

# **University Extension Education in Zambia: increasing Opportunities for Human Resource Training and Development**

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## **Abstract**

This paper conceptualises the remarkable ability of University extension to increase opportunities for human resource training and development. This was a desk research and reviewed works that have published on this subject. By definition, university extension education refers to the delivery of university knowledge and ways of thought to people away from the premises of the University. Human resource training and development, on the other hand, is a process of providing knowledge and skills to individual's particularly those in employment. It offers both short term and long term preparation of individuals subjected to it. The rationale for human resource training and development is premised on the fact that knowledge and skills are dynamic. Therefore, individuals require to be in constant touch with the reality. Based on the literature reviewed, the benefits of University extension education cannot be over-emphasized. It creates training opportunities for different people who may not manage to attend university education on full-time basis for some reasons. The increased opportunities include programme offerings in various certificate and diploma programmes. These programmes have provided a further training opportunity at a higher level. The people who have obtained qualifications through this mode of study have advanced to a degree either at the University of Zambia or other up-coming universities within the country. Essentially, some of the graduates from extension education have been the main clientele for the degree programmes of the up-coming universities in the country. The demand for university extension education has, however, increased due to the growing benefits witnessed

by the Zambian society. From the findings the participants have experienced attitude change, increased employment and business opportunities, job promotion, better management of their affairs and career progression. It has continued to address the various socio-economic and political concerns of the Zambian society.

**Keywords:** University extension education, Human resource training, development, participants

## **Introduction**

The starting point into the inquiry of setting up the University of Zambia was based on two convictions. First, that the university must be responsive to the real needs of the country (Zambia); and second, that it must be an institution which should on merit win respect and proper recognition among the universities of the world (Lockwood Report, 1963). In light of these convictions, the University of Zambia was established and among other strategies used to be responsive to the needs of society was the provision of university extension education. University extension education is a type of education which is need-based and provided to people who may not have an opportunity to attend full time learning at the university for one reason or another. This education is taken from the centre to the door steps of the learners (Luchembe, 2010).

Based on the aforesaid, the quest for this article is to provide an account of how university extension education has been increasing opportunities for human resource training and development in Zambia. It is in the interest of this article to explore the concept university extension education in terms of what it is, and the concept of human resource training and development. Thereafter elaborate on how university extension education has been creating opportunities for human resource training and development in Zambia.

## **University Extension Education**

The term extension was derived from the practice of British Universities of having one educational programme within the

premises of the University and another away from the central location of the University (Sichula, 2016). This programme conducted outside the university was described as “extension education” (National Open University of Nigeria, 2008). The connotation projecting from this term is the outspreading of knowledge from the centre to the periphery.

The concept “extension education” was first introduced in 1873 by Cambridge University in England to describe a particular system dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge to rural people where they lived and worked (Jepson, 1973). In this regard, the meaning of extension education may refer to a relationship between the providers of education services and the people (recipients) designed to meet the needs of the people in their respective locations (Kelsey and Hearne, 1966).

Quoted by Nduna (2010) and Chakanika (1989), Bradfield (1966) shows evidence that the concept Extension Education has been widely used in the field of agriculture. They observe:

Extension has been developed as the only logical, scientific and successful way of bringing knowledge to farmers to help them farm their land more efficiently..., by developing the agricultural skills and knowledge of the farmers (Chakanika, 1989:47; Bradfield, 1966:11).

However, the concept ‘extension’ has evolved and eventually given birth to the whole new concept as an ideology. It now embraces a far much broader perspective to include all the activities of individuals and organizations who are engaged in the provision of knowledge and skills to both individuals and corporate organizations including communities, from the centre to the periphery (Sichula, 2016).

From this perspective, one can readily infer that the concept of extension education has to do with the provision of a service conceived at the centre and extended to the areas in the periphery so that, the service can have some bearing in those areas.

The modern way of looking at extension education is that it is a process of providing knowledge in its original form from the centre of production to the people away from the university in order to

meet their needs (Chakanika & Sichula, 2016; AgriInfor, 2011). Similarly, Luchembe (2010) says extension education is knowledge based education delivered straight to the people where they live and work. Therefore, it provides educational opportunities to help people, individually and collectively make sound decisions about their lives, businesses and communities and develop themselves economically, socially and culturally.

Chakanika (1989:48) explains that there is not a point where concepts are developed by experts in isolation and diffused to the periphery, rather, *“extension education is said to involve a two way channel of knowledge and experience in which, field problems find their way into the laboratories and results are in turn taken back to the farmers and villagers.”*

Thus, a more fitting definition for *extension education* is one put forward by Savile (1965), extension education is *“... a process of education, its constant aim being to develop the knowledge, the will power and skill of the people to solve their own problems, by their own efforts, instead of waiting for the government to do it for them”* (Chakanika, 1989:47).

