

Employment Perspectives and Professionalisation in Adult Education

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Between educating and teaching: The professional identity of adult educators. A transnational comparison between Portugal, India, and Germany

Abstract: Concepts of professional identity define the socialisation of adult educators, if only implicitly. This article presents a comparative, transnational discussion of the main theories and concepts of academic professionalisation and the emergence of a professional identity, as an individual or as a profession.

Introduction

Questions regarding personal professional identity are essential in the context of academic professionalisation. In andragogical settings, these are framed by different conditions and demands: by the curricular foundation, the institutional requirements, the expectations on the part of participants, and by how the role of an adult educator itself is understood. The understanding of learning and teaching plays a central role. Adult educators see themselves – according to their own transcultural and learning experiences and academic socialisation – as teachers, learning guides, consultants, or role models. These forms of identity correspond to each individual view of the profession and what it includes. This understanding of identities and roles, paired with different concepts of learning and teaching, biographic experiences, and theoretical discourses, also influences the identity development of students in adult education.

The article starts by providing an overview of the concepts and theories of professional identity, followed by a comparison of these concepts in India, Germany, and Portugal. We will show that adult education in India is dominated by an endeavour to foster literacy and numeracy, whereas in Germany, it is professional development in an academic context that takes precedence. Portugal, however, accentuates adult education in association with political-emancipatory aspirations, which will be presented through a current study. This is followed by a transnational comparison of the different concepts and development of professional identity in the three countries. In conclusion, we will present the core

dimensions of professional identity in adult education and point out potential issues to be addressed.

Professional identity

The concept of professional identity includes beliefs, behaviours, values, and motives through which a person defines himself or herself in a professional role. Bierema (2011) defines professional identity as a result of professional socialisation:

Professional socialisation involves building specialised knowledge and skills, incorporating a sense of occupational identity, internalising the norms of the profession, and adapting the values and norms into individual behaviour and self concept. (Bierema, 2011, p. 29)

Cooper and Olson (1996) point out that professional identity is multifaceted. Historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural factors may all influence the professional self-concept of adult educators. Professional identity in adult education takes two forms (Bierema, 2011, p. 30). The first is how one conceives individual professional identity as an adult educator. This includes individual identification with an adaptation to the field and the culture of adult education:

Since there are many types of adult education, you might be more inclined to identify yourself as a literacy teacher or health educator or human rights activist or human resource developer or instructional designer, rather than as an adult educator. (p. 30)

The second form of professional identity in adult education according to Bierema is how the field itself creates, maintains, and changes its professional identity. In other words, there is a public face with a relatively agreed upon discourse, research, and practice that has been established (p. 30). According to Cruess, Cruess, and Steinert (2016), professional identity includes five different dimensions: knowledge, competences, performance, action, and identity. Performance in particular demonstrates the behaviours expected of adult educators, and their identity consistently demonstrates the attitudes, values, and behaviours like a 'biographical mind set' (p. 181). Professional identity itself is always a combination of personal and social identity; it is a subjective effort of lifelong learning and identification in which individuals, with their life history, their gender, and so on, become able to perform an already existing task to some extent by acquiring already existing knowledge and using it to create their own practice and identity (Salling Olesen, 2001a, 2001b). From this perspective, professional identity can be described as the combined effort of learning processes and the ongoing struggle with the demands of a task – integrated into one's own general life experience. (Salling Olesen, 2006, p. 5). Professional identity, furthermore, may consist of many sub-identities that

might conflict or align with each other (Mishler, 1999). According to Mishler, it is therefore better to recognise that a plurality of 'subidentities' exists in the definition of identity.

It has thus been shown that there are different dimensions, including socialisation, biography, knowledge, (inter)action, competences, and theoretical discourses, each of which influences the development of professional identity. Therefore, the developmental process is part of the professionalisation of adult educators and adult education itself.

Within the German discourse on professionalisation, three different terms are commonly used: *Professionalität*, *Profession*, and *Professionalisierung*. They are equivalent to the English terms professionalism, profession, and professionalisation. Against this background, profession is generally understood as an academic occupation, including successful completion of a university education. The term profession also includes dealing with a central social problem and the necessity to implement required knowledge systematically (Nittel, 2000, pp. 15–17). According to Schwendenwein, there are seven structural features of a profession: existence of professionally relevant research, a corresponding legal base, consideration and observation of job-specific key objectives, existence of a professional codex, existence of an intrinsic representation of professional interest, participation in continuing education by active members, and unrivalled exercise (Schwendenwein, 1990, p. 360). Further characteristics of a profession are to act within an occupation usually including a certain degree of autonomy. The term professionalisation (*Professionalisierung*), however, refers to the processes of occupationalisation, individual formation, and continuing education within a job. Furthermore, we can distinguish between collective professionalisation and individual professionalisation. Collective professionalisation includes interrelated process levels, such as the institutional expansion of continuing education or the academisation of adult education. Within the individual process, the focus is on the educational process as a personal change and maturing process. Professionalism (*Professionalität*) is understood as skilful occupational aspiration and as an indicator of high-quality work. This is the base for professional action: to use specific knowledge and competence to interpret and deal with unstructured situations. It means making situation-based and personalised use of knowledge and competence. Professionalism further includes the professional self with his or her values, goals, knowledge, and so forth. Furthermore, the term includes a wide pedagogical repertoire of actions to ensure the successful handling of work assignments (Nittel, 2000, pp. 15–17).

In summary, all three terms include aspects of ‘professional identity’. Profession refers to a professional code and the personal interest in further education. Within individual professionalisation, personal change and maturing processes are important issues. Professionalism includes the professional self and the connection between knowledge and skills (Schütz, 2009, pp. 81–92). Personal interest, the maturing process, personal development, and the professional self are in the focus of the discourse. This means that by thinking about professional identity in adult education, the discourse on professionalism seems to be an important starting point for further analysis and consideration.

Adult education: Influential concepts and practices. Examples from Germany, India, and Portugal

This following section adopts a qualitative research methodology based on the comparison of three case studies regarding professional identity in India, Germany, and Portugal. Besides the common main concept, each country adopted a ‘way of work’ and presented a different example within their case.

In the case of India, the country report took a historical and descriptive approach. In the case of Germany, after contextualisation and with the specific aim to analyse how professionalisation and especially professional identity is implemented in academic study programmes of adult education, three different module manuals were analysed. For Portugal, several basic concepts related to the professional identity of adult educators, functions, and competences were defined on the basis of an empirical study. These different approaches, concepts, and practices have an immense influence and impact on the core aspects of the professional identity of an adult educator. This difference between the three approaches is related to the qualitative methodology used; it is further related to the historical context and the development of each country. In the following, we present different aspects of adult education in India, Germany, and Portugal and shed light on the similarities and differences between the three countries.

India

In India, teachers, instructors, labour educators, human resource developers, and the like are considered adult educators. ‘The scope of adult education is daunting in its many forms and contexts, making this work challenging’ (Bierema, 2011, p. 22). Lifelong learning has been an integral part of Indian culture; however, India has yet to develop a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning (Shah, 2017).

In ancient history, Indians seeking an education went to 'ashrams' – institutions roughly comparable to colleges. There, a guru functioning as teacher provided religious knowledge as well as ethical and moral values. However, adult education in modern India has been reformed. During the 1960s, reformers contributed to social change and brought down barriers for women and the poor to participate in education (Shah, 2017). Nowadays, India is still a country with strong beliefs in a religious approach to education, and the Indian majority therefore accepts sweeping change justified by religious reasoning. Grassroots projects and basic education are prevalent, aimed at enhancing the percentage of literate and numerate adults in India and resulting in efforts to educate a vast number of people and to support people-teach-people approaches. As Shah (2010, p. 56) points out, India is the second most populous country in the world with a population of 1,028 million, but the gross enrolment in higher education is only 10 per cent. The demographic data show that 68.9 per cent of the Indian population is below the age of 35 (Shah, 2010). Mainly because of these factors,

the focus of India's adult and lifelong learning programmes continues to be on adult basic literacy and continuing education for the younger age group. However, the scope of adult education policy and programmes in India is not limited to imparting basic literacy and post literacy to learners, but includes skills training, inculcation of civic values of national integration, environmental conservation, women's equality, and observance of the small family norm. (Shah, 2010, p. 81)

In spite of having the third-largest education system in the world with 358 universities, 153 research institutions, and 2,019 teacher-training colleges, and an increase in literacy rates from 52.11 per cent to 64.84 per cent during the decade from 1991 to 2001, there is a massive backlog of 304.11 million neo-literates in the country, comprising nearly 30 per cent of global neo-literates (Shah, 2010). Moreover, it is estimated that there are 110 million neo-literates in the country:

Although the importance of lifelong learning was never overlooked in Indian education policy documents, and the policy statement on the National Adult Education Programme (1978) considered continuing education as an indispensable aspect of the strategy of human resource development and of the goal of creation of a learning society, there has been practically no shift from the exclusive emphasis on adult literacy. (Shah, 2010, p. 57)

Despite the changing concept of adult education from basic literacy to civic literacy, functional literacy and developmental literacy and various short-term programmes undertaken during the second half of the twentieth century, the thrust of the adult education programmes in India continues to be on the eradication of illiteracy among adults, Shah (2017) emphasises.

As Shah (2010, p. 60) further points out, the prevalent tendency in adult and lifelong learning in India has been to design the different programmes as short-term projects. It is assumed that such short programmes can be implemented with professionally trained staff, regular pay, and allowances. Hence, there has been hardly any serious thinking on the professionalisation of adult education. Indian adult educators have not yet carved a niche for themselves among the important professions. The majority of practitioners of adult education do not have a homogeneous professional background. There are no qualifying examinations to become an adult educator. 'Due to the voluntary nature of programmes, adult education as a profession is neither well-established nor well understood.' (Shah, 2010, p. 56) Therefore, Shah developed four categories of functionaries in adult education (Shah, 2010, pp. 60–61): Firstly, the teachers/instructors employed in university departments of adult education, academic staff at colleges, community colleges, and polytechnics or industrial training institutes. Secondly, trainers who were designated as programme coordinators and employed in state resource centres and NGOs. Thirdly, programme managers who are employed in governmental and non-governmental organisations, and, lastly, the 'grassroots-level functionaries' working in continuing education centres. Hence, professional socialisation in India is also a developmental process of adult socialisation. This not only involves the recognition of an assumed identity by the outside world, it is also recognition of the identity within themselves and the non-deliberate projection of themselves in its terms referred to as internalisation and depicts the success of past socialisation, causing a new identity to emerge, much of which is formed through academic training (Bierema, 2010, p. 138).

Germany

The field and context of adult education in Germany is wide and diverse. Because of this heterogeneity, the discourse about professionalisation is intensive and long-lasting. Different research approaches are followed with regards to professionalisation in adult education, for example, evaluating the curricula of adult education graduation programmes and interviewing graduates of adult education programmes. (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2012, p. 7) A review of the most recent publications and the current discourse in adult education reveals research and discussions on professionalism, including professional identity and professional self. In the discussion on professionalisation, different approaches are pursued to define a competence-based framework for adult educators. Based on discussions during the 1990s, this framework includes personal competences, social competences, didactical competences, methodical expertise, as well as social

and institutional competences (Bechtel 2008, p. 37), adapted or complemented (Rapold, 2006, p. 7).

In Germany, the economic sector in particular is strongly represented in the adult education field of practice. Especially within the last forty years, professional continuing education in Germany has been extensively discussed and thus gained importance. Demands on companies and opportunities in this sector have been growing. One reason for the increasing interest in professional continuing education is related to the motivation of the economy and employers, but it is also a highly discussed topic in politics (Bundesinstitut für berufliche Bildung, 2014, pp. 12–13). Adult educators in Germany are professionally active in a variety of fields. Various institutions such as the *Volkshochschule* (schools for adults providing continuing non-credit education) offer employment opportunities for adult educators in teaching, administration, and counselling positions. In addition, the consulting and services field for training and human resources has been developing and growing over the last decade. This is due to increased political interest in professional continuing education in the economic sector. *Volkshochschulen* were the starting point of a discourse on professionalisation in adult education. Nowadays, adult educators can work in various fields, as the profession is neither a clearly defined homogeneous social unit nor a standardised career model (Nittel, 2011, p. 487).

To find out how professionalisation and especially professional identity is implemented in academic study programmes of adult education, different module manuals were analysed. Three universities published their master's module manuals on their homepage. All three of the programmes analysed offer a four-semester master's programme with the same title, 'adult and continuing education'. The universities are public, and the programmes are research oriented. Different terms were identified in the manuals, including 'pedagogic professionalism', 'professional pedagogical competence development', 'professional pedagogical activity', and 'professional action competence'. However, the term 'identity' was not mentioned in any of the manuals. The following categories were found: professional codex and interest in further education, personal change and maturing process, professional self (professional knowledge, values, goals, techniques, professional languages, and professional responsibilities) and skills. This further shows that each university has its own thematic priority in its manual, such as values and ethics featuring strongly in seminar content, seminars and practical work on education research, or an emphasis on how to handle media content. All of the evaluated universities offered opportunities for optional internships. It was understood as an opportunity for students to gain practical experience, for instance through project

work or by participating in research. The universities further emphasise self-study and independent, individual learning as part of their programmes, presumably to encourage and support students to follow their personal interests and motivations. This could be an important influential factor, enabling students to be more confident and certain of their chosen profession and to develop a professional identity.

