

**EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF FACILITATORS IN REFLECT ADULT
LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN MALAWI: A CASE STUDY OF REFLECT
FACILITATORS IN MULANJE DISTRICT**

PHD (LANGUAGE EDUCATION) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (LANGUAGE EDUCATION) THESIS

By

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Submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Studies, School of Education
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

To the Most High God for His tender mercies.

To Him be the glory, praise and honour.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. The main research question sought to explore how REFLECT facilitators experience the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired programme outcomes. The study employed qualitative approach using case study design to have a deeper understanding of facilitators' experiences in literacy circles. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample for the study. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations were used to generate data from the participants. The theoretical framework which guided the study was andragogy theory by Malcolm Knowles. While the extent to which adult learning outcomes are achieved can partly be traced from the manner in which adult learners are taught in literacy circles, the study found that although facilitation process takes place in the participating literacy circles, the actual effective facilitation does not really take place. From the study, this was due to several challenges such as inadequate training of facilitators, recruitment of underqualified facilitators, lack of refresher courses, and lack of motivation which compromised the quality of facilitation process. Given the experiences of facilitators overall, the study established that lecture method was predominantly used in literacy circles which deprived adult learners' opportunities to interact, contrary to andragogical principles. Consequently, the study further revealed that the core outcomes such as economic empowerment and participation in development activities were not achieved due to adult learners' failure to interpret theory into practice, the problem that has its roots in the way adult learners are taught in literacy circles which is directly linked to facilitators' knowledge. Thus, consideration and strengthening of four key factors such as the required academic qualifications, proper training, regular refresher courses and motivation may improve not only the experiences of facilitators

but also the quality of facilitation in literacy circles which directly affect the achievement of learning outcomes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADRA:	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ALP:	Adult Literacy Programme
CBO:	Community Based Organisation
CCAP:	Church of Central African Presbyterian
DFID:	Department for International Development
EFA:	Education for All
FAL:	Functional Adult Literacy
FBO:	Faith Based Organisation
FRC:	Finnish Refugee Council
ICEIDA:	Icelandic International Development Agency
JCE:	Junior Certificate of Education
MSCE:	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MP:	Member of Parliament
NALP:	National Adult Literacy Programme
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OXFAM:	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
REFLECT:	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
UK:	United Kingdom
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
VDC:	Village Development Committee

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides an overview of the problem under exploration. The study explores experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi, specifically in Mulanje district. The chapter begins by introducing the background and context of the study. Further, the chapter focuses on the following sub-topics: statement of the problem, purpose of the study and research questions, significance of the study, and definition of key terms used in the study. The chapter outlines the structure of the whole thesis in the final section.

1.2 Background to the study

Malawi is one of the countries in the sub-Saharan African region with low literacy rates, at 69% in general, and 72% for men and 66% for women (National Statistics Office, 2019). Worse still, levels of poverty are also high in adult populations in Malawi since poverty and illiteracy are directly linked, and increased illiteracy levels mean more poverty (Egbo, 2000). Consequently, it may be argued that those that are illiterate have limited involvement in personal, social and economic development (Mjaya, 2022; Human Development Report, 2009). Human Development Report (2009) further indicates that the majority of illiterate people who live in rural areas in Malawi are generally poor and therefore have limited involvement in economic development in their families and communities. Thus, literacy has the potential to either empower or disempower individuals in social encounters (Mjaya, 2022), as will be discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

1.3 Literacy

On one hand, literacy empowers people to address and overcome challenges affecting them in their communities for improved quality of life and promotion of active citizenship (Mjaya, 2022; People's Action Forum, 2009; Literacy for life, 2005). Titmus (2014) argues that literacy goes beyond activities designed to teach people to read and write simple sentences as it has been observed that such restricted skills are of little utility. It can empower learners to take actions in different contexts such as in the household, the community and at national level (Mjaya, 2022; Literacy for life, 2005). As will be discussed later in Chapter 2, this suggests that literacy builds and strengthens the capabilities of individuals and enhances their participation in social, economic, cultural and political activities (Mjaya, 2022; People's Action Forum, 2009).

On the other hand, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2006) observes that adult literacy gives people the tools, knowledge and confidence to improve their livelihoods, to participate more actively in their societies and to make informed choices. Accordingly, Bhola (1997) states that adult literacy programmes prepare adult learners to learn how to transfer knowledge and skills to family, workplace, community, society and to the new world on a shrunken globe. Bhola's statement underscores what Whitehead (1996) argues that adult literacy is a key to survival and success of people in different aspects of their lives. As such, adult literacy should be viewed as the core engine and agent of social change, considering the fact that it generally transforms people's lives (People's Action Forum, 2009). Giere (1997) underlines that everywhere in the world, adult literacy education is seen as a key to the survival of humankind in the 21st Century.

In Malawi, over the past two decades, there have been efforts by various stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to address the problem of illiteracy through, for instance, introduction of adult literacy education programmes. However, evidence indicates that adult literacy education programmes are facing many challenges, despite the efforts invested by the various stakeholders over the years. The situation is exacerbated by, among other factors, low funding, lack of training for facilitators, high withdrawal rates,

low participation of men, limited provisions for adult literacy, inadequate materials for instruction, and inefficient monitoring and evaluation of literacy classes (Mjaya, 2022; National Report of Malawi, 2008; Snyder, Kamanga, Tate & McLaughlin, 2010). Overall, this suggests that effective implementation of adult literacy programmes in Malawi still remains a challenge considering the fact that it is hampered by various problems, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

In response to the unending problem of illiteracy and changing needs and approaches, Malawi has been running the Functional Adult Literacy programme (FAL) as a catalyst to poverty reduction (National Report of Malawi, 2008). According to The National Report of Malawi (2008), there are over 8000 adult literacy classes with an average of 25 learners per class functioning across the country annually since the 1990s. These estimates include literacy programmes provided by other service providers beside the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP), such as NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, and even the private sector. NALP alone runs an estimated 4400 classes annually countrywide. Besides, there are some other players that are also involved in the provision of adult literacy programmes such as Action Aid, World Vision International, Oxfam, ADRA Malawi, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), among others (National Report of Malawi, 2008).

Despite what might be perceived as impressive coverage and a series of interventions from different actors dating back to the colonial era, the problem of illiteracy remains intractable in the country (National Report of Malawi, 2008; ICEIDA, 2006). Evidence from reports indicate that at its launch in 1986, NALP intended to reach out to at least 2 million of the 4.6 million illiterate adults by the year 2000, but by 2006 the programme had only reached about 860, 000 adult learners. These figures highlight the magnitude of failure by the set of interventions and programmes that have previously been carried out to fight illiteracy in the country (National Report of Malawi, 2008). Besides, Phiri and Safalaoh (2003) observe that the evaluation of NALP and its impact in some areas has shown that the outputs from the programme have declined over the years and the programme is still far from reaching its full potential and achieving its goals, as will be discussed later in the thesis (Chapter 4).

1.4 Approaches to adult literacy programmes in Malawi

There are two approaches to adult literacy programmes in Malawi. These are Functional Adult Literacy (FAL), and Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) approaches.

1.4.1 Functional Adult Literacy (FAL)

Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) is one of the approaches to adult literacy programmes that provides skills in reading, writing and numeracy integrated with practical knowledge and skills (Nsekaki, 2014). In Malawi, FAL programme was introduced in 1986 to provide illiterate adults the opportunity to acquire literacy skills in a system of non-formal education (Kishindo, 1994). FAL is defined as “the level of skill in reading and writing that any individual needs in order to cope with adult life” (Lawton & Gordon, 1996, p. 108). From the definition, FAL is more than a set of literacy skills considering that it includes the ability to use those acquired skills to solve problems encountered in one’s daily life (Ayodele & Adedokun, 2012). According to EFA Global Monitoring Report (2006), FAL involves:

meaning acquisition, development and use of reading and writing (also for numeracy purposes) in everyday life, as a tool for self-expression, information, communication, lifelong learning, work and civic participation, and as a means to improve one’s life and to contribute to family, community and national transformation and development (p. 2).

The description above implies that when individual persons are functionally literate, they are able to acquire the skills which allow them to function well on any job they are performing on a daily basis (Ayodele & Adedokun, 2012). What emerges clearly from the definitions of FAL, as rightly observed by Egbo (2000), is that “functional literacy is literacy for everyday use” (p. 23). The definitions suggest that what is learned is supposed to be of relevance to the adult learners’ needs of their everyday lives. Actually, FAL addresses the problem faced by illiterate people in carrying out their day-to-day activities (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016). Thus, functional literacy equips adult learners with sufficient skills for their personal, community as well as national development.

FAL programme follows the conventional approach of using a well-defined curriculum and uses textbooks (Rogers, 2008; Jeke, 2006). Learning in FAL is entirely participatory so as to motivate adult learners to discuss and share knowledge and skills that will help them to improve on whatever activities they are engaged in for the betterment of their lives and the communities in which they live (Nsekaki, 2014). In all the learning activities, FAL encourages interaction among adult learners themselves, and between adult learners and the facilitator. On the whole, adult learners actively contribute to the learning process rather than passively receiving information from the facilitator (Jeke, 2006). This suggests that FAL encourages adult learners to share knowledge, learn from each other, and ultimately work together to solve common problems affecting their lives.

1.4.2 REFLECT approach

REFLECT is an acronym that stands for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. It is a new approach to adult literacy programme which came about in 1993 to provide dynamic literacy that focuses on development and requires people to take action for their own development (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016). The key aspect in REFLECT approach centres on creating space where people discuss issues that are relevant to them with the view of transforming their lives (Action Aid, 2009). REFLECT aims to improve the meaningful participation of people in decisions that affect their lives through strengthening their ability to communicate (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Throughout the process, adult learners (participants) meet in literacy circles to discuss various issues affecting them and come up with lasting and sustainable solutions to the challenges faced (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). As will be discussed in Section 2.4, there is a general belief in REFLECT approach that through focusing on the practical aspects, real learning takes place (Archer & Goreth, 2004).

REFLECT approach uses no primers or textbooks as such each literacy circle develops their own learning materials based on various issues affecting them in their communities (Finnish Refugee Council, 2016; Archer & Cottingham, 1996) (also see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). In terms of facilitation methods and strategies, REFLECT promotes the use of

participatory methods. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, these methods and strategies include story-telling, drama, role-play, songs, dance, visualization, games, radio, and proverbs (Jarvis, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Archer, 1995). The approach focuses on promoting the exchange of ideas, experiences and the construction of new knowledge by adult learners, bearing in mind that illiterate people are not ignorant but rather have countless skills and extensive knowledge (Archer & Cottingham, 1996; Archer, 1995). For instance, in rural areas, illiterate people have complex knowledge about how to plant, care for and harvest a wide range of crops; how to take care of different domesticated animals; burn bricks, build houses and make various crafts (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). All this suggests that adult learners have the knowledge necessary to survive in what are often very harsh conditions particularly about rural life.

However, both FAL and REFLECT approaches require facilitators that are not only well-trained but are also committed to facilitate the adult learning process for successful implementation (see Chapter 2). Generally, REFLECT facilitators must undergo training for two weeks to equip them with knowledge and skills for effective facilitation (McCaffery et al., 2007; Archer & Cottingham, 1996) (also see sub-section 2.3.3). Phnuyal (1998) observes that the role of facilitators is crucial in making the whole REFLECT approach effective. While emphasising the crucial role that facilitators play, Attwood (2008) also observes that REFLECT approach demands for highly skilled and trained facilitators to guide the learning process to achieve the desired outcomes. Phnuyal and Attwood's observations raise a major critical issue as to whether facilitators that are implementing adult literacy programmes in Malawi using the REFLECT approach are well prepared and trained to facilitate the learning process effectively so that the programme achieves its intended outcomes (see Chapter 4). As will be discussed in Chapter 2, Archer and Cottingham (1996) argue that effective facilitation of REFLECT approach and achievement of its intended outcomes largely depends on the knowledge, skills and understanding of facilitators because they are core implementers of the approach. This implies that facilitator's knowledge and skills are decisive in successful implementation of REFLECT approach.

In Malawi, some research studies have established that some REFLECT facilitators do not have the minimum qualifications which qualify them to become adult literacy facilitators. Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) conducted an evaluation study on the support to the National Adult Literacy Programme in Monkey Bay from 2001 to 2004. The study findings revealed that most facilitators only attained primary school education and that the selection process of facilitators was not rigorous enough. Consequently, the study found that most facilitators found it difficult to use the right methodologies suitable for adult learning during facilitation process. This has implications on the extent to which adult learning outcomes are achieved. Nonetheless, Benediktsson and Kamtengeni's study did not explain why the process of selecting facilitators was not rigorous. The consequences of underqualified facilitators are detrimental because research studies have established that educational qualification of facilitators directly affect facilitators' capacity to facilitate adult learning process (Alkali, 2016; Oluoch, Ayodo & Enose, 2014).

Rogers (2008), in his comparative study of the Malawi-REFLECT programme and the Uganda-FAL programme, found that facilitators use primary school methodologies which are more appropriate to children than to adult learners. The study found that facilitators use teacher-centred methods during facilitation process. This has implications on adult learners' acquisition of literacy skills. As a result, the study found that most adult learners literally failed to put the formal literacy they had acquired into practice meaning that they did not use the formal literacy in their daily lives which implies that the intended outcomes may not have been achieved. However, the study did not explain the reasons behind the use of teacher-centred methods by facilitators during facilitation process which are not appropriate to adult learners. Harod (2001) points out that the impact of adult literacy education on learners largely depends on the knowledge of the facilitators and the facilitation methods that are used, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis.

Based on the research studies referred to above, it is not clear why facilitators use teacher-centred methods during facilitation process (see Chapter 4). This is a big challenge to most of the facilitators yet there is very little knowledge regarding experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. Such a situation has prompted the

researcher to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. Without understanding their experiences, we may not help to inform practice as the country strives to reduce illiteracy levels in Malawi.

1.5 Statement of the problem

After undergoing training on adult literacy facilitation, it is expected that adult literacy facilitators should understand principles of facilitation and therefore be able to use appropriate facilitation methods and techniques suitable for adult learners. To the contrary, evidence from research studies indicates that adult literacy facilitators use teacher-centred methods even after undergoing training, which is against the principles of adult literacy learning and facilitation (Rogers, 2008; Benediktsson & Kamtengeni, 2004). However, previous studies did not investigate why REFLECT facilitators, despite being trained, use teacher-centred methods which are not suitable for adult learners. Besides, previous studies did not explore the challenges faced by REFLECT facilitators from using learner-centred methods which makes them opt for teacher-centred methods. Consequently, the findings in extant research indicate that the intended outcomes for REFLECT approach to equip adult learners with literacy skills which empower them for improved livelihoods are not achieved. Bearing all these issues in mind, this study sought to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in order to provide a deeper understanding of the critical experiences shaping facilitation practice which have a direct effect on the implementation of adult literacy programmes.

1.6 Purpose of the study

The overall purpose of this study was to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi in order to provide a deeper understanding on the practice of effective facilitation of adult literacy programmes. To achieve this purpose, the study attempted to address the following questions:

1.6.1 Main research question

How do facilitators experience the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired programme outcomes?

1.6.2 Specific research questions

1. What are the experiences of REFLECT facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult literacy?
2. How are facilitators motivated during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation?
3. How effective is the REFLECT approach in bringing out the intended outcomes?
4. How can REFLECT facilitators effectively facilitate adult literacy to achieve the expected programme outcomes?

1.7 Significance of the study

Currently, there is very limited research on adult literacy programmes in Malawi, and even more so on experiences of facilitators within adult literacy circles. This study is, therefore, critical in providing more understanding of facilitation practice in adult literacy circles and its implications for National Adult Literacy Programme policy implementation. Besides, the study findings might help key ministries and stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, policy makers and education experts as they strive to promote adult literacy education programmes across the country to meaningfully contribute to the development of citizens and the nation. Further, the findings may also assist higher education institutions, universities and colleges to consider how they may effectively contribute to the promotion of adult literacy programmes in Malawi. Finally, this study could also serve as a springboard for future studies on adult literacy programmes within Malawi and even beyond.

1.8 Definition of terms

This section provides definitions of terms that are used in the study as below.

Adult learner – refers to any individual above the age of fifteen (15) who is engaged in any form of literacy education programme (People’s Action Forum, 2009).

Literacy – refers to ability to read and write in a given language and also use of numeracy skills (Titmus, 2014; People’s Action Forum, 2009).

Adult literacy – refers to a learning process designed to equip illiterate people aged 15 and above with specialised knowledge, skills and techniques to independently engage in reading, writing, numeracy and critical thinking intended to promote the development of active citizenship (People’s Action Forum, 2009).

Adult literacy programme – refers to any forms of educational activities that are organised to enable adults acquire literacy skills (People’s Action Forum, 2009).

Adult facilitation – refers to the process of helping adult learners acquire literacy skills (Kamp, 2011).

Facilitator – refers to any individual who guides adults to learn (Archer & Cottingham, 1996).

Methods of facilitation – refers to the planned and systematic way by which a facilitator imparts knowledge and skills to adult learners (Kapur, 2018; Time Project Partnership, 2016).

Effective facilitation methods – refers to the ability of the facilitation methods to effectively promote learners’ understanding of subject-matter and their participation in the teaching and learning process (Kapur, 2018; UNISA, 2015; Kamp, 2011).

Andragogy – a set of procedures and practices that constitutes a distinctive form of education or learning, most suited to adults because it acknowledges their needs, experience, and self-directed qualities (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1989).

Functional adult literacy – refers to an approach in which the skills of reading, writing and numeracy are integrated in daily activities of adults for effective functioning within a group or community (Nsekaki, 2014; Lawton & Gordon, 1996).

Experiences – refers to skills and practices that enables one to perform a particular job better.

1.9 Structure of thesis

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One provides the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and research questions. The chapter further discusses significance of the study, definition of terms and concepts that are frequently used throughout the research study, and finally, organisation of the entire thesis. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature in teaching and learning of adult literacy programmes and links it to the current study. Furthermore, it discusses principles of adult learning and facilitation methods for adult learners. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the theoretical framework that guides the study. Chapter Three focuses on research design and research methodology the study employs. It also provides a discussion on data generation methods, ethical consideration and data analysis techniques. Chapter Four presents the results of the study and discussion of findings. Lastly, Chapter Five presents the conclusion, implications of the study and suggested areas for further studies.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter began the discussion of exploring experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi by providing the background to the study in which adult literacy programmes in Malawi is contextualised. Specifically, the discussion focused on the overall significance of adult literacy education in all the development aspects such as the nation, community and family. It is clear from the discussion in this chapter that literacy generally builds and strengthens the capabilities of individuals and enhances their participation in social, economic, cultural and political activities. Furthermore, the chapter has discussed the approaches to adult literacy programmes in Malawi, paying particular attention to the REFLECT approach, which is the main focus of this study. The chapter has also defined key terms and concepts in the adult literacy programmes that are frequently used in this research study with the aim of understanding them. Finally, the chapter concludes with the organisational structure of the entire thesis. The following chapter reviews relevant literature to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews literature on adult literacy education and facilitation in four major parts with the aim of establishing links with the current study. The first part presents issues around facilitation of adult learning process in general with special focus on REFLECT approach. The second part of the review discusses principles of adult learning which form the basis for adult literacy education particularly adult learning and facilitation. The third part specifically focuses on discussing facilitation methods and techniques suitable for adult learning; and also, facilitator motivation. This part is crucial because adult learning, regardless of the literacy programme, requires appropriate facilitation methods and techniques. While there is not much research on the experiences of facilitators in Malawi, most research about facilitators from other parts of the world has relevance to Malawi. The fourth part of the chapter discusses the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.2 Adult learning and its benefits

Evidence from across the world demonstrates that acquiring literacy as an adult has a profound impact (Mjaya, 2022; McCaffery, Merrifield & Millican, 2007). Acquiring literacy changes people in many ways such as what they can do, their perception of themselves, their social interaction, and sometimes their economic situation. These are what Charnley and Jones (1979) call enactive, personal, social, and social-economic achievements. Realising that these achievements largely emanate from one's acquisition of literacy skills, one could therefore argue that overall, adult learning acts as a key that could be used to open several doors for success in one's life. It can empower learners to take actions in different contexts such as in the household, the community and at national levels (Mjaya, 2022; Literacy for Life, 2005). Actually, literacy empowers people to address and overcome challenges affecting them in their communities for improved quality of life and promotion of active citizenship (People's Action Forum, 2009).

These days, literacy is seen as a continuum of skills that enable individuals to achieve their goals in life and work and participate fully in society (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015). This means that literacy levels do not only benefit individuals but also the society as a whole, in terms of economic, educational, social and health aspects. Central to this argument is the idea that when individuals do well, so do their families and communities (Working Together for Adult Literacy, 2009). As such, literacy should be considered as the core engine and agent of social change, as a means to the creation of peace and stability and to the promotion of poverty reduction (People's Action Forum, 2009). In attempting to extend the argument further, Literacy for Life (2005) states that literacy creates a lot of benefits such as “improved self-esteem, empowerment, creativity and critical reflection that participation in adult literacy programmes and the practice of literacy may produce” (p. 138). Having considered all the available arguments and pieces of evidence, what stands out from the discussion, as Egbo (2000) observes, is the fact that literacy largely improves people's quality of life by increasing opportunities in life as well as overall societal progress.

With respect to adult learning, Bhola (1997) explains that “Adult learners must learn how to transfer knowledge and skills to family, workplace, community, society, and to the new world on a shrunken globe” (p. 67). It may be inferred that Bhola's explanation offers clarification regarding the usefulness of literacy skills in people's daily lives. This implies that literacy learned must relate directly to the adult learners' livelihood activities and needs as well as development activities and projects (Rogers, 2008; Rogers, Kachiwanda & McKay, 2003). Nuwagaba (2006) observes that adult learners are motivated to join adult literacy programmes if they feel programmes are addressing their needs. However, Rogers et al. (2003); Degener (2001) highlight that critical adult literacy programmes do not simply teach literacy and other basic skills but rather they show adult learners how they can use those skills to transform their lives and the society in which they live. This argument brings us to the question of whether facilitators are aware and eventually incorporate critical pedagogy with the view of assisting adult learners change their lives (see Chapter 4).

Literature and research are clear about the need to engage adult learners in literacy practices with texts and tools that are demanded by and valued in society in order for them to be functionally literate (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012). Dhlamini (2012) argues that the appropriateness of adult literacy programmes can be judged from the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired and satisfaction the learners get from the programme. This suggests that adult learners are motivated to join adult literacy programmes if they feel programmes are addressing their needs (Nuwagaba, 2006). McCaffery et al. (2007) state that because humans are social beings, these needs must also be defined socially and culturally. For instance, people may want to acquire literacy skills for them to be able to read the Bible, and possibly write letters to family members and relatives who are away somewhere. Overall, Lesgold and Welch-Ross (2012) observe that there are many reasons why individuals seek to develop literacy skills as adults. Some people join adult literacy classes to get a higher certificate, others seek to help their children and families with education, and others seek to learn English or enhance skills for their job responsibilities. Arguments regarding the benefits of adult learning appear to focus on the understanding that adult learning largely transforms people's lives by providing various opportunities that can only be discovered through the acquisition of literacy skills.

Nonetheless, it must be emphasised that the facilitation process remains at the centre for adult learning to take place and achieve its benefits. Harod (2001) argues that the development of literacy skills among adult learners largely depends on facilitation methods and content employed by facilitators. This argument implies that adult learning outcomes cannot be achieved in the absence of a robust facilitation process. While it may be necessary to acknowledge that facilitation methods used during the learning process play a crucial role in the development of literacy skills among adult learners (see Section 2.5), this raises questions as to whether REFLECT facilitators are aware of facilitation methods appropriate for adult learning and how they are employed during facilitation process, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, what follows in the next sub-section is a description of facilitation process of adult learning and how it may be applied, with a focus on the essential requirements around adult learning facilitation.

2.3 Facilitating adult learning

The facilitation of adult learning means assisting adult learners to make sense of and act upon the personal, social, occupational and political environment in which they live (Kapur, 2018). Modern approaches to adult literacy programmes emphasize that facilitation of adult learning cannot be effectively accomplished through the conventional teaching style based on teacher-centred method (Kamp, 2011). To bring about effective adult learning, facilitators should understand what adult learning actually is and what methods and strategies are used to influence effectiveness in adult learning (Kapur, 2018), as will be discussed later in the chapter (Section 2.5). This suggests that facilitators should have knowledge and skills necessary for facilitation of the adult learning process. Certainly, it is ironical to expect facilitators to facilitate adult learning effectively when they do not have knowledge about how adult learning can be effectively facilitated.

Facilitation involves working with people with the aim of enabling and empowering them to effectively discuss and interact in order to perform a certain task or achieve certain objectives (Kamp, 2011). It generally encourages sharing of knowledge, ideas, resources, opinions and allows for constructive criticism as a way of coming to one understanding of concepts and reality. As such, facilitation of adult learning should be done in such a way that the learning expectations of every adult learner involved should be met (Kapur, 2018). It is important to know that when adult learners are engaged in learning, they do bring about vast collection of experiences within their setting that helps in facilitation of their learning (Rural Health Education Foundation, 2009). Therefore, facilitators are expected to make deliberate efforts to create a conducive environment that allows adult learners to discover their potential through sharing of knowledge, skills and experiences during adult learning. This brings us to the question of whether REFLECT facilitators do create such an environment for adult learners to share knowledge and skills during adult learning process (see Chapter 4). These are the issues which this research study set out to address.

It may be necessary to mention that the term facilitator encompasses the idea of facilitating learning and it is commonly used in the more radical approaches to literacy. Programmes that are consciously linked to empowerment, community development, and social change

such as REFLECT always use the word '*facilitator*' (McCaffery et al., 2007; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This study therefore uses the term facilitator. Literature and research appear to be clear about the need to consider the predominant requirements for literacy facilitators. Thus, the following sub-sections discuss general requirements significantly related to facilitators.

2.3.1 Qualities of a facilitator

Ogu, Osaru and Yahaya (2019) define facilitator as a person who helps adults to learn in an experiential group. According to McCaffery et al. (2007), the facilitator must be competent and fluent in reading and writing the language of the programme and the language of the learners, and also be competent and confident in mathematics and numeracy. Over and above, the facilitator must be able to relate to adult learners, their lives and their issues apart from having excellent communication skills. Kapur (2018) highlights that the role of the facilitator is to facilitate learning and to make sure that adult learners understand and learn whatever is being taught to them. This means that a facilitator handles learning situations and simplifies learning for adult learners. Ogu et al. (2019) state that facilitators, among other things, liberate, free and ease adult learning through adult education programmes. All this highlights the crucial role that facilitators play in implementing adult literacy programmes. However, one wonders whether facilitators are aware of their responsibilities regarding facilitation of the adult learning process. Despite all the descriptions regarding qualities and roles of facilitators, not much is known about REFLECT facilitators in our Malawian context. This signifies that there is little coverage on the experiences of facilitators particularly in terms of their awareness to issues around facilitation and duties involved.

However, for facilitators to successfully facilitate adult learning process, they need to be competent in performing facilitation roles. Ogu et al. (2019) argue that competent facilitators enhance good and relevant adult education programmes design and curricula and adopt innovative strategies for facilitating learning for adult learners to improve the achievement of their learning needs. The argument points to calls for facilitators to be properly selected and trained appropriately as this prepares them to use appropriate

andragogical skills in facilitating adult learning (Oluoch, Ayodo & Enose, 2014). This gives rise to a question of whether REFLECT facilitators in Mulanje district are competent enough to effectively facilitate adult learning process, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. These are some of the key issues that this study sought to explore.

2.3.2 Academic qualifications of facilitators

As regards academic qualifications, McCaffery et al. (2007) state that literacy facilitators are normally expected to have at least completed secondary education and hold a Junior Certificate of Education (JCE), but preferably a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). This is based on the belief that those with JCE and MSCE have knowledge and are competent enough to assist adult learners develop literacy skills. In this study, qualifications of REFLECT facilitators are central issues that the study sought to investigate. Considering that one distinctive criterion for one to become a facilitator is academic qualifications, this study sought to establish whether REFLECT facilitators involved have the qualifications required to facilitate effectively in the literacy circles, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 (see Table 4.1).

An evaluation study conducted in Monkey Bay, Malawi, by Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) on the support to the National Adult Literacy Programme in Monkey Bay from 2001 to 2004 found that most facilitators had only attained primary education and that the selection process of facilitators was not rigorous enough. Consequently, the study showed that most of the facilitators found it difficult to use the appropriate methodologies suitable for adult learning. In a study on the capacity of facilitators to produce learners with functional skills in adult literacy programme in Vihiga, Kenya, Oluoch et al. (2014) established similar findings that some facilitators had gone only up to Primary Class 8. These findings raise a serious question on whether facilitators who have just attended primary education have the knowledge and skills to ably facilitate adult learning process. Oluoch et al. (2014) argue that it is education that provides individuals with capacity to understand and conceptualise complex issues and that educational attainment of facilitators has a direct impact on the facilitators' capacity to deliver necessary information needed by the adult learners. This argument implies that facilitators' education qualifications should

be considered equally important because they determine the quality of education, which is essential for achieving learning outcomes. Actually, a study by Alkali (2016) on facilitators' professional qualities and learning outcomes in non-formal basic literacy programme in Sokoto State, Nigeria found that educational qualifications of facilitators have positive effect on adult learners' learning outcomes in basic adult literacy programmes.

Apart from academic qualifications, Lesgold and Welch-Ross (2012) add that facilitators often need training, coaching, mentoring, and encouragement to question and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction. This means that periodic trainings and refresher courses for facilitators are equally essential and therefore need more attention. Such trainings and refresher courses act as an eye-opener for facilitators to be equipped with best practices regarding facilitation of adult learning process. Thus, the following sub-section discusses general issues related to training of facilitators.

