Adult Education, Deliberative Democracy and Social Re-engagement in Africa

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ABSTRACT

While the western powers credit globalization with facilitating development, Africa continues to face challenges such as poverty, low quality education, HIV/AIDS, and ineffective governance. This article provides an overview of African development since independence arguing that the African states shifted from their service-based policy agenda of the 1960s during the boom and bust period in the 1970s and 1980s, experienced the drastic effects of structural adjustments in the 1990s, and are now attempting to pursue an African renaissance agenda. It demonstrates how adult educators can help create deliberative democracy by working with civil society to engage African communities in public discourse and empower the citizenry.

Keywords: adult educators, civil society, deliberative democracy, globalization, hegemony

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that in spite of Africa's diversity and the contextual differences of African states, it is possible to organize effectively educational programs that engage African communities in deliberative democracy for social transformation. Deliberative democracy involves the interaction of all voices within a community in the making and executing of collective decisions. It is argued that Africa's troubles since independence can be traced in part to the tactical and political mistakes of its leaders who endorsed the World Bank-initiated agenda for development in the 1980s and accepted forms of so-called development assistance which set back some countries as much as 50 years in their development goals (Daubon, 2005).

The World Bank agenda promised accelerated development but in practice this agenda led to the reduction of public spending on education and health, the promotion of export products to the detriment of products for the domestic market, the devaluation of national currencies, and the privatization of public enterprises (Ansprenger, 2003). This article provides an overview of the effects of this development process, the problems that have affected Africa since the 1960s and the extent to which Africa is currently in a state of turmoil. It argues that adult education must be an important aspect of any effective strategy that

seeks to transform the current situation. This recommendation is made notwithstanding the legitimate argument raised by others (see Ogunsanya and Thomas, 2004) about the need to address wider structural economic and societal issues if education is to have a positive impact on African development.

We argue that in order to provide empowering educational experiences, African progressive educators need to organize adult education programs that respond to the needs and resources of their communities. It contends that the poor do not only need financial aid but an opportunity to determine the conditions that account for how this aid is employed. They need to develop the capacity to deliberate and advocate for effective strategies that will transform their situation in positive terms. Poverty is not just a lack of material wealth but also a lack of power to address the circumstance that has kept the poor in their impoverishment (Daubon, 2005).

This article contends that critical African adult educators must promote the recognition of quality education as a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all. They must foster participatory strategies that provide the type of civic education that will invigorate communities and engage citizens in deliberative democracy. As an initial and fundamental step, African educators must employ democratic techniques in their classrooms and lecture halls that help citizens generate contextually responsive practices to their problems – responses that cannot be fruitfully imposed by or adopted from the West. They need to recognize and reinforce the key role of civil society in the provision of democratic public education. This approach to education will help Africans to empower themselves sufficiently and to globalize from below.

The African Context

Over the past three decades or so of self-government, most African societies have not experienced development but rather stagnation and regression. This situation has resulted in such tragic consequences as the rise in the rate of poverty, the declining provision of public services, the collapse of infrastructure, heightened social tensions and political turmoil (Ambrose, 1995). Most African states have been compelled by international donors to change from one-party states to multi-party political systems as a precondition for receiving aid from the West. This process has been characterized by voting for parliamentary representatives and a president once every four or five years. This situation poses a disturbing question as to whether the political leadership is genuinely committed to democracy or they are just going along with the trappings of democracy to appease the donors.

In spite of the practice of political democracy, Africa continues to be bedeviled by numerous social and economic problems that have been aggravated by the process of globalization. This process involves the unregulated movement of capital (controlled largely by transnational corporations), technology and

knowledge into Africa largely from the western nations. It creates what amounts to a near state of siege and is characterized by social anxiety and increasing dependency on the part of the majority of the people in Africa and most of the developing nations (Ansprenger, 2003; Cruikshank, 1998; Thomas and Wilkin, 1999). The economic, social, cultural and political restructuring associated with this process has been described as producing an indirect form of corporate colonialism. It reveals Africa has failed to transcend the negative effects of both colonialism and imperialism. It has furthered the bankruptcy of African nations, the impoverishment of the poor worldwide and has enlarged the gap between the poor and rich (Cruikshank, 1998). Globalization has paralyzed the political and economic structures of the formally independent African states, and widened the disparities in income between the local elites and the masses. It has also shifted power from elected officials to the transnational corporations (Castells, 1996).

