

Combating Adult Unemployment through Post-training Support in Non-formal Education and Training Programmes in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper is to assess the effectiveness of institutional linkages of adult non-formal education and training (NFET) centres in providing post-training support for skills utilisation in wage employment of graduates in South Africa. The centres' institutional linkages with public institutions and agencies, private sectors are meant to improve skills utilisation in the labour market. Survey questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used for qualitative data collection. The findings show that the weak institutional centre linkages result in graduates not having access to post-training support from institutions and agencies available in the local communities. The author concludes that without linking the NFET programmes to stakeholders who provide post-training support, the NFET graduates will remain unemployed and live in chronic poverty.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged today that adult education and training, by itself, cannot create wage employment. Referring to wage employment for adults who acquired skills from adult training centres, Oertle and O'Leary (2017) argue that if there are employment opportunities in a community, employers will consider graduates from education and training programmes provided that their skills and abilities match with specific needs of their institutions or companies. Similarly, Harris et al. (2017) state that the employment outcome can be realistic where there are supportive environments and different stakeholders are involved from early stage to the completion of the training programs in order to facilitate the employment of adult trainees. The inference from these two arguments is that there is no automatic link between adult non-formal training and middle-skill jobs.

This paper looks at the dynamic relationship between adult non-formal education and training (NFET) and wage employment. The current

problem concerns its failure to link up with the existing job opportunities. Kedrayate (2012: 12) points out that since its inception in the 1960s and 1970s, adult non-formal education was considered as "second chance education" to those who could not access the formal educational system and improve their job opportunities. The main objective of non-formal education in developing countries was to create job opportunities for disadvantaged social groups who were unable to study in the formal educational systems.

There is a need to apply strategies for the graduates from adult NFET centres to be productively employed in their communities. In South Africa, the current problem is that there is a missing link between adult skills training programmes and employment outcomes (Vally and Motala 2014; Human Sciences Research Council 2016). As a result, unemployed adults face double social exclusion, namely a lack of participation in market opportunities and as a consequence chronic poverty due to long-term unemployment. It appears that the knowledge gap is not as much about adult skills training programmes but about enabling environments facilitating the transition from skills acquisition to skills utilisation in the market opportunities. In

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South Africa, the NFET programmes intend to provide training opportunities for unemployed citizens who have low educational achievement and lack livelihood skills (Aitchison 2007).

The government enacted adult NFET through the Adult Education and Training (AET) Act 25 of 2010 in order to reduce poverty due to unemployment of unskilled adults. Act 25 of 2010 intends to increase the ability of unskilled adults to be employed and change their living conditions. To this end, the Act specifies that training centres work in partnership with public and private institutions in the local communities in order to facilitate the transition from skills acquisition to the labour market (Republic of South Africa [RSA 2010]). It is significant to mention that in the context of South Africa, the NFET centres are not the same as the public Adult Education and Training (AET) centres which provide accredited courses to adults. The NFET centres under investigation are those managed by not-for-profit organisations and provide work-related skills training programmes for unemployed adults. They provide non-accredited training courses funded by private sectors or organisations.

In South Africa, the difference between AET and NFET resides in course accreditation. The provision of training courses within NFET programmes encompasses vocationally related skills for income-generation activities in the form of non-formal vocational training, irrespective the duration of the training. Though recognised by the Department of Higher Education and Training through the National Policy on Community Colleges (RSA 2015), non-formal vocational courses are not accredited by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). Therefore, the role of NFET in the labour market is limited to low-skill jobs and self-employment.

Preceding studies have analysed the link between NFET provision and poverty reduction. In the context of Nigeria, Ireteyayo (2017) investigated the role of adult NFET in maximising human capital development. Other researchers studied the significance of NFET in helping poor adults to generate income (Harris et al. 2017; Melaku and Sabukuttan 2016) and the impact of NFET on empowerment of disadvantaged adults (Krupar et al. 2017). Likewise, Ireteyayo (2017) and Piktournaité et al. (2017) report that graduates acquired practical skills, but without stating the internal and external enabling environments con-

cerned. From previous studies, little is known about the effectiveness of the external environments in improving skills utilisation in the labour market of the graduates.

