

ADULT EDUCATION AS VERITABLE TOOL FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, CREATIVITY AND SELF-RELIANCE THROUGH NATIONAL OPEN APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME IN OSUN STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the vocational training programme of the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), a vocational skill development (VSD) programme of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Nigeria for equipping the unemployed youths and adults with required skills for employability. Specifically, the study (i) examined methods used by the master-craft trainers to train adult trainees under their apprenticeship; (ii) investigated whether the adult trainees are equipped with appropriate job skills that will enable them to be self-employed/reliant or secure wage employment; and, (iii) found out whether the adults trained under this scheme eventually become self-employed/reliant or secured wage employment. The study used case study research design. The population for the study consisted of apprenticeship trainees, ex-trainees and master-craft trainers under the NOAS. The sample comprised 10 trainees and 10 master-craft trainers drawn using simple random sampling technique, and 10 ex-trainees selected through snowballing sampling method. The instruments were semi-structured interview guide and direct observation. The data collected from oral interviews and direct observation were qualitatively analyzed using interpretive content analysis. The study employed experiential andragogy model developed by O'Bannon & McFadden (2008) as its framework. The results showed that the trainees/ex-trainees were trained through verbal instruction, observation, and imitation among other methods. The trainees responded that they liked the vocation for which they are being trained and the results also showed that 7 out of the 10 ex-trainees practiced the trades for which they were trained. It was concluded that the methods used were andragogically effective and the programmes were good enough to meet the job/trade expectations of the trainees. However, the number of beneficiaries of the NDE's NOAS was too small in enormous Nigeria's population. Among others, it was recommended that there should be more awareness on the veritableness of VSD as an alternative means of socioeconomic sustenance.

Keywords: Training; skills; Employability; Adult learning; Experiential andragogy.

Introduction

One of the common factors exacerbating unemployment rate, especially in developing countries, and Nigeria in particular is lack of employable skills among young adults (Emeh, 2012; Ibikunle, Orefuwa & Mafo, 2019). Realizing this, the Federal Government of Nigeria established in 1986 the National Directorate of Employment with the primary mandate of empowering and equipping youths, through vocational training, with relevant employable/marketable skills that will ameliorate joblessness and unemployment among them. Despite this and other governmental and non-governmental efforts at tackling the problem of unemployment in the country, the rate of unemployment is still very high. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2017) reported that the number of people within the labour force who are unemployed or underemployed increased from 13.6 million and 17.7 million respectively in the second quarter, 2017 to 15.9 million and 18.0 million in the third quarter of 2017. According to James (2021), the number of unemployed Nigerians is currently standing at 23,187,389; it was further reported that a combination of both the unemployment and underemployment rates as at first quarter 2021 amounted to a staggering 56.1%. Thus, an alternative way out of this menace is for youths to seek to be self-employed/self-reliant. However, many young adults do not have required skills for vocational/entrepreneurial creativity and self-reliance. This, in part, accounts for high rate of crimes and youth restiveness in the country.

In addition, in Nigeria, as in most developing countries, going to school is with a view to securing paid employment (white-collar jobs) and live a better life. Stemming from the colonial system, education in Africa has been majorly liberal. Parents and children alike place more value on going to school and obtaining educational certificates for glamorous interests and for placements in prestigious positions either in civil service, firms and industries or in politics. Continuous rise in population of school children and the consequent mass production of school leavers both at secondary school and tertiary levels have made job opportunities in the country insufficient. Also, the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has made any individual who lacks technical skills unemployable in the current technology-driven economy. Roche (2016) observed that the knowledge and skills acquired in childhood and youth will not suffice for an entire working life. Thus, there is need for youths to always upgrade and update their knowledge and skills to remain employable.

The resultant effect of lack of skills is tantamount to lack of employment opportunities for the youths. This bad situation is further worsened since many of these school leavers lack practical, functional and relevant job skills for the few available employment opportunities. Amasa (2011) observed that the reason for high rate of unemployment in Nigeria could be that either the youths are trained without saleable skills or they are graduated with adequate skills but without jobs created for them. This observation truly depicts the plight of Nigerian youths. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) aims at correcting and safeguarding the society against this menace.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) through its Vocational Skill Development (VSD) programme provides opportunities for the unemployed and unskilled school leavers and graduates to learn and acquire relevant job skills that will equip them for gainful employment or become self-reliant by establishing their own trades. This then necessitates that the trainees learn and relearn some new job skills. How do the trainers engage by the NDE train the trainees? What are the pedagogical and the andragogical methods used in training them? What transformation and/or re-orientation do the trainees have in the process of training? These, among other issues of concern are the crux of this study.