2.3.3 Training of facilitators

Oluoch et al. (2014) argue that facilitators need proper training as it prepares them to use appropriate facilitation methods in facilitating adult learning. Further, DFID (2008) states that literacy education programmes are more likely to be effective when facilitators are well trained. Concurring with DFID (2008), Addae (2016) observes that if basic adult literacy programmes can be successful in achieving their goals of imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learners, facilitators must be equipped with the various strategies, methods, and techniques for facilitating adult learning process. As Suleyman (2013) argues, training of facilitators is important since it helps them develop their knowledge and skills for effective facilitation. Besides, it enables them to use appropriate facilitation methods during adult learning process. This suggests that facilitators must have formal training to equip them with knowledge and skills to competently facilitate adult learning process.

Majority of adult literacy programmes usually prepare facilitators through a short period of initial training. In most cases, the training period for facilitators is two weeks

(McCaffery et al., 2007). According to Archer and Cottingham (1996), REFLECT facilitators must undergo a residential training for at least 12 days to enable them share knowledge and encourage team building. One question still remains open – why should facilitators undergo residential training when they usually come from within the same locality? The researcher's view on residential training is that it could be a deliberate effort meant to give facilitators more time and focus to have more and deeper understanding of REFLECT approach and issues to do with effective facilitation. In line with the researcher's view, Lesgold and Welch-Ross (2012) argue that facilitators need adequate training for them to acquire knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate adult literacy learning.

Given that the recommended period of training for REFLECT facilitators is 12 days (Archer & Cottingham, 1996), one wonders whether the 12 days of training are adequate enough to prepare them understand the approach, process and facilitation methods to successfully facilitate adult learning process. Some scholars have rightly noted that 12 days of training is too short time to make facilitators competent enough on different aspects of running literacy circles effectively and helping adult learners to achieve basic literacy competencies (Rogers, 2005; Kishindo, 1994). A study by Popkins (1998) on facilitator training and innovation in REFLECT focusing on experience from Nepal found out that some facilitators had problems to understand REFLECT approach and its principles even after undergoing training for 3 days. While Popkins' findings do not undermine the importance of training for facilitators, they invite us to raise some critical questions such as whether the 12 days of training are enough to prepare the facilitators, and whether the training offered really prepared them enough to facilitate the adult learning process (see Chapter 4). Despite these findings from research studies conducted elsewhere, not much is known about experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes, especially in a Malawian context. This signifies that there is little coverage on experiences of facilitators which this research study sought to address.

Archer and Newman (2003) add that the training should include at least some hours of practical experiences in the facilitators' own communities to enable them put into practice

what they have learnt. The question to be asked is whether facilitators are given some time during training to go out for practical experiences in literacy circles to actually put into practice the theoretical knowledge acquired (see Chapter 4). Attwood (2008) observes that REFLECT approach demands for highly skilled facilitators to guide the facilitation process to achieve intended outcomes. Thus, the role of facilitators as rightly argued by Phnuyal (1998) is crucial in making the whole REFLECT process effective.

More crucially, the training also focuses on facilitation methods appropriate for adult learners: how to lead facilitation process in the literacy circles, how to handle adult learners, how to use tools for facilitation, and how to correct adult learners when they have made mistakes during the learning process, among other topics (Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Oluoch et al. (2014) argue that facilitators need to be imparted with knowledge regarding effective facilitation methodologies suitable for adult literacy learning and equip them with necessary capacity to assist adult learners through the process that leads to the achievement of learning outcomes, as discussed in the sub-section 2.4.2 of the thesis. In general, the training can be considered as the hub for effective facilitation which in the end has implications on the achievement of learning outcomes. On the contrary, it can be inferred that lack of training for facilitators is a recipe for disaster with regards to both facilitation and attainment of learning outcomes. Supporting the argument, DFID's (2008) practice paper on the update about adult literacy across the globe found that quality and achievement in adult learning depend on the quality of facilitation which requires a combination of understanding of issues and good facilitation skills which largely emanate from the training of facilitators. A study by Alkali (2016) on facilitators' professional qualities and learning outcomes in non-formal basic literacy programme in Sokoto State, Nigeria also found that facilitators' knowledge and skills relate positively and significantly with adult learners' learning outcomes in adult basic literacy programmes. This calls for adult literacy programmes to consider the issue of training seriously in order to achieve the intended outcomes of the programmes, as will be discussed later in the thesis (see sub-section 4.6.2).

However, Archer and Cottingham (1996) argue that any amount of initial training, even if the period could be six months, will be inadequate if there are no on-going trainings such as refresher which are aimed at following up issues that affect facilitators during the facilitation process. Facilitators need refresher courses in which they review facilitation experiences, discuss common issues arising across adult literacy circles during facilitation process and jointly share experiences on issues and take actions (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012; Archer & Newman, 2003). It is recommended that refresher courses should be held frequently at least once a year, but preferably twice or thrice a year (Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). All these efforts are aimed at improving the quality of facilitation process.

Archer and Cottingham (1996) emphasise that facilitators should frequently attend refresher courses because they can help in a number of ways, such as monitoring and outlining gaps, and also improving upon the weakest areas of facilitation. This shows that these refresher courses focus on capacity building to equip facilitators with knowledge and skills for improved facilitation process. While emphasising the relevance of refresher courses, Oluoch et al. (2014) state that capacity building for facilitators in adult literacy programmes is essentially crucial for effective facilitation as it enables them to articulate and respond to the ever-changing needs of adult literacy learners and other emerging issues.

Nevertheless, a study by Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) on the support to the National Adult Literacy Programme in Monkey Bay from 2001 to 2004 found that while some REFLECT facilitators attended a refresher course for 5 days, others had never attended one. The study further indicated that most facilitators who attended the refresher course observed that they considered the time for the refresher course rather too short. While Benediktsson and Kamtengeni's findings do not undermine the importance of refresher courses for facilitators, they expose some knowledge gaps experienced by facilitators about how visual aids such as graphics can be used during the facilitation process. Such knowledge gaps can be resolved if refresher courses are conducted more regularly.

Overall, evidence from literature and research acknowledges the need to regard training of facilitators as a dominant requirement for adult literacy programmes. As such, it may be necessary to consider training of facilitators as a basis for facilitation and adult learning. The crucial aspect of training involves equipping facilitators with knowledge and skills to competently facilitate adult learning process. This suggests that the training significantly contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.3.4 Peer support meetings

Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) argue that peer support provides an important opportunity for facilitators to learn from each other's experiences, share ideas and revise their facilitation methods and practices. According to Archer and Newman (2003), the best support for facilitators will be each other as they will have a shared experience and will understand each other. Archer and Newman further observe that the sharing and review of their experiences can also lead to them identifying and discussing common issues arising across adult literacy circles and therefore develop joint actions. This suggests the need to consider encouraging exchange visits between facilitators themselves in order to offer each other a wide range of practical support. The growing recognition of the importance of peer support meetings to facilitation brings us to the question of whether REFLECT facilitators that participated in this study are involved in peer support meetings. Accordingly, consideration should be given to these peer support meetings. The following section discusses the REFLECT approach and the facilitation process.

2.4 Facilitating literacy through REFLECT approach

REFLECT approach focuses on learning by practice and believes that it is only through practice that real learning takes place (Archer & Goreth, 2004). Participants in REFLECT circles discuss issues affecting them and come up with lasting and sustainable solutions to the challenges faced. The approach strives to improve people's meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives through strengthening their ability to communicate while at the same time developing literacy skills (Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). The approach has three broad aims which are interconnected, and these are enforcing people's communication skills, development of literacy skills, and changing

people's lives through the application of literacy skills acquired. Hence, facilitators should facilitate the learning process with the realisation that adult learners need to acquire such multifaceted skills.

There are no prescribed textbooks in the REFLECT approach, as such facilitators together with adult learners develop their own manual for facilitation (FRC, 2016; Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). The approach emphasises developing literacy skills alongside improving people's meaningful participation in decisions that affects their lives through strengthening their ability to communicate (Sempere, 2009; Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Participants discuss a wide range of issues that affect them in their communities in order to find long lasting solutions. Examples of such issues could be lack of portable water, deforestation, gender-based violence, early marriages, cases of rape and child abuse, among other topics. After the discussions, actions are taken. Some actions may be very local and precise while others may require linkages beyond the local level to national level mobilisation (Archer & Goreth, 2004). The participants then evaluate whether the strategies put in place have achieved their intended objectives or not. If the results are not favourable, then through the same discussion, new plans are devised on how to proceed in dealing with the issues at hand by involving various stakeholders (Sempere, 2009; Archer & Cottingham, 1996).

Underpinning the approach is a range of participatory tools and techniques such as calendars, maps, matrices and trees which enable participants to communicate their knowledge, experience and feelings without being restricted by literacy and language barriers. Other facilitation methods such as role play are introduced to give learners the opportunity to communicate as they rehearse real situations (Cardiff, Newman & Pearce, 2007). This makes adult learners understand the root causes of their problems and plan on the best strategies to deal with the challenges faced (Cardiff et al., 2007; Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This suggests that REFLECT approach encourages facilitators to use facilitation methods that promote adult learners' ability to interact and practice what they have learned, as will be discussed later in the chapter (see Section 2.5). Schunk (2008) advocates for facilitators to involve adult learners actively in their learning

and to provide experiences that challenge their thinking. Some of the facilitation methods that can be used to actively engage adult learners in the learning process include group discussion, role play, debate and drama. As Moon and Sunderland (2008) state, REFLECT approach gives more space to learners for discussions in the literacy circles. This indicates that key to REFLECT approach is creating a space where people feel comfortable to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and their lives (Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This implies that the facilitator does not take centre stage in the learning process. In this case, the role of the facilitator is to create an environment that promotes the active participation of learners in the learning process (Addae, 2016), and as is discussed in Section 2.7.

2.4.1 REFLECT learning circle

REFLECT learning circle has some stages which include challenge/issue, tools and techniques, discussion and analysis, and planning and action. Besides, other stages are strengthening literacy, numeracy and communication skills, and reflection and evaluation (Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Figure 2.1 illustrates REFLECT learning circle.

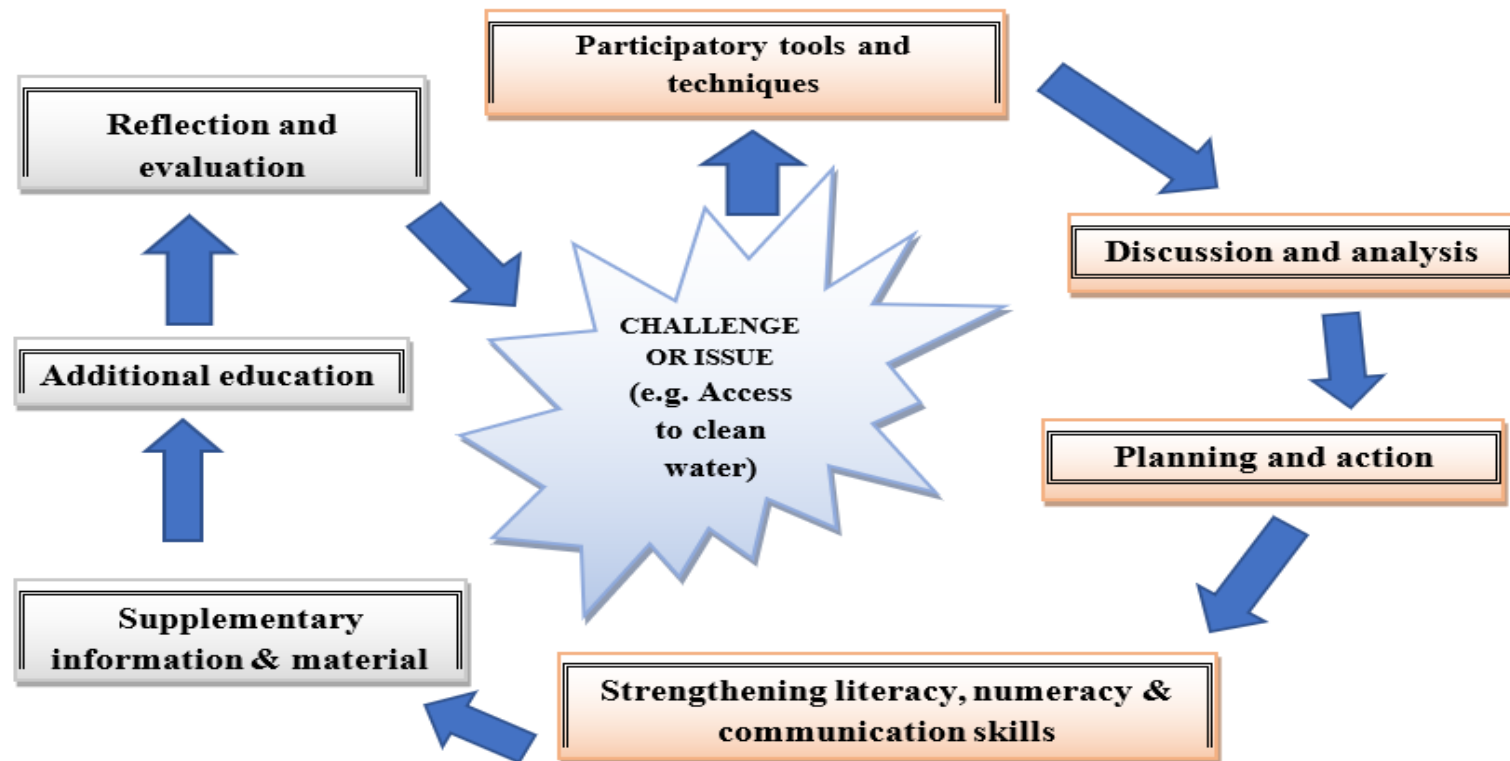


Figure 2.1: REFLECT learning circle

Source: Adapted from Attwood (2008)

The following section provides a brief discussion of each of the stages in the REFLECT learning circle depicted in Figure 2.1.

2.4.1.1 Challenge or issue

One important step in getting started with REFLECT approach is a pre-literacy survey. During this stage, facilitators together with adult learners identify possible themes for which literacy would be required. These themes provide an insight into a long list of topics that could be developed as facilitators' manual, for future facilitation purposes. Whether a pre-literacy survey is done or not, a facilitator should in consultation with adult learners be able to identify as topic a typical problem or a topical issue that is close to the heart of the community or adult learners (Finnish Refugee Council [FRC], 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). For instance, typical problems experienced in communities could be access to clean water, child marriages, and gender-based violence, among others. These identified problems in the end become topics to be discussed in literacy circle.

2.4.1.2 Tools and techniques

Facilitators develop suitable graphics or use any technique during sessions to help the discussion of issues by adult learners. Some examples of tools include maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams. These graphics also serve as topic introducers as well as reference materials when faced with similar issues that need the same tools or techniques (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This suggests that once these tools are used in literacy circles, they are not discarded but rather kept for future use and perhaps reference.

2.4.1.3 Discussion and analysis

Adult learners develop communication and analysis skills through constructive discussion based on the graphics developed by asking questions using the seven words such as who, what, why, when, where, how and what else. They ask themselves, why this is happening and what are the immediate and root causes of these problems? This involves analysis of the problem from three perspectives; the personal, the cultural and the institutional/political

perspective. This discussion usually leads to a clear understanding of what the graphics represent (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Thus, the use of graphics in literacy circles may be considered as an effective approach to develop literacy skills, specifically speaking skills since discussions in literacy circles mostly focus on the graphics provided by facilitators. This raises questions such as whether REFLECT facilitators involved in this study consider the use of graphics as crucial to the acquisition of literacy skills, and whether they are often used during learning process, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

2.4.1.4 Planning and action

Discussing problems without finding workable solutions is as good as not talking about them at all, because it is not only unproductive and frustrating but also de-motivating. By backing up problem discussion with appropriate action, adult learners develop the culture of self-driven and self-managed development (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008). At this stage, adult learners at a literacy circle together with the community discuss solutions to their problems and arrive at action points that should be taken into consideration when implementing decisions that have been agreed upon (FRC, 2016). The focus at this stage is on the solutions and the actions to be taken regarding the issues discussed.

2.4.1.5 Strengthening literacy, numeracy and communication skills

REFLECT approach strengthens a wide range of skills such as literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In REFLECT circles, reading and writing work arises either directly or thematically out of the graphics produced by participants. The maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams, and the structured discussions provide rich source materials for developing literacy practice in a meaningful context. A root-word is coined from the topic and used as foundation for further spelling, reading, writing, question and answer. The limit in generating reading and writing materials largely depends on the creativity and ingenuity of the facilitator (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This brings us to the question of whether REFLECT facilitators involved in the study are creative and resourceful enough to generate reading and writing materials that can stimulate reading and writing skills among adult learners (see Chapter 4). In essence, creativity and

resourcefulness of facilitator becomes the heart of the progress of literacy circle and more importantly, the attainment of literacy skills by adult learners. The issue discussed is what is used as a reference point in regards to words to be used in the literacy circles (FRC, 2016). In the end, the generated words form the basis for literacy practices, specifically reading and writing skills.

Similarly, numeracy skills stem from the same topic and graphics discussed at reading and writing stage. Basic arithmetic operations including weight, distance and money value, among others could be introduced (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). For instance, basic arithmetic sums that are discussed in literacy circles include questions like, If a bag of maize is sold at K12 000. 00 at Admarc market, how much money will a farmer realise after selling 5 bags of maize? Or suppose a family consumes 2 bags of maize per month, how many bags of maize will the family need to cater them the whole year? These kinds of basic arithmetic sums which are practical in nature greatly assist adult learners to acquire numeracy skills. The basic arithmetic sums are meant to equip adult learners with numerical skills needed for their daily use.

2.4.1.6 Supplementary information and material

These materials include books, pamphlets and posters on topics that adult learners have already been dealing with. Adult learners can then use their experience to critically read and challenge such texts, or to seek specific information on issues that have been left unresolved (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). These materials generally provide necessary information with regard to issues being discussed in literacy circle. One needs to understand that sourcing of such materials largely rests on the facilitators' creativity and resourcefulness to determine its relevance to the theme under discussion (Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). It can therefore be argued that the creativity and resourcefulness of facilitators largely plays a key role during the facilitation process and therefore need much attention.

2.4.1.7 Additional education

Adult learners together with the facilitator invite people with technical expertise within the area to share their information which can be useful in dealing with the issue being discussed (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). For instance, the facilitator can invite an Agricultural Extension Officer to facilitate on how adult learners can apply fertilizers in their fields to realise maximum yields or a Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) to share with them on how to treat water from water borne diseases such as diarrhoea. The shared knowledge from experts in different fields helps adult learners to have a deeper understanding of issues leading to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This also depends on the commitment of the facilitator to engage such people with specialised knowledge and share their knowledge with adult learners on specific issues (Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). This suggests that commitment of facilitators plays a crucial role during facilitation process. This invites us to raise a question of whether REFLECT facilitators involved in this study are committed to their duties of helping adult learners acquire literacy skills. Again, the issue of commitment by REFLECT facilitators requires attention, as will be discussed in sub-section 4.4.2.

2.4.1.8 Reflection and evaluation

At the end of each literacy session, the facilitator should check whether the session has been successful or not in terms of adult learners' understanding of concepts. This means that the facilitator should evaluate the depth to which the topic is understood and whether there is need for additional work (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008; Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). However, reflection and evaluation are equally done after the action points have been implemented to find out how effective the decisions made were and if the challenges or issues have been successfully resolved, if not how best to re-plan (FRC, 2016; Attwood, 2008). Overall, this stage develops creative thinking skills and increases self-awareness which are key components in developing a better understanding of the progress made regarding adult learning.

2.4.2 Expected outcomes for REFLECT approach

The expected outcomes for REFLECT approach are that it: helps adult learners to read, write and develop numeracy skills; empowers adult learners through literacy and livelihood skills training to combat poverty, enhances their livelihoods and income generation capacity, and promotes community development. Apart from that, REFLECT approach assists adult learners acquire knowledge on a wide range of issues affecting people in their communities such as health issues, human rights, power to the people, family nutrition, agriculture, sanitation and hygiene. It also empowers adult learners to be active participants and decision makers within the family and in the community. Besides, it empowers adult learners to effectively nurture their children's psychosocial development, and also monitor their progress in school (Hanemann, 2017; FRC, 2016; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Overall, REFLECT approach is not only about knowing how to read and write but also understanding and combating different issues that are affecting peoples' lives for improved livelihoods (Hanemann, 2017; Archer & Cottingham, 1996).

In summary, REFLECT approach generally does not only aim at assisting adult learners develop literacy skills but also strengthen their communication skills through discussion of issues, problems and challenges that affect them and then come up with sustainable solutions. The acquired knowledge and skills then help them to transform their lives and communities. More crucially, the approach demands for competent and committed facilitators who play the key role in the facilitation of adult learning process.

2.5 Facilitation methods and techniques

Adult literacy programmes require the use of different facilitation methods and techniques that are specifically suitable for adult learning (TIME Project Partnership, 2016). Facilitators should realise that literacy programmes recommend the use of learner-centred methods because they help enhance the adult learners' ability to learn independently (Kapur, 2018; UNISA, 2015; Kamp, 2011). Kamp (2011) argues that facilitators should use a mix of appropriate facilitation methods to ensure an effective and participatory adult learning process. Besides that, it has been proven in practice that the combination of different facilitation methods is more effective because they stimulate the motivation of

adult learners (TIME Project Partnership, 2016). Table 2.1 provides a summary of facilitation methods suitable for adult learning.

Table 2.1: Summary of facilitation methods

Facilitation method	Key aspect(s)	Strengths	Challenges and/or weaknesses
Lecture	- Suitable for large groups	-Covers bulk of information in a short time	-Its effectiveness depends on the knowledge and skills of a facilitator -Less participatory -Does not promote interaction
Brainstorming	- Suitable for collecting ideas, views and suggestions	- Highly participatory - Promotes involvement of learners -Stimulates quick thinking and creativity	- Does not engage all learners in the learning process - Time consuming if learners are not controlled
Group discussion	- Divide learners into small groups (3 to 5 people) - It is more focused and result-oriented	- Stimulates exchange of ideas - Helps to clarify learners' thoughts and feelings - Highly participatory -Builds learners' self-esteem	-Its effectiveness depends on the unity of purpose of group members - It leads to individual participation - Peer pressure from everyone to agree on incorrect responses
Buzz group	- Discussion of 2 to 3 learners seated next to each other	-Used to break up long sessions -Helps to prevent boredom	- Immaturity of learners affect its effectiveness Not effective to younger learners or close friends

Role play	- Learners act out a real-life situation	- Stimulates actions - Triggers discussion -Creates friendly learning environment	- Requires expert guidance and leadership - Depends on learners' imagination
Case study	- Relate topics to real-life situations	-Encourages participation -Helps develop concrete ideas -Helps in decision making -Reinforces critical and analytical skills	-Requires an expert with experience - Time consuming
Songs and dances	-Learning entertainment methods - Add both fun and action	- Provides both creative and entertainment to learning -Used as energisers and stimulate active learning	- It depends on the commitment of learners - Can turn into an entertainment show
Visual aids	-Pictures, photos, charts, and any physical objects	-Explain new ideas and stimulate discussion -Stimulates interactions through reactions -Stimulates thinking -Makes learning lively and interesting	-Poorly designed visual aids can mislead learners -Wrong information on visual aids can cause distraction
Question and answer	-Used to clarify ideas	-Stimulates participation of learners -Stretches learners' reasoning skills	-Questions should not be directed to few learners -No room for imaginative answers due to structured responses
Demonstration	-Used for teaching concepts	-Allows learners to see and experience things	-Restricted to certain teaching situations

		-Increases learners' knowledge to master concepts	-Requires more time for preliminary preparation
Debate	-Two groups with opposite views argue for their positions	-Motivates learners -Encourages active learning -Helps to explore opposing views -Promotes critical thinking, speaking skills and self-confidence	-Arguments can cause hard feelings between opposing groups -It makes learners to focus solely on one side of an issue or topic
Drama	-Uses imaginations	-Helps learners to explore and learn social skills -Motivates learners to think independently -Most effective method for illiterate people -Improves creative thinking, communication skills, problem-solving and self-confidence	-Its effectiveness depends on the knowledge and skills of a facilitator - Hard to control learners because of too much fun -Time consuming as it required more time for preparation

(Sources: Kapur, 2018; UNISA, 2015; Kamp, 2011; Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996)

Evidence from literature and research indicates that a combination of different appropriate facilitation methods (see Table 2.1) promotes effective and participatory adult learning process. Apart from that, the combination of those methods has proved to be more effective to stimulate the motivation of adult learners (Kapur, 2018; TIME Project Partnership, 2016; UNISA, 2015; Kamp, 2011). This knowledge therefore calls for facilitators to seriously consider how best they can use different appropriate facilitation methods during the learning process in order to bring out the desired outcomes. As Quan-Baffour (2000) argues, no single facilitation method can achieve the outcomes of the facilitation process. It is the researcher's view that facilitator's knowledge can either make adult learning

successful or mess it up depending on how facilitation methods are used during the learning process. Addae (2016) argues that by employing effective facilitation methods, the facilitator is able to assist adult learners achieve the desired learning outcomes, as previously discussed in sub-section 2.4.2. With respect to Addae's argument, a study by Alkali (2016) on facilitators' professional qualities and learning outcomes in non-formal basic literacy programme in Sokoto State, Nigeria found that facilitation methods used by facilitators relate strongly and positively to adult learners' learning outcomes in basic literacy programmes. Thus, it can be inferred that limited knowledge of facilitators about facilitation methods could affect the overall achievement of learning outcomes considering that facilitation methods have direct bearing on the achievement of adult learning outcomes.

A crucial point that can be raised is whether REFLECT facilitators involved in this study are aware of facilitation methods that are suitable for adult learning (see Chapter 4). Of course, it may be difficult to give a clear-cut answer considering the findings from research studies which have established that REFLECT facilitators use learner-centred methods during facilitation process (Rogers, 2008; Benediktsson & Kamtengeni, 2004). The findings suggest that adult learners are taught in the same manner just like children and that has implications on the extent to which adult learners can acquire literacy skills. In general, facilitation methods used during adult learning process were some of the issues that the study sought to explore, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

Overall, this section has discussed different facilitation methods that are appropriate for adult learning. Evidence from literature strongly suggests that adult literacy programmes recommend learner-centered methods and techniques of facilitation alongside in order to bring out the expected outcomes (Kamp, 2011). Some of the facilitation methods and techniques include role play, brainstorming, small group discussion, songs and dances, drama, debate and buzz group. Considered together, it appears adult literacy facilitators have a wide range of options regarding facilitation methods and techniques suitable for adult learning. More importantly, it has been observed that effective use of these facilitation

methods and techniques depends on the knowledge of facilitators. Thus, the knowledge of facilitator plays a critical role in the facilitation of adult learning process.

2.6 Facilitator motivation

Motivation is defined as a driving force or desire that causes an individual to engage in certain behaviour (Mwamwenda, 2004). Rogers (2009) argues that it is a major factor in addressing a person's willingness to do something. There are two types of motivation which are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the internal drive to succeed whereas extrinsic motivation focuses on outside influences which impact on our need to succeed (Byrne et al., 2016). Rheinberg (2000) states that actions which are intrinsically motivated are especially interesting, exciting or challenging and show positive aspects of experience. By contrast, extrinsically motivated actions have an instrumental function as they are used to reach positive consequences, for instance, rewards or bonuses for facilitators. This means that, as argued by Nnadi (2016), if there is no motivation amongst workers, their quality of work will obviously deteriorate.

Nnadi (2016) observes that adult literacy facilitators need motivational strategies to influence their work commitment, performance, productivity and efficiency. It is critical to realise that motivational strategies greatly assist facilitators to carry out their facilitation activities effectively for the achievement of expected outcomes. Nsekaki (2014) while researching on functional adult literacy programme (FAL) in Uganda found that some of the major challenges faced by adult literacy programmes include lack of incentives for facilitators and limited financial support towards the development of literacy education programmes. The problem that needs to be highlighted is that lack of incentives for facilitators coupled with limited financial support towards literacy programmes can negatively affect the performance of facilitators because they have direct impact on the motivation of facilitators.

A study in Kenya by Nyakundi (2012) on factors affecting teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Thika West District, Kiambu County found that some of the motivational strategies for teachers include incentives and rewards, bonuses, comfortable

pay, awards, participatory decision-making process, supportive evaluation and supervision, promotion, adequate support through effective teaching resources, and conducive working conditions. Even though Nyakundi's study focused on teachers, the researcher argues that the findings have far-reaching implications for adult literacy facilitators. In Nigeria, a study by Nnadi (2016) about motivational strategies provided for facilitators in adult literacy centres in Enugu-North Senatorial Zone, Enugu State also found that motivating facilitators through effective rewards such as incentives, promotions, compensations, scholarships, and recognition resulted in improved high performances in literacy classes. Andrew (2004) observes that any form of reward will ultimately assist to boost workers' productivity and performance. Clearly, all this seems to indicate that if facilitators are adequately motivated, it is possible that their level of performance during facilitation process of adult learning can be improved. The research findings by Nyakundi (2012) and Nnadi (2016) invite the researcher to ask whether facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes are motivated as they carry out their duties in helping adult learners acquire literacy skills. These are some of the key issues which this research study sought to investigate, as will be discussed in Section 4.4 of the thesis.

However, it is equally crucial for facilitators to know the aspirations of adult learners to have a better understanding of what they like and want to achieve. Dhlamini (2012) argues that adults are motivated to join adult literacy programmes if they feel programmes are addressing their needs. Rogers (2008) observes that adult learners join literacy classes for them to gain social status in their communities and be recognised as literate, given that literate people are usually regarded as special people by community members. For instance, some adults want to be able to read a Bible so that they can become Bible readers either at church or funerals. Such responsibilities, though they may appear small to others, do extremely change some people's status to a higher level in our communities. Research studies found that adults are motivated to participate in adult learning in order to achieve certain goals to make a better life for themselves and also provide education support to their children (Probak, 2004; Openjuru, 2004). This means that adult learners need skills that will help them transform their lives.

