
University Extension Education as a tool for Social Justice Adult Education: A Synthesis Paper on Access, Barriers and Success

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Abstract

The genesis of university extension education in Zambia is rooted in the history of the University of Zambia (UNZA) in 1966. The mandate to provide extension education was given to the then Department of Extra-Mural Studies (DEMS) current known as the Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies (DAEES). The core business of university extension education is to address the educational needs of the marginalised masses by increasing access to both formal university education and lifelong learning. Nevertheless, the literature indicates that university extension education at UNZA has been under constant threats of being abolished as it has always been perceived as a liability to the institution irrespective of its philosophical underpinning which relates to the third function of universities. The purpose of this paper is to synthesise the literature that focuses on access, barriers and successes of UNZA extension education. Furthermore, it locates a nexus between university extension education and social justice. Finally, the paper concludes as an added voice on the need to sustain the existence of university extension education in Zambia.

Keywords: Adult education • Extension education • Extra-mural studies • Social justice • University of Zambia

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Introduction

The origin of University Extension Education in Zambia is ingrained in the history of the University of Zambia (UNZA) which was established in 1966. The mandate to provide extension education was given to the then Department of Extra-Mural Studies (DEMS) currently known as the Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies (DAEES) (Chakanika, Luchembe and

Sichula, 2016). Among the core foci and business of the university, extension education is to address the educational needs of the marginalised masses by increasing access to both formal university education and lifelong learning. The Extra-Mural Studies Department was established as a result of the Lockwood Commission which was set up in 1963 and recommended the establishment of the University of Zambia (Ngambi, 2013). The Lockwood Report stipulated that:

“the institution must combine practical service to the nation at a critical time at its use, with the fulfilment of the historic purpose for the university as a centre for learning, a treasure house of knowledge and a creative centre of research”(Alexander,1975).

Further, the report also emphasised that the university should make provision both for the extension of its degree and diploma studies to people outside the university and offer non-formal, non-credit courses to the masses who missed obtaining a high enough education. Hence, the establishment of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies currently called Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies (Ngambi, 2013; Mwansa, 2016). The provision of university extension education has been resisted by various stakeholders including the university itself who viewed it from the negative perspectives. The literature review indicates that university extension education has always been perceived as a liability to the institution irrespective of its philosophical underpinning which relates to the third function of universities that of providing service to the community (Anijaobi-Idem, Berezi and Akuegwu, 2012).

Currently, university extension education has centres in all the 10 provinces of Zambia and is running both certificate and diploma programmes. These provinces are being run by Resident Lecturers assisted by the Administrative Officers who include Accounts Officer, Records Management Officer, Secretary and a Messenger. The purpose of this paper is to critically discuss university extension education as a tool for social justice. The paper begins by providing conceptual clarifications as used throughout this paper. The issues discussed include access, barriers and successes of university extension education in Zambia. Fundamentally, the interpretive analogy between university extension education and social justice.

Conceptual Clarifications

Extension Education: has been defined differently by different scholars. For example, Ngambi (2013) defines extension education is one where the resources both human and material of the parent learning institution are extended geographically beyond the confines of the main campus to serve the wider clientele in a particular state or region as the universities constituent area. Sichula (2016) says university extension education is versatile, environmentally based and responds to a variety of needs of the people in different ways and form, therefore, it is the provision of knowledge-based education to people found in the periphery to provide them with access to the very nature of the education provided at the Centre of its generation. While a variety of definitions of the term extension education have been suggested, this paper will use the definition suggested by Luchembe (2016:54) who saw it as “university-based knowledge delivered straight to the people where they live and work.”

Social Justice: Furlong and Cartmel (2009) point out that social justice means fair access to rewards for all individuals and groups within a society. Social justice is regarded as an aspect of distributive justice, where the latter, according to the philosopher Aristotle, is concerned with the fair distribution of benefits among the members of various associations (Miller 2003:2). Bell (2007:1) says that the goal of social justice is “equal participation of all groups in a society that is

mutually shaped to meet their needs... in which distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure”.

