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Attitude towards skills training: The case of final year adult education female students at the University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

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Abstract

Zambia experienced an unprecedented increase in youth unemployment since 1991 when the country adopted the free market economy. This has led to numerous interventions by government and other stakeholders. The school system bears the blame. However, in the last decade the school system has increased access and equity due to opening and upgrading of many schools throughout the country. Nevertheless, this has proved futile in addressing the youth unemployment challenges facing the country. Several scholars and commentators on the subject have referred to skills development and acquisition as a solution to youth unemployment problems. This study examined the attitude of graduating adult education female students towards skills training on the leverage of the adage “when you educate a woman you educate the community but when you educate a man you educate an individual”. The graduating female students in adult education are expected to understand the value of skills training as they have been

exposed to several youth empowerment strategies and programmes. A simple survey using a questionnaire was conducted among these students at the University of Zambia to establish their attitude toward skills training. The findings reviewed that female adult education students at the University of Zambia had a negative attitude toward skills training. They attribute this to its inability to attract good paying jobs in the formal sector and its being associated with blue collar jobs. The study concluded that skills acquisition should be emphasized in the lower levels of the education system; primary and secondary school. It is therefore, recommended that skills training should be an integral part of the whole education system continuum in Zambia in order to help learners appreciate it and what it can do in one’s life. The study is significant in that it can influence policy formulation and direction in order to address the high youth unemployment in Zambia.

Keywords: Unemployment, Skills, Skills Training, Female

Introduction

Skills training are regarded as a key priority area in the fight against youth unemployment world over and it is indispensable to the social and economic development of any country. It is considered a conduit to valuable responses, constraints and possible avenues resolving youth unemployment locally and globally. Skills training are as old as mankind. Before the arrival of missionaries in Africa, skills training was provided through family socialization systems (MOE, 2013) ^[10]. When missionaries arrived in Africa schools were introduced that had workshops and some trades or crafts were taught outside the family social system (MOE, 2013) ^[10] as skills were need outside the family boundaries.

In this study the following definitions and meanings were adopted:

Kiel (1995) defines attitude as positive or negative feelings that an individual hold about objects, persons or ideas. It is used in this study to refer to positive or negative feelings about skills training. Attitude is defined as a person's feelings / emotions about something or object (Merriam dictionary, 2019). One’s attitude determines how they react at the mention or presence of a person or object, their ability to grow and learn, to overcome challenges, and create bonds with others. Our attitude as is the product of a lifetime of instilled beliefs, programming, and in my opinion, brainwashing. What is important, however, is that we take responsibility for ourselves in this moment so that we can consciously reverse it in order to grow, transform, evolve, and experience these exalted levels of consciousness for ourselves (Brandon, 2017) ^[3].

Skills are the ability to perform an activity in a competent manner (Gboku & Lekoko, 2007).

Training is the process of enhancing the skills, capabilities and knowledge of employees for doing a particular job. Training

moulds the thinking of employees and leads to quality performance of employees. It is continuous and never ending in nature (www.hotelleriejob.com.news, 2017)^[6].

Since independence in 1964, the government of the Republic of Zambia has been committed to skills training especially for the youth. The Government brought all technical vocation skills together in order for all to access skills training. The objective at the time was to train Zambians to meet the needs and requirements of industry (Saunders, 1967).

Youth unemployment has become a global issue in the past decades. Brem pong and Kimenye (2013) submit; one of the greatest challenges facing government and policy makers in Africa today is how to provide opportunities for the continent's million youths so that they can have decent lives and contribute to the economic development of their countries. Ali and Jabin (2016) acknowledge that the ILO has been emphasising on youth employment for a long time as part of each agenda to promote full productive employment and descent work for all. In Nigeria youth unemployment has been identified as one of the major causes of social vices such as fraud, robberies, prostitution, political instability, social instability other consequences of youth unemployment are poverty and migration. Brem pong and Kimenye (2013) argue that females particularly face extremely high poverty rates.

