Enabling labour market entry for adults through non-formal education and training for employment in South Africa

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Abstract

Adult non-formal education and training (NFET) in South Africa was adopted in 1990 to address the problem of unemployment of non-educated and unskilled adults. Public and private NFET centres aim to meet the training needs of adults who were deprived of formal education that would foster access to opportunities for employment. The paper reports on a study conducted to investigate what constitutes NFET enabling environments for employment. The paper focuses on the approach of training delivery fostering labour market entry of graduates. The findings show that individual trainees who participated in private centres had a higher probability of being employed because of the creation of internal enabling environments for skills acquisition and focus on income-generating activities. The authors conclude that an integration of technical skills with business skills and 'learning by earning' is a potential training delivery approach enabling graduates to participate in economic activities.

Keywords
Adult non-formal education; training delivery; enabling environments; labour market; South Africa

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that unemployment among non-educated and unskilled adults is one of the most serious development problems facing sub-Saharan African countries today. Adults are active labour force participants, but their entry into labour markets is hindered by a lack of education and skills impediments (World Bank, 2004). In South Africa particularly, a lack of education and training among poor adults is a significant contributor to unemployment and poverty (Anderson, 2012). This is due to absolute poverty caused by limited employable skills among adults on the one hand and on the other the lack of employment opportunities in the KwaZulu-Natal province where the study was conducted (Soobramoney, 2011).

The paper looks at the problem of unemployment through the lens of adult non-formal education and training (NFET). The NFET is intended to be a strategy to expand opportunities for marginalised groups to bridge unemployment and employment (Georgiadou, Kekkeris, & Kalantzis, 2009). It is perceived as a 'second chance education' to those who had been 'pushed out' from the formal system (Kedrayate, 2012, 12). NFET in South Africa was adopted in 1990 with the aim to respond to the learning needs of adults who did not

have access to formal education, to increase their employment opportunities, to reduce the high rates of poverty and to enhance social inclusion (Aitchison, 2007). Most adults who enrol in the NFET for employable skills acquisition are those who had no chance to attend the formal education system or to complete school due to certain circumstances in life.

NFET was an important part of the anti-apartheid struggle. It helped prepare people for democracy, something formal education did not do. Prior to 1994, NFET was provided by a range of groups ranging from religious groups, NGOs/CBOs, civic associations, workers organisations, political parties and social movements (Mckay, 2007; Aitchison 2007). Formal technical and vocational training was provided in the former White technical colleges and some schools of industries for Coloureds and mission schools for Black students (Aitchison, 2007). The NGOs involved in adult non-formal education prior 1994 were concerned with teaching people to read and understand printed texts and to communicate through writing.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, various Freirian approaches to conscientisation were adopted in NGO projects aligned to the democratic struggle (Aitchison 2007). The lack of compulsory formal education, and the fact that the schools were sites of the liberation struggle, resulted in many children not attending or disrupting attendance between 1976 and 1994. The situation left many citizens without education, thus contributing to the massive need for adult NFET within the country (Mckay, 2007; Aitchison 2007).

To redress the historical lack of education and training and promote lifelong learning, the South African government legislated non-formal adult education and training through the Adult Education and Training (AET) Act 25 of 2010. To achieve this aim, the Act stipulates that NFET centres, in collaboration with government departments, private institutions and various stakeholders, should create an enabling environment for the utilisation of the skills learnt from NFET centres in the labour market (RSA, 2010). To this end, the Department of Education and local NGOs are involved in offering NFET programmes to poor people in order to involve them in income-generating activities (Aitchison, 2007).

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education offers two significant categories of NFET programmes for adults who have no or little formal education. Both categories are the educational system linked to the National Qualification Framework structure starting from AET level 1 to level 4. Level 4 culminates in a General Education and Training Certificate at the end of the programmes (KZN-Department of Education [KZN-DoE], 2011). The first category of programme covers AET levels 1–3, which provides 'an educational level equivalent to the Adult Secondary Education Curriculum for Adults' (ibid. p. 36). The second category is AET level 4, which is linked to livelihood skills. It is this category of NFET programme which is relevant for the focus of this study. It encompasses training unemployed adults from rural and urban backgrounds in technical and entrepreneurial skills to enable them to take up paid or self-employment in the fields of agriculture, services or small business activities (KZN-Department of Education [KZN-DoE], 2012).

Previous studies have explored the dynamics of relationship between NFET programmes and employment. Researchers examined the relevance of NFET for income generation (Blaak, Openjuru, & Zeelen, 2012; Islam, Mia, & Sorcar, 2012) and socio-economic empowerment of poor adults (Akpama, Esang, Asor, & Osang, 2011; Morton & Montgomery, 2011). Similarly, Georgiadou, et al. (2009) and Islam et al. (2012) report practical skills acquisition by graduates without mentioning the conducive factors thereof.

