A democracy we can eat: a livelihoods approach to TVET policy and provision

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Abstract

In Southern Africa, theories of adult education have remained modelled on imported paradigms. The urgency of particularly the first of the Millennium Development Goals, 'to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger' generally translates into policy and provision of skills training based on purely economistic considerations. In practice, lifelong education and learning occurs most commonly as part of other social practices and in the guise of community development. This article outlines the livelihood approach as a conceptual and methodological tool for a locally grounded understanding of what constitutes 'work' particularly in the context of poverty and high-risk environments. It argues that the principles of interconnectedness, relationality and agency are central to understanding livelihood practices and that participatory processes of data collection, dialogue and analysis should inform education and training policy. Programmes and curricula that fit in with the livelihood strategies of people have a greater chance of being supported and the process that leads to such understanding could provide a democratic model for adult education elsewhere.

Introduction: Crossroads trading

As my car stops at the traffic lights a young man wearing a tall hat made out of recycled cardboard comes to the window, smiling broadly and greeting me. His name is Themba and he tries is to persuade me to pay anything ("funny money") for a two-page folded pamphlet with jokes. Behind him, Winston waves; he knows I have no interest in purchasing a cellular phone holder for my car, but he is ready for a brief chat and laugh. Across the lights young men from the DRC offer brightly coloured paintings of Table Mountain with the newly built 2010 World Cup soccer stadium in the foreground. Unlike the joke-sellers they are not licensed and every now and then they scatter from police and run to hide behind hedges and walls. Others work in shifts; they trade in

newspapers, beaded wire-flowers and 'Big Issue' magazines. In the late afternoon, local men arrive to sell fruit and flowers. All share the 'window of opportunity' when the lights on their side of the crossing turn red, and all spend hours in the hot sun and wind hoping to make enough for a meal and their bus-fare home. But this is where the similarities end.

Themba had to leave school when his father was retrenched two years ago. Shortly afterwards his older sister brought her baby to live with them and soon afterwards she died from Aids. Themba's father is still unemployed and his mother carries the main burden for the household. She has a part-time job as a domestic worker which brings in some cash to pay for Themba's little sister's school fees and other necessities. She grows vegetables on the public verge near their township house and she is the treasurer of a woman's saving club. Themba heard about the joke business through a friend who sings in the church choir with him. The friend also told him how to apply for a child support grant for his little sister and the baby. The grant will make a big difference. Winston is a refugee a few years older and, together with a home 'connection' rents a room adjacent to a shack in an informal settlement some 21 km away from the crossroads. They have no cooking or sanitation facilities but at least their roof does not leak in the rain. His business is doing very poorly as no one wants Chinese phone holders and he is not sure how he will pay the rent at the end of the month.

What factors endanger or support these men's daily livelihood activities? What access to assets such as cash, support and influence does each one have? What would make a substantial difference to their ability to work and generate an income and produce a sense of wellbeing? Their vulnerabilities and capabilities vary greatly and depending on who they are – young/old, local/foreigner etc - they have access to different assets and resources. For example, as part of a household with a diversity of livelihood strategies, strong social connections and the potential income from social grants Themba has much more resilience than Winston whose only source of potential support is the 'home connection' he lives with.

Marginal and economically vulnerable young men and women like Themba and Winston and the other sellers at the intersection would be the potential target population for much of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) offered in response to unemployment and growing poverty. Yet, they are generally excluded from training opportunities. As Willis, McKenzie and Harris (2009, p. 1) argue, current policies, systems, programmes are failing 'to adapt to the changing nature of work and society and are thereby missing a crucial opportunity to enable the growth of more sustainable and equitable communities'. This paper adds another voice to the growing number of studies and calls for change collected in 'Rethinking work and learning' and 'Turning work and lifelong learning inside out'. (Willis et al., 2009; Cooper & Walters, 2009) Recognising unemployment, the ever-increasing growth of the informal economy in the majority world, and the precarious nature of multiple activities undertaken by poor people and especially women and youth in order to make a living, this paper proposes a 'turn' to a livelihood approach as the basis for planning more appropriate technical and vocational education and training (TVET) interventions.

The sustainable livelihood approach challenges single-sector interventions to development and was central to rural development debates before also being applied to urban studies. It drew economists into discussions on questions of access, built on methodologies experimented with by social anthropologists, roped in political ecologists and is underpinned by a strong sense of Freirean philosophy. Importantly, it is a conceptual and methodological tool developed in the Global South and it has, I

believe, a lot to offer both 'developed countries' and adult education as an approach to research and planning.