## **Human Resource Training and Development**

Human resource development is the study and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, and organisations through the development and application of learning-based interventions for the purpose of optimising human and organisational growth and effectiveness (Chalofsky, 1992). In its authentic terms human resource development suggests a wide-ranging concern with the overall development of the individual, normally in their capacity as an employee or worker, and forms one aspect of the broader field of human resource management or planning (Tight, 2004).

Human resource development takes on board the three activities of the directing function of human resource management which are education, training and development. For this reason human resource management is used in this paper to mean the preparation of human resource through learning activities for the current job and future work assignments as well as individual enhancements

(Wilson, 2001, and Tight 2004).

The volume of human resource development have continued to increase in Zambia due to emerging issues in technology and global economic trends. These changes have influenced the direction of education provision both locally and internationally. In Zambia the Department of adult education and extension studies seem to be responding well to these changes as detailed below.

### **Extension education increasing opportunities for human resource training and development**

The population of Zambia is largely composed of young people. Its economy is dependent on copper which has been marred with a lot of challenges in terms of the price fall on the international market. Youth unemployment has also been a thorny issue for both the educated and uneducated youths (World Bank, 2013). Despite this scenario there is still hope that with the change in the landscape of the education system in the country, the problem of youth unemployment can be minimised (Sichula, Luchembe, & Chakanika, 2016). Apparently university extension education has been receptive in contributing solutions to this challenge. This section argues that the first step to resolving economic development and youth unemployment in Zambia is redefining the education system in line with the demands of the economy.

There has been a global recognition that for African countries to develop their social and economic infrastructure, they will require to redefine and invest in their education system in line with the global development agenda. At the same time they should acknowledge the relevance of that education to their respective economies (UNECA, 2011).

Zambia's development challenges can be attributed in a large part to the countries failure to transform its education system from general and academic to specific and production oriented education system. This issue has also been projected in the overall economy where the country's economy is primary commodity based, as opposed to manufacturing based economy. The universities in the country have a bigger role to play in transforming the economy of

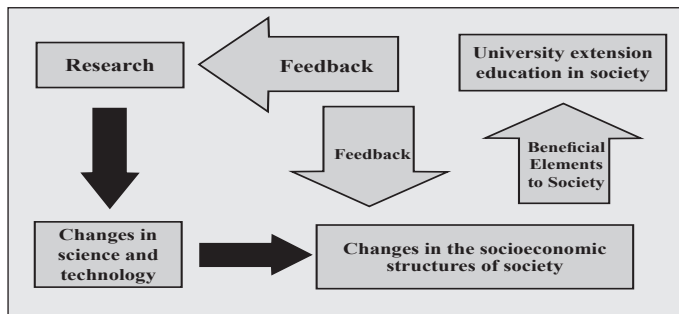
Zambia. The University of Zambia in particular, has been playing a role in creating opportunities for human resource training and development. This is done through its extension education.

In living up to this vision, university extension education has been using the following strategies to increase opportunities for human resource training and development; *dynamic university extension model, community integrative technique* and the use of a *mult-sectoral approach*.

**(a) Dynamic university extension model**

A dynamic university extension model is based on a constant alert to changes taking place in science and technology influenced by research and ultimately affect changes in the structure and content of the education system, economy and overall social institutions. Change is a constant factor in education, especially in this era when we are experiencing rapid innovations in science and technology. As matter of fact technology integration in education is unavoidable, it is actually more of doing things different rather than doing more (Sichula and Genis, 2019). A dynamic university extension model in receptive to changes and integrate elements which are beneficial to both the individual and the entire society as shown in the model below:

**Figure 1: Dynamic model of University extension education**



Fundamental in this model is conducting research in what is happening in science and technology and the socioeconomic structures in society.

These inform programme design, implementation and evaluation. Constant research is critical for extension education to respond to the demand for programmes and services needed by society. The findings of this desk research show that these changes have influenced the provision of university extension education. One of the ever changing unit in the provision of university education at the University of Zambia has been the extension section located in the Department of Adult Education. This section has continued to extend university education to society in line with its initial mission of being responsive to the educational needs of society. The dynamism of extension education has further been reflected in its flexibility in terms of the time classes are conducted. Chuma (2004) explains that evening courses are provided under extension education to enable those who are unable to attend full time classes have access to tertiary education. Many have managed to obtain degrees and diplomas because of the flexibility of the time table of extension education. Through university extension, graduates have been able to develop their personal interest. For instance, those who have an interest in business have been able to expand their knowledge in the field by studying a course in business administration.

