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Manuel, Alzira; van der Linden, Josje; Popov, Oleg

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Educators in non-formal vocational education and training in Mozambique: a plea for recognition and professionalisation

Alzira Manuel^a, Josje van der Linden^b and Oleg Popov^c

^aDepartment of Adult Education, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique; ^bDepartment of Lifelong Learning, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands; ^cDepartment of Science and Mathematics Education, Umea University, Umea, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Interest in vocational education and training (VET) is growing. This can be attributed to global socio-economic developments requiring continuously changing knowledge and skills. Adult education and training, particularly in non-formal education (NFE) contributes to provide these skills and knowledge for youth and adults. This puts pressure not only on programmes and facilities, but also on the educators. How do they cope with the changing demands? This paper focuses on educators in non-formal vocational education and training (NFVET) in Mozambique. It explores the perceptions, experiences and reflections of educators in NFVET working in training centres on the outskirts of Maputo. Semi-structured interviews and observations were used to get insight into the educators' understandings and into the conditions in which their educational activities took place. The findings point to the need for the professionalisation of NFVET educators. This would contribute to the quality of their activities and to their status as professionals.

KEYWORDS

Adult education; non-formal vocational education and training; competencies; professionalisation

Introduction

Rapid social and economic changes all over the world demand the improvement of people's competencies in work and social life. Several studies have investigated the necessary competencies for the so-called new era resulting in diverse classifications. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) call for cognitive skills, problem-solving skills, social skills and a motivation for work as the required new competencies. These competencies can contribute to the consensus on the relevant and needed capacities for life in society. As, in general, 'governments focus on the productive capacity of the society, individuals focus on preparation for their working life and progression in the labour market; and employers focus on the immediate needs of their firms' (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011, p. 3), the suggested competencies may create a balance between the interests of governments, individuals and employers. This constitutes a challenge for non-formal vocational education and training (NFVET), which is expected to provide not only vocational knowledge and skills, but also life skills, including knowledge, skills, values and attitudes according to UNESCO (2004). Values and attitudes are

fundamental in the context of learning and development. The Global Monitoring Report of 2015 (UNESCO, 2015) uses another classification and asserts foundational skills including literacy and numeracy, transferable or generic skills and technical/vocational skills, as necessary. This is essential to increase the chances for the participants to cope with the new demands. The increased changes and the people's need to continuously improve their knowledge and skills denote the relevance of lifelong learning, especially for educators as the guiders of the learning process.

In Mozambique, where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line, the need for effective NFVET is evident due to the dominance of subsistence agriculture, in which around 80% of the economically active population works on the one hand and the country's lack of capacity for job creation and lack of skills development programmes on the other hand (Masha & Ross, 2014). Currently, the situation in the country is strongly influenced by the discovery of coal and gas, and the increasing presence of regional and international business interests (Hofmann, 2013). This situation influences all areas of activity, particularly the educational sector. Educators need to possess competencies allowing them to act in a context of change. A study carried out by Van der Linden and Manuel (2011) suggests that the capacity of the educators could be developed to improve NFVET programmes in Mozambique. Luís (2012) noted that although many adult educators do have formal teaching qualifications, some of their skills are outdated. This means that they need to constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills to meet the new challenges.

The purpose of this article is to explore the educators' experiences, perceptions and reflections about the NFVET programmes in two training programmes in Mozambique, towards a reflection on the professionalisation of adult education and its educators. The research on which this article is based was guided by the following research questions:

- How do educators perceive the role of NFVET in the context of change?
- What are the educators' experiences and reflections concerning the working conditions in NFVET?
- What do educators perceive as necessary to improve their work?

Following this introduction, we present the conceptual framework of the study focusing on the concepts of adult education, NFVET, competencies and professionalisation. After that, the Mozambican context focusing on NFE is presented. This part is followed by the methodology of the study and the findings. Finally, the discussion and conclusion link the findings with the concepts discussed to reflect on their value to support the NFVET professionals.

Conceptual framework

The concepts of adult education, NFVET, competencies and professionalisation constitute the framework of this study. These concepts are crucial for the analysis and understanding of the educators' experiences, perceptions and reflections as practitioners of NFVET in the context of change and development. The discussion of the concept of professionalisation will sustain the reflection on professionalisation of NFVET as a field of adult education in the context of change.