Access to university extension education broadly refers to institutional strategies in which the university policy is aimed at ensuring that learners have fair opportunities to participate in education. While *barrier* according to Hornby, Ashby and Wehmeier (2000) is a problem, rule or situation that prevents somebody from doing something or that makes something impossible. The term barrier refers here to the limitations or factors which make it difficult for learners to have access to university extension education. *Success* is defined by Mueller (2016) as the status of having achieved and accomplished an aim or objective. Being successful means the achievement of desired visions and planned goals...

Theoretical framework

This study was informed by Brighouse (2002) egalitarian liberal theory of justice in education. According to Brighouse (2002: 181), “egalitarian liberalism is rooted in the conviction that all individuals need a certain minimum of liberties and that the state must make them accessible to all”. The theory offers a twofold principle that should guide social justice in education, these are fair equality of opportunity and equality of condition (Brighouse, 2002: 183). While the former, not only focus on treating all people equally but also providing them with equal rights. The latter concerns itself with providing equitable outcomes to marginalised groups by recognising past disadvantages and existence of structural barriers embedded in the social, economic and political system that perpetuate systemic discrimination (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The provision of equality of opportunity must be combined with social justice principles to provide substantive equality to marginalised groups. This theory was adopted based on the justification that extension education is by nature distribute, especially to the marginalized adults. It was further utilized because the two principles of social justice offer a framework through which to assess the impact of practices of extension education.

Methodology

This synthesis paper is based on a review of studies conducted on university extension education mainly at the University of Zambia and to a lesser extent abroad. These studies include Chakanika, Sichula & Luchembe (2016); Sichula (2016); Phiri (2015; 2017); Luchembe (2016); Ngambi (2013); and Ngambi and Chakanika (2020) on university extension education were downloaded online while others were accessed through published journals at the University of Zambia. These were reviewed on what they say about extension and education in Zambia. Further, the reviewed literature from these studies was synthesized and complemented with additional secondary and primary data to respond to the purpose of the study. The findings are presented as themes in the following section which include access, barriers and success.

Access

University extension education has made access to university education easy to those who are unable to attend regular studies over the years. The following are the factors accounting for access to university extension education:

i. Distance Factor

The fact that university extension education has been made available in all the ten provinces of Zambia demonstrates how accessible university extension education is in Zambia. Mwansa (2016), states that this is the only education system that has achieved a considerable amount of success in reaching the grass-roots of the Zambian society in terms of higher education. The target learners of this education are all groups of people who require higher education including the rich and the poor, and all the disadvantaged groups especially women (Chakanika and Sichula, 2016). These adults could have had a challenge of access to tertiary education after graduating from high school or had dropped out of school (Chakanika and Nduna, 2016).

Chakanika et al (2015:14) note that “the University of Zambia recognised the need to extend course offerings off-campus to improve access for remote communities”. It can, therefore, be argued that university extension education in Zambia has eliminated the challenge of long distances from the learner’s residency to the learning venue. This is because each province has ensured that they have centres within the province. For example, Lusaka province has 9 extension education centres as of the year 2019. Some of the centres under Lusaka province are Ridgeway day, Ridgeway evening, Chilenge Centre, South end Centre, UNZA Main Campus, Mumuni Centre, Burma Centre, Kafue Centre, and Chirundu Centre. This makes accessibility to university extension education by physical distance easy because these centres are embedded within the communities where the learners are found.

ii. Minimum entry requirements

In terms of entry qualification, it is crucial to understand that university extension education does not place so much emphasis on entry requirements for learners. Willingness and availability of the learner were the primary criteria that existed for learner’s entry into university extension. According to Chakanika and Nduna (2016), university extension education was purely designed for specific community members and the curriculum used to be developed by the learners with assistance from qualified Adult Educators. The courses being offered were non-credit courses. The aim of offering such courses was not for academic purposes but enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants to improve their communities and for survival within their environments (Ngambi, 2013). This disadvantaged most high school graduate learners because they could not be promoted after graduation. It became a challenge for these graduates because employers wanted credit certificate for one to both gain employment and promotion. This dilemma led to graduates and various community members’ demand for credit courses. According to Chakanika, Sichula & Ngambi (2016), students were questioned about the credibility of the qualifications. Therefore, by 2008 the University of Zambia had responded to the needs of society and transformed these programme to credit programmes. This resulted into the first-ever graduation ceremony held on 17 June 2012 of the University of Zambia, School of Education, Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies.

