers, these programmes can best be implemented within a nonformal context. This will make it possible for learners to interact with their immediate environment. Learners in compensatory programmes have a drive

to learn in order to address challenges and problems they face in their lives. Learning for them is part of everyday chores. This type of learning will never end because the individual performs tasks on a daily basis and never exists out of his/her environment. Learning of this type is lifelong. The success factors in these compensatory programmes is to ensure that what is taught relates to life and learning needs of learners as active members of communities. These programmes are meaningless when they focus on abstract information because learners will not apply these to their social worlds.

While we do not underplay the importance of the 3Rs, their appropriateness when applied to the African context has been questioned. The value of the 3Rs, for example, is measured by their effectiveness in life situations. The generally accepted understanding of the 3Rs, for example, has been questioned in situations where people considered illiterate are just as productive as those with formal skills. We are aware that some people can tailor clothes to very precise measurements without having attained the necessary formal numeracy skills to do so (Lekoko and Garegae 2006). Many examples of this type of the use of informal learning can be given prominence when lifelong learning is understood as presented in this paper. That is, learning is and has always been an indispensable part of everyday activities and this value should be maintained in lifelong learning.

The success of compensatory programmes depends on how well educators, policy makers, trainers, facilitators and sponsors acknowledge that learners' experiences and life challenges are critical components of learning. Kennedy reminds us that 'education is, above all else, about opportunity; the opportunity to give others the personal and intellectual platform they need to advance the culture; and to preserve life and guarantee a sustainable human future'. Failure to realize this natural use of lifelong learning may result in failure to acknowledge adult learners and their environment as great resources for learning. It is, therefore, necessary for adult educators as role players in lifelong learning to forge a strong sense of purpose and direction for practices and opportunities for lifelong learning.

Ideal 3: Learners do not take part in formal learning but are exemplars of the type of learning being promoted as they validate their experiences and reality of their social living and influence in their own lifewide learning, thus active interaction is a given ideal

Lifelong learners as presented through women weavers use interactive learning friendship. Interactive friendship implies that a learner establishes an informal learning partnership with others who can help in areas of concentration. One here may think of adult learners who would develop friendship because it compliments their learning needs. For example, women at Lentswe La Odi Weavers demonstrated this learning friendship.

An understanding of the concept of space in an African context is necessary here as this relatively simple concept may influence the way adult education programmes are run. To give a person a space, that is, keeping a distance from another, may send a message to an African that he/she is being avoided. This may be different in other cultures, for example, American culture. For them, standing two to three feet apart

when they talk to each other is well accepted. They may get very uncomfortable, 'even to the point of backing away, when the other person gets any closer' (Miller 1994: 211). An African (Motswana to be precise), believes that '*mafoko a matlhong*'. This proverb sends a message that 'the closer you are, the more you understand each other'. It illustrates the importance of a face-to-face learning environment or the learning friendship model presented here. Such an environment is accompanied by gestures such as touching, shaking hands to the point of hugging. This has great implication for the way adult educators organize learning environments, for example, interactive methods would be most suitable. Learners learned from each other, not from a teacher.

The types of lifelong learning envisioned in this paper do not all lend themselves to formal assessment strategies. Flexibility is needed to cater for the needs of the lifelong learners. The strictness of some formal assessment strategies such as paper and pen will not suit some activities and intentions as explained in this paper. Accrediting bodies too like the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) are interested in quality as it relates mostly to formal learning. Efforts should be made to recognize achievements in other forms of lifelong learning like indigenous and traditional skills such as basket weaving and pottery making. This means, among other things, that theorization should be filtered through the lived experiences and felt needs of learners.

Other ideals that we want to underscore in this paper relate to the concept of time in lifelong learning. Although this has already been briefly explained, the following debate adds some more perspectives.

