

Integrating the Socially Constructed Pedagogy in Non-School-Based Adult Literacy Classes

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This study sought to explore the integration of socially constructed pedagogy in adult literacy classes. The findings show a concentration of school-based reading and writing literacy skills, with minimal emphasis on the application of these skills in real life. The study concluded that the ideal platform for integrating socially constructed pedagogy in adult literacy classes is by adhering to the adult learning principle of beginning from the perspective of the adult learners, rather than applying a one-size-fits all approach.

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This study sought to explore the integration of socially constructed pedagogy in adult literacy classes. The study focused on teaching farming literacies to small scale farmers and sought to answer two research questions: 1) how do adult literacy learning facilitators socially construct pedagogy?

and 2) how is socially constructed pedagogy integrated into teaching about farming literacies? This study followed a qualitative research approach and data was collected through face-to-face interviews and class observations. The findings show there was a concentration on school-based reading and writing literacy skills with minimal emphasis on the application of these skills in real life. In addition, not all facilitators were able to socially construct pedagogy because they lacked appropriate training. For those who were able to construct pedagogy, they applied it in a situated manner, largely characterised by locally-generated resources and practices. This approach was seemingly responsible for fostering a sense of belonging and ownership of the teaching and learning activities experienced by the adult learners. It was concluded that the ideal platform for integrating socially constructed pedagogy in adult literacy classes is to adhere to the adult learning principle of beginning from the perspective of the adult learners, rather than applying a one-size-fits all pedagogy.

- The focus of many studies on literacy pedagogy has concentrated on school-based pedagogy for children and in higher education.
- Non-school-based adult literacy learning is ingrained with a type of pedagogy that is mediated by the sociocultural context of the adult learners.
- Research has linked the success of adult literacy learning programmes in most rural parts of developing countries to developing pedagogy that should be based on the everyday literacy practices of the people.
- Adult literacy learning should refer to teaching adult learners to improve their already existing literacy practices and not to teaching to them discrete skills such as reading and writing.
- Socially constructed pedagogy should relate to the creative, innovative uses of locally-situated resources to support teaching and learning.



Present study

The purpose of this study was to explore how socially constructed pedagogy was incorporated in non-school-based adult literacy classes in the Mkushi District of Central Zambia.

Research questions:

- 1. How do adult literacy learning facilitators socially construct pedagogy?*
- 2. How is socially constructed pedagogy integrated into teaching about farming literacies?*

Methods

The research sites and participants were selected through purposive sampling. The rationale for the purposive selection of Mkushi District was based on its concentrated farming activities within the entire Central Province. The research participants were adult literacy learning facilitators who were interviewed and observed. The collected data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

The conceptualisation and provision of adult literacy learning in Zambia

- In Zambia (as well many other countries) there is a narrow conceptualisation that literacy simply means the skills of reading and writing.
- Essentially, there is compelling evidence from research regarding the importance of conceptualising and applying literacy as a social practice.
- This approach produces considerable progress in improving literacy practices among learners compared to

the discrete skills-based approach.

- Sadly, the new adult literacy learning curriculum in Zambia has simply considered adult literacy as the ability to read, write, and perform numerical calculations.
- It is important for all adult literacy practitioners in the country to realise that the 21st century paradigm of literacy and learning has emerged from socio-culturally based research.
- This presents the following ideas: 1) multi-literacies as opposed to a single view of literacy, and 2) teaching and learning are learner-centred as opposed to teacher-centred and have been found beneficial for improving both teaching and learning.

Pedagogy

- Traditionally, pedagogy has been associated with the teaching and learning processes of children.
- The meaning of the concept is said to be composed of two Greek words, paidos (child) and agogus (leader).
- To consider pedagogy as being only concerned with teaching children is limited in content and scope.
- Therefore, the concept of andragogy was developed to explain teaching and learning related to adults. However, its definition and meaning are not clear; thus, pedagogy is used for all categories of learners (children, youths, and adults).
- Literature on the conceptualisation of pedagogy reveals two dominant views: 1) pedagogy is considered only in relation to teaching, and 2) pedagogy is considered a science concerned with teaching processes associated with all learners.
- The emphasis on learner-centred pedagogy reflects important implications for the understanding of how socially constructed pedagogy can be integrated into non-school-based adult literacy learning.

