

Insights on the Benefits and Challenges of the Skills Development Program at Kgalagadi South Subdistrict of Botswana: Beneficiaries' Experiences

Adult Education Quarterly

2019, Vol. 69(2) 83–100

© The Author(s) 2019

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: [10.1177/0741713619827647](https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713619827647)

journals.sagepub.com/home/aeq



Reginald Oats¹ and Meshack T. Gumbo²

Abstract

A fit-for-purpose, functional program is the vehicle that guarantees the relevance of an education system by ensuring the sustainability of the society. Failure of a program to be relevant has the potential to cause crisis in a society. This basic qualitative research study explored the experiences of the beneficiaries of a skills development program (SDP) in the rural Kgalagadi south subdistrict of Botswana with specific reference to the benefits and challenges of the program and its potential to improve their livelihoods. Twelve beneficiaries (program participants) of the SDP and their four trainers were purposively selected and interviewed. Data were also collected through observation. The findings indicated that the participants benefited from the SDP training in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies that they had acquired. As such, they now could make good quality products. The findings also showed that the beneficiaries faced certain challenges with the SDP, especially the lack of financial muscle to sponsor their products. With the necessary improvements, the SDP promises to improve the livelihoods of those who undergo the training in the Kgalagadi south rural communities. This study sheds new insights on the benefits and challenges of the SDP, and this can help decision-makers and funders (Botswana government in particular) in the review of the program.

Keywords

beneficiaries, funding, improvement, projects, skills development program, sustainability

¹University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

²University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding Author:

Reginald Oats, University of Botswana, Private Bag 00702, Gaborone, Botswana.

Email: reginald.oats@mopipi.ub.bw

Introduction

The aim of this reported study was to explore the benefits and challenges of the skills development program (SDP) as well as its potential to improve the livelihoods of its beneficiaries in the rural communities at Kgalagadi south subdistrict of Botswana. The word Kgalagadi means “land of thirst.” Kgalagadi is one of Botswana’s remote, south subdistrict areas, which are detached from the mainstream of sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical activities. This detachment from the mainstream activities is due to the inadequate infrastructural development, low level of citizens’ education, minimal opportunities for economic advancement, and lack of information and knowledge about various opportunities that exist in the country. Literacy and functional literacy have been widely talked about and researched in the Western developed contexts (Eme, 2011; Parsons & Bynner, 2005; Przybylska, 2017). Przybylska (2017) gives an indication of European countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, where debates have been going on since the 1970s. The need to improve the livelihoods of illiterate people is one of the foremost reasons for pure literacy and/or functional literacy programs. In developing contexts, such programs would be appreciated. Botswana, which this article focuses on, strategically decided to provide education to the out-of-school population in the 1980s at a basic level. This was done to ensure that all Batswana benefited from the national principles of democracy, development of self-refinance, unity, and *botho* (humanness). Subsequent to this decision, the Botswana National Literacy Programme (BNLP) was introduced in 1981 as a major adult literacy initiative. Adult literacy refers to the provision of basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills and other postliteracy activities designed to prevent the neoliterates from relapsing into illiteracy (Maruatona, 2012). Over the years, it became clear that the BNLP was not adequately meeting the functional literacy needs of the participants in the program. Hence, there was a need to make literacy functional in order for it to be more useful to the daily lives of the learners (Motiki, 2006). The Ministry of Education and Skills Development introduced income-generating projects into the BNLP in order to address this need, and the review of the BNLP birthed the SDP, which was introduced in 2010. The SDP was aimed at creating a literate environment and informing sector development (Botswana Government, 2012). This development still accords a status of importance to literacy (functional literacy) in Botswana, thus warranting the need to research the SDP. Moreover, the SDP is a recent metamorphosis of functional literacy (introduced in 2010), and this study will therefore add to the few existing studies about the SDP. The SDP is an income-generating skills program in leatherwork, basketry, pottery, weaving, baking, dressmaking, food production, survival/life skills, computer skills, and entrepreneurial development. The SDP aims to improve the people’s livelihoods through the provision of requisite vocational and entrepreneurial skills especially to the out-of-school population (Botswana Government, 1994, 2012). Therefore, in the context of Botswana, the SDP promises to be a poverty alleviator to the appalling conditions such as in Kgalagadi south subdistrict. In this light, the SDP supports education for self-reliance and sustainability, as well as promotes the millennium development goals (United Nations, 2015) and

sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2017), which consider education as a key player in addressing poverty. However, the challenges and benefits that the SDP can yield have not been researched. This state of affairs necessitated this study with the intention to address the following objectives:

- To explore the benefits of the SDP to the beneficiaries at Kgalagadi south sub-district of Botswana;
- To determine the SDP's potential to improve the livelihoods of the beneficiaries after they have undergone the training; and
- To identify the challenges facing the beneficiaries after undergoing the SDP training.