Education has been widely defined as the process of acquiring knowledge and skill from the cradle to the grave. A major component of education system that allows learning from cradle to grave is adult education. Adult education provides opportunity for people after the initial education to upgrade and update their knowledge and skills to cope with the ever-emerging changes in every facet of life endeavours. Not only this, adult education also provides avenues for remedy of whichever shortcoming or incompetence of the initial education. Through adult education, individuals seek opportunities to learn or acquire new and relevant knowledge and skills that will make them relevant and functional in various job areas. Hence, adult education is an inevitable component of lifelong learning.

Many unemployed youths have mentality that securing white-collar jobs is the only way out of unemployment. Even one who engages in personal trade or vocation does not consider him/herself employed until he/she secures a (salary/wage) paid job. This set of school leavers need to be transformed in their thinking and mentality. Many of them because of glamour associated with certificates acquired from schools and colleges detest apprenticeship, especially for vocational skills. It is erroneously believed that vocational and technical education is for less intelligent and less academically brilliant individuals (Edokpolor & Owenubiugie, 2017; Obiora, 2021). Intelligence and brilliance are required in every area of human endeavours for success and productivity.

Andragogy influences the ways in which individuals that are regarded as adults are treated in an educational or a training programme. Experiential learning influences the development of training plans and learning activities for adults. This study is mainly premised on the model of experiential andragogy by O'Bannon & McFadden (2008). According to them experiential andragogy is effective for building non-traditional adult experiential learning. The VSD programmes of the NDE is in form of apprenticeship which is majorly through a process of experiential learning. According to Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (2012), learning essentially is change resulting from experience. Knowles *et al.* (2012) & McMahon (2015) reiterated that learning is the act/process by which behavioural change, knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired. Root (2017), conceived experiential learning as a training method that employs a shared immersive experience that is a direct metaphor for a set of challenges commonly faced in the workplace. According to him, the experience requires participants to solve a problem or achieve a common goal by using newly learned skills and behaviours. Thus, the experiential andragogy programme as propounded by O'Bannon & McFadden (2008) has six stages. These are:

- i. Motivation
- ii. Orientation
- iii. Involvement
- iv. Activity
- v. Reflection
- vi. Adaptation



Figure 1: Experiential Andragogy Model of a Non-Traditional Experiential Learning Programme
(Source: O'Bannon, T. and McFadden, C., 2008, p. 26)

The process as depicted by the Figure 1 above forms a continuum with one stage running into the next. At the stage of motivation, O'Bannon & McFadden (2008) believed that the motivation to participate in learning experiences must come from within the learner. Trainees in the NOAS are young school leavers who had been jobless/unemployed/underemployed and have enrolled for VSD to find a way out of joblessness. Some of them might have been self-motivated to enroll with the NDE by being tired of their jobless situation. Some might have been encouraged by parents/guardians or friends. For anything of purpose that humans do, there is a motivating factor either intrinsically or extrinsically (Cherry, 2020; Sennett, 2021). O'Bannon & McFadden (2008) observed that intrinsic motivation gives the learner a personal reason for participating in, and learning from a non-traditional experiential learning programme.

At the orientation stage, learners are introduced to the nature of learning/training programme. Orientation is also the time to introduce learners to the concept of experiential andragogy. The trainer needs to guide adult trainees to new style of learning. The third stage is involvement. Here, trainees need to have personal understanding of why they are undergoing the vocational training so that they can become involved in planning their experience. The involvement stage includes trainees developing goals and objectives, both on a personal level and as a group. At the activity stage experiential learning process can either be active or passive, involve one learner, small groups, or the entire group, and can either be long or short term. Here, trainees should be well guided in all training activities they are involved because simply participating in an activity does not necessarily lead to learning, as some activities may be "mis-educative" – meaning that the learner leaves the activity with negative feelings that can lead to a lack of sensitivity in future activities (O'Bannon & McFadden, 2008). The stage of reflection provides an opportunity for the learners (as individuals and a group) to look back on a specific activity or the experience to-date, and extract meaning from it. This stage allows a learner to gain insight and bring cohesion to the group.

