

Chapter 2

Poverty and Community Engagement

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2.1 Introduction

The introduction Chap. 1 laid a broad view of lifelong learning, as one of the most effective tools communities can employ to fight poverty. Poverty can be interpreted as a failure of the world to promote social justice in our quest to promote planned development for all societal groups. Undoubtedly it is a debilitating agent that manifests itself in more than economic terms such as disabled capability, erosion of self-esteem, and general lack of participation in civic life. Community engagement is a catalyst for lifelong learning and developing new ways of defining and tackling poverty. Community engagement programmes and activities may be employed to reduce or eradicate poverty to promote social justice, change and empowerment of communities.

2.2 Brief Summary of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning includes all forms of learning for behavior change that takes place everywhere within and outside the four walls of the classroom. This includes learning under trees, within old buildings, along the road or any other place where there are human beings. This learning takes place across a lifespan; hence its scope has no limits. It covers learning for life, and goes back to the origins of life and work. With the impact of the western notions of what counts as learning came notions of certificates and accreditation, while these are crucial to acknowledge, it is equally crucial to know that there are different formats of African Indigenous knowledge and systems of learning not packaged in western pockets. Lifelong encompasses

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both planned and unplanned learning through different modes of delivery such as professional development, formal school, continuing education, distance education, e-learning, correspondence, home schooling and continuing education. Illeris (2003) argues that learning is central to human nature and has three dimensions – cognitive, social and emotional. These dimensions are interdependent and have tensions as every single learning process is stretched between the three.

A research with older adults by Poon et al. (1989), suggests that lifelong learning and training is crucial to improve memory and cognitive abilities of adults in the midst of teaching intellectual patterns. The authors argue that it is crucial to monitor everyday cognition to compare laboratory work with real life situations, clinical and educational applications. An understanding of how the human memory functions is crucial for understanding age related changes, declines and how to intensive training and retraining to improve everyday functional abilities of older adults.

2.3 Botswana Lifelong Learning Policy Context

Botswana's education subsystem still lacks quality. Although literacy levels are very high (68–70%) the type of education received does not seem relevant to meet the needs of the national economy. Key issues here are widening participation in education programmes across a lifespan, and measuring that education offered is of top quality and relevance.

The overall aims of lifelong learning are to improve Botswana for better life and access to the corporate world, and to develop educational and training programmes responsive to the needs of the ever-changing economy. The objectives of lifelong learning are to promote community and human development, and an environment that helps people to be able to cope with the challenges and demands of change.

2.3.1 Adult Education Modes of Delivery for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning

Botswana has four major modes of adult education delivery which give opportunities for lifelong learning to take place:

1. Basic education and training: Examples include, but are not limited to Adult Basic education, Formal learning, Non Formal learning, Pre-primary learning, Primary learning, and Secondary learning and Out of school education.
2. Continuing Education: Examples include, but are not limited to Continuing education and re-entry of the adult learners, learning by special needs groups, Vocational/technical education and training, and Tertiary institutions.
3. Extension workers' education and training: Examples include, but are not limited to Extension education, Training of trainers for extension work, extra mural studies, and Life skills training.

Table 2.1 Some indicators of poverty. (Sources: Central Statistics Office (CSO), Vision 2016, the MDG Indicators Report, (2009, MDG Status Report on Botswana, (2010)

Indicator	Value/year	Percent change for each indicator
National population	2 million in 2008	2.7
Life expectancy at birth (Years)	55.1(1971); 65.3 in 1991; 64.3 (1998); 54.6 (2006).	8.7
Poverty head (%) National Poverty Line	47(1993); 30.6(2002)	16.4
Count Rate 1\$/Day Poverty Line	24.3(1992); 23.5(2002)	0.8
Poverty gap ratio	11.8(1992); 11.6 (2002)	0.2
Rate of unemployment (%)	20.8(1998); 26.2(2008)	5.4
Access to safe drinking water (%)	93.0(1990); 95.8(2006)	2.8
Access to sanitation (%)	38.0(1990); 79.8(2007)	41.8
Adult Literacy Rate (%)	19% illiterate in 2003; 81% literate (2003).	62
Child Malnutrition (%)	7.1(2003); 4.3(2009)	2.8

4. Distance education: Examples include, but are not limited to Open and distance education, Leisure education, Community education, Environmental education and tourism.

While lifelong learning takes place everywhere, there are facilities that promote lifelong learning. These include libraries, ICT, partnerships and funding.

There are varieties of definitions of poverty that focus on income insufficiency, basic needs dissatisfaction, Capabilities, and lack of participation in civic life. Such definitions also attribute poverty to gender inequalities, illiteracy and other socio-cultural factors associated with some form of disadvantage. Before moving on to definitions in details, it is important to illuminate the poverty situation in Botswana. The Table 2.1 below provides some vital indicators on, amongst others, poverty and related indicators in Botswana.