In 2012 the ILO reported that the youth unemployment rate in Zambia was at 14% and observed that the unemployment rate was higher among youths than among adults Ali and Jabin (2016) and Chidiebele, *et al.*, (2014)^[4] affirm that the causes of youth un employment are as numeracy as its consequences. Kelly (1991) attributes it to demographic explosion and high school fees that inhibit young learners from continuing in tertiary education. Sasa (1996) proposes non-formal education as a solution to youth unemployment. The world conference in 1990 recognised non formal education as one that can help increase access and equity to general education. Little *et al.*, (1990) argue that apart from the technical and vocational education (TVET) which puts skills training in formal school system such as in Trades training institutes and colleges in Zambia, most of the skills training is done in non-formal setups such as apprenticeship systems. Non-formal education is the education which is organised outside the formal school system. Apprenticeship system is a form of non-formal education system in that it meets most of the parameters of non-formal education system such as flexibility in several respects. Unlike the formal education system, apprenticeship system can be done in many set ups such as with low teacher ratio which can be as low as one to one- and the-time tabling of the learning process to the convenience of the master trainer and the trainees. It befits UNESCO recognition of as one of the avenues of tackling youth unemployment by putting it on the global agenda (UNESCO, 2015).

This paper examined skills training as it is perceived by female graduating female students in adult education at the University of Zambia department of Adult Education and Extension studies. The study was a survey design with one objective to find out the female students' attitude toward skills training. This comes from the backdrop that generally females shun scientific and skills jobs in Zambia. The paper presents a statement of the problem, objectives of the study, study questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations of the study methods used,

findings and the ensuing discussion.

In Zambia, the levels of unemployment keep escalating annually with over 2, 500 secondary school pupils unleashed into the labour market without hope of finding decent employment in the formal sector (Tonga, 2010). Mulenga (1989)^[7] citing in Momma (2014)^[8] confirms that the main factor influencing the escalating statistics of unemployed youths was unmarketable skills.

In view of the foregoing, the government in Zambia has identified and prioritized skills training as a portal to cushion unemployment levels thereby according the youth an opportunity to acquire skills for self-reliance. In 1996, the government revised the national policy on Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) with a view to increasing access to skills training and relate the improvements to the requirements of the labour market (MoE, 1996). Despite the rising prominence placed upon skills training, little has been done to unmask the attitudes of female students towards skills training. The number of females participating in skills training programmes in the country has remained low (TEVETA, 2017)^[11]. The distribution of results in the previous year testifies to this.

From a total of 12,623 candidates who registered to sit for ZQF Levels 4-6 Programmes: 8,781 males passed, 376 males failed, 3,193 females passed, 159 females failed and 114 candidates were absent (p.19).

It was against this background, therefore, that this study attempted to investigate the attitudes of female students toward skills training at the University of Zambia.

Statement of the problem

As the adage goes, "when you teach a woman you teach a community but if you teach a man, you teach an individual," is the centre of this study. Bearing in mind that skills acquired by women would be for the benefit of the entire community, nevertheless it is not clear how graduate women or those that are studying at university level view skills training which UNESCO (2015) describes as a remedy to youth unemployment. Going by this, it would be expected that adult education graduates and students regardless of sex would be advocates of skills training which would empower many people especially youths. One of the potential jobs for graduates from the adult education programme at the University of Zambia is community development work. This entails sensitising members of the community on how to overcome problems such as youth unemployment. The graduates are therefore expected to be well aware of the advantages of skills training in mitigating youth unemployment by getting the youth to be self-reliant.

This study examined the attitude of graduating university of Zambia female adult education students toward skills training in Zambia.

In the views of Ainley (1998)^[2] the number of females who engage in education and training outweigh that of males. The Education policy: Educating our future in Zambia (GRZ, 1996)^[5] recognises this fact and the number of females in universities outnumbers that of males. Lamb, Long and Malley (1998) point out that there has been no deliberate effort made to investigate the attitudes of female students toward skills training which would reduce the poverty and general suffering of the youth due to unemployment.

If left unchecked, this may lead to failure to understand career trajectories of female students which has the potential of rendering them jobless and frustrate their aspirations.

- Unemployment rates for female graduates in Zambia were at 7.7% (World Bank, 2016).
- Government and private sector are encouraging women to apply for male dominated jobs. Enrolments at primary, secondary and tertiary levels have increased. Despite that the attitude towards skills training for female graduates at tertiary level is unknown
- The study contends that if the attitude of female graduates toward skills training remains unknown in Zambia it will be very difficult to reduce unemployment rates of female graduates because most jobs are currently in the informal sector (Shamenda, 2013).