It is indisputably true that any form of education has a context in which it operates. Similarly extension education can take the form of either non-formal or formal education. This means that regardless of the context it has taken notwithstanding extension education to strive by all means to respond to the needs of society as effectively and efficiently as possible. Chuma (2004) explains that even within the formalized context extension education provides packaged courses which are purely driven by the needs of society. This is a demonstration of the high degree of dynamism in planning, decision making, implementation and evaluation of extension education. It is also reflected in its constant repositioning of its programmes towards the demands of the labour market.

The dynamic approach to extension education has also brought about befitting changes in the recruitment of teaching staff. Recruitment of staff has been slowly shifting from general qualification to specific and specialised training of teaching staff

(Sichula, 2016). This is done in a bid to remain afloat with the needs of society dictated by the global economic trends. Additionally, the recruitment of local staff with relevant qualifications provides an advantage for university extension education. Their facilitation in university extension programmes benefit the participants from professional acumen and knowledge of the local environment which put together (combined), enhance the aspect of relevance of the programme offerings (Chakanika, Sichula, & Luchembe, 2016).

It is also cardinal to stress that the provision of university extension education of the University of Zambia is bifurcated; one stream provides credit courses which are centrally formulated. The second stream provides non – credit courses. It is this stream which caters to everyday concerns of the community. Aside from being relevant, these programmes provide knowledge and skills which are of immediate application by society, without waiting for certification.

In view of this, information reaching provincial centres and the University as whole is that these graduates have been integrated in the Zambia labour market pretty well, whereas others have opted to advance on their studies by pursuing degree programmes in a field of their diploma qualification. It has been supposed that, their entry into different degree programmes was on the basis of the diploma qualification of the University of Zambia under extension studies.

Further, University extension education conducts public lectures where they invite qualified personnel in specific fields to teach people on particular issues and among the topics of concern may include: water and air pollution, diseases such as cholera, HIV/AIDS, malaria and swine flu. People who graduate from such programmes have information at their fingertips and problems in their communities are likely to be solved with ease. Graduates gain knowledge which gives them power to adapt and suit in any environment.

According to Hakala (2008), among several benefits of university graduates is the ability to upgrade themselves in terms of career and more so improved work performance. This demonstrates two things to their employers. First, it shows that they care about their jobs and secondly that they can be trusted as valuable assets to the company. Skills and knowledge gained may help these graduates



to secure their jobs. This is in view of the fact that the trend on the labour market is paper qualification of a cadre of workers, devoid of which one may not be given employment. Similarly, graduates of extension education who could have had no employment, have now been enabled to find formal employment which has helped them to become independent and self-reliant.

Hakala (2008) states that education strengthens the economy. When citizens of a nation have an education, the nation's economy is strengthened. They become a productive cadre of human resource economic growth and unemployment will go down. Innovation and creativity in the work places will soar. Individuals earn more and have a better standard of living.

Further, University extension education has benefited graduates who are in self-employment by providing them with new skills, knowledge and ideas. They have left the classroom eager to implement what they have learned and to improve their businesses. Some graduates have managed to start their own organizations which they are running efficiently and effectively. These qualifications have improved their image in the family and society at large. It has also enhanced their image and has improved on their level of socialisation and self-esteem (Musa, 1994).

In view of the growing concern of limited formal jobs in Zambia, University extension education has provided employment to several University graduates. Many have been participating by teaching in extension programmes until such a time when they find formal placements either in government or private employers. To others, extension education has provided extra income. In light of this, Luchembe (2010) explains that evening courses are offered to impart knowledge and skills to help people with ever-changing demands of life at work, and the changes taking place in social-political spheres. These courses are offered to meet the educational needs of the participants.

### **(b) Community integrative technique**

Community integrative technique is a tool for diffusing innovations, programmes and projects in a community or society. University

extension education is one of the potent tools which has the integrative power to diffuse into society. This is the only unit of the university which is able to get to the tip of the community and society without much difficulties. This is based on its use of adult education principles. In certain instances extension education has actually been confused with adult education.

However, the community integrative technique used by extension education has given it an advantage at creating learning opportunities and networks with members of the Zambian society. It has been observed that most universities tend to focus on serving the needs of a few privileged individuals in a given society, thereby making the university to be an ivory tower. At the same time most people in the Africa setting carry a strong and elitist perception of people from the university. They believe that when one goes to study at the university he/she will provide answers to all their societal problems. This shows how expectant society is from the university.

To breakdown these unrealistic expectations and perceptions, extension education has permeated the Zambia society to provide university extension education right where the people are. The University of Zambia has created provincial centres in all provinces of Zambia which operate as satellite posts for the administration of university education.