The transition from non-credit to credit programmes came with a shift in terms of entry qualifications from merely being able to read and write in English to possessing five credits or better. For instance, those enrolling for diploma programmes were and now expected to possess

five credits or a better in terms of the General Certificate of Examination (GCE) or ‘Ordinary’ levels while those interested in certificate courses should possess three credits or better GCE ‘O’ levels. There is also a stipulated rule that one who studies a certificate programme will not be allowed to proceed to diploma until they meet the entry requirements for this level which is 5 ‘O’ Levels.

Chakanika and Nduna (2016) quoting Jepson (1973) states that the original purpose of university extension education was to produce graduates who are relevant to their environments. These students are not from the wealthy classes, but from the entire population out of the raw material of the masses. This was done to break down intellectual caste and the university extension of the intellectual franchise. In terms of accessibility, the introduction of G.C.E entry has hindered those without such certificates from pursuing university education which was not the case before the introduction of credit courses in 2008 and commenced in 2009.

iii. Affordable and flexible Payment of Fees

The University of Zambia, extension education is also characterised by affordable tuition fees and a flexible payment plan (Chakanika, Sichula and Ngambi, 2016). According to Ngambi (2013), compared to other tertiary institutions in Lusaka offering diploma programmes, extension education ranks the cheapest with pliable payment conditions and good quality education. Richardson and Moore (2000) and Sichula (2016) note that one of the principles of university extension education is to ensure that the cost of this type of education is affordable to members of various communities especially the poor. Reduced expenditure that participants realise can often be easily identified in determining the economic impact of the programs. In instances where students fail to pay their school fees, they are authorised by the institution to seat for the examinations and clear the outstanding tuition fees when collection their results. This is so because the University of Zambia has decided to make life easy for their students by giving them ample time to fundraise for school fees. This decision was made in consideration of the country’s difficult economic situation and to accommodate students of low social-economic status.

iv. Convenient Time for Classes

University extension education conducts both day and evening classes based on the convenience of eth participants. This flexibility allows learners to carry out other duties and attend classes at a time that is convenient for them. In light of this, Ngambi and Chakanika (2020a) observe that university education through adult education and extension studies provides a beacon of hope to all eligible Zambians who want to pursue a university education. This is because university extension education provides a more flexible mode of study in that even those that are working or doing business can also find time to attend lectures. Additionally, it has decentralised its study centres not only in the capital city of Lusaka where the main campus of the University of Zambia is situated but also in the remaining nine provinces of Zambia.

From this discussion, access to university extension is mainly realized through the bridging of distance by decentralizing the campus, relaxation of stringent entry qualifications and flexible yet affordable payment of tuition fees as well as convenience of time for classes. Much as it has been observed that university extension education is accessible, this does not mean that it has not faced any problems. The section that follows highlights the barriers to university extension education.

Barriers

Although university extension education at the University of Zambia has been said to be accessible, there still exist problems or limitations that prevent it to be fully accessible. The following are some of the barriers to extension education:

i. Part-Time Lecturers and Tutors' Turnover

Extension education studies suffer from a Part-Time Lecturer and or Tutor turnover. This is also made worse by delayed remunerations of staff involved in the facilitation or teaching of programmes. Chakanika et al. (2015) postulate that the allowances are usually paid late and as a result, they get demoralized and search for better opportunities. This is further supported by the work of Mukumbi (2015) who discovered that in Western province, some classes had no lecturers and classes could not take place. The possible explanation for this is that part-time lecturers and tutors abandon classes at whatever point they feel like because the payments tend to be delayed and thus creating frustration and less care. This is so because some of them are engaged in full-time work elsewhere, consequently, this disrupts classes and may, in the end, demotivate adult learners from participating.

ii. Selective Exemption from Programmes

Research findings have revealed that adults are exempted only in Guidance and Counseling and Adult Education programmes (Mulenga, 2019). This has affected the progression of adults from diploma to degree programmes at the University of Zambia. Adults who want to upgrade their qualifications are forced to either start a degree programme from scratch. It is, therefore, possible to hypothesize that this problem is to some extent responsible for the poor enrolments experienced in extension centres. With the mushrooming of private universities, students opt to go and enrol elsewhere where they are given exemptions.