The article proceeds with the discussion of literature and theoretical framework, research design and methods, presentation and discussion of findings, and makes conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; Olaniyi, 2015) explicates the importance of the concept of literacy; among others and for the purpose of this article, it is the heart of basic education for all and essential for eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. Functional illiteracy is defined differently from nation to nation (Mukan & Fuchyla, 2016). However, a useful distinction can be made between pure and functional illiteracy. Purely illiterate persons cannot read or write in any capacity, for all practical purposes, while a functionally illiterate person can read and possibly write simple sentences using a limited vocabulary, but cannot do well enough to deal with the everyday requirements of life in their own society (Vágvölgyi, Coldea, Dresler, Schrader, & Nuerk, 2016).

The above definition sparked debates with respect to the provision of literacy during the past decade. The first is whether literacy should be a means to an end, or an end in itself (Omolewa, 2000). The author further indicates that the skills associated with literacy are not ends in themselves, but need to serve a purpose in practice that is important for users. For this reason, UNESCO (2003) promotes debates about the launching endeavors of functional literacy aimed at supplementing the traditional literacy programs introduced in the 1960s. The idea was that countries should not restrict the promotion of literacy to the acquisition of related skills only, but proceed to the adoption and use of those skills to improve people's livelihoods (Mukan & Fuchyla, 2016; Oxenham, Dialo, Katahoire, Mwangi, & Sall, 2002). The second issue has been the limitations of literacy in terms of economic development. Given this view, literacy was criticized in the 1980s for not really generating employment opportunities or putting bread on the table (Mukan & Fuchyla, 2016; Omolewa, 2000). Thus, a country such as Botswana is noticed as taking action to transform its BNLP into an SDP. An inquiry into the SDP is therefore necessary to inject insights about the program into the existing knowledge and practice. The benefits and challenges of this functional

literacy program and its potential to improve the livelihoods of those who participate in it will inform the needed program review.

The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtein, Thailand, in 1990, indicated the importance of education for all by emphasizing that “education is a fundamental right, and that for countries to succeed they should educate their people so as to sustain growth and reduce poverty” (Muller, 2000, p. 29). Consequently, as stated above, the BNLP incorporated the entrepreneurial training programs in the literacy program. Kgoroba (2002) writes that there soon was a realization that the provision of literacy skills alone was not enough. Thus, a need was created to consider, at the program development level, the fact that the characteristics of functional illiteracy will vary from one individual to the next, and from one culture to another.

It should, however, be noted that the current concept of functional literacy involves more than mere economic skills. It has come to have three elements, namely literacy, functionality, and awareness (Wagner, 2000). The literacy component focuses on the skills of reading, writing, and numeracy; functionality deals with the economic skills, which are typically taught in the context of income-generating projects; and awareness disseminates information among learners with reference to their social, cultural, and political life. All the aforementioned components of functional literacy are important in teaching the skills aimed at income generation, which are indicated in the evaluation of Home Economics programs by the Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis Corporation (SIAPAC-AFRICA, 1990). That evaluation revealed that the provision of the 3Rs was essential to the effective running of income-generating projects (Motiki, 2006). Muller (2000), however, argues that adult education programs that contribute toward income generation appear to be much more effective than those with a narrow focus on reading, writing, and numeracy. This means that while literacy with regard to the 3Rs cannot be undervalued, it is even more important not to miss the economic functionality, which can make sustainable development in a community viable—especially in contexts such as the one under study in this article. It is in this light that the current study primarily focused on functional literacy.

Economic rewards can be more motivating to adults as they (adults) are more easily attracted to functional literacy classes than to literacy classes that do not teach economic skills (Oxenham et al., 2002). Other reasons for incorporating income-generating activities in the literacy programs are noted in certain studies such as those conducted by Scarborough and Zimmerer (1996) and the Social Impact and Assessment Policy Analysis Corporation (SIAPAC-AFRICA, 1990). In the mentioned studies, self-sufficient members mentioned that they had started projects because they saw them as opportunities to make a difference in their own lives, while enabling them to contribute toward rural development. An added strength of such projects, which ensures their sustainability, is that they have a corporate nature, that is, they are operated by groups that allow members to socialize in the process—they sing, tell stories, update one another on village imperatives, and so on. Scarborough and Zimmerer (1996) point out that some participants in the program even engage in income-generating projects to receive recognition from their communities. The SDP is one such program in which the beneficiaries should exhibit competence to design and

make projects as part of their own income generation. The featuring of the concepts design, projects, entrepreneurship/income generation, problem solving, and skills make the SDP a technology-oriented program. This is suited to adults who would want to be independent by making things to sustain their livelihoods. Technology entails complex processes that involve knowledge, skills, and resources available in various environmental contexts, to produce solutions to societal problems or to meet needs and/or wants (Gumbo, 2016).