Developing nations have experienced technological transformations that have resulted in their workforces being considered redundant by technology-based transnational corporations (Bauman, 1998). One of the outcomes in Africa has been that workers in capitalist institutions such as banks are often subjected to austerity measures such as retrenchments and/or retraining programs that have limited value and do not focus on local needs. Ambrose (1995) has observed that the majority of the citizenry in Africa do not have significant input into the operations and functions of their economies because of a number of factors. They are not literate, they are inflicted with both absolute and relative poverty, they suffer disease and despair and the trade unions that exist have been weakened. Consequently, the globalization 'gravy train' has bypassed most of the people and served the interests of a small elite, which has followed the time-honored colonialist strategy of divide and rule.

National governments in this context are not able to control transnational capital criss-crossing their territorial boundaries, and they continue to provide an imposed gender insensitive neocolonial education curriculum. For example, Egbo (2000) notes that contemporary education generally fails to help women maximize their potential at the individual, collective and national levels, so that they can move from the margins of their societies to the center. Education serves a contradictory role. Instead of liberating, it serves to reinforce the existing neocolonial and class relations. It is characterized by oppression, eurocentrism and an assimilative and hegemonic content that supposedly achieves value neutral goals such as the development of productive skills (Egbo, 2000), but in practice is not value neutral and does not provide the necessary skills. However, as Ntiri (1998) has observed, 'in Africa, education has become the instrument to monopolize choice occupations and political power' (p. 110). Thus, African education is not designed to meet the needs of the larger society, rather it serves a very narrow purpose, and does not adequately address such critical issues as inequity and poverty (Odara, 1993).

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Cruikshank (1998) notes that African leaders tend to collaborate with transnational capital by serving as their local agents while the majority of the people in the rural and urban areas continue to live in poverty. This renders meaningless notions such the creation of a global village and the use of information technology as an important tool for people in the developing nations to use in improving the quality of their lives. The interests of the people are subsumed under the profiteering interests of transnational capital (Korsgaard, 1997). Globalization has legitimated the re-colonization of the African states under the pretext of bringing development. Unfortunately, the development agenda currently pursued by most of the political leadership has led most local communities to feel a deepened sense of exploitation and the exclusion from participating in the affairs of their nations.

To complement this overview, the following sections provide a brief schematic analysis of the main phases in the development of the African states since their independence. These phases can be characterized as: the post-independence euphoria, the boom and bust period, the structural adjustment era and the African renaissance period.

The Post-Independence Euphoria

This period took place during the 1960s and was marked by the euphoria of the new governments that came to power with the promise of serving the people. This was a period during which anti-colonial leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana envisioned Africa's economic growth leading to bountiful social development, peace and eventual continental unity. Most government leaders postured as benevolent guardians of the people committed to improving the welfare of the masses through the provision of public education, health and other social services. Some states such as Botswana and Kenya adopted the capitalist approach. Others such as Angola, Tanzania and Mozambique endorsed a socialist approach that equated rapid industrialization with the equitable provision of social services. However, in both cases they left the systematic development of the people off the agenda. In spite of adopting different ideologies, all of them produced the same devastating results of increased poverty, inequality and social decay (Deng, 1998). Even relative success stories, such as Botswana, which now has a GNP per capita of US$3650, still have significant class inequalities, and a very large proportion of the population (47% in the case of Botswana in 1993) continue to live below the poverty line (Youngman, 2002). Moreover, most African nations have grown heavily indebted since independence, continue to produce primary products, are dependent on external aid, and are now faced with public health crises such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Ansprenger, 2003).

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Boom and Burst Period

Another significant development phase took place during the 1970s and 1980s when the continent experienced a relatively short-lived economic boom as a result of the discovery and exploitation of valuable minerals in some countries such as Botswana, Nigeria and Zambia. However, the economic boom in these African nations had a limited effect since the benefits were largely enjoyed by the urban elites while women, the marginalized semi-urban population and the large rural communities were excluded. Thus, in Botswana, poverty is today the severest in the largely rural areas of Western Botswana where 71 percent of the population live below the poverty line (Republic of Botswana, 2004).