Objectives

The main problem facing NFET graduates is the inadequacy of conducive factors for employment, both internal and external (Piktournaité et al. 2017; Ireteyayo 2017). In the context of South Africa, adults who live in absolute poverty as result of unemployment caused by a deficiency of livelihood skills, do not find paid jobs after acquiring vocational skills training from NFET centres. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of NFET centres' external linkages with institutions in providing post-training support for graduates' wage employment in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It examines the enabling and disabling environments for the graduate trainees to get gainful employment.

Given the scarcity of wage employment in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province (Stats SA 2017), it is crucial to firstly look at the type of labour markets accessible to trainees. This will be followed by examining the ways of getting access to those jobs and the post-training support the trainees received in this regard. The paper begins with discussing adult NFET and the need for an enabling environment for employment as the theoretical framework underpinning the study, followed by the study's methodology. Next, the researcher will present the results followed by discussions of the results. Finally, the researcher concludes the paper and suggests some recommendations.

Adult NFET and the Need for Enabling Environments

Where there is economic growth, the development of a supportive enabling environment will influence the skills learnt to contribute to the employment of a given target group. This is because a supportive enabling environment allows skills to be utilised productively (Palmer 2007; Palmer et al. 2007). Similarly, Adams (2007: 57) argues that "skills training alone is unlikely to address the problems of unemployment or of meeting all the needs of disadvantaged adults." Without enabling environments, skills training

for adults may lead to higher educational attainment that has to be valued for its own benefit apart from those of immediate employment (Adams 2007).

Current debates on adult NFET programmes consist of linking skills acquisition to employment opportunities. Palmer (2007), in his article “Skills for work? From skills development to decent livelihoods in Ghana’s rural informal economy”, points out that “It is recognised that skills training alone is not sufficient for developmental outcomes to materialise.” Palmer’s view suggests that the provision of skills in NFET centres constitutes only first phase in the process of adult training for employment. This is because skills training alone cannot create employment. Thus, conducive factors should be in place outside the training centres in order to improve employment opportunities of the graduates. To be conducive, Palmer (2007) means that there should be other factors, external to the NFET centres such as employment policies and regulations; linkages with institutions, agencies, organisations which facilitate a productive integration of graduates into the labour market.

Adult NFET programmes for paid jobs need the involvement of external stakeholders in order to address the skills needed by the employers. In the context of adult NFET programmes for unemployed adults, skills acquisition may not directly lead to skills utilisation in the labour market, and particularly for the semi-skilled adults as clerks, as sales and services personnel, skilled agriculture workers, as well as handcraftmen, machine operators, plumbers and auto mechanics. In this connection, King (2012: 2) argues that NFET requires an “enabling environment for its outcomes to materialise into improved employment and productivity.” The reason is that graduates from NFET programmes acquire skills at a low-level but lack the work experience needed in the job market. Furthermore, Palmer (2007, 2008) and King (2012) emphasise that skills development is not automatically linked to employment outcome. The implication is that skills training alone cannot create employment.

There is a need for external factors linked to the adult non-formal training centres in order to help adult graduates utilise skills in the labour market. The external factors are supportive enabling environments that allow the acquired skills to be utilised effectively in the labour market (Harris et al. 2017). In order to provide post-train-

ing support to NFET graduates after the completion, the external enabling environments for the improvement of skills utilisation in the employment opportunities are linkages with public institutions as well as agencies, associations and potential employers.

The Linkages with Public Institutions, Associations and Employers

Linking the NFET centre to public and private sectors is crucial and key to success in skills utilisation in the world of work. Adult skills training programmes do operate in a vacuum but should operate in a given community with social and political entities (Yunos et al. 2017). Therefore, an effective NFET programme builds on the available resources and needs of the local community (Oviawe et al. 2017). In a similar vein, Freedman (2008: 21) argues that “adult training programme establishes and maintains links with various referral sources and community agencies as well as other relevant educational programmes and organisations.” The implementers of the programme regularly review community needs, sectoral and organisational interactions (Freedman 2008). According to Yunos et al. (2017), the collaboration should be between the NFET centre and the agencies at local and national levels and with the keen involvement of social partners. The linkages with public institutions, associations and employers are important because they seek to form partnerships through networking amongst stakeholders.