The link between global changes and learning is widely discussed by Jarvis (2007) who stresses that the rapidly changing world implies that individuals have to engage permanently

in learning to ‘find their place in society’ (Jarvis, 2007, p. 5). This is a lifelong learning perspective which ‘embraces formal and non-formal adult education’ and considers all learning influences throughout life (Lind, 2008, p. 44). Lifelong learning is a promising perspective that ensures that all individuals independently of their age and academic background have chances to continually improve their competencies. Adult education has an important role in the context of lifelong learning. It comprises all practices by which people considered as adults can ‘acquire new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, interests or values ...’ Knowles (1980, p. 25). Adult education is related to formal or non-formal educational initiatives organised and carried out to provide learning opportunities for adults. In the context of Mozambique, adult education also embraces out-of-school youth.

This study focuses on the educators’ perceptions, experiences and reflections in NFE programmes. The concept of non-formal education has been object of debate amongst scholars. This concept has been used by policy-makers and practitioners in education, both in developing and in ‘more economically advanced’ countries (Rogers, 2004, p. 29). NFE is generally defined as opposite to formal education as ‘any organised systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system of education to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups of the population’ (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 35). Some writers focus on the purposes of the educational activities, others on the contents or timing. Most definitions include ideas such as NFE which consists of short-time-specific activities aiming to meet the learning needs of individuals embracing ‘specific knowledge, skills and attitudes’; it focuses on the needs of participants and on ‘the constantly changing nature of society’ (Rogers, 2004, p. 102). Attempting to solve ambiguities, Rogers (2004) positions NFE on a continuum between formal and informal education. NFE is flexible schooling, (partially) adapted to the context of the learners. Thus, instead of viewing people as lacking education (deficit paradigm), education is viewed as lacking opportunities for people to get educated (disadvantaged paradigm).

The main difference between non-formal and formal education resides in the factor ‘flexibility’, in terms of contents, duration and place of implementation. As formal education is characterised by being a ‘highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured system ...’ (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8), the curriculum of formal education relates to academic disciplines not necessarily to the challenges which life presents (Rogers, 2004). Though, nowadays the distinctions between ‘formal’ and ‘non-formal’ education, in terms of approaches to teaching and learning are becoming minimal’ (Rogers, 2004, p. 131). NFE, due to its characteristic flexibility has been predominantly used in adult education programmes and sometimes adult education is considered equivalent to NFE. For instance, Indabawa and Mpofu (2006) characterise adult education as ‘any learning or educational activity outside the structure of the formal education system’ (p. 3).

In this study, adult education is placed in NFE referring to educational and learning activities designed to meet the learning needs of youth and adults in NFVET programmes. VET is a broad and complex area of education. This complexity influences its terminology. According to Allais (2012), the terminology in the area of VET differs across countries. For instance, in the context of South Africa, the concepts ‘vocational education, occupational education and professional education are used’ (Allais, 2012, p. 633) to refer to education which aims to provide skills for work. Vocational education is seen as a wider approach which includes elements of general education, occupational education refers to vocational education which focuses on specific skills for a given activity, and professional education

designates the advanced levels of vocational education including higher education (Allais, 2012).

The term NFVET in this study refers to activities of VET taking place outside the formal system of education. In the debate concerning the purposes of VET, different views are confronted. According to the perspective of VET for 'economic development', which is driven by a neoliberal ideology, people are seen from an economic perspective. McGrath (2012) explains that training in this perspective is seen in a restricted way, as leading to productivity and economic growth and skills are only seen in terms of employability and jobs. However, people have their personal and social needs which have to be kept in mind in the context of VET. Attempting to focus on people's needs, the 'integrated human development' theory emphasises human-centred development and allows linking vocational learning with the idea of 'becoming fully human' (McGrath, 2012, p. 630). This is in line with Freire's ideas of 'humanisation' and 'becoming more fully human' (Freire, 2005, p. 44), which will be discussed later on, and constitutes an opposition to the narrow perspective of VET that characterises the neoliberal point of view. It implies changes in education and training to provide 'work related skills, know-how and personal characteristics which increase the probability that one can meet high expectations in a particular job' (Farkes & Török, 2011, p. 70).

