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Training Needs and Employability of Adult and Non-Formal Education Graduates in Northern Nigeria

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© 2026 جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، المركز الرئيس عدن، اليمن. يمكن إعادة استخدام المادة المنشورة حسب رخصة مؤسسة المشاع الإبداعي شريطة الاستشهاد بالمؤلف والمجلة.

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Training Needs and Employability of Adult and Non-Formal Education Graduates in Northern Nigeria

Abstract:
This study used a quantitative descriptive survey and the Employability and Training Needs Skills Scale (ETNSS) to assess the training needs and employability of prospective Adult and Non-formal Education graduates (PGAE) in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria. The findings indicate a low level of relevance in the current PGAE curriculum for developing essential workplace skills. The research revealed a critical need to deepen student training to incorporate generic competencies vital for impactful learning and career prospects. Specifically, the study identified the necessity for enhanced training in entrepreneurial, critical thinking, technical knowledge, effective communication, and numeracy skills. Although limited by self-reporting bias, these findings offer valuable insights to the Nigeria National University Commission and Adult Education departments, informing the review and redesign of the B.Ed. Adult and Non-formal Education degree program to better equip graduates with the employability skills required for successful careers.

Keywords: *Adult and non-formal education, employability skills, prospective graduate, training needs*.

Introduction

In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed a renewed interest in young people struggling to acquire higher education. Year in, year out, universities get more applicants than they can accommodate. One of the reasons why people pursue degree programs is to gain employment. This may suggest why every prospective graduate is concerned about the employment prospects of the course being pursued. According to Haladu (2017), very often, prospective graduates of adult education are concerned about their employability after graduation; perhaps this anxiety is aggravated by the rate of unemployment in the country. It is important to note that adult education, through its various programs such as vocational education, functional literacy, and entrepreneurship education, among others, gives employment hopes to Nigerian youths. However, unknown to Adult Education potential graduates, opportunities abound for them to make a good career after their graduation; careers such as non-formal education administrator, development worker, social welfare worker, adult literacy organizer, and political strategist are a few opportunities awaiting the prospective graduate of adult education (PGAE).

Against this background, it is therefore important to explore the readiness of the PGAE to transition to the workplace by assessing the relevance of their learning experiences, skills, and competences to the workplace needs. Given that the knowledge level and the quality of training possessed by personnel are central to professionalization (Tobias, 1996). The chances of an adult education graduate being employed, particularly in the relevant sector in Nigeria, are contingent upon the quality of knowledge, skills, and competence possessed since available jobs are highly competitive. Unfortunately, employers of labor have often lamented that some Nigerian graduates do not possess the skills, knowledge, and expertise that are needed in the 'modern Nigeria of world work' despite possession of requisite certificates (Sodipo, 2014). This situation challenges Nigerian universities and other higher institutions of learning in the country to strategize in the program contents and learning delivery mechanisms for better results. The academic programs leading to the award of degrees, diplomas, and certificates must reflect modern skills that will help the graduates fill the gap in their knowledge to make them suitable to compete for the few available vacancies. The program should also make prospective adult educators globally competitive. Global competitiveness, according to Onwuadi (2014, p. 56), means "the ability of the Nigerian adult education programs to train adults who are self-reliant and/or possess the necessary employable skills for effective national and global utilization."

Adult education as an academic program is defined by Kobani and Kpurunee (2019, p. 48) as "any educational program(s) developed by a tertiary institution and organized as an academic plan to move beneficiaries towards a career path in helping adults to learn." It is important to note that the work of adult educators is not limited to helping adults to learn but involves helping adults and the underserved to live a fulfilling life. The expectation is that any product of adult education should be able to positively influence the lives and problem-solving of adults and underserved persons or groups who form their clientele.

The importance of adults who are in charge of all human affairs implies that adult education as a profession covers all human endeavors (Kobani & Kpurunee, 2019); thus, graduates must be trained to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies that will enable them to deal with the myriad of problems and issues confronting adults and underserved

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persons. This is because no employee could perform above the quality of the training he/she has received. Thus, the need to ascertain the training needs of the prospective graduates of adult education in Nigeria.

Training needs are defined as a condition that reveals a gap between "what is and what should be" in terms of requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior for a particular job at any point in time (Halim & Ali (nd) as cited in Onwuadi, 2014). Obikeze and Obi (2004) argued that assessment of training needs is usually done when there are problems associated with poor recruitment, induction, and training programs. It is important to add that employers of labor have certain demands expected from anyone to be employed to perform the occupational duties and roles effectively, of which when such expectations are not met, the candidate seeking the job may not succeed. Thus, effective assessment of the training needs of prospective graduates of adult education will help ascertain the extent to which their lack of adequate training can prevent them from securing viable employment as well as identify strategies that, if put in place, will brighten their chances of securing viable employment (Onwuadi, 2014).