Although studies have explored the relationship between NFET programmes and employment, little is known about factors that enhance the utilisation of acquired skills in

the labour market. Research shows that NFET graduates continue to experience challenges due to the insufficiency of internal enabling environments (Department of Higher Education & Training [DHET], 2012; Aitchison, 2007; Blaak et al., 2012). This implies that adults who face long-term unemployment due to a lack of marketable skills remain unemployed after completing NFET programmes. In this paper, the main focus of the assessment at training delivery level is on the approach the NFET centres use to ensure graduates are prepared for employment at semi-skilled levels or to start their own income-generating activities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

In this paper, NFET refers to a skills programme carried out outside the framework of the established education system that involves foundational knowledge, technical and manual skills, entrepreneurial skills and competencies tailored to the specific requirements of a gainful employment or self-employment (DVV International, 2011; Mckay, 2007; Erasmus, 2010). Enabling environments refer to internal and external factors of the NFET centre which creates conducive conditions for skills acquisition and skills utilisation in wage- or self-employment (King & Palmer, 2006; World Bank, 2004).

The paper begins by discussing the conceptual framework and approaches of NFET in South Africa. Next, the focus is on a discussion of the internal enabling environments of adult NFET centres for skills acquisition and employment. Then, the research methodology of the study is explained, followed by the presentation of the findings. A discussion of the findings then follows, and finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations presented.

Conceptual framework and approach of NFET in South Africa

Non-formal education and training was defined as all education outside of the formal system (Rogers, 2004). According to Coombs and Ahmed (in Rogers, 2004), its basic definition is 'any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal schooling system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adult as well as children.' Depending on the context of a given country, it involves programmes to impact literacy, basic education and training for out-of-school leavers and livelihood skills programmes. Contrary to other scholars, Weyer (2009) conceptualises NFET in terms of its purpose. Weyer (2009) notes that NFET is an educational system outside the recognised framework that typically provides occupational access only to the lowest level jobs because it does not have the legitimacy to grant school-based diplomas and credentials required gaining access to white-collar and professional jobs.

The NFET distinguishes itself from formal education on basis of its delivery approach (Weyer, 2009). This view of Weyers is similar to that of International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2009) according to which, in NFET programmes, great attention is taken to ensure that training is tailored to a specific requirement of employment or income-generating activities. Thus, NFET is provided not only in 'technical skills but also in business, organisational and management skills to function as self-employed or to run a small business, most often a micro-enterprise' (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2009, 27).

The adult education theory that guided the study is experiential learning theory by David Kolb (1984). The 'Experiential Learning' theory emphasises the central role that experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 1999). The theory defines learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience' (Kolb,

1984, 4). Kolb suggested that adult learning is more effective when learners are more directly involved rather passively receiving knowledge transmitted by educators. Experiential learning is known as 'learning by doing' or 'hands-on learning.' Herod (2012) argues that in 'learning by doing', learning includes not only being more active physically, but also the fact of being more engaged in one's learning cognitively, in other words, involving a process of deep level of knowledge and skills through experience, reflection, experimentation and application in the real world of work.

According to Kold, adult learning involves an 'experiential learning cycle' of four stages, and all stages are required in order for learner to learn effectively (Herod, 2012). Firstly, the 'Concrete Experience' stage entails active learning as opposed to passive receipt of knowledge. Secondly, the 'Reflective Observation' stage helps a learner to thinking critically about the experience. Thirdly, the 'Abstract Conceptualisation' helps a learner to link the experience to the theory or concepts underlying it. Fourthly, the 'Active Experimentation' helps a learner to test out his/her learning in new situations (Herod, 2012, 12).

Furthermore, adults enter into skills training programmes with a task-centred (or problem-centred or life-centred) orientation to learning. According to Knowles (1996), adults enter into any undertaking with a different background of experience from that of their youth. Having lived longer, they have amassed great volume of experience. Therefore, adults by virtue of life and work experiences develop a task-centred or problem-centred orientation to learning. If training is developed around problem solving, then adults will learn content with the intention of using it in their economic activities (Knowles, 1996). In connection with experiential learning theory by David Kolb (1984), learning activities should clearly demonstrate to the learner where he or she would benefit in their jobs. Therefore, educators should design a training programme so that adult learners are solving problems or are performing tasks as close to those on the job as possible. Again, the focus should be on 'doing' something with information rather than simply 'knowing' the information (Knowles, 1996). To this end, as implication for adult teaching practice, Knowles (1996) suggests that the delivery approach of adult education and training emphasises firstly on experiential techniques which involves simulation exercises, skill-practice exercises and field projects. Secondly, the delivery approach should emphasise on practical application.

The approach to adult education as a form of NFET in South Africa included more than simple literacy and numeracy from 1997. The new approach to NFET was then called para-formal education[1] (Aitchison, 2007; Mckay, 2007). Studying the relationship between NFET and employment, Johanson and Adams (2004) argue that training for the informal sector is necessarily different from that for the formal sector in its preference for merging technical skills with business management skills and in delivering these courses within a flexible schedule. However, in line with experiential learning theory, Johanson and Adams (2004) recommend that the adult NFET needs to have immediate application, since the poor can hardly afford long periods of training before seeing a pay-off.

In view of NFET enabling labour market entry for adults, a significant aspect of approaches of NFET is that providing knowledge and employable skills may benefit individual, poor adults to get jobs and, as a result, increase the human capital resource pool and potential productivity in South Africa. In support of McGrath and Akoojee (2007) and Robert's (2008) view, it can be argued that NFET is a tool to fight unemployment among adults. The acquisition of knowledge and skills in enabling environments can help adults compete with others in the labour market.