Support after the Completion of Training Programmes

The adult NFET is only one part of an employment promotion strategy. Skills training might have limited effectiveness unless other supporting mechanisms exist to improve the utilisation of skills in paid jobs employment of graduates (Yunos et al. 2017). The post-training support for trainees who are interested in paid jobs include any linkages with employers for trainees’ job placement, exploration of the job market, the arrangement of opportunities for them to gain work experience, preparation of a list of prospective employers and follow-up advisory services of the employed trainees (Yunos et al. 2017). The inference from the discussions on

post-training support suggests that NFET programmes should take the form of work-integrated learning (WIL).

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the research objectives, the paper utilised both qualitative and quantitative research designs as outlined by Creswell (2013). For the qualitative design, the researcher used multiple case studies and for the quantitative search design, he used a survey. Four education districts in the KwaZulu-Natal province (Pinetown, ILembe, Umlazi and uMgungundlovu) were used to draw the study sample. The sample involved a mixture of adult training centres, trainers, centre managers and trainees from urban and rural areas. In order to draw valid conclusions, the researcher investigated public and private adult training centres¹.

Since the research consisted of selecting participants from urban and rural settings, and from public and private NFET centres, the researcher used the stratified method of sampling to select 21 centres out of 326. The stratified method was then supplemented by purposive sampling of non-probability sampling method (Nieuwenhuis 2012). The researcher selected 21 centres of which 15 were public centres managed by the provincial Department of Education, and the other six centres were from the non-profit organisations. Within 21 centres, the researcher reached a sample size of 472 participants, consisting of 420 trainees, 21 centre managers and 31 trainers. Using purposive sampling method, the researcher selected five out of 21 centre managers for one-on-one interviews in order to supplement quantitative data. A manager was selected if his/her centre had provision for at least two of the following further criteria: Post-training follow-up, support programmes for wage employment; institutional linkages with public and private sectors or agencies; linkages with non-profit organisations and potential employers.

The researcher collected and analysed the data from January to August 2016. Following the view of Maree and Pietersen (2012), the researcher used questionnaires to collect quantitative data from centre managers, trainers and trainees; and he analysed the data using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) soft-

ware. The data collection instruments for the qualitative study were document analysis, semi-structured interviews and field observations (Creswell 2009). They were analysed using thematic method of data analysis (Fouché and Bartley 2011; Nieuwenhuis 2012). The qualitative data was coded, then organised and “classified to find common themes and sub-themes to be matched and compared with the findings on the sections and sub-sections of the quantitative findings” (Nieuwenhuis 2012: 99).

RESULTS

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 analysis of the results begins with a socio-economic characteristics of the trainees and the possibilities of employment.

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Trainees and Possibilities of Employment

The finding reveals that the majority (83.6%, 351/420) of the trainees from the selected NFET centres were females as compared to males (16.4%, 69/420). The inference of these findings reveals that non-formal vocational training can be a tool to help unemployed and unskilled women to overcome poverty and be able to support their families (KwaZulu-Natal Province 2017). The employment situation prior to enrolment for the skills training indicates that 50.5 percent (212/420) of trainees were unemployed for a period of five years and above. The findings on the category of jobs the trainees had before registering with adult training centre reveals that 48.8 percent of them had no employment during the time of application. However, 8.1 percent of trainees reported to have full-time jobs and 16.7 percent of them were employed on part-time basis. The finding infers that almost half of the trainees expected to gain wage or self-employment after completing adult NFET programmes.

In the context of South Africa, the level of education is one of contributing factors of unemployment and poverty among adults. In this connection, respondents were asked to mention

their highest level of formal education. The findings reveals that 20.7 percent (87/420) of trainees had completed secondary school and obtained Grade 12 certificate or general certificate of education. Trainees who completed Grade 11 consisted of 27.4 percent (115/420), 20.5 percent left secondary education in Grade 10, those who completed Grade 8 comprised 9.8 percent. Trainees who completed formal primary education consisted of five percent (21/420) and 4.8 percent did some primary school.