The result of this study will add empirical evidence to the existing body of knowledge on training needs and employability of prospective graduates of adult education (PGAE) in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria. This evidence might help inform the planning of the adult education program development and designs tailored to equipping students of adult education with employability skills for career prospects. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the training needs of prospective graduates of adult education in some selected universities in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria based on their perceived employability skills as required by their prospective employers. Furthermore, subsequent sections address the theoretical foundations of the study, the review of related literature, and data collection and analysis, as well as the discussion and implications drawn from the findings.

Literature Review

Adult education is seen as a helping profession that seeks to identify and solve personal and community problems. It is a multidisciplinary field that is aimed at supporting and promoting the development of adults and the underserved in the community. Adult education, according to Merriam and Brocket (2007), is defined as deliberately designed activities to bring about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception describe them as adults. Citing UNESCO, Kobani and Kpurunee (2019, p. 48) defined adult education as the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level, and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as in apprenticeships. Whereby persons regarded as adults by the society in which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical skills, or bring about change in their attitude or behavior in the two-fold perspectives of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent socio-, economic, and cultural development.

Adult education as an academic field provides key skills and competencies in developing, organizing, delivering, managing, and evaluating literacy classes; vocational programs; community and environmental health education; nutrition; income-generating programs; agricultural extension; women's programs; career and professional development; leisure and

hobby pursuits; personal and social growth programs; specific training; general interest courses; and postgraduate courses (Rogers, 1996). These opportunities are provided for the trained professionals to discharge their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

Accordingly, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013) recognized the role of adult and non-formal education in the provision of basic education to the citizens and the overall educational development of the country. In this regard, the policy identified the objectives of adult and non-formal education as follows:

1. Providing functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education (these include the nomads, migrants' families, Almajiris, and women in difficult circumstances).
2. Providing functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education.
3. Providing in-service, on-the-job, vocational, and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals to improve their skills.
4. Giving the adult citizens of the country the necessary aesthetic, cultural, and civic education for public enlightenment.
5. Providing education for different categories of completers of the formal school system to improve their knowledge and skills on income generation activities.

A critical examination of the focus of adult education as captured above portrays it as a multidisciplinary profession, and its relevance is multifaceted in the lives of people in the society. This underscores the relevance of its graduates as critical stakeholders in every aspect of adult lives and the larger society educationally, economically, socially, culturally, politically, and technologically. Thus, functioning in any or all of the above aspects of adult lives is contingent upon possession of relevant and appropriate knowledge, skills, competence, and expertise that are acquired through initial and continuous training opportunities. These skills are often referred to as employability skills.

The Departments of Adult Education and other related departments in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Nigeria offer courses leading to the award of a degree, diploma, and certificate in adult and non-formal education, community development, extension education, and social welfare education. These departments are statutory to train adult educators who will influence the lives of people, particularly adults and the underserved, positively through skilled-oriented services (Abubakar & Yusuf, 2017). The training contents of all departments of adult education in Nigerian universities, according to Biao (2005), are identical with core and elective courses. The core courses include History, Philosophy, Psychology, and Economy of Adult Education, as well as ICT in Adult Education. Some of the elective courses are Community and Rural Development, Innovation and Diffusion, Extension Studies, Health and Environmental Education, Education of Disadvantaged Groups, Social Welfare, Gerontology, Adult Learning Facilitation, Entrepreneurship, Labor Studies, Gender Studies, Governance and Public Administration, and a host of others (National Universities Commission (NUC), 2018). It is hoped that the multidimensional nature of the adult education curriculum will groom graduates who will be able to serve in any aspect of adult lives.

The training of graduates of adult education in Nigeria is done in such a way that the trainees are groomed in different skills. For example, communication skills are taught to

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provide the graduates with the ability to articulate and communicate ideas for the understanding of people and the target audience. Teaching communication skills, according to RMIT University (2017), will instill in the learners listening and understanding, speaking clearly and directly, writing to the needs of the audience, negotiating, and persuading responsively and effectively.

