

Compassion and Sorrow as Irreducible Minimum for Intergenerational Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Akpovire Oduaran

*Department of Adult Education, University of Botswana Gaborone, Botswana
E-mail: ODUARANA@mopipi.ub.bw*

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ABSTRACT This paper is intended to fill the gap that has emerged in the scholarship on the changing nature of intergenerational practice in Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, it addresses the emergence of compassion and sorrow as irreducible minimum in intergenerational practice. The paper attempts to confirm the common assumption among practitioners that in every community, whether in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia or the Oceania, intergenerational practices notably try to capture the most daunting challenges confronting the people. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, our own major challenge is HIV/AIDS. To achieve this purpose, the paper begins with a brief explanation of the concept of irreducible minimum, moves through a highlight of the theoretical framework of the discussion, the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the light of how it has changed the demography of intergenerational practice, and concludes with a brief exploration of intergenerational learning exchange programmes that might benefit Sub-Saharan Africa, and, indirectly, the modern world. This might sound over-ambitious but it is our hope that an awareness of the common destiny the human race shares should make our message worth listening to, and matching that with positive action.