Ideal 4: Time is an important attribute in understanding of lifelong learning from an African perspective because time is not perceived in temporal sense but functional and situational

The interpretation of time is consistent with the African belief of time as a composition of events rather than the western perspective of time that is understood in year, month, week, day, hour, minute and second. This notion of time as a composition of events is illustrated, for example, in the historic calendars. As Mbiti (1988) observed, numerical calendars did not exist in the African societies. Instead, there were phenomenon calendars, in which events or phenomena that constitute time were reckoned or considered in relation to one another and as they took place. For example, an expecting mother counted the lunar months of her pregnancy; a traveler counted the number of days it took to walk from one part of the country to another. The day, the month and year were understood according to their specific events that made them meaningful (Mbiti 1988). It is for this reason that 'when Africans reckon time, it is for a concrete and specific purpose, in connection with events but not just for the sake of numbers. Since time is a composition of events, people cannot and do not reckon it in a vacuum' (Mbiti 1988: 17). This idea of time as composition of events is also illustrated by Zaslavsky (1992) through examples of lunar markings found on prehistoric bone fragments which show how early women marked their menstrual cycles, a critical time dimension. In short, time is a moment at which, or stretch of duration in which, things happen. It is a concept defined through changes that have been experienced (Muruku *et al.* 1999). Fundamentals of lifelong learning from the Africa perspective will therefore include time as events,

that is, as learning-in-context. We view lifelong learning as a process that begins with examining the real circumstances of the learner and his or her surroundings, as experienced.

Care should be taken to interpret time in the manner that suits the learning-in-context, action-learning of the African perspective for lifelong learning. The learner becomes an active participant and explorer of the environment in which he/she learns and lives. It is a concept of time understood only by the significance of events not numeric values per se. The principle of immediacy of application is indispensable in practices that advance lifelong learning. That is, the learner conceives his/her learning in the present and will want to apply such learning in this present time. It is for this reason that Lekoko and Garegae (2006) contend that lifelong learners' greatest passion is to see how what they learn works in real-life situations. The conclusion we make is that when definitions and processes of lifelong learning are directed to the African context, care should be taken to interpret time in the manner that suits their concept of time.

Ideal 5: Lifelong learning is learning through interaction with others for the community's ways of living

The dimension of I/We presented earlier in the model of dimensions of lifelong learning from an African perspective relates to the mutual interaction of an individual (learner) with others in his/her environment. An individual's lifelong attributes are enhanced by such an individual acting on the basis and responses of the immediate environment. This critical dimension of learning is reflected in the traditional African belief that, 'a person is a person through other people' (in Xhosa *Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu*, in Zulu *Umntu ngumuntu ngabanye* and in Setswana *Motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe*) (Lekoko and Garegae 2006). The meaning of all these phrases is captured by Murithi's (2006) statement, 'I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share' (26). This African spirit of oneness is also expressed by Mbiti's (1988) statement, 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am' and also that 'an individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately, he is simply part of the whole' (Mbiti 1988: 108). *Ubuntu* defines the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others; individuals only exist in their relationship with others (Ntuli 1999). In summary, there is nothing like learning by and for self. Learning acquired by the individual impacts everyone in the environment. Even the processes of learning should indicate this interaction of learners with others in the surrounding community, workplace, churches, lands and schools. Individuals and communities are sources and resource for learning. To tap into their resourcefulness, little structure is necessary.

Summary

Lifelong learning has been presented as a concept and a process. The argument raised in this paper is that, the basic justification to advance this concept should depend on educators' understanding it in within a framework of the African Indigenous Learning (AIL). Lifelong learning within the framework of African Indigenous Learning (AIL) is generally functional, preparing young people to fit well

into the society at large. Such learning is entrenched deep in the practices, cultures and ways of knowing of many Africans. The fundamentals or the ideals of this lifelong learning have been woven into three dimensions of time, space, and I/We. Woven together, these concepts present a context in which lifelong learning is defined by aspects such as learning-in-action (immediacy of application); interactive methods; and a time that is only valued in respect of events that constitute it. It has been argued that a true refocus on the African Indigenous Learning philosophy is to view lifelong learning as education or learning that is grounded in the experiences Africans have as a result of living their lives within their own societies. A programme, compensatory adult education, has been presented to showcase the types of ideals envisioned in the African perspective on lifelong learning as presented in this paper. Through this case, it was illustrated that learning that is lifelong is highly contextualized and de-emphasizes the highly exaggerated importance of the formal learning systems. As such it cannot be conceptualized through theory. Such learning can benefit from following certain ideals or be presented, for example as; learning that is lifelong taps from the social context in which acquisition of relevant skills never stops and is usable; lifelong learning as a way of validating indigenous knowledge that is mostly gained through informal and functional practices; learners do not only take part in learning but are exemplars of the type of learning being promoted as they validate their experiences and reality of their social living; time is an important attribute in understanding lifelong learning because time is not perceived in a temporal sense but functional and situational; and finally: lifelong learning is learning through interaction with others for the community's ways of living.

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