Overview

The title of this paper derives from a colleague in the Philippines, Edicio dela Torre, (2009, p. 229) who recalls Thai activists demanding 'a democracy that we can eat'. Outlining the recent history in the Philippines he discusses some of the tensions for adult educators engaged in the struggle for democracy. The deposal of elite leaders and holding of democratic elections do not automatically lead to food for the people – and democracy means very little unless it has real practical benefits for all.

This paper addresses the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aims to 'Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger'. Poverty is most often described as 'hunger' rather than the absence of things: we know people are poor 'when the cat sleeps on the hearth' because there is no cooking happening.[1] Hunger is the most potent manifestation of poverty. Malnutrition contributes to at least half of the 10.8 million children who die before their time; it acts together with infection in a vicious cycle increasing susceptibility to further infection, exacerbates the effect of childhood diseases and has long-term effects on cognitive development. Malnourished women give birth to underweight babies and thus contribute to the next cycle of malnutrition, ill health and morbidity. If an already vulnerable situation of food insecurity is made worse by the impact of another threat such as the world economic crisis those who are most at risk from malnutrition will suffer most. According to the Food and Agriculture organisation (FAO) the economic crisis has pushed the number of undernourished people up by 105 million to more than one billion – about one sixth of the global population. How is adult education responding?

In the first part of the paper I will briefly address the shortage of conceptual and theoretical research and writing on African adult education appropriate to conditions on the ground. Both the practice and conceptual understanding of adult education and training in (Southern) Africa have remained largely modelled on imported adult education history and paradigms. Secondly, connecting adult education firmly with development I then suggest that the livelihood approach offers a conceptual and methodological tool that builds on theories of participatory development. It recognises that poor people live under precarious and uncertain conditions and that they spend extraordinary energies on devising ways to avert threats to daily survival and building safety nets for unexpected new shocks. Only they can describe how they make sense of their lives and how they invent strategies to both cope and improve their wellbeing. If we truly want to address 'poverty and hunger' we need to listen.

Thirdly, after outlining and illustrating some of the principles and methodological tools underpinning a livelihoods framework I argue its relevance for adult education, particularly in the majority world[2]. Finally, I propose we turn 'work and learning' not just inside out but also upside down by looking to the livelihoods approach developed in the majority world as a model for potentially new forms of researching and educating/learning, in the 'developed countries'. This, I suggest, would also be a way in which adult education can contribute to deepening democracy in the interests of food security for all.

Adult education and development in Southern Africa

Esteva (1997, p. 6-7) has argued that U.S. president Truman created a 'new perception of one's own self, and of the other' the day he announced a programme for the 'improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas', on January 20,1949.

> Two hundred years of social construction of the historical-political meaning of the term, development, were successfully usurped and transmogrified.(…) On that day, two billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue.

Since then, multiple approaches have been advanced for the 'upgrading' of 'the Third World', ranging from classical and neo-liberal development theories to structuralism, neo-Marxism, grassroots and people-based development. Adult education in the 'developing world' has generally mirrored or deflected the dominant development approach of the day. Depending on the organisational and social contexts within which educators of adults have worked their orientation would support the agenda of government, big business or NGOs working within 'the politics of resistance' or 'the politics of participation' (dela Torre, 2009, p. 230)

The practice of adult education in countries in Africa has a long history (Indabawa & Mpofu, 2006), yet activities concerned with adults learning new skills, or youth, women or specially selected people being inducted into cultural and social practices have rarely been framed as adult education. 'Initiation', 'socialisation', 'health promotion' and 'agricultural extension services' are part of life-long development processes, offered by elders, local experts, non-governmental organisations, church-leaders or government agents. Indabawa and Mpofu (2006, p. 6) have pointed out that the old perception that adult education means literacy and remedial education persists: 'The concept of adult education remains hazy in most African countries and, consequently, there is very little commitment to the promotion of adult education activities.' They suggest: 'A historical overview of the provision of education in Africa may help explain why most institutional providers of adult education are not aware that they are engaged in adult learning.'