Key skills in program initiation, development, delivery, and evaluation are important skills and competencies that are taught in the Planning and Management Adult Education Course. The contents of the course revolve around setting timelines, coordinating tasks for self and with others, predicting and forecasting issues, and allocating people and other resources to tasks (RMIT University, 2017). Shitu (2019) argues that the multidimensional and diverse nature of the community development component of the adult education curriculum gives graduates of adult education competencies in community organizing, community project management and evaluation, and innovation diffusion. Advocacy and lobbying skills embedded in the adult education curriculum give prospective adult educators opportunities to work with politicians and to support business managers in developing multi-team marketing strategies, which are required in the business climate. Research skills that give the graduates the ability to identify and proffer dependable solutions through empirical studies and investigations form an important component of the learning content adult educators are exposed to during their training.

Skills in providing community-based care and support for disadvantaged groups, including organized palliative support for older adults and rehabilitation services for disaster victims and persons living with HIV/AIDS, make adult educators better qualified for helping profession-related opportunities.

It is observed that despite the large number of graduates the Nigerian higher institutions turn out every year that should ordinarily meet the country's human capital resources needs, they could not fill the job vacancies due to insufficient employability skills (Sodipo, 2014). Oyesiku (2010) argued that employers of labor in Nigeria are willing to pay well to attract skilled workers, as the need for skilled employees is increasing to man the ever-dynamic information technology-driven economy. Employability skills are a range of attributes that can be developed through education, training, work experience, and extracurriculars. These skills are very important in every workplace and highly valued by employers (RMIT University, 2017). Also, York (2004) defines employability as a set of achievements, skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits them, the community, and the economy. Employability skills are sometimes referred to as core skills, key skills, common skills, transferable skills, essential skills, functional skills, skills for life, generic skills, and enterprise skills (Lowden, Hall, Elliot & Lewin, 2011).

In categorizing the employability skills required by employers, RMIT University (2017) identified loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity, enthusiasm, reliability, personal presentation, common sense, positive self-esteem, a sense of humor, a balanced attitude to work and home life, and the ability to deal with pressure, motivation, and adaptability as personal attributes most sought by employers. The list of the personal attributes as required by employers suggests that prospective graduates and higher education providers must work assiduously to meet up to produce outstanding graduates that can compete favorably in the world of work. RMIT University (2017) further regards effective communication, teamwork,

problem solving, self-management, planning and organizing, technology, initiative, and enterprising as important employability skills.

Studies (Dabalen, Oni & Adekola, 2000; NUC, 2004; Adeyemo, Ogunleye, Oke & Adenle, 2010; Akinyemi, Ofem & Ikuenomore, 2012; Pitan & Adedeji, 2012) have shown the relationship between the training received by the university graduates in Nigeria and the employers' demands. Dabalen et al.'s (2000) study on labor market prospects of university graduates in Nigeria has established a disparity between university products and labor market demands. As the study showed that the universities' outcomes in terms of the graduates produced could not meet up with the expectations of the labor market. The study (Dabalen et al. (2000)) further reported that a number of university graduates are poor in terms of communication and technical competency. Similarly, the National Universities Commission (NUC) (2004) argued that the massive unemployment of Nigerian university graduates in the country could be linked to the disequilibrium between labor market requirements and the lack of essential employability skills of the graduates.

The raging debate among employers of labor in Nigeria is whether the university education/curriculum aligns with the workplace skills requirement. This has prompted Adeyemo et al. (2010, p. 99)'s investigation, which revealed that there was a "mismatch between university outputs and labor market demands." In the same vein, Akinyemi et al.'s (2012) study on graduate turnout and graduate employment in Nigeria showed that lack of technical skills, poor spoken and written English language, poor critical thinking, and ICT deficiency of the graduates have prevented the Nigerian university graduates from securing highly competitive employment. Surprisingly, this also extends to neighboring countries. A recent study by Segbenya et al. (2021) reported skills mismatch among the problems of graduate employability in Ghana.

Another study from Pitan and Adedeji (2012) on "skills mismatch among university graduates in Nigeria labor market" revealed "a significant negative relationship between skills demand by employers and supply by the graduates, as a lack of employability skills in terms of poor communication, ICT illiteracy, poor decision-making, poor critical thinking, and poor entrepreneurial skills was found in the sample of graduates of the study.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is hinged on human capital theory. The human capital theory is linked to neoclassical theories of labor markets, education, and economic growth. Its foundation was traced to the works of Mincer (1958, 1962), Schultz (1960, 1961), Becker (1962), and Ben-Porath (1967) (Milhem, Abushamsieh & Arostegui, 2014). The theory considers education and training as catalysts that increase or improve the capacities of people in all walks of life (Schultz, 1971; Becker, 1993; Swanson & King, 1991). The importance of training and retraining opportunities for workers in the attainment of organizational objectives is paramount and worthy of pursuing. According to Becker (1962), employers of labor have better benefits to get if they give training opportunities for their staff, as better and greater productivity is certain.