Considering the context of the study, the authors investigated the literature on the approach of training delivery enabling environments of NFET programmes linking to post-training employment. If there is a mismatch between the approach of training delivery environments and the post-training activities of graduates in the labour market, the environments are disabling for both wage- and self-employment. The purpose of this section is to review previous studies and to examine the factors that enhance the utilisation of skills acquired from NFET centres in the labour market.

Tekle (2010) evaluated a non-formal adult farmer training programme in Ethiopia with the focus on investigating its relevance and effectiveness. Among the reasons for rural households living in poverty were a lack of knowledge and skills on improved farming and poor utilisation of new technologies and therefore a lack of improvement in agricultural production and productivity (Tekle, 2010). The study reveals that there was a significant change in knowledge and skills acquisition. However, the training was not effective because the practice on the farm and on a specific agricultural production technology were not covered in the training programmes.

In an early study, Islam et al. (2012) examined the effectiveness of NFET for income generation, and more specifically on internal environments at centre level. The study found that the NFET programmes were irrelevant and ineffective to reduce poverty among the disadvantaged adults because the NFET centres did not develop materials on income generation such as technical education, poultry, sewing and garment making, vegetable cultivation, mushroom cultivation and fishery (Islam et al., 2012). In addition, the graduates who were determined to start self-employment have been trying and facing problems to get a loan from Centre for Mass Education in Science of Bangladesh and other sources to start their own business (Islam et al., 2012).

Similarly, Blaak et al. (2012) assessed adult NFET programmes in Uganda focussing on hair dressing, carpentry, tailoring, catering, plumbing, motor bike mechanics, electronics or welding. The objective of the assessment was to ascertain whether trainees from NFET centres under investigation acquired marketable skills, practical empowerment as well as capabilities to critically give direction to their lives. Blaak et al. (2012) argue that in the midst of challenges, the programmes could not enable labour market entry because the centres did not create internal enabling environments for both wage- and self-employment. Furthermore, most of the skills taught were basic and success depended on advanced skills at other training centres.

Morton and Montgomery (2011) assessed the effect of NFET on vulnerable youths and adults in a study focussing on the extent to which the skills trainings socio-economically empowered the target groups in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The findings reveal that the overall results were modest with no significant effects on most outcomes. Although beneficiaries gained some livelihood skills and life skills, these skills were not transferable in the labour market in order to improve the lives of poor people (Morton & Montgomery, 2011).

Akpama et al. (2011) evaluated NFET programmes linked to poverty reduction among adults in the Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The authors investigated the extent to which these NFET programmes had contributed to the reduction of poverty among the youth and adults in their respective study areas (Akpama et al., 2011). The findings reveal that skills acquisition did not significantly influence poverty reduction among the young and adults (Akpama et al., 2011).

In summary, previous studies reveal that NFET graduates experience difficulties to enter the labour market due to the fact that NFET centres did not create enabling environments facilitating a transition from skills training to post-training activities. Based on previous studies, the research gap that informed this paper was to know the extent to which the approaches of training delivery, as internal environments of NFET centres, enable graduates to enter the labour market, whether wage- or self-employment. While previous studies addressed the issue of effectiveness of NFET programmes, the link between the approaches of training delivery for skills acquisition and post-training activities of graduates in the labour market have not been sufficiently studied.

Study context and methodology

Adult non-formal education and training in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

The study was conducted among community members in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa, who have difficulty in generating enough income to become self-sufficient in order to enjoy a reasonable quality of life. There is a spatial distribution of poverty according to provinces in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal, comprising of urban, semi-urban and deep rural areas, is one of the three poorest of nine provinces in South Africa where 5.3 million people are living in poverty and 1.2 million people can hardly afford three meals a day (KZN-Department of Health, 2010; May, 2010).

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, both government and NGOs provide NFET programmes in order to enable unemployed adults to acquire technical and entrepreneurial skills and to take up self-employment or wage-employment in urban and rural areas (KZN-Department of Education [KZN-DoE], 2012). However, research shows that NFET graduates in KZN continue to experience challenges due to the insufficiency of enabling environments (Department of Higher Education & Training [DHET], 2012; Aitchison, 2007).

Research methodology

The study utilised a mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2013). It is based on a doctoral study by the primary author who was primarily responsible for the data collection and analysis. The qualitative research design used multiple case studies, and the quantitative research design was a survey (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Werner, 2004). The sample was drawn from the education districts of Umlazi, Pinetown, ILembe and uMgungundlovu (Msunduzi) in the KZN province. The sample consisted of NFET centres, managers, trainers and adult trainees from both urban and rural settings from public and private[2] NFET centres.

In the context of non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was used as a supplement to the stratified method to select 21 centres of 326 (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The sample of 21 NFET centres consisted of 15 public AET centres under supervision of the Department of Education; and the other six centres were from the private sector. From the selected 21 NFET centres, the sample size consisted of 472 participants of which 420 were trainees, 21 centre managers and 31 trainers (instructors). To complement quantitative data, five of 21 managers were selected for one-on-one interviews. They were selected if the NFET centres that they manage make provision for at least one of the following criteria: Post-training

follow-up and support programmes for self- or wage-employment, linkages with public institutions and agencies or private sectors, linkages with social networks, associations and employers and mentorship and psychological support programmes for self-employed trainees.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from adult trainees, trainers and centre managers (Maree & Pietersen, 2012), and data were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Semi-structured interviews and field observation were used for data collection in the qualitative study (Creswell, 2009), and data were analysed through thematic analysis (Fouché & Bartley, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Data were coded, then sorted and classified to find common themes and sub-themes to be matched and compared with the findings on the sections and subsections of the quantitative findings. The study was ethically cleared by the University of Pretoria, and permission to conduct the study was granted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and relevant NGO managers. Participation was voluntary, and participants gave written informed consent.