Little has been written about the history of adult education in Africa (Walters & Watters, 2000, p. 49; Oduaran, 2000). What exists is either fairly dated and covers colonial histories rather than more current policies and provision (Nafukho, Amutabi & Otunga, 2005), offers a broad overview rather than in-depth study of a particular region (Walters & Watters, 2000) or concentrates on literacy (Aitchison, 2008). There are no regularly published journals on adult education in Africa (Oduaran, 2000) and a review of English-language materials and textbooks used at higher education institutions reveals that the majority are published in the UK and USA. Many are irrelevant for the context of adult education in Africa as examples and references given are largely derived from advanced industrialized countries in the West and often suggest inappropriate examples and models. (Oduaran, 2000; Youngman, 2005). There are a few exceptions; here I will mention two.

In 2000, a most welcome book was published: The State of Adult and Continuing Education in Africa. As the foreword penned by Peter Jarvis (2000, p. vii) points out,

> (Secondly,) for too long the continent has been exposed to Western thought and ideas without having its own established baseline by which to evaluate these. Indeed, many of the ideas from the North have been imposed on the peoples of Africa. Not it is time to

develop African bodies of knowledge that reflect the culture of the South and evaluate and critique the ideas from African thought.

Sadly, the book does not live up to the hope that readers will find a critique of Northern/Western thought from the perspective of African thought. If anything, beyond the rhetoric of anti-colonialism and cultural imperialism many of the case studies in the book reflect too closely a continued adherence to western adult education conceptual frameworks and practices (von Kotze, 2002). Most country reports show that, generally, adult education is underpinned by instrumental expectations: it is to contribute to the advancement of individuals and communities, either in the form of human resource development (as in vocational and skills trainings), or as community development (for example associated with health promotion or agricultural extension work). As Walters and Watters (2000, p. 51) have correctly pointed out adult education policies 'were strongly influenced by modernization theory and they were seen as integral to national development'. Just one example illustrates this: Omolewa (2000, p. 11) assesses that 'Africa is currently in an urgent need of a vibrant adult and continuing education programme to address the variety of problems', because

> Unless Africa is able to explore the possibility of developing her adult population to respond to the demands of new technology and professional development, Africa may remain a passive observer living in the 17th century when the whole world moves to the 21st century. (Omolewa, 2000, p. 15)

He reflects what Esteva (1997, p. 10) has described as the misery of two-thirds of the world's people for whom development is what they are *not*: 'It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it, they need to be enslaved to others' experiences and dreams'. On the whole, development means economic growth based on the expansion of the modern sector and the export of primary products (Youngman, 2000) and in continuation of the modernist tradition the role of adult education is primarily to contribute to economic growth through skills development programmes. The basis for such programmes is a deficit model and curricula are constructed on the basis of the perceived needs of industry with a strong human resource development orientation.

The second exception to the dearth of writings on adult education in Africa is the publication of a series of 'relevant, affordable and available textbooks that reflect African social realities, theoretical and cultural perspectives, policies and modes of practice' (Youngman, 2005, p. xiv). The series 'African perspectives on adult learning', written and edited by African writers or writers in Africa goes some way towards filling the gap. The 'foundations' and 'social context' books include topics such as 'opportunities and access for adult learners', 'gender and development', and 'Globalisation', 'social change and development', 'social class', 'race, ethnicity, religion' and 'empowerment.' It is hoped that tertiary curricula for the education and training for adult educators will be adjusted to reflect African perspectives, concerns and methodologies giving rise to rigorous theorising, debate and critique around adut education in Africa.

Julius Nyerere (1978, p. 29-30), Mwalimu (the teacher), asserted that adult education has two primary aims: firstly, to 'Inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible', and secondly, 'Help people to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves'. In the following I want to show how a livelihood approach offers could inform both policy and provision of an adult education that helps people make their own decisions and act on them. Based on

rigorous processes in which people examine the actions and strategies they employ to live within a precarious context of ever-changing pressures, their voices can make recommendations that inform designers of policy and curricula towards the provision of education and learning processes that enhance the sustainability agenda both in terms of food security and environmental and natural resource protection.

From 'work' to 'livelihood'

Elsewhere (von Kotze, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) I have suggested that the narrow definition of work as employment in the formal economy does not serve the conditions in the South where the majority of youth and adults, especially women, make a living working in the interstices between formal and informal economy, and where the informal economy is a bigger employer than the formal one. Studies that look at what people do in order to make a living have shown that the notion of single purpose economies in which people have *one* job that generates the income for their livelihood must be rejected. Despite the majority of working people in the world now being engaged in subsistence production, self-employed or working in the informal economy, the perception remains that what constitutes 'work' is employment in the formal economy: Work is seen as a paid activity that is measurable and quantifiable, both in terms of income/expenditure, taxation, contribution to gross domestic product, modes of production, and in terms of status (blue-collar / white collar jobs) and knowledge that, for the purpose of training, is broken down into neat modules and discrete competencies.