2.3.2 *The Poverty Situation*

An estimated 23 % of the population lives below poverty datum line in 2009, down from 30 % in 2003. Poverty manifests itself in several indicators such as, amongst others, living below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL), unemployment, life expectancy at birth, access to safe drinking water and sanitation to curb water-borne diseases, illiteracy, and child malnutrition.

In 2008, the national population was estimated at 1.8 million (2 million). Life expectancy at birth increased from 55, 5 in 1971 to 65.3 years in 1991, 64.3, and 64.3 % in 1998, and further decreased to 54.4 years in 2006 due to the impact of HIV/AIDS (National Development Plan 200910, p. 13). Literacy rate increased from 68.9% in 1993 to about 90 % by 2003. If literacy rates continue to increase

by 12% every ten years as estimated, Botswana is most likely to have a literacy of about 93% in 2013 (CSO/NFE 2003, p. 54)

The income definitions attribute poverty to lack of income and purchasing power. Poverty is traditionally defined for Botswana as the inability to afford income that is essential for meeting basic and recreational needs (UNICEF 1993; BIDPA 1997). A Poverty Datum Line (PDL) was drawn for Botswana, and based on a suggested minimum wage of about P600.00 per month (US\$ 120.00). This is an arbitrary line that divides the poor from the non-poor. According to UNICEF (1993), households with income below the poverty datum line are poverty stricken.

The Botswana Institute of Development and Policy Analysis (BIDPA) study identified poverty in terms of inability to afford basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and education. According to this study, about 47% of Botswana's population was living in poverty in 1993/94. The figure reduced to 23% in 2007, Government of Botswana report (2010).

Poverty is also perceived as a problem caused by gender inequalities especially in patriarchal societies where women are not given the same power as men, and educational, literacy and employment opportunities that are needed for everyone to break through poverty. Women's education, and in particular, education of the girl child is important to reduce illiteracy among women and help them deal with poverty.

First, research conducted in Botswana portrays poverty as mainly reflected in skewed income distribution. However, how much income is essential to significantly reduce poverty is not clear. About 55% of women are poverty stricken (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning/Central Statistics Office 2003). The gini coefficient measures income inequality. The Maximum Equalization Percentage (MEP) indicates the percentage of income that should be taken from those who are rich to the relatively poor to attain absolute equality. These income measures are inadequate because redistribution of wealth has not been done rigorously to benefit people living in poverty.

Second, poverty is, in most cases, inherited from generation to generation though not in a linear fashion. Children born into poverty are more likely to inherit poverty from their parents than children born to rich families. Jefferies (1997a) argues that one important aspect of poverty alleviation in Botswana is to ensure that those who are born into poverty have a chance of economic and social mobility out of poverty. If this goal is to be met, then everyone, and society in general, should care about reducing or eliminating poverty through the impact of educational programmes and state based poverty eradication strategies and available packages as discussed in Chap. 3. In the final analysis, everyone should be committed to an ethic of alleviating poverty because poverty can lead to delinquency and crime, which drain public resources.

From the author's own personal and work experience, children of the poor often suffer a multiplicity of disadvantages such as illiteracy, lack of access to good quality education, inadequate or lack of income, inadequate access to information, lack of access to medical or specialist treatment, low social and self-esteem. They often lack access to facilities that may help them break through their poverty status. Children of poor single women in particular suffer the high dependency ratio and the disadvantage of having only one parent to support them financially and emotionally.

Poverty situations worsen where women do not have any source of income. The poor have low public participation, little or no voice in the Botswana society. Poor children are likely to under-perform or drop from school than children from rich families (UNDP 1997). Under five malnutrition and illiteracy among women are some of the major indications of widespread human poverty used by UN agencies.

Preece et al (2007) make a distinction between four categories of poverty: income, capability, participatory and consequential poverty.

- Income poverty is calculated on the basis of absolute income poverty using Poverty Datum line.
- Participatory poverty is measured by participation or lack of it due to a range of deprivations, “culture of silence.”
- Capability poverty is conceptualized by absence of freedom to participate in economic life, “unemployment.”
- Consequential poverty is conceived as human and political interventions on the natural or social environment in a harmful way, making it difficult to access natural resources, labour, wars and other environmental catastrophes. “inability to harness natural resources like firewood” earthquakes, floods.

Poverty is caused by both environmental and human causes. These are further discussed in Chap. 7, with a special focus on the San Community as one of those hard hit by poverty, and Chap. 8 on reducing poverty through inventive entrepreneurship skills training.