The challenging responsibility of educators is to help individuals to achieve their potential. It demands a high level of professionalism in terms of competencies and professional recognition. Adult educators need to be competent, as their responsibilities are linked to the improvement of 'knowledge, skills and abilities of adults who are increasingly looking for more initiatives' (Guimarães, 2009, p. 205). Kouwenhoven, Howie, and Plomp (2003, p. 136) see competencies as the individual's capabilities that connect 'professional practice and personal intention'. They also highlight generic competencies as the necessary capabilities for all domains of activity. In this sense, competencies can be seen as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that people need to function adequately in a certain profession. Guimarães (2009) considers competencies as fundamental aspects in education and training as educators are expected to provide relevant knowledge and skills, particularly in the framework of increased change. Van der Linden and Manuel (2011), reflecting on NFE in Mozambique, pointed out a lack of competencies among educators, in particular, pedagogical competencies. This situation is almost common in developing countries, where the increased demand of knowledge and skills is not proportional to the existing capacity and to the educators' competencies. For instance, Onyenemezu (2012b, p. 225) refers that 'in Nigeria, only a few of those working in adult education programmes have received basic professional training in the field'.

Recently, the topic of the professionalisation of the field of adult education and continuing education has been an object of debate and controversy (Jütte, Nicoll, & Salling Olesen, 2011; Merriam & Brockett, 2011). The question is to what extent the professionalisation of adult educators will be beneficial for the field. Some consider professionalisation as a way of creating 'elites' arguing that it limits the diversity of adult educators and appropriate adult education practices. Others argue that professionalisation 'is essential to helping adult education play a more central role by increasing the visibility of the field and its influence throughout society' (Merriam & Brockett, 2011, p. 12). In this paper, the professionalisation of adult education is seen as a proactive measure that can open up ways for the development of this area including the professional development of the practitioners.

According to Gines (2013, p. 156), the process of professionalisation requires ‘standards set by a professional body to guarantee quality assurance, in terms of delivery of adult education activities and qualifications of the adult educator’s competencies’. Professionalisation involves a set of measures that have to be followed in order to accomplish the requisites of a profession as ‘any prestige holding occupation that renders an essential social service, embodies systematic body of knowledge, requires academic and practical training (...) as well as provision of professional development’ (Onyenemezu, 2012a, p. 223). Professionalisation in adult education can be seen as a way of improving the practices, the field and professional competencies through a continuous process of learning and capacity development. This process can also contribute to the increased recognition of the educators because a profession suggests certain rights for its practitioners (Egetenmeyer & Kpplinger, 2011).

The discussion of professionalisation in this paper is rooted in Freire’s theory. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher widely known for his ideas on critical pedagogy, which are explored in his work *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. In this work, the concepts of ‘banking education’, ‘humanisation’, ‘becoming fully human’ amongst others are central. Freire considers ‘humanisation’ as the ‘affirmation of men and women’, because ‘dehumanisation (...) is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order ...’ (Freire, 2005, p. 44). ‘Dehumanisation’ is a consequence of barriers or an undesirable situation – a ‘limiting-situation’ that impacts people’s lives or activity. There is a need to reverse this situation because learners and educators are humans, and humans, according to Freire, are subjects, thus able to transcend and recreate the world. Using Freire’s ideas, professionalisation can be interpreted as a way to help educators change their practices, become competent and recognised as professionals in their field of work. Educators can ‘become more fully human’ – more fully educators. ‘Becoming more fully human’ can be achieved by ‘humanisation’ as the ‘vocation’ of all people (Freire, 2005, p. 44). Consequently, professionalisation is considered one of the ways towards the ‘humanisation’ of educators. It implies enhancement of their power and self-esteem as professionals. This would contribute to overcome the ‘limiting-situations’ in which their work is embedded, for themselves and for the participants.

Based on the educators’ perceptions, experiences, reflection as well as the conceptual framework, this study advances the idea of professionalisation of educators focusing on the development of educators’ competencies to the improvement of the quality of NFVET programmes and to the recognition of educators as professionals in adult education.