Such a conception of 'work' excludes the efforts and energy expanded in performing specific tasks related to sustaining life, as well as all unpaid activities such as housework, food preparation, all kinds of care-work, home-building and gardening, fuel collection and the myriad of small but important interactions involved in community-building and establishing social protection. Much of this unpaid / unseen work is performed by women and it remains unacknowledged and under-valued. Worse, still, is the emphasis almost wholly on economic considerations instead of life and living. The title of this paper re-connects work with food within a particular political context: democracy. By linking work to nutrition and the opportunity to have a say in the daily 'running' of a society I propose that the fundamental underlying reason for why people in the majority world engage in strenuous activities is not the accumulation of (dead) commodities but to sustain and reproduce life. (Gorz, 1999; Krog, 2009) The response to the quest to 'make a decent living' should not be training programmes that funnel people into dehumanising labour. Generic skills training or technical and vocational education and training (TVET) designed by specialists in highly industrialised countries for the purposes of poverty eradication in poor ones have clearly not been the answer to food and livelihood insecurity in the majority world. Work and learning must go beyond a narrow economistic framework.

Why a livelihood approach to research and learning?

Mojab (2009, p. 10) has asked 'How do we uncover the social relations of work and learning that are not visible on the surface?' I believe the livelihood approach has developed tools and processes for doing just that – not in a 'quick fix' way but by relating the data from various different processes and dialogues to each other.

A livelihood approach deals with people as subjects rather than simply workers, employees, clients, customers etc. It considers people as active agents who draw on particular locally available resources in order to create the means for life and living. Crucially, a livelihood approach does not assume problems, deficiencies and gaps, nor does it begin by defining needs. Instead it recognizes that people, however poor, have developed and mobilise coping mechanisms, capabilities, knowledge and skills. People draw on local knowledge and locally available resources – including experts and people in positions of power - in order to make a living and deal with daily obstacles and uncertainties. In times of increased stress they make decisions by weighing up available options in terms of immediate, medium and long-term pressures. Outsiders often assume that poor people are passive victims or act out of ignorance. For example, a woman exposing herself to the potential of being infected with HIV by having unprotected sex may do so because she has to generate cash in order to pay for public transport to take her sick child to a clinic. She has weighed up the long-term risk of being infected with HIV and getting sick in years to come against the short-term risk of loosing her sick child.

Chambers and Conway (1992, p. 7) formulated a livelihood as comprising 'the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living.' The resources used, whether they be material, personal, educational, social, political, are connected to broader aspects of peoples' lives that is, the changing social, political, economic, environmental circumstances that allow them to have access to such resources, or not. A livelihoods approach contextualises work as diverse and divergent activities irrespective of whether they are income generating or not. It asks questions such as: How do people make their living in the context of competing demands and dynamics? How do they juggle multiple responsibilities? People are not solitary creatures and they generally do not live and work alone. The less access to means of production and control over resources they have the more they work with others sharing, exchanging, and collaborating in an intricate system of reciprocity. (Lund & Nicholson, 2003) Therefore, especially in conditions of poverty and unemployment people living in / constituting a household pool resources and diversify strategies to deal with risks of insufficiency and the unit of analysis in a livelihood study is often an individual as part of a household.

Given this more holistic approach to people's activities a livelihood approach affords insights into poverty – not just as an absence of material goods but a specific high-risk condition that often forces people to make decisions to avert further immediate crises to the detriment of longer-term developments. An analysis of livelihoods takes into account the ways in which subjects negotiate access to and use assets and mobilise capabilities. Examining stores, resources and claims accessed helps to ascertain what enables or prevents a person from activating knowledge and skills within an environment of risk factors and opportunities.

Poverty is often associated with a lack of income, or availability of cash. An integrated holistic understanding of poverty would consider the socio-political context, the relations of power, gendered divisions of labour, the particular economic and institutional factors of the environment. It recognizes that poverty is a complex web of social, cultural, political relations rather than a simple 'dollar a day' or 'calories a day' calculation. The array of activities in which household members engage each day extends far beyond market-related actions and the approach provides a tool for analysing and understanding how people allocate energies in the fight for food security and happiness.