In the mid-1980s, Africa was struck by inflation that caught the continent unprepared (Iheduru, 1999). It has been argued that the problem was that most of the African countries had inadequate public policies that hindered their economies from responding adequately to the changes at the international level. According to Deng, the 'African governments had no consistent set of policies in place to deal with the worsening situation' (1998: 35). Many were still dependent on the export of a single commodity and/or semi-processed raw materials such as diamonds and copper. They did not diversify their economies in order to produce multiple commodities. For example, Botswana has remained dependent on the export of diamonds and has allowed its agriculture to drop from contributing 54 percent of the gross domestic product in the 1970s to a bare four percent in the 1990s (Maruatona, 2004).

Statistics such as these suggest there is a lack of effective participation by rural communities in the planning and operation of the economy. The political elite essentially collaborates with foreign capital to give away national resources at below market prices culminating in low national economic returns. Consequently, rural people have learned to be less dependent on the state and have been forced to depend on the resilience of their own communities (Iheduru, 1999).

Some observers (see Sahn et al., 1997) have attributed the conditions that developed during this period to drought and cultural biases in the rural areas rather than the so-called economic reforms imposed by western-dominated financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They argue that African peasants have failed to modify their agricultural technologies. However, they are unable to explain why poverty has affected women more than men, even during the economic boom period. These observers have conveniently ignored the poor prices and lack of international markets for agricultural products produced in Africa as the causes of the continent's economic decline (Thomas and Wilkin, 1999). They do not recognize the extent to which the tragedy of African states that developed during this period was compounded by the structural adjustment policies imposed by the international financial institutions during the 1980s and 1990s.

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Structural Adjustment Era: 1985–2000

This period was marked by poor economic growth rates in Africa, except for only a few countries such as Botswana. The thrust of the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) dismissed the populist view that governments were obliged to provide social services to their citizens. These SAPs tended to ignore the socio-economic fabric and objective realities of the African situation. These policies were developed by technocrats at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) without any significant participation of Africans. They were based on a limited view of African conditions and how these SAPs could be adapted to these conditions. As a result, these policies widened the economic disparities between the elite and the majority of the people in Africa.

As a result of this unfortunate situation, one of Africa's foremost leaders Julius Nyerere (cited in Deng, 1998) called on Africans to rely again on their communities to advance the development of their societies. He stated: 'the first step must be to reeducate ourselves,' and recall that 'in our traditional African societies, we were individuals within a community, we took care of the community and the community took care of us' (Deng, 1998: 59). Nyerere's words point to the need for a critical adult education process that helps rebuild a sense of community among the people so that they can break free of the cycle of poverty.

The SAPs contributed to the increased indebtedness and continued exploitation of the natural resources of African countries for repaying their massive debts. Ironically, the debts that have been incurred have not benefited the majority of the people and their repayment has only benefited the banks and the local elites in these countries. Twenty years into the SAPs, some Africa countries are now poorer that they were 30 years before (Ansprenger, 2003). Thus, it can be argued that the SAPs and 'globalization' have brought human security for only a few while they have impoverished the majority of the people in African nations. Paradoxically, they have rhetorically emphasized democracy while in practice they have reduced the capacity of African states to provide the kind of services people need so that they can participate effectively in the democratic process. Throughout the continent, therefore, a critical appraisal that is focused on the social well-being of the people is needed, if Africa is to get back on its feet in the 21st century. In fact, the African leaders who have joined in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD, 2001) have articulated the need for this type of critical appraisal as well as a recommitment to making Africa economically independent.

The African Renaissance Era: 2001 to date

Africa remains the least developed continent in spite of being so richly endowed with natural resources. The African states need to institute economic reforms

that will significantly reduce poverty and that are appropriate to the African context. They also need to develop a non-western democratization process that is appropriate to the context, and education that will enable the African people to take control of their own development (NEPAD, 2001). This type of people-based development strategy requires that the riches of the continent be harnessed to improve the welfare of its people. Most of Africa's leaders have today acknowledged that genuine development can only be undertaken if there is true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance (NEPAD, 2001).

The task facing African leaders in this period of renaissance is to re-define the role of the African state and restore its legitimacy. This renaissance requires the active observance of human rights and the active participation of communities in democratic decision-making to legitimize the actions of the political leadership. The leadership must promote the involvement of women, youth and the marginalized population in the socioeconomic development process. Democratic participation in Africa must be rooted in the fact that traditionally people came together to engage in face-to-face discussions on issues of mutual concern and to make collective decisions (Iheduru, 1999). The African people have the capacity to disconnect from the ambit of the top-down state and establish more vibrant and integral social systems that can secure their collective interests in the public arena. What they need is not only increased control of their resources but an enhanced capacity to participate in decisions affecting their individual and collective lives.