Employees, on the other hand, stand a better chance of getting a job and attaining career progression if they are well trained. Studies such as Picchio & van Ours (2013) and Elman & Weiss (2014) have proven the efficacy of human capital theory that a positive impact of training on the employability of trainees exists. Picchio and van Ours (2013), for example,

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reported that training for older workers significantly increased future employment prospects. Similarly, Elman and Weiss's (2014) study revealed that on-the-job training increased women's employability in the United States of America, and formal adult learning on average seems to increase employment outcomes (Midtsundstad, 2019). The relevance of the human capital theory to this paper is that prospective graduates of adult education have abundant job opportunities if they are well equipped with employability skills contained in the kind of training they receive.

The importance of the review shows a complete disconnect between what the universities teach and the realities in terms of the expectations of the employers of labor. This is a gap that must be filled by the universities if they are to solve the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. It is also clear from the review of the related literature that some studies have shown that there exists a huge gap between the skills possessed by Nigerian university graduates and the demands of the employers of labor. And this scenario has made it difficult for prospective graduates to secure the available jobs. What is glaring from the review is that there is a lack of empirical literature that focuses on the prospective graduates of adult and non-formal education, especially in the northwest and northeast of Nigeria. In this regard, the study answered the following research questions:

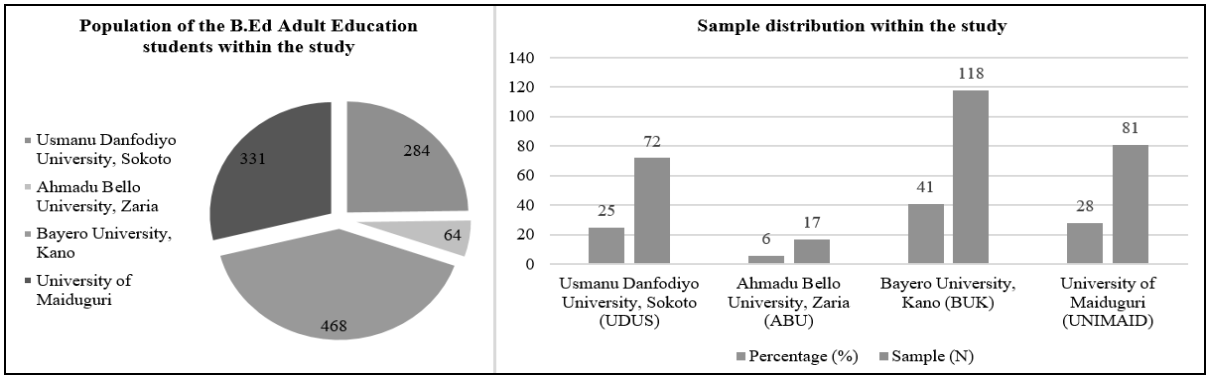
1. What is the status of prospective graduates of adult education's (PGAE) employability skills in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria?
2. What are the training needs of PGAE for meeting the employers' demands in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria?

Method

The study adopted the quantitative research approach of descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is defined by Nworgu (2006) as a research design that is aimed at systematic data collection and description of characteristics and features about a given population. Accordingly, Creswell (2014) describes the quantitative research design as the trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population. The descriptive survey design in a quantitative research approach is justified because the study aims to collect standardized numerical data from a large sample of graduates to identify and describe the existing training needs and current employability status in Northern Nigeria, allowing for statistical analysis and generalizable findings.

The study is on the assessment of the training needs of PGAE and how the needs relate to the employers' demand in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria. It was confined to all the final-year students of adult education in all four (4) universities that offer adult education in northwest and northeast Nigeria. The universities are Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Bayero University, Kano; and University of Maiduguri (Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE), 2019). The choice of the final-year students as the population of the study was informed by the fact that it is expected that the final-year students would have been exposed to 85% of the curriculum, which is expected to prepare them for their future careers. Therefore, they would serve as the best respondents to the issue of training they have received and those they have not been exposed to, which can serve as their training needs. The population and sample distribution of the participants

across the universities within the study are shown in Figure 1. The population of the study as of the 2018/19 academic session.



