

Professionalization of Adult Educators: The Philippine Experience

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Abstract

Literatures show that professionalization in adult education/adult literacy is one least studied approach to professional development and performance improvement. Hence, this study looked into the professionalization of adult educators. Specifically, this research is aimed to give answers to the following 1) Develop the concept of adult educators and professionalization of adult educators in Philippine context; 2) Determine the strategies in the professionalization of adult educators; and 3) Identify best practices of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in contributing to professionalization of adult educators. Descriptive qualitative analysis of existing documents, focus group discussion among officials and faculty members of HEIs specifically the National Network of Normal Schools (3NS), TESDA and other professional organizations were conducted on top of one on one and face to face interview with a number of experts in the field of adult education and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) of the Philippines. Results reveal that professionalization among educators focus more on enhancement of individual skills, knowledge, attitude, ethics and accountability of practitioners. Professionalization as practised in the Philippines has a variant of licensing, certification, assessment, accreditation and continuing professional development activities.

Keywords: Adult Education, adult educator, professionalization

Introduction

With the coming ASEAN Integration in 2015, where the ten (10) ASEAN countries will have one vision; one identity; and one community, and with the influx of rapid and emerging changes and development in education, globally and internationally, professionalization as a concept of adult education and adult educators need further discussion and revisiting. Literatures on adult education show that this is a mission of social change in its formative years as a field in the 1920s. And as it evolved and became institutionalized and or delivered on formal, non-formal and informal structures, this field became preoccupied with the concept of professionalization. More recently, emphasis on literacy and lifelong learning in a changing workplace has allied it with the agenda of economic competitiveness. Further, studies show that professionalization in adult education/adult literacy is one least studied approach to professional development and performance improvement. Hence, it is in this context that this study proposed to initially explore and develop a knowledge base information and eventually be a part of a knowledge exchange project specifically in the field of professionalization of adult educators in the Philippines. This study may also serve as a venue to a better understanding of professionalization, particularly within the context of recent developments in adult education. Finally, this research may not just be a source of benchmarking information for ASEAN countries but also an addition of data bank information to developed countries like Europe, Canada, Australia and the USA.

Statement of Purpose

This research intends to build an initial knowledge base information on the professionalization of adult educators in the Philippines. Specifically it aims to:

1. Develop the concept of adult educator in Philippine context;
2. Develop the concept of professionalization of adult educators in the Philippine context;
3. Determine the strategies in the professionalization of adult educators; and
4. Identify best practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in contributing to professionalization of adult educators.

Brief History of Adult and Community Education and Non Formal Education in the Philippines

Adult Education in the Philippines has passed away seven (7) phases as follows:

The first phase dated back to the Spanish regime, where the “*Comedia*” or “*moro-moro*”, the “*duplo*”, “*balagtasan*” and the “*passion chanting*” provided occasion for popular gathering which resembled the “Open Air School” for the masses. These simply showed a semblance of adult education which served as factors for the literacy and cultural improvement of the people.

The second phase of the movement took the form of the popular civico-educational lectures which started about seven (7) years after the implantation of the American civil regime in the Philippines.

The third phase of the Philippine adult education movement was undertaken by the National Supreme Council in 1926 by the different political parties for the purpose of presenting a solid stand against the reactionary administrator. It was also at this time that the then President Quezon got disturbed over the fact that 50.8% of the Filipinos in that year were illiterate, emphatically declared the total war against illiteracy; hence, the first crusade for the eradication of illiteracy in the Philippines.

The fourth phase which was in 1932 was the period of the community assemblies. The administration then deeply sympathized with the cause of the poor and advocated the improvement of the welfare of the masses. It was at this time that the people were encouraged to maintain good health habits and adopt appropriate measures to prevent sickness and the spread of diseases.

The fifth phase was focused on the promotion of adult education on Literacy and Civic Education by the University of the Philippines alumni to become volunteer workers and was able to teach a thousand of adults on how to read and write. This program was expanded and extended in different places around Manila, Philippines. It also, broadened and included additional courses such as shop work for men, and dressmaking, flower making, knitting and painting for women. The work of the university in promoting adult education stopped when its activities were absorbed by the Office of Adult Education created by Commonwealth Act # 80 and passed on October 26, 1936.