Objectives

The study objectives were to:

1. Ascertain the attitude of female final year adult education students toward skills training.
2. Find out what contributes to university of Zambia adult education final students to their attitude toward skills training; and
3. Explore the knowledge of skills training held by the female University of Zambia final year adult education students.

Significance of the study

Through the findings of this study, it was hoped that the findings may help policy makers, managers and educators the position of graduating adult education students and women in general on skills training. This would lead to an understanding of the problems the country is facing in the promotion of skills training in the communities especially among vulnerable groups like the youth. This might suggest a review of the curriculum of the Adult Education study programme to ensure that the right values and knowledge are imparted to would be community development programme implementers. The findings may also lead to a policy review that would compel women regardless of levels of formal education to participate actively in skills training in order to have a positive multiplier effect in the skills development and acquisition in the community and subsequently mitigate unemployment especially among the youth in Zambia.

Related literature

Female students' participation in skills training

Skills training are a direct result of vocational educational and training (TVET) TEVETA (2017) ^[11]. *The Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) is an institution created under the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Act (No. 13 of 1998), read together with the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (Amendment) Act No. 11 of 2005. Its general function is to regulate, coordinate and monitor Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training in consultation with industry, employers, employees and other stakeholders (p.1).*

Education international (2009) refers to vocational educational training as training leading to a mastery of a vocation which is usually different from academic learning. Skills training usually leads to blue collar jobs.

Distinguishing skills training from academic training, skills training is basically concerned with the psychomotor or manipulative skills of the learner while academic is centred and limited to the cognitive domain. Another distinguishing factor between academic and vocational training is that skills training does not demand high level education and are offered by a variety of skills training centres. In Zambia skills training are offered by the family, community, established skills training centres such as; Lusaka Youth Training centres, Chiyota training centres in Rufunsa district to name a few. Skills training can also be offered by high schools and tertiary education institutions.

According to education international (2009), skills can be offered by education institutions including school, technical colleges, adult education centres and universities. These can be public, private, NGO, Development Agencies and Faith based educational centres to mention a few. Sometimes Skills training can be provided in industry (formal and informal through in house and organisation of specific training) skills training can cater for out-of-school youths and graduates and generally anybody else.

Although skills training is widespread from family to skills centres, they are understood differently by many people. Generally, in Zambia, skills training is associated to males or gender specific where female is learning from females and males are learning from males as a result it is rare for females to acquire most of the skills. This is typical in the traditional apprenticeship training set up. In any case, the traditional society puts the woman's place to be the home so many females would be more familiar with feminine roles and skills needed there. On the other hand, males will normally be exposed to more public utility skills in the hope that they will look after the females when they grow up. The males would acquire skills much earlier which enable them to perform public duties. In some cases, women grow up completely ignorant of essential skills one would need for survival because they were the preserve of males. However, with the coming of western civilisation females have begun to acquire skills that were dominated by men; for example, motor mechanics. This means that there has been some penetration of females in the male dominated skills arena. The present research investigated the female graduating students' attitude toward skills training of vocational nature.

Female students' attitudes towards skills training

Luchembe (1991) did a study on the attitudes towards skills training and occupational aspirations of participants in schools for continuing education in Zambia the case of Mazabuka Continuing Education Centre. This was inclusive of male and female students. The findings elucidate that the majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards skills training and that participant preferred self-employment over formal employment. However, those who preferred formal employment wished to work in urban areas due to the availability of opportunities for better jobs and raw materials. Nevertheless, this study does not replicate Luchembe's study due to the sample difference and the fact that his study did not unmask the gender characteristics of the respondents which is the main focus of the current study. His study targeted participants in schools for continuing education, while this study targeted final year female students in adult education at the University of Zambia. Momma (2014) ^[8] carried out a study on factors influencing youth participation in skills training programs at the school

for continuing education in Mongo district of Zambia. The study revealed that lack of knowledge, poor infrastructure, combining the skills and academic section, low calibre of enrolled students and insufficient tools and materials were among the factors that negatively affected the participation of youths in skills training programs. Although on one hand Mboma's study reviewed factors which impede youths from participating in skills training programs, it did not nevertheless examine the attitude of females towards skills training a lacuna this study seeks to amend. Moreover, Mboma's study was conducted at a continuing Education centre in a provincial headquarters while the present study was done at a public university located in the capital city of the country. The present study has possibility of a wider regional representation than Mboma's study. Findings of the present study can easily be generalised to Zambia as a result.