Each household member's contribution is regarded in relation to those of others and each activity exists in the context of others complementing or supplementing them. The importance of each livelihoods strategy is relational and in response to or anticipation of another within a larger framework of vulnerability and risk. Livelihood studies integrate contextual micro and macro pressures, actors, institutions and processes affecting the household. Insight into comparative risk factors could generate understanding about decisions made about transport, energies spent on one activity over another, savings or loans and the like.

With regards to the men at the crossroads, rather than simply looking at the selling work performed a livelihood approach would not simply dismiss the activity as 'unskilled and low-income work'. Instead, it may ask questions about the considerations informing what to sell at the street-corner. The decision what to sell depends on a number of variables, such as, first, available financial assets, that is the amount of cash available to purchase goods; second, access to goods through social connections that point the way or open doors to affordable goods, and/or access to small loans as 'starter capital'; third, the capability to engage with motorists, such as the ability to attract enough attention for a driver to roll down the window and be persuaded to part with some cash in exchange for an unwanted article, or to elicit the goodwill to purchase jokes; fourth, the tools, materials and skill to make something from wire and beads or boards and paint; fifth, the necessary level of numeracy to bargain successfully. Furthermore, beyond identifying and analysing the assets and capabilities involved in the decision to sell essentially unnecessary goods at an intersection, the process can also generate insight into other reasons for doing selling-work, such as access to information circulated amongst sellers, the affirmation or not of personal dignity and the management of social relations. All these contribute to understanding the risk profile of both the selling activity and individual sellers' lives. Such information should significantly inform education and training policy and provision.

A livelihood approach is also an extremely useful tool for and process of participatory inquiry in which both facilitators and the subjects of research learn from and with each other about interventions that are already in place: 'The livelihood lens (also) shows the macro environment more clearly by showing how policies and events at a regional, provincial, national and international level affect the livelihoods of people at a local level' (de Satge, Holloway, Mullins, Nchabeleng & Ward, 2002, p. 71) . Thus, it can act as a means to ascertain how existing actions impact positively or negatively on people's attempts to make a living. With regards to education and training, the information generated in processes of data production and analysis helps us to understand what policies and programmes might offer opportunities for resource-poor people towards creating sustainable livelihoods.

A livelihood approach is based on perspectives from 'below': it recognizes that only the people themselves know the great variety of activities engaged in and combination of resources utilized. Thus, the principle of strong participation is crucial, that is, participation not just as tokenism, or simply as collaboration where the stronger 'stakeholder's agenda dominates, nor as 'a politically attractive slogan' or 'economically, an appealing proposition' (Rahnema, 1997, p. 118), but participation at every stage of assessment and decision-making. As participants in livelihood analyses focus on complex realities and the multiple roles they play while navigating power relations and interests and trading information, they construct new insights into their lives within the broader context of threats and pressures. Therefore, the process is one of investigation and analysis for both the subjects of investigation and for (outside)

researchers who wish to gain a deeper understanding in order to suggest appropriate interventions.

The livelihoods framework

For such inquiries to be systematic, livelihoods frameworks offer conceptual and methodological tools. Generally, livelihoods frameworks focus on assets, capabilities and activities and the relations between these. More broadly, they include particular risk factors, analyzing particular hazards and threats – whether they be economic, political, environmental, climatic or social – and the specific vulnerabilities (structural, social, personal, economic and so on) and resilience factors that can be activated to mitigate the potential impact.

Livelihoods frameworks are based on a range of principles and beliefs about bottom-up participatory development. de Satge et al. (2002, p. 3) have pointed out how there are differences of interpretation and different variations of the livelihoods framework; yet, they all build on earlier development theory:

> These include aspects of the integrated rural development planning (IRDP) approaches of the 1970's; food security initiatives during the 1980's; rapid rural appraisal (RRA); participatory rural appraisal (PRA); farming systems research; gender analysis; new understandings of poverty and well-being; risk and vulnerability assessment; and agrarian reform.

Scoones (2009, p. 178) describes in some detail the history of how the livelihood approach and various frameworks were developed, over years, in practice and dialogues and workshops, across disciplines and sector-specific research and action,

> with enthusiasm and commitment from a new group of people with often a quite radical vision, and a government seemingly committed to doing something about it. This was not the old world of natural resources specialists (archetypically concerned with soils not people) and economists (with their interest in growth and trickle down), but a new, integrated perspective centred on normative, political commitments to banish poverty – and later supported by widespread public campaigns, at least in the UK, from Jubilee 2000 to Make Poverty History.