Rogers (2000) emphasizes that literacy programs that support income-generating projects should link the literacy learned in classes with the projects' activities, because in most programs that he studied in Africa, the members of the income-generating projects were attracted to the literacy programs because of the income-generating skills that were taught as part of those programs. As Rogers et al. (1999) highlight, "adults learn literacy skills best when learning for a purpose and . . . this purpose needs to be built into the learning programme" (p. 81). On the other hand, functioning in a society without literacy becomes more difficult because those who cannot acquire basic literacy skills have fewer opportunities in every area of life (Cree, Kay, & Steward, 2012). This means that the teaching of adults should not be confined to the use of their literacy skills during classroom exercises only—by their very nature, adults move around doing things in search of providing for themselves and their families. Hence, adults should decide what they want to learn as they know what they need for their livelihoods. We argue that people's participation in the planning and decision-making process is a means of empowering them because such participation affects their own development. With further reference to empowerment, Nyerere (1980) observed that "if people are to develop, they must have power" (p. 2). This means that the literacy programs need to encourage their active participation and must enable them to develop a community of practice.

These advanced perspectives on literacy suggest a rethinking of the policies and strategies that are related to the provision of adult lifelong learning. To bring literacy to more people, lessons should be drawn from how things were done in the past, to identify the practices, which are primarily needed to support the global community (UNESCO, 2012). Certain demographics, areas, and people (e.g., those in remote areas of the Kgalagadi south subdistrict) have been woefully underserved in the past, thus governments should be more accountable for assisting and empowering them with a functional education. It was for this reason that, during the literacy day in 2016 to celebrate the 50th International Literacy Day Anniversary (themed *Reading the past, writing the future*), UNESCO broached the need for the member states to think in broader terms about what that meant for their citizens. The key questions for the member states were the following: How likely are these people to find meaningful, sustainable employment? Will these people be able to access medical care and health support? When they have children, will they be able to care for them properly and provide them with access to the opportunities they deserve? Can these people stand up for their civil rights, or are they likely to be taken advantage of?

These questions arguably targeted countries, which did not provide convincing reports about adult education activities during the development of the 2016 *Global*

Report on Adult Learning and Education. The report reflects positive outcomes obtained in Mali, where, with the introduction and implementation of the *Programme Vigoureux d'Alphabétisation et de Promotion des Langues Nationales* (Dynamic Literacy and Promotion of National Languages Program), the Adult Learning and Education (ALE) budget increased significantly. In that country, there has been a push toward the adoption of the education policies and strategies designed to connect formal and nonformal educational paths more effectively. In most cases, nonformal paths have been neglected for decades. Unlike these programs, the SDP seems to be more concerned about the functional side of literacy, hence a study of the program can help with the understanding of its capacitation to improve the livelihoods of people.

The authors framed the study in the theory of andragogy, which is “the art and science of helping adults to learn” (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy [TEAL], 2011, p. 1). The main reason behind this choice was that the authors were interested in the learning of adults enrolled in the SDP and what they took away from the program, which they could apply to achieve the sustainability of their livelihoods and social responsibility. The pioneer of andragogy, Knowles (1984), attempted to develop adult education and learning by popularizing the notion that adults need to know why they should learn something, learn experientially, approach learning as problem solving, and learn best when the topic is of immediate value to them. His work was a significant factor in reorienting adult educators from educating people, to helping them learn. In light of Knowles’s claims, andragogy is premised on these assumptions about adult learners: self-directed learning, internal motivation, experience as a learning resource, learning needs are focused on social roles, immediate application of what was learnt, and need to know why and learn what needs to be learnt (Henschke, 2016; TEAL, 2011).

In addition, it is important to equip learners with motivation and skills for lifelong learning. Hence, in Botswana, the government introduced the SDP to equip the out-of-school populace with skills capable of improving their livelihoods now and in the future. This resonates well with the theory of andragogy, which maintains that learners should be engaged in informal learning activities where they share and learn by doing. In addition, adult learners should give their input into policy and program development initiatives as they discover why they should learn particular skills.

The authors of this article believe that adult learning should expand those skills with relevance and a utility to particular learners. As a matter of fact, adult learners should acquire the necessary skills to enable them to achieve the potential of their personalities. This is premised on the fact that every person has the capacities which, if realized, will contribute toward his or her well-being and that of the society. Achieving this potential requires skills of many kinds in the vocational, social, recreational, civic, and artistic domains. It should be the goal of education to teach each individual those skills, which will allow him or her to make full use of his or her capacities.

The main criticism leveled against andragogy is its cultural blindness (Brookfield in TEAL, 2011) in the sense that self-directed learning and learners’ establishment “of a non-threatening relationship with the teacher as facilitator of learning may neglect

races and cultures that value the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and direction” (p. 1).

Method

This study followed Merriam’s (2009) basic qualitative research design. The choice of this design was informed by how the participants in the SDP interpreted their learning experiences, constructed their worlds as a result of their learning in SDP, and the meaning they attributed to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Thus, the researchers’ overall purpose was to understand how the beneficiaries of SDP made sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Trainers (education officials), SDP beneficiaries, and two remote settlements inhabited by the SDP beneficiaries in the Kgalagadi were purposively selected to participate in the study in order to understand their experiences of the SDP. The researchers were keen to understand the participants’ experiences of undergoing the SDP training as adults, the benefits they gained, the challenges that they faced, and the change that the SDP could bring to their lives. The participants’ selection is explained in Table 1.