Adaptation stage completes the cycle. This provides an opportunity for individuals to come to terms with the experiences they have had during the programme. The adaptation stage is also the time for facilitators to work with the trainees/learners and help them find ways to express what they have experienced, both mentally and physically. At this stage, the learners consider how they will apply what they have learned to future experiences. This is a hallmark of adult education and learning – immediate application of knowledge/skills acquired to real life situations to solve current

challenges. O'Bannon & McFadden (2008) concluded that the development of the experiential andragogy model is propounded for practical use in non-traditional experiential learning settings, particularly in programmes designed for adult learners. In this, NDE vocational training scheme fits. In the same vein, theory of transformative learning propounded by Jack Mezirow in the late 1970s is the second theory underpinning this study. It emphasized recognition, reassessment, and modification of the structures of assumptions and expectations that frame our tacit points of view and influence our thinking, beliefs, attitudes and actions (Mezirow, 2009). As a theory, transformative learning is an act that individuals conduct in order to be more self-motivated, self-governing, rational, collaborative, and emphatic (Lavrysh, 2015). It is virtually impossible to be self-employed and successful in any personal enterprise without being self-motivated and self-governing.

Love (2020) described transformative learning as teaching for change. Thus, Mezirow (2012) urged teachers/trainers of adults and adult learners towards transformation, as both of them are learners and objects of change. According to Carter (2017) transformative learning is an 'opening up' to new experiences. Magro (2009) and Cranton (2012) advised adult educators to reflect on their teaching, and tactics to employ in the classroom and workshop such as mentoring and art-based projects that may lead to transformation. Thus, Cranton (2012: 9) viewed that:

Any technical skill has the potential to lead to transformative learning. As adult educators, we need to be aware of these possibilities, recognize the moment they exist, and do our best to challenge and support learners as they move into a different realm of learning.

Both Magro (2009) and Cranton (2012) acknowledged that vocational and technical education can and should be a place for transformation. The economic and industrial needs of the modern society enforce education towards technically oriented graduates who will meet up today labour markets demands. Education institutions should train and graduate experts to conform to economic interests. Constantly, transforming society demands providing vocational training according to transformative learning principles. Implementing transformative learning in training programme is important because it enhances the rate at which trainees acquire the necessary skills that culminate into their transformation.

This study determined the andragogical veritableness of the NOAS in Nigeria. Specifically, the study;

Examined andragogical and pedagogical methods used by the trainers to train adult trainees under their apprenticeship; investigated whether the adult trainees are equipped with relevant job skills that will enable them to be self-employed/reliant or secure wage employment; and find out whether the adults trained under the scheme utilise the skills acquired to establish their own trades/vocations or secure wage employment.

Research Questions

In view of the stated objectives, the following research questions were raised:

- i. What are the andragogical and pedagogical methods used by the trainers to train adult trainees under their apprenticeship?
- ii. Are the trainees being trained for jobs they desire to do after their training?
- iii. Do the graduates of NOAS utilise the skills acquired to establish their own trades or secure wage employment?

Methodology

This study used case study research design. The population for the study consisted of apprenticeship trainees, trainers and ex-trainees of the NOAS in all the NDE approved vocational training centres in Osun State, Southwestern Nigeria. Through purposive sampling technique, ten vocational training centres most frequently patronised by the NDE out of the 145 registered centres were chosen, while the trainers (master-craft person) in each of the selected centres (each centre has a master-craft person) were also chosen. In addition, ten trainees and ten ex-trainees of the NOAS were chosen through snowballing sampling technique. Two instruments: Key informant Interview Guide (KIIG), and Observation Checklist were used to collect data for the study. The purpose of using these two research instruments was to achieve the aim of triangulation. Triangulation enables a researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999).