Findings

The quantitative findings are presented first, followed by the qualitative findings on the related themes which emerged from the interviews. The quantitative and qualitative findings are then jointly interpreted in order to shed more light on the views and concerns of managers, trainers and trainees in an integrated manner. The presentation starts with a socio-economic profile of the trainees.

A comparative analysis of educational system reveals that public and private NFET centres differ in providing skills to unemployed adults. It is significant to mention that the public centres operate alongside the formal education system. They are under the administration of the Department of Education and dependent on the funding from the government. They are fully supported by the provincial Department of Education in terms of trainers' salary, finance, materials, labour and technical assistance. The majority of the skills training programmes provided at public centres are mainly aimed at wage-employment. Interviews with public centre managers indicated that the skills training programmes at these centres were specifically designed to provide trainees with basic technical skills or business skills allowing them to register with Further Education and Training (FET) colleges for further training in the specific skills area in order to enter paid employment in the public or private sector.

By contrast, the provision of skills training programmes in most private centres mainly focuses on self-employment. Hence, the skills training approach is tailored towards immediate self-employment after graduation. It was observed that their NFET programmes were often linked to income-generating activities for poor and marginalised adults. Potentially, private centres are in a better position than public ones to organise support in terms of finance, materials, labour and technical assistance. They are supported by occasional national and foreign donations.

Socio-economic characteristics of the trainees

The greater majority of the trainees were females (83.6%, 351/420) as compared to males (16.4%, 69/420). Half of the respondents (50.5%, 212/420) had been unemployed for more

Table 1. Approach of training delivery by type of the centres ($n = 472$).

	Public (KZN-AET), $n = 329$						Private (NPO, CBO, FBO), $n = 143$					
	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
Statement on the training approach	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
The practical component in technical curriculum is well used	158	48	72	21.9	109	33.1	110	76.9	20	14	13	9.1
Little attention is given to link training and industries or workplace	179	54.4	64	19.5	86	26.1	44	30.8	40	28	62	43.4
The training consists of 75% practice	56	17	54	16.4	234	71.1	92	64.3	14	9.8	37	25.9
The training consists of 25% theory	83	25.2	48	14.6	198	60.2	76	53.4	12	8.4	55	38.5
Training focuses on technical skills only	158	48	55	16.7	104	31.6	52	36.4	26	18.9	66	46.2
Each training focuses on both technical skills and business skills	119	36.2	49	14.9	171	52	73	51	27	18.9	43	30.1

than five years. The analysis of type of work before joining NFET centre reveals that almost half (48.8%, 205/420) of trainees were unemployed during the time of application for skills training at adult centres. Only 8.1% (34/420) had full-time jobs in the formal sector. Very few had part-time jobs (16.7%, 70/420).

The analysis of the highest level of formal schooling[3] reveals that only 20.7% (87/420) of trainees had completed the final year of schooling (Grade 12). More than a quarter (27.4%, 115/420) of respondents had completed Grade 11; 20.5% (86/420) left school in Grade 10, and 9.8% (41/420) of trainees completed Grade 8. The lowest school achievers were those who only completed primary school (5%, 21/420) and 4.8% (20) completed some primary school.

Quantitative findings on the approach of training delivery enabling environments

The main focus of the assessment at training delivery level was on the approach the NFET centres use to ensure trainees are prepared for employment at semi-skilled levels, or to start their own income-generating activities. Researchers used the quantitative data to make a comparative analysis of the approach of training delivery for skills acquisition at public and private centres. The responses from managers, trainers and trainees are presented in Table 1 below. The percentages are within the respective respondent groups.

A comparative analysis of the approach of training delivery in Table 1 reveals a huge gap between public and private centres. Less than half (48%, 158/329) of the public centre respondents agreed that the practical component in technical curriculum was well used, whereas 76.9% (110/143) of private centre respondents agreed with the statement. When asked about the specific attention given to the training, more than half (54.4%, 179/329) of the public centre respondents agreed that little attention was given to link training and industries or workplace in public or private sector and 26.1% (86/329) disagreed. Less than half (43.4%, 62/143) of private centre respondents disagreed, and 30.8% agreed on the little attention given to the training link.

When asked about the time allocated between practice and theory, public centre respondents (71.1%, 234/329) disagreed that the training consisted of 75% practice, and 60.2% (198/329) also disagreed that the training consisted of 25% theory. This means that the skills training consists of 75% theory in classroom and 25% practice. However, for the private centre respondents, 64.3% (92/143) agreed that the training consisted of 75% practice in the workshops or projects and 53.4% (76/143) agreed that theory consisted of 25% in classrooms. Lastly, more than half (52%, 171/329) of public centre respondents disagreed that the training programmes focused on both technical skills and business skills; but more than half (51%, 73/143) of private centre respondents agreed with the statement.