Surprisingly, Dhlamini (2012) argues that most facilitators do not have the knowledge on what motivates adults to learn. The argument raises questions regarding facilitators' competences such as whether facilitators who do not have the knowledge on what motivates adults to join adult literacy learning are capable of assisting adult learners to acquire literacy skills and ultimately achieve their goals. The researcher opines that all this points to knowledge gap of facilitators and the need to determine their competences to effectively facilitate adult learning process. Knowles (2001) argues that one way of motivating adult learners to participate in adult learning is by making the content meaningful and connecting it to their needs. This argument suggests that if adult learners are able to relate the content to their daily needs, that may encourage them to see the relevance of learning and therefore stir up their motivation. The absence of clear understanding by facilitators on what motivates adult learners to learn could adversely affect the overall development of literacy skills and above all, the achievement of learning outcomes if the problem is not properly addressed. This implies the need for literacy facilitators to understand what actually motivates adult learners to participate in adult learning if adult literacy programmes are to achieve the intended outcomes.

2.7 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy. Knowles (1989) defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. The theory focuses on adult learners and it extends to facilitation methods. It recommends learner-centred methods, which is crucial part in terms of facilitation of adult learning process (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984). Knowles identified six characteristics of adult learners that literacy facilitators should consider for effective facilitation. These characteristics are: adults are autonomous and self-directed; adults have accumulated life experiences and knowledge; adults are goal-oriented; adults are relevancy-oriented; adults are practical; and adults need to be shown respect (Kapur, 2018; Kamp, 2011; Rogers, 2008; McCaffery et al., 2007; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Lieb, 1991). The characteristics of adult learners have become increasingly influential in adult learning programmes considering that they form the basis for facilitation of adult learning.

2.7.1 Adults are autonomous and self-directed

Fidishun (2000) argues that adult learners resist learning when they feel others are imposing information, ideas or actions on them. This is because they are used to control their own lives and even those of others. As such, adult learners want to control the learning process and not leave the control to literacy facilitator (Rogers, 2008). This suggests that the role of facilitator is to engage and guide adult learners to their own knowledge instead of purely supplying them with facts by actively involving them in the learning process (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). It also suggests that adult learners should be free to direct themselves, decide what they want to learn, for how long they can learn and what direction the learning process will take. This includes creating their learning objectives which allow them to set learning goals (Kamp, 2011; Rogers, 2008). As Kamp (2011) rightly observes, learning is most effective and lasting when the process is self-initiated.

Adult learners should be encouraged to be responsible for their own learning process and the direction it takes. This suggests that facilitators should consult adult learners' perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests, and the methodology to be applied (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). The challenge for facilitators comes in when it is time to take up adult learners' input to enhance their ownership of the literacy learning process while at the same time still ensuring that the pre-defined objectives of literacy learning should be achieved (Kamp, 2011). However, it is imperative to remind facilitators that their role is just to provide guidance to adult learners in the learning process. In this regard, Rogers (2008) recommends that a horizontal relationship rather than a vertical relationship between facilitators and adult learners should characterise all adult literacy programmes simply because a hierarchy of power may be suitable for teaching children but not helping adults to learn. This knowledge invites the researcher to ask questions whether REFLECT facilitators involved in this study are aware of their role of providing guidance to adult learners during the learning process. In addition, whether facilitators understand the kind of relationship that should exist between themselves and adult learners. These are some of the key issues that this study sought to address (see Chapter 4).

2.7.2 Adults have accumulated life experiences and knowledge

Adults come to adult literacy programmes with a range of previous experience, for instance, work-related skills and experiences as well as family responsibilities. As such, all new learning must build on prior knowledge and experience (Kamp, 2011; McCaffery, et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2005). However, past experiences may also bias adult learners' attitude towards learning, and if the new learning experience does not fit into what adult learners already know, they might reject it (Kamp, 2011). As such, facilitators should assist adult learners to see a connection between the current learning experience and their past experiences and their existing knowledge base (Kamp, 2011; Rogers, 2008; Lieb, 1991). Lindeman (1926) argues that experience is the richest resource for adult learning, hence the principal methodology for adult education is the analysis of experience. As Rogers (2008) suggests, all adult literacy programmes should help adult learners to identify their existing knowledge and build on it and not treat them as ignorant and unskilled. This implies that facilitators should acknowledge adult learners' backgrounds and competences and use that as a resource to adult learning (Kamp, 2011). The question to be asked is whether facilitators realise that adult learners have a bank of knowledge and experiences that can be utilised during the learning process. This is one of the issues that the study explored.

2.7.3 Adults are goal-oriented

Adults usually enroll in adult literacy programmes with certain goals in mind and they learn best when they feel that there is direct connection between adult learning and their goals (Kapur, 2018; Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). Likewise, Rogers (2008) argues that the aspirations, goals and expectations which adult learners bring to adult literacy learning are the foundation for all adult literacy programmes. This argument tends to reinforce the fact that adult learners must recognise the personal benefits that they are going to achieve behind their adult literacy learning (Kapur, 2018). The argument suggests the need for facilitators to inform adult learners how literacy learning will help them attain their goals. This classification of goals and learning objectives must be done right at the beginning of literacy learning (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). Dhlamini (2012) argues that adults are motivated to join adult literacy programmes if they feel programmes are addressing their

needs. Concurring with Dhlamini (2012), Kapur (2018) observes that adults are motivated to learn if the learning eventually solves their problems, provides an opportunity or increased status and enhances their personal growth and professionalism.

2.7.4 Adults are relevancy-oriented

Adult learners need to see a concrete reason for learning literacy (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). They need to be convinced of the relevance of adult literacy learning for their personal life and direct environment. This indicates that literacy learning has to be applicable to their work or other highly valued responsibilities, for instance in the family or the community (Kamp, 2011). The content for literacy learning should be problem-centered and applicable to real-life in the given context of adult learners that reflect their own interests. This means, also, that theories and concepts of literacy learning must be related to a setting familiar to adult learners (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). This would suggest that contextualising adult learning would be beneficial to adult learners in the sense that they would find it easy to relate and apply to their experiences. More importantly, it may be argued, that contextualising adult learning would also have life-long effect on adult learners considering the proximity of issues learnt.

2.7.5 Adults are practical

On the whole, adult learners need a practical approach to learning which means that they learn best through an active and not a passive process (Kamp, 2011). According to Lindeman (1926), adults' orientation to learning is life-centred, task-centred or problems-centred. This means that adults learn new knowledge, values and skills most effectively when they are presented in the context of application of real-life situations. Rogers (2008) provides a striking example that adults learn how to be mothers by being mothers and not by attending lectures without experience. Rogers explains this as a process, not of learning for some possible future doing which is the normal approach of schooling but of learning by doing which is the approach of informal learning in everyday life.

Usually, adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2005). It is important for

facilitators to recognise that adult learners can learn most effectively by applying and doing what they have learnt. As such, they must provide adult learners with endless opportunities to practice new skills in an interactive manner in which newly acquired knowledge is applied and tested by adult learners (Kapur, 2018, Kamp, 2011). What emerges strongly from these arguments is that adults learn effectively by doing and that gives them an opportunity to apply what they have learnt right away. Certainly, this points to facilitation methods that facilitators should use during the learning process (see Section 2.5). One question still remains open – what facilitation methods do facilitators use during learning process to engage adult learners for effective learning? Questions like this one prompted the researcher to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

2.7.6 Adults need to be shown respect

Ordinarily, adult learners need to be respected as individuals (Kamp, 2011). As such, there is need for facilitators to acknowledge the maturity and wealth of knowledge and experience that adult learners bring to literacy circles. This implies that adult learners should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and therefore be allowed to voice their opinions freely in literacy circles (Kamp, 2011; Lieb, 1991). Kapur (2018) points out that the “my way” attitude, which sometimes may linger in the minds of facilitators has little or no space in the adult learning environment where adult learners are involved. Kapur also states that mutual respect and a spirit of cooperation should characterise the adult learning environment. In the adult learning environment, all adult learners including facilitators share ideas and learn from each other. Everyone should see each other as a bank of resources while the facilitator should take themselves as a guide and not the only one with relevant knowledge (Kamp, 2011). The underlying question is whether facilitators involved in this study consider adult learners as equals in experience and knowledge during learning process. Presumably, this could be a challenge considering the feeling that some facilitators might have about themselves being more knowledgeable than adult learners, and therefore more superior. One could see that what is crucial here is the attitude of facilitators towards adult learners. The researcher’s view is that perhaps developing a

positive attitude towards adult learners coupled with open-mindedness could make facilitators and adult learners work as equals.

The characteristics of adult learners discussed above, which are also referred to as principles of adult learning or assumptions of adult learners, enveloped Knowles' theory of andragogy. Table 2.2 gives a summary of the assumptions of andragogy theory about adult learners.

Table 2.2: Summary of assumptions of Andragogy theory

Assumptions of adult learners	Characteristics
1. Adults are autonomous and self-directed	• They want to direct their own learning • Be actively involved in the learning process • They want to control the learning process
2. Adults have accumulated life experiences and knowledge	• Work-related activities, family responsibilities • Hence, all new learning must build on prior knowledge and experience
3. Adults are goal-oriented	• Have purpose for joining adult learning classes • Personal benefits are reasons for learning
4. Adults are relevancy-oriented	• Need to see a reason for learning something • Theory should relate to practical experiences
5. Adults are practical	• Be able to apply their knowledge • Learning should be life-centred, problems-centred and issues-based

6. Adult learners like to be respected	• Want to be treated as equals • Learners and facilitators must share ideas and learn from each other
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(Sources: Knowles, 2001; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980)

The theory relates to the study in the sense that Knowles viewed the assumptions about adult learners as the basis for designing adult literacy education programmes in terms of adult learning and facilitation processes (Knowles, 2001; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984). Thus, the theory provides a framework for interpreting the study findings in several ways. Firstly, andragogy theory helps facilitators to identify various facilitation methods suitable for adult learning, as earlier discussed in Section 2.5. As such, it will be interesting to see whether REFLECT facilitators use facilitation methods appropriate for adult learners in the literacy circles during the learning process (see Chapter 4). Secondly, the theory specifically explains the kind of interaction among adult learners in the literacy circles for them to acquire literacy skills. The theory states that facilitators should support adult learners in the learning process by incorporating learning activities that will make adult learners active participants rather than passive participants and this will be used as a benchmark for interpreting the study findings. Thirdly, andragogy discusses the role of a facilitator which is to guide the learning process (Knowles, 2001; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984). This suggests that facilitators should not take a center stage in the learning process which implies that adult learners should take a leading role in the learning activities in the literacy circles. Therefore, the theory will act as the lens to interpret the findings of the study in terms of whether REFLECT facilitators create a conducive learning environment which puts adult learners at the center stage of the learning process in the literacy circles, as will be discussed later in the thesis (see Chapter 4).

Evidence from research studies established two major problems emanating from facilitation process which is the focus of the study and are directly related to the theory. Firstly, facilitators control the teaching and learning process with little adult learner participation. Secondly, adult learners are taught in the same manner without differentiating between a child and an adult (Chan, 2010; Rogers, 2008; Benediktsson &

Kamtengeni, 2004). Andragogy theory therefore provides guidance to facilitators to address these problems through learner-centred approach to instructions to enhance knowledge and skills necessary for adult learners' needs which makes the theory directly relate to the study. According to the theory, the role of the facilitator is not to provide adult learners with new knowledge but rather create opportunities for them to reflect on such knowledge and beliefs and to identify the most feasible knowledge to solve their problems (Addae, 2016). Although Knowles' principles are about adult learners and not facilitators, the principles are actually meant for facilitators since they unpack characteristics of adult learners for facilitators to have knowledge about learners for effective facilitation. As Bedi (2004) rightly argues, andragogy helps facilitators understand adult learners' behaviour. Thus, the principles about adult learners provide a basis for interpreting the findings of the study particularly to determine whether REFLECT facilitators consider them when conducting the learning activities in the literacy circles (see Chapter 4).

Using the andragogical principles, facilitators can tailor the instruction in the literacy circles to meet adult learners' goals for learning by involving them in planning the learning objectives and activities in order to solve their real-life problems. Once facilitators know the characteristics of adult learners (see Table 2.2), it gives them the basis to realise that adult learners require learner-centred approach to learning which are grounded in the andragogy theory (Chan, 2010; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980). Hence, the andragogical principles offer the framework for interpreting the findings of the study pertaining to whether REFLECT facilitators use learner-centred approaches during the learning process in the literacy circles which help adult learners learn their best to become self-directed learners. This also extends to whether facilitators design instructional content to be covered in the literacy circles that responds to the adult learners' needs.

Overall, the principles of andragogy theory, as Table 2.2 indicates, provide the benchmark for interpreting the study findings since they guide facilitators to make rightful decisions in terms of facilitation methods and techniques suitable for adult learners during the learning process (Chan, 2010; Bedi, 2004; Knowles, 2001; Knowles, 1980). Thus, the facilitation methods, techniques and approaches used in the literacy circles and ways in

which facilitators engage adult learners during the learning process are the central aspects of the theory. This implies that the theory directly relates to facilitators which makes it appropriate for this study.

Although andragogy is considered important in adult education and has played a crucial role in adult learning, there are also some criticisms levelled against the theory. One criticism is that andragogy does not consider social contexts in which adult learning actually takes place (Litster, 2016). Sandlin (2005) argues that by considering the learning process and the individual to be separated from the social, political, and economic context, Knowles ignored the relationship between the individual and society. The argument indicates that Knowles did not consider how privileges and suppression attached to race, gender and class influence learning depending on social contexts (Sandlin, 2005; Finger & Asun, 2001). Finger and Asun (2001) argue that Knowles' failure to challenge the status quo in terms of the norms and values contributes to his narrow view of social contexts in the theory.

The second criticism is that the theory lacks empirical evidence to support its claims (Litster, 2016). Knowles (1984) states that andragogical assumptions were not formulated on empirical research but were developed as a result of experience, observation, and theoretical influences. As such, Loeng (2018) argues that Knowles' theory suffers from a weak or non-existent empirical basis. As a result, it could not be called a theory of adult learning. Hartree (1984) observes that by focusing on the assumptions about adult learners, the theory fails to encompass the underlying epistemological base.

Although the above criticisms are valid, it is the researcher's view that the relevance of andragogy in shaping and guiding facilitation process of adult literacy learning cannot be underestimated, considering that the theory helps facilitators understand adult learners' behaviour in general which directly affect their decisions in terms of the choice of facilitation methods in the literacy circles. The weaknesses of the theory as highlighted by the critics of the theory did not affect the interpretation of the study findings given that the theory encompasses many other aspects that explain how adult learning and facilitation

processes should occur in the literacy circles which was the focus of the study (Knowles, 2001; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980). It is important to note that this theory continues to generate interests from researchers and scholars because it provides enormous foundation for adult literacy programmes.

Even though andragogy helps to equip facilitators with knowledge for effective facilitation (Bedi, 2004; Merriam, 2001; Houle, 1996), the theory does not explicitly provide critical aspects about the facilitator which are crucial for knowledge acquisition for effective facilitation. Such aspects include academic qualifications for facilitators, adequate training, frequent refresher courses, and motivation. However, rather than looking at this inadequacy of the theory as a problem, it is useful to consider it as a window through which other theories can be developed to compliment the andragogy theory (Mjaya, 2022). Thus, the researcher developed a model for adult learning and facilitation which shall be discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis (see Section 4.7, also Figure 4.8). The model explicitly provides critical aspects for adult literacy facilitators which are essential for the acquisition of knowledge and skills for effective facilitation in the literacy circles.

2.8 Chapter summary

The aim of the chapter was to review relevant literature in facilitation of adult literacy programmes and link it to the current study. It is apparent from the review of literature that a key aspect regarding effective facilitation of adult literacy programmes depends largely on the knowledge of the facilitator which emanates from adequate training and regular refresher courses. While motivation of facilitators plays a crucial role in adult literacy programmes, the absence of motivation strategies is detrimental to the performance of facilitators in the literacy classes and that influences the quality of facilitation and achievement of learning outcomes. Furthermore, the chapter has discussed that adult literacy education in general, and in particular, REFLECT approach requires learner-centred methods of facilitation as advocated by andragogy, the theoretical framework that guided the study, to promote active participation among adult learners in the entire learning process. A discussion of learner-centred methods of facilitation was critical in order to provide a foundation for understanding facilitation methods and techniques, and their

effectiveness in the facilitation and learning process. The next chapter discusses the methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology the study employed to arrive at the findings in Chapter 4. The chapter begins by presenting research approach and design used to undertake the study. The discussion also focuses on study participants and sampling techniques that were used in the study. The chapter further covers areas of data generation methods, data management and data analysis. Finally, the chapter discusses empirical processes that the study followed such as access negotiations, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research approach

The general approach that guided the study was qualitative since it is exploratory in nature. The aim of this research study was to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT Adult Literacy Programmes in Malawi. Thus, the qualitative approach was suitable for this study considering what Marshal and Rossman (2006) explain that it is “pragmatic, interpretative and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (p. 2). A qualitative approach advocates for an understanding of human experience, which is important for professionals who focus on caring, communication and interaction (Holloway & Wheeler (2000). Besides, a qualitative research approach is more concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the study participants (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2007). This happens through the researcher’s participation in the daily life activities of those involved in the study, in this case, facilitators of REFLECT adult literacy programme.

Mason (2006) argues that qualitative research is a highly rewarding activity because it engages the researcher with things that matter. The researcher seeks to understand the deeper meaning and get a detailed understanding of an issue, a person's experiences and how they articulate these issues and experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Thus, using the qualitative research approach greatly helped the researcher to get a deeper understanding of experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi.

Further, the choice of the qualitative research approach for this study was informed by the interpretative paradigm. According to Bryman (2012), interpretivists argue that the study of social phenomena should not be done in a manner that depicts the social world as following a set of rules. This is because human beings are not objects and do not respond to stimuli mechanically. Humans are conscious of the environment and make decisions based on mental processes. As such, researchers need to recognise the subjective meaning of human experience in order to understand social phenomena. In view of this, the role of the researcher in the interpretive paradigm, as rightly argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), is to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, and to try to get inside the person and to understand him/her from within. Thus, the interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of experiences of facilitators in order to interpret how they make meaning in terms of facilitation of adult literacy programmes.

3.3 Research design

The study used a case study design. Welman and Kruger (2001) describe research design as the plan according to which the researcher chooses participants of the study and collects data from them. Merriam (2001) defines a qualitative case study as an "intensive, holistic, descriptive analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). Accordingly, the problem under study qualified as a case simply because the boundaries were clearly defined as "REFLECT facilitators" responsible for implementing adult literacy programmes in Malawi. The literacy circle provided the context for the implementation part of adult literacy programmes. Merriam (2001) explains that case studies are suitable

for situations in which it is impossible to separate cases from their context. Besides, McLeod (2008) states that case studies are often used in exploratory research because they can help generate new ideas that might also be verified by other method. Thus, a case study was suitable for this study because it seeks to bring out the details from the view point of the participants (Stake, 1995) in this case, REFLECT facilitators. Welman and Kruger (2000) argue that a case study design relates to a limited number of units of analysis such as a group or an institution which was explored intensively. In this case study, one group, which is REFLECT facilitators, was intensively studied to deeply understand their overall experiences during facilitation of adult literacy programmes.

According to Schumacher and McMillan (2006), a case study promotes better understanding of a practice or issue and facilitates informed decision-making. Blanche et al. (2007) concurred with Schumacher and McMillan (2006) and state that case studies are intensive investigations of particular individuals or institutions. It must be mentioned that the researcher intensively studied REFLECT facilitators in terms of their experiences during facilitation of adult literacy programmes using multiple data generation methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations, as has been discussed later in the chapter (see Section 3.4). Blanche et al. further argue that case studies are ideographic research methods which means that they study individuals as individuals rather than as members of a population. Thus, REFLECT facilitators were the case study and the research focused on their experiences in facilitating adult literacy programmes.

3.3.1 Study sites

The study was conducted in Mulanje district, in the Southern Region of Malawi. Mulanje was chosen on the basis that there are various Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) implementing adult literacy programmes in the district. Besides, the district was convenient to the researcher in terms of accessibility considering the transportation issues and costs.

3.3.2 Study participants and sampling techniques

The participants of the study were facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes. It is important to note that literacy facilitators are responsible for implementing adult literacy

programmes and therefore have knowledge and experience regarding the issues around facilitation of adult learning in the literacy circles, the relevancy of their training, literacy development in adult learners, and overall challenges faced in the course of implementation of adult literacy programmes.

The study employed purposive sampling technique to select a sample that provided the researcher with the much-needed data for the study. Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher selects a sample using set criterion so that the sample will provide maximum insight and understanding of the study (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). Cohen et al. (2007) state that in purposive sampling “researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample based on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (p. 114 – 115). The advantage of employing purposive sampling lay in selecting participants that had rich data for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied. In this case, the central issues were experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes.

3.3.3 Sample size

In simple terms, sample means part of a population that is selected for a study. Schumacher and McMillan (2006) explain population as the subjects used in a study that has certain characteristics and can be described with respect to such variables as age, race, gender and ability. For this study, a sample of 30 participants was purposively selected. The 30 purposively sampled participants were REFLECT facilitators. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) argue that the purpose is not to establish a random or representative sample drawn from a population but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in the circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. Thus, the sample for this study was purposively chosen merely on the basis of what the researcher considered to be typical units. The researcher believed that the sample was enough and adequate to represent the feelings of the facilitators pertaining to their experiences in facilitating adult literacy programmes more so considering that the sample provided huge volumes of data.

3.4 Data generation methods

In a case study, data are generated from a variety of sources and by using different methods such as interviews, observations and focus group discussions (McLeod, 2008; Fraenkel & Warren, 2000; Stake, 1995). For this study, three different data generation methods were used. These were in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. The following sections discuss three data generation methods used in the study.

3.4.1 In-depth interviews

Schumacher and McMillan (2006) state that in-depth interviews are open response questions to obtain data of study participants' opinions, how individuals perceive their world and how they explain and make sense of the important events in their lives. They are usually characterised as a conversation with a goal. The researcher used an interview guide containing a set of specific questions in order to pursue the topic being researched. Patton (1990) explains that an interview guide is "a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview" (p. 283). One of the major purposes of the interview guide is to elicit participants' views and also achieve uniformity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The interviews were done in literacy circles. Each interview took about one and half hours. The researcher used an interview guide (see Appendix 4) for the interview questions. All the interviews were recorded. In total, 6 in-depth interviews were conducted and the interviews among other things focused on experiences of facilitators which included the training they underwent, facilitator motivation, their general experiences in terms of implementation of adult literacy programmes in Malawi, and challenges faced during facilitation process. Besides, the study also sought to explore the perception of facilitators regarding the effectiveness of the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired outcomes. However, one major challenge experienced was the expectations by participants to receive an incentive in return for their involvement in the study. To overcome this problem, the researcher explained to the participants individually before interviews that this research study was purely academic as a fulfillment of the course requirements (see Appendix 1). Therefore, the participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary since there was no incentive attached for their involvement in the study.

3.4.2 Observations

Observation is essential in qualitative research because it entails being present in a situation and make a record of one's impressions of what takes place with the researcher as the primary research instrument (Jones & Somekh, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The study used observation method because it has a unique strength of discovering complex interactions in natural settings and that enabled the researcher to gather data that often would be unavailable by other means (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The purpose of observation is to observe the setting that is being researched and describe the activities that took place and the people who participated in these activities (White, 2005). For this study, the purpose was to describe literacy circles and issues taking place during adult learning process.

During the observation exercise, the researcher, among other things, focused on the facilitation methods and techniques used by facilitators in the literacy circles, the kinds of activities and tasks given to adult learners, adult learners' participation in the literacy circles, and strategies used to assist adult learners develop literacy skills (see Appendix 6). A total of 6 literacy circles that were facilitated by the 6 purposively sampled facilitators engaged in the in-depth interviews were observed in the study. Each literacy circle was observed once a week for 2 hours for a period of 7 months. On average, 15 observations for each literacy circle were conducted. Throughout the entire study period, the researcher used field notes to capture all the details of the observations and conversations. These observations proved equally essential in the sense that they supplemented the data that was generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The major problem that was experienced during the entire observation exercise was high absenteeism by facilitators which led to cancellation of classes. As a result, the observation period was extended from 4 months, as it was initially planned by the researcher, to 7 months to allow the 6 literacy circles have equal chances of being observed.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) defined FGD as a discussion during which there are a small number of respondents, usually not less than four and not more than 12. Cohen et al. (2007) state that FGDs are ideal when one wants to investigate a particular situation, topic or phenomenon where discussion and the expression of differing opinions with the group lead to data and outcomes. The study employed FGDs and the focus was, among other things, on experiences of facilitators which include the training they underwent, facilitator motivation, their general experiences during implementation of adult literacy programmes in Malawi, and challenges faced during facilitation process. Further, the study explored the perception of facilitators regarding the effectiveness of the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired outcomes (see Appendix 5).

For this study, a total of 5 FGDs comprising 6 participants were conducted. As Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) argue, the group size in FGDs should deliberately be kept small so that its members do not feel intimidated but can express opinion freely. Each FGD took about two hours. All the FGDs in the study were conducted as an open conversation in which each study participant could comment, ask other participants questions or question comments made by others (White, 2005). The researcher deliberately created a conducive environment that allowed and respected different perceptions and viewpoints without necessarily pressuring the study participants. All these efforts were done to ensure maximum participation from the participants. Holloway and Wheeler (2003) highlight that FGDs are characterised by the interaction between participants of the study from which the researcher discovers how they think and feel about particular issues.

The researcher employed two strategies to overcome the problem of subjectivity, in terms of social experiences and personal biasness, which is common in research but is particularly strong in focus group discussion work (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001). Firstly, the FGDs were conducted in the study to enable the researcher pick out issues that were repeatedly coming out from the discussions. Secondly, all the participants in FGDs were given equal chance of participation to avoid vocal participants from dominating in the discussions for fair participation and contribution. More importantly, the researcher

asked follow-up and probing questions to seek clarification or additional information on various issues under discussion (Cohen et al., 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) in order to get an in-depth understanding of issues raised by the participants.

A high-quality recorder was used to record the dialogue between the researcher and the study participants. This practice ensured that everything that was said by the participants was preserved for analysis (Merriam, 1998). Permission to use the recorder was sought after the researcher explained its use to all the participants. Each FGD session was opened with an introduction and a brief explanation of the study. The study participants were encouraged to feel that their contributions during FGDs were valued and confidential. Apart from recording the discussions, the researcher made brief field notes during the session as validation of the recorded discussions. Taking notes during FGDs to supplement the recorded discussions served two purposes. First, not everything that was said by the participants in the FGDs can be recorded, for instance, gestures and facial expressions. Second, taking notes acted as a back-up to the recorded data (Cohen et al., 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Merriam, 1998). Key insights were also recorded during the FGD sessions. The transcription of recorded data was done after focus group sessions were completed for analysis.

Figure 3.1 summarises sample size and data generation methods of the study.

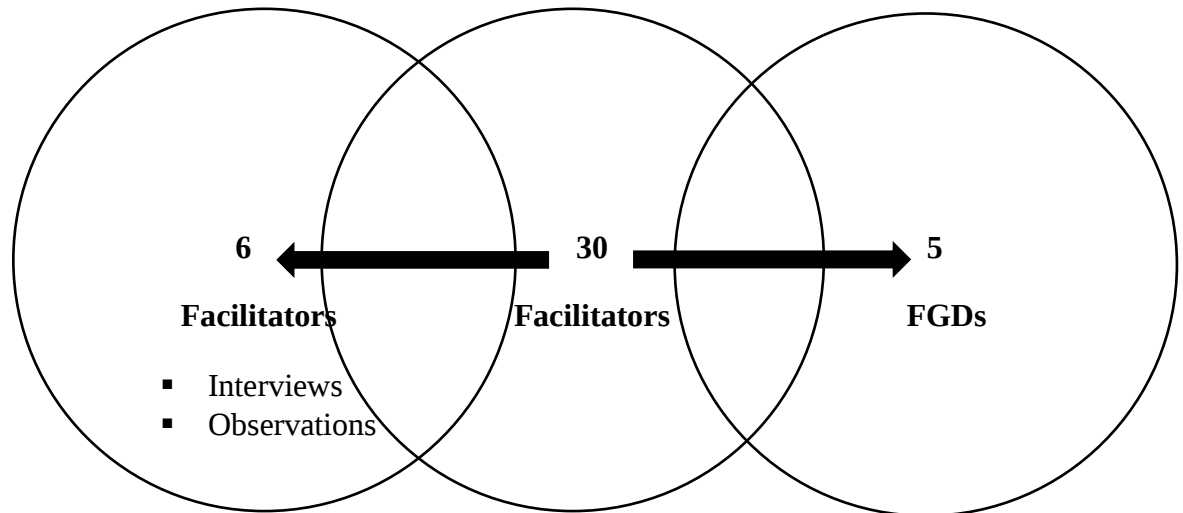


Figure 3.1: Sample size and data generation methods

Source: Researcher

Figure 3.1 indicates a sample of 30 participants that was purposively selected in this study. From the total sample, 6 facilitators were purposively picked and were engaged in the in-depth interviews. The literacy circles that were facilitated by the 6 purposively sampled facilitators engaged in the in-depth interviews were observed. This means that the 6 purposively sampled facilitators were both interviewed and observed in their literacy circles. In addition, 5 FGDs were formed from the purposively sampled 30 facilitators and each FGD had 6 members.

It is important to point out that the interviews were translated into English since all the interviews were done in Chichewa. The researcher, as an expert in language, translated the interviews from Chichewa to English. However, in order to maximise the accuracy of the participants' responses, the researcher also engaged some critical friends from Language

and Communication Skills Department at the University of Malawi to edit the thesis, as has been discussed later in the chapter (see sub-section 3.7.4). All these efforts were done to ensure that the translation of interviews from Chichewa to English did not lose the intended meaning of the participants.