One-on-one semistructured interviews were conducted with the trainers, and one-on-one structured interviews with the beneficiaries. The participants were interviewed at the training sites in disturbance-free venues on agreed days and times when they were free. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The researchers probed where necessary to ensure a full coverage of the questions asked. Probing covered the questions that revolved around their experiences with the SDP and its benefits, and the challenges that the beneficiaries faced in their efforts to produce marketable products after undergoing the SDP training. The questions were attuned to the research objectives and aspects of andragogy to ensure relevance to the theoretical framework in the methods and findings. Each interview session lasted about 20 minutes.

The researchers also engaged in observation at the research sites to get a sense of the training environment and related training. An observation tool was designed to note the learning venues, condition of the workshop spaces for making the products, materials and tools, products made, and participants’ learning and the application of such learning in their projects.

Numerous researcher decisions and actions ensured the study’s trustworthiness, for example, participants’ homogeneity, systematic coding, and transcription of the statements (which remained true to the raw data); member checking with participants; researchers’ co-observation approach; and ultimate comparison and synergizing of their data.

Data analysis followed thematic building that was decided in light of the research objectives. The process of analysis happened concurrently with data collection in inductive and iterative ways (Creswell, 2012), because in the process of collecting the data, the researchers were already thinking of themes or codes for the data (Randolph, 2008). To familiarize themselves with the data, the researchers read and reread through the data before they started coding them through to theme building (Creswell, 2012). The findings were ultimately presented according to the main and subthemes.

Table I. Participants' Selection.

Research sites	SDP beneficiaries	Trainers (education officials)
<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural, remote <p>How selection was made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified with the help of trainers of SDP beneficiaries Trainers provided a list of beneficiaries between 2012 and 2015 and purposive sampling was used to select participants from various skills areas 	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youthful and elderly people Did not have opportunity to undergo formal schooling, or those who dropped out from school due to some reasons 4 were doing leatherwork, 2 basketry, 4 baking, and 2 dressmaking Aged from 28 to 75 Annually 20 people benefit from the program <p>How they were selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected with the help of trainers on the day of training The trainers introduced them to the researchers 	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainers of SDP beneficiaries Held Diploma in Adult Education to Bachelor's Degree in Adult Education or Secondary Education <p>How they were selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They were approached by researchers on the day of training at research sites

Note. SDP = skills development program. Purposive selection of contexts and participants: homogeneity (SDP beneficiaries, adult learners, ruralites, plus trainers of SDP beneficiaries).

Ethical issues are central to social research because knowledge confers power (Sayer, 2000). In research, ethics is the principle that guides researchers' conduct and their relationship with participants (Creswell, 2013). Botswana's policies governing research ethics were adhered to. In this light, permission to collect data at the identified sites was sought from the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, and the Kgalagadi Regional Operations Office. This action would facilitate the informed consent of the participants as a pivotal aspect of research ethics (Mills, 2003). The participants consented to participate after information about the study was disclosed to them and they were assured confidentiality and freedom to withdraw their participation at any time without any implications.

Findings and Discussion

This study sought to explore the experiences of the SDP beneficiaries in the Kgalagadi south subdistrict with respect to the benefits and challenges of the program and its

potential to improve their livelihoods. In an attempt to address the objectives of the study, the trainers and beneficiaries of the SDP were used as participants. The main themes that were decided in line with the research objectives are as follows: benefits of SDP to participants, SDP's potential to improve the beneficiaries' livelihoods, and challenges SDP beneficiaries face after undergoing training.

Benefits of the SDP to Participants

The participants, who are the SDP beneficiaries, took away certain benefits from the program. First, the SDP was an illiteracy alleviator. One participant attested thus: "The program is indeed capable of alleviating illiteracy among people in remote areas." Second, the SDP was viewed as a catalyst for sustainable development in Kgalagadi. A participant stated in this regard: "For us in the Kgalagadi regions, the program is an opportunity to acquire skills we could use to improve [our] livelihoods." This catalytic effect of the SDP complements its illiteracy alleviating function because it contributes functional literacy to the beneficiaries. Hence, third, the SDP was, in the mind of its beneficiaries, an extender of the traditional education through its functional literacy ideology. The beneficiaries realized the importance of functional literacy for self-reliance and sustainability. Botswana's traditional educational system might have boosted this notion. This exposed beneficiaries to diverse skills under the principle of utilitarianism, which enabled them to acquire and appreciate various skills (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). By implication, then, the SDP furthers what the traditional education system in Botswana set out to do by imparting practical skills for survival purposes. A range of skills that it purports to impart include different kinds of games such as wrestling and running, training for healthy living, cooking, dressing, hunting, farming, carpentry, training to become a smith, drumming, dancing, marriage counseling, and critical thinking (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). Oats (2014) indicates that in Botswana, specifically, initiation schools are used as training centers where children are prepared for adult roles in their respective communities. This enables them to fit into their communities and live productively. Thus, the beneficiaries of the SDP understood it in light of traditional education.