Consequently, within the field of education there is need for adult educators who use participatory methods to organize educational experiences that enable communities to engage in genuine public discussions and to assume control of their lives. The involvement of communities in public deliberations will enable them to explore alternative means to reducing the negative impact of social maladies such as gender inequality, lack of dignity and impoverishment. It would enable them to engage in self-help groups and form a basis for their participation in the political decision-making process espoused by the African renaissance documents. In spite of the acknowledgement of the value of education in development, there is a lack of clear articulation of how it should be organized to enhance Africa's capacity to create vibrant and democratic societies.

This article discusses how effectively planned adult education experiences can empower marginalized communities through their engagement in public deliberations. Notwithstanding the fact that education is not a panacea for all social ills, properly planned adult education experiences are a prerequisite for the involvement of all African communities in the political process. In spite of the inherent limitations in resolving structural problems, adult educators have to make an effort to empower people through education that facilitates democratic participation, establishes a deliberative democratic culture, involves the use of participatory approaches in planning the educational curriculum,

re-activates civil society, and promotes globalization (global awareness and cooperation) from below.

Adult Education and Democratic Participation

Adult education as used here includes any formal and non-formal educational activities designed to facilitate the education of persons construed to be adults in their sociocultural contexts. Democratic participation implies people are actively engaged in the processes of decision-making. Adult education should assist participants in overcoming any negative self-images they may have about their ability to design and execute tasks with confidence.

The essential task of adult education in Africa must be to engage learners in productive public discussions and collective decision-making within their own contexts. Furthermore, to establish a democratic culture, which is as an essential ingredient for local action and democratic participation, adult educators must help communities to think nationally and globally but act locally. Adult educators must be willing to educate and at the same time learn from the wisdom of adult learners.

The backdrop to this effort is the recognition that the provision of adult education is increasingly being accepted as a human right. Its legitimacy, however, cannot stem from international rhetoric and the pronouncements of international agencies such as UNESCO. It must come from educators who earn the cooperation and respect of communities within which they work (Maruatona, 2004). Education is often perceived as essential for development at the personal, community and national levels. Unfortunately, this assumption can hold only if educators create spaces for communities to act on and direct their development plans and adjust them to changing local and global circumstances (Daubon, 2005).

For example, the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 reaffirmed the right to basic education for all. In Africa, this also articulated very well the 1981 Africa Charter on Human and People's Rights, which also carried the obligation for states to provide education as a fundamental human right (Archer, 1998; Singh, 2003). As Singh (2003) has noted, in Africa a substantial proportion of women and the minorities in rural and urban areas are still denied access to their right to education and the opportunities it brings, such as living healthier and more productive lives. Thus, women in most African literacy programs are exposed to government prescribed materials that do not have a bearing on their realities. Ntiri (1998) has argued these programs are intended to perpetuate state ideology and external economic imperatives, while Archer (1998) has observed that providing education as a human right militates against the negative impact of globalization since it increases people's access to information and knowledge, which they need to gain access to economic, social and political power.

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Access to education can only be extended to those who need it the most if the majority of the people are involved in the educational policy-making process at the grassroots level. Widespread public involvement in shaping public programs enables individuals to own programs or ideas without feeling alienated (Archer, 1998; Freire and Horton, 1990). It goes without saying that it must be kept in mind that issues of poverty, inequality, class differences and unemployment are structural in nature and cannot be addressed solely by education. However, the poor need more that just material support to effect changes that they can recognize and value in their lives. They need to participate in the decisions that affect them.

Participatory Approaches to Reinvigorating the Sense of Community

As already indicated, the results of globalization have stigmatized and disempowered certain sectors of African society such as women and the rural poor. What is needed among these groups is to establish a democratic culture. One means for doing this is through the use of participatory approaches such as the Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques – most often referred to by its acronym REFLECT. It is a new approach to adult literacy, which fuses the theory of Paulo Freire (Freire and Horton, 1990) and the practice of participatory rural appraisal (Cottingham, 1998). This participatory approach has been used in empowering literacy programs in over 60 Third World countries since 1993. It was piloted in three projects in Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh by ActionAid, an international non-governmental development organization whose aim is to fight poverty worldwide by empowering local communities (see their website at http://www.actionaid.org). This approach enables people to comprehend and address the forces that deny them access to power. The use of this method has made it possible for people to see that they can play a central role in any process of change affecting them. It has enabled communities to turn conditions around in their favor by helping them to gain access to decision-making opportunities (Archer, 1998).