Government agencies and funders, NGOs and civil society organisations, social movements and academics all worked together towards a general agreement described by Murray (2001) as follows:

> Firstly, the approach is 'people-centred', in that the making of policy is based on understanding the realities of struggle of poor people themselves, on the principle of their participation in determining priorities for practical intervention, and on their need to influence the institutional structures and processes that govern their lives. Secondly, it is 'holistic' in that it is 'non-sectoral' and it recognises multiple influences, multiple actors, multiple strategies and multiple outcomes. Thirdly, it is 'dynamic' in that it attempts to understand change, complex cause-and-effect relationships and 'iterative chains of events'. Fourthly, it starts with analysis of strengths rather than of needs, and seeks to build on everyone's inherent potential. Fifthly, it attempts to 'bridge the gap' between macro- and micro-levels. Sixthly, it is committed explicitly to several different dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, social and institutional.

This has clear methodological implications.

Methodology of researching and learning

Essentially, a livelihood analysis is a process of social inquiry and learning akin to action research for the purposes of planning change. The principles of people-centeredness, interconnectedness, holism, dynamism and agency translate into an inclusive methodology that works mainly with oral and visual tools so that literacy is not a pre-condition for participation. Employing a variety of participatory tools many of which derive from rapid rural appraisal (RRA), participatory rural appraisal (PRA) or participatory action learning (PAL) facilitators of livelihood studies initiate processes of detailed data collection and in-depth analysis of daily living conditions and social practices.

Generally, the process begins with stock-taking: naming what is there. This often involves the production of 'maps' – these may be geographical and show available facilities and resources drawn on in daily life, or social detailing institutions, organisations and resource people. Maps can focus on environmental, physical, political factors and indicate both the sources of shocks and stresses and the assets and resources people use to make a living, as much as taking account of who has what particular knowledge and know-how within a household or community. Such a map was produced by streetchildren as part of a process of telling their story to inform appropriate interventions. (Trent & von Kotze, 2009)

A series of story-telling exercises may lead to the construction of a time-line in which, collectively, participants construct the history of their place and identify crucial events or moments that may have constituted turning-points. A visual representation of the seasons in a diagram or calendar assists in pinpointing times of increased stress or wellbeing. Recording the beginning and finishing points of particular activities helps to create a detailed and nuanced picture of busy times and serves to highlight more or less access to particular resources such as food, water and labour power.

On the basis of 'activity clocks' detailing all the activities undertaken in the course of a day participants may analyse the knowledge, know-how and resources drawn on in order to perform the activity. The clocks register all the activities whose primary purpose is to maintain and sustain the daily conditions of life as well as the 'other' 'non-scientific, nontechnical work', the work generally done by women and not recognised and acknowledged as work, and hence unpaid, as Hart (2002, p. 37) describes

> the "bad" kind of work that administers to the body and its needs, a body that gets born and dies and that gets us in touch with the earth and its materials, with dirt, blood and excrement, that is, with life in the primary, "primitive" sense of the word.

Like all subsistence work – or what Hart calls 'life-affirming work' – such activities have been so 'naturalised' as part of women's lives that it is often hard to make them visible and count as energy-sapping work. An activity clock is one way to take stock and often men and women compare their 'clocks' and draw conclusions about the gendered division of labour.

Once base-line information has been gathered, cross-analyses offer in-depth understanding. For example, a ranking exercise can generate information about power and authority within a household. The question: 'Who has the most or least access to nutritious foods' may see the 'mother' figure standing at the end of the line despite her being the one who cooked the meal. The question of 'decision-making powers' sees her move up the line, just above the young daughters, because she does have a say over the rights, roles and responsibilities of the children in the home. There may be some indecision whether she should be ranked last again in response to 'access to

opportunities': women often have few choices in their lives despite contributing most to household food security and income. Her status will be an important consideration when planning women's attendance at training interventions. Based on the exploration of position and status a facilitator might steer the ranking exercise towards a dialogue on nutrition and health as issues of power and culture rather than knowledge about micronutrients and agricultural practices, especially for women and girl-children. Finally, there is a move to practical responses: What would be democratic practices in terms of food distribution? How can we change relations at home and in our communities so that all have sufficient nutritious food?