The community integrative system has opened doors for other units of the University of Zambia to provide their respective university education and training programmes to society with minimal difficulties. These, units are Institute of Distance Education (IDE) which has grown its activities based on the already existing local environment created by extension education. Advisory Unit on affiliate Colleges of Education to the University of Zambia (AUCE) and the Fast Track Teacher Training Education Programme between the University of Zambia and the Ministry of General Education.

Further, within the context of non-formal education, extension education has continued to link the University of Zambia with society. It has made the university closer to the people by providing training which is contextualised within the local condition of the people. This integrative ability makes it easy for the university to

relate its activities with the real challenges of the country. This interphase with society has created more opportunities for learning. As a matter of fact extension education has made the university to be relevant to society (see: Chakanika and Sichula, 2016; and Nduna, 2010).

### **(c) Use of a mult-sectoral approach**

The main objective of all extension education programmes is to bring forth significant changes in the life of the participants and their respective communities. These changes are directed at meeting a variety of needs which can only be achieved by the use of a multi-sectoral approach. University extension education is interdisciplinary in its delivery of content for the purpose of remaining responsive to the needs of society. Musa (1994); Davis (2008); and Anderson, Felder, and Ganguly (2006) explain that extension education cannot afford to depend on a single profession if it was to achieve maximum results in the delivery of educational and training programmes. If so it will be in contradiction with its professional regulations and standards. They argue that a myriad of professions are at the core of extension education. Different experts have been working in collaboration to provide extension education programmes.

The University of Zambia extension education has been collaborating with professional bodies on respective professional programmes. These include the Copperbelt University, School of Business on Business related programmes, Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply or purchasing related programmes, Zambia Institute of Marketing on Sales and marketing related programmes and the accounting profession.

Furthermore, at local level extension education has utilised knowledge from different professions to mount its programmes in various centres of the country. This include, the use of knowledge from the field of agriculture to organise agricultural related programmes in areas where agriculture is the typical day of the people, and mining were it is the main activity of the people. The

programmes in these areas have been provided mainly as non-credit programmes.

University extension education remains key, especially in Third World countries, where it plays a catalytic role in development. A relevant feature of Third World countries is the division between rural and urban environments, with a greater part of the population living in the former and characterised by deprivation of access to education. It is this education which is at the epicentre of linking the experts from the University and its target population.

The use of a multi-sectoral approach has created an increased demand for extension education from various sectors of the Zambian society. According to Luchembe (2010), this demand has reflected an increase in the enrolment levels every year. The demand for university extension education has additionally been influenced by the recognition of university extension qualifications by different organizations and government agencies on how relevant they have been to their respective organizations and departments. For instance, the permanent secretary of Public Service Management Division (PSMD) of the Republic of Zambia on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 wrote to the University of Zambia management and various government ministries and departments indicating a positive recognition of qualifications from the University of Zambia, Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies. The Permanent Secretary wrote:

“I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter and advice that the Division has taken note of your concerns and have since been advised by the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) that the issue has been resolved amicable ....”

According to Jones (1994), extension education takes different forms: community development strategies, cooperative education, agriculture extension services and extra mural activities, which link experts with a target population through a given medium. Similarly extension education at the University of Zambia has been organised in such a way that it remains responsive to the needs of society and using different professions to achieve its objectives.

## **Conclusion**

The article has presented the three main areas university extension at the University of Zambia has been using to create opportunities for human resource training and development. It has demonstrated that for development to achieve the most results, training and development of human resource remains key. It is through extension education that using various approaches that have been highlighted and strategies that the University infuses into society its thinking and practices, which in turn, usher in development and transform society for the betterment of society. Conversely, society influences the programmes of the university which tend to be responsive and, therefore, relevant to societal needs and aspirations. Without this connection the university would be disconnected from society and be offering programmes which may not be relevant to the society. Since inception in 1966 extension education has consistently endeavoured to improve access to all groups in Zambia through innovative programmes aimed at reaching such groups within their local contexts. It also remains one of the strategic approaches in the development and acceleration of human resource capacity in Zambia. Therefore, it cannot be disputed that extension education remains committed to maintaining University links with the community and diffusing University knowledge and University ways of thought throughout the nation and providing further opportunities for human resource training and development. The changes in technology have constantly continued to impart on human life on daily. Therefore, extension education remains the only education system which is receptive to these changes and help society remain in tandem with the global changes. In terms of recommendation, the extension unity should allocate more resources to research and market research in particular in order to sustain continuous improvements of extension education and maintain its responsiveness to societal needs.

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