Fourth, the SDP is suited for ruralites. The participants felt that it benefits people who go through the program such as Kgalagadi south subdistrict dwellers. This notion was even articulated by one trainer, who maintained,

The SDP targets all adult learners and out-of-school populace, and has shown positive outcomes. It is thus evident that the programme suits the remote areas where the majority of people have not had the opportunity to attend school beyond the primary school level.

In light of this assertion, the SDP supports the United Nations' global report on ALE, which is opposed to the marginalization of adult learners. The report treats learning as a fundamental human right that requires not only every child but also every youth and adult to learn life skills so that they can address personal, sociocultural, political, and environmental challenges in local and global contexts (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). This understanding attracts the fifth aspect, namely,

the fact that the SDP bridges the gap between remote areas and advanced ones such as cities. In light of this, the SDP had the potential to transform disadvantaged communities through the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This became clear when one participant who underwent training in metalwork said,

The programme is suitable for us in remote areas because we are alienated from a wide range of national benefits and opportunities. Simply put, though we have interests in a number of economic activities, we fail to further our dreams because of the localities we find ourselves in.

In sixth place, quality was mentioned as an important aspect in learning or training. One of the beneficiaries stated, “the SDP has elements of quality education which provide the outcomes needed by individuals, communities, and societies to prosper and ensure inclusivity and equality for all, while promoting lifelong learning for sustainability.” This argument is based on the fact that those responsible for the out-of-school education and training in Botswana have a mandate to provide quality education for all in line with the government mandate of ensuring that all Batswana embrace the four goals of democracy, development, unity, and self-reliance. In this way, the SDP aligns with the United Nations’ Education for All goals, which are to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met. The latter should be done through the provisioning of equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs (Goal 3), and to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy (Goal 4) by 2015 (especially for women), and grant equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (UNESCO, 2000).

SDP’s Potential to Improve Beneficiaries’ Livelihoods

This part of the article specifically focuses on the participants’ experiences regarding the SDP’s potential to improve their livelihoods. In that sense the SDP as a poverty alleviator became a dominant subtheme mentioned. This is because poverty is more prevalent in rural areas such as Kgalagadi, where the majority of the poor mainly female-headed households live. It was for this reason that the beneficiaries were asked to share their experiences about the SDP having helped them run their projects effectively as a perceived solution to poverty. The effects of the SDP were also seen in the eyes (approval) of the beneficiaries’ customers in marketing their products, a thing that lies much closer to the subtheme of quality education under the first main theme above. This emerged when this participant indicated that since completing training in leatherwork his life had changed tremendously:

Before I went for training in metal works, I had limited skills in handling leather and making products of leather, though I used to make products. It was not that profitable because customers used to say my products are of less quality. After undergoing 2 weeks’ training my skills in leatherworks improved tremendously. Equally, my confidence in workmanship and my work speed of work upgraded.

This participant was also motivated to make better quality products. He stated further that his working speed had also improved in the sense that he now could produce and sell more goods within a shorter period of time than before.

The third subtheme also lies close to the aspect of quality—accuracy of measurement. This featured through another participant who had also trained in leatherwork, in that he had “learnt about making accurate measurements in the projects.” When probed, he elaborated, “A lesson I learnt from undergoing SDP training is that of making proper measurements and designs before making leather products.” In support of the above participant, who saw it through his customers’ eyes, this participant claimed that since he produced improved products, his clients had stopped complaining about product measurements and quality. This, to the participant, indicated skills he had acquired from the SDP training. In manufacturing, quality control is a process that ensures that customers receive products that are free from defects and that meet their needs (Bradbury, 2018). These deliberations by participants attracted the aspect of personal development and enrichment, as one participant said, “This training is relevant since it has allowed me to enrich my talent and has further given me the competencies to make better goods than before and this has increased my profits.” According to this participant, the training was important because it “leads to the one’s development, with a particular emphasis on nurturing passion and drive for the birth and growth of an entrepreneurial spirit.”

Another participant who had trained in bakery had this to say:

After 2 weeks’ training in bakery with the department of Out-of-School Education and Training, I felt like a well-rounded manufacturer and entrepreneur as I was now able to put to use my talent to take my project to a higher place. Currently, my bread-making project is doing fairly well and I have gone to the extent of sharing skills learned from the training with other women in my village.

The future prosperity of any economy depends on its success in promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and the effective and prompt absorption of technological advances (Braunerhjelm, 2009). This, it seems, can be achieved through the SDP project, as it aids its beneficiaries in ways that they can design and make products independently on completion of the SDP training. Thus, the face of the SDP is technological as it injects thinking to innovate, design, and make products from a functional literacy point of view. This fulfills the definition of technology given earlier in this article according to Gumbo (2016).

In concluding this part, the participants’ views diverged—there were those who were positive about the SDP’s capability to improve their livelihoods, and those (especially the trainers) who blamed the SDP’s emphasis of theory over practical. They backed up their views with their empathy for the learners who had not attended school beyond the primary school level. Yet another section of the participants felt that lack of financial provisioning further disempowered them even after successfully undergoing the training. The fact that they had proven their acquired skills from the training, the government had to consider giving them a financial start-up. Due to their poverty-stricken

backgrounds, the nonprovisioning of financial help put them in an awkward situation that denied them the opportunity to thrust forward, thus disequating the effort made to be trained to the value of its outcome.