Qualitative findings on the approach of training delivery at public NFET centres

Data from interviews, field observation and document analysis reveal that the approach of training delivery for skills acquisition at public NFET centres was traditional. Meaning, it was centre-based instead of being on-the-job training or following a project-based training approach. The researcher could identify only one public centre in an urban area where working and learning were closely integrated. In others, be in rural or urban areas, this integrated approach was non-existent. There are three reasons for the success in this

public centre. Firstly, since most of the trainees had a low formal education level, the use of workshops, on-the-job training and project-based training were very important for skills acquisition. Secondly, 'learning by earning' was vital to the many trainees because of their socio-economic background. They have been coming from very poor families, some have never been employed before, some were homeless, single mothers, and some were disabled. Thirdly, its centre manager was optimistic in creating linkages with institutions, agencies, NGOs/CBOs. The manager was using a strategy of inviting institutions, organisations and prospective employers to visit the centres in order to advise on training delivery approach.

For the rest of other public centres, it was observed that in rural areas, the agricultural technology course was taught without a chance of being either wage-employed or self-employed, but for the purpose of academic credit and a General Education and Training (GET) Certificate. It is a real blackboard agriculture training course. In three public centres offering agricultural technology, trainees expressed their anger to the researchers saying that the centres were producing frustrated and unemployed adults. One female in a group of public centre trainees reported:

> I have been a domestic worker for seven years now. As you can see around in our township, there are so many farms belonging to white people. They employ black people who have at least little knowledge in agriculture. When I decided to study agricultural technology at our AET centre, I was thinking to be employed in the farms like other women or start my own vegetable garden of tomatoes, carrots and cabbages so I can sell them to the shops such as Jwayelani, Checkout and Cambridge. During our training, the centre never took us to the farms in order to do practicals. We were taught some types of fertilisers, but I never saw them. The knowledge I have in planting vegetables is what I have learnt in classroom only. I cannot go and apply for a job to these farms because the managers do not know me and they do not recognise our centre. I feel bad because I have wasted a whole year studying agricultural technology and still remain a domestic worker.

A male trainee with disability angrily spoke on behalf of his class mates as follows:

> We have agreed all learners [trainees] to meet you and ask some questions. In your papers you ask about starting a business after completing our skills training, our current types of small business and support we received from our AET centre. We have finished our exams but we do not know that our centre was supposed to help us to start a small business. We are poor and unemployed; please tell people of the department in Maritzburg [KZN-Department of Education in Pietermaritzburg] that we appreciate the free adult education, but they should help us find jobs in these farms around here or give us lands for garden projects.

It was also observed that the pressure for more academic and examination-oriented training was another factor affecting skills acquisition in the public centres. They strictly follow the standardised curricula designed by the Department of Education. The trainers had to prepare the trainees for departmental final examination appropriate for Adult Education and Training (AET) level-4, in which they generally do well. During the interview, managers were asked to describe the programme structure and approach which have been designed to meet the training objectives. One of the public centre managers said:

> In the skills training areas, for example in travel and tourism subject, they [trainees] study theory in class, and on practical side of it they go to the travel and tourism centre to get more knowledge about the industry. The objective is that in case they can enrol to Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges for further studies, they must be able to understand what it is all about.

Beside the examinations, the approach also aims to prepare trainees for further studies at colleges. These two aims resulted in the centres limiting the training approach to theory in the classroom. When asked about how the centres integrated entrepreneurship skills with the technical training content, all interviewed public centre managers responded that there was not enough time to teach theory and practice at the same time because trainees must be ready for departmental examinations. Though many of the trainees had a low formal education level, the findings reveal that there are three main reasons of not combining technical skills with business skills in public centres. Firstly, there is times constraint to prepare trainees for the examinations from KZN-Department of Education. Secondly, the main focus of public centres is on wage-employment after graduating from FET colleges. However, the findings indicate that there was a disagreement between centre manager and the KZN-Department of Education on the focus of the AET programmes in the public centres. Managers would like the trainings to only focus on immediate self-employment instead of wage-employment after graduating from FET colleges. Thirdly, public centres are characterised by managers and trainers who are academically qualified with college diplomas or university degrees in AET. But they lack training and practical experience in SMME, small business or entrepreneurship and project management.

Qualitative findings on the approach of training delivery at private NFET centres

The private centres differed from their counterpart in many aspects of training delivery approaches. In the majority of private centres, the field observation and interviews revealed that the approach of training delivery was practice and self-employment oriented. This means that there is a balance between theory in class and practice in the workshops or fieldwork. The approach of training delivery follows a sequential pattern starting with pre-counselling sessions, followed by technical skills training, business skills training and ultimately trainees forming groups while being on the programme. The sequence in the training approach is described below as emerging themes of the interviews.

Pre-counselling sessions

In most private centres, pre-counselling sessions are used at the beginning phase of the skills training sessions in order to identify the potential and learning objectives of a trainee. One manager whose centre offers SMME training stated the purpose of these sessions as follows:

> The sessions help us recruit the right trainees on the programme. We cannot take in [the] programme any trainees without knowing what he/she wants to do or what type of business he/she is interested in. Basically, we inform them about our SMME training and the outcomes of the programme. As soon as a trainee or a group of trainees decide to establish a small business or a co-operative, they undergo further training programmes.