iii. Centrally located in Provincial Centres and Districts

Although extension education is credited with having a presence in all the provinces of Zambia, it is only concentrated in provincial centres and districts along the line of rail. Therefore, it can be argued that it is still not accessible to the remotest persons. As such we can say it somewhat defeats its inherent philosophy and principles, that of focusing on addressing the problems of people in rural, remote and disadvantaged communities (Chakanika, Sichula and Ngambi, 2016). For instance, from the seven districts in Lusaka Province, it is only present in three districts. Similarly, in the Southern and Eastern Provinces, it is only present in three districts.

iv. Overshadowing of Non-Credit by Credit Courses

University extension education has undergone some transformation from its inception up to date. One area where this education enterprise has witnessed change has been in the area of courses. The university introduced credit programmes in 2009, a decision informed by rigorous research. Phiri et al (2017) observed that non-credit courses were almost at the cliff edge falling into extinction and that in North Western province there was no student enrolled in such programmes.

v. Lack of University Infrastructure for Extension Studies

Extension education makes use of rented buildings especially formal schools in some centres to run classes. These are classes which are meant for school-going children. For effective adult learning to take place, certain physical conditions must be met. Chakanika, Sichula and Sumbwa (2016) point out that the physical environment is very important in adult learning and that planners should take into account factors related to their hearing and vision. Chakanika, Sichula and Sumbwa (2016:29) advise that “before teaching in an unfamiliar room, check the visibility from various parts of the room. In particular check for glare. Make sure there is enough light”. Moreover, the room should be spacious enough furnished with comfortable seats and free from noise. In short, the environment should be physically and psychologically good. According to Sichula (2018), the adult-learning environment constitutes all necessary components associated with learning. It is a symbolic representation of all physical, psychological and socio-cultural aspects that influences the success and failure of the adult learning programme. Thus, when looking at what has been suggested and the condition of classes for school going children where extension classes take place, it is hard to reconcile with the factors accounting for physical conditions necessary for adult learning.

Successes

Despite the barriers that have bedevilled extension education at the University of Zambia, this mode of study has registered some successes. Therefore, in the pages that follow we review some of the successes of university extension education.

i. Recognition of Qualifications by the Government

One of the major challenges for university extension education has been the employing agency’s poor perception of qualifications attained by graduates. Chakanika, Sichula and Ngambi (2016) contend that before the 2012 graduation ceremony of the first cohort of the credit and senate approved programmes, the qualifications attained from extension education were not recognized by the government and other employers. This affected those who completed education under extension studies in so much that they could not be hired. This view was being legitimized by the fact that not until the year 2009 university extension education was known to be providing non-credit programmes. However, in their study, Chakanika, Sichula and Ngambi (2016:93) record that the Permanent Secretary of Public Service Management Division (PSMD) of the Republic of Zambia on 9 November 2012 wrote to the University of Zambia management and various government ministries and departments indicating a positive recognition of qualifications from the University of Zambia, Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies. This provides some explanation as to why many graduates have been deployed in various government departments and private entities. This is a success as it has instilled public confidence and won society’s acceptance.

ii. Curriculum improvement

The responsiveness of the learning content is crucial to the relevance and success of the adult education programme (Sichula, 2018), including extension education (Chakanika, Sichula and Luchembe, 2016). The challenge of progression to degree level is seemingly being taking off with

the revision of the curriculum. Once implemented, this curriculum will facilitate diploma graduates from extension unit to proceed to degree level with exemptions.