Portugal

In Portugal, the fields of teaching and learning are understood in a broad sense. They include not only formal and non-formal education, meaning to learn within a structured and organised learning environment, but also the processes of development and learning in the context of work. In this sense, the phenomenon of adult education follows two principal approaches. Firstly, the approach defined by UNESCO (2009), characterised by the diversity and complexity of practices, participants, and organisations, and a second approach that is more visible in academic contexts.

Roths (2003) points out that ‘the expression ‘educator (or trainer) of adults’ [...] refers to a multitude of functions and new professional activities” (p. 56). Guimarães (2016) presents a variety of tasks and activities carried out by adult educators, which can be divided into two main dimensions. On the one hand, the technical-pedagogical and educational dimension involves monitoring, guidance and advice, the recognition and validation of skills, as well as support for the construction of the autobiography of adults (Guimarães, 2016). On the other hand, there is the dimension of organisation and procedural management. It includes primarily administrative activities (Guimarães, 2016). Because of the complexity and diversity of this profession, it is not yet possible to identify a strong professional identity (Carvalho & Baptista, 2004).

To elaborate on the aforementioned points, the study *Realities of Adult Educators in the South of Portugal* (Ricardo & Fragoso 2014) will be contextualized. One university in southern Portugal is following models of practice inspired by adult education principles. In this sense, content related to adult education makes a significant appearance in the curricular structure of this degree scheme (Educação Social). Critical educators such as Paulo Freire (1997), however, represent transversal references and an inspiration to social educators’ training. By taking critical education or humanism as foundational paradigms for this programme of studies, the intentions are that professionals go beyond the old paradigms of social work (Ricardo & Fragoso, 2014). Consequently, the study’s main aim was to understand the professional situation of adult educators working in southern Portugal (Algarve), taking into consideration the perceptions of these professionals (graduated

between 1998 and 2012). To that end, the study used a mixed method – a combination of an online survey (Ghiglione & Matalon, 1997), 21 semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994), and a focus group discussion. The different methods used in the research convey an idea of the main elements and categories that are related to the identity of the profession. The majority of the research participants were female (91%) and young (56% were between 25 and 30 years old). They had comparatively low salaries. 45 per cent earned between €500 and €1000; 11 per cent earned less than €500 per month, which they commented on by saying ‘pockets empty, hearts full’. Generally, the educators surveyed claimed to be satisfied with their profession (even recognising that low salaries are an everyday problem). The main activities they performed were social diagnosis, designing and implementing processes, developing and guiding activities specifically designed for vulnerable groups, and psychosocial counselling. The educators surveyed indicated that they feel valuable to their institutions because of the characteristics of their global professional profile. Characteristics mentioned were the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams, to act as mediators, and to contribute to solving conflicts and to have a horizontal relationship with people (both individuals and communities), thus facilitating processes that aim to be empowering. It is important to stress that educators seem to try and do more in their work beyond providing simple assistance. Generally, they indicated that it is their professional duty to promote community participation through education and training and to help people to recognise their importance and abilities.

To perform their professional identity, educators needed to have several capacities and characteristics, both professional and personal. According to the survey and the interview analysis, the main personal characteristics of the adult educators were creativity (85%), autonomy (73%), ability to plan (86%), humility (72%), dynamic (93%), and being a well-rounded person (74%). The educators also indicated that some professional capabilities are empathy, the ability to listen, vocation, the ability to work with others in a team, good adaptability, problem-solving ability, and the ability to mediate.

Comparison of the countries

The following reflection will provide an insight into the developmental process of four core aspects affecting the identity of adult educators. These include the societal roots of adult education, the aim of adult education training and degrees, the different connotations of the terms educator and teacher, and the main fields of practice for adult educators. The objective of this activity was to work out potentially influential aspects that substantiate the identity of adult educators. The

developed aspects were considered comprehensively in order to avoid limiting the discussion purely to the skills and competences of adult educators. They are intended to ensure a comprehensive view of adult educators' identity as well as the comparability of different countries.

During the first developmental phase, a preparatory report on each country was provided. The reports assured a general overview of the field of adult education professionals in each country. They gave a basic understanding of the cultural, structural, and functional differences in the field between Germany, India, and Portugal. The second developmental phase was conducted during a face-to-face working period in Würzburg, Germany. A subsequent in-depth reflection on the terminology used in the field of adult education professionals was carried out to further deepen the understanding of terminological nuances and to develop a comparative strategy. The analysis of the terminology used in Germany, India, and Portugal regarding adult education, adult learners, and adult educators, indicated profound differences in how the specific terms are understood and used in each country. Terms addressing or describing adult educators were used ambiguously and inconsistently. However, during the work session in Würzburg, it also became apparent that overlaps could be identified and further developed. This is the reason for the multitude of common terms examined. The examination based on the country reports provided an analysis of different publications on adult education and adult educators and a critical discourse within the consortium. Grouping together these terms showed how the used terminology not only failed to differentiate the affected professionals (e.g. learners, educators, politicians) but also the different levels of action (e.g. individual level, school level, national level). This indicated the necessity of incorporating a distinction between macro, meso, and micro levels and the assignment of terms to the respective levels. At the macro level, politics and policies were identified, as they provide the legal and financial basis of education and reach a level of generality in the field that other levels might not. Institutions and work contexts were determined to represent the meso level. They provide a certain compulsory frame for the individual involved, but follow the macro level regulations and standards. The micro level, therefore, stands for the individuals who are active in adult education, both inside and outside of organisations and institutions, since they represent the smallest unit in the field and are directly governed by the macro and meso levels. However, these levels should be understood as communicative and interactive, insofar as feedback is exchanged between them through means such as communiqués, surveys, and protests. In the final step, the developed generic terms were abstracted into components of a reference frame, providing a categorical model of comparison.

By analysing the process and the results of the first and the second phase of the intensive workshops, four core aspects were identified. Parameters for the identification of these aspects were, amongst other things, the weighting and the impact in the countries compared. The four comparative core aspects are the societal roots of adult education, the aim of adult education training and degrees, the different connotations of the terms educator and teacher, and the main fields of practice for adult educators. After examining the roots and the position of adult education in Germany, India, and Portugal in each society, the view of adult education in each country became clearer, so that including this aspect into the analytical model was essential. In the process of analysing and discussing the terminology, it became evident that ‘educator’ and ‘teacher’ were transnationally the most frequently mentioned terms in the professional discourse and papers published on adult education. This indicated the necessity of clarifying the connotations of the terms ‘educator’ and ‘teacher’ in order to gain a comprehensive and comparable understanding of the adult education profession in Germany, India, and Portugal. Consequently, the aim of adult education training and degrees was seen as crucial to embedding the training of adult education professionals into its academic context in order to examine its identity-building potential. The main fields of practice for adult educators were included into the analytical model, as they provide some of the main indicators regarding the requirements in the adult education profession and, therefore, the professional identities potentially associated with them.

The following table summarises the application of the four comparative core aspects in keywords.

Table 1: Comparative model by categories and by country.

	Roots	Academic degree in AE (main goal)	Terms: Educator (E) & Teacher (T)	Fields of practice
GERMANY	Humanistic Re-education	Promotes individualisation and prioritisation through the student	E: A person working with children or adolescents; development of their personality T: A person spreading knowledge in a didactical setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive, ranging from public institutions such as community colleges to corporate environments

	Roots	Academic degree in AE (main goal)	Terms: Educator (E) & Teacher (T)	Fields of practice
INDIA	Religion	Enables individuals to work in AE and social work	E: A person providing instruction at a basic level; follows formal setting T: A person who teaches in a formal learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy education; • Subsequent vocational training
PORTUGAL	Humanistic	Provides the tools to develop projects, research and intervention	E: A professional whose work is related to humanistic pedagogy; non-formal education T: A person who teaches something specific, e.g. a certain topic, in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Vocational training • Local development • Socio-cultural animation

Source: Authors' own

Based on the four core aspects, a comparison of Germany, India, and Portugal was conducted. A subsequent in-depth reflection on the terminology used in the field of adult education professionals was carried out with respect to the core aspects. The aim was to further deepen the understanding of terminological nuances and identify similarities and differences.

Adult education in India was found to have comparatively strong roots in religion, which mirrors Indian adult education. It is strongly driven by changes justified through religious morals and values. In Germany, the roots of adult education are highly influenced by a humanistic approach and the term *Bildung*. Although it is frequently translated as 'education', *Bildung* follows a more comprehensive approach, including aspects of an open mind and creativity. Adult education in Germany is defined by a wide variety of factors, such as the re-education programme after the Second World War. Compared to India, basic education in Germany is less prominent. Portugal is characterised by a humanistic approach as well. Marked by the dictatorship regime from 1926 to 1974, Portugal tried to rebuild itself with the support of associations and programmes like LEADER

and EQUAL. These programmes, financed by the European Union, created some opportunities and projects that focused on participative methodologies, such as popular education, bottom-up approach, local development, and social intervention (Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010).

Regarding the main goal of academic degrees in adult education, India strives to enable individuals to work in adult education and social work. As Indian adult educators primarily fight illiteracy and innumeracy, the fields of practice are mainly found in literacy education and subsequent vocational training. Academic degrees in adult education in Germany, however, are less narrow. Master's degree programmes include elective courses and internships, giving students more opportunities for individualisation and prioritisation. The possible fields of practice for adult educators are extensive, ranging from public institutions such as community colleges to corporate environments. Adult education graduates in Germany work as teachers, trainers, and in similar roles. In Portugal, adult education training generally provides the tools to develop and implement different projects, research and intervention. In this case, the framework of adult education intersects with community involvement, cultural animation, adult literacy, training of trainers, the recognition of acquired experience, and the management, organisation, and financing of training. Consequently, the goal of academic degrees in adult education in Portugal is more versatile than in India. Portugal supports a practice-oriented approach similar to that in Germany, enabling adult education graduates to individualise and prioritise through their studies. In Portugal, there are four main fields of practice: literacy (or second chance education), vocational training, local development, and socio-cultural animation (Canário, 1999). The fields are independent but can fit together, and interaction between them is possible.

The terms 'educator' and 'teacher' were identified as the most commonly used terms to name and address adult educators in the three countries. Although there is some overlap in the meanings of the terms, they refer to different characteristics and functions. In India, an educator is a person providing instructions at a basic level in a formal setting. In Portugal, an educator is primarily a professional whose work is related to humanistic pedagogy (Azevedo, 2011). In this sense, an educator would for the most part be engaged in non-formal education. In Germany, however, educators are mainly found working with children or adolescents supporting the development of their personality. In India, the term 'teacher' primarily refers to a person who teaches in a formal learning environment, such as a school. Although the same is applicable to the understanding of teacher in Germany, the term has a broader meaning and can be expanded to include any person spreading knowledge in a didactical setting. In Portugal, 'teacher' has a

similar meaning, referring to a person who teaches something specific, such as a certain topic, in a specific context, such as a school. Looking at these distinctions between the meanings of educator and teacher, India is the country that shows the least differentiation between the two terms. This could also be understood in regards of illiteracy and innumeracy in this country and the need for strong literacy education, as the need for professionals prepared to work in basic literacy is mostly embedded in formal learning environments.

Conclusions and outlook

This study revealed a lack of systematisation regarding the characteristics and functions associated with adult educators in three countries, confirming that the application of ‘competence profiles and standards for adult learning staff [...] differs considerably between institutional and regional levels’ (Buiskool, Broek, van Lakerveld, Zarifis, & Osborne, 2010). The description of skill sets and characteristics that were found differed with regards to the prevailing circumstances in each country and regarding the tasks and challenges in each chosen field of action. Accordingly, the study identified standardised terminology in adult education, used exclusively within the borders of one specific profession or regarding a particular target group, such as India’s orientation towards basic literate and numerical education, the dual education system in Germany, and the socio-cultural orientation of the Portuguese education system.

It is indicated that a trans-sectorally consistent usage of terminology, primarily regarding education and training, knowledge, competences, and the characteristics of adult educators (Cruess, Cruess, & Steinert, 2016) is required. In order to facilitate a fruitful dialogue that will provide the background for professional identity-building, further discussion on the lack of shared definitions and the establishment of a consistent and defined adult education terminology is necessary. This is specifically true for India, as its discourse on adult education professionals takes place on a comparatively small scale. However, for all three countries it is suggested to consider existing orientation frameworks and implement these in future publications more frequently, specifically those definitions provided at the supranational level (Buiskool et al., 2010).

The study did not find direct indicators that an institutionally initiated examination or reflection on identity-building was conducted during the education and training of adult education professionals. The evaluated sources did not provide concrete terminological guidance, no active support for identity formation for adult educators, nor an impulse for reflection on identity, missing out on the ‘most meaningful source of knowledge that professionals acquire’ (Hansman,

2016, p. 35). Identity formation and self-reflection in adult education professionals during their education and training can support adult educators in establishing a reflective self-image and professional identity so that they more actively choose and shape their individual career paths. Therefore, it is further suggested to raise awareness regarding the multifariousness of adult education, encourage reflection on professional identity, and facilitate the development of professional identity. In this way, adult educators can be encouraged to form and improve the field of adult education in a 'Biermian sense'.