The full blown operation of the Office of Adult Education was very much felt in this sixth phase of the movement. The Office was able to organize 466 community assemblies, 586 citizenship study circles, and 1, 322 vocational clubs for adults.

The seventh and last phase of the movement came not longer after the liberation. As it was closed during the war, the Office of Adult Education was reopened on August 15, 1945. By virtue of the Executive Order #94 in 1947, brought about by the reorganization of the National government, the functions of the Office were transferred to the Bureau of Public Schools. At present, the former Adult Education Division which became a Non-formal Education Division is now called Office of Alternative Learning System but still under the then Bureau of Public Schools which is now popularly called as Department of Education.

From adult education, came non-formal education which is defined as any organized school-based educational system under the Department of Education and other agencies aimed at attaining specific learning objectives for a particular clientele, especially the illiterates and out-of-school youth and adult, distinct from and outside the regular offering of the formal school system.

In summary, non-formal education is an outgrowth of early movements, from adult education to non-formal education, the goal of which is to eradicate illiteracy and alleviate poverty.

The Philippine Education System

The Philippine Education System includes both formal and non-formal education. The formal education is a sequential progression of academic school for kindergarten, elementary (grades 1-7); junior high school (grades 8-10), senior high school (grades 11-12) and tertiary or higher education (college, graduate and technical/vocational).

Basic education refers to kindergarten up to grade 12 is being handled by the Department of Education (DepEd) while the college is under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the vocational/technical and non-degree training is under Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

The non-formal education is delivered through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) under DepEd which caters for out-of-school youths and adults. With the emergence of “Education for All” (EFA 2015), the Philippines is committed to pursue eight time bound and specific targets under the Millennium Declaration. This declaration in general aims to reduce poverty by half in 2015.

Further, the Philippine Education for All (EFA 2015) National Action Plan entitled “Functionally Literate Filipinos, An Education Nation,” points to an “urgent need to respond to the learning needs of youth and adults who either have never been to school, have dropped out, reverted to illiteracy, or need basic or advanced skills to find jobs.” Hence, some of the goals of EFA related to out-of-school youth and adults are: to achieve functional literacy by 2015 wherein Lifelong Learning in the Philippines is directly linked with the EFA goals.

On the development and welfare of teachers, as part of EFA 2015 goals, teachers’ competencies will be strengthened through a unified program of pre-service and in-service teacher training which will be more school-based and demand driven. With the above developments of how the Philippines value education, teachers, trainers, facilitators, and other qualified professionals and adult educators are in demand and very much wanting.

Methodology

This research used the descriptive qualitative design to analyze existing documents such as R.A. 7836 otherwise known as Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994, R.A. 9293 of 2004, CMO No. 40, s. 2008, TESDA, Continuing Professional Education (CPE)/Development Handbook (2010), and other Philippine Books on Non-formal Education. A focus group discussion (FGD) was also conducted among University officials and faculty members of State Universities including the National Network of Normal Schools (3NS) consisting of 10 pioneering normal schools in the Philippines. A one –on-one phone and face to face interview were equally undertaken with the Philippine Regulations Commission and some PRB members. Lastly, an open-ended questionnaire on the concepts of adult educator, professionalization and strategies used were distributed to other colleagues in the university, NGOs and also the ten member institutions of 3NS. The data gathered from the above mentioned sources were clustered thematically and analyzed based on the research objectives.

Results and Discussion

The Concept of Adult Educator in Philippine context

Table 1; Matrix on the Structure of Adult Education and Components of Adult Educators

Components	Formal Adult Education		Non-Formal Adult Education	Informal Adult Education
	Professional Academic Track	Professional Technical/ Vocational Track		
1. Qualifications and attributes of the adult educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Institutions 1.1 Bachelor’s, MA or Ph.D. degree holder depending on level of higher Education students 1.2 Licensed professional (e.g. teacher, engineer, accountant, nurse, pharmacist & other professionals needing licensure exam) 1.3 At least two years, of experience in the field of specialization 1.4 Has competence in knowledge skills & attitude 1.5 Exemplify professional ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESDA 1.1 Please refer to the Philippine TVET Trainers/ Assessors Qualification Framework (see Figure 1 below) 1.2 Positive work values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems (BALS) 1.1 Bachelor’s Degree holder 1.2 Qualified teachers with adequate training in andragogy & special approaches for effectively facilitating learning & managing learners development through alternative scheme. 1.3 Exemplify professional ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any accreditation agency 1.1 Has advocacy in the program 1.2 Has competence (knowledge, skills & passion) Has appropriate skills in the specialization 1.3 Has the spirit of volunteerism