iii. Increasing Number of Adult Graduates

As it has been stated elsewhere, university extension thrives on fulfilling its overarching aim of providing opportunities to those that miss out in life. This statement is in agreement with Nduna (2010:25) who argues that “the university, through extension education can take such individuals on board to empower them with skills to prepare them for the new roles and make them responsive to their environment”. This is especially the case with adults, particularly those whose full-time employment cannot accommodate their attendance of full-time education. Previous research has demonstrated that there has been an upward trend in terms of adult graduate output by university extension centres across the country. In their study, Chakanika, Sichula and Ngambi (2016) note that in 2012 a total of 1,888 students graduated in various fields in extension education. Furthermore, Banda (2016) also provides a graduate output university extension education trends analysis for three-year calendar graduations. He notes that whereas in 2013, 2226 people graduated in university extension, 739 graduated with diplomas in 2014 and, 748 graduated with diplomas and 119 graduated with certificates culminating into a total of 867 graduates in 2015 under university extension studies. This in itself is a roaring success for university extension education because not only does it help to improve adult literacy (Sichula, 2018), but also ensure that disadvantaged adults have the chance to compete for jobs like anyone else.

iv. Integration of Adults into the Labour Market

Closely aligned with the swelling number of graduates is the absorption of these graduates into the industrial arena (Ngambi and Chakanika, 2020b). University extension education has also proven to play a crucial role in the development of adults as human beings. It is little wonder that Mwansa (2016:101) concluded that “extension studies is education for development because it is a utilitarian education, which enables people to improve their lives”. A considerable amount of literature has been published on university extension and development. These studies have demonstrated a strong and consistent association between this mode of study and the well-being of adults (Ngambi and Chakanika, 2020b; Banda, 2016). Adult graduates from university extension have been employed by various agencies like the government, non-governmental organizations, and private entities and capacitated others to set up their own businesses. For instance, Banda (2016:40) says that some of the graduates interviewed during 2012 graduation ceremony indicated that they had been employed, promoted, started own business or advanced in studies because of the diploma programmes they completed with the University of Zambia’s extension studies. Similarly, few business administration graduates interviewed at the 2015 graduation ceremony indicated that they pursued the business administration programme so that they may successfully start and manage their own business, whether they were in employment or self-employed. These graduates stated that the business administration diploma programme had equipped them with entrepreneurship skills, business skills and helped them nurture their business ideas into viable enterprises. Those who graduated with a diploma in early childhood education stated that they pursued the new programme because of the possible job opportunity in the newly introduced early childhood education sector in schools by the Ministry of Education. They also hoped to start their own schools...”

This is equally another success of extension education. It has helped people to identify and analyse their production problems and become aware of the opportunities for improvement. Owing to this, it is seen to be elevating people's standards of living by making them employable while at the same time wrestling with the problem of unemployment, instilling self-reliance and consequently enhancing national development.

v. Ownership of Assets

It is common knowledge that right from its inception, university extension education had set out on borrowed or rented infrastructures to run its programmes in all the provinces (Chakanika & Sichula, 2016). To some extent, this might no longer be the same today because some centres have acquired buildings operating as administrative centres. We say so because the University of Zambia through extension studies has acquired the property in almost all the provinces. For instance, some centres own buildings and stocked them with library facilities while others have bought land and are working towards building their infrastructure.

vi. Increased Knowledge and Skills

Another area where extension education has been successful is its extension of knowledge and skills closer to the people, especially those in rural areas. Several lines of evidence suggest that extension education is imperative, especially in developing countries, where it plays a catalytic role in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Ngambi and Chakanika (2020:51) report that "university extension education has benefited graduates who are in self-employment by providing them with new skills, knowledge and ideas". In the same vein, Luchembe (2016) in his paper 'the role and challenges of extension education at the University of Zambia' writes that said university extension education offers courses to impart knowledge and skills to help people with ever-changing demands of life at work, and this change takes place in social, political and economic spheres.

vii. Increased research on extension education

University extension education as a discipline and applied science has continued to command and attract research to improve its practice. These studies have ranged from evolution, methodology Phiri (2015), the benefits Ngambi and Chakanika (2020b), challenges Mandumbwa (2011), Nduna 2010, Imasiku (2019) motivation, quality assurance Chinyimba (2019) to qualifications Mulenga (2019). Extension education is an applied science consisting of content derived from research, accumulated field experiences and relevant principles drawn from the behavioural science and synthesized with useful technology into a body of philosophy, principles, content and methods focused on the problems of out-of-school education for adults and youth (Das, 2017).

University Extension Education and Social Justice

Social justice manifests itself in university extension education in a multifarious way. This can be perceived through the domain of access. It has been contended that university extension education provides access to adults who have been socially excluded from the education system by bridging the distance by taking education closer to them. Others are through entry qualifications, flexible payment of fees and time for classes, its presence in various parts of the country.