Source(s): Field survey (2021).

Figure 1: Population and Sample Distribution of the study

Figure 1 depicts the population, sample distribution within the study, and the acronyms of the universities. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator, at a 95% confidence level, a proportionate sample based on the number of final-year students in the universities within this study was drawn. Consequently, 25% (n = 72) of the respondents are from UDUS, 6% (n = 17) were drawn from ABU Zaria, and 41% (n = 118) are from BUK, which are all located in the northwestern states of Nigeria. Whereas 28% (n= 81) are from UNIMAID, located in the northeastern part of Nigeria. The total population of the study is 1,147, while the sample is 288. The sample size selection was based on the recommendation of Research Advisors (2006). This number was arrived at after distributing 350 questionnaires across the universities; 293 were returned, while 288 were found usable for analysis, thus yielding a return rate of 83.7%, which was above the Raosoft sample size threshold. The data collection was achieved through collaboration and the active support of the heads of departments of Adult Education in the respective universities, who committed to seeing through the data collection within their domains.

The researcher used an instrument adapted from the works of Adeyemo et al. (2010), Akinyemi et al. (2012), and Pitan (2016). The Employability and Training Needs Skills Scale (ETNSS) measures the employability and training needs skills status of PGAE with thirty-four (34) items. The respondents were asked to rate their competence in each of the 17 employability skills using 5 scales of Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), and Poor (1) in section A. Examples of the items include "analytical and investigative capacity to serve the needs of adults and underserved persons," among others. Section B measures the training needs of the PGAE with seventeen (17) items. The respondents were asked to rate how much they require training in each of the following skills listed using the 4 scales of Very Much (4), Much (3), Less Much (2), and Not Much (1). Examples of the items include "decision-making skills to better the lives of adults and the underserved," among others. Table 1 presents the number of items and their sources.

Table 1: PGAE Skills and Training needs items and their sources

SN	Item codes	Sources
1	1, 3,4,5,7,8,9,13 &17	Adeyemo et al., (2010)
2	2,6,& 15	Akinyemi et al., (2012)
3	10,11,12,14 & 16	Pitan (2016)

Source(s) Authors' field work (2021)

Table 1 presents the summary of the PGAE employability skills and training needs items and their sources. The instrument (ETNSS) was validated by the experts in Adult Education and Guidance and Counselling from the Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The corrections observed by the experts in terms of content relevance, appropriateness, and adequacy of items in relation to the objectives of the study were addressed by the researchers and incorporated into the final version of the instruments. The reliability of the two instruments was determined and ascertained after the researchers did a trial testing of the instruments using Cronbach's alpha reliability with a sample of 30 respondents from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, who were not part of the selected sample for the study. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81 was found for ETNSS. The coefficient showed that the instrument was reliable and could be used for the data collection.

The researchers sought the assistance of the Heads of Departments (HOD) in the selected institutions for the study to help with administering the copies of the instruments for each of the institutions. Also, the researchers personally administered the copies of the instruments to the final-year students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, while the other copies of the same instruments were sent to the HODs in the other institutions by courier service. The HODs were then briefed by the researchers about the focus of the study via phone conversation. The researchers received the filled instruments after about five weeks of administering the instruments, a period spanning from 11th March to 9th May 2021. Meanwhile, 293 copies of the instruments were returned, and 288 were used for the analysis after data cleaning. The research questions were answered using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) on the IBM SPSS statistical analysis software version 20. The mean criteria are (mean of = or greater than 4.5 = Excellent, 3.5 – 4.49 = Very Good, 3.0 – 3.49 = Good, 2.5 – 2.99 = Fair, and 2.0 – 1.49 = Poor).

Results

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	196	68%
Female	102	32%
Total	288	100%
Age:		
18-25	139	48.2%
26-33	126	43.8%
34-41	19	6.6%
>42	04	1.4%
Total	288	100%
Marital Status:		
Married	04	1.4%
Single	281	97.6%
Divorced	00	00%
Widowed	03	1.0%
Total	288	100%

Source (s): Field survey (2021).

Table 2 comprised of the demographic profiles of the respondents, 68% (n= 196) are male students, while 32% (n= 102) are female students. The age distribution indicates that 48.2% (n=139) fall between the age range of 18-25 years, 43.8% (n=126) are between 26-33 years old, 6.6% (19) are between 34 and 41 years, while only 1.4% (n=4) are above 42 years, suggesting that most of the students are within the youth and digital age range. In addition, the table showed that 97.6% (n=281) of the students are single, not married; 1.4% (n=4) are married; and 1.0% (n=3) are married, with none of the students as widowed.