Pre-counselling sessions also help the trainers to orient the training approach according to future types of self-employment. Interviews with managers and trainers of some private centres revealed that the courses start off with an introductory period. During this phase, trainers become aware of what each individual trainee knows about the specific skills training, his/her training needs and life expectations.

Technical skills training

During the phase of technical skills training, much attention is paid to progressive skills acquisition in order to ensure the proper development of skills. The theoretical component of the technical skills training consists of introduction to hand tools, machines and their use; measuring instruments and their use; and safety precautions. For the sewing programmes, there are usually a number of electrical machines as well as industrial machines.

Six managers mentioned that their centres were implementing an inclusive competency-based training (CBT) package to ensure that each of the training objectives was attained. Below are the responses of two managers providing fashion design and sewing and computer training courses. Private centre manager 1 said:

> Yes, we do have a learning programme subdivided into competence learning areas. It is a professional programme for sewing and fashion designing. Also we have a sort of a time table. For instance, for each month we allocate learning activities such as a proper use of the sewing machine and its maintenance, cutting the materials, designing a fashion, and so forth.

Private centre manager 2 said:

> We do have the Competency-Based Training package because we used South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) accredited programme. The curriculum we use is from SAQA. There are three different levels for both computer training and fashion design and sewing courses. Each level has a source material from SAQA with an identity number.

The quotes imply that the approach of internal training delivery for skills acquisition in private centres is aimed at enabling and ensuring that trainees acquire knowledge, practical skills and competencies to perform a task, job or occupation to a benchmarked level. With regard to the integration of theoretical and practical components of the skills training, the interviews and field observations revealed three significant approaches to adult skills acquisition. These approaches are the use of workshops, on-the-job training and project-based training.

The use of workshops

In the case of sewing and fashion design, and craft training programmes, the trainees had extensive practicum under the supervision of an instructor in the workshops. It is even estimated that trainees were spending up to a maximum of 75% of their training time in these practical training workshops. The survey with the trainers and trainees was conducted in the respective practical training workshops.

On-the-job training

Some private centres were using their practical training workshops and equipment for both skills training purposes and a source of production. As part of their practice and on-job-training, the trainees are involved in the production for the centre. They receive orders from schools to sew school uniforms for learners and company and school workers' uniforms. Thus, trainees were part-time paid and employed in the workshops while learning. Though trainees were not linked to any companies, factories or business for external training, this approach gave them the opportunity to practice what they learnt in classrooms and to acquire more experience and income by being casually employed by the centre.

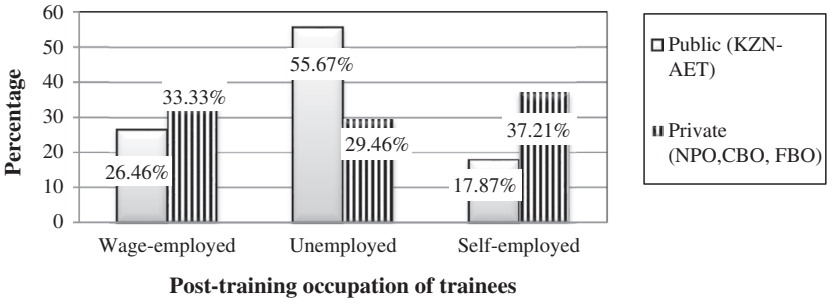

Figure 1. The wage- and self-employment of the trainees by types of the centres.

Business skills training

When they have acquired technical skills, the centres train them in how to start and manage a business relative to the area of technical skills training. Business skills training entails teaching basic knowledge in entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, simple business management, marketing, financial management and a business plan. However, managers reported that business skills training was not formally or well-integrated with technical skills from the designing to the implementation phase. One private centre manager summarised business skills training as follows:

> Our programme consists of providing them with technical skills in first stage; then the business skills training in order for them to acquire knowledge on how to manage their small businesses and market the products in the local community and elsewhere. But as they are on technical skills training, we keep them informed about business opportunities and business marketing. We make sure that they are well-informed about the competition in the market.

Another private centre manager explained the integration context of her centre in the following words:

> I think that there is no formal integration between entrepreneurship skills with the technical training content. That is because when trainees start the technical skills, they are also taught the business skills at the same time. At the end of the training, trainees are able to make business plan and marketing strategies for their small businesses. We also train BEST game (business economic support training). It is a programme we use to teach our trainees small business entrepreneurship.

The overall findings from private centre managers reveal that there is still a problem on how to integrate the technical skills with business skills. All managers involved in the study viewed the importance of business skills as a means of creating sustainability of the technical skills acquired. Moreover, trainees they also learnt from observing other people in a social setting. During one-on-one interviews with self-employed graduates, they reported that besides learning about business skills (entrepreneurship, marketing, basic bookkeeping and drawing up a business plan), they also used to attend business shows and seminars outside their centres.

Forming groups while being on the programme

Trainees at private centres were urged to start their micro-enterprises in groups or cooperatives. According to the managers, doing business in groups would help achieve the effectiveness of the skills training programmes in creating employment and in sustaining

trainee's micro-enterprises. In other programmes such as sewing, SMME and agricultural technology, trainees form groups in the middle phase of the programme or towards the end of the training programme, but not after graduation. One manager said:

> To ensure that they are able to start a business, we urge them to form a group which will allow them to register as a co-operative. So, they start working as a group while still being on the training programme. The income they gain is used for buying raw materials and a stipend.