2.4 ITMUA: An Example of Community Engagement as a tool for poverty reduction

Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa (ITMUA): Contributing to the Millennium Development Goals is one example of a regional action research project that sought to illuminate best practice in community engagement.

The ITMUA project which is used to inform this book chapter was a regional collaborative research project that involved four African universities: University of Botswana, National University of Lesotho, University of Calabar in Nigeria, and Chancellor College of Malawi (see university logos below).



As part of TMUA, each of the 4 participating universities carried out a self-assessment, between March and April 2010, with the view to determining the extent to which it has been involved in community service activities.

For this purpose and for the purpose of the whole project, community service was understood to mean:

Extension of university expertise to the world outside the university, the community, in the service of improving the quality of life of the community and which is effected through a university model in which community service is integral to all aspects of the university: mission, structure and organization, hiring and promotion, curriculum and teaching, research and publications etc. (Lulat 2005 p. 262).

Four universities, the National University of Lesotho (NUL), the University of Botswana (UB) the University of Calabar (Unical) and the University of Malawi (Unima), submitted reports and the contents of their submissions were summarized under the following headings: (1) country contexts within which community service was carried through (2) understandings of “community service” as reflected in the reports (3) themes explored by community services carried out (4) objectives of the community services (5) number of faculties carrying out community service (6) total number of faculties within the university (7) Number of community service projects started by individuals and (8) average age of community service.

2.4.1 Community Service—Types

1. Work carried out within a community with the dual purpose of equipping students with some practical training while at the same time teaching community members some techniques for improving on identified practices or on general living styles.
2. Work purposefully instituted by universities with the view to addressing challenges identified by particular communities.
3. Work started off in a community by an individual (who may or may not be a staff of any of the 4 universities in this project and who may be alone or collaborating with another agency or university) who is eventually joined within the same community by one of the 4 universities with the view to promoting the work originally started by the individual.

2.4.2 Themes Explored by Community Service(s) included the Following

1. Poverty reduction
2. Social inclusion
3. Health (HIV/AIDS)
4. the elderly

5. civil society
6. Environmental education

2.4.3 Objectives of Community Service(s)

1. To provide relevant information and skills which ultimately will improve practice and raise levels of daily, weekly or monthly income and thereby reduce economic poverty and poverty of information.
2. To supply both information and social services that will combine to make segments of society feel a sense of belonging.
3. To provide education in the manner HIV/AIDS particularly is to be handled to prevent its spread and to prevent that it leads to death.
4. To reach out to the elderly with the view to proffering advice on how to manage the old age pension being received in some countries and to provide health tips that would make old age life pleasurable and even longer.
5. To strengthen capacity of civil society organizations to serve communities more efficiently and more purposefully.
6. To enlighten communities on the meaning and implications of climate change and to equip them with practices that mitigate further deterioration of the environment.

2.4.4 Number of Faculties in Each University

Each of the four universities involved in the ITMUA project had a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 11 Faculties and Institutes. However, between 3 and 10 faculties were found to be involved in community service projects at the time of this project.

The least number of Faculties involved in community service was recorded in the University of Calabar while the National University of Lesotho posted the highest number of Faculties involved in community service projects.

2.4.5 Number of Projects Begun by Individuals

In all the four universities, it was found out that individual employees (mostly academic staff), started off community service projects on their own, using their own resources or with the assistance of some agencies outside their universities.

Some of these individually begun projects were eventually taken over by universities while others are in the process of involving universities. Again the National University of Lesotho posted the highest number of individual staff members that started off community service projects into which the university eventually stepped into or which are yet to involve the university.

Table 2.2 University to university performance on community service activities. (Source: ITMUA 6th Monthly Synthesis Report, (2011); ITMUA project)

University Issue	National Univer- sity of Lesotho	University of Botswana	University of Calabar	University of Malawi
Meaning of “Community Service”	Types 1, 2 and 3	Types 1, 2 and 3	Types 1 and 2	Types 1, 2 and 3
Themes explored	Poverty reduction, Social inclusion, Health (HIV/AIDS), the elderly, civil society, Environmental education society, Environmental education	Poverty reduction, Social inclusion, Health (HIV/AIDS), civil society, Environmental education	Poverty reduction, Health (HIV/AIDS), Environmental education.	Poverty reduction, Social inclusion, Health (HIV/AIDS), Environmental education
Objectives of Community Service	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	1, 2, 3, 5 & 6	1, 3 & 6	1, 2, 3, & 6
Maximum number of Faculties/ Institutes	10	9	11	5
Number of Faculties/ Institutes running Community Services	10	7	3	5
Number of Projects started off by Individuals	3	2	4	2
Age of community service projects	4 to 7 years	3–7 years	3–7 years	3–7 years

2.4.6 Age of the Community Service Projects

Some of the reported community service projects are as old as 15 years; especially those that served as training workshops for students; in other words, they have been going on for up to 15 years or more. However, most of the reported projects were between 4 to 5 years old.