Proposed measures to attract female to skills training

In a study on factors influencing youth participation in skills training programs at the school for continuing education in Mongo district of Zambia by Momma (2014) [8], the following recommendations were made to increase youth participation in skills training programmes; introduce demand driven programmes in addition to the traditional courses that were being offered, build more infrastructure and increase funding to the school.

Another study by Kasich (2014) on factors affecting youth participation in skills training programs in Kafue District: A case of St. Ambrose Trade Centre proposed that skills training institutions should provide guidance and counselling services to their female participants in skills training and that the government should encourage youths to participate by providing sponsorship. However, the respondents in these studies differ from those in the current study, hence the need to conduct this study so as to ascertain whether these recommendations can apply to the female adult education final students at the University of Zambia.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design. Frankel and Walled (2003) define a survey as the method that involves asking a large group question about a particular issue. Information was obtained from a sample rather than the entire population at one point. The population for this study encompassed all 4th year or graduating female students in adult education at the University of Zambia. Thus, all the participants in this study were selected using simple random. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and book review while qualitative data was analysed using emerging themes.

Having reviewed some relevant literature/studies on the theme of female attitude to skills training, we now proceed to the methodology. The study is a case study design directed at the final year adult education students at the University of Zambia. The target population of the study included all final year adult education students at the University of Zambia. The sample was limited to the female students only. These were purposely sampled as they belong to a specific group. All the female final year adult education students made the sample size. Data was collected using a researcher administered questionnaire. The data was analysed using the cumulative frequencies and percentages. Prior permission was obtained from the management and the participant to consent to participate in the study.

In the perception of Yaw son (2009:36) a research design is the "is the overall plan for collecting data in order to answer research questions". This study adopted a case study design. A case study design is defined as "... a holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyse or evaluate a specific phenomenon or instance" (Anderson, 1998:152). This research used this design over other designs so as to allow an in-depth study of the case in its natural setting as this was based on the final year adult education female students at the University of Zambia.

Population

The population is a group of individuals, objects and items from which samples are taken for measurements (Kasonde-N'gandu, 2013). The population for this study encompassed all 2017 4th year or graduating female students in the adult education programme at the University of Zambia.

Sample size

A sample size is a portion of the population. It refers to the number of participants selected from the universe to constitute a desired sample (Bless, 1999). For this study, the sample size consisted of 77 graduating female students drawn from the school of education adult education programme.

Sampling procedure

Orodho and kombo (2002) defines sampling procedure as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population in such a way that the picked elements are a representation of the characteristics found in the entire population. Thus, all the participants in this study were purposively selected. In purposive sampling the researcher targets a group of people believed to be reliable for the study (Mutombo, 2014).

Instruments

Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe the data collection process as a way of collecting information that will be used to solve the research problem. Primary data for this study was collected through questionnaires from female students and secondary data was collected through reports, journals and books.

Questionnaire

Brown (2001) defines a questionnaire as a written instrument that accords an opportunity to respondents to either write down their answers or choose from the given options. This study adopted a questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. The majority of closed ended questions were constructed on a four-point likert scale.

1	Strongly agree
2	Agree
3	Do not know
4	Strongly disagree
5	Disagree

Reasons for choosing a likert scale was that it provides respondents with a wide range of options to choose from than a yes or no type of questionnaire. On this scale 1 and 2 are considered positive, 3 is neutral while 4 and 5 is considered negative.

Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic way of making conclusions by bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 1985). Qualitative data from open ended questions was coded and common themes were identified. Quantitative data was analysed manually using tables of frequencies and percentages.

Presentation of the findings

The findings presented were based on the information given by the respondents; final year female students from the University of Zambia in the school of education department of adult education and extension studies. The findings revealed that students had knowledge of skills training. Some of the definitions about skills training that they gave are:

“Imparting of practical skills to an individual which tends to change one’s behaviour”.