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The development of employability skills in higher education curricula: A transnational comparison

Abstract: After defining employability and employability models with the aim of creating a theoretical framework for the following juxtaposition, the paper presents the strategies and practices developed at a higher education level in Italy and India for supporting the development of employability skills in young adults enrolled in master's degree courses in education.

Definition of employability and employability models

Work and the future of work are very fascinating subjects that play a central role in our life and our life plans. Indeed, work not only represents a tool to secure financial and economic independence from the home family, it is also a means to become active citizens, to be included and play a role in civil society as individuals. Therefore, it is very important that higher education reflects the profound changes affecting the world of work when planning the curricula that will help educate the future workforce.

Universities must tune an increasing proportion of their activity into the needs of students whose employability is at stake, and towards the needs of society at large. (World Employment Confederation, 2015, p. 35)

But what do we mean by the future of work, and how does it affect young people's employability?

According to the World Economic Forum, the 'future of work' represents all the changes occurring in the world of work, in terms of work capabilities, contracts, organisation, and regulations due to economic and technological change.

1 The paper is the result of joint work on the index, ideas for the paper, abstract, and references. However, the sections 'Definition of employability and employability models' and 'Conclusion' can be attributed to Gaia Gioli, 'The case study of Italy' to Nicoletta Tomei, 'Soft skills approach in India' to Ashok Kumar, and 'The Indian higher education system and the master's degree curricula in education' to Sunita Swajli.

[...] many occupations will undergo a fundamental transformation. They will change the skill sets required in both old and new occupations in most industries and transform how and where people work, leading to new management and regulatory challenges. (World Economic Forum, 2016, n. p.)

But what are the skills needs of employers when hiring a graduate? We cannot answer this question without considering that employers look for applicants with two skill sets: hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills (or technical skills, discipline-specific skills) can change according to the economic field and specific work area, whereas soft skills (or common skills) are generally considered transversal or common to many different fields and workplaces. Moreover, we should reflect on the fact that no single word could summarise the things employers seek in a graduate. Some authors refer to assets, achievements, or attributes, although none of these terms really capture the hard work that graduates do to acquire what employers want. As suggested by Harvey and Knight (2003, p. 6), '[i]t is important to see attribute development as a process of learning and to insist that attributes are not collected like stamps'. Other researchers tried to summarise the main attributes/skills/assets as follows.

Harvey, Moon, and Geall (1997) stress the attention on willingness to learn, self-management skills, adaptability, communication skills, team-working and interpersonal skills.

Stephenson and Yorke (1998) stress oral communication, workload management, team working, managerial skills, problem analysis, critical analysis, group problem-solving, stress resistance, commitment, flexibility, dependability, imagination/creativity, and willingness to learn.

Brennan, Johnston, Little, Shah, and Woodley (2001) highlight the importance of the ability to work independently, under pressure, oral communication skills, accuracy, attention to details, time management, adaptability, team working, taking responsibility and decisions, planning co-ordinating and organising.

It is difficult to identify a specific set that is common at a global level, yet multiple studies in the last decades have tried to do so. Most of them answered the question by linking the concept and definition of soft skills to that of employability and higher education, seeing it as the place to train graduates for future life from an academic perspective.

The term 'employability' has been extensively investigated in the past six decades, starting with the Robbins report (1963), which identified employability as one of the main goals of higher education institutions. From that moment on, the term had great diffusion and success, as it is very flexible. For example, it can be re-read through the lens of the capability approach, the lifecycle approach (Günter

& Markowitsch, 2010), entrepreneurship (Hall, 1996), or it can be applied to the context of higher education (Yorke, 2006). As a pedagogically oriented category, it was investigated by pedagogues and experts, especially from the UK (the most important publications are those published by the Higher Education Academy and ESECT, for example: Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002; Harvey & Knight, 2003; Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, & Lawton, 2012; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2006), who linked the term to the preparation of the transition from study to work, thus with the concept of placement. In this way, the term has had far-reaching consequences on the higher education system at a global level. The aim has been to modify higher education (Yorke, 2006; Boffo, Del Gobbo, Gioli, & Torlone, 2017) in order to meet the needs of the labour market and the individual. In a certain way, to reflect on employability is to reflect on the ability of higher education to create educational paths that can 'build' professionals, their knowledge, and skills.

In the context of higher education, two authors must be mentioned: Peter Knight and Mantz Yorke, who spread a new way of studying employability and curricula and skills. Indeed, they were the first researchers who read curricula as a tool for the acquisition of employability and employability skills suitable for the labour market.

What do we mean by employability? The definitions of employability can be organised in two main groups. The first one relates to the abilities of students to get, retain and develop these employability skills on a job after graduation (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 3). The second one defines employability as:

A set of [...] skills, understanding and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce and the economy. (Yorke & Knight, 2006, p. 3)

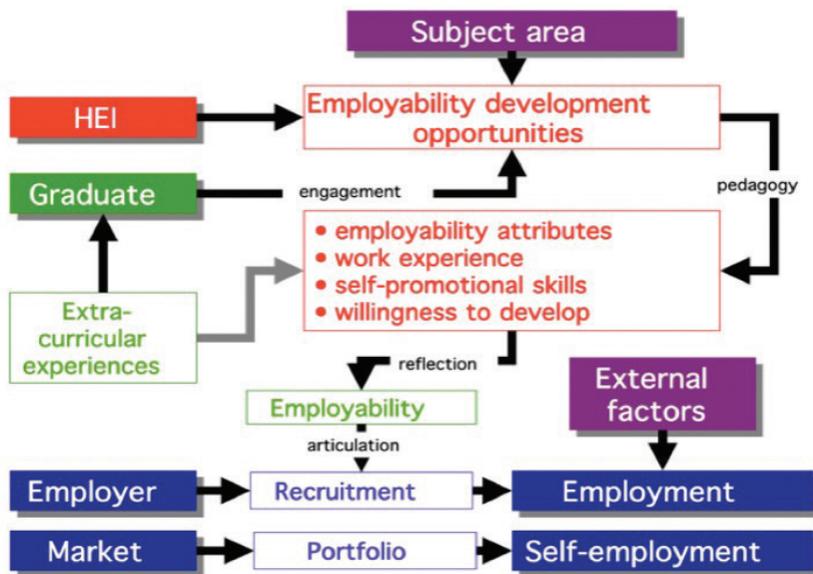
From this definition, it is particularly clear how the professional success of graduates in terms of employment is linked with the curricular activities undertaken during the studies, and how learning is intertwined with knowledge and all the skills that the labour market in a given world region and economic sector is looking for today and will be looking for in the longer term. As a matter of fact, we can assume that this outlook reflects the idea that higher education pays attention to the full development of human beings, as individuals and as future workers, following the lifecycle approach. Indeed, the labour market, social and cultural norms, and the economic situation can deeply affect graduates' current and future employment (Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002; Pegg et al., 2012, p. 7).

The difference between the two groups of definitions is clear. The first definition stresses the career choice that students make after graduation and the career they will choose.

The second definition has been implemented in the last twenty years in the UK with the involvement of businesses and employers in the construction of professional profiles of graduates. This approach – that we could call much more realistic than the first one – is intertwined with the ability of developing all those ‘assets’ (skills, knowledge, and personal attributes, such as values) that can support employment. These can be better explained by many important employability models that consider skills the basis of employability.

One of these models is the graduate employability model (Fig. 1) developed by Harvey, Locke, and Morey (2002), which focuses on the link between internal and external factors, that is, all the opportunities offered by higher education and the labour market for the development of employability, such as extracurricular experiences that can foster the acquisition of employability attributes, self-promotional skills, and willingness to self-development through work experience. This model is based on the involvement of engagement, pedagogy, self-reflection, and articulation as leading categories. The soft skills that are considered most important in this model are: self-promotional skills, the willingness to develop employability attributes, and the ability to reflect on them.

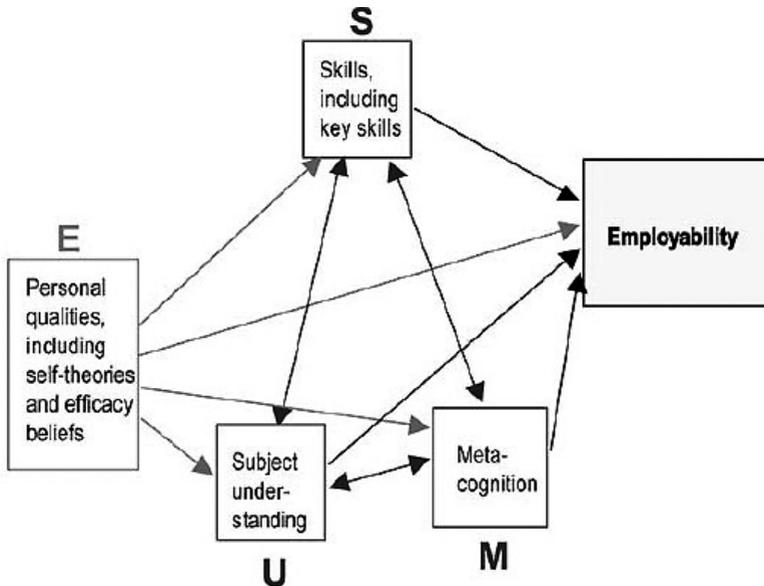
Figure 1: Graduate employability model.



Source: Harvey, Locke, & Morey (2002, p. 4)

Shortly afterwards, the Higher Education Academy developed the USEM model (Fig. 2). In particular, the USEM model was developed by Knight and Yorke in 2004 and sees employability as the result of the interaction of ‘four broad and inter-related elements’: Understanding, Skilful practice, Efficacy beliefs, and Meta-cognition (Knight & Yorke, 2004, p. 37).

Figure 2: USEM model.



Source: Yorke & Knight (2006, p. 4)

These categories are not only connected to the skills and knowledge that young people can acquire through curricular and extracurricular activities, they also represent the ability of academia to renew itself by offering students opportunities to develop self-reflectiveness and self-consciousness regarding their personal and professional identity, to develop a critical sense (metacognition), to acquire generic (skilful practice) and specific skills necessary for their future work and to be conscious of them (understanding), to guide themselves through life, and to learn how to learn and be able to read the contexts of life, situations, and events (efficacy beliefs) (Yorke & Knight, 2006, p. 38).

The USEM model was created from empirical data to develop a commonly shared taxonomy in the scientific community. For this reason, it became the first famous employability model. Yet it was not the only one. Other important models

are the DOTS model² (Watts, 2006) and the CareerEDGE framework³ (Pool & Sewell, 2007). The DOTS model stresses the attention on Self-awareness (the ability to identify and articulate motivations, skills, and personality as they affect career plans), Opportunity awareness (knowledge of opportunities and the ability to research these), Decision learning (being able to weigh personal factors to make a sound plan), and Transition skills (understanding of how to seek and secure opportunities) (Watts, 2006). The CareerEDGE framework stresses Career development learning, Experience (work and life), Degree subject, knowledge, understanding & skills, Generic skills, and Emotional intelligence (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

The conception of employability that underlies the above-mentioned models is very rich from a pedagogical perspective and can be thought of as the fundamental category to be used to rethink the structure of a study curriculum. Indeed, it is linked to a didactical approach and a renewal of higher education that sees all elements and persons working together towards the common goal of students' employability and the development of their skills.

According to Fallows and Steven (2000, p. 75), 'the academic curriculum is essentially a vehicle through which other attributes are delivered', and it includes information, discipline-specific, and generic skills. Generic (or soft) skills are different from discipline-specific skills because they can change according to the nature of the job and the specific workplace. Fallows and Steven also suggest that the modern workplace is so varied and constantly changing that academic education cannot hope to impact job-specific skills but should instead support the acquisition of soft skills and teach students how to learn new skills.

In the process, the institutional, organisational, and human dimensions of higher education should be involved. In the words of Knight and Yorke (2004, p. 269):

Program leaders and designers should be asking whether the approach to teaching and assessment is

- consistent with a rounded conception of employability;
- structured to encourage progressively higher levels of autonomy;
- appropriately balanced throughout the program (across contemporaneous units of study and across time);
- allowing those skills and qualities (that usually need longer than a study-unit to develop) the opportunity to grow progressively;

2 The DOTS model was developed by Professor A.G. Watts and represented the framework for the development of the UK higher education system (Law & Watts 1977; Watts 2006).

3 The CareerEDGE model was introduced in 2007 as a framework for employability development targeted at academic staff, career staff, practitioners in employability activities, and students (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

- involving a variety of pedagogic methods and styles;
- encouraging deep rather than surface learning (or, put another way, weighting quality of learning more heavily than quantity of learning);
- valuing collaboration in learning for what it can offer to employability (but taking care to deal appropriately with assessment issues);
- providing plenty of feedback in a manner designed to enhance the capacity for self-assessment and to lead to enhanced future performance; and
- helping students to become aware of, and document (perhaps via portfolios), what they have achieved during their period of time in higher education.

Regardless the adopted model, employability is always interconnected with generic/soft and specific/hard skills. In particular, looking at the soft skills, we can affirm that they may change according to context. It may occur that the most relevant soft skills for the care and education professions are different in India and Italy because of the cultural, economic, social, and political context. Thus, it may happen that the adoption of an employability model could differ from one country to another. So, which are the recurrent employability skills embedded into the higher education curricula?

The case study of Italy

Soft skills in Italy

In Italy, the debate on soft skills has gained relevance in the wake of some international publications. Among them, the most important are *Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in School*, issued by the World Health Organisation (World Health Organisation, 1993), and the *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2016).