Wage-employment of Graduates and the Existing Employment Opportunities

The analysis of the findings reveals that forty-nine percent (206/420) of trainees were unemployed before the training interventions. The outcome of the NFET programmes is that 41.3 percent of the graduates found gainful wage or self-employment within three months after graduation. The analysis of the post-training occupations after graduation reveals that 28.6 percent (120/420) of trainees have become wage employed, and 23.8 percent (100/420) of the trainees have become self-employed. The rest, 47.6 percent (200/420) of the trainees, were still unemployed during the data collection period. Respondents who indicated that they were wage employed trainees were asked to mention whether or not their current jobs were related to their respective skills training. The majority (72.4%, 89/123) of wage employed trainees said “yes”, it was related to the training; and 27.6 percent said “no”, but the training helped in finding a job. The types of the labour market where the graduates from NFET are likely to be employed according to the geographical areas are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that in the urban areas, only a few trainees (28.2%, 11/39) started working for someone in a small business or in small service areas (small enterprises). The chance of working for the government/public sector was very low (15.4%, 6/39). The probability of finding jobs in the peri-urban areas was very low, and only 25.6 percent (23/90) could be employed in community-based organisations. However, wage-employment chances increased in the rural areas for those who studied ancillary healthcare. Less than half (41.2%, 21/51) of trainees started working for the Department of Social Development, and 39.2 percent (20/51) of the respondents found jobs in community-based organisations. According to all managers in the rural areas, the reason for this increase of wage-employment was the insufficiency of social service delivery in the rural areas.

Means of Getting Jobs

The findings on post-training occupations of NFET graduates indicate that some graduates found wage employment after completing the training programmes. Among those trainees who were unemployed (49%, 206/420) before enrolling to the training programmes, 28.6 percent (120/420) have become wage-employed. Table 2 presents the distribution of means of getting wage-employment.

The quantitative data in Table 2 show that only 15.4 percent (28/182) of the total number of respondents reported that trainees find wage employment through training centre job placement. The overall result from the responses is that 26.9 percent (49/182) of trainees could find jobs through their own efforts and 23.6 percent (43/182) being connected through a friend. Re-

Table 1: Distribution of types of wage-employment of graduates by centre areas (n=181)

Type of wage-employment	Urban (n=39)		Peri-urban (n=90)		Rural (n=51)		Total (n=181)	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Working for someone in small business area	11	28.2	17	18.9	3	5.9	31	17.1
Working for someone in small service areas/ small enterprise	11	28.2	13	14.4	5	9.8	29	16
Working in big business area	-	-	17	18.9	1	1.9	18	9.9
Working in big services area	1	2.6	6	6.7	1	1.9	9	5
Working for government/public sector	6	15.4	14	15.6	21	41.2	41	22.7
Working for community-based organisation	10	25.6	23	25.6	20	39.2	53	29.3

Note: Percentages are within centre areas

Table 2: Distribution of means of getting wage-employment by types of respondents

<i>Means of getting jobs</i>	<i>Trainees (n=130)</i>		<i>Managers and trainers (n=52)</i>		<i>Total (n=182)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
I owned a small business	9	6.9	5	9.6	14	7.7
The training centre arranged a placement	23	17.7	5	9.6	28	15.4
Through a friend	31	23.8	12	23.1	43	23.6
My own efforts	35	26.9	14	26.9	49	26.9
Through an employment agency	12	9.2	5	9.6	17	9.3
Through newspaper advertisements	16	12.3	11	21.2	27	18.8
Other	4	3.1	-	-	4	2.2
Total	130	100	52	100	182	100

Note: Percentages are within group of respondents

sponses from the trainees themselves reveal that only 17.7 percent (23/130) of graduates became employed through the job placement by NFET centres. Those who found jobs through friends constitute of 23.8 percent and through employment agencies, totalled 9.2 percent. The highest number of graduates (26.9%) found jobs through their own efforts in the process of job-hunting. These findings suggest that at all NFET centres involved in the study, there were no mechanisms utilised by the training centres to assist graduates with finding wage-employment.