REFLECT helps people to analyze their local conditions, to take action and to mobilize locally available resources (Popkins, 1998). This participatory strategy connects literacy acquisition with empowerment. At the heart of REFLECT is a collective community analysis of existing social and economic issues, which is interwoven with the literacy curriculum. The strategy creates a deliberative process that enables learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need to advocate for positive changes in their lives including challenging the existing elitist perceptions of reality.

If adopted as an educational strategy, REFLECT enables communities to control their development agenda from within rather than letting it be prescribed from outside (Bhalalusesa, 2004). For example, in a recently completed REFLECT project in Botswana, adult learners made crucial

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decisions that were independent of the conventional literacy program and income-generating projects (Maruatona, 2004). The REFLECT circle meetings enabled the literacy learners to discuss health and minority issues in ways that went far beyond just reading and writing. Kanyesigye (1998) had observed that REFLECT groups in Uganda empowered communities there by enabling them to critically analyze the inequality in their societies and question the dominant development paradigm. The REFLECT process mobilized both rural and urban communities and strengthened their traditional culture of community democracy that had been subdued by colonial domination and neocolonial hegemonic control.

The most daunting tasks for progressive African educators is to make the educational content effectively respond to the felt needs of the learners by taking into account their history, local culture and their current and future goals in the educational curriculum. In contrast to the REFLECT approach, the prevailing educational practices throughout Africa create discontinuities between the educational organizations and local communities they serve. Education should enable African communities to contribute to the political discussions and decisions affecting their daily lives (UNESCO-BREDA, 1998). However, in Africa, even in fairly democratic states such as Botswana, the educational structures continue to emphasize the total integration and crude assimilation of the minorities in these societies through the use of one national language (Le Roux, 2001; Maruatona, 2004). What is needed is for adult educators to work with rural communities to bring about people-centered development. Rural communities, especially in minority areas, need to be re-assured that they can assert control over their lives. They need to learn how to make choices based on the limited human and natural resources they have at their disposal. The involvement of rural communities in a process of deliberative democracy is needed to help them negotiate control over the utilization of local resources, which in turn will help them to challenge the control of the elites who now exploit these resources.

Adult educators need to engage the citizenry in a process of deliberative democracy by working with them to extend the 'public spaces' in their countries at both the local community and national levels. Public discussion of critical issues leads to the creation of mutual trust and the comprehension of these issues among the members of the citizenry. For example, in Nigeria, REFLECT circles have discussed critical community issues, prioritized them and developed community action plans, which link local actions to a national community mobilization process (Newman, 2000). The goal is to balance local and national concerns and make sure village development aspirations are catered for in district and national development plans. As Fishkin (1995) has observed, the objective of this strategy is to create 'a place where citizens have a public life, where public questions meet active, engaged citizens' (p. 148). This outcome can only be achieved through the use of participatory techniques where adult

educators work with the community to identify and prioritize their issues. Adult educators in these contexts provide technical information to the community and facilitate deliberative democracy (Youngman and Maruatona, 1998).

One way to strengthen democracy through adult education is to help the participants become members of a deliberative public, rather than passive recipients of pre-coded knowledge (Apple, 1999). Contemporary African politics has been described as the moral equivalent of 'war' because it is increasingly adversarial as opposed to being deliberative (Mathews, 1999). Deliberative democracy involves people determining what kind of community and nation they would like to create through indulging in extensive deliberative conversations about public choices. They dialogue (rather than debate) about public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. People regularly engage in civil discourse about the issues affecting their communities (Mathews, 1999).

