

# THE CHALLENGES OF ADULT EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN MOZAMBIQUE

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## Abstract

*The current socio-economic development in Mozambique is characterized by growing social inequalities, in particular concerning the imbalanced access to education and the increased poverty of women and the unemployed. Adult education is a way to provide youth and adults with opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Through education they can gain power and they can learn how to cope with social and economic challenges. The purpose of this research is to examine how far policies concerning adult education, especially with respect to Non-Formal Vocational Education and Training (NFVET) are implemented. The research is qualitative in nature, based on document analysis with a focus on the policies that have guided the implementation of adult education and training in Mozambique during the period 2000-2015. The findings reveal that Mozambique has been strongly influenced by international initiatives within the framework of 'Education for all' and 'Education for development'. There is an apparent need to strengthen policy implementation strategies, particularly in the area of NFVET in order to ensure the real empowerment of learners and teachers.*

**Key words:** adult education, activity theory, power and development.

## Introduction

Since independence in 1975, Mozambique has been engaged in measures to increase access to education for all people, at all levels and particularly for those who lack basic education. Different organizations are involved in providing education and training in formal and non-formal sectors. Unfortunately the civil war in the 1980s curtailed many educational activities. From 1992 onwards, after the general agreement of peace and under the influence of the international initiatives in education to which Mozambique is a signatory, participation rates in education and training have increased. In spite of these improvements, adult education in Mozambique, particularly Non-Formal Vocational Education and Training (NFVET), still faces many challenges.

The purpose of this research is to analyse the main policies that have guided the implementation of NFVET, as part of adult education in the period 2000-2015. It explores the contradictions that emerged in this process. The rationale for the choice of the period 2000-2015 is that it encompasses a period strongly influenced by the World Declaration on Education for All (2000), which highlighted the need to expand access to education and the need to assure "that education offered to children and adults is of high quality" (Fiske, 2000, p. 20). This period also includes the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000, to which Mozambique is also committed as

a signatory. Thus, the research is guided by the following questions:

- What are the main policy priorities concerning NFVET in the period 2000-2015 in Mozambique?
- What major contradictions emerged in the process of implementation of these policies?

#### *Research Problem*

Mozambique has committed itself to improving access to education and training for all people, at all levels, including adult education and training. This commitment is greatly influenced by the principle that education in Mozambique is a ‘right’ and ‘duty’ for all, as declared in the Constitution of Mozambique. This ideal has encouraged Mozambique to be one of the signatories of different international initiatives that aim to promote education and training for all, especially for marginalized groups such as out-of-school and unemployed youth and adults.

Different policies regarding adult education have been designed and implemented focusing on non-formal education. Some improvements can be clearly noticed, particularly in terms of an increase in the number and types of adult education and training programmes, a growth in participation and a rise in the quantity of providers, both Governmental and Non-Governmental. Despite these changes, the problem of access to education and training and the issue of quality are still major problems in Mozambique, particularly in rural areas. Caifaz (2012) points out that many graduates of the training programmes in NFVET have difficulties finding employment and that the skills they have acquired are in general out of date. Further, Luis (2012) noted that there is no clear policy framework that links training programmes with the labour market. This impacts people’s lives and it perpetuates marginalization and poverty in society. The reasons for this need to be examined.

#### *Research Focus*

This research focuses on the main educational policies concerning adult education and training in Mozambique and their implementation, from 2000 to 2015. Emphasis is placed on the contradictions that emerged between the policies developed and the process of their implementation, in other words between the two systems of activities: policy making and policy implementation. An understanding of contradictions can contribute to necessary improvements in adult education and training, since contradictions can also be an important source of change and development (Kaptelinin, 2005). This research is relevant because adult education activities play an important role in combating inequalities in society, especially in developing countries such as Mozambique where illiteracy, unemployment and poverty are widespread. Education and training become a source of power for these groups. Fejes and Fragoso (2014, p. 7) suggested that “power is imbued in adult education and learning practices at all levels and in all instances where learning occurs (...) it is also manifested at the level of policy making where decisions of how adult education should be shaped, financed and carried out are made ...”.