Another private centre manager emphasised the relevance of already existing groups in the training:

> At the beginning of the training each candidate should already have a plan to start a small business whether individually or in group. We also train them in business skills, such as marketing, business plan and financial management. The business skills enable them to start a small business while being on the training programme or immediately after graduation.

In summary, both quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that in public centres, the approach to adult skills training was predominantly theoretical (75% of the sessions). However, in the private centres, the approach of training delivery was 75% practice-oriented. The analysis of the findings above shows that the training delivery for skills acquisition in the private centres was characterised by three main approaches for adult skills trainings. They are as follows: 'learning by doing, learning by producing and learning by earning'.

Post-training activities of NFET graduates in the labour market

In this paper, the effectiveness of the internal training delivery environments was measured by skills utilisation in the wage- or self-employment of the graduates. Moreover, exploring post-training activities of the graduates in the labour market was a paramount focus of the empirical study. This is because trainees entered the training programmes with very high expectations of finding a job or opening an own small business. Figure 1 below presents the findings on wage- and self-employment of the graduates. The percentages are within the type of the centre.

Figure 1 reveals a significant difference between public and private centres in terms of employment outcomes of the trainees. Those trainees in the private centres were more likely to become wage- and/or self-employed (70.54%, 91/129) as compared to public centres (44.33%, 129/291). Similarly, the unemployment rate after graduating from skills training was higher in public centres (55.67%, 162/291) and lower in private centres (29.46%, 38/129). The wage-employment (33.33%) and self-employment (37.21%) were again higher in the private centres. The probability of being employed after completing adult education and training was high in private centres because of the main focus on self-employment or income-generating activities in micro-enterprises. The post-training activities of graduates in the labour market reveal that from those trainees who were unemployed (49.04%, 206/420) before training, 41.25% (85/206) became wage- or self-employed immediately after graduating.

Discussions of findings

The mode and approach of training delivery that the most public centres use do not efficiently prepare trainees neither for wage-employment nor to start income-generating

activities. The training delivery consists of 75% theory and 25% practice, and hence, the training approach is centre-based instead of on-the-job training or project-based. This is in line with what the trainees interviewed said that

> During our training, the centre never took us to the farms in order to do practicals. We were taught some types of fertilisers, but I never saw them. The knowledge I have in planting vegetables is what I have learnt in classroom only'.

More than half (54.4%, 179/329) of the public centre respondents agreed that little attention was given to link training and industries or workplace in public or private sector. The present finding correlates with those by Blaak et al. (2012). In their study, they found that the disabling delivery approach of 75% theory was due to the lack of facilities for workshops and practical training.

The present findings are opposed to the 'Experiential Learning' theory which emphasises the central role that experience plays in the learning process (Kolb et al., 1999). In line with the theory, one can argue that the process of knowledge and skills acquisition was not created through the transformation of experience. Skills acquisition did not result from the combination of grasping and transforming experience (Kolb, 1984). On viewing the findings in the lens of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), it is evident that learning activities did not clearly demonstrate to an adult trainee where they would benefit in their jobs after graduating.

This lack of practical component of training due to facilities also contributed to the mismatch between skills training and the market requirements. In contrast, the findings of Blaak et al. (2012) in the context of NFET in Uganda revealed that while the centres lacked facilities for workshops and skills training practitioners for practical sessions, the centre managers were exposing trainees to different workshops and materials available in the community.

In private centres, a combination of technical skills with business skills is an effective training delivery approach that prepared most trainees for low-skilled wage- or self-employment. The mode and approach consist of 75% practice and 25% theory and focuses on own income-generating activities. This finding is in line with the 'Experiential Learning' theory which stresses that adults learn more effectively when they are more directly involved rather passively receiving knowledge transmitted by educators (Herod, 2012). The findings are in line with Knowles (1996) suggestion that the delivery approach of adult education and training should firstly emphasise on experiential techniques which involves simulation exercises, skill-practice exercises and field projects.

Moreover, the findings are in agreement with Herod's (2012) argument that in 'learning by doing', learning includes the fact of being more engaged in one's deep level of knowledge and skills through experience, experimentation and application in the real world of work. These findings are similar to those by Islam and Mia (2007) in the NFET study in Bangladesh and Blaak et al.'s (2012) in Uganda. In these two studies, the training delivery approach for skills training acquisition was directed at producing services, goods and marketing of the products. Likewise, the practice of the skills also allowed trainees to earn some income while they participated in training programmes.

The NFET effectiveness on overall employment is 52.37% after graduation. Graduates from the private centres are more likely to become employed than from public centres. The results are in alignment with the expanded unemployment rate of 41.5% in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Statistics South Africa, 2014; xvi). These findings are different from

Morton and Montgomery's (2011) study in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The graduates acquired some livelihood skills and life skills which were not transferable in the labour market in order to improve their lives.