Challenges That SDP Beneficiaries Face After Undergoing Training

This study illuminated the challenges that the SDP beneficiaries faced in their determination to put into practice the theory and skills acquired during training. The beneficiaries' sentiments were mainly backed by their trainers. Market shrinking was a worrisome matter to them. Though they were upbeat about the changing customer attitude, they expressed concern about the shortage of markets for their products because they lived in remote areas with smaller populations, poor terrains, and limited finance. One participant argued,

Our hope was that after training the education office would assist us by linking us with potential buyers of our goods, given that most of us are from remote settlements and as such not much aware of marketing opportunities.

In the second instance, a trainer raised an issue about the SDP content, noting that the "SDP content does not have sufficient focus on marketing skills." In this trainer's opinion, the program was unbalanced because "it lacks the key elements of entrepreneurship education." To the trainers, the content had relevant topics capable of imparting adequate knowledge on the production of goods and services, but its design emphasized theory instead of practice—given the technological indications of the SDP, which mostly target functional skills, this fell short on theory-practice balance. Keeping theory-practice balance in a program of this nature is crucial in light of educating or training adult learners considering the notion of functional literacy and Knowles's theory (commented on at the end of this section in light of the findings). The trainers thus felt that the program could only bear fruits if more practical activities were included than theory. They argued that most of the trainees were people who had not gone beyond the primary school level, and as such theory was difficult to them. One trainer said,

For me, though the programme content is relevant, the challenge for [the] majority is illiteracy. That is, most of the trainees we admit are illiterate, and teaching them certain concepts becomes a huge challenge. As a matter of fact, after training it becomes challenging for them to implement concepts as [they] were taught.

Concerning the meager terrain and lack of transportation opportunities, the findings revealed that the beneficiaries resided far from the urban areas where poor road infrastructure was the order of the day. The participants' concerns were therefore that, after completing the training and making the effort to produce goods for sale, they were faced with transport challenges in bringing their goods to the marketplaces. On the other hand, it became equally challenging for potential buyers to reach these areas.

Juxtaposed to the poor road conditions is transport issues that bothered the trainers. According to one trainer, even the regional education office staff found it uneasy to visit the remote areas due to the poor condition of the roads. This gave the researchers an understanding that such a situation complicated the officials' monitoring and evaluation of the SDP. If trainers could not visit the trainees to monitor the implementation of the SDP program, how could they account for the achievements and nonachievements thereof? United Nations Joint Initiatives (2012) indicates the value of monitoring and evaluation thus:

At the programme level, the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to track implementation and outputs systematically, and measure the effectiveness of programmes. It helps determine exactly when a programme is on track and when changes may be needed. Monitoring and evaluation form the basis for modification of interventions and assessing the quality of activities being conducted. (p. 1)

Another key challenge raised by beneficiaries and trainers is the financial aspect, in particular start-up capital. The beneficiaries were worried that without the financial support it was impossible to run functional and sustainable income-generating projects in the far-flung areas. This became clear when two beneficiaries commented thus:

The truth is we appreciate the support given by the government in terms of training opportunities with a view to equip[ping] us with life skills to improve [our] livelihood[s], but the challenge is money to start the enterprises. In remote areas like ours it is difficult to generate funds to buy material for our projects.

With a metal works project, for me to fit into today's challenging retail world, I need quality material and machines, so that I produce quality material I could sell anywhere, but without good start-up capital, it is a challenge to realize this giant step.

The beneficiaries suggested that since the Ministry of Education and Skills Development did not provide funding to support the beneficiaries to start their own businesses post training, accessing sponsorships presented them with huge challenges. Post training, they encountered financial challenges in the form of not acquiring start-up capital and as such could not make sufficient improvements in their lives. They complained that the program only took them to training, but thereafter they were left to cope on their own. One beneficiary explained in this regard as follows:

Some of us find ourselves in disadvantaged areas like Kgalagadi south and [these] are areas with fewer economic activit[ies] and resources, therefore even if you produce some goods for sale, markets are a challenge. As such I cannot confidently say that the training benefited me much in terms of improv[ing] to [my] livelihood.

The participants' views were corroborated with the researchers' observation. The SDP beneficiaries looked enthused to learn so they could improve their lives. They freely interacted with their trainers who respected and showed willingness to help

them. The researchers saw that the beneficiaries of the SDP struggled to finance their own projects. That affected their material buying and production as those depended on funding. As the researchers observed the participants' goods during their visit, they attest that the program fell short of making the beneficiaries' trades fit into what had become an extremely competitive market. As such, it is clear that without funding after training, it would be very difficult for the trainees to manage and present competitive projects. These participants seemed to fall under the target group identified in the global report on ALE 2012, which indicates that ALE still receives only a small proportion of public funding, that is, 42% of countries spend less than 1% of their public education budgets on ALE, and only 23% of countries spend more than 4%.