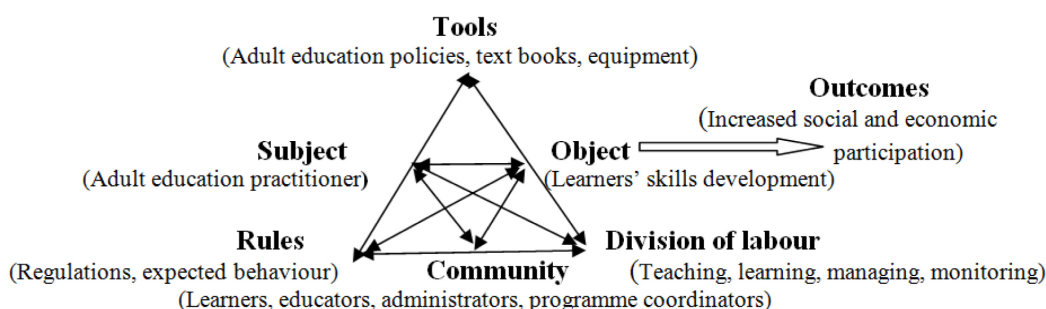
Further, Inglis (1997) states that power is invested in rules, regulations, discourse and practice. Power can be individual or collective; it implies the possession of different kinds of resources such as economic and social tools including knowledge and voice. Empowerment in this sense focuses “on creating self-confidence, self-expression and an interest in learning” (Inglis, 1997, p.14). It suggests lifelong learning oriented towards development where people are seen as active subjects.

## Theoretical Framework

This research uses Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework. The theory has its origin in the cultural-historical psychology of Vygotsky and Leont'ev in the 1920s and early 1930s. Nowadays it is rapidly becoming an international and multidisciplinary approach (Engeström, 2014). The main characteristic of an 'activity' is the interaction between 'subject' and 'object', through mediating artefacts, resulting in their reciprocal change. Thus, "activity is considered the key source of development of both the object and the subject" (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006, p. 32). The emphasis on the important role of socio-cultural context in CHAT contributes to an understanding of activities within the context in which they take place.

Engeström's (2014) model of collective activity is used as an analytical tool. The concept of activity in this model includes multifaceted interconnections between the subject and the community of practice. In general terms, the community refers to a group of people who work together towards the same object (to produce the desired outcome). Division of labour refers not only to the "division of tasks among the members of the community, but also to the division of power or status" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6). Rules refer to guidelines that the subject needs to follow to accomplish the activity. This model not only considers the subject, object and tools but also emphasizes the role of collective elements, focusing on the "interactions among community, rules, division of labour and their influence on the activity system" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6).

Figure 1 below represents the activity system model from Engeström (2014) adapted to the context of the research.



**Figure 1: Representation of the adult education policy implementation activity system.**

Human activities are often characterized by different contradictions which depend on the type of activity system and the historical and cultural context in which the activity takes place. Contradictions are seen as historically accumulated structural tensions within and between activity systems (Ekundayo, Wang & Andrade, 2012). They can impede the achievement of outcomes of any activity. Nevertheless, contradictions can also be seen as a source of change and development.

According to Waycott, Jones and Scanlon (2005, p.114), "the concept of contradictions is a useful analytical tool, enabling the identification and classification of particular instances of change and development in an activity system". Contradictions in the educational context have been investigated by different researchers. For instance, Joo (2014) used the activity theory framework to examine the organizational contradictions that occur in a variety of educational activities among a group of adult students in Korea. Madyarov and Taef (2012) employed the same theory to investigate a distance course for excluded groups at a Middle Eastern University. According to Basharina (2007), contradictions are often presented as limited resources and poor infrastructures, as well as teachers' lack of competencies, inappropriate pedagogical approaches etc. These contradictions impact the attainment of the desired outcomes and affect the effective implementation of educational policies.