Non-formal vocational education and training in Mozambique

Upon independence, in 1975, Mozambique inherited a precarious education system with levels of illiteracy around 93% (Lind, 1985). To improve the situation, primary education was expanded in the country and national literacy campaigns were carried out from 1978. Adult education centres offering literacy, numeracy and life skills programmes were opened. As a result, the illiteracy rates in the country dropped to around 53.6% in 2004 (Lus, 2012). Although the Constitution of Mozambique (article 88) considers education as a ‘right’ and ‘duty’ of all citizens, a significant part of the population is still deprived of this right, particularly in the rural areas (Fox, Santibez, Nguyen, & Andr, 2012). In spite of some progress in terms of access to education, the Ministry of Education recognises that there are great challenges to overcome. There is still a significant number of children out

of school and many children who do not complete primary education, particularly in rural areas, while those who complete primary education and continue are few due to the lack of educational opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2012). This scenario contributes to the prevalence of higher illiteracy rates in the country, especially in rural areas. For instance, in 2007, the percentage of illiteracy in urban areas in Mozambique was 26.3% compared with 65.5% in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2010).

NFE is considered one of the ways to increase people's opportunities to education and training. According to the Poverty Reduction Action Plan for 2006–2010 (*Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza*, PARP) special attention is given to NFE as an approach for the development of life skills, including literacy and vocational skills to improve people's lives (PARP, 2006). The strategic Plan of Literacy Adult Education and NFE for 2001–2005, that was used until 2010, in the area of expansion of education and training aimed to promote access to literacy and NFE programmes including income generation programmes, with the involvement of the civil society and other institutions working in adult education and NFE focused on the participants' needs (Ministério da Educação, 2001).

NFVET is greatly developed by the National Institute of Employment and Professional training *Instituto Nacional the Emprego e Formação Profissional* (INEFP) which is part of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. According to the *Boletim da República de Moçambique* (Bulletin of the Republic of Mozambique) (2015), the objectives of the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training are distributed in two areas: in the area of employment the objectives of this institute include to propose, coordinate, implement and evaluate the national policies of employment; to promote, monitor and evaluate programmes implemented in the context of socio-economic development and to promote regulation of services of public and private employment. In the area of professional training, the objectives of this Institute are to implement professional training and to participate in professional training in the context of the funds provided for employment and self-employment, in the country. This institute implements short-term professional training courses in 23 training centres of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Lind & Manuel, 2008). Unfortunately, in many of these centres, the training programmes lack alignment with the 'current labour market needs' (Luís, 2012, p. 22).

Apart from governmental and private institutions, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious organisations are implementing different initiatives in NFE, especially for out-of-school and unemployed youth and adults. These organisations are considered partners of the government in the implementation of the educational policies in the context of expansion of access to education and training. According to the Ministry of Education (2010), the role of international partners is to support the implementation of adult education and NFE, providing technical, material and financial support, while the role of the national NGOs and religious organisations is to contribute in the implementation of different NFE programmes (as the Ministry of education alone cannot respond to the increased demand, and its major field of action is in formal education). These organisations provide different short-term training programmes (around six months) with the major focus on literacy or/and professional and vocational training. For instance, one of the organisations included in this study provides literacy, sewing and computer skills, while the second provides skills on auto-mechanics, refrigeration, auto-electricity and small business management. The topics are linked to the basic knowledge and

skills on each course, for instance, in auto-electricity, the contents included *Basic concepts on auto-electricity, engine functioning, engine assistance, electrical links within a vehicle*; while in small business management, the topics included: *Business opportunities, design of a business plan, business as a process and calculation of profit*.

The purpose of these initiatives is not only to increase access to education and training but also to increase opportunities of learning for those who are currently employed, to continually improve their knowledge and skills. Despite these initiatives, adult education programmes are criticised as lacking coordination and cooperation amongst different providers and with the formal education system (Takala, 2008). Aitchison and Alidou (2009), in the report about the state and development of adult learning and education in sub-Saharan Africa, noted that 'it is clear that in many countries the various adult education structures operate in isolation' (p. 41). This problem is manifested by lack of communication and lack of interchange of experiences amongst the practitioners. (UNESCO, 2015) advises that:

... better coordination and cooperation are needed among stakeholders: Ministries, civil society, organisations advocates of lifelong learning and schooling, enterprises and providers of education and training, whether or not they are based in schools. (p. 133)

Lack of coordination and cooperation limits the opportunities for the practitioners to increase their experiences through interaction amongst them. This interaction would allow a learning environment which would contribute to the improvement of the educators' competencies, in the perspective of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning as way of change and development 'requires new models and strategies not just to learning but also of teaching ...' (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013, p. 10).