At first, the recommendations contained in these documents were adopted by the school system, which in the 1990s started to set up training interventions on the basis of the concept of life skills. According to the above-mentioned WHO document, life skills are ‘abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life’ (p. 1). These abilities play an important role in the broader category of psychosocial competence, which consists in the capacity to ‘maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this [...] while interacting with others, his/her cultures and environments’ (p. 1). The interventions inspired by this approach interpret life skills education as a tool for the promotion of physical, mental, and social health, which are able to influence behaviours ‘in particular at a time when behaviours are more and more implicated as source of health problems’ (p. 1).

Life skills education developed acknowledging that prevention strategies based on control and repression of 'at risk' behaviours are a failure. Although it failed to integrate soft skills development into standard school activities, life skill education contributed to stimulating the implementation of projects able to develop skills which cross disciplinary fields and to expand the school curriculum.

After this first season of experimentation, the efforts for integrating soft skills into the school curriculum took advantages from the European Reference Framework presented by the above-mentioned recommendation of 18 December 2006. In fact, this recommendation, which 'identifies and defines the key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in the knowledge society' (EPC 2006, p. 1 annex), determined the issue of Ministerial Decree n. 139 on 22 August 2007 by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca (MIUR), 2007). This Decree, aiming to govern the field of mandatory education, states that the final diplomas of upper secondary school have to certify 'core competences related to language, STEM and history curriculum as well as specific citizenship skills which compose, together, the key competences for lifelong learning according to the Italian national strategies' (MIUR, 2007, p. 1 annex 1).

Table 1: Soft skills integrated into the Italian school curriculum as recommend by national and international documents.

Life Skills (WHO, 1993)	Key Competences (EPC, 2006)	Citizenship Skills (MIUR, 2007)
Problem-solving	Communication in the mother tongue	Learning to learn
Critical and creative thinking	Communication in foreign languages	Projecting
Effective communication	Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	Communicating
Empathy	Digital competence	Collaborating and participating
Emotional management	Learning to learn	Autonomous and responsible acting
Stress management	Social and civic competences	Problem-solving
Personal efficacy	Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	Linking and identifying connections between concepts and situations
Social efficacy	Cultural awareness and expression	Getting and interpreting information

Source: Authors' own

Besides the speculation on the certification of competences in the school system, the higher education sector has developed its own understanding of the acquisition of soft skills across tertiary study paths (Fondazione CRUI, 2016). This understanding is closely linked to the implementation of the Bologna Process. The term ‘Bologna Process’ refers to the international reform process through which European Union Member States try to harmonise national higher education systems in order to promote mobility through a better understanding and comparison of the different qualifications issued in each country (European Commission, 2016).

In 2005, this process of harmonisation, started in 1988 with the elaboration of the Magna Charta Universitatum, led to the adoption of the ‘Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area – QF for the EHEA’ (Bologna Follow-up Group, 2005). This framework proposed to describe the qualifications issued for each cycle by each state, with reference to the number of ECTS credits and to the learning outcomes that characterise each qualification. In particular, the description of the learning outcomes of bachelor’s and master’s programmes was carried out using some shared descriptors. These descriptors, known as Dublin descriptors (named after the city in which they were finally defined), do not refer to any disciplinary field or professional area in particular and are built on the following elements:

- knowledge and understanding;
- applying knowledge and understanding;
- making judgements;
- communication skills;
- learning skills.

(Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005)

Soft skills in the curriculum of Italian master’s programmes in adult and continuing education

According to the European procedure, and in consideration of the asset of the Italian higher education system after the university reform started in 1999, the Italian Qualification Framework, issued in 2010, states that, at the end of the second cycle of higher education, all students have to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their own study field by using advanced references, formulating hypotheses, and applying original ideas in a research context;

- apply their knowledge and understanding to their own professional activities, conceptualizing and solving unfamiliar problems in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields;
- collect, interpret, and integrate data and information by creating assessments which reflect social and ethical concerns linked to the application of their knowledge;
- communicate in a clear manner their conclusions and their underlying rationale to specialised and non-specialised audiences;
- develop their learning abilities in order to be able to continuously study in a self-directed and autonomous way.

(MIUR, 2011)

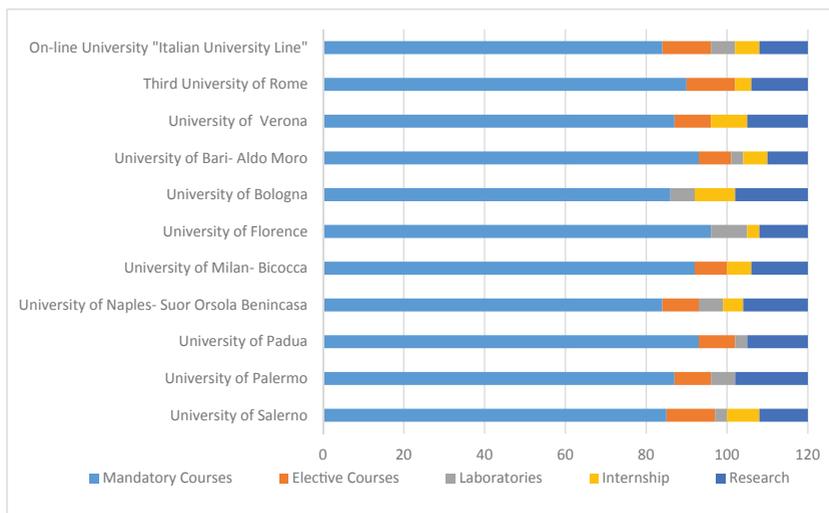
Beside describing the soft skills common to all master's programmes, the Dublin descriptors also provide the basis through which each university defines the learning outcomes that each student has to reach according to the professional profile focused by the programme he or she is attending. Regarding the master's programmes in adult and continuing education in Italy, the analysis of the official documents published on the ministerial web portal 'University' highlights some important information.

In the academic year 2016/17, eleven master's programmes in adult and continuing education were offered at the national level. They are evenly distributed across the country and, aside from local specifications, generally aim to develop professionals able to manage, plan, implement, and evaluate educational and training actions in the field of adult and continuing education and human resource management, including development and career guidance.

A deeper look into the contents of each programme shows that the curricula are composed of different kinds of courses, laboratories, extracurricular activities (in particular internships), and research activities mostly related to pedagogical, psychological and sociological knowledge. Courses in the humanities and technology make up the rest (Fig. 3).

The consistent weight given to courses in terms of ECTS points suggests that many of the soft skills linked to the specific professional profiles focused by the different master's programmes are being developed as part of the coursework. However, the analysis of the syllabus of different courses shows that only rarely are soft skills explicitly mentioned as expected learning outcomes.

Figure 3: ECTS distribution in Italian master's programmes in adult and continuing education.



Source: Authors' compilation of Ministerial data from <http://www.universitaly.it/index.php/cercacorsi/universita>

Including information about the goals of laboratories, internships, and research activities into the analysis confirms that soft skills are usually developed informally. Nevertheless, as stated by a recent publication, it is not uncommon to couple these informal ways of developing soft skills with reflective practices that help students to take advantage of experiential and work-related learning activities (Boffo, Fedeli, Lo Presti, Melacarne, & Vianello, 2017).

To find examples of training activities that include soft skills as expected learning outcomes, it is more appropriate to consider the integrative training offers provided by guidance, tutoring, and placement services. Indeed, these services often seem to provide the opportunity to be trained for the development of the specific soft skills identified by partner institutions or by students themselves. In order to illustrate the mechanisms through which some of these services work, looking at the experience of the University of Florence could be very useful. The career service of this university has in fact promoted the establishment of a 'Light Assessment Centre' for the development of soft skills based on a survey which asked local human resources managers about the most relevant soft skills for the university graduates they are hiring (Boffo, 2018).

Given the almost complete lack of explicit reference to soft skills in the institutional documents of the master's programmes in adult and continuing education, it is nearly impossible to guess which might be relevant for graduates' transitions into the labour market without referring to specific research projects.

In this perspective, the analysis performed in the framework of the international research project 'Skills and Labour Market to Raise Youth Employment' (Project Number: 527690-LLP-1-2012-1-PT-LEONARDO-LMP) can be helpful for identifying the essential soft skills that help adult education professionals find and keep a job in the context of the Italian social economy. Analysing materials gathered in the two years of research, the project states in fact that, even if 'the demand for professional profiles and workers' competences is conditioned by the basic functions performed by the organisation in question' (p. 98), the demand for transversal competences and soft skills corresponds to the necessity of combining technical skills with 1) personal qualities, 2) communication skills, and 3) interpersonal skills (p. 106) (see Table 2).

Table 2: The demand for soft skills for the future that emerged from the SALM research based on the Italian sample.

<i>1. Personal qualities</i>
Self-management
Self-control
Sense of responsibility
Adaptability
Initiative
Emergency management
Being patient
Strategic thinking
<i>2. Communication skills</i>
Transmissibility
Expressivity
Empathy
Effective communication with external environment
<i>3. Interpersonal skills</i>
Teamwork
Coaching
Personal development
Conflict management
Peer cooperation

Source: Boffo, Federighi, & Torlone (2015, p. 107)

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The case study of India

Soft skills approach in India

A shortage of skills is one of the major constraints to continuous economic growth in India (International Labour Organisation, 2007). On the basis of these studies and observations, it has been found that in the sector of adult education, the concept of soft skills is neglected in India. Most of the government policies and documents emphasised the hard skills (NPSD, 2009), so it seemed that adult or youth employability is less affected due to the lower orientation towards soft skills and training in the sector of adult education.

It has been observed that in the Indian context, soft skills are considered only in the private sector or in multi-national companies such as BPOs, Deloitte, and others. These multi-national companies effectively provide in-service training and pre-service training to their employees. Furthermore, it has also been observed on the basis of discussions with expert in adult education in India that, based on their observations, there is no need to provide training to adults because they have more experience and because of that experience, they can overcome all problems. Therefore, it has been found that if there were less training of soft skills, the result would be less employability in the sector of adult education in India (Indian policies, reviews).

Soft skills are 'people skills' consisting of personal attributes that drive an individual's potential for sustained growth and enhance their social interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Robbins & Hunsaker, 1996).

Soft skills have been defined as 'the cluster of personality traits, social graces, language skills, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us in varying degrees' (Career Opportunities News, 2002).

Fundamental soft skills are: self-awareness and self-esteem, critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, empathy, coping with emotions, handling peer pressure, and negotiation skills (WHO, 1997).

The author personally observed that government documents and policies are focused on hard skills in the adult education sector, but it was also evident that the government makes the policy for adults only with regard to hard skills.

Based on field observations and interviews conducted with ten adult employees and with the various social workers, policy makers, and experts, it has been said that there is no need for adults to acquire soft skills because they already have sufficient knowledge and experience to deal with personal problems and they can easily communicate with colleagues. The government is making a very strong

initiative promoting hard skills for adults in the organised and unorganised sectors, including Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs). Even its new education policy, the government is not taking any initiative towards soft skills (National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986).

Agencies of soft skills and role of higher education in this context

After reviewing the official policies, we find that there is no formal criterion for soft skills training. Due to that, the higher education is not taking any initiative for soft skills, so employability in the sector of adult education is not up to the mark.

There are some organised and unorganised agencies providing hard skills to the sector of adult education, such as Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs). These agencies provide hard skills such as tailoring, beautification, computer learning, documentation, and others.

The Indian higher education system and master's degree curricula in education

The term 'higher education' in India refers to post-secondary education (10+2), beginning after 10 years of primary and secondary education and 2 years of senior secondary or tertiary-level education. Higher education degrees include bachelor's degrees, post-graduate degrees, and research degrees (M.Phil and PhD). Higher education in India holds a significant place in the country's educational process. Since independence, higher education has been regarded as one of the important tools for national development, as it has the important task of preparing leaders for different paths of life, such as social, intellectual, political, cultural, scientific and technological careers. It serves to understand life and to enlighten the people (Gandhi, 2013, p. 63).

The higher education system in India is experiencing a transition phase from a conventional education system, or teacher-centred mode of instruction, to a progressive education system that is more student-centred and employment-oriented (University Grants Commission, 2012).

Various initiatives and transformations have taken place, designed to keep pace with growing industry demands and the global positioning of the Indian economy. India is the single largest provider of global talent, with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian system (Ernst & Young, 2013, p. 8). The Indian education system focuses almost exclusively on technical knowledge while ignoring critical areas like industry exposure and soft skills development (Padhi, 2014, p. 3). As a matter of fact, the 'freshers' (those who do not have any work experience, or who have just finished their professional degrees) face career

limitations due to their limited English language capabilities, weak communication skills, and poor interpersonal skills (Askari, 2010, p. 2).

Employability is a very crucial aspect of the higher education system. The need of the hour is to take serious consideration of the career paths to help students acquire the skills demanded by the labour market, such as analytical thinking skills, communication skills, presentation skills, teamwork skills, and IT skills (Public & Social Policies Management Group & YES Bank, 2014, p. 12). Various recommendations from the National Knowledge Commission Report also point out the lack of spoken and written English skills. English is the primary language of teaching and learning in all higher education courses in India, meaning that a lack of English skills becomes a serious obstacle to accessing resources and entering the job market (National Knowledge Commission Report to the Nation 2006–2009, p. 49). The Indian higher education system has gone through many reforms and transformations in order to raise the quality of education.