## Methodology of Research

This research has a qualitative, exploratory character. It was conducted during the period November 2015 - April 2016. A systematic data collection was employed, as presented below.

### *Instrument and Procedures*

In this research data collection consisted of the identification and analysis of the main policy documents, reports and studies on adult education and training relating to the period 2000-2015. Concentrating on the main function of the policies, data was selected with a focus on 'Expansion of access to education' and 'Improvement of quality of education'. These objectives are fundamental and common for all levels and types of education in Mozambique. Due to the fact that the information contained in policy documents produced by different organisations showed many similarities, some repetitive documents were excluded. The framework of activity theory helped to focus data collection on the contradictions that emerged during the implementation of the policies in NFVET programmes. The preliminary findings of this research were shared with some experts in Mozambican adult education, who made a valuable contribution by giving their feedback.

### *Data Analysis*

The data from different documents were transcribed to enable analysis, and the content was systematically interpreted and compared. The relevant parts were codified, with the help of the analytical framework, in a number of categories. Similar categories were grouped together and so the main themes emerged. According to Bowen (2009, p.28) "document analysis yields data excerpts, quotations, or entire passages that are organized into major themes through content analysis". The themes identified were: '*Emergence of NFVET in the policy documents*' and '*Contradictions between policies and practices*'.

## Results of the Research

The findings are linked to the research questions which aimed to identify the focus of the policies that guided NFVET in Mozambique in the period 2000-2015. The central object of research was the contradictions encountered during the process of implementation of these policies. The findings are organized in accordance with the emergent themes.

### *Emergence of NFVET in the Policy Documents*

Since independence, education in Mozambique, has been and still is one of the great national challenges. Article 88 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (*Constituição da República de Moçambique*) (2004) postulates that education is a right and duty of all citizens; the state should guarantee the extension of education to professional training and continuing vocational training, as well as equal access for all citizens. Following this declaration Mozambique has adhered to different international initiatives on education, aiming to provide educational opportunities for all and has designed corresponding educational policies. The focus of these policies is to "improve opportunities (...) for all Mozambicans, especially the poor", as stated in the Mozambican Action Plan for Absolute Poverty Reduction 2001-2005 (*Plano de Acção Para a Redução da Pobreza Absoluta*) (PARPA, 2001, p. 1) which from 2006 was re-designated as Action Plan for Poverty Reduction (*Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza*, PARP). Education is seen as "an instrument for the affirmation and integration of individuals in social economic and political life (...) aiming to reduce poverty" (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 9).

One of the main principles of educational policy in Mozambique is that “it is a tool for assertion and insertion of the individual in the social, political and economic life...” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 21). Concerning technical and vocational education the objectives are to “substantially expand access to technical-vocational training and to raise its quality in order to meet the labour market demands” (PARPA, 2001, p. 47). These objectives imply paying attention not only to formal education but also to non-formal education as a way of opening up opportunities for ‘Education for all’. The policy documents emphasise the need to ensure collaboration with other providers of non-formal education and training programmes to increase opportunities for professional training for out-of-school youth and adults.

The Strategy of Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education for 2001-2005 (Ministério da Educação, 2001), which is the first strategic plan in this sector after the independence of the country, aimed to achieve an increase in access to basic education for youth and adults with a focus on women and girls. This strategic plan was designed not only to challenge the problem of illiteracy in the country, but also to tackle the problem of a lack of relevant NFVET programmes. It is through these programmes that youth and adults should get the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills and increase their chances to participate in the economic and social life of society. The strategic plan emphasised the need to include non-formal education programmes in the phase of post-literacy activities. The implementation of two approaches was suggested: one linked to the programmes of income generation (vocational adult education) and another approach linked to the reinforcement of reading and writing abilities (Ministério da Educação, 2001). The involvement of literacy educators and vocational trainers in the NFVET programmes increases the community of practice, as they are working towards the same objectives of skills development, improved economic and social participation and poverty reduction. However, these educational practitioners tend to work in isolation. The coordination of training activities in these parallel approaches is impeded by the traditional ‘rules and division of labour’ in the system of NFVET.