The learning venues were equipped and the condition of the workshop spaces for making the products was motivating to the participants. There was a supply of materials and tools to make the products. The trainers and beneficiaries enjoyed the teaching and learning and its application in their projects—the beneficiaries were afforded the opportunity to practically work on their projects. It was observed that the trainers made every effort to operationalize the theory-packed content for the sake of their adult learners. Hence, it is not that the trainers' role was underplayed as critics of andragogy claim (Brookfield in TEAL, 2011). The fact that the training venues were equipped caused an imbalance with the outside realities facing the beneficiaries as they were not able to move on with their projects as they had wished due to lack of financial aid.

Judged against andragogy, the SDP's aim was to help its beneficiaries learn (TEAL, 2011). Indeed, the findings confirm that the beneficiaries benefited from the program. That they were able to work on their projects in an improved manner post training attests to the importance put to the ideals of functional literacy particularly for adult learners. From this point of view, it seems that the SDP fulfilled the beneficiaries in terms of why they had to learn what they learnt. The beneficiaries related their learning to their experiences in their context, and approached their training in the SDP as problem solving in terms of improving their livelihoods with the sales that they envisaged from their made products (Henschke, 2016; TEAL, 2011). The SDP provides hope of improving the lives of its participants in a context such as Kgalagadi south subdistrict. However, there is an aspect of the SDP, which has denied beneficiaries to realize the full benefits of the program. This pertains to the posttraining support needed especially financially, the SDP being blind to the realities of poor road infrastructure in the rural context that restricts beneficiaries' movement in marketing their goods, and the dependency of the SDP on theory compared with practice. The latter communicates the SDP's weak design for adult learners. Additionally, the SDP bears no indication that its design accommodated the beneficiaries' voices or contributions. Involving adult participants in a program of this nature could complete their reasons for participating in it and serve as their internal motivation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the SDP is a timely initiative, which has the potential to improve its beneficiaries' livelihoods and add to their self-reliance and

sustainable development, especially in rural contexts. Thus, the SDP promises to be workable, achievable, and sustainable, if proper monitoring occurs and improvements could be factored in. Specifically, to those who already run businesses and have reliable clients, the SDP adds value, because these beneficiaries can improve their earnings. To those who do not have businesses but were trained, the SDP ended before the start-up due to financial challenges. Additionally, to those who started up, it is unclear where the customers shall come from. If there are no customers, the SDP's improving of the beneficiaries' livelihoods cannot be guaranteed. In both instances, other conditions may stall the prospects of the SDP, for example, bad road infrastructure. Posttraining financial support seems to carry weight. The government's unfavorable response to this challenge brought the benefits of the SDP to a dead end and locked the beneficiaries into a state of project stagnation. The researchers believe that without funding posttraining, the SDP participants cannot produce market competitive goods. The researchers are thus of the opinion that the SDP should be defended and its weak sides addressed so that it can wholly achieve its function of improving livelihoods.

The article has responded to the objectives, as the findings shed insights on the benefits and challenges of the SDP and its potential to improve the livelihoods of its beneficiaries. The main contribution here is that the research adds to the body of knowledge about how far the SDP can capacitate its beneficiaries. At a practical level, the article exposes the need to—as part of the training of SDP beneficiaries—impart business and marketing skills that can help beneficiaries survive current complex market demands, as well as inform practice. In as far as decision-makers and government (the funder) are concerned, this article highlights the beyond-training support needed to make the SDP a complete success.

Given the fact that the SDP is a promising program, which could capacitate its beneficiaries, the Botswana government should revisit its funding strategy for the program. The government should also commission public works to attend to the road conditions to make the marketability of beneficiaries' products viable in rural contexts. The education officials and trainers should consider evaluating the SDP especially by soliciting the beneficiaries' inputs for future improvements of the program. Further research could help assess the feasibility of cascading the SDP to communities in other contexts given its promising effect of improving people's livelihoods. Other types of studies such as action research and case evaluation can add to the understanding of the SDP's empowering mission. Gathering added data with regard to participants' prior and post SDP states could add to the understanding of the improvements that they have realized.