Dialogue is considered essential for Africa's development because it can be contrasted with the hollow electioneering slogans of politicians and their litany of empty promises. Constructive democratic dialogue is not unknown in African societies. Africans respect age-based logic and wisdom which comes with experiential learning and the public diffusion of this type of logic and wisdom have guided their communities for centuries. For example, the use of a community meeting or *kgotla* in Botswana has facilitated people's involvement in local politics long before the imposition of the Westminster type of parliamentary democracy. Ideally, at the *kgotla* all were free to share their views in a constructive discussion that would result in decisions that would yield the common social good. However, the *kgotla* system, like any institutions of governance, had its own limitations. This system restricted participation along tribal, ethnic and even economic lines, especially for the minorities. The people who spoke the most and whose contributions were most often taken into account were usually the rich and the socially and culturally powerful. In spite of its limits, however, this system served the purposes of inculcating the culture of traditional community democracy. The people's collective wisdom was embedded in such institutions and the meetings helped to establish consensus. Unfortunately, these institutions have since been distorted. Instead of building upon the strength of the *kgotla* and addressing its weaknesses, the political elite has converted it into a forum where they manipulate communities under the pretext of consultation.

The current political system restricts people's democratic participation to occasional voting once every four or five years. This system contrasts with the notion of deliberative democracy. Equating democracy to voting has failed African leaders. They do not have legitimacy among the people because voting does not facilitate active citizenship and a strong bond between the leaders and the people. As Heather (1999) has indicated, active citizenship as espoused by the Athenians played a key role in public life since it enabled them to identify their problems, negotiate about them and work towards a common social good.

Currently, the public in most African countries, including Botswana, is discontented and cynical about democracy. They feel left out of public decision-making. What is lacking in these contexts are clear practical means for involving the public in the decision-making process beyond voting occasionally for the top political leaders. The South African constitution guarantees certain rights and privileges to the citizenry such as the use of their native languages in order for people to speak their minds freely in the language they understand. This constitutional provision will remain an intangible ideal if the country's adult educators do not help the citizens to enjoy the protection and benefits this provision provides.

The process of democratization has to take place in classrooms at the primary, secondary, and university levels as well as in non-formal adult education programs. A deliberative process that re-engages the public in democratic discussions will ensure that the public develops control of their lives and the majority of the people become effective change agents and citizens. The establishment of deliberative democracy will allow communities to engage in constructive dialogue, to be at the same time sensitive but relentless in their criticism of the leadership, and also improve the delivery of public services, gender equity and social justice (Singh, 2003). The culture of democracy can never take hold if prescribed by western governments and international financial institutions as part of the requirements to receive aid. Mathews (1999) has cautioned that democracy can only take root if the citizenry, an actively involved civil society and all levels of government work together to redress all forms of inhibiting social divisions along racial, ethnic or religious lines.

Strengthening Civil Society Organizations

In Africa, civil society includes church-related associations, trade unions and burial societies. These groups are voluntary and endure across generations even though they tend to be formed for a limited purpose and represent primarily the interests of their members. Civil society therefore refers to the wide range of voluntary associations, not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations to which individuals and groups are affiliated. It is founded on the free pursuit of personal and cultural interests in the social space located between the family, economy and the state, and it helps people to find value amidst the oppressive structures of society (Elsey, 1993).

Welton (1997) argues that civil society can be strengthened through the provision of effective adult education that is designed to facilitate democracy. Unfortunately, the political elites in the African countries have sought to limit the capacity of civil society to challenge their hegemonic control and official authority, and as result civil society organizations have been weakened. However, Maruatona (1999) has observed that in spite of these challenges, adult educators can still train and strengthen the leadership of civil society

organizations such as trade unions to play a meaningful role in building democracy in Africa.

Moreover, the involvement of local communities in democratic discourse creates a vigorous civil society since it engages rural and urban communities in democratizing their own local organizations and challenging the dominant paradigm of hegemonic power. In Africa, community involvement in democratic discourse challenges the imposed state institutions of western parliamentary democracy and the global capitalist interests that require a docile and cheap labor force, both of which have stifled the growth and development of deliberative and democratic institutions in civil society.

The current weakness of civil society reflects the absence of civil and social efficacy and the collective benefits associated with active public involvement in democratic discourse. A supportive relationship between adult education and civil society is essential for launching a genuine culture of democracy in Africa. As Macdonald (1997) has noted, 'in the Third World societies characterized by histories of repression ... some form of popular participation is essential in order to build more durable and legitimate democratic institutions' (p. 2). This conclusion is applicable to the African context and it calls for the strengthening of adult education programs that work closely with civil society organizations such as unions and churches. Establishing working relationships and a common agenda for social transformation between adult education and civil society organizations is essential if local communities in Africa are to face up to challenges associated with asserting their rights and exploring ways to create alternatives to the existing repressive regimes. As Ambrose (1995) has noted, the accountability of the state depends upon the vibrancy and political vision of civil society. Adult education can help civil society organizations cultivate the openness and transparency in political life that is envisaged by the African renaissance.