3.5 Data management

After completion of data generation exercise, the researcher organised and kept all the generated data safely. The researcher stored the transcribed data from in-depth interviews, FGDs and observations in separate multiple files and in different laptops. Besides keeping the transcribed data in printed hard copies, the data was emailed to the researcher's accounts as a back-up. Corti (2011) suggests that a researcher must utilise at least two different forms of storage and locations, and also maintain original copy and external copies. All these efforts were aimed at ensuring that the valuable data was safe and seriously protected.

3.6 Data analysis

Given that the study was purely qualitative in nature, data analysis was done qualitatively using a thematic analysis. Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen, et al., 2007). Arhar, Holly and Kasten (2001) underscore that data generation and data analysis are parallel activities in qualitative research. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious and overwhelming in terms of the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed (Merriam, 2001). Thus, data analysis in this case occurred throughout the entire data generation period and beyond.

As part of the process of analysing the data from the interviews, the researcher read over and over the transcripts to familiarise himself with the data. This sometimes involved re-listening to the tapes for more familiarisation with the major issues arising from the data (also see Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Similarly, the observation notes taken during visits to the literacy classes were read over and over to identify themes and categories relating to

experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes. These were compared and contrasted with those that arose from the interviews with facilitators to check if there were any significant links, which was generally the case.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and presents some level of patterned response of meaning within the data set” (p. 82). In using thematic analysis, the researcher had to code the data. Ayres (2008) states that “coding facilitates the development of themes, and the development of themes facilitates coding” (p. 867). In order to successfully analyse the data, the researcher grouped information under themes and sub-themes. The generation of the various themes and sub-themes was based on coding. Actually, coding enabled the researcher to categorise the data generated from the study.

Throughout the entire data analysis process, the researcher was picking out and reviewing the themes which were emerging from the generated data. An in-depth analysis from the generated data was made and recurring themes were identified following the research questions. This was done by checking for uniformities, consistencies, connections, inconsistencies, and overlaps from the data. Patton (2002) describes data analysis as attaching meaning to what is found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions and making inferences. At this stage of interpretation, the researcher reported the narratives based on facilitators experiences under various themes and categories supported by data and the researcher’s own comments in order to interpret the meaning embedded in the data as they related to the research questions. The researcher then came up with summaries of all the themes to show how the study has responded to the research questions to form the findings of the study. However, the biggest challenge that was experienced by the researcher during data analysis was huge volumes of data. To overcome the problem, data generation and data analysis exercises were done

simultaneously and that helped the researcher to a greater extent to avoid piling up of huge volumes data for analysis.

3.7 Credibility and trustworthiness of the study

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher is generally confronted with many methodological issues and the most paramount among them are the issues of credibility and trustworthiness. Jensen (2008) defines credibility as the methodological procedures and sources used to establish a high level of harmony between the participants' expressions and the researcher's interpretations of them. It is important to understand that researchers in qualitative research are usually interested in reporting on the lived experiences of participants of the study from their own interpretations and perspectives. This implies that there must be synergy between what is expressed by the participants and what is reported by the researcher. The need to ensure such synergy brings in the issue of credibility into the domain of qualitative research (Addae, 2016). The researcher ensured credibility and trustworthiness in the study through piloting of the research instruments, triangulation, use of verbatim quotes and peer review. What follows is a discussion of how each of the aspects of credibility and trustworthiness were ensured in the study.

3.7.1 Piloting of the study

Before the actual data generation exercise commenced on 23rd April, 2018, the researcher conducted a pilot study in Machinga district. Machinga was chosen on the basis that there were various NGOs implementing REFLECT Adult Literacy Programmes in the district. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) explain that "piloting is the process whereby you try out the research techniques and methods which you have in mind, see how well they work in practice and, if necessary, modify your plans accordingly" (p. 135). Piloting research instruments is in fact one way of dealing with issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Eventually, the exercise helped the researcher to re-phrase and modify the research tools in areas where they appeared unclear and ambiguous in readiness for the actual data generation exercise.

3.7.2 Triangulation

One way through which the researcher ensured credibility of the study was through triangulation of data generation methods. The aim was to reduce the disadvantages inherent in the use of any single data source and data generation method. Rothbauer (2008) states that triangulation in qualitative research means a multi-method approach to data generation and data analysis. The basic idea underpinning the concept of triangulation is that the phenomenon under study can be best understood when approached from a variety or a combination of research methods. Since triangulation involves generating data from several methods to inform the same question or to strengthen the conclusion (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), Cohen et al. (2007) argue that when the findings from different data generation methods yield the same results, the researcher is more confident of the findings of the study. For this study, triangulation occurred particularly at the level of data generation methods namely in-depth interviews, observations and FGDs. Therefore, the use of these data generation methods enabled the researcher to gain a deeper and fuller understanding into the problem under exploration.

3.7.3 Use of verbatim quotes

The researcher ensured the use of verbatim quotes in the study for two major reasons. Firstly, the researcher believed that presenting quotations helped to provide evidence for justifying interpretations and findings of the study. Secondly, on the part of readers, use of verbatim quotes could help them make their own judgement about the fairness and accuracy of the analysis of the findings (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). White, Woodfield, Rithie and Ormston (2014) argue that quotations can bring content to life. Thus, using direct quotes will enable readers to examine the data generated in the study and the analysis by the researcher.

3.7.4 Peer review

Throughout the study, critical friends were directly involved and played an instrumental role in both shaping and critiquing some of the ideas in the study. Opie (2004) highlights that “the critical friend can be a colleague, family member or friend whose opinion you

value” (p. 56). In the researcher’s case, most of the critical friends were colleagues in the Department of Language and Communication Skills at the University of Malawi, where the researcher works as a Lecturer in Language and Communication Skills.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Realising that the study involved people as participants, some ethical issues were equally considered before and throughout the entire data generation exercise. The conduct of social research requires that data should be generated from participants in the most humane and fair manner possible. This means that researchers must consider ethical considerations regarding the participants of the study and managing of the data generated. Yin (2014) outlines some critical ethical issues to be considered including access negotiations, gaining informed consent, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants, and protecting participants especially vulnerable groups from harm and deception. With this in mind, the researcher provides ethical considerations which are discussed in the sections that follow.

3.8.1 Access negotiations

The researcher first and foremost sought a formal letter of introduction from the Dean of the School of Education at the University of Malawi (see Appendix 1) which was addressed to Mulanje District Commissioner. When the District Commissioner granted the permission (see Appendix 2), the researcher then made deliberate efforts to visit in advance all the sampled REFLECT facilitators to brief them on the purpose and the significance of the study, the activities to be involved and the actual duration of the whole exercise. These efforts were aimed at ensuring that all the participants of the study should make an informed decision to participate in this research study voluntarily and willingly. This access negotiations gave the participants an opportunity to decide whether to participate in the study or not. Participation in the study was voluntary.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are important ethical issues to be considered by researchers when conducting research. Confidentiality involves assuring study participants about the safety of their responses. Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012) argue that once the data in the

study have been generated, researchers should make sure that no one else except perhaps a few key research assistants has access to the data. While acknowledging the significance of confidentiality, the researcher made it clear to all the participants of the study that their responses would be kept secret from anyone except those directly involved in the study who in this case was the researcher himself.

Another ethical consideration that the researcher considered was the protection of the anonymity of the participants. The researcher assured the participants of their right to anonymity and that at no any point shall their identities of the participants be revealed which may eventually negatively affect them. As such, the researcher ensured that all the research instruments be designed in such a way that did not reveal the identities of the participants of the study. Corti (2011) highlights that the identities of all participants in a qualitative study should be protected and above all, participants should be treated with respect. Thus, participants were assured of maximum confidentiality and anonymity by not disclosing their names and identity to the researcher to secure the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

3.8.3 Informed consent

The researcher adhered to ethical conduct of research regarding the issue of informed consent. The aim was to gain consent from the participants so that they take part in the study at their own will. The researcher explained to participants in the study of their right to be informed and to engage in every decision which directly affects them. Besides, participants were informed that they had a right whether to take part in the study activities or not. All these efforts were meant to let participants know that their participation in the study was rather voluntary. In the end, all the participants granted a formal consent to take part in the study on voluntary basis (see Appendix 3). Despite granting the consent, the researcher informed the participants that should they decide to withdraw from the study activities at any given point in the course of the research, they were free to do (also see Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

3.9 Limitations of the study

Throughout the process of carrying out the study, one major limitation was observed during data generation exercise. High absenteeism of facilitators was the major limitation that was experienced which led to cancellation of classes in the literacy circles. As a result, the researcher had to extend the data generation period from 4 months, as it was initially planned, to 7 months to generate adequate data for study. Finally, the fact that this study was conducted in six literacy circles in only one district means that the results of the study are generalised within the context of the six literacy circles involved in the study. However, the findings can be applied to similar adult literacy contexts in Malawi.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology employed in conducting this research study. The approach and design of the study have been discussed in the chapter with particular focus on the decisions that were made, and the reasons for using the various research techniques to generate and analyse the data. The chapter has also raised issues of ethical considerations, and credibility and trustworthiness which were observed in the conduct of the study. In the next chapter, the researcher presents and discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT Adult Literacy Programmes in Malawi. The main research question sought to explore how REFLECT facilitators experience the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired programme outcomes. The researcher raised four specific questions whose aim was to explore the experiences of REFLECT facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult learning, how facilitators are motivated when facilitating REFLECT adult literacy programmes, how effective the REFLECT approach is in bringing out the intended outcomes, and how REFLECT facilitators can effectively facilitate adult literacy to achieve the expected programme outcomes. The structure of the chapter is based on these specific research questions that guided this study. The chapter also includes a description of major themes that have emerged from the data as per research questions. The findings of the study within each theme are interpreted using andragogy theory and the relevant literature.

4.2 Context of the REFLECT adult literacy circles

This section provides a description of the context of the REFLECT adult literacy circles in which the study was conducted. The literacy circles were conducted either in primary school classrooms or churches in adult learners' communities. The following paragraphs therefore discuss physical description of the two research contexts.

Firstly, some REFLECT literacy circles in Mulanje district were conducted in government primary school classrooms. The proximity of the primary schools to facilitators and adult learners was a deciding factor in the selection of this research context. The classrooms were

rectangular just like most primary schools in Malawi. There were no desks in the classrooms, meaning that adult learners were sitting on the floor. In rare cases, the only available furniture was a desk placed at the front of the classroom meant for primary school teacher. Most primary school classrooms had displays of teaching and learning materials such as charts, graphs and maps which were used by primary school teachers and learners. The teaching and learning materials that were displayed in the classrooms were not removed by primary school teachers when knocking off, they remained there on the walls. The classrooms had black chalkboards in the front of the rooms. Figure 4.1 shows adult literacy circle in government primary school classroom.



Figure 4.1: Adult literacy circle in government primary school classroom

Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.1 shows adult learners in one of the government primary school classrooms copying notes from black chalkboard. Generally, most REFLECT facilitators heavily depended on the chalkboard during facilitation process. Consequently, teaching and learning materials such as charts, graphs and maps were rarely used during facilitation process. This implies that REFLECT facilitators were not creative regarding the use of teaching and learning materials in the literacy circles during the facilitation process.

Secondly, apart from primary school classrooms, some churches in the communities were also used as literacy circles. As has already been discussed, the proximity of churches to facilitators and adult learners was a deciding factor in the selection of this research context. The churches that were used as literacy circles were roofed with corrugated iron-sheets but the walls were not plastered and had mud floors. Similarly, there were no chairs for adult learners but in some cases, the churches had clay-moulded benches where learners sat. In these literacy circles, facilitators used mobile-wooden blackboards during facilitation process. Figure 4.2 shows adult literacy circle in one of the churches in the community.



Figure 4.2: Adult literacy circle in the church

Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.2 shows adult learners copying notes from mobile-wooden blackboard in the church. There was no display of teaching and learning materials and facilitators never brought them to help during facilitation process. Overall, the absence of teaching and learning materials in almost all the literacy circles suggests that REFLECT facilitators were

using chalkboards and pieces of chalk as the most readily available teaching and learning materials.

Literacy circles usually meet 4 days in a week for just 2 hours in the afternoon. All adults who are illiterate but are willing to join adult literacy circles for them to acquire literacy skills are enrolled into circles voluntarily. The average attendance in the REFLECT adult literacy circles was about 10 adult learners which were mostly women. Although low participation of men in adult literacy programmes was not the focus of the study, it was found that men feel shy to enrol in adult literacy programmes mainly because they want to protect their ego and status in the community. Besides, the study found that men are usually busy with other activities as such they see no reason to participate in adult literacy programmes since they are expected to provide for their families. Regarding the seating plan in the literacy circles, adult learners sat in lines except at one literacy circle where they chose to sit in a circle (see Figure 4.5). With respect to REFLECT approach, facilitators are expected to guide adult learners on the seating plan in the literacy circles. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, there are no prescribed textbooks in the REFLECT approach. Facilitators together with adult learners develop their own facilitation manual depending on the issues affecting them in their communities which eventually becomes topics for learning in the literacy circles. The expected outcomes of the REFLECT approach are discussed in Chapter 2. Regarding REFLECT facilitators, it is worth pointing out that they are considered as volunteers and at the time this study was conducted, they were receiving K6 000 as a monthly honorarium.

4.3 Experiences of REFLECT facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult literacy.

This section presents and discusses findings of the study based on research question one, which focused on experiences of REFLECT facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult literacy programmes. Under this research question, the discussion centres around three major themes that emerged from the data. These themes include: *academic qualifications for facilitators; opportunities for training; and*

facilitators' knowledge of facilitation methods. The discussion of these major themes includes a description of sub-themes within some of these major themes.

4.3.1 Academic qualifications for facilitators

The researcher was interested in finding out the academic qualifications for the facilitators that were involved in the study to determine whether they have academic qualifications required for facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes, as discussed in Chapter 2. The study found that REFLECT facilitators have varied academic qualifications. It was found that some of those academic qualifications were below the required minimum qualifications for the REFLECT facilitator, which is Junior Certificate of Education (JCE). Among the group of REFLECT facilitators, there were some that just reached Standard 5, others Standard 7 while others have JCE and Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). Table 4.1 provides a summary of academic qualifications for REFLECT facilitators. Although the issue of gender of facilitators was not the focus of the study, it must be mentioned that most of the REFLECT facilitators involved in the study were female.

Table 4.1: Summary of academic qualifications for REFLECT facilitators

Academic qualifications	Number of facilitators	Percentage
Primary School Level (PSLCE)	11	37 %
Junior Certificate of Education (JCE)	17	56 %
Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE)	2	7 %
Total	30	100

Source: Data from the field

The findings show that 19 out of 30 facilitators (those with JCE and MSCE), have the required academic qualifications while 11 facilitators did not have academic qualifications required for facilitators. This suggests that most facilitators meet the expectations in terms of the academic qualifications and therefore one would expect them to make positive

contributions during facilitation process in the literacy circles. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, academic qualifications influence facilitators' capacity for facilitation. While emphasising the significance of academic qualifications for facilitators, a comparative study of adult education programmes in Ghana and South Africa by Addae (2016) found that one of the pillars for the successful implementation of basic literacy education is qualified facilitators.

However, 11 out of 30 facilitators, representing 37%, did not meet academic requirements. This should be regarded as a weakness considering the significance that academic qualifications have on facilitation of learning process. This finding raises questions regarding the selection process of REFLECT facilitators. It suggests that the selection process may not have been rigorous enough and may not have considered the level of education as a major criterion for choosing REFLECT facilitators. Although facilitators acknowledged the availability of people in the communities with JCE and were willing to be recruited as facilitators, they faulted the selection process that it was not open and transparent. The lack of transparency is critical, especially if we consider facilitators' level of education in terms of the expected knowledge acquired and the challenges associated with facilitating adult learning process. It is ironical to expect REFLECT facilitators who are not academically qualified to assist adult learners develop literacy skills. This finding that some facilitators did not meet academic requirements is consistent with research findings by Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) who found that some REFLECT facilitators in Monkey Bay had only attained primary school education level. Elsewhere, similar findings in Kenya showed that some facilitators had gone only up to Primary Class 8 (Oluoch et al., 2014).

As discussed in Chapter 2, some level of education for adult literacy facilitators is required to facilitate the learning process effectively and achieve the expected outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2). Regarding the theory, andragogy does not address the critical aspects of facilitators, particularly the issue of academic qualifications even though it directly affects the quality of facilitation (see Section 2.7). The influence of academic qualifications for facilitators on facilitation cannot be underestimated, the study therefore suggests the need

for literacy programmes to engage adult literacy facilitators that are academically qualified for effective facilitation process (see sub-section 4.6.1).

4.3.2 Opportunities for training

The researcher was interested in finding out the experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes. Particularly, the study aimed to explore whether the training equipped facilitators with appropriate knowledge and skills to facilitate learning process effectively and meet diverse learning needs of adult learners. Therefore, in this section, issues of training for facilitators are discussed, starting with importance of training.

4.3.2.1 Importance of training

During the interviews with REFLECT facilitators, it was reported that training for facilitators was provided by the organisation which was implementing the adult literacy programme in the district. From the interviews, it was stated that the organisation conducted training for REFLECT facilitators depending on the availability of funds. Regarding the importance of training, participants acknowledged the great importance of training for REFLECT facilitators as it equips them with knowledge and skills to understand their roles as facilitators, aspects of the REFLECT approach and various issues around facilitation of adult learning in general. One participant had this to say:

Training inali yofunikila kwambiri chifukwa inatipangitsa kuti tidziwe kuti tizikagwira ntchito yanji ngati ma facilitator. Komanso tinadziwa kuti REFLECT circle ndi chani? Nanga kuti mukaphunzitse ku adult literacy, mupanga bwanji? Zipangizo zogwilitsira ntchito ngati zida, mtengo wa mavuto, map a m'mudzi, kaya ndi minga ya nsomba kuti mungayigwilitse bwanji ntchito?

(The training was very important because it made us appreciate the scope of the work that we would be doing as facilitators. We also learnt what REFLECT circle is, how we can facilitate adult literacy learning. How we can use tools such as problem tree, social map, and fish bones.) **(Facilitator Circle X, 19th April, 2018)**

The findings suggest that the training received helped to equip REFLECT facilitators with knowledge and skills on how to facilitate adult learning process. This highlights the important role training can play in enhancing REFLECT facilitators' competences to

provide useful facilitation experiences to adult learners to acquire literacy skills. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the importance of facilitator training cannot be overemphasised, since it offers opportunity to REFLECT facilitators to enhance knowledge, capabilities and skills regarding facilitation of adult learning process.

4.3.2.2 Training opportunities for REFLECT facilitators

Apart from looking at the training of REFLECT facilitators in general, with specific focus on its importance, the study also explored the opportunities for training. The study found that some REFLECT facilitators had a chance to go for training while others did not. Table 4.2 provides a summary of training opportunities for REFLECT facilitators.

Table 4.2: Summary of training opportunities for REFLECT facilitators

Training of facilitators	Number of facilitators	Percentage
Underwent training	25	83 %
Not trained	5	17 %
Total	30	100

Source: Data from the field

The findings show that 25 out of 30 facilitators representing 83 % underwent training, while 5 out of 30 facilitators representing 17 % did not attend training. The fact that 25 out of 30 facilitators received training suggests that the training might have positively impacted some knowledge of the facilitators which helps them to facilitate adult learning process, as has been discussed earlier in Chapter 2. This means that training opportunities for REFLECT facilitators play an important role in enhancing their performance in terms of facilitating adult learning process. However, it is also important to raise the issue of challenges associated with the training of facilitators. As we shall see in sub-section 4.5.3 of the thesis, some of the challenges of facilitator training include inadequate training which makes them hugely lacking in terms of competence to facilitate effectively the learning process.

The findings in Table 4.2 also indicate that 5 out of 30 facilitators were not trained, raising the question of whether it is still possible to achieve effective adult learning and acquisition of literacy skills among adult learners with facilitators who are not trained. The issue of lack of training opportunities for some REFLECT facilitators raises the question of their competences to effectively facilitate adult learning process. The fact that some REFLECT facilitators did not undergo training could have direct effect on the extent to which they can meaningfully contribute to the development of literacy skills to adult learners and achieve the outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 2, the significance of facilitators' knowledge and skills on adult learners' learning outcomes in adult basic literacy programmes cannot be overemphasised. The study therefore suggests that apart from the required academic qualifications, REFLECT facilitators also need opportunities for training to equip them with knowledge, skills and abilities to competently facilitate adult learning process to achieve the outcomes, as we shall discuss later in the chapter (see subsection 4.6.2).

4.3.2.3 Training period

Regarding the training period for REFLECT facilitators, the researcher found that the facilitators underwent the same REFLECT training but with varied duration. The study revealed that among the group of facilitators, some attended training for 10 days while others for 5 days. During the face-to-face interviews, some participants reiterated the following:

Ku mudzi kuja atatisankha, tinapita kwa masiku okwana 10 ku maphunziro a REFLECT. Koma pa masiku 10 wo kuphatikizapo tsiku lofikila ndi lonyamukila.

(When we were chosen to be facilitators in the village, we went for 10 days training in REFLECT but the 10 days included day of arrival and departure.)
(Facilitator Circle U, 25th April, 2018)

Titangosankhidwa etii, ndiye tinapita ku training ya masiku 5.

(When we were just chosen to be facilitators, we went for 5 days' training.)
(Facilitator Circle W, 4th August, 2018)

Worse still, the study further established that some REFLECT facilitators attended the same REFLECT training for just a day, precisely for about 2 hours only. Some of the participants during FGDS explained:

Monga ife m'mene timayamba, training yake inali ya tsiku limodzi tinakapangila ku boma uko kwa DC. Komansotu silinali tsiku lonse chifukwa tinayamba cham'ma 9 kapena 10 koloko koma m'mene imati 12 koloko tinali tikubwelako.

(As for us when we were starting, we only went for 1 day training and it was not a full day. We started around 9 or 10 o'clock and by 12 o'clock, we were coming back.) **(FGD 2, 26th April, 2018)**

Given the explanation above, one could argue that the training did not adequately prepare REFLECT facilitators due to the period of training which was otherwise short and inconsistent. The findings suggest some mismatch between the recommended period of training, as earlier discussed in Chapter 2, and the actual period that facilitators attended training. Consequently, this has a direct effect on the extent to which REFLECT facilitators can contribute meaningfully to the actual facilitation process in literacy circles as they are likely to be incompetent on certain issues regarding facilitation of adult learning due to limited knowledge emanating from inadequate training, as we shall discuss later in this chapter. This is critical, especially if we take into consideration the challenges associated with facilitating adult learning process in the literacy circles. Further, this has a direct effect on the development of literacy skills among adult learners, especially when we consider that adult learning process requires some level of knowledge and skills on the part of REFLECT facilitators if they are to effectively equip adult learners with literacy skills (see Chapter 2). This finding agrees with Warkineh et al. (2017) who found that although all of the adult literacy facilitators in Ethiopia had high levels of commitment, none of them received much in terms of training and also lacked professional support in some cases.

Nonetheless, the study further revealed one critical gap emanating from the training which was short period of training. As a result, it was found that most topics during the training, as discussed in Chapter 2, were not covered. Although the researcher is cautious of the fact that the study did not focus on training issues, and he did not attend any of the training sessions to make any solid claim, most participants observed that short period of training

was detrimental to their understanding of the REFLECT approach and various issues around effective facilitation of adult learning process. From facilitators' experiences, the situation was more complicated upon realising that even the few topics that were covered during REFLECT training were done in bits and pieces. Some participants in FGDs explained:

Vuto lalikulu ndiloti nthawi ya training inali yochepa kwambiri ndiye zotsatila zake anangotiwaula basi, anatiphunzitsa mwamgwazu chifukwa masiku anachepa opanga training zophunzira zinachuluka kwambiri ndiye ifenso sitinamveko bwino bwino ayi.

(The biggest challenge was that the time for training was not enough, it was too short. As a result, we were inadequately trained, the trainer was too fast because the days were few, the material was too much so we did not understand everything since we just covered few topics and not in details.)
(FGD 5, 10th August, 2018)

The explanation above shows that even after training facilitators still felt incompetent in facilitating REFLECT approach. This finding is consistent with what Addae's (2016) study found that some of the facilitators for adult education programmes in Ghana and South Africa are not professionally trained. More crucially, the study further established that the facilitators' incompetence was manifested during facilitation process in literacy circles. The study found that some REFLECT facilitators had limited knowledge on REFLECT approach to the extent that some of them could not understand the critical aspects of the approach. As a result, facilitators chose which topics to cover during learning process as explained by one participant during face-to-face interviews:

Ndiye ifenso nafe timangopanga part yomwe tikuyiziwayo ndikulekezera panjira, kwinako nkusiya nanga tikaname? Ayi!

(So, we too just facilitate the topics that we only understand and leave out the rest, should we go and lie? No!) **(Facilitator Circle Z, 1st August, 2018)**

The fact that the REFLECT facilitators choose to facilitate on topics that are only familiar to them and leave out those topics that are considered difficult has a huge effect on the level of literacy development for adult learners. Limited knowledge by REFLECT facilitators means that they do not have adequate knowledge and skills to competently facilitate adult learning process. This affects adult learners' acquisition of literacy skills

since REFLECT facilitators do not holistically and systematically exploit various aspects of literacy skills acquisition in literacy circles. This argument resonates well with the findings of the study by Alkali (2016) that facilitators' quality of knowledge and skills relates positively and significantly with adult learners' learning outcomes in adult basic literacy programmes. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the importance of facilitator training cannot be overemphasised.

In addition, it emerged that facilitators' incompetence further resulted in little knowledge on how to motivate adult learners attend literacy circles. Most facilitators linked the problem to inadequate training as one facilitator reiterated:

Pamene pamapelewera ndi kumupanga munthu wamkulu kuti akhale ndi chidwi choti asajombe eeh kukhazikika kwa ophunzira, upangili oti ndimpange tsiku ndi tsiku azimva kukoma ndimaona kuti pamenepa pamandivuta kwambiri, eeh chifukwa sanatiphunzitse ayi ku training.

(What is lacking is the ability to motivate an adult learner to be interested, not to be absent from class and become committed adult learners. I do not have those skills to make them still interested in learning everyday because we were not taught during training.) (**Facilitator Circle V, 17th July, 2018**)

Although little knowledge on how to motivate adult learners may not be the only reason for absenteeism, there could be some other causes of absenteeism such as family engagements and business demands. Even during the whole period in which the researcher visited the six literacy circles, it was observed that there was low turn-out of adult learners and most of them were regularly absent from literacy circles. Failure to motivate adult learners attend literacy circles reflects lack of knowledge by facilitators contrary to andragogy theory which advocates facilitators to have adequate knowledge and skills to motivate adult learners to attend literacy circles through designing the instruction to meet adult learners' needs and interests to achieve their goals (Chan, 2010; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980). The findings that facilitators lack knowledge to motivate adult learners in the literacy circles are in general agreement with the discussion in Chapter 2 of the thesis. As discussed in Chapter 2, Dhlamini (2012) argues that adults are motivated to join adult literacy programmes if they feel the programmes are addressing their needs (also see Rogers, 2008).

Apart from facilitator training, the study further explored opportunities for facilitators to attend refresher courses and their relevance. The evidence from the interviews revealed that most participants in the study acknowledged the great part refresher courses play in reminding REFLECT facilitators of their facilitation roles which eventually improves their facilitation performance in the literacy circles. The study further found that refresher courses provide opportunities for REFLECT facilitators to share experiences and learn from each other. One participant emphasised the importance of refresher courses in the following words:

Ma refresher amakukumbusila zomwe udaphunzila kale mwina zina unaziwala, ndiye kufunika kwake ma refresher ndikoti amakumapangisa munthu kukumbuka zomwe unaziwala ngati correction. Komanso amathandiza kuti mumagawana nzeru kuti muzikaphunzitsa motani.
(Refresher courses remind you things you learnt but maybe you had forgotten them, so the importance of refresher courses is that they make a person to remember things they had forgotten just like a correction. Besides, they also provide opportunities to share knowledge on how facilitation can be done.) (FGD 1, 19th April, 2018)

The verbatim quote solidifies the relevance of refresher courses in improving facilitators' knowledge and skills through sharing of knowledge and experiences. Apart from the positive impact of refresher courses in terms of knowledge and skills development for REFLECT facilitators, they also help prevent disastrous errors from occurring during facilitation process in the literacy circles which influences on the extent to which adult learners acquire literacy skills. Thus, refresher courses have a huge influence on both knowledge development and facilitation process in the literacy circles.

Despite several advantages that refresher courses have on the part of REFLECT facilitators, the study established that they are not regularly organised. The study revealed that most facilitators have never attended refresher courses since they joined as REFLECT facilitators. As a consequence, the research found from facilitators that lack of refresher courses negatively influence the decisions they make during facilitation process. Some participants of the study explained:

Ineyo ndakhala facilitator kwa zaka 9 koma ku refresher sindinapiteko ngakhale kamodzi.

(I have been a facilitator for 9 years but I have never gone for a refresher course, not even once.) (**Facilitator Circle U, 25th April, 2018**)

Chiyambileni kukhala facilitator, ineyo sindinapiteko ku refresher ayi koma ndakhala facilitator kwa zaka 4 panopa.

(Since I became a facilitator, I have never been to a refresher course, but I have been a facilitator for 4 years now.) (**Facilitator Circle W, 4th August, 2018**)

Lack of opportunities for refresher courses deprive facilitators a chance to acquire new knowledge and skills to improve their facilitation performance as this seemed to influence practice in the literacy circles. Besides, lack of refresher courses can also have negative effect on facilitators in terms of self-confidence particularly when they begin to experience some knowledge gaps in the course of facilitation. As a result, this may increase levels of mistakes during the facilitation process. When REFLECT facilitators begin to experience some knowledge gaps, they are more likely to mess up the whole facilitation process which can negatively affect the learning process and the extent to which adult learners acquire literacy skills. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the influence of refresher courses on the facilitators' knowledge and skills cannot be underplayed (also see Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012; Archer & Newman, 2003).