Figure 1



Components	Formal Adult Education		Non-Formal Adult Education	Informal Adult Education
	Professional Academic Track	Professional Technical/Vocational Track		
2. Target Clients	2.1 In-School college/graduate students taking a bachelor's, MA or doctorate degree; a diploma (e.g. Teacher Education, Engineering, Accounting, Nursing, Law, etc.)	2.1 Philippine Technical – Vocational Education & Training (TVET) trainers & assessors involved in the training delivery, competency assessment, training design/development & training supervision	2.1 Open to any out-of-school youth & adult who want to be literate (read & write)	2.1 Open to out-of-school youth/in-school/ adult professional wanting to improve/ update his professional vocational competence & other skills.
3. Activity/ Projects & Objectives	3.1 Regular classroom instruction (face to face or blended delivery) Objectives – to finish a degree/diploma - to update skills/competencies in their field	3.1 Regular TVET of trainers & assessors to ensure competence in trade qualifications, training & assessment methodologies 3.2 TESDA offers a variety of skills development for more job employment to alleviate poverty	3.1 Alternative Learning System (ALS) projects such as Indigenous Peoples Education program;” Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out of School Adult “(Back to School for Out of School Adult); Family Basic Literacy Program; and Mobile Literacy Program <i>Objective: To develop functional literacy to alleviate poverty & promote lifelong learning</i>	3.1 Seminars, workshops /training programs to serve as continuing professional education of professionals 3.2 Seminar workshops to improve skills in farming, agriculture, & other life skills for “real life literacies.” 3.3 Innovative training programs & out-reach activities to address institutional, professional & societal need by the Human Rights & Peace Advocates Advocates: Its objectives are: 1) To sharpen the participants skills in conflict resolution/ transformation, inter-ethnic & intra-faith dialogue, tolerance, leadership, coalition building & community activism. 2) To enhance the participants’ appreciation of their similarities & differences through various interactive activities that will serve as a venue for open dialogue 3) To provide participants with skills for working collaboratively across ethnic & religious lines (R. TY 2007)

Table 1 shows the matrix on the concept of adult educator based on structure and components, namely; (1) formal adult education refers to professional academic track and professional technological/vocational track offered by higher education institutions and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), respectively, (2) non-formal adult education refers to any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of a formal school system with a view of providing selected type of learning to particular subgroup among adults and out of school youth (Cabag, 1999).

In this present time, the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) under the Department of Education takes care of this program, and (3) informal adult education is a lifelong process of learning by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitude and insights from experiences at home, at work and from life itself. This is offered by a school or institutions, accredited government agency or NGOs. In each of these three (3) structures, the adult educator has a set of (1) required qualifications and/or attributes; (2) target clients, and (3) activities/programs with goals leading to eradication of illiteracy, and building on functional literacy to alleviate poverty, improve delivery of instruction and lifelong learning.

On the whole, an adult educator in the Philippines is a professional, a lecturer, a teacher a, trainer, a resource person, NGO advocate, a community leader, who may be a parent, clergy/priest who contributes in poverty alleviation through functional literacy, life skills and advance professional academic and technical vocational skills in a formal, non-formal and informal adult education context.

The Concept of Professionalization of Adult Educators

Based on the different sources of information from a focus group discussion (FGD) , an open-ended questionnaire on professionalization, a phone and face to face interaction with some officials of higher education institutions like the National Network of Normal Schools (3NS), NGOs and PRC and PRB members and 'Philippine Education for All' literatures, an analysis of these data gathered yielded three components of the concept of professionalization. It is a **process**, **has standards** and with **definite goals**. As a process, it suggests a systematic procedure that allows entry to the profession of the adult educator through a variety of capacity building activities/programs and other professional requirements and continuing programs. What comes with the process is the standards set by a professional body to guarantee quality assurance, in terms of delivery of adult education activities and qualifications of the adult educator, such as competence (knowledge, skills, attitude, disposition, professional ethical values and positive work values), expertise in the profession, advocacy and spirit of volunteerism. The third component of professionalization is its definite goal which is to enhance the competence (knowledge, skills, attitude, values and ethics) to ensure the desired intent of adult education in the Philippines which are the following: (a) achieve a 50% improvement on level of adult literacy by 2015 especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; (b) to realize functional literacy and life skills by 2015; (c) reduce poverty by half in 2015 and (d) improve practitioners' experience, knowledge, skills and attitude as they enter professional development.