The researcher obtained official permission from the NDE to conduct interviews with trainees, ex-trainees and trainers under the NAOS. At the point of the interview, the researchers explained the purpose of the research to each of the participants and obtained oral consent from each of them. The interviews which were conducted in the English language were tape-recorded and transcribed. The participants were numbered 1-30: trainees were numbered 1-10; trainers were numbered 11-

20, while ex-trainees were numbered 21-30. Also, trainees were coded Te1 - Te10; trainers were coded Tr11 - to 20, while the ex-trainees were coded ExTe21- to 30. The responses of the participants were then quoted corresponding to their respective codes. The Data were analysed using interpretive content analysis.

Results and Discussion of Findings

In this section, the researchers provide answers to the research questions raised for the study as well as discussion of findings. The results and the discussion were combined together since the key responses of the participants were quoted directly in the discussion of findings. This is to avoid verbosity and to limit number of words as well as pages.

Research Question One: What are the andragogical and pedagogical methods used by the trainers to train adult trainees under their apprenticeship?

The responses of the trainees and ex-trainees (participants) showed that both theory and practical methods were used to train them. For instance, the typical responses from the participants were: *Te 2, 4 and 7, ExTe 22, 25, 26, and 27: 'We have theory and practical sessions. We write notes and sketches during theory and practical sessions. Our trainer always gives us verbal instructions intermittently in the workshop.'* Te 8, said: *'Our Master teaches us theory on how to use soft and hard wares in photography. We take notes and watch documentaries.'* Te 10 for interlocking also responded that: *'We learn by doing. Our Master teaches and explains to us the quality and quantity of materials (sand, cement) to use for molding. We know how to set the interlocking by doing it together'.* For barbing, Te 6 said, *'I learn majorly by watching and observing my Master as he barbs for customers'.*

The researchers indeed observed that the trainers gave verbal instructions to trainees in all the centres visited. The trainees were seen standing and clustering around their trainers during training sessions after which they would be asked to do what they had been instructed and shown. Many of the trainees were also observed to be busy with various tasks and work activities assigned them by their masters. These conform to the method of apprenticeship/training, which involves learning from the master by imitation, recitation, imagination and repetition of the master's performances (Amasa, 2011). Abadzi (2016) corroborated Amasa (2011) by saying that trades, traditionally, are passed down to trainees through observation, application, feedback and correction.

According to the two trainer-fashion designers, Tr 3 and 7, their methods of training included ‘*patterning and free-hand*’ methods. Patterning method was explained to involve using large paper to draw, draft, sketch, and cut the paper into shapes and designs and place the cut paper on the cloth to cut it into the actual design to be sewn. On the other hand, free-hand method entails direct cutting of the material into the sizes and designs intended. One of them Tr 7 narrated: ‘*I train my trainees to draw, draft and sketch the design, cut it out and place it on the cloth and then cut the cloth out into the desired sizes and designs*’. The patterning and free-hand methods of training are good as they can engender creativity among the trainees. According to Cohrane, *et. al.* (2014), creativity thrives in an atmosphere that is supportive, dynamic, and receptive to new ideas and activities. They believed that learning environment should encourage interactions between learners in which action and reflection are carefully counter-balanced, open-ended periods of play and ‘blue-sky’ thinking alternate with goal-oriented problem-solving. Some other centres visited did not have clearly defined methods of training but the trainees were seen observing and doing some work activities as their master-trainers assigned them.

However, it was observed that in all the centres the training procedures have no strict structures. Instructions were given based on the aspects of vocation being handled and subsequent emerging issues. No strict step-by-step or hierarchical arrangement of topics of discussion. Instructions were on as-the-need-arises mode.

Research Question Two: Are the trainees being trained for jobs they desire to do after their training? These responses from respondents showed that they were being trained for jobs they desired to do after their training.