4.3.3 Facilitators' knowledge of facilitation methods

The study explored facilitators' knowledge of facilitation methods. Facilitation methods can be considered as a bedrock for effective facilitation process. The study found that only few REFLECT facilitators had some knowledge of facilitation methods that are supposed to be used in literacy circles. One participant during face-to-face interviews explained as follows:

Inetu ma method amene ndimawadziwa alipo angapo: method iyi yokambilana, kwina kugwilitsa ntchito method ija yoti kulongosola kapena kuti kukambilana, kaya kugwiritsa ntchito nyimbo, eya. Ndi njira zimene ndikuziziwa kuti tingathe kugwiritsa ntchito ku REFLECT circle kuja.

(I know some of the methods, discussion method or using lecture or discussion method, may be using songs. These are the methods I know that

we can use at the REFLECT circle.) (**Facilitator Circle Z, 1st August, 2018**)

Discussion, lecture and songs are some of the facilitation methods that some REFLECT facilitators know. However, the study discovered that most REFLECT facilitators had little knowledge of facilitation methods. Some participants explained:

Aaaahh ine ndiye ma method ophunzitsira sindimawadziwa bwinobwino chifukwa choti ku training sanatiphunzitse ayi. Ndimangodziwa njira yolembe pa bolodi ndi kuwafunsa mafunso. Ndiye njira yomwe tinaphunzira kuchokera ku training ndi imeneyo yolembe pa bolodi ndiye palibe inanso. (I do not know any teaching methods because we were not taught during our training. I just know the method of writing on the board and asking questions. So, the method we learnt from the training is that one of writing on the board, there is no other method.) (**Facilitator Circle V, 17th July, 2018**)

Monga m'mene ndinanena kale chifukwa kumeneko kuma method'ko sitinakhuzeko kwenikweni chifukwa chake zinangokhala zowaula pamenepo nde pakhala ngati pavuta. Zimenezzo zama method'zo sitinakambepo.

(Just as I already said, the topic on methods, we did not learn the topic on the methods mainly because we were not properly trained so that is a challenge. We did not touch on the methods.) (**FGD 4, 8th August, 2018**)

Contrary to andragogy theory which advocates that facilitators should have adequate knowledge for effective facilitation (Chan, 2010; Bedi, 2004, Knowles, 1989), these findings seem to point to the fact that some REFLECT facilitators had little knowledge of facilitation methods for adult learning. However, as earlier discussed in the chapter, this challenge originates from the training that facilitators underwent. It was particularly interesting that although some REFLECT facilitators had limited knowledge of facilitation methods, they were actually still facilitating the adult learning process in the literacy circles. As has been discussed in the previous section, limited knowledge on the part of REFLECT facilitators about facilitation methods could negatively affect the overall development of literacy skills for adult learners because facilitators do not holistically and systematically exploit various aspects of literacy skills acquisition in literacy circles. The findings seem to agree with those in Chapter 2, that facilitation methods used by facilitators relate strongly and positively to adult learners' learning outcomes in basic literacy

programmes (see Alkali, 2016). This emphasises the need for REFLECT facilitators to acquire adequate knowledge on effective facilitation methods (see Section 2.5, also Table 2.1), since they directly influence the quality of practice in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes.

4.3.3.1 Commonly used facilitation methods

The researcher found that the lecture, and question and answer methods are predominantly used by REFLECT facilitators in all the literacy circles. There might be a number of explanations for this situation including the fact that REFLECT facilitators do not have knowledge on different types of facilitation methods that could be used in literacy circles during facilitation process, as has already been discussed in this chapter. Another explanation could be that the facilitators may have knowledge about different methods of facilitation but lack ideas about how such methods can be used in literacy circles. During FGDs, some participants reported commonly used methods during facilitation process as explained:

Koma kwa ineyo, njira zimene ndimagwiritsa ntchito pafupi-pafupi ndi kufunsa mafunso kuti aziyankha komanso kulemba pa bolodi.

(For me, the methods that I usually use from time to time are question and answer method and also writing on the chalkboard.) (FGD 5, 10th August, 2018)

The dominance of the lecture, and question and answer methods meant that adult learners were not given much opportunities to be exposed to participatory learning which is against the andragogical principles (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984). The study found that much of the facilitation process in the literacy circles was facilitator-centred. The underlying question is whether adult learners can still acquire literacy skills without being actively involved in the learning process. As discussed in Chapter 2, no single facilitation method can achieve the outcomes of the facilitation process (see Quan-Baffour, 2000). This knowledge calls for REFLECT facilitators to use different facilitation methods (see Section 2.5, also Table 2.1) during the learning process. Likewise, the findings of the study by Warigia (2014) on factors affecting the implementation of literacy programmes in adult education in Kenya, recommends literacy facilitators to use several facilitations methods during the facilitation process for effective adult learning.

Figure 4.3 shows a REFLECT facilitator facilitating in one of the sessions in the literacy circle.



Figure 4.3: REFLECT facilitator during session in Literacy Circle X

Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.3 points to several things, for instance, that the learning session was mainly dominated by the REFLECT facilitators. During visits to the Literacy Circle X, the researcher observed that the REFLECT facilitator mostly controlled and dominated the learning activities, contrary to andragogy theory (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984). This might reflect this particular REFLECT facilitator's knowledge about facilitation methods for facilitating adult learning process, as discussed in Chapter 2. As has been discussed in the previous sections, this problem could be directly linked to facilitator training. As a consequence, much less attention was paid to engaging adult learners in various learning activities necessary for developing literacy skills. Consequently, adult learners who may

not understand the concepts presented by the REFLECT facilitator may find it difficult to ask questions since they are not given an opportunity to express their ideas.

Figure 4.3 further shows that adult learners are not actively involved in their learning process. In real sense, the facilitation process was facilitator-centred. The problem with facilitator-centred approach is that adult learners can get bored and may therefore lose interest in the learning process. The other problem could be that adult learners are not able to take responsibility in their learning since they are less engaged in the learning process, contrary to one of the andragogical principles which suggests that adults are autonomous and self-directed (Knowles, 1989; Brookfield, 1986). To some extent, this indicates some lost opportunities for peer learning among adult learners which directly influences learners' literacy skills acquisition. As earlier discussed in Chapter 2, the role of the facilitator, according to andragogy theory is not to provide adult learners with new knowledge but rather create opportunities for them to reflect on such knowledge and beliefs and to identify the most feasible knowledge to solve their problems (also see Addae, 2016).

Besides, the school-like seating arrangement in Figure 4.3, where adult learners are seated next to each other on one row listening to the REFLECT facilitator in front of the classroom, raises the questions of the extent to which such seating arrangements in the literacy circles are contextually appropriate for adult learners since REFLECT facilitators appeared to promote them. To understand what is happening in the figure, one needs to understand that REFLECT approach promotes adult learners to be in small circles just as the name suggests - literacy circles, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. As has been discussed in the previous sections, the lack of knowledge by facilitators to understand the seating arrangements in the literacy circles originates from the training. Literacy circles are considered to be a place for cooperative learning since adult learners use each other as resources for learning through sharing of knowledge and experiences. Thus, literacy circles provide adult learners with opportunities to share knowledge and experiences through cooperative learning. Through their discussions, adult learners learn various skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving which may eventually help them to deepen their

understanding of various literacy skills, as advocated by andragogy theory, which suggests that adults are practical (Chan, 2010; Knowles, 1989).

Figure 4.4 shows another REFLECT facilitator facilitating in one of the sessions in the literacy circle.



Figure 4.4: REFLECT facilitator during session in Literacy Circle V

Source: Data from the field

Similarly, Figure 4.4 raises a number of issues. For example, apart from the seating plan which shows school-like seating arrangement where adult learners are seated next to each other on one row listening to the REFLECT facilitator in front of the classroom, adult learners are not actively involved in their learning process. Failure to engage adult learners in the learning process ultimately deprives them opportunities to share knowledge, skills and experiences through cooperative learning, which is against one of the principles of andragogy theory which states that adults are practical (Chan, 2010; Knowles, 1989). Therefore, facilitators must be aware that learning in the literacy circles requires different seating arrangements suitable for REFLECT approach, as discussed in Chapter 2 and this

section (also see Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Although the study did not engage adult learners to establish whether they liked the school-like seating arrangement because it was not within the parameters of the study, the researcher observed that every time they come to literacy circle, the seating arrangement was a school-like setup, so it was like a traditional setup. This means that adult learners themselves already expected a school-like setup. Perhaps, one could argue that the nature of the infrastructure and the teaching space also influenced the seating arrangement during learning. However, it is the researcher's view that facilitators should observe principles of REFLECT approach (see Chapter 2) despite circumstances around them for effective facilitation.

Figure 4.4 also suggests that the facilitation process was facilitator-centred to such an extent that the facilitator was only focusing on the chalk-board. The position of the facilitator could imply detaching herself from the adult learners. This indicates some lost opportunities for adult learners to be engaged in interactive activities that could greatly help them acquire different skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and literacy. Contrary to the facilitator's approach, andragogy theory reminds facilitators to engage adult learners in the learning process and create conducive participatory learning environments that help them learn their best to achieve goals (Houle, 1996).

More importantly, both Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show that there were no instruction aids such as charts in the literacy circles. Although Figure 4.3 has two charts pasted at the back of the classroom, however, the researcher observed that those charts do not belong to the Literacy Circle X but rather belong to the primary school class that uses the classroom, as earlier discussed in Section 4.2. Even during visits to the six literacy circles, the researcher observed that generally instruction aids such as charts are rarely used during the learning process. Of course, there might be a number of explanations for this, and one of it might be lack of knowledge to appreciate the value of using instruction aids in the literacy circles and how they can be used. Another explanation could be simply an oversight by the REFLECT facilitators to deliberately ignore them and just focus on the activities that are perceived to be easy for them to use. Therefore, both figures reflect the use of lecture method by REFLECT facilitators.

Nevertheless, within the limitations of the findings, this suggests that lecture method was predominantly used by facilitators in the literacy circles, as already discussed in the chapter. Further, it implies that REFLECT facilitators involved in the study may not be in line with the andragogy theory which advocates against the use of facilitator-centred methods. Andragogy theory emphasises that adult learners should not be passive but rather actively involved in the learning process under the guidance of a facilitator (Knowles, 1990; Knowles, 1989; Brookfield, 1986). This finding is consistent with the findings of the study by Dhlamini (2012) who found that literacy facilitators in South Africa were using lecture method during adult learning. Dhlamini further found that classrooms had no instruction aids such as charts with graphs, shapes, and figures to help facilitate literacy skills. It is important for REFLECT facilitators to know that the use of instruction aids adds value to the learning process by improving the clarity and effectiveness of the concepts and theories (Cardiff et al. 2007; Archer & Goreth, 2004; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). However, the issue of the use of instructional materials is particularly interesting considering that there was lack of facilitation materials in the literacy circles, as will be discussed in the sub-section 4.5.3.3 of the thesis.

4.3.3.2 Rarely used facilitation methods

The study findings from observations and interviews established that discussion and demonstration methods were rarely used by REFLECT facilitators in literacy circles during facilitation process. Even during the visits to the six literacy circles, the researcher observed that REFLECT facilitators hardly used discussion and demonstration methods in the learning process. This highlights that most of the REFLECT facilitators involved in the study did not maximise the use of a variety of different facilitation methods despite having several advantages on adult learning in terms of the development of literacy skills. This situation gives rise to questions about whether this was simply an oversight by the REFLECT facilitators or lack of ideas about how such effective facilitation methods can be used during facilitation process and therefore decide to deliberately ignore them and focus only on facilitation methods that seemed easy for them to use. As has been discussed in the previous sections, the major reason could be lack of knowledge about effective

facilitation methods which originates from the training of facilitators. This finding also agrees with Machobane (2010) who reports that in South Africa, demonstration methods are rarely used by literacy facilitators during adult learning process.

However, at one literacy circle, a special case was observed during one of the visits. The researcher observed that a REFLECT facilitator was using appropriate facilitation methods such as discussion, demonstration and group work during the learning process. It was observed that adult learners were fully engaged in different activities and the learning process was fully participatory. Besides, this particular REFLECT facilitator had prepared instruction aids such as charts and word pictures to help facilitate literacy learning. More significantly, the researcher also noted that a REFLECT facilitator and adult learners were all sitting in a circle which is typical of a literacy circle (see Chapter 2). Figure 4.5 shows the REFLECT facilitator (a man seated in white shirt) during the session in one of the literacy circles.



Figure 4.5: REFLECT facilitator (a man seated in white shirt) during session in Literacy Circle Z

Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.5 provides a good model of how REFLECT facilitators should facilitate the learning process. The facilitator made a useful attempt to use appropriate facilitation methods and also engaged adult learners actively in the learning process, as discussed in Chapter 2. This underscores valuable efforts by the REFLECT facilitator to allow adult learners get more control over their learning which directly reflects the andragogical principles which emphasise learner-centred approach for adult learning (Knowles, 1989; Knowles 1984; Knowles, 1980).

In addition, the use of instruction aids such as charts and word pictures during the learning process as shown in Figure 4.5, adds value to adult learning since they improve the clarity and effectiveness of the concepts during literacy learning. Considering that this particular facilitator used different facilitation methods suitable for adult learning during the whole period of the study, and that the learning process was greatly participatory in nature throughout the learning process, raises some crucial issues about REFLECT facilitators' capacity and potential to facilitate adult learning process. To some extent, it reveals the potential and capacity that REFLECT facilitators have to use effective facilitation methods and instruction aids in the learning process. Thus, Figure 4.5 could be regarded as a good model of an attempt by a REFLECT facilitator to demonstrate how adult learning process can be facilitated effectively using appropriate facilitation methods. This finding relates to one of the principles of andragogy theory which states that adults are autonomous and self-directed therefore, facilitators should use learner-centred methods to actively engage them in the learning process (Knowles, 1990; Knowles, 1989; Brookfield, 1986). As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the role of a facilitator, according to andragogy theory, cannot be overemphasized.

When the researcher further asked this particular facilitator, what could be the factors for effective facilitation considering that he was unique in the way he handled the literacy circle, it was revealed that there are some critical aspects that make significant contribution for effective facilitation in the literacy circles. It emerged during interviews that apart from academic qualifications, the facilitator also attended trainings several times about adult literacy facilitation before joining the REFLECT programme. He stressed that those

trainings helped him to acquire knowledge and skills for effective facilitation. The facilitator highlighted some critical aspects for effective facilitation in the following quotation:

Ineyo monga ndayionera REFLECT'yi, munthu oti athe akuphunzisa bwinobwino akuyenera kuti akhale ndi maphunziro okwanira monga JCE kapena MSCE, akhale kutinso waphunzisdwa mokwanira bwino ku training m'mene angaphunzisire REFLECT komanso azipita kuma refresher courses pafupi-pafupi.

(According to my own experience on the REFLECT approach, the person to become facilitator should have the required qualifications such as JCE and MSCE, he/she should also be adequately trained on how to facilitate the REFLECT approach and also should be attending refresher courses regularly.) (FGD 4, 8th August, 2018).

The verbatim quote reveals three critical aspects necessary for effective facilitation, namely the required academic qualifications, adequate training, and regular refresher courses. The findings are in general agreement with the discussion in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Understanding the crucial aspects for facilitators is a key feature of the study, as it allows us to appreciate critical aspects for effective facilitation. Although andragogy theory does not explicitly provide critical aspects for facilitators (Knowles, 1989; Knowles 1984; Knowles, 1980), as has been discussed elsewhere in the chapter, the important role these three crucial aspects can play in enhancing facilitators' abilities to provide effective facilitation process in the literacy circles cannot be underestimated. Thus, consideration and strengthening of the above-mentioned aspects may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. As will be discussed in Section 4.7, the researcher developed a model for adult learning and facilitation based on the study findings which provides the critical aspects for facilitators that influence knowledge for effective facilitation in literacy circles.

Nonetheless, during visits to all the six literacy circles throughout the whole period of the study, the researcher did not observe any of the REFLECT facilitators using role play, drama, songs, narration and debate methods of facilitation. As discussed in the chapter, this may be attributed to lack of knowledge and skills about how these facilitation methods can be used in the literacy circles during the facilitation process which is directly linked to

facilitator training. It is the researcher's view that the use of a variety of facilitation methods depends on the REFLECT facilitators' knowledge, that is, how well they understand the methods and how they can effectively be used in literacy circles during the facilitation process. The findings, thus suggest that the training received by REFLECT facilitators in the six literacy circles was not effective.

In summary, research question one focused on experiences of facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult literacy programmes. Overall, the discussion centred on three major themes namely academic qualifications of facilitators; opportunities for training; and facilitators' knowledge of facilitation methods. Regarding academic qualifications, it was evident that while some facilitators had the required academic qualifications, others did not have which compromised the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. Although training equips facilitators with knowledge and skills for effective facilitation, the training received by facilitators was not effective since facilitators had little knowledge about facilitation. In general, the lecture, and question and answer methods were predominantly used by REFLECT facilitators whereas discussion and demonstration methods were rarely used in literacy circles. Thus, the study found that consideration and strengthening of three key aspects such as the required academic qualifications, adequate training, and regular refresher courses may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. The next section discusses findings of the study for research question two, about the motivation of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programme.

4.4 Motivation of facilitators during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation

The second research question explored the motivation of facilitators during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation. The researcher observed that facilitator motivation was one of the hot issues that kept on being repeatedly mentioned by most participants in the study throughout the entire period of the study. The discussion for this research question focuses on two themes, namely motivation of facilitators, and commitment of REFLECT facilitators. The following sub-sections discusses these two themes.

4.4.1 Motivation of facilitators

One of the factors that was found to be influencing effective facilitation of REFLECT adult literacy programme was motivation of facilitators. The researcher found that facilitators were not motivated during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation. The study further established that lack of motivational strategies such as attractive monthly honoraria was detrimental to effective facilitation process and achievement of learning outcomes. It must be mentioned that REFLECT facilitators were receiving a monthly honorarium of K6 000. 00, as discussed in Section 4.2. The amount is usually determined by a particular organisation that is implementing the literacy programme without actually consulting the facilitators involved. One participant during FGDs had this to say:

Palibe njira kapena ndondomeko zomwe anakonza mu REFLECT'mu kuti azitilimbikisa ife ma facilitator kuti tizigwira ntchito yathu molimbika, palibe ndithu. Palibepo olo ndi njira imodzi yomwe. Tikati tinene za mphatso olo kapena bonus, palibe palibiletu. Zosatira zake palibe amene amagwira ntchito molimbikira ndiye zimakhuzanso zosatira zake pa mapeto.

(There are no strategies that are put in place to motivate REFLECT facilitators to work hard. There is literally none, not even rewards or bonuses, not at all. As a result, no one works hard in the literacy circles and that also affects the outcomes at the end.) (FGD 1, 19th April, 2018).

Lack of motivation for REFLECT facilitators was likely to have dire consequences in terms of the quality of facilitation and the extent to which the learning outcomes were achieved. One participant highlighted the consequence of lack of motivation as quoted:

Ine ngati facilitator ndili ndikuthekera kuchikweza chinthuchi komanso ine ndili ndikuthekera kuchigwetsa. Kuchigwetsa kwake, ine ndili pa nkhani ya honoraria, imeneyi ikugwetsanso chinthuchi panso, kuchepa kwa honoraria. Ineyo ine, ndinazasiya kwa 3 months, ineyo ndinausiya u facilitator kwa 3 months, nkhani yake honoraria. Kuchepa kwa honoraria ndikumene kumapangitsa kuti tichigwetse chimenechi.

(As a facilitator, I have the potential to make the REFLECT approach work but also to fail. On the issue of honoraria, this issue is contributing to the failure of the approach, the honoraria is too little. I for one, I once quitted for 3 months, I stopped working as a facilitator for 3 months because of honoraria. The small honoraria make us to make the approach fail.) (FGD 2, 26th April, 2018)

Little monthly honoraria given to REFLECT facilitators has huge impact on the quality of facilitation and the achievement of learning outcomes. The fact that some REFLECT facilitators had to quit the job as a result of little monthly honoraria signifies how crucial the monthly honoraria is to the facilitators and underscores the fact that it has potential to negatively affect effective implementation of adult literacy programmes. The finding also agrees with UNESCO (2005) who reports that adult literacy facilitators received little remuneration in terms of monthly honoraria. On the contrary, some studies found that motivating facilitators through effective rewards such as incentives, bonuses and awards resulted in improved high performances in literacy classes (Nnadi, 2016; Nyakundi, 2012). This knowledge calls for literacy programmes to consider motivating facilitators in various ways to improve performance and ultimately achieve the outcomes. Besides, there is need for government and NGOs to consider alternative means of motivating and supporting literacy facilitators instead of just depending on the monthly honoraria as the only means. As we shall discuss later in the chapter, the participants did not suggest other forms of motivation they would have loved to receive apart from emphasising on increasing the monthly honoraria. Perhaps, this suggests how REFLECT facilitators perceive the issue of motivation in terms of monetary rewards.

4.4.2 Commitment by REFLECT facilitators

The study found from interviews with participants in the study that most REFLECT facilitators are not committed to their work. The findings indicate that literacy circles do not usually meet four times per week as it is recommended, as earlier discussed in Section 4.2 of the thesis. It was further found that the majority of REFLECT facilitators are not seriously committed to their work and they do not prioritise it. It emerged that they usually take facilitation as a second option. One participant had this to say:

Ndizoon a ndithu kuti masiku ena anthu samakumana monga m'mene ziyenera kukhalira chifukwa choti nthawi zina ife ma facilitator timapita kukagwira ganyu kapena ngati tapeza ntchito. Ntchito ina ikapezeka, iyi imakhala pa number 2, ikatha ganyu ija basi timabwelerera ku kalasi kwathu. Izi sindipanga ine ndekha ayi koma ma facilitator ambiri timapanga zimenezi. Choncho magwilidwe ntchito a ife ma facilitator amakhala a on

and off. *Ngati munthu (facilitator) wapeza ganyu, basi umapita ku ganyuko kukagwira, pamene ganyuyo ikatha basi umabwelera ku kalasi.*

(It is indeed true that in some days people do not meet in the literacy circles as it is supposed to be because sometimes as facilitators, we go out to do some pieces of work if they are available. If a piece work is available, this one as a facilitator becomes second option, when the piece work is finished then we go back to literacy circles. I am not the only doing such things but most facilitators also do the same. So, the way we work can be considered as on and off. If a facilitator has found a piece of work, they go out and work and once the piece work is finished, then they go back to literacy circles.)
(Facilitator Circle Z, 1st August, 2018)

High levels of absenteeism highlight little commitment by REFLECT facilitators. Although there might be several reasons behind REFLECT facilitators' absenteeism, one of the major reasons could be that facilitators lack basic needs in the homes and this pushes them to prioritize piece work than the literacy circle. Little commitment by REFLECT facilitators is directly linked to the issue of motivation, as discussed in the previous section. Consequently, the absenteeism of facilitators in literacy circles eventually deprives adult learners the opportunity to acquire literacy skills. While supporting these findings, a study on the functional literacy programme in Malawi about educating adults for improved standards of living by Kishindo (1994) also found that adult literacy facilitators were not particularly committed to the task and absenteeism was very high. Kishindo observed that absenteeism of adult literacy facilitators makes it difficult for adult learners to acquire the required knowledge and it is often a source of frustration to them.

To conclude, research question two explored the motivation of facilitators during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation. Overall, study findings revealed that REFLECT facilitators were not motivated during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation. Consequently, the study discovered that REFLECT facilitators were not committed to carry out their duties in the literacy circles to the extent that there were high levels of absenteeism by facilitators which resulted in depriving adult learners' opportunities to acquire literacy skills. In the next section, the discussion focuses on research question three about experiences of facilitators with the REFLECT approach's effectiveness in bringing out the desired outcomes.

4.5 Experiences of facilitators with the REFLECT approach's effectiveness in bringing out desired outcomes

This section discusses findings of the study for the third research question regarding experiences of facilitators with the REFLECT approach's effectiveness in bringing out desired outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 2, the expected outcomes for REFLECT approach include helping adult learners acquire literacy skills; enhancing their livelihoods and income generation capacity; and promoting community development (also see Hanemann, 2017; FRC, 2016; Archer & Cottingham, 1996). The section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section discusses the findings about the outcomes that have been achieved with the REFLECT approach. The second sub-section presents results on the outcomes that have not been achieved and finally, the last sub-section discusses challenges experienced that negatively affect the achievement of desired outcomes.

Regarding the effectiveness of the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2), the study found that almost all the participants had observed that partly the approach was bringing out the desired outcomes. Based on the experiences of facilitators, it emerged during face-to-face interviews that just part of the core outcomes for the REFLECT approach have been achieved. One participant explained:

REFLECT 'yi indee ikumatulutsa zotsatira ndithu koma ndi pang'ono. Ndinganene kuti sinafikepo potulutsa zotsatira zonse bwino bwino ayi. Ndiye mbali imodzi pang'ono zotsatila zikutuluka ndipo zikuoneka.
(Indeed, REFLECT is bringing out the outcomes but it is partially. What I can say is that it has not reached the level expected for it to bring out the outcomes fully. So partly, somehow the expected outcomes are achieved and demonstrated.) (FGD 2, 26th April, 2018)

The quote suggests that somehow the core outcomes for the REFLECT approach have been partially achieved. As will be discussed later in the chapter, among the core outcomes that were partially achieved based on the experiences of facilitators include the acquisition of literacy skills by adult learners, understanding of human rights, and the power to the people. On one hand, the partial achievement of core outcomes for the programme should encourage REFLECT facilitators to reflect on the best practices employed in the literacy

circles for improved facilitation process (see sub-section 4.3.3.2; also Figure 4.5). On the other hand, it can also encourage adult learners to take the achievement as a milestone towards achieving the other core outcomes that have not so far been achieved. Overall, the partial achievement of the core outcomes for REFLECT approach could motivate both facilitators and adult learners to work together in the literacy circles with a common purpose and strive to achieve the approach's overall core outcomes.

However, the study further found that the REFLECT approach is not fully bringing out the desired outcomes as it is expected. Most study participants emphasised that to a certain extent, the approach is not achieving the expected outcomes as explained by one participant during FGDs:

Komanso mbali ina yaikulu, zotsatilazo zikuvuta kuti zituluke. Nchifukwa chake tikutonso REFLECT 'yi ku mbali ina yaikulu sikutulusa zotsatira zake m'mene ifeyo tikufunira monga m'mene zikuyenera kukhalira.

(On a greater part, it's difficult for the outcomes to be achieved. That's why we are saying that on a greater part, REFLECT is not bringing out the outcomes the way we want it to be, as it is expected.) **(FGD 5, 10th August, 2018)**

This suggests failure by adult learners to achieve their goal for joining adult literacy programme, contrary to one of the principles of andragogy theory which states that adults are goal-oriented (Knowles, 1989; Knowles 1984; Knowles, 1980). From facilitators' experiences, the study established some of the core outcomes that have not been achieved such as economic empowerment, lack of parental assistance in their children's school activities, and adult learners' detachment from developmental projects taking place in their communities. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the influence of effective facilitation methods on the learning outcomes cannot be overemphasised (see Addae, 2016). However, the issue of effective facilitation methods could be linked to facilitator training, as discussed in the previous sections. The next section discusses the outcomes that have been achieved in the REFLECT approach.

4.5.1 The achieved outcomes

This section discusses the achieved outcomes that have been registered in the REFLECT adult literacy programme. The fact that some core outcomes of the programme have been achieved suggests that to some extent good facilitation is taking place in the literacy circles although it was rarely experienced, as earlier discussed in the sub-section 4.3.3.2 (also see Figure 4.5). In this section, the discussion focuses on three sub-themes which include acquisition of literacy skills, understanding of human rights, and power to the people. These sub-themes are discussed below.

4.5.1.1 Acquisition of literacy skills

The researcher found that one of the achieved outcomes of the REFLECT approach is the acquisition of literacy skills among adult learners. Findings from interviews indicate that most adult learners who were not able to read and write have now acquired literacy skills after attending literacy sessions in the literacy circles. These findings were corroborated during visits to the six literacy circles, the researcher observed that some adult learners were able to read and write some words and even sentences on different issues. During face-to-face interviews, one of the participants explained:

Anthu amene samadziwa kulemba, kuwerenga ndi kuwerengetsera panopa akudziwano kulemba, kuwerenga ndi kuwerengetsera. Ndiponso ena mwaiwo apeza m'madindo osiyanasiyana mu makomiti aku mudzi chifukwa akutha kulemba, kuwerenga and kuwerengetsera. Zonsezi chifukwa choti aphunzira kuma literacy classes.

(People who did not know how to write, read and count are now able to write, read and count. Some have been appointed in different leadership position in different committees in the village because they are able to write, read and count. All this because they have participated in the literacy classes.) (**Facilitator Circle Y, 20th June, 2018**)

Appointment of some learners into different leadership positions in their communities indicates the level of literacy acquired by adult learners. It should be noted that in most cases, leadership positions in communities such as church elders, deacons, secretaries and treasurers are usually given to people who are able to read and write in order for them to meet the demands of such positions. More importantly, assuming these positions in the communities generally lift one's status and such people are usually regarded as leaders of

the community. All this demonstrates the significance of the acquisition of literacy skills to individuals and also to the communities. Therefore, the acquisition of literacy skills among adult learners highlights the achievement of one of the core outcomes for REFLECT approach. The findings directly reflect one of the principles of andragogy theory which suggests that adult learners enroll for adult literacy programmes to fulfill their own purposes, meaning that adult literacy learners are goal-oriented (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980). It was therefore concluded that their appointment into different leadership positions stresses personal benefits which directly relate to their everyday life which might have influenced their acquisition of literacy skills to a greater extent.