The 'learning by producing' and 'learning by earning' approaches have two other innovative elements of the NFET training that facilitate an enabling labour market entry for graduates. Firstly, 'learning by producing' created a motivation in the trainees to master the skills and it enhanced a smooth transfer of the skills to the real world of work. Secondly, 'learning by earning' was vital to the many trainees because of their socio-economic background. They came from very poor families, some have never been employed before, some were homeless, single mothers, and some were disabled. Therefore, they were in urgent need of an income for daily survival. There is a connection between these two training delivery approaches with the experiential theory (Kolb, 1984). The theory suggests that learning activities should clearly demonstrate to the trainees where they would benefit in their jobs. Thus, the material presented should have immediate usefulness to the trainees' lives.

Certain private centres created this enabling environment using training equipment and materials to help trainees earn an income. This finding indicates the significance of a 'learning by earning' adult training approach as enabling environments for self-employment by providing a start-up capital. Therefore, it enables trainees to utilise the acquired skills in micro-enterprises (Weyer, 2009). These findings are in line with experiential learning theory and Johanson and Adams (2004) recommendation that the adult NFET needs to have immediate application, since the poor can hardly afford long periods of training before seeing a pay-off. The findings are also congruent with the argument of Blaak et al. (2012) that the NFET centres should empower individual graduates to discover the ability, as their own choice, to take action on the issues that are important to them. Using the training equipment and materials of the centre, trainees obtained enough start-up capital for small businesses which resulted in empowerment. However, these findings are in contrast to King and Palmer's (2007) study on STEP trainees who could not utilised the acquired skills in micro-enterprise due to the unsuccessful loan applications.

Group forming, while being on the training programme, was another delivery internal enabling environment of adult NFET centres for employment. Starting small businesses in groups helped trainees in being effective in creating self-employment and in sustaining their micro-enterprises or cooperatives. This is in line with what a centre manager interviewed said that 'To ensure that they are able to start a business, we urge them to form a group which will allow them to register as a co-operative. The income they gain is used for buying raw materials and a stipend.' In Morton and Montgomery's (2011) study, graduates acquired some livelihood skills. But the skills were not transferable in the labour market in order to improve the lives of the graduates because there was no group forming while they were still in training. According to Morton and Montgomery (2011), motivating trainees to start small business in group during the training process would help avoid non-utilisation of skills.

In summary, the integration of technical skills with business skills was an internal enabling environment for employment. It motivated trainees to start small and micro-enterprises after graduation with the small financial resources they possessed.

In line with Dakar Framework for Action to the achievement of Education for All (EFA), the main debate concerning the provision of adult NFET today is around the question: Is training for purpose of only a certificate or training for employment? There is a need to develop occupational skills and create enabling factors to ensure that these are utilised to

generate income (UNESCO 2011). There are debates today around linking adult NFET to employment and poverty reduction. Palmer (2007) argues that it is recognised that skills training alone is not sufficient for developmental outcomes to materialise. Palmer's view implies that skills acquired from NFET programmes are only a part of the package in the process of employment and poverty reduction. King (2011) took the discussion further by stating that skills acquisition from NFET is very different from skills utilisation, and especially for the poorest who can only access basic education of very low quality. In line with King's argument, one can conclude that NFET requires an internal and external conducive factor for its outcomes to materialise into improved employment and productivity.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is evident from the findings that the approach of training delivery for skills acquisition used by a centre laid a good foundation for wage- or self-employment. Individual trainees who participated in the private centres had a higher probability of being employed. Because most private centres focus on self-employment or income-generating activities in micro-enterprises in small businesses either as an individual or in groups, they endeavour to create internal enabling environments for skills acquisition. In contrast, the mode and approach of training delivery that most public centres use do not efficiently prepare trainees for wage- or self-employment.

The authors conclude that an integration of technical skills with business skills and 'learning by earning' is a potential training delivery approach enabling graduates to be integrated in the labour market. The approach enables graduates to save money as a major source of start-up capital. Without improving the approach of training delivery environments, graduates will continue finding it difficult to be integrated in the labour market (Aitchison, 2007; Mjoli, 2007) which perpetuates unemployment and chronic poverty.

Of course, qualitative research design based on small samples does not produce representative results. It was limited to adult NFET centres in South Africa and did not include centres from other countries in Africa or other continents. However, the findings could be relevant for making NFET programmes market- and demand-oriented and apply to NFET centres in similar contexts.

Based on the findings and conclusions (which were presented during a two-day seminar of all the centre managers organised by KZN-Department of Education, Directorate of Adult Education and Training on 7th and 8th May 2015), the paper provides four major recommendations. NFET centres should firstly identify potential labour markets, goods, services and demand opportunities. Secondly, the centre managers should ensure that training delivery approaches match with the trainee's need for wage-employment opportunities and available income-generating activities. Thirdly, the NFET approach should focus on income-generating activities while in training based on the principle of 'learning by doing, learning by producing and learning by earning'. Fourthly, where a centre lacks facilities for workshops and skills training practitioners for practical sessions, the centre managers should expose trainees to different workshops and materials available in the local community.

Notes

1. The term 'para-formal education' forms of adult education and training are those programmes in the formal educational systems that are implemented by non-formal means (Hoppers, 2006, 23). These are NFET programmes that operate closely or alongside the formal school system.
2. In this paper, private centre means non-profit training centres managed by non-profit organisations, community-based organisations (CBOs) and church or other faith-based organisations.
3. In the South African formal education system, primary school encompasses Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) and Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6). The secondary school involves Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) and FET Phase (Grades 10–12).

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