The launch of NFVET connected to literacy classes, described above, was planned after a needs assessment and took shape through the design and implementation of the programmes in three provinces. This was the first step of the plan. The second step was the dissemination of the training programme to other provinces in the country (Ministério da Educação, 2001). However, this project lasted only three years (from 2005 to 2007). Internal contradictions within the system of policy implementation lead to its de facto collapse. The two main contradictions that could be identified were: 1) the lack of qualified educators to teach vocational skills and 2) the lack of collaboration between different providers in this area. The Strategy of Literacy, Adult Education and Non-Formal Education for 2001-2005 aimed to promote work-related education (NFVET) which was an important policy innovation in the history of this educational sector in Mozambique. The Strategy was valid until 2010.

It was also in 2010 that implementation of the second Strategic Plan of the sector of adult education for the period 2010-2015 started. This Strategic Plan aimed to promote lifelong learning for youth and adults in partnership with civil society (Ministry of Education, 2010). Attempting to learn from previous faults, it emphasized the need for close collaboration between Governmental and Non-Governmental institutions delivering NFVET. One of these providers is the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training (INEFP). According to INEFP’s own strategic plan of action for 2006-2015, NFVET should be implemented in partnership with three important sectors: the sector of employment; the private sector; and the formal technical education sector (INEFP, 2006). The so-called Integrated Programme for the Reform of the Professional Education (*Programa Integrado de Reforma da Educação Profissional*, PIREP), for years 2006 to 2020, is an example of partnership between the public sector (Ministry of Labour and Professional Training, and Ministry of Education), the private sector, syndicates, and civil society with the support of international organisations (INEFP, 2006). The main focus of these still valid policies has been the expansion of educational opportunities via NFVET with the aim of increasing social inclusion and poverty reduction and with special attention paid to



women and marginalized groups. However, looking at the implementation of these policies, further contradictions could be noticed that are presented in the next section.

### *Contradictions in the Policy Implementation Activities*

The results presented in this section focus on the causes of contradictions between existing NFVET policies and practice. These are grouped according to the two main areas of concern specified in the policies, namely, access and quality.

#### *Access to Education*

The policies of education and training in Mozambique emphasize the expansion of education. However, public institutions have limited capacity to offer sufficient educational programmes to meet the peoples' educational needs. There is a clear contradiction between the policy focus to expand NFVET and the real capacity of the public sector. The Ministry of Education (2012, p. 5) recognises that "Maintaining and improving continuous expansion of the education system requires additional financial and human resources (...) it is likely that the volume of resources available will be below the requirements of the sector".

National and international Non-Governmental Organisations contribute to the NFVET expansion. However, these organizations usually work on a project basis and over a limited time span. When the project ends, the activities in the field also stop. This results in a lack of sustainability in policy implementation activities and lack of ownership by the practitioners. In addition to the objective of expanding educational opportunities, NFVET policy documents focus on vocational practice-based competence development. However, there is no national authority in Mozambique that can facilitate graduates in obtaining an internship or to enter the labour market. Neither are these issues usually solved at local levels (Manuel, Popov & Buque, 2015). This creates another explicit contradiction concerning the outcome of NFVET: participants graduate from the programmes but usually do not have any support to be able to find employment or to implement self-employment.

#### *Quality of Education*

The quality of NFVET programmes is emphasised as being critical in different documents. There is a fundamental contradiction between the objective of expanding education and improving its quality. In Mozambique the situation is aggravated by the precarious conditions in which NFVET takes place, particularly in governmental institutions and community organizations. The poor quality of education is typically linked to a lack of resources which impedes the effective implementation of training activities. In general, the poor infrastructure, the out-of-date equipment and the irrelevant curriculum are well known problems concerning NFVET in the country (Luís, 2012; Caifaz, 2012; Manuel, Popov & Buque, 2015; Popov & Manuel, 2016).