Figure 4.6 shows the REFLECT facilitator (on the right) at the Literacy Circle X asking adult learners (at the centre and on the left) to read a statement on the chalkboard.



Figure 4.6: Adult learners (at the centre and on the left) at Literacy Circle X reading on the board

Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.6 indicates adult learners showcasing their reading skills at one of the literacy circles (Literacy Circle X) in Mulanje district. At this literacy circle, the facilitator engaged adult learners in the reading skills' activities where they were asked to come in front and read either statements or sentences written on the chalkboard. In this particular exercise, all the learners were involved in the reading activity and from the observations, the researcher noted that almost all the adult learners managed to read what was presented to them without much difficulties. In terms of reading skills in general, the researcher observed that adult learners' acquisition of reading skills was high given the fact that each learner could easily read the statements, sentences and even short passages. Apart from the reading skills, the researcher also observed that adult learners' comprehension of the subject matter was good to the extent that after reading activities, adult learners were also able to answer some questions related to the reading tasks from their facilitators. This finding relates to andragogy theory particularly on the assumption that adults are practical and that influences their learning (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980). The theory stresses that adults would want to be able to apply their knowledge, hence learning should be life-centred, problems-centred and issues-based.

In terms of the participation of adult learners in the reading skills, the researcher observed that the strategies used by REFLECT facilitators encouraged learner participation in the literacy circles, which directly reflects andragogy theory (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980). In all the six literacy circles visited, adult learners were actively involved in the reading activities. REFLECT facilitators could ask several questions to the adult learners from the reading activities and that enabled adult learners to become active participants in the facilitation process in the literacy circles. Overall, with regard to reading skills, the researcher generally observed that reading skills promoted active participation of adult learners in the learning process. In some cases, adult learners were able to ask questions where they either did not understand the concepts or misunderstood the concepts and REFLECT facilitators were able to assist adult learners clarify and address such problems.

Apart from reading skills, adult learners also acquired writing skills. The researcher found, among other things, that adult learners were able to write on their own various words, phrases and some sentences on a given topic. For instance, a lesson on “*Njira zopangira ukhondo pa nyumba*” translated as, “Ways of observing hygiene practices at the household level” at Literacy Circle Z can be used as a case in point. After introducing the topic, the facilitator gave a brief description of the topic after which adult learners gave responses according to their understanding of the topic. Then the facilitator asked each adult learner to write their responses on the chalkboard which also spurred further discussion in the literacy circle. The researcher noted that learners were able to write their responses correctly on the chalkboard despite the fact that some words were a bit challenging. Besides the writing skills activities, the researcher further observed that there was also maximum interaction amongst the adult learners during this discussion. Figure 4.7 shows an adult learner writing some words on the board at Literacy Circle Z.

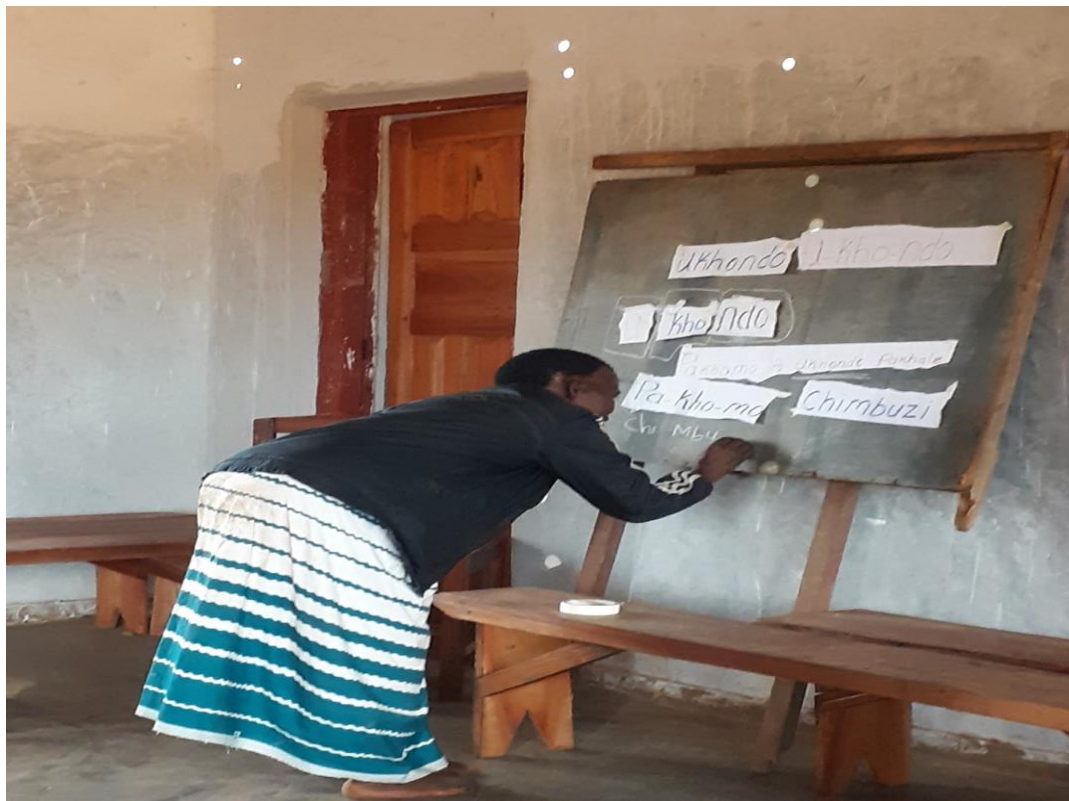


Figure 4.7: An adult learner at Literacy Circle Z writing on the chalkboard
Source: Data from the field

Figure 4.7 above demonstrates an adult learner writing her responses on the chalkboard for further discussion at Literacy Circle Z. In this particular activity, the facilitator involved adult learners in the writing skills where they were asked to come in front and write their responses on specific questions on the chalkboard. In general, the researcher noted that adult learners were able to write their responses correctly and with confidence on the chalkboard. In fact, in each of the literacy circles visited, the researcher observed that adult learners acquired writing skills and had a very good understanding of concepts of the various topics taught. In addition to writing skills, it was found that adult learners also acquired numeracy skills. In other literacy circles visited, where REFLECT facilitators taught numeracy skills to adult learners, it was generally observed that learning was made more practical and enhanced the motivation of adult learners to the extent that adult learners were just volunteering themselves to come to the front of the literacy circle and demonstrate on the chalkboard how to solve some arithmetic sums. In terms of the participation of adult learners in the learning process, the researcher generally observed that the activities employed by REFLECT facilitators encouraged adult learner participation in the literacy circle, as emphasised by andragogy theory (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980).

Overall, both Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7 demonstrate the extent to which adult learners have acquired literacy skills. While most facilitators had challenges to facilitate the learning process effectively, as earlier discussed in the sub-sections 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.3, the acquisition of literacy skills by most adult learners indicates positive developments about the core outcomes that have been registered in the REFLECT approach. Through practical demonstrations (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7), adult learners were able to showcase reading, writing and numeracy skills acquired although such experiences were rare in the literacy circles except at the Literacy Circle Z which could be regarded as a good model of effective facilitation and learner involvement, as discussed in the previous sections. These findings reflect principles of andragogy theory which promote adult learners to be active and not passive. The theory encourages adult learners to be actively involved in the learning process under the guidance of a facilitator (Knowles, 1989; Brookfield, 1986; Knowles,

1984; Knowles, 1980). This promotes self-directed learning which is perceived as a goal, an underlying assumption of andragogy and a prevailing philosophy for adult literacy education (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998). According to Knowles et al. (1998), the role of facilitators in promoting self-directed learning among adult learners is to provide appropriate learning tools, resources, experiences and encouragement. Therefore, this calls for REFLECT facilitators to create conducive learning environment and use facilitation methods suitable for adult learning.

4.5.1.2 Understanding of human rights

Besides the acquisition of literacy skills which is one of the core outcomes for the REFLECT approach, as discussed in the previous section, the study also established that adult learners are now fully aware of their rights and how they can defend them as a result of attending adult literacy programmes. In REFLECT approach, understanding of human rights is one of the core outcomes of the programme. Participants in the study highlighted adult learners' understanding of human rights as one of the core outcomes in the following verbatim quote:

Chifukwa cha REFLECT 'yi, panopa anthu akudziwa maufulu awo, kuti aah kodi ndili ndi ufulunso oyankhulanso zakukhosi eti? Choncho REFLECT yathandizanso ku mbali imeneyi kudziwitsa anthu maufulu awo. (Because of this REFLECT, people are now able to know their rights, that is, I too have rights to voice out my concerns? So, REFLECT has helped in this area of bringing awareness of people's rights.) (FGD 2, 26th April, 2018)

The findings reveal that in REFLECT approach, the acquisition of literacy skills go beyond mere abilities to know how to read and write to a level where adult learners are able to apply the acquired knowledge to understand and solve real issues affecting their daily lives (see Mjaya, 2022). Likewise, understanding of human rights by adult learners reflects one of the assumptions of andragogy theory which emphasises that adult learning should be life-centred, problems-centred and issues-based (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980).

One question still remains open – on the extent to which adult learners understand issues of human rights. Although it may not be easy to answer this question as this was not the

focus of the study, adult learners should be made aware that human rights generally have limitations hence the need to exercise their rights with caution and sense of responsibility. This is critical, especially if we take into consideration the challenges associated with failure to respect other peoples' rights within communities which sometimes may have dire consequences, for instance, loss of property through violence that may erupt as a result of misunderstandings over some issues. This seems to suggest the need for REFLECT facilitators to make deliberate efforts and creatively engage adult learners in understanding boundaries within spheres of human rights.

4.5.1.3 Power to the people

The other core outcome that has been achieved in REFLECT approach is the understanding of power to the people. From face-to-face interviews, the researcher found that the approach has helped adult learners to know that as people, they have power to influence things be at community or district level. It was revealed that currently, people are aware that their voice has power and can therefore influence decisions on various issues affecting their lives in the communities. One participant in the study made the following explanation:

Panopa anthu akudziwa mphamvu ku anthu kuti kodi ndi chani? Anthu pakali pano ndiomasuka ndipo azindikira kuti atha kutulutsa liwu kugulu mpaka zinthu nkusinthu. Komanso akudziwa kuti vuto ili tikaapeze nalo akuti akuti, kuti atithandize, eyaa!

(People now know what power to the people is. Now people are free and know that they can voice out their concerns in public and change situations. They also know which authority to approach for each problem encountered for them to be assisted.) (FGD 1, 19th April, 2018)

The acquisition of a wide range of knowledge by adult learners underscores the fact that REFLECT approach stretches beyond literacy skills. Adult learners have been transformed into active citizens to such an extent that they are now able to know which people to approach when faced with various problems in their communities. This is also in accordance with one of the assumptions underlying andragogy principles which states that adults are relevancy-oriented. The assumption particularly stresses that adults need to see a reason for learning something and that theory should relate to practical experiences (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980). The finding indicates that not only does REFLECT approach equip adult learners with literacy skills but also transform them into active citizen

(see Mjaya, 2022). Of course, there is need to be cautious about this link and also understand the active citizenship because to be an active citizen should not be construed as to become aggressive citizen. Active citizenship is about helping to make your community a better place. Thus, adult learners should be cautious, sensitive and responsible more especially when requesting various things from people at different levels.

4.5.2 Outcomes that have not been achieved

This section discusses some of the outcomes that have not been achieved as required in the REFLECT approach, as discussed in Chapter 2, and that reflect on the quality of facilitation taking place in the literacy circles. The discussion focuses on three sub-themes and these are economic empowerment, parental assistance in their children's school activities, and participation in developmental projects.

4.5.2.1 Economic empowerment

The study findings revealed that REFLECT approach has failed to bring out the economic empowerment to adult learners which is one of the core outcomes of the approach. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, apart from acquiring literacy skills, adult learners are supposed to use the acquired knowledge to transform their lives even economically for the betterment of their welfare which suggests that economic empowerment is one of the core outcomes of the REFLECT approach. One participant of the study argued as follows:

Chuma, kuchuma kumeneko mmm sikukuyenda bwino kukuvuta. Chifukwa REFLECT imaphunzitsa munthu kuti aziyimire payekha ku mbali ya chuma. Ndiye anthu amaphunzitsidwa kuti azikhala m'magulu kuti azibwerekana ndalama, kuti azisunga komanso kuti azipanga timabizinesi. Ndiye maphunziro amaperekedwa koma zinthu sizikuoneka kuti zikusintha ayi. Koma kuphunzirako akuphunzira, koma kuti agwiritse ntchito zimene aphunzirazo kuti atukule miyoyo yawo sizikutheka, pamenepo ndi pamene pagona vuto lalikulu. Ndiponso gap yakeyo ngati sanabwerenso kumaphunziro.

(Finances, in terms of finances things are not going on well, they are actually not working. REFLECT teaches a person to be financially independent. So, people are taught to be in groups to loan each other money, to save but also to do small scale businesses. Of course, trainings are conducted but things are not changing at all. People are indeed attending the trainings but are failing to use the knowledge and skills gained in order to develop their lives and that is the biggest challenge. The gap is huge as if

they have not gone for any training.) (**Facilitator Circle X, 19th April, 2018**)

The fact that adult learners are attending literacy circles but failing to achieve economic empowerment implies that they do not know how to interpret theory into practice. Failure to put theory into practice suggests some mismatch between the expectations of the REFLECT approach in terms of the outcomes, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the reality on the ground. The problem could be directly linked to the quality of facilitation in literacy circles which can be traced back from the training of facilitators, as earlier discussed in the chapter. Although there might be several reasons behind the poverty situation for most of rural illiterate households which include food shortages due to inadequate harvests to sustain them throughout the year, it is the researcher's view that adult learners might have potential to transform their lives. Concurring with the researcher's view, Mjaya (2022) argues that literacy has the potential to empower individuals in social encounters. The understanding of adult learning as presented by andragogy suggests that adult learners require facilitation methods that promote their ability to practice what they have learned (Knowles, 1989; Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980). A study by Alkali (2016) found that facilitation methods used by facilitators relates strongly and positively with adult learners' learning outcomes in basic literacy programmes. Facilitators are therefore challenged to engage adult learners actively in the literacy circles by using facilitation methods that would enable them interpret theory into practice.

4.5.2.2 Parental assistance in their children's school activities

From the study, it was found that some parents hardly assist their school-going children with school activities and assignments despite acquiring literacy skills in the literacy circles. The findings reveal that some parents do not spare some time within their schedule to help their children with school assignments even though they have developed literacy skills to the extent that they are now able to read and write. One of the participants in the study had this to say during FGDs:

Zina zimene zisakutuluka ndizoti makolo amene akuphunzira REFLECT 'yi pena akukanika kumawalimbikitsa ana awo komanso kuwaunikila ntchito imene amapatsidwa ku sukulu ngati home work. Chifukwa kholo

likaphunzira, limayenera kumawathandiza ana aja ntchito zaku sukulu. Ndiye mbali imeneyinso ikuvuta kuti ioneke bwino bwino.

(Other issues that are not coming out are issues of parents who have been to the RFELECT circles failing to help their children with home work. Because when parents are educated, they are supposed to help their children with their homework. So, this area is not materializing properly.) (FGD 5, 10th August, 2018)

Although it is not automatic that when parents are educated then they are likely to help their children with their homework, lack of parental assistance in school assignments has negative effect on the motivation and progress of children in school. Though the researcher did not interview parents to corroborate the evidence, it should be noted that REFLECT facilitators also live in the same communities with parents of the children and it is easy for them to know what is happening in the communities on different issues. In order to establish the extent to which parents followed up on their children's progress at home, there is need to conduct more research.

School-going children can be more motivated when their parents take particular interests in their school related tasks. Nevertheless, adult learners should be made aware that helping children with school related tasks does not necessarily mean writing school assignments for them, it could simply mean explaining some concepts on a particular assignment or just demonstrating some skills on how notes, for instance, can be organised in their exercise books. One wonders whether adult learners can confidently handle primary school level stuff including organization of notes. However, it also seems important to raise the issue of whether adult learners will have developed enough knowledge and skills to handle the work considering the many challenges of facilitation experienced in literacy circles, as previously discussed in the chapter. It would have been interesting if the researcher talked to the parents themselves on this issue, more rich data would have been generated.

4.5.2.3 Participation in developmental projects

During interviews with participants, the study discovered that adult learners were failing to participate in various developmental projects in their communities through showing the spirit of ownership of such projects, highlighting the failure of the approach to achieve one

of the core outcomes. It emerged that instead of taking ownership of such projects and embrace them as their own, people including adult learners usually label them after the organisation that has supported and financed the projects. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, REFLECT approach empower adult learners through literacy and livelihood skills training to promote community development. The study further established that such tendencies are detrimental to the progress of communities in terms of developmental projects, as explained by one participant during FGDs:

Zotsatira zina zimene zisakutuluka ndi zoti ngati chitukuko chikubwera kuderako, kodi mwini wa chitukuko ndi ndani? Amachita kuchipatsa dzina aaah ichi ndicha Plan Malawi. Ndiye umwini ukumavuta, chifukwa kuderana ngati kuli sukulu imakhala school chifukwa choti kuli ana, choncho imakhala anthuwo ndiye eni ake a sukuluyo. Ndiye izizi zikumavuta kuti ophunzira athu azionetse, azizichita.

(Other issues that are not coming out as expected are issues of any development that comes to the community, who owns it? People give names to such projects, this development is for Plan Malawi. So, ownership is becoming difficult because if an area has a school, it is a school because learners are present, then it means the people surrounding the school are the owners. So, taking ownership of developmental activities by participants is a major problem.) (FGD 3, 17th July, 2018).

Central to the verbatim quote is the realisation that adult literacy learners were failing to demonstrate and take ownership of developmental projects in their communities. This suggests adult learners' failure to achieve the intended outcomes. Contrary to the study findings, one of the assumptions of andragogy theory stresses that adult learning should be life-centred, problems-centred, and issues-based to allow adult learners apply their knowledge in real situations (Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1980). Although adult learners were expected to be in forefront promoting community development considering the knowledge acquired in REFLECT approach, it is the researcher's view that the entire community should be held with this responsibility. The researcher argues that matters which concern a wider community should not be left to be handled by few individuals. Despite these findings, it should be mentioned that rural people sometimes use the name of a particular organisation to refer to their projects for identification purposes knowing that different organisations may carry out various developmental projects in the

same community. Thus, naming community projects after the particular organisation might serve purposes of identification in the community.

Although there are positives in the facilitator's experiences, in general, the experiences are negative resulting in failure to realise some of the important outcomes of the REFLECT approach. Therefore, consideration and strengthening of four key aspects such as the required academic qualifications, proper training, regular refresher courses and motivation may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles which directly affect the achievement of learning outcomes.

4.5.3 Challenges experienced that negatively affect the achievement of desired outcomes

This section discusses some of the challenges that negatively affect the achievement of desired outcomes for REFLECT approach discussed in the previous section (see sub-section 4.5.2). The discussion focuses on the following sub-themes emanating from interviews with participants in the study: inadequate training, recruitment of REFLECT facilitators, inadequate facilitation materials, leadership challenges at community level, and little commitment by government.

4.5.3.1 Inadequate training

As has been discussed in sub-section 4.3.2, inadequate training of REFLECT facilitators largely contributes to the failure of adult learners to achieve the desired outcomes. Most participants in the study highlighted that the training did not prepare them enough to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for effective facilitation. Consequently, it emerged that they still felt hugely lacking in terms of competence to facilitate adult learning process effectively. One participant had this to say:

Koma tikati tionesese bwinobwino, mbali yaikulu, vuto ili lakusowa kwa upangili kumbali ya ife ma facilitator likuchokera ku training kuja. Sinanga training yake amangowaula ndiye choncho ifeyo sitinamvepo kanthu kwenikweni.

(If we look at it properly, the great part of the problem of lack of knowledge on the part of us facilitators originated from the training. The training was

inadequate and imperfect as such we did not get the required knowledge.)
(Facilitator Circle V, 17th July, 2018)

As discussed in the previous sections, lack of knowledge by facilitators originates from the fact that the training was inadequate, which has its own implications for the quality of practice, especially the provision of learning experiences in literacy circles. Thus, it is almost certain that the quality of training has huge influence on practice in the literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes.

4.5.3.2 Recruitment of REFLECT facilitators

The study discovered that recruitment process of facilitators was largely contributing to the challenges that negatively affect the achievement of desired outcomes. It was found during interviews that there was somehow a casual approach in choosing facilitators to such an extent that some basic rules and principles were ignored regarding recruitment of REFLECT facilitators, as discussed in Chapter 2. The study further found that some people did not even qualify to be facilitators considering their academic qualifications, as has been indicated in Table 4.1. One of the participants during interviews stated:

Tikamasankha anthu kuti akhale ma facilitator ku mudzi kuja, ndipofunika pazikhala kuunika kwambiri kuti kodi munthuyi kusukulu adapitako nanga analekeza pati, kodi zinthu amazimvetsa? Chifukwa tili ndi anthu ena oti ndi ma facilitator koma ngati anafika Std 8 ndizokaikitsa, moti m'mene chilili chi REFLECT'chi sangakwanitse kuchiyendetsa, kuchiphunzitsa. Ndiye akamati tikupita kukasankha facilitator ofunika aziunguza bwinobwino komanso kupereka ndondomeko zoyenera kuti anthu aziyendera zimenezo posankha facilitator. Anthu oti alibe mapepala owayenereza bwinobwino kumakhala phwanyaphwany moti kumakhalano aah iwe tapita ukamuthandize m'nzakoyu kuchita facilitate eeh zikuchitika ndithu mizimu anthu akuwawulidwa kwambiri.

(When choosing people to become facilitators in the village, there is need for thorough assessment to be done, did the person attend any formal education, what class did the person reach, does the person understand issues? Because we have other people that are facilitators but it is doubtful if they reached Standard 8, the way REFLECT is, they cannot manage to facilitate it. So, when they are saying we are going to choose facilitators there is need to do proper assessments and also give proper steps to use in choosing a facilitator. People who do not have papers to qualify them do not facilitate well, to the point that some of us are told to go and help them, this is happening in the communities. People are not being taught properly in our villages.) **(Facilitator Circle Y, 20th June, 2018)**

The statement suggests that there was less emphasis on the set rules and guidelines for choosing REFLECT facilitators and that had several effects. Firstly, it led to recruitment of unqualified REFLECT facilitators (see Table 4.1) who could not manage facilitation process effectively in the literacy circles. Secondly, as earlier discussed in the previous sections, recruitment of unqualified facilitators seemed to influence practice in literacy circles which may be reflected through learning outcomes. Therefore, the importance of academic qualifications for facilitators cannot be overemphasised, as discussed in Chapter 2 (also see Suleyman, 2013; Alkali, 2016). However, it is also important to mention that academic qualifications of facilitators are considered as one of the crucial aspects for facilitators for effective facilitation (see sub-section 4.3.3.2). This is one of the issues that will be discussed in Section 4.7 of the thesis.

4.5.3.3 Inadequate facilitation materials

It was found that facilitators usually lack basic instruction materials such as flip charts and markers. Generally, the organisation that is implementing the adult literacy programme provides facilitation materials which includes flip charts and markers, among other things, to literacy circles for effective facilitation. Despite this provision, findings from interviews and observations indicate that literacy circles could run out of these instruction materials without being replenished for some months, and that affected the quality of the facilitation process. During the period in which the researcher visited the six literacy circles, it was observed that some literacy circles did not have flip charts and markers for quite some time and that negatively affect the achievement of learning outcomes. During face-to-face interviews, one participant explained:

Zovuta zina zomwe timakumana nazo kuti chinthuchi chisatulutse zotsatila zake ndi kusowa kwa zipangizo zogwiritsa ntchito ku REFLECT circle. Tisabise apa, tilibe zipangizo zokwanila zogwilitsila ntchito monga ngati ma chart, ma marker ndi zina zambiri. Ndiye kusowa kwa zipangizo zoyenera ndizimene zikupangitsa kuti REFLECT mwinanso isatulutse zotsatira zoyenera, ndithu.

(Other challenges that we face for the approach not to produce expected outcomes is lack of materials for use at the REFLECT circle. We should not hide here, we do not have enough materials to use such as flip charts, markers and many more. So, lack of adequate materials is making the

REFLECT approach not to produce the expected outcomes, sure.)
(Facilitator Circle U, 25th April, 2018)

Although the organisation provides facilitation materials, the above statement indicates that the materials did not adequately meet the demands in the literacy circles. Consequently, it affected the quality of facilitation process in the literacy circles prompting REFLECT facilitators to use ineffective means to help adult learners learn. This finding agrees with Warigia (2014) whose study on factors affecting the implementation of literacy programmes in adult education in Kenya also found that though the government in Kenya had provided teaching and learning resources, the resources did not sufficiently meet the demands in adult education centres.

When REFLECT facilitators were asked to explain how they dealt with the problem of inadequate instruction materials, some of the facilitators explained that during training, they were encouraged to use locally available resources in order to deal with the problem of lack of teaching and learning materials, as one of the participants in the study highlighted:

Ku training kuja anatiuza kuti ngati zipangizo zasowa, titha kufufuza zipangizo zomwe tingazipeze m'maderamu ndikumagwiritsa ntchito kuma circle kuja.

(During training, we were told that if teaching and learning materials are not available, we can look for the resources that are readily available in our communities and use them in literacy circles.) **(Facilitator Circle W, 4th August, 2018)**

The training for REFLECT facilitators encouraged improvisation and use of locally available instruction materials in situations when the materials were not available. However, improvisation requires the creativity of facilitators for them to effectively use locally available resources during the facilitation process. The major challenge was how REFLECT facilitators can creatively improvise the locally available resources but still promote learning in the literacy circles. Bearing in mind that instruction materials play an important role in the literacy circles for effective facilitation, the study therefore suggest the need to invest hugely in the provision of adequate resources to the literacy circles.

According to Knowles et al. (1998), adult learners can be assisted to become increasingly more self-directed learners when given appropriate learning resources, tools, experiences and encouragement. For REFLECT facilitators, this involves securing and creating necessary facilitation and learning materials, and planning subsequent learning activities during the learning process to achieve learning outcomes.

4.5.3.4 Lack of understanding by community leaders

The study found that lack of understanding by community leaders, such as chiefs, members of parliament, ward counsellors and leaders of village development committee (VDC) about literacy programmes negatively affects how the programmes were conducted in communities which had an influence on the quality of facilitation process in literacy circles. One participant explained:

Ndinene kuti kusamvesesa bwinobwino kwa adindo. Adindo athu samamvetsa kuti REFLECT ndi chani, ena amaona ngati kaya ndi chipani chandale kapena ndi kagulu koukila, amazitenga choncho kuti awa m'mene atipeza kuti tiwathandize vuto ili, ndiye kuti akufuna ineyo, mwina udindo wangawu ndisiye kapena mwina andipange decampaign ngati anzathu andalewa ngati a MP, Counsellor, amaganiza choncho. Zoti mwina REFLECT ndi chani, sadziwa bwinobwino za REFLECT, ndiye zimapangitsa kuti zotsatira zina zisamatuluke bwinobwino, isatulutse zotsatira bwino REFLECT. Choncho kusamvetsetsa bwino kwa mafumu, atsogoleri ena a VDC zikupangitsanso kuti mwina zotsatira zisamatuluke bwino chifukwa chinthuchi sakuchiziwa bwinobwino, eya ndithu ndithu.
(Let me say that lack of proper understanding among our leaders. Our leaders do not understand what REFLECT is. Others see it as a political party or a rebel group. When we approach them to assist us on an issue, they think we would like to take them of their seat or decampaign them especially these politicians like an MP, Counsellor, they usually think like that. They really do not know what REFLECT is and that makes it difficult for the approach to produce the expected outcomes. So, lack of understanding among community leaders, chiefs and VDC is also making it difficult for REFLECT to bring out the expected outcomes because they do not really understand the approach. So that's it.) **(Facilitator Circle Z, 1st August, 2018)**

Smooth running of adult literacy programmes requires concerted efforts of all stakeholder, which includes community leaders such as chiefs, ward counsellors, MPs and community development leaders and their involvement ultimately

simplifies the operations of literacy circles. Lack of understanding by community leaders has negative effect on the operations of literacy circles which directly affect the quality of facilitation process and achievement of learning outcomes. The study therefore suggests that government and NGOs implementing adult literacy programmes should directly engage community leaders to equip them with some knowledge about adult literacy programmes, and also make them aware that effective implementation of these programmes depends on the concerted efforts from various stakeholders.

Besides, the study further revealed that lack of coordination amongst community leaders such as facilitators, circle committee and chiefs affect facilitation as well as learning processes. It emerged from face-to-face interviews with participants in the study that lack of coordination compromises REFLECT facilitators' efforts in the provision of literacy skills to adult learners. One of the participants in the study had this to say:

Mavuto ena ndi linkage ya facilitator, committee ya circle ndi amfumu imayenda mwawedewede chifukwa chinthuchi sichifunika kuti wina asise phewa. Ndiye mukaphika zinthu uku, mukati mukatule kwa amfumu ndiye amfumu kumangoti ndipangabe nthawi zonse koma osapanga, chimakhala chikugwa.

(Other challenges are lack of coordination among facilitators, circle committees and chiefs which is not good because for the approach to work effectively, everyone has to be committed and put in more effort. So, if you make plans and approach the chief to do his part and he postpones at all times and does not do his work, that makes the approach to keep on failing.)

(Facilitator Circle X, 19th April, 2018)

The verbatim quotation indicates that lack of coordination among community leaders complicates processes involved in the implementation of adult literacy programmes. Apart from that, it also creates gaps in resolving emerging issues which in turn make literacy programmes, particularly literacy circles ineffective thereby negatively affecting the achievement of learning outcomes in the end. Placing emphasis on the coordination among community leaders restores teamwork which is essentially crucial in the successful implementation of adult literacy programmes. The study suggests the need for community

leaders to fully coordinate with one another and therefore resolve any issue that may hinder effective implementation of adult literacy programmes in their communities.