Clearly, the aim of any livelihood analysis is practical: to plan for action. Calendars and seasonality maps in conjunction with activity charts give a clear message about 'slacker' times when potential education and training activities could be slotted into daily routines. Once suggestions have been advanced each is examined in terms of competing demands, pressures, and constraints. Finally, participants identify opportunities and the necessary resources and capabilities needed to access and realise such opportunities.

Participation at each stage of decision-making in the investigation and planning is crucial if the action finally proposed is to enjoy a sense of ownership and commitment. Importantly, participation is also a way to learn about democratic processes.

A livelihood approach for adult education and training

Asserting his belief in the importance of TVET as a means to creating skilled workers 'central to achieving all eight goals and associated targets in the Millennium Development Goals', Maclean (2009, p. xii) reiterates that 'TVET should be relevant to the needs of the labour market, be of high quality, and broadly accessible to all.' He regrets that 'However, this ideal is often not being met, particularly in developing nations, economies in transition, and those in a post-conflict situation.' Here, I have suggested that top-down provision of TVET programmes that do not take local conditions into account may be one of the reasons for why the ideal is not being met, and that research involving livelihood analyses with target groups may generate the information necessary to make TVET accessible and relevant. Below, I will outline how and why I believe the approach to be directly useful for designing and offering an adult education that strengthens local capacities and shifts the emphasis away from purely economic considerations.

Firstly, rooted in a bottom-up people-centred approach to development the process of generating information and making sense of it is *participatory* at each stage of enquiry and decision-making. As de Satge et al. (2002, p. 22) point out

> Good livelihoods planning is based on a collaborative enquiry to discover how people live, what resources they have access to, what works, and what has potential to work. It identifies how different people in different households are able to transform their assets and capabilities into livelihood strategies. It explores what people see as desirable livelihood outcomes – these will vary from household to household.

Principles and process are based on dialogue as 'an act of creation' underpinned by a facilitator's love as 'a commitment to other men' (sic): 'Dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanised'; therefore, 'this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple

exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the participants in the discussion.' (Freire, 1972, p. 61-62). The subjects of inquiry 'name the world' in response to a facilitator's questions. The facilitator / educator assists in making connections between the micro- and macro aspects of the emerging picture, by challenging and probing and by adding information, if necessary, in order to extend the analysis. In a livelihood approach the questions 'whose voice counts?' and 'whose perceptions are important?' are answered with a clear reference to the subjects whom education and training provision so often render into passive recipients.

Secondly, therefore, learner-participants are acknowledged to have both *knowledge and agency*. The basis of the enquiry and later planning are existing strengths, assets, capabilities and, importantly, knowledge. Rather than assuming deficits and needs the livelihood approach recognises people as actors in their own development in the sense that Nyerere (1978) has highlighted:

> It is in the process of deciding for himself (sic)what is development, and deciding in what direction it should take his society, and in implementing those decisions, that Man develops himself. For man does not develop himself in a vacuum, in isolation from his society and his environment; and he certainly cannot be developed by others. Man's consciousness is developed in the process of thinking, and deciding and of acting. His capacity is developed in the process of doing things.

For example, there is a common practice of planting particular weeds in between rows of vegetable crops as a way of protecting soil fertility and humidity, deterring insects and harmful weeds and creating a source of edible or medicinal greens. This practice contradicts commercial agricultural conventions and 'modernist' extension officers label farmers 'ignorant' and 'backwards' and demand that they remove the weeds. (Busingye, forthcoming) A livelihood analysis would have ensured the officers to learn about local technologies and indigenous botanical knowledge and hence recognize the importance of wild foods particularly for times of stress and shortage. For education, the process of dialogue and learning can facilitate the re-discovery and naming of such knowledge in the interests of more appropriate curriculum design.

Thirdly, the livelihoods framework is holistic and based on *interconnectedness*. It recognizes that work is not a discrete activity pursued in isolation from living and the pressures of life, other people, the constraints and opportunities of institutions, policies and pressures. Rather, work is 'integrated into a multi-active life as one of its components', and working time is integrated 'into the differentiated temporality of a multi-dimensional life' (Gorz, 1999, p. 73). Similarly, the knowledge and know-how necessary for performing work are not seen as 'belonging' to particular work but integral to life and (making a) living. Part of the process of dialogue may be to identify how competencies and insights drawn on in one area of life may be utilised for another. Once this complex system has been made visible and conscious people are in a much better position to propose how, why, when and where they could fit planned learning and education activities into the day. Only then can policy and programme planning strengthen and support existing activities so that continued and sustained participation in a programme is assured.