Further, looking at the NFVET sector from the perspective of quality, an apparent problem is also the lack of organizational skills, initiative and leadership among educators. This is a barrier to the establishment of useful connections with other institutions in order to benefit from their experience or to get some support to carry out their activities. This limitation illustrates a contradiction between policy encouraging collaboration and formal bureaucratic 'rules and division of labour' in which contacts with possible partner institutions are not particularly stimulated. Professionals working on NFVET programmes do not feel sufficient empowerment to take such steps on their own. There are high social and psychological barriers at the thresholds of other NFVET institutions that are not easy to cross for a 'simple adult educator'.

This scenario does not only prevail in relations among NFVET institutions within the adult education sector. Barriers and contradictions are also clearly visible between NFVET programmes and the labour market. There is a discrepancy between the outdated equipment used in the training centres and the modern state-of-the-art equipment used in the private sector companies. This state-of-the-art equipment requires new skills that many NFVET providers cannot offer to the learners. However, modern private companies seldom open their doors for visitors from NFVET institutions. It is not easy for vocational educators to organise such a study visit since they seldom have working connections with such companies.

Finally, another contradiction is related to the NFVET policy ownership. The process of its development and implementation is strongly dependent on the support of international organisations. These organisations exercise power through funding and in terms of know-how. The policies are usually developed with a focus on modern educational approaches, for example focusing on learner's empowerment, but such approaches are hindered by contextual factors in the field characterized by a lack of resources and a poor educational environment.

## Discussion

The data collected from various documents and the framework of activity theory made it possible to gain important analytical insight into the system of NFVET policy implementation. The educational policies were conceived in this analysis as the tools of NFVET collective activity, the object of which is the development of learners' knowledge and skills. The expected outcomes are foreseen as NFVET participants' increased economic and social engagement, leading finally towards social inclusion and poverty reduction.

The research reveals a gap between the intentions and what really happens in the field. Expressions such as 'expansion of access' in an inclusive way towards 'poverty reduction' and 'improvement of the quality' are key words used in different NFVET policy documents. However, contextual factors, characterized by the educators' lack of power, lack of competencies and lack of support in combination with a lack of material and financial resources impact the activities in the field, affecting NFVET practice negatively, particularly in the public sector and in some communitarian and religious organisations.

The results suggest that many contradictions appear in this activity system impeding the achievement of the intended outcomes. The research raises the issue that the expansion of NFVET has a contradictory relationship with the improvement of its quality. Another important finding concerns the donors' impact on the implementation of NFVET policies. Many NFVET programmes are designed by the donors who are also considered as partners of development, resulting in an imbalance of power. Typically, when donor support ends, the difficulties tend to increase: the quality of training decreases or the programmes are discontinued. However, these contradictions are also opportunities for reflection and the identification of new alternatives. According to Kaptelinin (2005), contradictions are a source of dialectical development. As such, they can motivate creativity and innovation in education and training. The deeper insights gained into NFVET in Mozambique through the analysis of contradictions in policy implementation activities are the major contributions of this research.

## Conclusion

NFVET policy implementation in Mozambique is negatively influenced by the dominant context of poverty and disengagement. Effective strategies for policy implementation need to be located between the political aspirations of the government and what is possible in the field in relation to the real context and capacity of the country. Strategies for strong networks, collaboration and coordination among different providers as well as the promotion of mechanisms for systematic monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, are some of the crucial elements necessary for successful policy implementation in NFVET. Here, local educational authorities should play an important role.

Specific partnership models can be developed to enhance links between companies and NFVET institutions. The National Institute of Employment and Professional Training (INEFP) can, for example, play a mediating role and provide the necessary support for this collaboration. These are just some of the possible routes to take that can be recommended based on the research findings.

Finally, in the authors' opinion, the contradictions identified in this research show the need and the potential for strengthening policy implementation strategies in adult education and training, taking into consideration international policies on adult education, the particularities of the Mozambican context and the needs of the learners.

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