4.5.3.5 Commitment by government

The study discovered that little commitment by government was one of the problems that affect effective implementation of adult literacy programmes across the country. It was found during interviews that there is somehow a casual approach from the government on various issues affecting adult literacy programmes. Most participants in the study emphasised that government is not fully committed to adult literacy programmes considering the way various issues regarding literacy programmes in general are usually handled. One of the participants during interviews argued as follows:

A boma nawonso ali ndi vuto lalikulu zimene zikupangitsa kuti adult literacy isapite patsogolo m'dziko muno. Pena ifeyo timadabwa kuti boma likuchitapo chani pa nkhani ya REFLECT 'yi kuti ipite patsogolo, nanga unduna okhuzana ndi zinthu zimenezi ukuchitapo chani, nanga thandizo likupelekedwa ku REFLECT kuti ikhale ya mphamvu, ndilotani. Ndikhulupilira kuti amenewanso a bomawa akutengapo gawo kuti adult literacy isapite patsogolo ndiponso zotsatira zake zabwino zisatuluke.

(The government also has a big problem in contributing to lack of progress of adult literacy programmes in the country. Sometimes we wonder what is the government doing for REFLECT to move forward; how about the ministry responsible, what is it doing; what about the funding towards improving the REFLECT, how much does the government give. I believe that the government is also playing a big role in hindering the progress of adult literacy programmes from achieving good outcomes.) **(Facilitator Circle Y, 20th June, 2018)**

Lack of commitment by government hinders the progress of adult literacy programmes across the country. Consequently, the absence of a special vote in the national budget directed specifically to adult literacy programmes makes it difficult for proper implementation of the programmes across the country. Adult literacy programmes over the years depend on the budget allocated to the Ministry of Gender, Women, Children and Social Welfare. Despite the crucial role that adult literacy programmes play as key to the development of the nation, they are one of the most underfunded programmes in the

country. With such unpredictable budget funding from the government, it is likely that issues that need urgent attention pertaining to implementation of adult literacy programmes and monitoring are likely to suffer. Lack of budget funding means that literacy circles cannot get the necessary and adequate instruction materials for effective facilitation and that affects the quality of facilitation. Kholowa (2007) argues that adequate provision of instruction materials plays a decisive role in literacy learning.

It is important to note that as a country, Malawi started implementing adult literacy programmes in the 1980s, which were then called Kwacha schools. Since then, adult literacy programmes have been running throughout the country without a policy guiding their operations. This raises questions of the extent to which adult literacy programmes are implemented in the country in terms of programming, coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders. Worse still, the policy has been in draft form for over 15 years, a development that hinders effective implementation of literacy programmes. The absence of the policy might also negatively affect national adult literacy programmes in terms of resource mobilisation, governance and above all, enhancing capacity at all levels of its implementation. As a result, this might have slowed down the implementation process considering that some crucial and emerging issues that might have needed policy guidance might have not been addressed over the years. Therefore, this study suggests the need for government to speed up the process of policy formulation knowing that the policy will help in funding mobilisation and improve monitoring of adult literacy programmes. In addition, the policy will provide a more systematic career development for adult literacy facilitators and promote supervision of the programmes bearing in mind that the policy will have clearly outlined guidelines and benchmarks required for implementation of adult literacy programmes.

In summary, research question three explored experiences of facilitators with the REFLECT approach's effectiveness in bringing out desired outcomes. Overall, study findings revealed that REFLECT approach is not fully bringing out the intended outcomes as it ought to be. Although some of the core outcomes for REFLECT approach have been partially achieved, mainly the acquisition of literacy skills by adult learners, other core

outcomes have not been achieved in REFLECT approach such as economic empowerment, parental assistance to their children's school activities and participation in developmental activities primarily due to adult learners' failure to interpret theory into practice. However, the research discovered some of the barriers that hinder the achievement of intended outcomes including inadequate training of facilitators, recruitment of underqualified facilitators and inadequate facilitation materials which have serious consequences on practice in literacy circles. The section that follows discusses findings of the study for research question four regarding effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the intended outcomes.

4.6 Effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the expected outcomes

This section discusses findings of the study for the fourth research question about effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the expected outcomes. The researcher found some of the ways that can be used for the REFLECT approach to achieve the expected outcomes. The discussion below focuses on the following major themes: academic qualifications, training of facilitators, frequent refresher courses, motivation of facilitators, increasing funding for literacy activities, composition of REFLECT circle committee, and proper coordination between government and NGOs. Therefore, the following sections discuss these themes, starting with academic qualifications.

4.6.1 Academic qualifications

The findings from interviews with participants in the study revealed the need to strictly follow the academic qualifications requirements for one to become a facilitator, as previously discussed in Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.3.2). The study found that currently, the requirements in terms of academic qualifications for the facilitators are not rigorously followed, as earlier discussed in Section 4.3.1, and that affects the quality of facilitation process (see sub-section 4.3.3). However, it was found that if the requirements for academic qualifications are strictly followed, the approach can possibly achieve the expected outcomes. During FGDs, one of the participants explained:

Kumbali ya maphunziro kuti REFLECT yi iziyenda bwino munthu wosankhidwa kuti akhale facilitator ayenera kukhala woti anafika ndithu Form 4 ndipo ali certificate ya 4'yo kapena ali ndi JCE. Komanso ngati

akukwanila pa maphunziropo, akuyeneranso aziunikidwa kwambiri ngati ali ndikuthekela komvetsa zinthu. Choncho amabungwe kaya aboma akafuna kutenga ma facilitator asamangotola ayi ofunika azimuunika bwinobwino kuthekera kwake ndi maphunziro ake.

(For REFLECT approach to do well, the person chosen to be a facilitator should at least reach Form 4 and have an MSCE or JCE. If the person satisfies education qualifications, there is still need for further assessment to check if the person has the ability to understand issues. So, if NGOs or government want to pick a facilitator, they should not just pick anyone. Rather, they should assess the person's education level and the ability to understand and articulate issues.) (FGD 1, 19th April, 2018)

The quotation suggests that adult literacy facilitators must have the required academic qualifications for them to be considered as literacy facilitators. As discussed in sub-section 4.3.3.2, the study findings showed that academic qualifications are considered crucial in the sense that they hugely influence practice in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes. This finding resonates with previous research studies whose findings indicate that educational qualification for facilitators is a key factor in the implementation of adult literacy programmes since it relates positively with adult learners' learning outcomes (Alkali, 2016; Warigia 2014; Machobane, 2010). As will be discussed in Section 4.7 of the thesis, the significance of academic qualifications for facilitators cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the researcher opines that failure to recognise the significance of academic qualifications for literacy facilitators jeopardizes any efforts aimed at making adult literacy programmes successful.

While it might be argued that people that have the required academic qualifications might not be interested in being literacy facilitators considering that it is regarded as a voluntary work, the researcher is of the view that this argument lacks merit. It is the researcher's view that recruiting people to become literacy facilitators in the communities cannot be a major problem these days considering that there are a lot of young men and women that have nothing to do despite having the required academic qualifications. It just requires the government and NGOs involved in implementing adult literacy programmes to consider exploring various ways and means to make adult literacy facilitation more attractive and rewarding. One way could be taking and recognising it as a career so that those recruited

as adult literacy facilitators should be formally trained and drafted into the civil service and the particular organisations.

4.6.2 Training of REFLECT facilitators

The interview findings established the need to seriously consider issues of training for facilitators comprehensively bearing in mind that the training equips facilitators with knowledge and skills for effective facilitation in the literacy circles, as has been discussed in the previous sub-section 4.3.2.1. As such, taking training seriously and addressing issues related to it holistically can greatly assist in effective facilitation and achievement of learning outcomes. One participant argued during face-to-face interviews as follows:

Kuti REFLECT yi izitulutsa zotsatila zabwino, pakuyenela ndithu kuti ife ma facilitator tilandire training ya bwino kuti pasamakhalenso kuzikolakola. Ngati ife atati trainer bwinobwino komanso mokwanira ndithu, REFLECT yi itha kupanga zinthu zodabwitsa ku miyoyo ya anthu aku mudzi.

(For REFLECT to produce good results, there is need for us facilitators to be well trained so that we facilitate in the literacy circles effectively. If we are well and properly trained, REFLECT can bring out wonderful things in people's lives in the community.) (**Facilitator Circle V, 17th July, 2018**)

The argument in the quotation indicates that literacy facilitators must be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills necessary for facilitation process through proper training. It emerged that proper training prepares literacy facilitators to acquire knowledge and skills suitable for effective facilitation in the literacy circles. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies conducted by Addae (2016), Suleyman (2013), Machobane (2010) who also discovered that proper training for literacy facilitators is critical as it helps them to develop their knowledge and skills for effective facilitation. Besides, it also enables facilitators to use appropriate facilitation methods during learning process, as earlier discussed in the sub-section 4.3.3.2 (also see Figure 4.5). While training can be considered as key for acquisition of knowledge and skills for facilitators, the researcher holds the view of the need to explore other practical means of capacity building for REFLECT facilitators instead of just depending only on the formal training considering financial constraints that generally affects implementation of literacy programmes, as discussed in the sub-section 4.5.3.5. This also agrees with Kholowa (2007) who reports that training should not be

considered as the only means through which capacity building for literacy facilitators should solely depend on. Other ways through which capacity building for REFLECT facilitators can be intensified are conducting regular refresher courses, as will be discussed in Section 4.6.3, and also frequent monitoring and supervision of literacy circles to provide guidance on particular issues affecting them.

Within the broad aspect of training, the researcher also found some critical issues that need attention regarding the training of facilitators. The issues are discussed under the following sub-themes: extending the training period, introduction of facilitation (teaching) practice, introduction of end of training test, and introduction of training policy. Thus, the following sections discuss these sub-themes, starting with extending the training period.

4.6.2.1 Extending the training period

The researcher found that the period of training should be extended beyond the current two weeks, as discussed in Chapter 2. Most participants in the study highlighted that the training period should be extended considering that currently, the period has proven to be inadequate to cover the content meant for training. As such, most participants in the study suggested 21 days of training, as put forward by participants during FGDs:

Koma ndi m'mene ineyo ndimazionera pa nkhani ya training, masiku a training aja ndiochepa kwambiri. Ineyo ndinakakonda inakakhala 3 weeks kuti azitha kutiphunzitsa zonse bwinobwino m'mene tingakaphunzitsire kuma circle. Koma 3 weeks'yo izikhala yophunzitsa zenizeni, asamangowaula ayi.

(As for me how I see the issue of training, the period of training is inadequate, it's too short. I would have if the period of training could be 3 weeks so that they should train us well on how we can facilitate in the literacy circles. But that 3 weeks should be meant for proper training and not hazy training.) (FGD 3, 17th July, 2018).

Extending the period of training to 21 days (3 weeks) will enable REFLECT facilitators to cover more content on various issues about adult learning and facilitation in general. The extended period would be appropriate to enable the trainee REFLECT facilitators to acquire adequate knowledge and skills for effective facilitation. This finding is also in accordance to studies by Addae (2016), Kishindo (1994) whose findings recommended

that the period of training for literacy facilitators needs to be extended beyond the current two weeks given the fact that most of them are not professionally-trained adult literacy facilitators. As such, the extended period for training will enable the trainee facilitators to acquire the basic principles for effective implementation of adult literacy programmes.

4.6.2.2 Introduction of facilitation (teaching) practice

From interviews with participants, the researcher established the need to introduce facilitation (teaching) practice for REFLECT facilitators as part of the training. The study findings revealed that the introduction of facilitation (teaching) practice will give the trainee facilitators an opportunity to put into practice the theory aspects before they are deployed into their respective literacy circles. One of the participants argued during face-to-face interviews as below:

Kumbali ya maphunziro ama facilitator zikhale kuti mwina azikhala 21 days, ndiye kuti 15 days mukhala muli m'kalasi mwakathithi ndithu, 6 days yomalizayi ndiye kuti mukakhala m'ma REFLECT circle kukapanga ma practicals enieni kuma circle osati kungopanga zinthu monamizana kuti aaaah tinapita ku training ayi. Monganso ngati amachitira anzathu aphunzitsi timamva kuti apita ku teaching practice, eyaa. Ndiye ndikuona kuti zitha kuthandiza, kuzikhala ma practical enieni aja ndithu.

(As for the training of facilitators maybe they should be for 21 days, that means 15 days of intensive learning in class, the last 6 days should be for facilitation practice in the literacy circles and not doing things in bits and pieces, claiming that went for a training, no. Just like the way we hear about our friends, we hear teachers go for teaching practice like that. So, I feel that will help, there should be real facilitation practice.) **(Facilitator Circle X, 19th April, 2018)**

The argument in the verbatim quote highlights that out of 21 days of training, 6 days should be meant for practicals in the literacy circles. Six days for practicals will enable the trainee facilitators to put into practice the theoretical aspects learnt during the entire period of training. This will offer opportunities for trainee facilitators to practice and adopt methods, strategies and techniques particularly when they encounter challenging situations in real setting. In this case, the gap between the trainees' theoretical assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes and their applications in real learning setting could be exposed, tested and proven, and therefore improve practice in literacy circles. Relatedly, the findings reflect what REFLECT approach emphasises, as discussed in Chapter 2, that facilitators should undergo

practicals as part of their training (also see Archer & Newman, 2003). It was not surprising that most of the REFLECT facilitators who participated in this study seemed to lack some knowledge about methods for effective facilitation and had not yet developed clear strategies to improve practice in literacy circles, as previously discussed in sub-section 4.3.3. Thus, the introduction of facilitation practice during training would help them acquire some practical knowledge and skills that will help them develop their own theories regarding effective facilitation of adult learning process before they are deployed into their communities to start facilitation in the literacy circles.

4.6.2.3 Introduction of end of training test

The study established the need to introduce end of training test as part of the training. It was revealed that end of training test will enable trainee facilitators to see the content on training from a different perspective considering that the test will provide feedback to improve their understanding of issues around adult literacy education. Besides, the study further found that end of training test will also help in identifying weaknesses experienced by trainee facilitators and strive to improve them. It emerged that the test will improve trainee facilitators' understanding of the content and also help to recruit only those that are successful at the end of their training. One of the participants highlighted as below:

Ndipofunika ayambitse kuti pakutha pa training, pazikhala mayeso oti ma facilitator azilemba za zimene aphunzira zija. Awo amene apambana mayesowo azipatsidwa certificate kuti akakhale ma facilitator. Kwa amene alephera mayeso, basi asamaloledwe kuti azikaphunzitsa.

(They should introduce test at the end of training for the facilitators to write based on what they have learnt. Those that have passed the test should be given a certificate and become a facilitator. As for those that have failed the test, they should not be allowed to become a facilitator.) (**Facilitator Circle W, 4th August, 2018**)

The introduction of end of training test would enable both trainers and trainee facilitators to identify which areas of the training content need improvement. This will allow trainers to address areas that may need more attention and clarification thereby enabling trainee facilitators' progression and improvement on issues regarding adult literacy facilitation. Further, the performance of the trainee facilitators at the end of training will provide

feedback to trainers on areas they should spend more time and even change their present approach to training.

4.6.2.4 Introduction of training policy

The researcher found the great need to put in place a deliberate policy to allow the trainee facilitators to undergo the same period of training. As has been discussed in sub-section 4.3.2, the study found that currently, REFLECT facilitators have attended the same training but for different training duration, with some attending training for 10 days while others for 5 days. It was further discovered that some REFLECT facilitators just underwent a 1-day training while others did not even attend any training at all. Participants in the study highlighted that this kind of approach to training is worrisome and detrimental to facilitators' acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for facilitation. During face-to-face interviews, one of the participants had this to say:

Ine ndikuganiza kuti akhazikitse lamulo kuti tonse tizipita ku training yofanana chifukwa m'gulu mwathumu muli ena oti anapita ku training masiku 10, ena masiku 5, ena tsiku limodzi komanso pali ena oti olo ndi ku training'ko sanapiteko, basi anangotengedwa kuti akhala ma facilitator.

(I think there should be a policy that states that all of us should attend the same training because amongst us, some went for a 10-day training, others for 5 days, some had undergone training just for 1 day and yet others never went for any training, they were just picked to become facilitators.)

(Facilitator Circle U, 19th April, 2018)

The number of days for training determine the content to be covered and the extent to which the trainees can acquire knowledge and skills. As such, having a clear policy on training of facilitators will help to do away with such inconsistencies in terms of the period of training, as already discussed in sub-section 4.3.2. Among other things, the policy on training should provide a clear framework in terms of consistent and clear direction on various issues affecting adult literacy programmes, for instance, providing rules and guidelines for monitoring the progress of the training for trainee facilitators. Although it is one thing to have a training policy in place but to have it implemented is quite another, the study therefore suggests the need to put in place some mechanisms to ensure that once the policy has been introduced, the policy guidelines should be executed.

Overall, the findings of the study underscore the fact that the significance of adequate training for REFLECT facilitators cannot be underestimated, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, also sub-sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.5.3.1. It is worth pointing out that this is one of the issues that will be addressed in Section 4.7 of the thesis.

4.6.3 Frequent refresher courses

In this study, findings from interviews revealed that facilitators should be attending refresher courses regularly in order to improve facilitation practices in the literacy circles, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, and in the sub-section 4.3.2 of the thesis. The researcher found that it is important for refresher courses to be conducted regularly since they offer perfect opportunity for facilitators to update and acquire emerging knowledge and skills necessary for effective facilitation. It emerged that refresher courses play a critical role in reminding facilitators on certain aspects of effective facilitation that were otherwise hard to understand during the initial training. The quotation from one of the participants below emphasises the significance of attending refresher courses regularly:

Pakatha miyezi iwiri kapena itatu tizipita ku refresher course kuti mwina mwake zimene tinaphunzira zija zisamaiwalike komanso tizitsatira mokwanira. Koma izizi zongomusiya munthu mpaka zaka 5, zaka 8 kapena zaka 9 no refresher course, sizabwino ayi. Koma mwina kaya pa kotale (quarterly meeting) kungolepa mwina 2 days olo 3 days kuti mwina tikakumbutsane zitha kuthandiza ndipo ikhoza kukhala success REFLECT 'yi.

(After 2 to 3 months we should go for refresher training course so that we should not forget what we had acquired during the initial training. So, leaving someone to facilitate for 5 years, 8 years or 9 without a refresher course is not a good practice. But may be during the quarterly meetings, it could be possible to sacrifice perhaps 2 or 3 days to be used for refresher courses to remind each other. That can help and make REFLECT approach successful.) (FGD 5, 10th August, 2018)

Attending refresher courses regularly will help REFLECT facilitators to acquaint themselves with knowledge and skills to improve their performance in literacy circles. The study discovered that refresher courses provide opportunities for facilitators to discuss and share knowledge, skills and experiences regarding effective facilitation thereby reducing mistakes that might be encountered to improve practice in literacy circles. This is also in accordance to what Oluoch et al. (2014) concluded in a study that explored the capacity of

facilitators to produce learners with functional skills in Nigeria. The study revealed that capacity building for literacy facilitators is crucial for effective facilitation as it enables them to respond to the ever-changing needs of adult literacy learners. On the contrary, lack of refresher courses implies depriving REFLECT facilitators opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills required to improve their facilitation process in the literacy circles and that has direct effect on the extent to which learning outcomes are achieved. This suggests the important role refresher courses can play in enhancing facilitators' abilities to provide effective facilitation process in literacy circles. As will be discussed in Section 4.7, the influence of refresher courses on facilitators knowledge cannot therefore be underemphasized considering that they influence practice in literacy circles.

4.6.4 Motivation of facilitators

One of the issues that was discovered in the study as crucial was about motivation of facilitators, as discussed in Section 4.4. The researcher found from interviews with participants that motivation strategies, specifically monthly honoraria, can greatly help to motivate REFLECT facilitators to facilitate effectively to achieve the intended outcomes. The study further revealed that increasing monthly honoraria from K6 000 to about K20 000 will motivate facilitators considering that prices of basic commodities have currently skyrocketed. It emerged that increasing the monthly honoraria significantly will help facilitators to cope with life bearing in mind that they also offer valuable services to the communities. One of the participants argued as below:

Nkhani iyi ya honoraria, akanawonjezera honoraria kufika pa K20 000 kapena K25 000 pa mwezi bwenzi zikutimbikitsa komanso tikugwila ntchitoyi mosatopa ndi moyikapo mtima chifukwa choti pakali pano, zinthu zofunika pa moyo wa munthu zinakwela mtengo kwambiri kuli konse.

(This issue of honoraria, if they can increase the monthly honoraria to K20,000 or K25,000 per month, that can motivate facilitators to work very hard and be committed to the work because currently prices of necessities for a person's well-being are very high everywhere.) **(Facilitator Circle V, 17th July, 2018)**

The findings revealed that motivation of facilitators is crucial as it acts as a driving force for them to perform their duties in the literacy circles effectively. The REFLECT facilitators pointed out that highly motivated facilitators will improve the quality of their

work and the performance during facilitation process in the literacy circles. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies conducted by Nnadi (2016), Nyakundi (2012) who also discovered that motivating facilitators through effective rewards such as incentives and monthly honoraria could ultimately result in improved high performances in terms of facilitation. Of course, it is the researcher's view that increasing the monthly honoraria only may not be enough to improve the quality of facilitation, there is also need to consider other factors such as adequate training for facilitators (see sub-sections 4.6.2 and 4.6.3) and provision of adequate resources for facilitation, as will be discussed in the following section.

4.6.5 Increasing funding for literacy activities

The researcher found the great need to increase funding for literacy activities which will be instrumental in the provision of adequate instruction materials. The study findings from interviews established that allocating adequate funds to adult literacy programmes' activities will improve the provision of adult literacy services to adult learners. The study revealed that allocating more funds to adult literacy activities will help acquire adequate instructional materials for effective facilitation in the literacy circles and therefore help adult learners achieve learning outcomes. One of the study participants explained during face-to-face interviews:

M'mene ndayitsatira REFLECT'yi, imafuna ndalama zambiri, koma ndimaona ngati mu budget mwake amaikamo ndalama zochepa kwambiri. Ndiye ndipofunika ndithu aboma ndi amabungwe mu budget yawo ya literacy aziyipatsa ndalama zochuluka chifukwa pali zinthu zambiri zomwe zimafuna ndalama zambiri monga ma training, malipiro ama facilitator, zipangizo zogwilira ntchito ndi zina zambiri.

(From my experience, REFLECT approach requires a lot of money. However, I see that allocation of funds towards its implementation in the budget is not enough. So, there is need for government and NGOs in their budgets towards literacy activities to allocate more funds because there are a lot of activities that need more funds such as trainings of facilitators, honoraria for the facilitators, instructional materials and many more.)
(Facilitator Circle X, 19th April, 2018)

Several activities in the implementation of adult literacy programmes such as training of facilitators, provision of instructional materials, frequent refresher courses, monthly

honoraria for facilitators, carrying out awareness campaigns and other related activities require adequate funding. These factors considered together contribute meaningfully for effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the intended outcomes. It was established that government and NGOs involved in adult literacy programmes should consider allocating more funds towards implementation of literacy activities to achieve the expected outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2). In the context of inadequate instruction materials, it is crucial to question whether it is possible to still achieve effective facilitation in literacy circles and the outcomes even without adequate resources, as earlier discussed in the sub-section 4.5.3.3. The provision of adequate instruction materials hugely influences literacy skills acquisition in terms of challenging adult learners to apply various skills, for instance, pictures and other visual aids employed during the learning process in literacy circles. Availability of resources to accomplish the learning objectives relates to andragogy theory (Chan, 2010). The theory emphasises that the facilitator should work with adult learners to identify resources and sets up strategies to use those resources to achieve the learning objectives. However, this requires adult learners to be self-directed, which reflects one of the assumptions of the theory, and motivated to achieve the goals with the guidance of the facilitator (Chan, 2010; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1980).

4.6.6 Composition of REFLECT circle committee

The findings of the study revealed the need to re-organise the composition of REFLECT circle committees in the communities to include people that are at least educated, experienced and have also undergone training on REFLECT approach. The study found during interviews with participants in the study that circle committees are responsible for monitoring and supervision of the progress of literacy circles as such, re-organising such committees will improve their efficiency in terms of coordination, monitoring and supervision of literacy circles thereby easing some pressure from facilitators. Unlike the current situation, most members in the circle committees are not dedicated, uneducated, inexperienced and have little knowledge on the REFLECT approach, a situation which affects effective facilitation process and achievement of the outcomes. One of the participants emphasised during face-to-face interviews:

Committee circle *ikhale yodalilika kwambiri pachidachi. Masankhidwe aanthu amu circle committee asinthe, muzikhala anthu okhawo oti ndi ophunzira bwino amene ali ndi MSCE, ali ndi experience komanso anapita ku training ya REFLECT. Apapa ndikufuna kunena kuti committee nayo izipita kumaphunziro ku training asamangopita facilitator yekha ayi chifukwa choti a committee 'wa ndi amene amachiunika chinthu chija ndiye sitingamusankhe munthu, munthu oti azichiunika chinthu asanalandire maphunziro okwanila zimakhala zovuta. Chifukwa ngati sindikuiwala kuyambila 2011 kufika pano a committee sanapiteko ku maphunziro koma ndi amene amakhala msanamira ya facilitator ndi amene amamuunikila facilitator.*

(The circle committee should be more reliable. The composition of circle committee members should change, in the committee there should only be well learned people who have MSCE, have experience and have gone for a training in the REFLECT approach. What I want to say is that the committee members should go for training and not only the facilitator because the committee is the immediate supervisor of the facilitator and the literacy circle, how it is functioning, so we cannot choose someone who oversees the activities of the approach who has not been trained properly that brings its own challenges. If I remember very well since 2011 up to now the committee has not gone for any training but they are the pillar to which the facilitator leans on and they supervise how a facilitator is working.)

(Facilitator Circle Z, 1st August, 2018)

Restructuring REFLECT circle committees in the communities to include people that are dedicated, at least educated and are experienced will help to improve the operations of literacy circles. Running the operations of literacy circles cannot be left in the hands of REFLECT facilitators alone, there is need for concerted efforts from various community leaders to work together and strengthen the existence and operations of literacy circles in communities to achieve intended outcomes. However, the extent to which REFLECT circle committees improve the operations of literacy circles is yet to be determined. Of course, there is need to be cautious on how circle committees can be restructured considering the implications it might have at the community level. For instance, including only educated people in the committee may paint a bad picture about the committee and that may also negatively affect the operations of the literacy circles. While it is justifiable to re-organise the composition of REFLECT circle committees to make them robust and relevant, it is important to consider various factors including the understanding that literacy circles exist in community settings and therefore they cannot operate in isolation. Thus, inclusion of

community leaders is critical to provide guidance and direction among other things for smooth operations of literacy circles in communities.

4.6.7 Proper coordination between government and NGOs

The study discovered the significance of coordination among different stakeholders involved in the implementation of adult literacy programmes. The study established during interviews with participants that good coordination between the government and NGOs that are implementing adult literacy programmes in the communities can positively contribute to the successful implementation of literacy programmes in the country. During face-to-face interviews, one of the participants argued:

Choyambilira kuti REFLECT itulutse zotsatira zabwino, patakhalam'gwirizano wabwino pakati mwina pa boma komanso mabungwe amene akuchita introduce REFLECT kumudzi kuja, ndikukhala ndi m'gwilizano wabwino kuti akuluakulu, tikuchitenga chinthuchi ku mudzi, tiyeni tigwilane manja. Ndiye ine ndikuona ngati zitha kuthandiza kuti chikhale successful. (For REFLECT to bring out its intended outcomes, there should be good coordination between the government and NGOs implementing adult literacy programmes in the communities. If there could be good coordination amongst the stakeholders, I can see that the approach can become successful.) (FGD 4, 8th August, 2018)

The argument in the verbatim quote highlights that successful implementation of adult literacy programmes in the country requires concerted efforts and proper coordination of stakeholders, namely government and NGOs. It was reported that proper coordination among stakeholders could ignite networks aimed at developing policies for implementing adult literacy programmes in Malawi and also make literacy circles vibrant and conducive for adult learning. Therefore, all the stakeholders involved in adult literacy programmes should explore better ways of proper coordination for successful implementation of adult literacy programmes in the country.

4.7 Model for adult learning and facilitation

As shown in Figure 4.8, the researcher developed a model for adult learning and facilitation to compliment the andragogy theory based on the findings of the study. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, andragogy theory does not explicitly provide critical aspects about

the facilitator which hugely influence facilitators' knowledge acquisition for effective facilitation in literacy circles (see Section 2.7). However, based on the findings from the experiences of facilitators in the chapter, the study revealed four critical aspects for facilitators which influence practice in literacy circles, namely the required academic qualifications, fixed and adequate training, frequent refresher courses, and motivation. Consideration and strengthening of these four aspects may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles which directly affect the achievement of learning outcomes. Besides, another important aspect of the model is facilitation and learning process (Figure 4.8). The process serves as a driving force of the model in order to achieve the expected outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2). Therefore, the following sections discuss these key aspects, starting with the required academic qualifications.

4.7.1 Required academic qualifications

As has been discussed in sub-section 4.6.1, academic qualifications enhance knowledge acquisition of facilitators which influence practice in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes. On the contrary, as can be seen from Table 4.1, it emerged that some REFLECT facilitators did not have the academic qualifications required for facilitators which had negative effect on the facilitation process (see sub-section 4.3.1) as well as achievement of expected outcomes (see sub-section 4.5.2). Thus, in the context of this study, the findings suggest that the required academic qualifications for facilitators, as discussed in Chapter 2, should be regarded as a key aspect for facilitators because it has positive bearing on facilitators' knowledge which directly influence performance during facilitation process.