The qualitative data provides an explanation on the difficulties experienced by training centres to find wage employment opportunities for trainees. During one-on-one interviews, managers were asked about the effectiveness of NFET linkages with local business enterprises and NGOs in enabling trainees to find wage-employment. Four out of five public and private centre managers interviewed reported that the centre linkages with role players were not effective in fostering links for skills utilisation in wage-employment of graduates. One private manager reported a connection with fostering wage-employment of graduates:

We have got linkages with social networks. Our adult centre belongs to a forum called Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business and NGOs. But employment opportunity is so bad here in Pietermaritzburg. These linkages are not helping trainees to get jobs.

Another public manager added:

It is very difficult for our adult learners to get jobs. Sometimes employers advertise jobs in the newspapers for adult centre learners. Our learners did apply by submitting a CV. But no one was taken for any job.

The implication of these two statements is that both public and private managers were striving to create linkages for wage employment. However, that is in vain because of the scarcity of jobs and low level of skills. Two private centre managers were optimistic in creating effective linkages for wage-employment with prospective employers. One private centre manager said that prospective employers promised to consider some graduates for job interviews. She reported that:

We always call for people who are members of institutions and organisations to come and see our training programmes and the types of skills we provide to our adult trainees. They observe the performance of our trainees on the types of skills and the quality of their products. Then, we advocate on behalf of them [trainees] to the prospective employers by saying that after the completion of the training programme, please come to interview some of the trainees and employ those who qualify for the available offers the agency, enterprises, organisation or business may have. We are very confident with our trainees because at the completion of the training programme they will be well qualified to be employed for the low-skilled jobs in any institution or organisation. We believe that these departments and organisations will place our trainees in the post after completion of training.

Another private centre manager mentioned:

We are in very good network with the Departments of Education, Health and Social Development. They always come here and see what we do. They always inform the centre when there are some vacancies in the Department so that our trainees may apply for the jobs. Since

we are training disabled people, our trainees will be the first called for interviews.

Despite the job scarcity in the communities, these two quotes indicate that private centre managers were used to invite some stakeholders from local government, non-profit organisations and potential employers to visit the training while being in the process of training so that they may employ trainees after graduation. However, there was no agreement of partnership for employment formally signed between these private centres and the role-players.

Post-training Support for Wage-employment

As mentioned above, findings on socio-economic conditions of the trainees reveal that they come from disadvantaged social groups living in absolute poverty. They have been unemployed for a period of more than five years; were living in shacks or informal settlements, single mothers and some were people with disabilities. Therefore, they urgently needed income to survive and support their families after graduation. Table 3 indicates responses from trainees, managers and trainers on the types of post-training support to obtain wage employment by this type of centre.

The analysis of Table 3 reveals a similarity of responses from both types of centres and respondent groups. Both categories of trainees and managers of public and private centres agreed to respectively receive or provide limited assistance in terms of arranging opportunities for trainees to gain work experience. Concerning assistance in job placement by public centres, 68.4 percent (199/291) trainees and 52.6 percent (20/38) managers and trainers disagreed that it was provided.

For the private centres, 51.2 percent (66/129) of trainees disagreed that assistance in job placement was not provided. However, 41.1 percent (53/129) of trainees and fifty percent (7/14) of trainers and managers agreed that graduates were assisted with job placement. This means that the private centres provided assistance to half of the trainees who could approach the centre for post-training support. Moreover, in both public and private centres, post-training support in linking trainees with employers was very limited. The majority (76.6%, 223/291) of public centre trainees and more than half (57.4%, 74/129) of trainees in private centres disagreed that the centres link trainees with employers. All five managers interviewed confirmed that there were no post-training support mechanisms utilised to assist trainee graduates with finding wage-employment.

Transforming External Environments Fostering Skills Utilisation in Wage-employment

As earlier indicated, an adult training centre does not operate in a vacuum, but in an environment linked with social, economic and political entities. The central point of the paper is the centre's linkages that foster the utilisation of skills for employment. These linkages entail public institutions and agencies on the one hand and social networks, associations and employers on the other. Field observations and interviews revealed that private centres have strong linkages whereas public centres have weak linkages with the external environment. It was observed that there were diverse reasons for weak linkages of public centres; but the most common were managers' time constraints, types of

Table 3: Post-training support for wage-employment by type of centres

Post-training supports n=143		Public (KZN-AET), n=329				Private (NPO, CBO),			
		Trainees		Managers and trainers		Trainees		Managers and trainers	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Arranging Opportunities for Trainees to Gain Work Experience	Agree	131	45	16	42.1	58	44.9	8	57.1
	Neutral	31	10.7	11	28.9	22	17.1	5	35.7
	Disagree	129	44.3	16	42.1	49	38	1	7.1
	Agree	51	17.5	10	26.3	53	41.1	7	50
Assistance in Job Placement	Neutral	41	14.1	8	21.1	10	7.7	6	42.9
	Disagree	199	68.4	20	52.6	66	51.2	1	7.1

training programmes offered (wage employment or self-employment), and managers' professional training.