The following is a university to university summary of the findings:

Table 2.2 shows that 3 of the 4 participating universities operated the three concepts of community service (training students and helping community, designing community service specifically for the benefit of community and buying into community service started off by individuals). The fourth university (the University of Calabar) was found to operate only the first two of these concepts of community service.

a. Lesotho Policy context for university community engagement

The policy context for Lesotho's national development priorities are inscribed in the following documents:

- Lesotho Vision 2020: National vision for Lesotho (Government of Lesotho 2001)
- Kingdom of Lesotho Poverty Reduction Strategy 2004/5–2006/7 (Government of Lesotho 2004)
- Kingdom of Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005–2015
- National University of Lesotho Strategic Plan 2007–2012

Supporting documents include the Government's Gender and Development Policy and ICT Policy papers.

The University's vision is:

To be a leading African university responsive to national socio-economic needs, committed to high quality teaching, lifelong learning, research and community service (p. 4).

In this respect the university has positioned itself to serve the development needs of the nation and embraced the concept of lifelong learning as a strategy to meet these needs. The university further strengthens its responsiveness to regional engagement in two of its strategic goals. Goal 2 emphasises improved relevance and quality of teaching and learning; Goal 8 emphasises strengthened local, regional and international partnerships, with a view to addressing critical national issues, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), providing community services and engaging in partnerships with private, public and international bodies (p. 13) with relevant and responsive programmes (p. 14).

The university, therefore, has, as part of its mission and strategy, a commitment to community engagement—both for community service and as a consultative resource to make its programmes relevant to the nation.

In terms of government development goals, the government's PRSP and ESSP both highlight that the nation has signed up to international agreements and targets as articulated in the Education For All (EFA) and MDG statements. For Lesotho, the PRSP priorities include employment creation and income generation, improved agriculture and food security, deepening democracy and local governance, improved access to health care and services to vulnerable groups, relevance of education, promotion of culture, tourism, environmental conservation and recognition of cross cutting issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, and the needs of children and youth. In this respect the government has committed itself to achieving all the development goals, with a particular focus on poverty, education and health.

The nation's broader concerns are also reflected in the Vision 2020 which places emphasis on democracy, good governance, political participation, stability and peace, strong economy and well established technology, environmental management and justice for all. The Vision highlights relevant and productive education, lifelong learning, vocational, technical and entrepreneurial education and food security as priorities for national development.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan similarly promotes the idea of lifelong learning, relevant curriculum and the expectation that higher education will supply high level human resource for the world of work (p. 80). While Government emphasis for higher education is to respond to the world of work, this world of work can be interpreted widely to include all aspects of human life. For example the world of work includes management of human relations, cooperation and democratic participation in decision making which in turn affects all aspects of culture, health, environment, economy and politics.

It can be argued, therefore that the ITMUA project has direct policy relevance to national and university priorities since it is premised on ensuring communication between higher education, community, employer and government stakeholders in order to establish learning relevance in relation to development needs.

b. Botswana policy context for university community engagement

Community service is defined as one of the criteria for promotion of UB staff. Community service is described for the University of Botswana by SAPC as indicated in the self-assessment report.

Through university staff, the UB functions as a “resource” for innovative ideas, ‘think tank or source of knowledge’, serves in advisory capacity to community organizations, commissions, boards, and promotes innovations in Information Communication Technology (ICT), social and cultural matters.

The policy context for the University of Botswana and Botswana’s national development priorities are inscribed in the following documents:-

Botswana Vision 2016: National Vision for Botswana (Government of Botswana)

GOB/UNDP/MFDP Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2004; Millennium Development Goals (MGDS) of 2004,

The current Botswana’s National Development Plan 10, the Agricultural Policy and Strategy for diversification of the sector during NDP 10), the District and Village Development Plans.

Supporting documents include the National Commission on Education of 1993, The National Literacy Survey of 2003, Gender and Development Policy, The National Gender Framework, the National Youth Policy, the National Policy on Culture (1996), the national HIV/AIDS policy, ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, advocacy for the signing of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the Household Income and Expenditure Survey results.

The University of Botswana’s vision is:

- To be a leading ‘*centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world*’ (UB Calendar)
- The mission is to ‘*improve economic and social conditions for the nation while advancing as a distinctively African university with a regional and international outlook*’.

Other universities have also developed vision and mission statements. Based on missions, visions and other statements of intent by all universities represented in ITMUA, a common thread is that UB as the first main campus and others that became accredited over the last couple of years are willing to work with communities

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