4.7.2 Adequate and fixed training

As discussed in sub-section 4.6.2, REFLECT facilitators must be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills for effective facilitation through proper training. However, the study discovered that REFLECT facilitators attended the same training with varied period of training, as earlier discussed in the sub-section 4.3.2.3, and that had serious consequences on the facilitators' knowledge (see sub-section 4.3.3) which directly influenced the quality

of facilitation in the literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes (see sub-sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). Therefore, based on the findings discussed in the previous sections, the study considers adequate and fixed training as another crucial aspect for facilitators essential for effective facilitation and achievement of the outcomes.

4.7.3 Frequent refresher courses

As has been discussed in sub-section 4.6.3, the important role refresher courses play in enhancing facilitators' abilities to provide effective facilitation process in literacy circles cannot be underrated. Despite several advantages that refresher courses have on the part of facilitators, as discussed in the previous sections, and in Chapter 2, this did not seem to apply to REFLECT facilitators considering that refresher courses were rarely conducted (see sub-section 4.3.2.3). Consequently, as earlier discussed in this chapter, facilitators felt hugely incompetent in facilitating adult learning process because they were deprived opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills to improve their facilitation performance in literacy circles. Thus, based on the findings of the experiences of facilitators, the study considers refresher courses as one of the key aspects for facilitators and should be organised regularly to influence practice in literacy circles.

4.7.4 Motivation

The last critical aspect for facilitators which was observed in the study was motivation of facilitators, as earlier discussed in sub-section 4.6.4 of the thesis. The study found that lack of motivation affects the level of commitment of facilitators and the quality of facilitation which directly influence the achievement of learning outcomes (see Section 4.4). As has been discussed in the previous section, the study found that highly motivated facilitators will improve the quality of their work and the performance during facilitation process in literacy circles (see sub-section 4.6.4) hence, needs serious attention.

4.7.5 Facilitation and learning process

Apart from the four key aspects for facilitators which influence practice in literacy circles discussed in the previous sections, it must be noted that the role of facilitation and learning process in the model for adult learning and facilitation (see Figure 4.8) cannot be

underestimated. The process emphasises on the use of learner-centred methods during the entire learning process in literacy circles. As earlier discussed in the thesis, the use of participatory methods (see Section 2.5, also Table 2.1) during facilitation and learning process in literacy circles greatly influence effective learning among adult learners and thereby achieve the expected outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2). It is the argument of the researcher that the process serves as an important driving force in achieving the expected learning outcomes and therefore requires more attention. In order to promote effective learning, Schunk (2008) advocates for adult literacy facilitators to engage adult learners actively in the learning process and provide experiences that challenge their thinking to achieve the learning outcomes. Thus, REFLECT facilitators should employ appropriate facilitation methods (see Section 2.5 also Table 2.1) that encourage active participation of adult learners in the entire learning process in literacy circles.

Figure 4.8 shows a model for adult learning and facilitation.

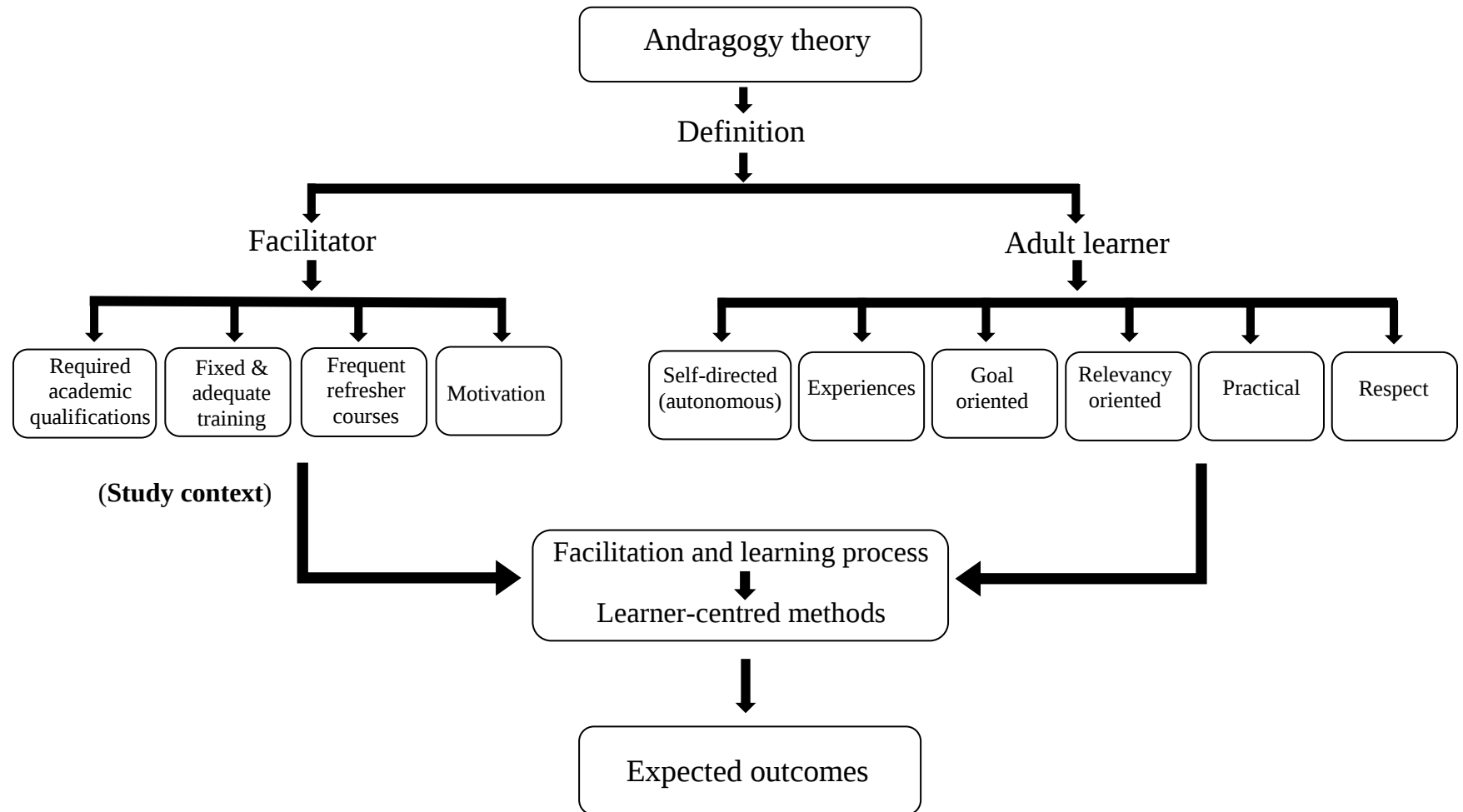


Figure 4.8: Model for adult learning and facilitation

Source: Developed by the researcher

The researcher developed the model for adult learning and facilitation, as shown in Figure 4.8. The model provides four key aspects for REFLECT facilitators that are crucial for facilitators' knowledge and skills which influence the quality of facilitation and the extent to which adult learning outcomes are achieved. The four key aspects are the required academic qualifications, fixed and adequate training, frequent refresher courses and motivation of facilitators. Understanding the crucial aspects for facilitators is a key feature of the study, as it allows us to appreciate the critical factors for effective facilitation in literacy circles. It is worth pointing out that, while the key aspects for facilitators are intertwined, any decision meant to disregard any of the four key aspect is likely to have negative effect on the knowledge and practice of facilitators which eventually influences the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, consideration and strengthening of the four key aspects may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. Over and above, facilitation and learning process plays a critical role in the model for adult learning and facilitation (see Figure 4.8). The process promotes the use of learner-centred methods in the entire learning process, hence acts as a driving force of the model in achieving the expected outcomes (see sub-section 2.4.2).

4.8 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed the findings of the study about experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. The study findings revealed that, while facilitation takes place in the literacy circles, effective facilitation to a greater extent does not take place due to several factors including inadequate training, recruitment of underqualified facilitators, and lack of motivation which hugely influence practice in literacy circles, resulted in partial achievement of expected outcomes, especially the acquisition of literacy skills among adult learners. However, the study established that some of the core outcomes of the programme such as economic empowerment was not achieved mainly because of failure by adult learners to interpret theory into practice. Finally, it emerged from the study findings that consideration and strengthening of the four key aspects such as the required academic qualifications, fixed and adequate training, regular refresher courses, and motivation may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in literacy circles which directly affect the

achievement of learning outcomes. More crucially, facilitation and learning process which promotes the use of learner-centred methods plays a crucial role in the model for adult learning and facilitation considering that it acts as a driving force in the entire learning process to achieve the expected outcomes. The final chapter presents the conclusion and implications of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

The aim of this study was to explore experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. The study was guided by the following main research question; How do facilitators experience the REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired programme outcomes? The researcher raised four subsidiary research questions which were crucial to the study and have all been answered in Chapter 4. The current chapter presents the conclusions of the study and explains the contribution of the study for adult literacy programmes in Malawi. The chapter also discusses implications of the study and, finally, presents areas for possible further studies.

5.2 Conclusion

The first research question focused on experiences of facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills required to successfully facilitate adult literacy programmes. From the experiences of REFLECT facilitators, the study established that there are key factors that influence the acquisition of knowledge and skills for facilitators to facilitate effectively in the literacy circles. With respect to the experiences of facilitators, the study found that, while the required academic qualifications, adequate and fixed training, and regular refresher courses directly relate to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for facilitators, they also influence practice in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes (see Chapter 4). Overall, in line with REFLECT facilitators' experiences, the study revealed that when facilitators develop adequate knowledge and skills, facilitation in the literacy circles is effective, and that has positive influence on the achievement of adult learning outcomes.

Given the experiences of facilitators, the study found that, while some facilitators have the required academic qualifications, others did not have the academic qualifications required for facilitators which compromised the quality of facilitation process in literacy circles and the extent to which learning outcomes were achieved. As has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, educational qualifications of facilitators act as one of the pillars for the successful implementation of adult literacy programmes (see Addae, 2016; Alkali, 2016; Oluoch et al., 2014). Besides, it was established from the experiences of facilitators that some REFLECT facilitators were recruited either without training or were inadequately trained and that had negative effect on the quality of facilitation in literacy circles. It is reasonable to conclude that some facilitators did not know how to use appropriate facilitation methods suitable for adult learners since the acquisition of such knowledge requires proper training (see Chapter 4). Based on the experiences of REFLECT facilitators, the study therefore concludes that undermining the value of training for facilitators defeats all the efforts for successful implementation of adult literacy programmes considering that not only does the training equip facilitators with knowledge and skills for effective facilitation but also influence practice in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes.

In general, the study established that REFLECT facilitators use facilitator-centred methods during the learning process. Evidence from interviews and observations in six literacy circles revealed that the lecture method, and question and answer were the two predominantly used methods by REFLECT facilitators. The emphasis placed on using facilitator-centred methods suggests that to a greater extent, effective facilitation was not taking place in the literacy circles, considering how such methods limited adult learners' opportunities to learn and practice language skills they desired. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies by Rogers (2008), Benediktsson and Kamtengeni (2004) who also discovered that adult literacy facilitators use teacher-centred methods during adult learning process (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4). In addition, it emerged from the experiences of facilitators that they relied heavily on the textbook method of facilitation during the learning process. This was demonstrated through the absence of instruction materials such as charts with figures, shapes and graph to help teach literacy, numeracy and other skills during the learning process (see Chapter 4). Although there was

lack of adequate instructional materials in the literacy circles in general, facilitators did not make use of locally available resources to overcome that challenge to improve the quality of facilitation.

However, from the perspective of facilitators' experiences, the study found that participatory methods such as discussion, demonstration and group work were rarely used during the learning process in the literacy circles (see Chapter 4). While participatory methods were rarely used in the literacy circles, this reveals the potential that REFLECT facilitators have regarding effective facilitation of adult literacy programmes. This might be a reflection of a number of factors, including the required academic qualifications, proper training, and regular refresher courses, which enhance facilitators' abilities to provide effective facilitation process in the literacy circles. Thus, consideration and strengthening of these factors may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. Overall, the study revealed that REFLECT facilitators do not use a variety of participatory methods in the literacy circles which is against andragogical principles (see Chan, 2010; Bedi, 2004; Knowles, 1989; Knowles, 1984) despite the several advantages that such methods have in adult learning. This suggests that adult learners may not be benefiting much from the learning experiences provided since they are not exposed to a wide range of activities in the literacy circles that can influence their acquisition of literacy skills.

Further, it emerged from the experiences of facilitators that refresher courses were not conducted regularly despite providing opportunities for them to acquire knowledge and skills which has positive effect on practice in literacy circles. The research revealed that lack of refresher courses deprives facilitators opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills to improve the quality of facilitation in literacy circles. This was demonstrated in the study when most of the facilitators indicated that they are not aware of some of the facilitation methods suitable for adult learning, thereby revealing their lack of knowledge about effective facilitation. While the importance of training cannot be underestimated and might have impacted some knowledge on facilitators, they cannot depend on initial training only to suffice for all their needs regarding knowledge gaps encountered during facilitation

process in literacy circles. As has been argued in Chapter 2, attempts to equip REFLECT facilitators with knowledge and skills through training for effective facilitation in literacy classes must go with organising regular fresher courses (see Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012; Archer & Newman, 2003; Archer & Cottingham, 1996).

The second research question explored the motivation of facilitators in the REFLECT adult literacy programmes. Overall, considering the experiences of facilitators, the study found that they are not motivated during REFLECT adult literacy programme facilitation. It was established that lack of motivational strategies such as attractive monthly honoraria affected the morale of REFLECT facilitators which influenced the quality of facilitation in literacy circles and the achievement of learning outcomes. Consequently, the study revealed that there was little commitment of facilitators to the extent that levels of absenteeism were high among REFLECT facilitators. This finding agrees with Kishindo (1994) who found that adult literacy facilitators were not particularly committed to the task and absenteeism was very high. Although there might be several reasons behind facilitators' absenteeism, one of the major reasons could be that facilitators lack basic needs in the homes and this pushes them to prioritize piece work than the literacy circle. Realising that lack of motivation directly affects the quality of facilitation and the achievement of learning outcomes, the study concludes that the issue of motivation is crucial and therefore requires serious consideration from various stakeholders involved in the implementation of adult literacy programmes.

The third research question intended to find out the effectiveness of REFLECT approach in bringing out the desired outcomes. Based on the experiences of facilitators overall, the study established that REFLECT approach is not fully bringing out the intended outcomes as it ought to be. While on one hand, some of the core outcomes for the REFLECT approach have been partially achieved, particularly the acquisition of literacy skills by adult learners, on the other hand, the core outcomes have not been achieved, including economic empowerment and participation in development activities (see Chapter 4). Although there are positives in the facilitator's experiences, in general, the experiences are negative resulting in failure to realise some of the important outcomes of the REFLECT approach.

The major problem from facilitators' experiences was failure to interpret theory into practice by adult learners which could be directly linked to the quality of facilitation taking place in the literacy circles considering the challenges REFLECT facilitators faced during facilitation process. While the study found that facilitation takes place in literacy circles, effective facilitation does not take place due to several reasons such as inadequate training of facilitators, recruitment of underqualified facilitators, inadequate facilitation materials, and lack of motivation which had huge influence on practice in literacy circles.

The last research question investigated effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the intended outcomes. Based on the findings from the perspective of facilitators' experiences, the study found five key factors which include academic qualifications, proper training, frequent refresher courses, motivation of facilitators, and increased funding for literacy activities. First, while the importance of academic qualifications for facilitators cannot be overemphasised as they reinforce the level of knowledge which directly influence the quality of facilitation in literacy circles, the study found the need to strictly adhere to the required academic qualifications for one to become adult literacy facilitator. Second, realising that facilitator training acts as a basis for facilitation in adult literacy programmes and therefore cannot be underplayed, the study suggests extending the training period to 21 days to incorporate practical aspects during the training to enable trainee facilitators acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge for effective facilitation (see Chapter 4).

Third, considering that the issue of motivation appeared to have serious consequences on the quality of facilitation (see Chapter 2), the study established that motivation was one of the critical aspects for facilitators which calls us to recognise the fact that it is directly linked to performance and commitment towards work. In this regard, given the experiences of REFLECT facilitators, the study suggests to increase monthly honoraria for facilitators to make it more attractive for improved performance in literacy circles and commitment towards their work (see Chapter 4). Fourth, while refresher courses provide opportunities for facilitators to share knowledge and experiences for effective facilitation, it emerged from the experiences of facilitators that organizing them regularly will have positive effect

on practice in literacy circles. Lastly, increasing funding for literacy activities was considered as one of the key factors for effective implementation of adult literacy programmes bearing in mind that it determines the provision of adequate instruction materials in the literacy circles. Although the issue of funding for adult literacy programmes is complex, as it depends on a number of factors such as the level of involvement of government and NGOs, increased funding for literacy activities will improve the quality of facilitation in literacy circles, and therefore requires serious consideration. Thus, considered together, the key issues discussed provide feasible solutions for effective facilitation of REFLECT approach to achieve the expected outcomes.

Finally, based on the findings of the experiences of REFLECT facilitators, the researcher developed a model for adult learning and facilitation (see Figure 4.8) which provides explicitly the critical aspects for facilitators regarding the knowledge and skills to successfully facilitate adult literacy programmes. Understanding the crucial aspects for facilitators is a key feature of the thesis, as it allows us to appreciate critical aspects that influence practice for effective facilitation of adult literacy programmes in Malawi. Thus, consideration and strengthening of the four key aspects such as the required academic qualifications, proper training, regular refresher courses and motivation may improve not only the experiences of facilitators but also the quality of facilitation in the literacy circles. Besides, it is important to note that the model requires facilitation and learning process which promotes learner-centred methods to engage adult learners actively in the learning process in the literacy classes. The process actually serves as a driving force of the model in achieving the expected adult learning outcomes.

5.3 Implications of the study

The findings of the study have the following implications on the implementation of adult literacy programmes in Malawi.

- 5.3.1 Facilitators for adult literacy programmes must be equipped with the required academic qualifications. While academic qualifications are directly linked to the level of knowledge based on the experiences of facilitators, they

have positive effect on quality of facilitation and the achievement of learning outcomes. Although some facilitators with the required academic qualifications available in the communities may not be interested to join in the light of poor conditions for remunerations, this calls for government and NGOs to consider facilitation as a profession to improve the quality of adult literacy programmes in Malawi.

5.3.2 Literacy facilitators should be adequately trained to improve practice in the literacy circles. The issue of facilitator training appeared to have serious consequences on the knowledge of facilitators and the quality of facilitation which directly affects the achievement of learning outcomes. Adequate training should involve engaging the trainee facilitators in full training for the fixed period of 21 days, to cover both theoretical and practical aspects of facilitation although that reveals not only the connection between the training and resources but also commitment of various stakeholder involved in the implementation of adult literacy programmes.

5.3.3 Refresher courses should be provided to literacy facilitators, at least twice or thrice a year for them to share knowledge, skills and experiences to improve practice in the literacy circles.

5.3.4 Motivation is key to ensuring total commitment of facilitators which is directly linked to quality of facilitation in literacy circles. However, to achieve this, a variety of strategies have to be used apart from monthly honoraria, such as incentives in the form of bonuses and rewards. This means various stakeholders at community, programme and district level have to consider the issue of motivation seriously.

5.4 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- 5.4.1 Adult literacy programmes should recruit facilitators with the required academic qualifications such as Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) and Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). The researcher opines that recruiting qualified REFLECT facilitators would positively influence the quality of facilitation in adult literacy classes and therefore achieve learning outcomes.
- 5.4.2 Training of REFLECT facilitators, being key to development of knowledge and skills for effective facilitation, should receive more attention by government and NGOs than is currently happening, in order to ensure that facilitators are well prepared for facilitation in literacy classes. This study has shown that ignoring the issue of training for facilitators negatively affects the quality of facilitation in literacy classes as well the achievement of learning outcomes. Based on the findings, it is important to point out that the study recommends 21 days of training. This will ensure that both theoretical and practical aspects of the content for training are covered.
- 5.4.3 REFLECT facilitators should employ a variety of participatory methods during learning process in literacy classes. This would greatly enhance effective learning among adult learners. Realistically, facilitation of adult learning in literacy classes should entail active participation of learners in the learning process in order to enhance their learning.
- 5.4.4 Adult literacy programmes should frequently organise refresher courses for REFLECT facilitators, preferably twice or thrice a year. These refresher courses should aim to build the capacity of facilitators with emphasis on the facilitation methods and techniques suitable for adult learners to improve the quality of facilitation in literacy classes.
- 5.4.5 Government and NGOs need to take into serious consideration the issue of motivation of REFLECT facilitators. What this means is that practically, it

will require them to commit some funds towards the welfare of REFLECT facilitators in terms of monthly honoraria and incentives in form of bonuses and rewards. The researcher is aware of the fact that addressing the issue of motivation will ensure ongoing commitment of REFLECT facilitators to their role in literacy classes since most of the time there is little commitment from facilitators.

5.5 Areas for further studies

The areas for further studies that the researcher refers to below are issues that emerged during the course of the study. This study explored experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi. Therefore, more research needs to be done in the following suggested areas:

- Conduct a longitudinal follow-up study to explore whether adult literacy facilitators have maintained or even extended experiences to understanding and implementing adult literacy programmes.
- Examine the training of facilitators and its influence on the facilitators' acquisition of knowledge and skills for facilitation of adult literacy programmes.
- Examine the influence of the learner-centered approaches on adult learners' acquisition of literacy skills.
- Explore how adult learners interpret theory into practice in adult literacy programmes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of introduction



Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
MALAWI

P. O. Box 280, Zomba,

BA, (Pub Admin), PBA (Hons), MPA, Ph.D

Tel: (265) 01 524 222

Your Ref.:

Email: cats@cc.ac.mw

11th April, 2018

achauma@cc.ac.mw

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING STUDIES DEPARTMENT

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

Letter of Introduction for Mr Martin Lipenga

I write to introduce **Mr Martin Lipenga** as a Doctoral candidate at the University of Malawi's Chancellor College. He is in his research year of studies where he is supposed to conduct research and submit a thesis in fulfillment of the Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Teaching studies (Language Education) degree requirements. I would like to request for your favour in granting him permission to conduct the study.

I look forward to your usual assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A.M. Chauma, PhD.

HOD, Curriculum and Teaching Studies

Appendix 2: Mulanje District Authority for Research

Telephone: + 265 01466 086 Facsimile: + 265 01 466 295 <i>All Communications should be addressed to:</i> The District Commissioner		<i>In reply please quote No.</i> research-1-2018 Mulanje District Council, PRIVATE BAG 9, Mulanje, MALAWI
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From: The District Commissioner

20th April, 2018

To: Adult Literacy Facilitators

Dear All,

AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The aforementioned subject refers.

I write to kindly request your office to allow Mr. Martin Lipenga, Lecturer at Chancellor College, the University of Malawi to undertake research activities at your Adult Literacy Centres, with the permission of your office.

The research aims at exploring Experience of facilitators in the implementation of REFLECT Adult literacy Programs in Malawi. I would be very grateful if Mr Lipenga is given all the necessary support and guidance so that his research activities are carried out successfully.

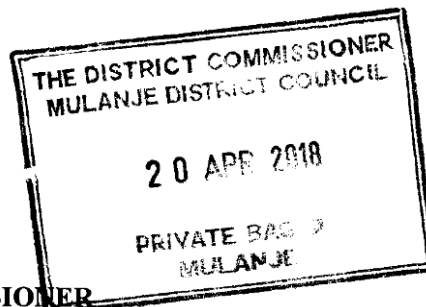
I look forward to your usual support and hoping at the same time that you will accord this request all the attention and urgency it deserves.

Yours faithfully,


Grey Mkwanda

Director of Administration

For: DISTRICT COMMISSIONER



CC: Director of Planning & Development, District Education Manager

Appendix 3: Consent from REFLECT facilitators

CONSENT FROM ADULT LITERACY FACILITATORS

We, the undersigned Adult Literacy Facilitators, give permission, on behalf of REFLECT facilitators in Mulanje District, to the researcher Mr Martin Lipenga, a Lecturer at the University of Malawi to use any photograph(s), audio recording(s) and/or any piece of information made as part of his research project in research presentations, publications, for educational purposes, or through any other means as long as our names are not used.

Without expectation of any remuneration or compensation, now or in the future, the undersigned REFLECT Facilitators hereby grant permission and therefore give our consent to Mr Lipenga. This consent includes, but is not limited to:

- Consent to willingly participate in the research study aimed at exploring experiences of facilitators in REFLECT adult literacy programmes in Malawi.
- Permission to interview, film, photograph, tape, or otherwise make a video reproduction of facilitators and/or record our voices.
- Permission to use quotes from the interview(s) or excerpts of such quotes, photograph(s), tape(s), and/or recording of facilitators' voice, in part or in whole, in its publications for educational and awareness.

This consent is given in perpetuity, and our signatures below show our approval.

FACILITATORS

SIGNATURES

DATE

Facilitator 1



21-04-2018

Facilitator 2



21-04-2018

Facilitator 3



21/04/2018

Facilitator 4



21/04/2018

Facilitator 5



21/04/2018

Facilitator 6



21/04/2018

Appendix 4: Individual interview questions for REFLECT facilitators

A. Recruitment and training of facilitators

1. How did you get involved as a facilitator of REFLECT approach to adult literacy programmes? (**Probe:** What criteria was used to involve you?)
2. Were you trained as a REFLECT facilitator? (**Probe:** How long was the training programme? How useful was the training?)

B. Facilitators' experiences regarding knowledge and skills to facilitate the REFLECT approach

3. What is your experience regarding the knowledge and skills acquired during the training to effectively facilitate the REFLECT approach? (**Probe:** What gaps did the training have? What do you think is the implication of these gaps in successfully facilitating the REFLECT approach?)
4. How can the trainings be improved in your view? (**Probe:** Do you have a chance to go for Refresher courses/workshops and seminars? How useful are the refresher courses and seminars? What challenges do you face in these Refresher courses and seminars?)
5. Give a brief description of how the literacy classes are conducted.
6. Based on your training, mention the facilitation methods that you know? (**Probe:** which facilitation methods do you commonly use? Which methods are rarely used? Explain)
7. What challenges do you face in the course of using these facilitation methods? (**Probe:** What are the possible solutions to those challenges?)
8. How do you perceive literacy and development aspects of the REFLECT approach (**Probe:** How do you facilitate these aspects: literacy and development? Which one do you place much emphasis on and consider more important?)

C. Motivation of REFLECT facilitators

9. How are facilitators motivated when facilitating REFLECT adult literacy programme?
10. Mention the strategies that are used to motivate facilitators?
11. What other forms of motivation would you have loved to receive?

D. Facilitators' experience on the REFLECT approach's effectiveness

12. In your opinion, does the REFLECT approach effectively bring out the desired outcomes? (**Probe:** To what extent have the expected outcomes been achieved?)
13. Do you experience any challenges with the approach that negatively affects the achievement of the desired outcomes?
14. What should be done better for the REFLECT approach to bring out positive results?

E. Effective facilitation of the REFLECT approach

15. In your opinion, how best do you think the REFLECT approach should be effectively facilitated to achieve its intended goals?
16. What overall recommendations can you make for effective facilitation of the REFLECT approach?

End of interview questions

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion questions for REFLECT facilitators

A. Facilitators' experiences regarding knowledge and skills to facilitate the REFLECT approach

1. Were you trained as a REFLECT facilitator? (**Probe:** How long was the training programme? How useful was the training?)
2. What is your experience regarding the knowledge and skills acquired during the training to effectively facilitate the REFLECT approach? (**Probe:** What gaps did the training have? What do you think is the implication of these gaps in successfully facilitating the REFLECT approach??)
3. How can the trainings be improved in your view? (**Probe:** Do you have a chance to go for Refresher courses/workshops and seminars? How useful are the refresher courses and seminars? What challenges do you face in these Refresher courses and seminars?)
4. Based on your training, mention the facilitation methods that you know? (**Probe:** which facilitation methods do you commonly use? Which methods are rarely used? Explain)
5. What challenges do you face in the course of using these facilitation methods? (**Probe:** What are the possible solutions to those challenges?)
6. Can you describe to me your typical day as a facilitator at a REFLECT circle? (**Probe:** How do you prepare for your lessons? What challenges do you face in your preparation?)
7. How do you perceive literacy and development aspects of the REFLECT Approach (**Probe:** How do you facilitate these aspects: literacy and development? Which one do you place much emphasis on and consider more important?)

B. Motivation of REFLECT facilitators

8. How are facilitators motivated when facilitating REFLECT adult literacy programme?
9. Mention the strategies that are used to motivate facilitators?
10. What other forms of motivation would you have loved to receive?

C. Facilitators' experience on the REFLECT approach's effectiveness

11. In your opinion, does the REFLECT approach effectively bring out the desired outcomes? (**Probe:** To what extent have the expected outcomes been achieved?)
12. Do you experience any challenges with the approach that negatively affects the achievement of the desired outcomes?
13. What should be done better for the REFLECT approach to bring out positive results?

D. Effective facilitation of the REFLECT approach

14. In your opinion, how best do you think the REFLECT approach should be effectively facilitated to achieve its intended goals?
15. What overall recommendations can you make for effective facilitation of the REFLECT approach?

End of interview questions

Appendix 6: Observation schedule for literacy circles

Literacy circle Id: _____

Total no of participants: _____

Facilitator Id: _____

Subject: _____

Topic: _____

Duration of lesson (Time): _____

Date: _____

Brief description of the literacy circle (sitting arrangement, i.e. is it classroom like, language used by participants, the kind of interaction etc)

Is there production of local materials for learning purposes? List them down.

Level of participation (observation on dialogue amongst the participants, and between participants and the facilitator)

List of facilitation methods used at all levels

Facilitation skills (Is the facilitator dominating, controlling, guiding, steering or non-existent)

Is the facilitator able to keep participants focused and achieving aims of the session?

Comments and points to follow up.

End of observation schedule