With regard to time constraints, document analysis revealed that it was intended that centre managers would make exploratory visits to prospective stakeholders within different socio-economic sectors of the communities. The exploratory visits would serve to select potential partner organisations. However, most public centre managers were unable to consult and create linkages with stakeholders as they were at the same time employed with a teaching workload as educators in the mainstream schools (formal educational system) from 7:30 am to 15:00 pm, Monday to Friday. They also had to attend district and departmental meetings in connection with adult education and training. In addition, they were also trainers at the NFET centre having one or two subjects to teach. On the contrary, private centre managers were working as full-time volunteers or employees of the centres. So they had sufficient time to consult the prospective stakeholders and to create the linkages with different socio-economic sectors.

The main focus of the adult training in the public centres was on helping trainees obtain certificates in order to secure admission at technical training colleges. The employment outcome would be a result of successful completion of further education and training colleges. Therefore it was of little importance to create linkages with other stakeholders. On the contrary, the six private centres involved in the study reported in interviews have taken into consideration the fact that their trainees were not wage employable due to their low level of educational achievement. In addition, the interview findings revealed that a perception of this limitation of the trainees to access wage-employment after training, positioned private centres well to conduct skills training for income-generating activities which enabled them to start small businesses. To this end, private centres brought together other training providers as well as agencies and organisations to link the trainees to other services in order to provide post-training support for wage-employment in their local communities.

The managers' professional training is significant in the endeavour to create linkages with stakeholders. The document analysis reveals that managers and trainers in the public centres

are academically qualified university diplomas and degrees holders in adult education and training. Nonetheless, they lack relevant skills, expertise and work experience in community development, project management and entrepreneurship. This is why they failed to conduct a stakeholder analysis at the early stage of the training programme. On the contrary, most private centre managers have the background and practical experience in community development, project management, business management and entrepreneurship. It was reported during interviews that they make use of their professional skills, experience and social networks to start training programmes with consulting stakeholders in the local community in order to maximise the effectiveness and impact of training.

DISCUSSION

In this discussion section, the key findings are presented under themes in relation to enabling and disabling environments in fostering links for skills utilisation in wage employment of graduates. A brief discussion and integration of literature follow next. The research findings are analysed in line with the theoretical framework.

There is a limited enabling environment for finding wage employment in the rural areas, whereas the probability of finding jobs in the urban and peri-urban areas is very low. In the rural areas, graduates have limited chances of finding wage employment in government/public sector (41.2%) and in community-based organisations (39.2%) for those who studied ancillary healthcare. This limited enabling environment for wage employment is due to the insufficiency of social service delivery in the rural areas. The probability of finding jobs in the urban and peri-urban areas is very low because wage employment opportunities for NFET graduates with low skills are scarce. The findings support the view of Melaku and Sabukuttan (2016), that adult training centres providing skills in the urban and rural settings should diversify livelihood skills based on the skills demand and skills supply in a particular field in order to avoid training unemployable adults.

Centres do not sufficiently create enabling environments for fostering graduates' wage employment. Except for one private centre, the other 20 centres involved in the study have no mechanisms to assist a graduate to find wage

employment. The connection between skills training delivery and support activities was not planned at the design stage. The present findings support the argument of Oviawe et al. (2017) and Krupar et al. (2017) that, for any effective adult training for finding employment, there is a need to create conducive factors and strategies internally and externally to the NFET centres in order to translate the acquired skills into the labour market. However, the present paper reveals that most of the graduates used their own efforts or connections with a friend to find wage employment. Both public and private centres seldom provided assistance in terms of arranging opportunities in NGOs for trainees to gain work experience.