That document analysis (with specific reference to the SDP) was not done is a possible limitation of the present study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Adeyemi, M., & Adeyenka, A. (2003). Principles and content of African traditional education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35, 365-472.
- Botswana Government. (1994). *Revised national policy on education*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printers.
- Botswana Government. (2012). *Skills development programme for adult learners*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printers.
- Bradbury, J. (2018). *Quality control in manufacturing*. Retrieved from <https://www.graphic-products.com/articles/quality-control-in-manufacturing>
- Braunerhjelm, P. (2009). *The role of SMEs and entrepreneurship in a globalised economy*. Retrieved from <https://www.government.se/49b731/contentassets/8efd3c3a4c844f88883513fa451760bd/the-role-of-smes-and-entrepreneurship-in-a-globalised-economy>
- Cree, A., Kay, A., & Steward, J. (2012). *The economic & social cost of illiteracy: A snapshot of illiteracy in a global context*. Melbourne, Australia: World Literacy Foundation.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Retrieved from <https://granolagradschoolandhoffman.wordpress.com>
- Eme, E. (2011). Cognitive and psycholinguistic skills of adults who are functionally illiterate: Current state of research and implications for adult education. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 25, 753-762.
- Gumbo, M. T. (2016). Pedagogical principles in technology education: An indigenous perspective. In G. Emegwali & E. Shizha (Eds.), *African indigenous knowledge and the sciences: Journeys into the past and present* (pp. 13-32). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.
- Henschke, J. A. (2016). A history of andragogy and its documents as they pertain to adult basic and literacy education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 25, 1-28.
- Kgoroba, P. (2002). *Post-literacy: Meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century: Opening speech* (Report 11-14). Department of Non-Formal Education Regional Workshop.
- Knowles, M. (1984). *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Maruatona, T. (2012). *Participatory approaches to the planning of literacy education in Botswana*. Paper presented at Adult Education Research Conference. Retrieved from <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2002/papers/43>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mills, G. E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Motiki, A. T. (2006). *Performance of income-generating projects supported by Botswana National Literacy Programme* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Mukan, N., & Fuchyla, O. (2016). Functional literacy learning in the system of adult education in Belgium. *Advance Education*, 6(6), 34-39.
- Muller, J. (2000). From Jomtein to Dakar: Meeting basic learning needs. *Journal for Adult Education and Development*, 55, 29-55. Retrieved from <https://www.dvv-international.de/>

- adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-552000/dakar-education-for-all/from-jom-tien-to-dakar-meeting-basic-learning-needs-ndash-of-whom/
- Nyerere, J. K. (1980). *The poor of the world unite*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzania Information Services, Ministry of Information and Tourism.
- Oats, R. (2014). *The responsiveness of social studies teacher retaining curriculum towards democratic citizenship education in Botswana* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Olaniyi, R.O. (2015). Basic and functional literacy and the attainment of vision 20-2020 in Nigeria. *Developing Country Studies*, 5(14), 22-25.
- Omolewa, M. (2000). The language of literacy. *Adult Education and Development*, 55, 221-227.
- Oxenham, J., Dialo, A., Katahoire, A., Mwangi, A., & Sall, O. (2002). Skills and literacy training for better livelihood. *Adult Education and Development*, 58, 8-43.
- Parsons, S., & Bynner, J. (2005). *Does numeracy matter more?* London, England: National Research and Development Centre.
- Przybylska, E. (2017). The phenomenon of functional literacy in the light of empirical studies. *Educational Studies Review*, 25, 91-109.
- Randolph, J. J. (2008). *Multidisciplinary methods in education technology research and development*. Hämeenlinna, Finland: HAMK.
- Rogers, A. (2000). Literacy comes second: Working with groups in developing societies. *Development in Practice*, 10, 236-240.
- Rogers, A., Madox, B., Millican, J., Jones, I., Pappen, U., & Robbin-Pant, A. (1999). *Re-defining post literacy in a changing world*. London, England: Department for International Development.
- Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and social science*. London, England: Sage.
- Scarborough, N. M., & Zimmerer, T. W. (1996). *Essentials of entrepreneurship and small business management* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- SIAPAC-AFRICA. (1990). *An evaluation of Botswana home economics programmes*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printers.
- Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy. (2011). *Adult learning theories* (TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 11). Retrieved from https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf
- United Nations. (2015). *Millennium development goals*. Paris, France: Author.
- United Nations. (2017). *Sustainable development goals*. Paris, France: Author.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2000, April). Dakar framework for action: Education for all. In *The world education forum*, Dakar, Senegal. Paris, France: Author.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2003). *Literacy: A UNESCO perspective*. Paris, France: Author.
- United Nations Joint Initiatives. (2012). *Why is monitoring and evaluation important?* Retrieved from www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/331-why-is-monitoring-and-evaluation-important.html
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2009). *UNODC report on human trafficking exposes modern form of slavery*. Retrieved from <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- Vágvölgyi, R., Coldea, A., Dresler, T., Schrader, J., & Nuerk, H. (2016). A review about functional illiteracy: Definition, cognitive, linguistic, and numeracy aspects. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1617. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01617
- Wagner, D. (2000). Literacy and adult education. *Journal for Adult Education and Development*, 55, 129-141.

Author Biographies

Reginald Oats is a lecturer in the University of Botswana, Faculty of Education, where he teaches courses in curriculum theory and design. He attained his MEd from the University of Botswana and a PhD from University of South Africa. Before joining the University of Botswana, he was an education officer (adult basic education). His research interest is in the area of teaching and learning, curriculum design, adult education, and environmental education.

Meshack T. Gumbo is a Full Professor in the College of Education at University of South Africa. He is currently an acting postgraduate program coordinator in the college. His research interests are in technology teachers' professional development, indigenous knowledge systems, decolonization of the curriculum, distance education, and e-learning. He leads a teachers' professional development in mathematics, science, and technology education; ODL; and book and article writing projects. He mentors developing academics and has supervised numerous doctoral and master's students.