Higher education institutions across the globe are implementing a system of credits, including the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Europe and the National Qualifications Framework in Australia.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), India's leading body in higher education, which is responsible for coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards and the release of grants, observed in 2014 that in spite of the large number of public and private educational institutions engaged in imparting education in India, the present education system produces young minds lacking knowledge, confidence, values, and skills. One reason might be the complete lack of relationships between education, employment, and skill development in the conventional education system (UGC, 2009).

The University Grants Commission argued that there is need to allow for more flexibility in the education system. Hence, with a view to quality in higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2015 implemented the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) for graduate/postgraduate diplomas and certificate programmes at the higher education level.

Choice Based Credit System means that students (undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses) have the option to choose from the prescribed courses, including core, elective, soft skill, or minor courses. Under this scheme, students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, take additional courses, and acquire more than the required credits. This system facilitates student mobility across educational institutions inside and outside of India. Depending on their interests and aims, students can choose interdisciplinary, intra-disciplinary, and skill-based courses (especially soft skill-oriented courses). So the CBCS not

only offers opportunities and avenues to learn core subjects but also to explore additional avenues of learning beyond the core subjects for individual holistic development (UGC, 2015, pp. 5–7). Holistic development enables individuals to acquire formal qualifications along with soft skills, contributing to their employability and employment.

The University Grants Commission has emphasised ability enhancement courses (AEC) in addition to core courses under the Choice Based Credit System. Under the CBCS system, the available courses in each semester in a particular discipline consist of core courses, elective courses, and ability enhancement courses:

- 1) Core courses are to be offered in every semester and are compulsory for students enrolled in a given study programme.
- 2) Elective courses are specialised or advanced or supportive to the discipline/subject of study enhancing students' proficiency/skills.
- 3) Ability enhancement courses may be of two kinds: ability enhancement compulsory courses (AECC) and skill enhancement courses (SEC). AECC are courses based on content that leads to knowledge enhancement. These are mandatory for all disciplines, for example environmental science, English communication/MIL communication. SEC courses are value-based and/or skill-based and are aimed at providing hands-on-training, competencies, skills, and the like (UGC, 2015, p. 7).

For example, an undergraduate degree in humanities, social sciences, or commerce may be awarded if a student completes four core papers each in two disciplines of choice, two core papers each in English and MIL respectively, two AECC, a minimum of four SEC, two papers each from a list of discipline-specific elective papers based on the two disciplines of choice selected above, respectively, and two papers from the list of general electives papers. If a student from the mathematics stream is interested in acquiring public speaking skills, under the Choice Based Credit System he can enrol in a public speaking course from another discipline.

Hence, under this system, students have more scope to enhance their skills and more scope to take up projects and assignments and vocational training, including entrepreneurship. According to UGC guidelines, the new system shifts the focus from teacher-centric to learner-centric education. The emphasis is on studying/learning and not on teaching, with the learner being at the centre stage of all academic transactions. This system may help improve students' the job opportunities and enable potential employers to assess the performance of students on a scientific scale.

Conclusion

The two case studies present a different approach to employability and soft skills in a changing labour market with effects on employment.

Moreover, it is clear that it is not possible to talk and reflect on employability from a scientific point of view without considering how curricula are designed and which soft skills should be included. Nonetheless, there are a lot of possibilities from which the 'ideal type' of curriculum emerges. They are:

- employability throughout the whole curriculum;
- employability in the core curriculum;
- work-based or work-related learning incorporated as one or more components within the curriculum;
- employability-related module(s) within the curriculum;
- work-based or work-related learning in parallel with the curriculum (Knight & Yorke, 2004, p. 199).

The juxtaposition shows that a similar approach to employability and soft skills is possible when considering the aim of single modules and/or courses.

- Soft skills are the central point for promoting professionalisation in the educational field. In both countries, the attention to soft skills is very high because, as research has shown, the acquisition of soft skills, the construction of employability, and the transition to the labour market are deeply intertwined. At the same time, there are a lot of differences in the set of soft skills that are considered most important in the two countries. Indeed, different socio-economic contexts require different professional profiles and different skills, although neither Italy nor India can demonstrate that the identification of soft skills to be acquired as part of the curriculum is directly connected to or guided by the labour market. What higher education needs to do is to increase the number of modules and courses directly connected to the practice of students' future professions, as indicated clearly by the graduate employability model, USEM, and the CareerEDGE models (see above), where extracurricular activities and work-related activities are considered the best way to acquire soft skills.
- The approach to employability is quite similar. In both countries, we can observe that the curricula provide at least one module/course that adopts work-based or work-related didactical approach.
- Italian and Indian university curricula are quite different because their main structural elements are different. For example, we can find different contents, types of didactical approach, tools, and so on. In particular, no curricular

practical training is included in Indian curricula, as if practical experience should take place separately from theoretical moments.

To conclude, we can affirm that juxtaposing curricula, soft skills, and employability approaches at the global level is very important, because these features are deeply intertwined with the internationalisation of higher education in the care and education field and the construction of a civil society based on the intercultural exchange of best practices and the development of a unified society. Moreover, studies in adult education are part of the foundation of every democratic society.

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Learning and work: Efficacy of university internships for syrian and ugandan education students

Abstract: Internships and related strategies within the work-related learning umbrella are credited for bridging university education and the world of work. From a comparative perspective, this paper, based on an interview study, discusses the Syrian university internship model for students in teacher education and the Ugandan university internship model in adult and community education.

Introduction

Ongoing changes in society inevitably alter workplace requirements to the extent that even university graduates with the most job-specific qualifications need an orientation to match the demand. For decades, higher education has been under pressure from industry leaders to prepare work-ready graduates (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; EU Skills Panorama, 2014). In Uganda and Syria, there are renewed concerns over the quality of higher education and the increasing number of unemployed university graduates (El-Araby, 2011; Nuwagaba, 2012). As articulated by Moore and Morton (2017), the cost of poor work-readiness 'not only holds graduates back from gaining satisfactory employment, but also has an inhibiting effect on the performance of employing organisations, and ultimately the broader economy' (p. 592).

The study is a contribution to a better analysis of how universities attempt to bridge higher education and the world of work. It builds on the collective learning of a group of master's and doctoral students from five countries (Denmark, Portugal, Italy, Syria, and Uganda) who focused on work-related learning and teaching methods within the framework of the 2017 International Winter School on Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong (COMPALL) at the University of Würzburg.

The study explores and examines the efficacy of university internships for Syrian and Ugandan degree students in teacher education and in adult and community education, respectively. The main question is: 'How are university internship programmes at the two case-study universities organised, and how do they manage to promote the work-readiness of students?' The study, which focuses more on

the process and less on the outcome or impact of internships, seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the efficacy of internships in the two countries.

Theoretical framework

Tackling the education-to-work transition challenges of university students is a global topical issue with varied practical and theoretical dimensions for education and employment systems, policies and practices (Boffo, Federighi, & Torlone, 2015). Therefore, the labour market increasingly challenges the curriculum and pedagogical autonomy of universities (Ayoubi, Al Zarif, & Khalifa, 2017; European Commission, 2014; Boden & Nedeva, 2010). Work readiness and employability, often used interchangeably, are the common concepts that communicate the demand for education and training to ensure that students are fit for the labour market (Harvey, 2003; WEF, 2014).

Besides job-specific technical competence, graduates are expected to possess specific skills, which are variedly labelled with terms ranging from soft, generic, transferable to social skills (Crebert, 2004; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Kaiser, 2013). These skills include intrapersonal and emotional intelligence, literacy and communication practices, good personal judgement, self-management, leadership, and lifelong learning tools (Bennet, 2002; Shoenfelt, Kottke, & Stone, 2012). To ensure work-ready graduates, universities have had to rethink teaching and learning approaches (Yorke & Knight, 2006), including the adoption of work-related learning methods among other options. The core of work-related learning pedagogy is the enhancement of the interconnectedness of learning and workplace realities (Frison, Fedeli, & Taylor 2015).

Adult education as an academic discipline has embraced a pluralism of theories such as experiential learning, situated learning, and communities of practice, which feature the core tenets of participation and collaboration; and these, of course, are connected to work-related learning and internships in particular (Wenger, 1998). Internships as a prevalent work-related learning model offer students the opportunity to learn with and from the community of professionals (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mihail, 2006). Understood and designed in various ways, internships in the context of this discussion refer to mandatory work experiences or placements within a higher education curriculum framework but operating outside the direct routine authority of the university (Bullock, 2009). Besides, we acknowledge the range of university internship variants as defined by formats relating to timing, duration, location, credit-bound, and intern remuneration (Holdaway, Johnson, Ratsoy, & Friesen, 1994).

A selective review of the literature on mandatory university internships in a range of disciplines from medicine, nursing, law, hospitality, food, finance to education points to two interrelated themes: (i) mutual benefits to students, employers and universities, and by extension the interplay of their roles and that of state actors; (ii) conditions, opportunities, and challenges in enhancing the value, effectiveness, and impact of internships (Maskooki, Rama, & Raghunandan, 1998; McNamara, 2009; Walmsley, Rhodri, & Jameson, 2012; Shoenfelt et al., 2012). The literature points out the conditions that influence the efficacy of internship processes as well as the shortcomings associated with weak design and delivery approaches. These dimensions effectively bring into context two comparative categories, namely the role of actors and policy, which were part of the focus for the the comparative group work during the 2017 Würzburg Winter School on Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

From the literature, we derive four parameters for constructing an internship quality framework, which also contains links to the efficacy dimensions informing the data collection tool we used in this study. The framework is helpful in designing an enabling environment for the three most important stakeholders (students, universities, and employers) to effectively fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities (Divine, Miller, Wilson, & Linrud, 2008). First, is a strong university-industry partnership, which provides an enabling institutional arrangement to galvanise the interests and aspirations of students, universities, employers, and the industry in general (Feldmann, Folks, & Turneley, 1999). The partnership is useful for enforcing rules and procedures for ensuring compliance with quality standards and agreed-upon work and learning standards. Second, academic preparedness and relevance are core considerations, because they facilitate students' learning and adaptation to new professional realities at the workplace. Internship activities and tasks ought to be relevant to the academic discipline and within reasonable limits and breadth of students' competence. Workplace supervisors ought to guide interns through their zone of proximal development (Fernández, Guerrón-Quintana, Kuester, & Rubio-Ramírez, 2015; Warford, 2011). Third, professional support and assessment provided by highly qualified university and workplace supervisors who understand the epistemologies of workplace learning are central. Valuable internships often embrace student's autonomy, collegial work relationships, social support, authentic learning opportunities, scaffolding, and mentorship. Assessment strategies need to be clarified and shared in order to inform the grading so as to offer meaningful guidance for students' career trajectory (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Fourth, ensuring prompt and adequate resources to meet the professional, logistical, and personal needs of students, university staff in charge of internships,

and workplace supervisors is paramount. Time, space, and related facilities for workplace supervisors to effectively provide required guidance as well as all the pedagogical and logistical support for university supervisors combine to influence the quality of internship processes and outcomes (Holdaway et al., 1994).

Study context

Two case-study universities (Damascus University in Syria and Kyambogo University in Uganda) were selected to constitute the study focus and defining entities to identify and locate participants. Syria, a former French colony with about 21 million inhabitants by 2011, is one of the Middle East and North Africa countries with the highest youth unemployment rates in the world (European Training Foundation, 2012). The first university was established in 1920s, and until 2001, when the state adopted a neoliberal social economy to license private universities, higher education was state controlled and publicly financed (El Hassan, 2013). After obtaining a General Secondary Education (GSE) Certificate, students are eligible for a four- to five-year university degree course. Damascus University is the largest and oldest public university in the country; and it is not so much affected by the war conditions as the other universities in the country due to its location in the heart of the capital, which is relatively safe. The focus of this study is the internship programme by the Primary School Teacher Education Department in the Faculty of Education, which is a compulsory component of the four-year undergraduate degree in education. Officially referred to as practical education, it is designed for students to work in primary schools to get exposure to the school environment, the teaching process, and a real-world experience (Mutlak, 2010).

Uganda, a British colony until 1962 with about 35 million people according to the 2012 census, is one of the youngest countries in the world. The country's higher education journey started when the colonial government established a technical school in 1922, later transformed into a university in the 1960s (Tumuheki, 2017). Owing to its liberalisation policy, the Ugandan government opened up higher education provision to the private sector in the 1990s; by 2007, over 37 institutions of higher learning had been licensed. While the state retains its regulatory function, financing and delivery is largely private (National Council for Higher Education, 2007). Ugandan secondary students are eligible for a three- to five-year undergraduate degree course after obtaining a good Uganda Advanced School of Education Certificate. Kyambogo University is one of the seven state-controlled universities in the country, and it is organised in six faculties. Internships are increasingly becoming a common feature across all faculties. The three-year Bachelor of Adult and Community Education degree features a mandatory internship component.

Methodology

This paper is based on data and information generated through a qualitative case study methodology that enabled internship supervisors, students, and graduates to narrate and describe their experiences and perceptions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The comparative perspective of the study was aimed at illuminating the forces and factors that define and influence the differences and similarities between the internship practices of the two universities (Bray, Adamson, & Mason, 2014; Reischmann, 2011). A search and review of relevant macro- and meso-level documents was undertaken to gain insights into how the internships under study are being organised and managed (Table 1).