All the 10 trainees responded that they liked and were satisfied with the vocational skills they were acquiring, for instance, Te 1-10 said: ‘*I like my job*’, ‘*I am satisfied with job skills I am acquiring*’. Five of the trainees, Te 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10 confessed acquiring vocational skills as ‘*remedy*’ to their lack of employable (practical/technical) skills despite their levels of education. They had finished school up to three years before they decided to acquire vocational skills, which they believed, according to them, would enhance ‘*my employability or self-employment*’. They responded ‘*I do not like being an artisan because people look down on them*’. They said that they initially detested being artisans because artisans are viewed as being the people that are less intelligent for formal schooling and academic work. But now, according to them, they have realised

otherwise and they would gladly earn their living through artisanship. *'Artisanship is now reigning in the society and I am glad to be one'*

Other five trainees said that they have passion for the vocation they are being trained for. They confessed vocational artisanship had been their dreams and that it is now becoming more relevant in the current dispensation when white collar and blue-collar jobs are not easy to come by. Thus, all the trainees are very optimistic of being gainfully employed/self-employed after their training.

Research Question Three: Do the graduates of NOAS utilise the skills acquired to establish their own trades or secure wage employment?

The researchers used the observation sheet to answer this research question. We visited the workshop of the NOAS graduates to actually see whether the work they do are the ones for which they acquired skills in the NDE NOAS.

Only seven out of the ten sampled ex-trainees were met practicing the vocation they trained for. This is good and encouraging which showed that the efforts of the Government to ameliorate joblessness/unemployment among the youths are yielding positive results. Further, it was reported by Mohammed (2017) that the Federal Government of Nigeria had begun the recruitment of 76,000 youths from the 36 states of the federation and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (2000 youths from each state) for the NDE training programmes. In the same vein, Nicholas (2018) reported that the Directorate had been directed by the Government to establish over 5,400 (150 beneficiaries from each state of the Federation) Cosmetology graduate-trainees under the Basic-National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (B-NOAS) programme in their trade. These Government efforts are to ensure that the youths who are trained under the NDE practice what they were trained for. All the participants (trainees) emphatically indicated that they would establish vocational trades based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they are acquiring in the NOAS. However, the number of beneficiaries is too few, considering the teeming population of unemployed youths in the country. At this juncture, talking about transformative learning will be highly complementary to the experiential andragogy model. Transformative learning, according to Sarojini (2009), transcends beyond skills acquisition to changes in frames of reference, because individuals and groups step out of their 'habits of mind'. Many of the NDE trainees had awkward attitudes and phobia for creativity before enrolling for training in NOAS as Te 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 confessed *'I am initially ashamed of training in vocational trade'*. However, in the process of their training, they acquired change of attitudes

and disposition to vocational artisanship. *‘As time goes on, I develop better interest in what I was learning’*. These changes in perspectives easily lead to more creative and innovative practices at work (Sarojini, 2009, Love 2020). Transformative learning creates what Root (2017) termed ‘Aha’ moment. This is the moment when one realises his/her errors or deficiency in knowledge and ready to accept change/new knowledge. Thus, transformative learning theory proposes that learning occurs when new meaning is conferred on a previous experience or when old understandings are transformed to have new meanings (Root, 2017).

Conclusions

The facilitation methods employed in the Nigeria’s NOAS border on theoretical and practical approaches and ultimately allow for reflection and adaptation among the trainees. For example, from the findings of this study, the following andragogical and pedagogical methods came to fore: verbal instructions, observation, imitation, watching documentaries films on video and television, learning-by-doing – experiential learning, and mentoring. These methods conform to andragogical expectations and can effectively help the trainees develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for socioeconomic empowerment and self-reliance. Importantly, based on the students’ perspectives, the NOAS training is relevant to equipping and empowering the adult trainees with necessary vocational skills required to making them employable and/or self-reliant and this is in consonant with the trainees’ job desires. Though majority (7 out of 10) of ex-trainees of NOAS became employed or self-employed based on the vocational skills they acquired in the scheme, coupled with the government’s efforts towards ensuring that they are gainfully engaged after graduation, the number of beneficiaries of NDE’s NOAS is too few compared to the Nigeria’s enormous population.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions above, the followings are recommended:

- i. The government, and particularly through the NDE, should create more awareness on the functionality of VSD as an alternative means of socioeconomic sustenance.
- ii. Government should provide more opportunities for young adults to enroll in NOAS.
- iii. Apprenticeship system should be developed and packaged as a subsystem of Nigerian education system and it should be implemented with lifelong learning approach.
- iv. Further studies should be carried out with focused on impact evaluation of NDE’s NOAS.

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