The challenges of adult education and NFE are similar in many African countries. For instance, a study on literacy education in Nigeria, (Onyenemezu, 2012b) noticed, among other aspects, that adult education is poorly funded and its image in public perception is in general negative. Adult education is not seen as an important field of work. Onyenemezu also noticed constraints related to funds, including the 'stipend for instructors', which constitutes discouragement. Lack of instructional materials and qualified personnel, was also pointed out. In the context of Uganda, Blaak, Openjuru, and Zeelen (2013) concluded that non-formal vocational education in this country 'seems to reflect a narrower outcome ...' and 'Participants do not feel completely equipped by the programme to become self-reliant'. This aspect may reflect educators' work and the quality of the programmes.

Aitchison and Alidou (2009), in their study about the state and development of adult learning and education in different sub-Saharan African countries including Mozambique, also identified constraints in this area including financial constraints, poorly qualified personnel and lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. These problems emerge from the generalised 'impression that adult education policy is a marginal element of education and development policies' (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009, p. 6). For instance, in Mozambique, voluntary literacy teachers receive a subsidy of 650 *meticals*, (approximately 10 Euros) per month from the Ministry of Education. Even so, their payment is irregular (Ministry of Education, 2012). In NFVET, educators are paid in function of the number of teaching hours, their contracts depend on the availability of learners. These poor contracts affect especially those who are only working in NFE.

Thus, although expectations of NFE and NFVET are high, because of changing societal demands, the conditions to meet these expectations are sub-optimal.

Methodology

This study relies on qualitative research methodology in two purposefully selected case studies. A case study focuses on ‘few instances of a particular phenomenon with the aim to provide an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance’ (Denscombe, 2003, p. 35). Purposive sampling is applied in those situations in which the researcher already has information about specific people or events (Denscombe, 2003). The two training centres selected for the study are both providers of VET in a non-formal educational setting. They have existed for more than five years and are typical examples of rather successful NFVET programmes, highly valued not only by the residents of the local community but also by people from the broader surrounds. They are both in the outskirts of the capital of the country. One was created by the civil society with the support of INEFP and some NGOs (the association of farmers) and the other by a religious organisation (created by the sisters of the Catholic Church), with the support, of the Ministry of Education and Development and some NGOs. They operate under similar objectives, but they provide different programmes. The interest to study the two programmes resides in their main characteristics: both focus on the out-of-school and unemployed and they are partners of the two different major sponsors of education and training in the country (one is partner of the Ministry of Education and the other is partner of the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training). This allowed understanding in what conditions educators work in both programmes, in spite of their differences.

The study initiated with informal contacts and informal conversations with the programme coordinators in the two training centres. The objective of these informal contacts and conversations was to get familiar with the context in which the training occurs, and to explain the objective of the study to the programme coordinators. Before data collection, a formal letter from the university where the main researcher works was sent to the training centres requesting their formal authorisation to conduct the study in their training centres. After the authorisation, educators and learners were informed about the work of the researcher in the training centre and were asked to collaborate. In March and April 2014, field visits and interviews were conducted by the researcher in the two selected training centres, resulting in field notes and interview transcripts.

The programme coordinators helped to find an appropriate day for the interviews and arranged times for the educators to participate. The educators selected, in both cases, are Mozambicans living in peripheral Maputo. They have five or more years experience working in these organisations. The educators (eight) were between 33 and 55 years old. Their schooling level varied from grade seven with professional competencies (educator of sewing, also literacy teacher) to technical higher education (only one of the respondents, also teaching at higher education). The background of the other six respondents was in technical education, either through formal education by the industrial institute in Maputo, Industrial Pedagogical Institute in Nampula or in NFVET programmes (short-term training, by INEFP). Among them, two are full-time educators in these training centres, others are part-time educators, working as teachers in technical formal education, and one is also student in higher education. The interviews were held in Portuguese, because the educators, who participated in this study, teach in Portuguese, which is the official language in the country, they demonstrated enough capacity of communication in this language. The relevant parts of the transcripts were translated to English by the researcher. Apart from interviews, observations were also

conducted in the courses on sewing, car-repair, refrigeration, auto-electricity and small business management and field notes focusing on the educators' working conditions were written.