Research Question 1: What is the status of the prospective graduate of adult education's (PGAE) employability skills in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria? The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation, and the result was presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) on the Employability Skill Status of Prospective Graduates of Adult Education (N = 288)

S/N	Skills	(M)	(SD)	Status
1	Subject knowledge of issues about problems of adults and disadvantaged persons	3.6	0.93	Very Good
2	Teamwork	3.6	2.00	Very Good
3	Technical knowledge about the needs and specific solutions to the clienteles' problems.	3.4	0.96	Very Good
4	Critical thinking to meet the needs of adults and underserved persons.	3.0	1.09	Good
5	Self-directed learning to encourage a self-problem-solving attitude among clienteles.	3.0	1.04	Good
6	Analytical and investigative capacity to serve the needs of adults and underserved persons.	2.9	1.04	Fair
7	Entrepreneurial skill to serve the needs of adults and underserved persons	2.9	1.08	Fair
8	Decision-making skills to better the lives of adults and the underserved.	2.9	1.07	Fair
9	ICT skills to make working with adults and underserved persons easier.	2.9	1.07	Fair
10	Innovative skill to change the lives of adults and underserved persons positively	2.7	1.05	Fair
11	Interpersonal relationships to secure the cooperation and participation of clienteles.	2.7	1.00	Fair
12	Problem-solving skills to solve specific and general problems of adults and the underserved.	2.7	1.08	Fair
13	Verbal communication skills	2.7	0.99	Fair
14	Managerial ability	2.5	1.01	Fair
15	Written communication skills	2.3	0.82	Fair
16	Advocacy and lobbying of community/groups for programme/policy acceptance.	2.3	0.80	Fair
17	Numeracy is the ability to work on any issue that requires a mathematical solution.	2.2	0.83	Fair

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Ground Mean (M) = 2.84. Source(s): Field survey (2021)

Table 3 shows the employability skill status of PGAE in the study areas. The table indicated that 12 out of the 17 employability skills in which the status of PGAE was sought were mostly rated Fair (with the scores ranging between M=2.2 and 3.0 and the SD ranging between SD=0.83 and 1.04); consequently, only 5 of these skills were rated Very Good and Good (scores range between M=3.0 and 3.6, whereas SD=0.93 and 1.09). None of the skills were rated excellent. This implies that the prospective graduates of adult education in the sampled universities do not possess most of the important employability skills, and it can be inferred that the employability skills status of the prospective graduates of adult education is not satisfactory.

Research Question 2: What are the training needs of PGAE for meeting the employers' demands in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria? The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation, and the result was presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) on the Training Needs of Prospective Graduates of Adult Education (N = 288)

S/N	Training Needs	M	(SD)	Decision	Ranking
1.	Entrepreneurial skill to serve the needs of adults and underserved persons.	3.5	0.58	Needed	1st
2.	Critical thinking to meet the needs of adults and underserved persons.	3.5	0.71	Needed	1st
3.	Technical knowledge about the needs and specific solutions to the clienteles' problems.	3.5	0.75	Needed	1st
4.	Analytical and investigative capacity to serve the needs of adults and underserved persons.	3.4	0.70	Needed	4th
5.	ICT skills to make working with adults and underserved persons easier.	3.4	0.94	Needed	4th
6.	Innovative skill to change the lives of adults and underserved persons positively	3.3	0.79	Needed	6th
7.	Decision-making skills to better the lives of adults and the underserved.	3.3	0.90	Needed	6th
8.	Self-directed learning to encourage self-problem-solving attitude among clienteles.	3.3	0.86	Needed	6th
9.	Numeracy ability to work on any issue that requires mathematical solution.	3.3	0.92	Needed	6th
10.	Verbal communication skills	3.3	0.81	Needed	6th
11.	Written communication skills	3.3	0.88	Needed	6th
12.	Teamwork	3.3	0.74	Needed	6th
13.	Problem solving skills to solve specific and general problems of adults and underserved.	3.2	0.91	Needed	13th
14.	Subject knowledge of issues about problems of adults and disadvantaged persons	3.2	0.91	Needed	13th
15	Managerial skills	3.2	0.76	Needed	13th
16.	Interpersonal relationship to secure the cooperation and participation of clienteles.	3.1	0.95	Needed	16th
17.	Advocacy and lobbying of community/groups for programme/policy acceptance.	3.1	0.84	Needed	16th