This has made it accessible by collapsing the distances between education and adult learners (Chakanika et al, 2015). This can best be interpreted as an act of social inclusion aimed at ensuring

equity and widened participation for adult learners in rural areas (Sichula, 2018). This implies that in agreement with the first principle of Brighouse (2002) egalitarian liberal theory of justice in education, that university extension education is treating marginalised adults in rural communities equally with those in urban settings by protecting and upholding their rights to education. Thus, the aspect of access reflected in its inclusiveness of working adult learners can be adopted as a social justice strategy in university extension education.

Another way to view extension studies as an instrument of social justice is through its relaxation of the demand for entry qualifications. Most public universities in Zambia attach a certain cut off point in their admission policies as a gauge for entry into a certain programme. Because of this, it could be argued that this makes institutions of education to function as purveyors of social inequalities. However, this is certainly not the case with extension studies where prospective students are required to have 5 credits or better G.C.E or 'O' levels. It might be contested even then that students who study through extension programmes only go up to diploma level, have difficulties with progression, hence, maintaining social differentials. Well, the truth of the matter is that the University of Zambia is reviewing its policy on exemptions which once done will apply to all programmes. Therefore, if this is not an act of social justice then it is a means towards social justice.

Social justice in extension education is further espoused through the payment of fees and flexible time for classes. Comparatively, university extension education is by far the cheapest in terms of tuition fees as earlier alluded and this can be paid in instalments. In terms of lessons, classes are conducted at are predominantly conducted at night while other centres accommodate day classes. Whatever, the case this gives adults the leverage to strike an equilibrium between other responsibilities including work and study. All these are measures not alone aimed at making university education affordable and accessible but also actions to address the endemic unfairness of the education system. Taken together, relaxation of the demand for entry qualifications and flexible payment of tuition fees constitute equality of conditions which have been put in place by the university to ensure that university education is affordable to the marginalised adults. This in itself is also supportive of Brighouse (2002) egalitarian liberal theory of justice's second principle of equality of conditions.

Furthermore, there seems to be a clear, obvious and important kinship and the association between the principles of extension education and social justice. University extension education draws its foundation from the principle of clientele need (Banda 2016; Ngambi and Chakanika 2020b). Correspondingly, Miller (2003:247) cited in Waghid (2014:1450) states that *"for society to be just it must comply with the principles of need, desert (reward) and equality, whereby institutional structures must ensure that an adequate share of social resources is set aside for individuals based on need. Social justice thus requires that the allocating agencies be set up in such a way that vital needs...become the criteria for distributing the various resources for each of the specific needs"*. In this sense, extension education is described as a cooperative effort (Chakanika and Nduna, 2016) meaning it is participatory and based on the felt needs and interests of the people involved. Instructors or facilitators in university extension have adopted adult education *"pedagogies that encourage students to be active participants in the classroom (Sichula, 2018), thus empowering these democratic practices and preparing participants for their roles in society"* (Dewey in Glass 2009:11). This in itself affirms the hallmarks of social justice which are democracy, inclusiveness and participation.

Closely allied to this is the issue of dessert or reward. Discussing the benefits of extension education has been laid bare in this paper that university extension education has equipped adult

learners with the knowledge, a varied set of skills, and unfurled them on the labour market and consequently improved their living standards. Mwansa (2016) notes that “the importance of extension studies in Zambia cannot be overemphasised as it contributes immensely to the human, social and economic development”. In other words, we can simply say that university extension education correlates with development. Therefore, if economic development is considered as an instance of education for social justice (Waghid, 2014), the same can be said of university extension education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been argued that university extension education at the University of Zambia is a tool for social justice which has fairly distributed economic and social benefits and resources, upheld citizen’s rights to education and promotes equity. Notwithstanding, the barriers that university extension education face, it has taken university education closer to the adults whose distance has socially disadvantaged. It does this by equitably providing access to education flexibly and cost-effectively. It has also enabled adults to compete favourably on the labour market and consequently help bring about development at all levels. Given this scenario, there is, therefore, a dire need for the University of Zambia to sustain university extension education.

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