Table 1: List of secondary data sources.

Type of document	Country	Title
Central Government Statutory Instrument – policy	Uganda	Circular Standing Instruction No. 3 of 2011: Internship placements in the Public Service
Central Government Pronouncement – policy	Uganda	Ministry of Education and Sports Ministerial Policy Statement Financial Year 2017/2018, presented to parliament for the budget debate
University operational policy	Uganda	Kyambogo University Strategic Plan 2012/13–2022/23
University operational policy	Uganda	Kyambogo University Guidelines on Management of Kyambogo University Examinations and Processing of Results
University guide for workplace supervisors	Uganda	Students field work assessment form for agency/organisation supervisor
University guide for students	Uganda & Syria	Fieldwork report form (UG) Practical education report form (SY)
University guide for university supervisors	Uganda & Syria	Supervision sheet (UG) Practical education progress report form (SY)
University guide for university supervisors	Uganda & Syria	How fieldwork is supervised (UG) Assessment template (SY)

Source: Authors' own

A purposive sampling approach was used to achieve maximum variation in the selection of study participants (Coyne, 1997). 18 participants were selected in equal proportions from Uganda and Syria, as indicated in Table 2. As indicated

in the table, the role of each category of participants has immense influence on the value and efficacy of internships.

Table 2: Research participants.

Category of actors: 9 for each country	Sample	Reason
Workplace internship supervisors	4	They are directly responsible for supporting and guiding students during the internship placement period. They possess first-hand perspectives on the students' behaviour, performance, and learning practices.
University internship supervisors	4	They directly deal with students' internship needs and requirements in line with the university internship programme; their insights into the factors influencing internship efficacy are crucial.
University internship coordinators	2	On behalf of the university and faculty, they play a supervisory role in ensuring compliance with technical and administrative procedures. Their perspectives on the policy and governance implications for internships are essential in fully understanding the practice.
Current students	4	Their fresh memories of their internship experience and what they are going through at the university helps to give the study a current perspective.
Graduates	4	Graduates' reflections on their internship experience in relation to current life and work realities are helpful in examining the usefulness of internships.

Source: Authors' own

The participants were engaged, between March and April 2017, in standardised open-ended interviews that helped to yield in-depth and contextual evidence on the state of internship programmes at the two universities. The interview protocol had three sections: (i) basic data about the participant, (ii) internship in practice with eight questions, and (iii) personal view and reflections about the internship experience with four questions. 'Interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 349)

In Uganda, the main author, supported by a research assistant, conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants. Informed consent was sought beforehand, and all participants agreed to have sessions captured by handwriting and voice recorder. In Syria, the researcher used the WhatsApp voice-call platform to conduct interviews with six participants who had Internet access and transcribed

the interviews. To reach the others, without Internet access, a research assistant who lives in Syria conducted face-to-face interviews with three participants, transcribed them, and sent them to the researcher.

Data organisation and analysis was undertaken within the generic qualitative data analysis framework and procedure. 18 transcripts were created, and rigorous coding was undertaken. Emerging codes were grouped into themes. The themes were further analysed and interpreted to describe the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders.

Internships in education studies in Uganda and Syria

Findings are organised and presented under eight headings, namely governance and management; aim, objectives, and benefits; financing; timing and duration; tasks and skills; supervision and support; assessment and grading; challenges. Case internships are from two contexts: a primary school teacher education degree course at Damascus University in Syria, and an adult and community education degree at Uganda's Kyambogo University.

In Syria, primary schools are required by the Ministry of Education to provide internship placements for education students. In Uganda, students search for placements themselves in all sorts of government and non-government institutions. In both countries, the university writes a recommendation letter that the students use to apply for placements.

Governance and management

In both countries, there are related policies and rules, but they are not firmly mainstreamed and enforced, which impacts internship governance and management. In Uganda, the most significant high-level state policy on university internships, in recent times, is reflected in a ministerial statement to the parliament that 'for the inadequate opportunities for internships in public universities [...] it is partnering with Uganda Manufacturers Association to find placements for students [...] (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2017, p. 28). In its 10-year strategic plan ending in 2023, Kyambogo University plans to place students through memorandums of understanding with employers, but no substantive policy is in place to implement this strategy. In 2011, the government issued Standing Instruction No. 3 to regulate the collaboration between public service institutions and training institutions. None of the interviewed stakeholders expressed awareness of this policy.

University supervisors, students, and graduates mentioned some departmental guidelines relating to the daily routines of students and basic supervision tips. The

one Ugandan university supervisor who said that there existed an explicit Faculty Industrial Training and Community School Practice Policy was contradicted by his colleagues who denied knowledge of such a policy framework. Indeed, no documentary evidence could be obtained apart from the supervision leaflets and forms issued by the department. In addition, workplace supervisors do not have a formal internship policy. Syrian students mentioned some rules relating to intern obligations and grading procedures by the supervisors. The university supervisors singled out the rules relating to their roles. Workplace supervisors presented modified extracts relating to the expected conduct of interns.

Aim, objectives, and benefits

Both Syrian and Ugandan university supervisors mentioned that the aim of internships is to enable students to do the practical tasks related to their future jobs and to obtain the required skills. They argued that the aim is to link theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

Current students and graduates shared similar views but added the benefits of minimising the anxiety associated with job market entry and of generating a positive attitude and self-confidence through exploring the work environment. Syrian workplace supervisors consider internship programmes a way to help the schools keep up with modern methods and benefit from young students' ideas and energy. They also consider it a duty and social responsibility. The Ugandan workplace supervisor talked about his organisations' new thinking about internships as a recruitment strategy. One of them said: 'Some interns have been retained in the teaching department; we have five teachers, in social work, I am one of them.'

Financing

In both Syria and Uganda, internship financing is a shared responsibility. The students and/or their sponsors meet the costs related to their transport to and from workplaces at host institutions. In both cases, universities pay for transport and related experiences to facilitate lecturers who are assigned to visit and supervise the students on internships. In Syria, internship placements are guaranteed free of charge by schools in accordance with the directive of the Ministry of Education. Teaching-learning materials for internships are provided by workplace institutions. University supervisors in both countries mentioned inadequate financing, which impacts the value and effectiveness of internship programmes.

Timing and duration

In both countries, internships are organised after students have been exposed to the basics of their professions. In Syria, internships are undertaken in the second semester of the third year and in the first and second semesters of the fourth year, which translates into three to four weeks. Ugandan students take their ten-week internships in the second semester of the second and third years. The university supervisors explained that starting the internship in the second and subsequent academic years is appropriate, because students need to complete some courses and obtain the basic academic information related to concepts, theories, strategies, and methods.

Tasks and skills

In both cases, internship tasks are determined within the context of the routine operations of workplace institutions, and largely determined by the workplace supervisors. The role of university supervisors in this regard is apparently mute. The Syrian students and graduates mentioned lesson planning and teaching as the main internship tasks. Both workplace and university supervisors said that students undertake all the roles related to the teacher position in class and outside the class, including taking notes, observing, and taking charge of their work. Ugandan interns and supervisors mentioned more engagement in administrative tasks and generic duties than in discipline-based tasks. Students in both countries said that they developed a range of generic skills and attributes including self-confidence and communication skills.

Supervision and support

University supervision is mainly through support visits to interns by university supervisors. While interns are visited four times in a month in Syria, their Ugandan counterparts are visited once or twice during the entire internship period. Short sessions of not more than 30 minutes are held to provide feedback for Ugandan interns; their Syrian counterparts receive weekly sessions of 20–30 minutes in the first two semesters, while in the last third semester, they send a video recording of their school working hours to the university supervisors. Workplace supervisors support interns through the assignment of tasks and subsequent follow-ups, but within the framework of their work routines. Ugandan university supervisors mentioned using telephone and e-mails in providing support and guidance to their students. One of them mentioned the use of social media, including a WhatsApp group to stay in constant contact.

Assessment and grading

In both cases, internship assessment results constitute part of the overall course grading and academic award, and university supervisors take the final decision on the final grade for students' internship performance. In Uganda, the university issues an assessment grid for both the university and workplace supervisors. In addition to the assessment of their daily and routine performance, students are required to write an internship report, which is assessed and graded; it constitutes 60% of the overall grade.

Challenges

Participants mentioned a number of challenges across the two countries. The relationship between universities and the host institutions is largely loose without firm institutional arrangements to enforce the required partnership. This has multiple effects on the quality of relationships between the interns, the supervisors, and entire work practices. In Syria, the student teachers are more or less visitors, because there is no real integration into the work environment. The Ugandan experience might be slightly better; it is only contextual and dependent on the discretionary approach of workplace supervisors. In both countries, limited financial resources for supervision affect the regularity and quality of the guidance and feedback provided by both workplace and university supervisors.

Crowded workplaces due to the ever-increasing number of students seeking internships undermine the primary purpose of contributing to the development of students' work readiness. In Uganda, adult and community education students compete for internship placements with their counterparts from other social science disciplines. Syrian primary schools providing internship placements for Damascus University students are crowded with pupils, owing to the increasing number of internally displaced families from other cities and schools. Likewise, the increasing number of trainees who leave their universities to join Damascus University put extra weight and responsibilities on the schools and the university.

Discussion

This section deals with the socio-economic and political forces that influence internship practices in the two country case studies with a focus on two main categories for comparison: the role of actors and policy, as extrapolated around five aspects (i) weak management manifested by limited awareness of rules and regulations; (ii) inadequate financing; (iii) unbalanced relationship between university

and internship host institutions; (iv) strength and intensity of supervision and support; and (v) academic relevance of internship activities and tasks.

The similarly limited awareness of the rules and regulations in both countries is not only caused by the endemic structural weakness of the state and its institutions – which can be ascribed to the diminishing coordination capacity and directive role of state institutions to ensure compliance with rules and regulations in Uganda, and to the long civil strife and violence in Syria – but is also determined at the micro level. Supervisors, in fact, in a perceived *laissez-faire* dimension, choose how to implement the internship programme, how to provide guidance and feedback to students, and how to realise the aim of current education.

A second similarity in both countries is the inadequate funding of internships even if final internship assessment results are a mandatory requirement in the overall grading and academic award across both cases. The common cause at the macro level was underlined by participants; namely, the diminished role of the state in financing university education amidst the liberalisation and massification of higher education. These budget cuts seem to mirror a political idea of privatisation, which does not consider revamping the higher education system to be one of the state's main objectives.

Stronger supervision and monitoring in Syria as compared to Uganda is attributable to the institutional framework of the Syrian Ministry of Education with its controlling influence on primary schools. In contrast to the adult and community education course, which is not assigned to any specific ministry without such an infrastructure, enforcement of a similar policy is not tenable. Student teachers' engagement in relevant academic activities and tasks during the internship period at primary school is in sharp contrast with student adult educators in Uganda, whose diverse disciplinary background and lack of a strong home ministry lead to engagement in largely generic community mobilisation tasks. These differences are determined by choices at the macro level, because it seems that the two countries have different aims: the centralisation of the education system in Syria and a possible orientation towards privatisation or the autonomy of higher institutions.

The dominant role of universities versus the weak role of host institutions on matters relating to internship design, including assessment and grading in both cases, is attributable to the long tradition giving universities unrivalled authority in determining who passes examinations and who does not. In Syria, where the university works with primary schools, the asymmetrical relationship between the two categories of actors cannot allow for equal responsibility and authority. In Uganda, workplace supervisors and their institutions offer internship placements just as a gesture of goodwill, but without strong awareness of the importance to

create a strong partnership for quality internship experiences. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the universities' weak institutional framework regarding internships in both countries is a reflection of poor governance and leadership that characterise public higher university education. Internship management and programmes do not have enforceable quality assurance parameters. The universities' dominance further points to a legacy of separate worlds of education and work, which again is a result of a deficiency in the policies at macro, meso, and micro levels.

Conclusion and recommendations

The required enabling environment for internships to effectively contribute to students' work readiness for the primary education sector in Syria and the adult and community education field of practice in Uganda is at variance with ideal conditions, particularly in regard to governance, resources, and optimum university-industry relationships. Amidst the prevailing conditions, stakeholders expressed trust and conviction regarding the value and usefulness of internships in supporting the transition of young adults from university into their profession and work life. In unison, students and graduates affirmed that internships are important for their career growth and development.

On the overall, the efficacy of the case-study university internships, as judged from the perspectives of our framework of four parameters, is highly questionable. Besides, there are great possibilities for increased effectiveness and usefulness of internships once deliberate efforts are taken to design internships with clear quality indicators and outcomes. The study findings and reviewed literature corroborate this finding in their emphasis on the core aspects of: strong university-industry partnerships; academic preparedness and relevance; professional support and assessment; and prompt and adequate resources. Traditional adult learning epistemologies and principles including participation, cooperation, and partnership (as included by several theoretical frameworks such as situated learning, communities of practice, and experiential learning) need to inform the university internship architecture much as they are located in a 'school education regime'.

Tackling the internal challenges of education systems can always yield tangible results once external structural forces are equally resolved. Uganda's private-sector-led economy and a liberalised education model characterised by a laissez-faire internship regime need a competent state to claim some degree of an interventionist character to facilitate university-industry partnerships. In addition to dealing with inherent political, cultural, and economic structural limitations like those in Uganda, Syria needs a stable government for education and employment systems to effectively support young adults in translating their skills into life and working

contexts. Internships can effectively help students of both countries to develop the much-needed soft skills for their occupation and social mobility in schools and communities as well as in the larger employment contexts.