The data collected and recorded in the interviews were transcribed, organised, according to the objectives of the study and the research questions, analysed, and compared with the data from observation. Initially all data were given equal attention during the process of familiarisation, and initial ideas were noted. The data were repeatedly read and interconnected to understand their meaning. In this process, two additional visits were paid to the selected training centres in May 2015 to clarify some issues (for instance, related to the type of contract educators have with the training centres) and to ask for feedback on the preliminary findings. In this process, the codes were generated. Braun and Clarke (2006) stress that coding is an important step in data analysis as it allows the organisation of data into significant groups. The codes and data were continually read and interpreted, similar categories were grouped and the following themes emerged:

- Educators' role and NFVET in the context of social inclusion and change;
- Contextual factors affecting NFVET and the educators' work;
- Improvement of educators' competencies and working conditions.

The next section presents the findings of the study, organised by the identified themes. However, as this study is an exploratory case study, its results cannot be generalised without further research. Due to ethical issues, the organisations and the respondents involved in this study were anonymised.

Findings

The findings are presented according to the research questions and to the themes. In this section, the idea of professionalisation is emphasised, based on the educators' experiences and reflections.

Educators' role and NFVET in the context of social inclusion and change

Educators' perceptions, experiences and reflections of NFVET not only allowed to get an understanding of the challenges in which their work is embedded but also helped to get insight in the importance of NFE in the context of change and development. Educators in both organisations see NFVET as relevant for the life of the people they train. In general, they see education as a right and a duty for all people and they regard their own activity as socially rewarding, as the following words show: 'It is a noble profession because in fact all individuals or everybody has to go through education' and '... the training contributes to people's preparation for life'. Educators perceive that their activity opens new opportunities for people who were at risk of being excluded from active participation in the wider economic and social life. One of them said '... it helps many people to acquire skills to do something useful for them and for the society ... mainly out of school youth and unemployed'. Another educator focused on the impact of the training on the beneficiaries, saying that '... I help people to be self-sustained'. They acknowledged that the training through NFVET gives opportunities to people who did not get a chance in formal education. In the words of one of them:

What I see as very positive is that this training includes many different participants. Some of them did not have an opportunity in formal education. They are from literacy classes, after completing grade three [equivalent to grade five of the national system of education], others are from general education, but dropped out, or finished general education and are looking for some practical skills.

Thus, the educators' perceptions point to the important role of NFVET as a way of improving people's skills for life and social inclusion.

Contextual factors affecting NFVET and the educators' work

In line with the observations, the educators perceived that their working conditions are critical. Based on their experience in the field, they identified different constraints. One of the respondents, for instance, said that 'the course lacks teaching materials'. Another respondent commented that '... the material we use is not up to date'. The observations done during the field visits allowed the understanding of the environment in which educators work. The scenario of lack of resources and the image of abandonment were the main contextual characteristics. The training centres lacked appropriate equipment for practice. In one of the cases, all the equipment used for practical work was old and the majority was obsolete. Sometimes the educators had to draw the instrument they wanted to explain, on the blackboard. For instance, in the course of auto-electricity, educators used to draw the car engine to explain its components, as the figures in the manuals were hardly visible, due to the poor quality of copying. In the other centre, there were six sewing machines in the classroom, but only two were operational (for 10 participants). This situation affects not only their activity, but also their image as educators, because they perceive that learners will attribute the weaknesses of the training to them. One of the respondents said:

When the learners go to do work practice at the factories and find different conditions, they think that the educators did not do their work in a correct way or that they are not capable.

The lack of materials for practice can be one of the reasons that training activities are sometimes excessively theoretical. For instance, in the practical lessons on car repair, the learners used very old motor components. They only saw the engine parts and the educator explained how it would work. In the sewing course, learners were asked to find alternatives for practical exercises, such as sewing by hand, or looking for help outside the training centre. Educators perceive their activity as helpful to the learners, but they regarded the conditions in the field as a hindrance. The following quotations illustrate this opposition:

We are in a dilemma, talking more concretely about this course [auto electricity course] the conditions of work are inappropriate (...) if there were opportunities for in-service training for educators (...) educators need to be well equipped, otherwise we are cheating people.