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Ground Mean (WM) = 2.84. Source(s): Field survey (2021)

Table 4 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the training needs status of prospective graduates of adult education in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria. It is clear from Table 4 that entrepreneurial and critical thinking skills (M = 3.5, SD = 0.58); (M = 3.5, SD = 0.71) as well as technical knowledge (M = 3.5, SD = 0.75) are the training needs ranked 1st by the respondents. Next to these skills as training needs, the respondents identified analytical and investigative as well as ICT skills (M = 3.4, SD = 0.70) as the much-needed training needs. The respondents also acknowledged the need to have training in innovation, decision-making (M = 3.3, SD = 0.90), self-directedness (M = 3.3, SD = 0.86), numeracy (M = 3.3, SD = 0.86), verbal (M = 3.3, SD = 0.81), and written communication (M = 3.3, SD =

0.88), as well as teamwork skills (M = 3.3, SD = 0.74). These sets of skills were ranked as the most needed skills after the first two sets of skills. Problem-solving skills (M = 3.2, SD = 0.91), subject knowledge (M = 3.2, SD = 0.91), and managerial skills (M = 3.2, SD = 0.76) were equally acknowledged to be needed by the respondents and ranked 13th on the scale. The respondents also indicated that interpersonal relationship skills (M = 3.1, SD = 0.95) and advocacy/lobbying skills (M = 3.1, SD = 0.84) are parts of the needed training. Thus, it can be deduced that entrepreneurial and critical thinking, technical knowledge, effective communication, and numeracy skills must be given priority in the training of adult educators at the undergraduate level.

Discussion

This study sought to determine the employability status and training needs of the prospective graduates of adult and non-formal education disciplines in four universities located in two geographical zones of Nigeria. Furthermore, the study aimed to use the insights gained to identify the training needs of these categories and employability to inform the design, development, and implementation of the undergraduate adult education programs in Nigerian universities in line with workplace needs/demands. In response to the research question, one which borders on the present status of the undergraduate student's preparedness for workplace responsibilities. The results show that out of the 17 items on the employability scale, only 5 (29%) were rated as very good and good, and these comprised critical thinking skill, technical knowledge, subject knowledge, self-directed learning, and teamwork.

Whereas the others were rated as fair. Although no failed or irrelevant unit was recorded, the outcome underlines the major flaws identified in previous studies as the bane of the higher education products in Nigeria. The inadequacy of the learning experiences to produce employable and seamless transitioning to the workplace (Pitan, 2016) is described as misalignment and disequilibrium with the workplace needs (NUC, 2004; Dabalen et al., 2000). The result sheds light on the contents, which have been more theoretical and cognitively inclined than soft skill-based (Nusrat & Sultana, 2019). Therefore, the higher education curriculum, in particular the adult education program, must be reimagined and repurposed to deliver theoretical research and skills development (Nwajiuba et al., 2020) and not just theories as unraveled in this study.

The result is also consistent with the findings of Chidinma & Uduak (2020), who reported that effective curriculum implementation does not determine the employability of graduates; this clearly negates the philosophy and thinking of curriculum planners as well as the national educational policy. Hence, in a wider country perspective, for Nigeria to attain greatness and achieve global competitive relevance across disciplines, the educational objectives and curriculum at the highest point of excellence must align with the workplace and economic, social, and political needs of the society. Nonetheless, this study has added a more refined dimension by unraveling the areas of needs of the prospective graduate of adult education to make them fit into the 21st century needs.

Therefore, those factors that are barely impacting the training of the students must be emphasized. It is also important to note that the outcome represents an improvement from the findings of Pitan and Adedeji (2012) and Philip Consulting (2014), who reported a skills mismatch of over 60% among employed university graduates with deficiencies in critical

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thinking, technical, and numeracy skills as well as interpersonal relations, even though these skills are global prerequisites. This study also adds to the evolving body of knowledge in that regard, given that research based on the perceptions of students' competencies towards employability is scarce (Cavanagh et al., 2015, as cited in Pitan, 2017).