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Enhancing employability through innovative teaching methods in adult learning and education: A comparative study of Nigeria and India

Abstract: The study is based on the theory of andragogy, reviewing the practice and teaching methods of adult education in Nigeria and India with life stories from ten adults. The study arrived at a framework of innovative teaching methods that can be used in formal, non-formal and informal contexts to aid employability based on its findings.

Introduction

In today's globalised world, we are familiar with the concept of the knowledge-based society, in which education and work are interconnected. If we accept the idea that education should provoke positive change at the individual and society level, then adult learning and education (ALE) would be fundamental in societies experiencing dynamic economic changes, such as developing countries. This was confirmed in the *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, which emphasised the fact that education boosts skills that invariably make people successful and flexible in the labour market (UIL, 2016, p. 12). In the recent debate, employability is not only seen as prosperity but also as an effect of individual learning taking place in formal, non-formal, and informal settings as part of a lifelong learning process. Learners are empowered and enhanced by developing critical, reflective abilities. By developing these attributes, techniques, or experiences, employability enables learners to get jobs or to progress within the same career or to have a career transition. Employability is a main concern and issue for developing countries, because being enrolled in a professional course or formal education does not assure employability.

In recent years, we can track the changes happening in higher education to the idea of students' employability – especially in countries with a developed neoliberal economy, where the major role of tertiary institutions is the production of an appropriately trained workforce that fits employers' needs (Boden &

Nedeva, 2010, p. 38). Although building knowledge societies in terms of competitive economies places higher demands on individuals' educational level, there is a need for considering wider educational and cultural horizons, especially when analysing countries in economic transition or development.

Although developing countries struggle with and focus on illiteracy, ALE can be seen as a main factor for economic development, providing skills relevant to employment. This is important because employability means much more than getting a job. It is related to lifelong learning (LL), because individuals need a range of attributes, knowledge, skills, values, and social networks to gain and maintain employment throughout their lifetime. This perspective of employability shows that education should go beyond the formal school age and extend to adulthood. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind the broader view of education, which includes indigenous knowledge and authentic local experience in learning processes between teachers and adult learners. This is the aim of ALE: to develop active citizenship, to enable productive ageing, and to promote employability.

Through adult education issues of employability concerning young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults can be addressed. The method of teaching to bring this about is very important, because it determines the extent to which the aims and objectives of learning are achieved (Bakare, 2010, p. 147). This makes it essential that ALE for employability adopts a teaching method that involves active participation and utilisation of adult learners' knowledge. This can be found in andragogy theory, which is a process model wherein a set of assumptions is identified to ensure the involvement of adult learners in the teaching and learning process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 115). Based on this, this study presents a comparative analysis of Nigeria and India with the specific purpose of providing answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the employment status and ALE practice in the two countries?
2. Which traditional ALE teaching methods are used in the two countries?
3. Which innovative ALE teaching methods can be used in the two countries to promote employability?

Theoretical framework

Using the tenets of andragogy, it can be inferred that learning provided by ALE must be experiential, drawing on the knowledge and characteristics of adult learners (Bakare, 2010, p. 131). Andragogy assumes that a teaching method ideal for employability must be one that helps adults understand that skills have a human relationship which must be learned at home, in school, or in social or formal

groups. To ensure the acquisition of employability skills in adulthood and in any learning context, a teaching method should

1. encourage learning inquisitiveness;
2. encourage and move learners toward independence and self-directed learning;
3. ensure learners identify themselves as rich resources for learning;
4. revolve around real-world application of learners;
5. enhance performance in learners' lives through learning forums;
6. encourage and motivate adults to continually seek to update their knowledge and skills.

Teaching methods that fit into the above tenets can be regarded as innovative, because they will be within learner's social settings, make use of community wisdom, knowledge, and experiences; and train adults in both hard skills and soft skills, which are qualities of a good ALE teaching method (Okenimkpe, 2003, pp. 176–177).

Teaching in ALE and employability

In simple terms, a teaching method can be defined as the overall plan for systematic presentation based on an approach including specific activities known as techniques (Brown, 2001, p. 34). In ALE, the teaching method to be used should be one that goes beyond giving knowledge to empowering learners to be self-dependent in their learning activities. This is the difference between the conventional act of teaching children and the act of teaching adults. The teaching of adults includes the development of social and professional skills, which can be provided by ALE as a solution to formal education deficiencies. ALE contributes to the developmental needs of developing countries (Wadhwa, 2000, pp. 41–45).

ALE can also be regarded as multidimensional education aimed at providing knowledge and imparting skills in an integrated manner. It is based on the underlying idea that the needs of workers require specifically tailored programmes relating to employable skills (Jha, Goswami, & Surana, 2015, p. 26). ALE as an aspect of LL helps to equip adults with job-specific occupational skills and inter-personal skills that will allow learners to enter into and attain some success in work world. The teaching-learning strategies for employability skills must be both guided and self-directed and involve the application of knowledge and skills.

Workforce employability is essential to turn structural change into an opportunity for all. Through innovative teaching methods in adult education, connections are to be established between study, personal development, and other activities

that influence learners' ability to find employment and be successful in their chosen jobs. Personal skills such as communication, leadership, self-motivation, team-work, time management, listening, ability to work under pressure, making decisions, problem-solving, creativity, and so forth can be acquired, developed, and improved. Depending on the definition of ALE in the local context, the method employed for teaching may vary, and this may indirectly affect employability.

Methodology

This study was a qualitative study employing the narrative inquiry technique, literature review, and observation. These methods were used because they provided stories that were coherent and based on continuing personal experience concerning issues of employability in the countries under review. Moreover, studying and interpreting self-narratives helped the researchers to access the participant's identity and their contextual responses to employability and ALE teaching methods based on their cultural and social world (Lieblich, Tuval Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998 p. 9). We think this is important for a holistic understanding of ALE teaching methods and employability in the countries. We selected a sample size of 5 individuals per country using multistage sampling techniques of purposive and convenience sampling techniques to ensure that the formal, non-formal, and informal context of ALE were represented in each country.

The instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview containing items in three sections. The first, second, and third sections were used to collect participants' personal information, their employment and skills details, and their knowledge of ALE teaching methods, respectively. The results of the interview were presented in a narrative form and interpreted by applying content analysis. Categories are determined after initial documentation of the stories in relation to the research questions and personal experiences of participants. The findings were discussed based on categories of the research questions.

Data analysis

ALE practice and employment in Nigeria

ALE in Nigeria has its basis in the indigenous system of education, where children, youth, and adults have varying levels of knowledge, skills, and values to acquire. With the advent of Islam, Christianity, and colonisation, the indigenous system of education became silent while the Western education model took over. Due to high rate of non-literacy then, we had formal adult education, which started with acquiring the basic 3Rs. Gradually, the obsession with knowledge, skills, and

development required people to update their knowledge and skills, so we had innovative programmes in ALE. From observation, we can group non-formal ALE programmes recognised and practised in Nigeria as:

1. Literacy: This includes basic adult literacy and post literacy.
2. Vocational: This includes workers' education, industrial training, extension education (health and agriculture), and apprenticeships.
3. Continuing education: This includes programmes related to remedial education, extra-mural classes, tertiary-level part-time, sandwich, and distance learning.
4. Civic oriented: This includes programmes related to citizenship, rural education, health education, environmental education, political education, women's education, retirement education, and nomadic education.

The country can be considered to practice formal ALE with academic programmes at various tertiary institutions. Although there are 82 federal, 124 state, and 103 private tertiary institutions in Nigeria, unemployment statistics do not seem to have improved significantly over the years. The government of Nigeria acknowledged this situation by providing schemes such as the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), the Nigerian Government's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and even the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). Aside from these, there are also non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on functional and entrepreneurship literacy to support the government in reducing the rate of unemployment. Statistics from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2016) show that the unemployment rate increased from 21.1 per cent in 2010 to 29.2 per cent in 2015 – this is disheartening. It is important to note that the method used for teaching is integral to employability skills because it ensures that learners get the soft skills and hard skills expected by employers or would-be employers. Hence, adults should not be taught with conventional methods, which often influence ideas and the curriculum. The methods used for teaching adults at the formal, informal, and non-formal levels of ALE have not had an impact in the labour market, as we have seen in the statistics of countries such as Nigeria.

The conventional teaching methods for ALE in Nigeria can be seen from the different types of programmes regarded as ALE. Some scholars recognised methods such as lecture/talk-chalk/telling; discussion; assignment/project/ written work; simulation/demonstration; seminar and workshop (Okenimkpe, 2003, p. 181; Bakare, 2010, pp. 141–144; Zuofa & Olori, 2015, p. 1134), which are common for the civic-oriented and vocational adult education programmes. For the continuing adult education programmes, we find a heavy reliance on the lecture method,

although it is not considered ideal for adult learners. For literacy, Okediran in Thejirika (2013, p. 134) and the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (2008, p. 16) identified a one-on-one instructional approach (referred to in the country as 'each-one-teach-one'), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community (REFLECT), and basic literacy by radio.

These commonly used methods have their benefits, but they also have disadvantages in terms of andragogy principles, because they do not enhance employability skills. For instance, the lecture, project, basic literacy by radio, and seminar formats are often rigid, not allowing the experience of adult learners to come into play. Ojokheta (2007) also disapproved of REFLECT, because his study revealed that when basic literacy learners are allowed to freely discuss the situation they live in to determine their problems, they get carried away and may not be interested in continuing with the learning activity. This may also be applicable to PRA, because both approaches have a way of raising consciousness in learners.

In order to establish teaching methods that are self-directed, active, experiential, collaborative, and narrative, all of which can enhance employability, it may be necessary to exploit traditional means of transmitting knowledge that will make maximum use of learners' experience and participation.

ALE practice and employment in India

In India, there have been conceptual changes in ALE (Shah, 2010, p. 80) from basic literacy, civic literacy, functional literacy, and developmental literacy to critical literacy, that is, moving towards critical thinking empowering learners to ask questions, seek information, take decisions, have equal access to education, health, livelihood, and all public institutions, participate in shaping their realities, create knowledge, participate in the workforce with improved skills, exercise agency fearlessly, and as a consequence, deepen democracy. At the tertiary level, India has 46 central universities, 358 state universities, 123 deemed universities, and 266 private universities. There is recognition that formal education alone cannot provide enough to improve citizens' potential to be employed in the country's economic sector. Consideration is still being given to ALE, as seen in the efforts of the government and international organisations.

For instance, there is the Skill Development Initiative Scheme (SDIS), which provides early school leavers and workers, especially in an unorganised sector, with employable skills. Only about 2.5 million vocational training seats are available in the country, whereas about 12.8 million persons enter the labour market every year (Directorate General of Training, no date). Even out of the training

places, very few are available for early school dropouts. This signifies that a large number of school dropouts do not have access to skill development for improving their employability. There is also the Saakshar Bharat Mission, whose aim is to promote and strengthen adult learning with basic literacy, covering vocational education and skill development, applied science, and sports (UNESCO, no date). Due to its approach, Saakshar Bharat is described as a 'people's programme', with the government acting as facilitator and resource provider, but working closely with local communities to tailor the programme to their needs. India also has programmes such as SWABHIMAAN and DIKSHA that provide functional literacy classes to non-literate adults over a period in both rural and urban areas. Under these programmes 69,681 adults have been made literate (Rotary India Literacy Mission, no date).

With all these efforts, the number of unemployed persons in India went from 5.10 million in 1971 to 46.80 million in 2013 and to 48.26 million in 2014 (Trading Economics, no date). Fortunately, the unemployment rate decreased by half from 9.5 per cent in August 2016 to 4.8 per cent in February 2017 (India Express, 2017). It has been predicted by the International Labour Organisation that the number of unemployed people will increase from 17.7 million in 2016 to 18 million in 2018, even though the country's unemployment rate is expected to go down from 3.5 per cent to 3.4 per cent in 2017 (The Hindu, 2017). This reflects the need to develop entrepreneurs instead of employees, a literate and trained workforce equipped with the right set of hard and soft skills. For this purpose, acquiring employable skills is a must, and education adds to it. To ensure these, teaching methods are important, and according to Mohanty (2007, pp. 41–45), there are various teaching-learning approaches being practiced in India. Literacy methods being used include the traditional method, the alphabetic method, the word method, the letter method, the each-one-teach-one method, the Lauback method, and analytical and synthetic methods. For improving adults' professional and social related skills, demonstration, exposition, role-playing, discussion, group work, and simulation exercises are used.

In spite of using these methods, most learners are unable to acquire employability skills. Therefore, there is a need for adult educators who believe in the role of the facilitator and who constantly link adult learners' vast life experience to the learning material. For this purpose, innovative methods and techniques have to be identified within the community resources that can work equally well in formal, non-formal, and informal settings and develop employability skills.

Narratives

The stories in this section are divided based on the ALE context the participants are presently involved in. The formal ALE context represents regular programmes of tertiary educational institutions; the non-formal ALE context is for those in professional extramural training development programmes; the informal ALE context is for those not enrolled in formal or non-formal training but learning within their immediate environment.