Apart from the scarcity and obsolescence of the teaching materials, the respondents also saw themselves confronted with technological developments. They perceived that their activity demands continuous learning, saying that 'we need to update our skills regularly'. This reflection is dominant in the cases where the courses are linked to the industrial sector.

Educators also explained that they had to deal with learners with different levels of schooling in the same classroom. One of them perceived that this situation challenged him and other educators to find appropriate methods to teach the same content to all participants at the same time, while taking into account their different backgrounds. 'Some learners have

problems with writing skills; we have to come down to the level of those learners. (...) We cannot leave them behind because of their limitations.' This aspect seems recurrent, as it was emphasised by the educators in both organisations. The educators' perceptions of their activities are sometimes expressed in terms of their own competencies. According to one of the respondents, 'the educators must have the capacity to transmit knowledge'. This aspect contributes to the status of the educators. They perceived a lack of recognition of their effort and their work. This aspect was expressed in different ways, shown in statements such as 'there are no incentives, the educators teach because they like their work'; '... the income is not satisfactory'; 'we like to teach (...) but benefits are very few'. Competent educators can ensure the self-confidence of the participants.

In summary, the educators see different constraints in their work which affected not only their activities but also their status as professionals.

Improvement of educators' competencies and working conditions

Concerning ideas for the improvement of NFVET programmes, one of the educators commented that 'educators are members of society (...) the government (...) should pay attention to them, in terms of the satisfaction of their basic needs'. Another respondent pointed to the issue of satisfaction as one of the conditions necessary to improve their confidence and self-esteem. In his words, 'the educator needs basic conditions and support to feel respected as an individual in all his dimensions'. This perception is related not only to their working conditions in terms of the materials needed for their work but also in terms of incentives for themselves as employees. Educators suggest the improvement or updating of their competencies. For instance, some educators completed their studies 10 to 20 years ago, and from that time on they have never had an opportunity to participate in any training or workshop in their area of activity. An educator lamenting the situation said that 'If there was interaction with other training centres, I would have the chance to improve my activity and my confidence'. This indicates that educators understand that the improvement of their competencies is crucial for their work.

The social aspect in the educators' work was also mentioned, as one of them pointed the need to improve their status. They refer to responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Development as the major sponsor of education and training in the country. This means that they perceive that their organisation does not have enough power to improve their working conditions without the support of the more experienced institutions. One of the respondents commented:

... the Ministry of Education and Development could add value to the educators' practice by making the necessary conditions available, not only in the classrooms but also regarding the educator's profession (...) no one works without money.

Educators perceived that their income was low compared with their effort and their responsibility. The idea of integrating educators as employees of the state was brought forward. This thought came up because some of the educators are employed full-time in the training centres and their payment depends on the availability of training activities in those centres. These activities are sometimes interrupted by lack of learners or during the holidays. Thus, educators see their contract as 'precarious', because they depend on student enrolments. For instance, one of the educators claimed that '... when there are no learners, the educators run the risk of being unemployed ...'. This poses a challenge to their

livelihoods, especially amongst those who are solely working as educators in those training centres. In brief, educators presented suggestions linked to their professional development, improvement of the working conditions and of their incomes. Fulfilment of these measures can contribute to an increased recognition of their work and their profession.

Discussion

The study presented in this article has been conducted in two training centres in peripheral area of Maputo – the capital of Mozambique. Interviews have been held with the educators. A fuller image would have been obtained if also the participants and other stakeholders would have been included in the study. Including more parts of Mozambique would have given a view of the situation in the whole country. Still, the words of the educators combined with the observations give a view of the challenges met by the educators in this kind of programmes which are various and complex. These challenges are not only linked to the inappropriate working conditions in the training centres, but also to their payment, which is perceived as ‘poor’. This makes them think their work is not appreciated.