In the Philippines, the above is directly linked with the Educational for All (EFA) goals of UNESCO by way of the new concept of Quality of Education – anchored on functionality. The new function of functional literacy is equated with the notion of life skills/lifelong learning rooted in the four pillars of education articulated by Delors Commission.

Strategies in the Professionalization of Adult Educators

An analysis of the Philippine Regulation Commission, Commission on Higher Education, TESDA memoranda, orders, advisories and other documents both government and non-government revealed several strategies in professionalizing adult educators. These are **licensing**, **certification**, **assessment**, **accreditation** and **continuing professional development activities**.

Licensing serves as the entry point to profession. It is carried out by the Professional Regulation Commission as a licensing body to ensure that those who are licensed possess the necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and ethical values to perform important professional activities safely, efficiently and effectively. **Certification** as another strategy refers to a system where a professional body, either CHED, DepEd or TESDA certifies accomplished practice/or level of competence. TESDA, for example, awards National Certificate I, II, III or IV depending on the assessed acquired technical/vocational competency of a trainer, senior trainer or master trainer. **Assessment** is another approach to professionalization where it is a process of gathering information such as results of "pencil and paper" tests and other practical activities in order to understand and describe practitioner performance in terms of practitioner knowledge, skills and professional growth. The Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and **Accreditation** Program (ETEEAP) is another scheme, an educational assessment to recognize knowledge, skills and prior learning from non-formal and informal educational experiences as basis for accreditation and equivalency of demonstrated competencies.

Lastly, the **Continuing Professional Education (CPE)/Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** refers to the inculcation, assimilation and acquisition of knowledge, skills, proficiency and ethical and moral values, after the initial registration of a professional, which raises and enhances the professional's technical skills and competence (Philippine PRL/CPE/CPD Handbook, 2010).

The following are the objectives of the CPE/CPD program: (CPE, 2010)

1. To provide and ensure the continuous education of registered professional with the latest trends in the professional brought about by modernization, scientific and technological advancement;
2. To raise and maintain the professional's capability for delivering professional services;
3. To attain and maintain the highest standards and quality on the practice of one's profession;
4. To comply with the professionals' continuing ethical standard requirements;
5. To make the professional globally competitive; and
6. To promote the general welfare of the public.

Best Practices of Higher education Institutions (HEIs) in contributing to Professionalization of Adult Educators

Among the best practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in contributing to the professionalization of adult educators are arranged in the order of frequency of multiple responses as follows: (1) strict implementation of licensed teachers only to teach, (2) pursue graduate education to update their knowledge and skills as a result of advancement of education and technology, (3) in-house training and workshop on new development in their field of specialization, (4) in-service training/workshop for those non-education graduates specifically on teaching strategies, table of specification (TOS) and test construction, (5) sending teachers for short term training or for scholarship, (6) encouraging non-education graduates to enroll in diploma or Certificate on Teaching to make them more competent and effective in the delivery of their specialization. Benchmarking on center of excellence institutions here in the Philippines and other countries.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Historically, the concept of adult educator simply refers to literacy teachers who teach out-of-school-youth and adult on how to read and write. However, with the adult education movement in the Philippines, it gradually evolved and was institutionalized and delivered into formal, non-formal and informal structure. Broadly at present, adult educators cover not only literacy teachers but also professional academic and technical-vocational teachers/trainers, resource persons, lecturers with minimum qualification to help enhance the out-of-school-youth and adult reduce poverty through functional literacy, life skills and basic and advance academic and technical-vocational skills.

Given this development, the concept and strategies of professionalizing the adult educators became inevitable. While the strategies of professionalization such as licensing, certification, assessment, accreditation and continuing professional development, follow a systematic process, has standards and with definite goals, it is still wanting to see the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), government and non-government agencies do their collective efforts to have more activities/programs to support and strictly implement the professionalization of adult educators; so that at the end of the day, the Philippines as one nation would have reduced poverty by 2015, which is the very goal of EFA 2015 and lifelong learning movement.

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