Formal context

Ahmed, a twenty-year-old Nigerian undergraduate studying full time for a B.A. in Political Science, has been able to develop writing, listening, self-motivation, and communication skills through his relationship with and observations of friends and family. He would love to develop more skills such as ICT, leadership, teamwork, and creativity skills, or the ability to work under pressure. He acknowledged that the lecture method, which is the main form of instruction in his tertiary institution, cannot help him achieve his desired skills, because it only helps him to know more about his career, not necessarily to fetch him a job upon graduation. This method does not accommodate learner's participation and contribution, because it is teacher- and content-centred. In learning the desired employability skills, Ahmed prefers doing a practicum. The use of drama and storytelling can be regarded as innovative because it will encourage students' participation and develop teamwork spirit, confidence, and courage. According to Ahmed, lecturers should act more like facilitators and guides to ensure the learning points are emphasised with these methods.

Folake, a thirty-year-old Nigerian in a M.Sc. Forensic Accounting programme, was once in formal employment. Hence, she has communication, creativity, ICT, and presentation skills, most of which she learnt through informal social interactions with people. She constantly upgrades her skills while on the job by reading professional books. Her desire to upgrade her employability status and skills motivated her to enrol in postgraduate studies, and she had to quit her job to manage her studies and family life. She wants to learn more about entrepreneurship skills to enhance her employability, but the straight lecture method often used in her institution does not allow for this. She stated that the instructors often believe that learners learn more when being lectured, but this method achieves nothing because it does not give room for interaction. She said that there should be a teaching method based on theories and practice, ensuring that students participate. Such methods should involve internships, demonstration, and simulation. She

stated that sometimes there should be jokes complimenting the lecture method to arouse the interest of learners and engage their experience.

Darshita, a twenty-three-year-old pursuing a B.Eng., identified skills as visioning, decision making, working under pressure, problem solving, leadership and decision-making, and team building. She mostly acquires skills when she finds upcoming opportunities and new challenges. The motivating factors for updating skills are the targets, achievements, her passion for learning, and her curiosity to find new patterns. The source of skill update is interaction, e-learning, and reading. By constantly updating skills, whenever she sees new programming problems, she feels more confident in making programming codes. She is apt to learn every new skill, which rejuvenates her passion. In classes, her teachers use explanation through examples. Their delivery of slides is insufficient to satisfy learners' interest, curiosity, and expectations. Instead, Darshita said they should use case studies of the delivered topics and create an environment for free and creative expression of thoughts to make new employable skills achievable. Participatory and experiential learning approaches should be used.

Shaila is a twenty-two-year-old Indian studying for a master's degree in rural development. When she was counselled regarding post-graduate courses, she did not expect the course to equip her with employability skills. She is a commerce graduate with interpersonal skills, computing skills, writing and listening skills, innovative and creative skills, but lacks confidence and good decision-making practices. She is keen to learn and adapt to her environment by updating her knowledge and required skills. The source of learning is her teachers, peers, and relatives. In the post-graduate classes, she is experiencing a much better learning environment. The teaching methods used are discussion, participatory approach, role-playing, and projects, which give ample opportunity for free expression of thoughts using her experiences. Now she is in her second year and has developed managerial, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Her programme allows for flexibility, which allows her to decide what, when, and how she would like to learn in classes. Her teachers make use of movies, documentaries, cultural performances, and real-life incidents to simplify the course content and relate to her routine experiences. Therefore, joyful and meaningful learning takes place, which ensures the development of employable and transferable skills.

Non-formal context

Chineye is a thirty-nine-year-old Nigerian entrepreneur. She learnt fashion design through an apprenticeship after her secondary school education and became her own boss fifteen years ago. She has skills such as the ability to work under pressure,

communication, leadership, time-management, creativity skills, among others. She acquired these skills during her apprenticeship training, but she constantly updates them to ensure that her customers are satisfied, to remain versatile in her career, and also to make more money. Usually when there are new styles in vogue, she will go to her trainer to learn about it, but subsequently she learns from videos, magazines, and the mass media in general. Updating her skills is beneficial, because she noted that her customers have increased by 50 per cent, and she is able to constantly satisfy them, she has more apprentices, and she keeps abreast with trends in the fashion world. She desires to learn more skills, such as suit-making and effective use of ICT, in order to expand her business and employment territories. She hopes to acquire these skills with support from and interaction with her colleagues, and demonstration will be the best method to help her achieve them. She finds demonstrations of cloth making on ICT platforms to be an innovative teaching method, but she may face challenges, such as being distracted by customers and neighbours, but this can be alleviated by learning outside her business premises to ensure that distractions from known persons do not happen.

Osaze is a thirty-five-year-old Nigerian, a basic literacy learner, and an automobile mechanic. He is self-employed and started his job as a mechanic after completing an apprenticeship at the age of nineteen. He was able to develop communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills. He was motivated to enrol at a basic literacy centre to develop better communication, reading, writing, and calculation skills to enhance his work. He was also motivated because he sometimes felt intimidated by his apprentices, who are secondary school students or dropouts. The method used often can be regarded as participatory, but it seems more like an active lecture method, which is limited because it does not encourage learners to teach other learners. A better teaching method that can use the experiences of the learners would be one involving indigenous arts such as music, film, drama, and stories. According to Osaze, this can be indigenous in nature, but it can also be misused as mere fun by learners. Therefore, he advised that the facilitators at the centres should be guided properly on the purpose of using these arts.

Swati is an Indian, a science graduate, and a forty-two-year-old beautician. Initially, she worked as a schoolteacher and then, at the age of twenty-eight, began a beauty parlour in a small room in her house. Her communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills motivated her to do something to match her skills, and she started the parlour and did a diploma course. Now, after fourteen years, her parlour is housed in a separate building. She has trained about 200 persons. She has also been a trainer in government schemes like *swarozgar yojana* and *pradhanmantri kaushal vikas yojana* to empower girls. Client requests and the

variation in clients' behaviour motivate her to frequently update her skills. The challenge in her job is to understand the mind-set of the client to satisfy them with the services they demand and expect. The sources she uses to update her skills are seminars, workshops, training programmes by beauty experts, visiting other parlours, and the Internet. She stated that when seminars, workshops, demonstration, discussion, and lecture are used, there is no room for hands-on experience for participants. With constant update of creativity, communication and listening skills, she can remain successful and well prepared in advance to cater to the needs of clients.

Rajendra is a forty-year-old Indian farmer, who over time has acquired new knowledge and skills related to agriculture to keep him abreast of the new technology in agriculture; to overcome problems arising from unexpected weather conditions; and to maintain the fertility of the soil. He has gained a lot of information regarding good farming from his ancestors, peers and the songs, stories, and proverbs based on agricultural activities. He visits agricultural research centres to meet scientists and to attend fairs and exhibitions. At the fairs, lectures and discussions are organised by experts. In between lectures, current agricultural issues and concerns are conveyed through folk songs and cultural performances. Five years ago, he was an illiterate and he could only learn whatever information was communicated orally. Being dependent on others for reading, writing, and calculation made him feel bad. He decided to be independent by becoming literate so that he can also make use of all the sources of information: newsletters, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, and e-learning. He joined adult literacy classes and is now a role model in his village by being in touch with all kinds of relevant information to get the best farming outcomes. He can be said to have acquired 40 per cent transferable skills.

Informal context

Ekaette is a forty-year-old Nigerian cloth seller and a primary school dropout who has been employed since the age of 26 after completing an apprenticeship. Presently, she is not on any specific training to enhance her employability, but she does have skills such as communicating in her indigenous language, decision-making, and problem solving to retain her customers and to keep abreast of trends in the cloth-trading industry. She developed these skills informally on a regular basis through observations, conversations, and relationships with customers. To enhance her communication with all types of customers, she desires to improve her communication skills in English language and her stocktaking ability. She has not enrolled in basic literacy class because there will be no one left to sell her stocks.

She desires to continue learning these skills from her customers, neighbours, and family members. She stated that she could learn these skills through proverbs, storytelling, and practice.

Ragini is a thirty-five-year-old Indian housewife who is also a tailor (she sews at home). She keeps pace with changing trends through informal interactions with customers. At the age of fifteen, she learnt tailoring skills from her mother, and at age twenty-three, she began to sew professionally. She is good at visioning, decision-making, creativity, and time management but cannot update her tailoring skills frequently because of family responsibilities and limited exposure. The only opportunities to learn are her observations at parties or other social functions, so she depends solely on customers to bring their designs while she sews to meet their satisfaction. She stated that she is not really interested in learning new tailoring skills, but she wants to be able to manage her time well so she can finish her work fast and meet her financial needs. She believes this can be learnt through simulated practices and experiential learning at capacity-building events.

Discussion of findings

Based on the narratives and existing literatures above, the following were deduced in line with the research questions.

What is the employment status and ALE practice in the countries?

Even though Nigeria and India are on different continents, they are both developing countries having a common problem of an increased unemployment rate, although India seems to have a lower rate in relation to their population than Nigeria. In both countries, university students mentioned that the educational programmes they attended did not adequately develop skills relevant for employability – which could be one reason for the low rate of employment in the two countries. Hence, ALE is available in both countries with the view of solving this problem. ALE has a similar history in the two countries, starting out with basic literacy, but it seems to have more recognition by the government of India than that of Nigeria. Although ALE is supported by NGOs in both countries, NGOs in India create more opportunities for adult learners and promote learning through folk songs, arts, local knowledge, experience exchange, and the like. The practice of ALE in Nigeria can be regarded to be in line with functional literacy while that of India is for critical literacy. In addition, of the persons that were interviewed for this study, one Indian can be said to be above average in terms of their employability skills; two Nigerians and two Indians are average; three Nigerians and

two Indians are below average. The participants were aware of their educational needs, hence, they engage in at least one context of ALE. They identified a lack of innovative teaching methods in formal and non-formal contexts of ALE practice.

Which traditional ALE teaching methods are used in the two countries?

The programmes related to preparation for the job market were not effective, especially in Nigeria. This is because of the use of traditional teaching methods, which are content- and teacher-centred. These methods include straight lecturing, identified only by Nigerians in formal ALE; active lecturing and personal e-learning was identified in equal proportion by the two countries; discussion is more used in India than in Nigeria; role-play and seminars were identified by Indians only. Furthermore, those working in the business sector have more opportunities for professional development through participation in online and on-the-job trainings, but they also identified the lack of a blended approach combining e-learning and face-to-face exchanges with colleagues. Those employed in low-paying jobs work on skills relevant for employability through spontaneous informal, self-directed learning.

Which innovative ALE teaching methods can be used in the countries for employability?

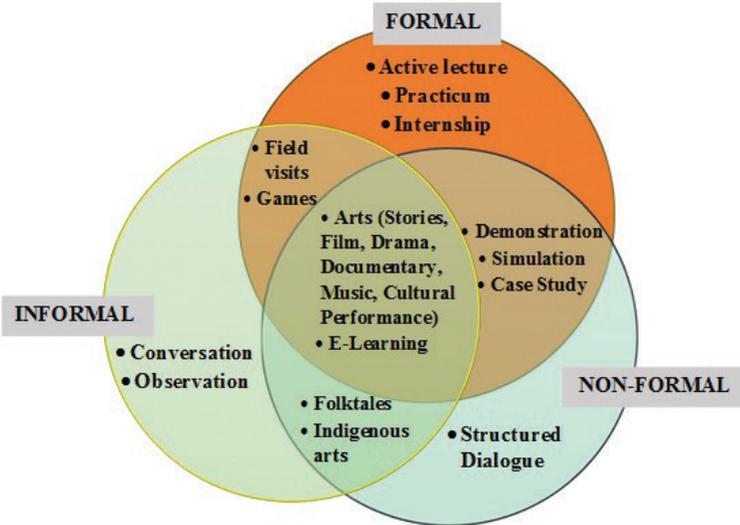
All participants expressed their need for participative and continuous educational programmes for renewing existing skills and gaining new professional/ employability skills. They regarded themselves as experiential learners who identified the exchange of experience and practice, blended learning, and learning through arts and humour as main elements of innovative teaching-learning approaches relevant to ALE. Specifically, practicums/internships and e-learning were identified as innovative methods by Nigerians only; the use of arts (stories, film, drama, documentary, music, cultural performance) were recognised as new and innovative more by Nigerians than by Indians; whereas demonstration and simulation were identified in equal proportion by participants in both countries. With these innovative methods, they said that they would have better employability skills.

Conclusion

The results of the study undoubtedly show that innovative teaching methods are linked to employability in India and Nigeria. The concentration on the use of traditional ALE teaching method in all ALE contexts is a direct and indirect reason

for the low employment status in the countries. Therefore, it is recommended that to ensure improved employability, ALE educators should observe and learn how to improve teaching with innovative methods taking into account the transitions and overlap between formal, non-formal, and informal ALE contexts, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Innovative ALE teaching methods for employability.



Source: Authors adapted from CW2, 2017 Wurzburg Winter School

The figure shows that there are some methods, such as arts and e-learning, that should be used across all ALE contexts; others, such as demonstration, simulation, and case studies, should be used for both formal and non-formal ALE contexts, whereas active lectures, practicums, and internships should be used in formal ALE alone. These methods can enhance employability because they comply with andragogy principles. Therefore, they can help learners develop skills such as writing, listening, self-motivation, teamwork, visioning, communication, self-confidence, decision-making, presentation, entrepreneurship, leadership, ICT, creativity/innovative, and presentation, among others.

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