Another respondent stated that:

“Survival skills that can be used in order to improve the living standard of individual at family, community and national level, and these may include carpentry, tailoring, computer skills and many others.”

On the attitude and Perception of fourth year female adult education students towards skills training the findings showed that female 4th year adult education students at the University of Zambia in the School of Education; Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies were interested in skills programmes. It revealed that 65% (50) of the students were interested in skills training programmes while 35% (27) students were not interested in skills training.

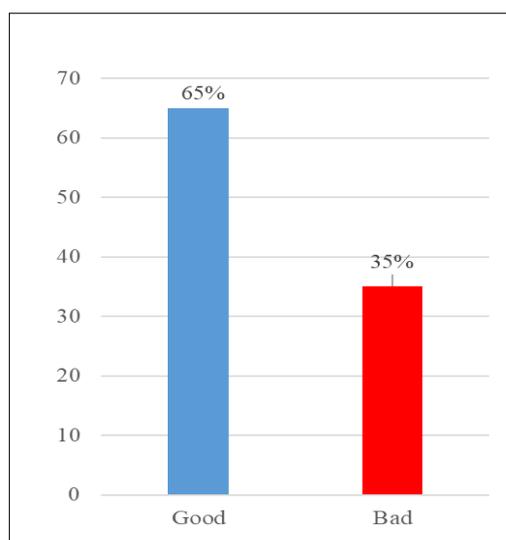


Fig 1: The respondents highlighted some of the benefits of engaging in skills training despite having higher qualifications

Self-Awareness

By developing the Self-awareness skill, one can be aware of his/her actions. They will be aware of their own performance and their behaviour which will make them competent to handle any situation. A person will get to know his feelings for things or towards other people. It also

helps them to make sound decisions.

Development of empathy and sympathy skills

With Empathy, a person will be able to understand other people’s perceptions, their feelings, and circumstances any person is in. It simply put them in someone’s place to understand their actual emotions. It helps them to react accordingly.

With sympathy, a person will be able show appreciation and compassion towards other people and their emotional reaction.

Problem-solving

The life skill of problem-solving makes an individual to trace a problem, suggesting options to solutions, evaluate the solutions to pick the best solution, and then apply the solution to the problem within the time limit. It is one of the most important life skills to practice in life on daily basis.

Decision-making skills

Every now and then, an individual has to face times when they have to make decisions which can affect their life. With decision-making skills, a person develops a skill to make the right and appropriate decision and pass it on to others. Decision making enables them to take decisions in difficult situations.

Thinking skills

Developing thinking skill is very important as it is the mental activity by which an individual can process information, use experiences, make relationships, finalize solutions to problems, pass on decisions, ask questions, and make suggestions.

Self-actualization

Helps individuals realize or fulfilment of one’s talents and full potential. These findings are in tandem with Okocha (2009) ^[12] who explained that, parents recognized the employment value inherent in vocational education but they were still prepared to accept the superiority of socially prestigious and white-collar professions over technical related occupations. On the other hand, Luchembe (2010) ^[9] found that participants had a negative attitude to skills training. The variation in the participants and their education levels might be attributed to the difference in their perceptions. The Final year female students in adult education have studied different ways of developing a community and are fully aware of the role skills play in that. The same cannot be guaranteed for the continuing education centre students who might be exposed differently from those studying for a degree qualification.

Other factors such as location and background of the participants can only be verified in a separate study.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Fourth year female students at the University of Zambia; School of Education, Department of Adult Education and Extension Studies had a positive perception and good attitude towards skills training. Therefore, skills training in Zambia should be popular among females as such, it should also be popular in the whole country as the adage goes that “when you train a woman you train the whole nation but if you train a man, you train an individual”. Therefore, there is

a possibility that skills training in the country can be popular. However, the high unemployment rate suggests otherwise. It cannot be attributed to female's dislike of skills training.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Further investigations are carried out to establish why skills training are not playing its rightful part in mitigating high unemployment in the country especially among the youth.
2. The Ministries of Education must make a serious curriculum review when introducing learners to skills acquisitions. Girls must be given more access to skills training if women's influence is to be realized.
3. There must be a paradigm shift where girls should participate in skills training like their male counterparts.
4. Students in higher education of learning should be provided with knowledge about skills training in order to have a quick multiplier effect in the community.

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