Adult Education and Globalization from Below

The concept of globalization from below (at the grassroots level) is driven by the assumption that in Africa, as elsewhere around the globe, a community-based, bottom-up and environmentally sustainable approach is what is needed as an alternative to the top-down, corporate-driven globalization from above. Adult educators in the continent have to decide which of these two alternatives they want to take sides with if they want to further the goal of community mobilization through adult education (Hall, 1997). Adult educators should appreciate the fact that democracy cannot be delivered to the struggling dispossessed masses by the political elites. They need to take the initiative and act on the side of the community to help inculcate democratic practices and the democratization of globalization from below. As Korsgaard (1997) states, 'to build a democratic society is an art which does not originate from the state or from the

market but from the citizenship of civil society' (p. 23). African adult educators have to help mobilize local communities so that they can assert their power to influence and shape decisions in their favor. Adult educators must help raise the consciousness of both rural and urban communities. This approach will enable these communities to challenge the hegemonic control of the elite-dominated state, especially in the current phase of neoliberal opening for democratic practices fostered by the international agencies as a prerequisite for economic assistance.

Globalization from below implies a struggle on the part of local communities and civil society to articulate their primary concerns and redirect the course of political democracy as preached by the leaders of the renaissance movement. Adult educators have to work with trade unions, churches, burial societies, women's movements and environmental groups at grassroots level to form a common front against the top-down state. This globalization from below movement relies on the power of civil society and non-governmental organizations to build spaces of political freedom and action alongside the state and its global allies, and thus enhance the capacity of the people to transform their lives. It should also be possible to strengthen the working relationships between trade unions and civil society organizations in Africa and those in the North to facilitate their collective struggle against corporate greed and to establish a world that is free of oppression and exploitation.

The struggle should be one that creates a global society that lives in harmony with the needs of all. The envisaged global village cannot be created by global capital but by progressive forces in both the North and the South who are seeking to bring social justice and prosperity to all. Genuine democracy can be achieved if there is a reincarnation of the struggle for political freedom among the majority of the people by the non-governmental organizations and local communities in Africa. These civil society forces should refuse to compromise their positions even in the face of the hegemonic tactics of both the national elites and their neoliberal allies from the West (Armstrong, 2004).

Adult education can help communities and citizens to make democratic choices between the two current conflicting visions of reality, one competitive, the other cooperative. They should strive to work with progressive forces from the North to end the marginalization of powerless African states at the hands of global capitalism. In the meantime, Hall (1997) advises critical adult educators to momentarily work with the African state to gain acceptance of the view that the education of adults is crucial to meeting those essential social demands that cannot be met by the market. This approach will allow adult education to be geared towards facilitating social reforms and the effective involvement of local communities in deliberative democratic practices.

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Conclusion

This article has argued that globalization in Africa has created a rift between the political elites and their electorates and resulted in the reduction of public services. The neoliberal structural reforms associated with globalization have resulted in the reduction of desperately needed services such as the provision of clean water, education and free health care and led to the increasing impoverishment of the majority of people. It has outlined four major phases which the African states have undergone from the 1960s to date. It has highlighted the contradictions that exist between the African states, the need for deliberative democracy and the process of globalization. The article has also argued that the imposition of structural adjustment policies have contributed to the failure of the African nations to realize the ideals of democracy and bring about economic recovery.

We have argued that the envisioned African renaissance will remain an empty slogan unless it relies on open public deliberation at the grassroots level about the issues affecting communities and what needs to be done to realize social and economic prosperity for all. Emphasis has been placed on the role of adult educators in this process of renaissance and about their need to work with civil society and introduce participatory approaches that reinvigorate community-based participation and facilitate deliberative democracy. It had been argued they should work with the organs of civil society to build strong communities and a strong foundation of deliberative democracy among the citizenry. Adult educators in Africa can help local communities build democracy from below and realize the vision of the newly launched New Partnership for Africa's Development by empowering African communities to become active participants in their own development rather than silent spectators.

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