In the present paper, centre managers reported that their centres have linkages with some public agencies and NGOs; but these linkages have not helped trainees to get jobs. This finding supports the view of Pikturnaitė et al. (2017) who state that adult non-formal education often lacks enabling environments for employment from external stakeholders. Nonetheless, the reality that emerges from the present findings reveals that centre managers do not mobilise the role players in the communities and partner organisations for their participation in the designing, planning and implementation of training programmes. In the KZN province, jobs in the public sector are scarce, specifically for NFET graduates with non-accredited skills training. Furthermore, the available labour market does not correspond to the low-skills qualifications (Human Sciences Research Council 2016). Thus, most of the managers did not negotiate with the private sector operators and find out whether they might be interested in employing graduates at low level.

The ineffectiveness of the NFET in improving trainees' wage employment may also be explained by the lack of a workplace assessment and certification conducted by an external company, an agency who would recognise and accredit the training skills provided. The study conducted by Pikturnaitė et al. (2017) reveals that the assessment by external stakeholders fostered the recognition and legitimacy of the trainees' qualifications on the labour market by employers in the public and private sectors. Similarly, Villalba (2017) argues that though there may be job opportunities for graduates from the NFET who are low-qualified and low-skilled,

there is still a need for workplace assessment to help disadvantaged groups find jobs. The inference from the present paper is that the recognised certification would foster NFET graduates to get access to wage employment in the informal businesses in order to gain work experience as interns.

The findings reveal that inadequate centre linkages with external environments constitute a disablement for the utilisation of skills in wage employment. However, most private centres have informal linkages with public institutions and agencies or private sectors without a signed partnership and a memorandum of understanding. In private centres, though the linkages and networks with external role players were not formalised but to some extent, they help to foster skills utilisation in assisting trainees with post-training support. The findings support the argument of Harris et al. (2017), Yunos et al. (2017) and Oviawe et al. (2017) that stakeholders from institutions, agencies, organisations, local businesses and community leaders tend to support adult training programmes that they have been involved in during the designing and implementing phases.

Weak institutional centre linkages disable the transforming external environments that foster the transformation of skills into wage employment in South Africa. The inference from the qualitative data from centre managers and post-training support (Table 3) reveals that the main cause of weak institutional linkages is the failure of the centre managers to locate potentially interested low-scale enterprises, firms and business in the private sectors. This finding is contrary to those in the study conducted by Pikturnaitė et al. (2017) on adult non-formal learning. In order to achieve the effectiveness of the training courses on the employment outcome, external stakeholders such as business owners, employers and social partners participated in the training course design, implementation and evaluation of the non-formal adult education.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this paper reveal that the external enabling environments fostering links for skills utilisation in wage-employment of NFET graduates in KZN were not effective. At the centre level, the disabling environment is that there were no mechanisms designed to assist gradu-

ates in wage employment. In addition, the inadequate centre linkages with external enabling environments constitute a breakdown in fostering links for skills utilisation in wage-employment. Weak institutional centre linkages resulted in graduates not receiving post-training support in order to access community resources made available to help poor and disadvantaged citizens. Adult centres do not take into consideration the importance of institutional linkages and the socio-economic background of the trainees who have faced long-term unemployment and poverty leading to social isolation, which then further reduce the likelihood of employment.

The researcher concludes that NFET programmes can foster adult trainees' employment if the centres create adequate linkages with external enabling environments for skills utilisation in the labour market. The linkages would improve graduates' access to public goods and services which could enable them to access wage employment in the informal sector. Without linking the NFET programmes to stakeholders who provide post-training support to graduates, graduates will continue remaining unemployed and living in absolute poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper provides three major recommendations. Firstly, centre managers should consult public, private agencies and local leaders from the planning stage of the training programmes. Secondly, centre managers should put great effort into post-training support and have an employment coordinator who will maintain contact with partners and graduates. Thirdly, to allow graduates to gain experience, centres should organise paid or unpaid temporary on-the-job training programmes in collaborative organisations and businesses.

NOTE

1. In this paper, "private centre" means a non-profit training centre managed by non-profit organisations (NPOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and church or other faith-based organisations (FBOs).

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