- Adult educators should apply socially developed pedagogy from the perspective of their adult learners.
- Thus, adult educators are expected to possess two forms of knowledge associated with pedagogy: content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.
- Content knowledge is understood as knowledge of the subject area possessed and ordered within the mind of a teacher.
- Adult educators should use their understanding to help adult learners in generating new knowledge and understanding.
- Pedagogical knowledge relates to the knowledge that is essential to all educators for effective teaching and learning.
- The nature of pedagogical knowledge is made up of knowledge on general instructional methods that is unique to educators and teachers.
- It provides an understanding of what teachers know about teaching and what they teach to specific learners.
- It also encompasses the teacher's knowledge of the learners in terms of their abilities, learning strategies, aspirations, and prior knowledge.
- This knowledge is also based on understanding ways of presenting information through explanations, illustrations, examples, and demonstrations to enable others to understand the subject matter.
- It is also associated with understanding aspects related to learning difficulties.
- Trained educators are expected to construct pedagogy creatively and innovatively based on the prevailing learning circumstances or situation.

Socially constructed pedagogy

- This relates to the use of material and any other useful resources found in the learning context to support teaching and learning.

- There is a global shift in emphases from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy, banking education to posing problems, and surface learning to deep learning.
- Adult educators are expected to have a clear knowledge of the adult learners in terms of their occupations, status, motivations, and knowledge of the subject matter to meet the goals of each learner.
- Knowledge and understanding of the content are the two most important elements that facilitate the shaping of goals and objectives to achieve the desired changes in learners.
- Beneficial life experiences play an important role in shaping pedagogy and aid the success of an educational activity.
- Pedagogy should be considered in situated terms and specific to the learning goals.

Theoretical framework of the present study

- This study was underpinned by two sociocultural learning theories: the social practice view of literacy and the theory of social constructivism (for both, learning and pedagogy are socially situated).
- The social practice theory views literacy from a broader perspective as socially situated practices.
- According to this theory, literacy practices develop socially within the cultural context of the people and are mediated by language and symbols.
- The implication of viewing literacy as social practices (LSP) to this study is that the literacy taught in the adult literacy classes should be viewed as situated literacies rather than universal literacy skills.
- Social constructivism is a theory grounded in informal situated learning practices and regards learning as social processes mediated by language and culture.
- The learning context familiar to the learner is important in enhancing learning and can be achieved by

setting a zone of proximal development (ZDP).

- This refers to an activity-based environment in which the educator or peers who are more knowledgeable assist learners to achieve what they cannot do on their own.
- Pedagogically, adult learning should be characterised by adult learners sharing their language and culture with their educators who adopt a more flexible and less authoritative role.
- Practically, educators should organise adult learners into pairs or groups to perform tasks and offer the necessary support to adult learners at any point.
- Informal learning practices should be essential for accommodating adult learners' interests.
- Instructions should be learner focused, learner-goal based, and possibly learner–educator co-constructed.
- The advantage of using a social and group interactive learning process is that it provides opportunities for adult learners to engage in discussions through which they may construct new knowledge.
- It can be said that educators using this model scaffold learning by creating opportunities for the genuine engagement of adult learners in the learning processes.

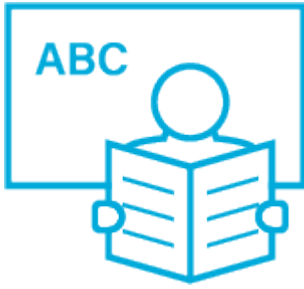


Findings

- The findings of this study demonstrate a concentration on school-based literacies that has been incorporated with elementary language literacies.
- Conversely, the national policy on community development and the 2012 national curriculum framework on adult literacy provision in Zambia emphasises farming, civic, and entrepreneurial literacy competencies in non-school-

based adult literacy classes in rural areas.

- The starting point in the social construction of pedagogy (in view of the social practice of literacy) should be to identify and integrate the farming literacies of adult learners in the different contexts of adult literacy classes.
- The primary focus should be on areas that require improvements identified by the adult learners themselves.
- The study revealed that facilitators only minimally attempted to socially construct pedagogy.
- Expository pedagogy was applied in the teaching of literacy in a teacher dominated manner and was primarily based on lecture teaching.
- Efforts to socially construct and integrate pedagogy in the teaching of literacy was evidenced by using situated resources, which included local knowledge and practices to formulate learning content.
- Local language shaped the medium of instruction, whereas local narratives, daily life activities, drama, songs, and role play shaped the pedagogical strategies.
- The facilitators indicated that this approach had helped them to remain effective in their teaching.
- They added that the approach demonstrated how solving learning challenges among the adult learners had considerably increased the speed of learner improvement.
- Some adult learners were able to relate reading and writing to helping their children with school homework, religious activities such as bible studying, daily communications through text messaging, and small-scale trading with related transactions.



Conclusions

- Adult learners are self-directed, experientially based learners, problem-centred, task-centred, and life-centred learners.
- People engaged in adult literacy learning are essentially engaged in the generation of knowledge situated in the context within which it is generated.
- Social learning is important for the construction and application of socially situated pedagogy.