Fourthly, different people devise *different livelihood strategies* contingent upon their particular assets, capabilities and access to resources. Instead of assuming that a 'one size fits all' approach to education and training policy a livelihoods study generates insights into what education and training would be appropriate for different people. Instead of being driven by an outcomes-based regiment of 'generic competencies' that are assumed to be transferrable the livelihood approach leads to suggestions of how to

improve and extend particular actions and the production of goods that support life rather than add to the accumulation of superfluous commodities.

Fifthly, the livelihoods perspective re-connects development and education with *politics*. Integral to analysis and planning are questions of power relations as they shape the actions of all participants both in time and space, that is, tied to particular moments/events such as global crises. The focus goes beyond economic and market relations to include pressures of environmental (climate) change. Facilitating ordinary people to participate fully in the process of analysis and planning is a deeply democratic act that recognises the reciprocal 'I am through you'. The outcome must be practical and food security should be the top priority.

Conclusion

The main challenge remains to make visible how deeply intertwined adult learning and education are with development in an ongoing dynamic process rather than a quick-fix injection of skills and information. The participatory design of any development programme or project should explicitly include considerations of learning. In this paper I have tried to show how a particular tool invented and refined in development action in the various countries of the South could become a useful basis for evolving recommendations for policy and provision in adult education. In this regard, action flowing from the Bonn Declaration issued by participants at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in March/April 2009 is most welcomed. The declaration called for the establishment of 'regional and country-level committees, networks and communities of practice for ESD that strengthen local-national, and national-global links, and that enhance North-South-South and South-South co-operation' (Bonn Declaration 2009). Writing from South Africa, such cooperation may be happening economically – however, in adult education links must be strengthened and maintained through a continuous exchange of experiences, insights and approaches.

A look at principles and practices developed in the majority world also shows that there are models that could teach important lessons about new social realities, changing forms of work and sustainable resource use, food security and ethics for the North. While such knowledges and technologies may be local in terms of their invention, application and cultural practices they often have wider applicability. Such knowledge is often still dismissed as 'local ways of doing', 'witchcraft' and 'indigenous craft' rather than scientific technological knowledge. Yet, attempts to patent seeds, plants and production processes show clearly that the value of such knowledge has been recognized and is being harnessed for commercial exploitative purposes. As Nafukho et al. (2005, p. 30) suggest

> (However) it is possible that through mutual respect and trust, traditional knowledge experts can work with those from other knowledge systems to generate more effective solutions for contemporary problems in Africa and the world. After all, the 'tape and weigh view' of measuring and weighing science, implying excessive reliance on specific methods of solving problems, has never helped in taking scientific research very far. Traditional contexts reflect and embed certain rules about how interaction with nature, with each other and with our inner selves can help to generate sustainable and compassionate approaches to solving problems.

We have but one planet and new ways of working, acting and hoping together need to

be rooted in 'the old ideas of a livelihood based on love, conviviality and simplicity, and also in helping people to resist the disruptive effects of economization.' (Rahnema, 1997, p. 127) Alternatives to neo-liberal global capitalism are developed in dialogue across disciplines, continents and cultures – but such dialogue must be based on respectful listening in recognition that what binds us is our common humanity, and that poverty and hunger in one part of the world deeply implicates people in the other part.

The old strategy of training people for one job in the hope that they might find employment will not generate sustainable livelihood security. A livelihood approach to education policy would bring disparate perspectives together, allow conversations over disciplinary and professional divides and provide an institutional bridging function linking people, professions and practices in new ways. (Scoones, 2009) A TVET policy and provision based on a livelihood approach would bridge disciplines and professions and would have to link training with working capital, connect people with markets both for buying materials and selling products, create facilities to manufacture or provide services, offer healthcare and child-support, and do so while respecting the necessity of local people to participate directly in ongoing negotiated decision-making – not as beneficiaries, but as subjects. In that way TVET may contribute to a 'democracy we can eat'.

Notes

[1] Proverbs offer useful insights into changing local perceptions and interpretations of problems such as poverty.
[2] Although the 'group of 8' countries represent a tiny fraction of humankind they continue to make the decisions that affect the majority of the world's peoples. I have chosen the term 'majority world' to indicate that the majority of humankind lives in many of the poorest countries not all of which are in the Global South.

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