Educators need improvements in their work which would contribute to their recognition. Recognition of educators is needed because of their ‘important role in society of providing knowledge, skills, attitudes or values ...’ (Knowles, 1980, p. 25) to adults for whom NFE is an opportunity to improve their lives. In this context, it is not surprising that the educators not only ask for the improvement of their working conditions, but also for the improvement of their competencies. On the one hand, they would like to update their knowledge and skills in the subjects they teach, on the other hand, they would like to increase their pedagogical skills; this would help them also to improve teaching strategies in classes with learners with different levels of knowledge and skills. In their opinion, they cannot refuse access to learners because of their low level of education. This reveals that there is a desire to the job well (see Sennett, 2008) and a potential in these people, which deserves better treatment than it has had up to now, due to poor conditions in which they work associated with lack of support. They consider that the improvement of their competencies can contribute to the improvement of their work, their confidence and their profession; this would conduct to their professionalisation and contribute to their increased recognition as professionals. There is a consensus that educators need to be trained, not only in the specific subject but also ‘in the principles and practices of adult education enterprise’ (Onyenemezu, 2012a, p. 223). For the development of the profession of educators towards professionalisation of their field, Merriam and Brockett (2011) suggest professionalisation through professional associations, which can support educators to meet different types of professional development needs. Gines (2013) states that professionalisation can ensure educators competencies and quality of the training as it focuses on a ‘variety of capacity building programmes’ (p. 156). It can enable practitioners to act appropriately according to the context and a given situation. Professionalisation in this framework ‘means educating people working in adult education’; ‘the goal of professionalisation is to support professionalism’ of educators (Egetenmeyer & Käpplinger, 2011, p. 23) and to empower them in their work. It would help educators to become fully professional and as Freire (2005) stated, ‘become fully humans’ by overcoming different ‘limiting-situations’ that affect their work and themselves as practitioners of NFVET and as social beings.

Conclusion

The research questions and the literature used in this study led to the conclusion that Mozambique is experiencing great challenges in the current social and economic environment which create new educational demands that place new requirements on teachers and educators. Educators in NFVET, as the field of adult education, are especially challenged because they have to meet these demands without proper training, support and resources. In spite of all the challenges, the empirical part of this study shows that there are dedicated men and women who try to make the best of their classes to help learners achieve their goals. Unfortunately, they meet constraints that affect not only their work but also themselves as educators and as social beings. The study demonstrates that educators have potential and are interested in improvement of their work through the process of professionalisation, focusing on the improvement of their competencies, improvement and their working conditions. This would lead to positive changes and to the increased effectiveness of NFVET programmes and consequently increased prestige for the educators.

NFVET in Mozambique is considered to be an instrument to overcome poverty, but the predominant negative contextual factors which characterise the programmes included in this study hamper this ambition. To upgrade this situation, the study concludes that professionalisation of the area of adult and non-formal education focusing on the development of the competencies of the educators would contribute to the improvement of their field of work, increased recognition of their profession and increased recognition of themselves as professionals. This consequently would improve their prestige in the society and their status, as Egetenmeyer and Kpplinger (2011) remarked, professionalisation includes rights for the professionals.

The conclusion of the study discussed in this article, coincides with the suggestion of the study carried out in different sub-Saharan African countries, which although recognising the challenges of professionalisation in the context of adult education in developing contexts, argues that ‘professionalisation is the only sure way that the adult education and continuing education can claim its rightful place as a respectable sector in education field’ (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009, p. 45). This study showed that professionalisation can ensure not only the improvement of pedagogical aspects in the educators’ work but also their motivation, increased confidence and self-esteem in their professional and social life. It is a lifelong learning perspective for adult education professionals, in which lifelong learning is not seen as a ‘commodity’, but as a way of improving ‘the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing person’ (Jarvis, 2007, p. 99) and the improvement of practices. Thus, professionalisation of adult education would be a step towards changes in this field, which would enable the use of its characteristic of ‘flexibility’ to serve youth and adult learners.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Alzira Manuel is a lecturer at Eduardo Mondlane University, Faculty of Education, Department of Adult Education in Maputo, Mozambique and PhD student at Ume University, Sweden. Her research focuses on non-formal education and adult education in Mozambique with emphasis on out of school and unemployed youth and adults.

Josje van der Linden is a lecturer on lifelong learning at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Her research focuses on adult education and lifelong learning in Africa and the Netherlands. She has recently defended her PhD thesis on Lifelong learning programmes for groups at risk in different contexts.

Oleg Popov is an associate professor at the Department of Science and Mathematics Education, Umeå University, Sweden. He has been working for over 30 years in teacher education in Russia, Mozambique and Sweden. His research interests lie mainly in the fields of comparative education, curriculum development and inter-cultural studies.

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