Regarding research question two, the results show that all the elements of employability skills that are required for transitioning to the relevant workplace are 'needed.' Implicitly, these attributes are not available within the adult education program context. However, the result identified the skills training needs in order of importance based on the frequency of occurrence. The most required skills are critical thinking, entrepreneurial and technical knowledge skills, followed by analytical and ICT skills, self-directed and personalized learning, as well as verbal, written, and numeracy skills. The least needed skills are subject knowledge of issues and advocacy skills. This result is surprising considering the earlier result that suggests that the training received in terms of critical thinking, technical knowledge, and teamwork is "good." This might be because the skills are not "good enough" for the job market, or the curriculum teaches the theory but not the application. In that sense, it can therefore be inferred that all the parameters for graduate employability in the adult education discipline are inadequate and not practical; hence, the conclusion can be drawn that the adult education curriculum at the higher education level within the context of the study requires restructuring to align with the workplace demands of the 21st century as proposed by Pitan (2017).

Much as this appears generic, this study provides a piece of empirical evidence on the discipline-specific needs in the context of adult education; hence, it is an important contribution. Furthermore, the result exposes the relevance of generic skills as opposed to a narrow view of skill requirements within adult education. These generic skills include higher-order thinking skills, communication, analytical, problem-solving, and transferable skills that realistically prepare the students in the mold of globalized citizens that can fit into today's workplace irrespective of the geographical or cultural context (Pitan, 2017).

In addition, beyond the theoretically laden employability parameters, such as the 'generic skills,' the need to explore other dimensions that may improve the employability of adult education graduates remains plausible. In that light, the adult education providers, teachers, academics, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders should refocus and adapt to the career management skills, otherwise known as 'graduate attributes' (Bridgstock, 2009). These attributes refer to the qualities, skills, and understanding an institution weaves for their students to imbibe and shape their contribution to their profession as well as to the society as a whole (Bowden, 2000 as cited in Bridgstock, 2009).

Additionally, this approach provides institutions with the leverage to design niched criteria for graduate employability built around the unique/nuanced needs of the environment. A career management skill is a contextually based approach to developing graduate students' employability skills that applies to a wide range of contexts. This suggestion is predicated upon the rapidly changing dynamics of the global knowledge economy, which has made graduate employability and skill set development a worldwide phenomenon rather than a narrow disciplinary concept.

The findings, when viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory (HCT), underscore that the current Adult and Non-Formal Education curriculum in Nigerian universities fails to make the necessary investment in skill development (human capital) required for graduates to be

highly productive and therefore employable in the 21st-century labor market. Specifically, the identified deficiency in practical and generic skills suggests that the program is not generating the requisite stock of valuable skills (human capital) that would yield a higher future return on investment for both the graduates (in the form of better wages and employment) and the economy (in the form of increased productivity).

Conclusion

The present study strived to identify the status of prospective graduates of adult education skills and employability potentials among students in Northwest and Northeast Nigeria. The study revealed a low level of relevance of the current PGAE curriculum in advancing the students' skills for workplace delivery in northeastern and northwestern higher education in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study unraveled the need to deepen the training of the PGAE students for a more impactful learning experience that encapsulates the needed critical generic competencies. However, drawing on similar experiences in a developed context, the study proposed the adaptation of the framework developed by Bridgstock (2009) as a relevant framework for PGAE students in Nigeria based on its worldwide applicability.

Like most other studies, this study has its inherent limitations. Because the study is a cross-sectional study, and data were collected based on the students' self-reporting. The study might be subjected to self-reporting bias. In that regard, the study may not be generalizable beyond the scope of prospective graduates of adult education in the Nigerian context. Theoretically, the study focused on adult education as a discipline rather than the wider context of higher education delivery in Nigeria. Also, the study did not consider the potential influence of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, nor did it factor in other relevant stakeholders such as adult education providers, teachers, administrators, and other professionals in the field.

Based on the inadequacies revealed within this study, the proposition by Nwajiuba et al. (2020) may suffice. Adopting a stakeholder approach by developing a culture of partnerships and collaboration between and among the stakeholders in higher education and industry/workplace to develop an all-encompassing curriculum that addresses the needs of the industry from a global perspective. Based on the adult education workplace needs aligned with the globally competitive job market, the adult education curriculum must incorporate learning experiences such as flexibility, adaptability, partnerships, and collaborations that foster the acquisition of the appropriate skills that fit the needs of the job markets. Further studies are needed that factor in other critical members of the universities in the context of the study to obtain more robust data that provides a more broad-based perception of the status of the PGAE students. Future studies might explore the adoption of a longitudinal study on PGAE skills' needs and employability. A mixed-method study might add value to the outcome from the supplemental qualitative data. Additionally, future studies may consider testing the potential of the work readiness integrated competence scale (WRICM) (Prikshat et al., 2019) to better understand the readiness of the students from other stakeholders' perspectives.

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Author's Contribution
All authors discussed the results and contributed from the start to the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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