



UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

**NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT:**

An assessment of the contribution of an NGO implemented program  
in Southwestern Uganda

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**University of Agder, 2020**

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This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

*University of Agder, 2020*

*Faculty of Social Sciences*

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## **Abstract**

This master thesis assessed the contribution of non-formal adult education programs in the process of community development. The study took a case of a training program designed and implemented by a local NGO supported by INGOs in southwestern Uganda. The program (whose name was anonymised in this study to follow the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act), was designed to provide vocational skills training to out-of-school youth. The findings showed that the program whose model is to use ‘master’ artisans (knowledgeable and experienced individuals) with workstations in the community. Trainees undergo hands-on training within their local communities. The study established that the program had several trades but tailoring and hairdressing were the most common among trainees.

By adopting the capability approach and critical capability approach as its lenses, the study findings established that the program provides competencies in the different trades but also an important set of life skills were provided to trainees in form of seminars. Findings indicated that the combination of these categories of competencies has enabled program graduates to find jobs majority being retained by their former trainers while others have established their micro-enterprises. Findings further revealed that graduates have acquired household assets and several other benefits which have improved their well-being. Based on the OECD well-being framework measures for 2020, the study established that the NGO implemented program has to a moderate extent contributed to improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries and their household members. The limitations of the program including donor dependence have made it hard to provide graduates with substantial start-up capital for the graduates to start meaningful micro-enterprises. This has therefore handicapped the immense contribution the program would have on the beneficiaries its ripple effects on the community. The study recommends for collaboration among different development actors to explore workable ways of improving the model especially for training vocational skills to not only the vulnerable groups but to the whole community as everyone needs key competencies to live a better life in the current globalized world.

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My workmates, Salman and your crew, Tussen Takk! Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and learn a lot of diversity.

## **Declaration**

I Saul Tumwine, declare that this master thesis entitled: *Non-Formal Adult Education and Community Development: An assessment of the contribution of an NGO implemented program in Southwestern Uganda* is my original piece of work and has never been submitted for any academic award to any institution of learning other than the University of Agder.

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15.12.2020

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## **List of abbreviations/acronyms**

ALE	Adult Learning and Education
CA	Capability Approach
CCA	Critical Capability Approach
ESL	Early School Leavers
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NFAE	Non-Formal Adult Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Rationale

While undertaking my bachelors' degree internship in 2014, I was involved in community-based services programs in one of the districts in south-western Uganda. My tasks included, among others, taking part in community organizing ventures and monitoring and evaluating district programs. One (local) Non-Governmental Organization (LNGO) was a close partner with the district in the field of community development.

The district administration oversaw the LNGO's development agendas with the rural communities in the district. I got a chance to witness on a few occasions what the LNGO was doing with community organized groups in areas of agriculture, savings and loan associations (SLAs), literacy campaigns, and training programs. The LNGO activities were amazing and motivating to me as a student of a discipline concerned with uplifting people's well-being. My educational background in adult and community education combined with my current studies in the global development and planning program has increased my inquisitiveness to understanding rural community development work.

For a considerable time now, issues of poverty reduction and other development challenges have taken centre stage in global discourses. Development frameworks the world over are being drafted to deal with such problems. From the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education is considered one of the development approaches. Education generally is recognized for its importance in health and well-being, employment and labour market, and social, civic & community life (Schuller et al., 2016). Specifically, adult education has been hailed as a springboard of development (Milana, 2012). While it is agreeable that Education provides skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviour required to spur development agenda, this role is played by various actors and thus, development work ought to be contextualized to understand which actors play which roles. Many issues are impeding community development in many developing countries and therefore require strategic solutions, including appropriate forms of education, Non-formal Adult Education (NFAE) being one of them.

Most developing countries have a high number of young people and a strong case of formal education school dropouts (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016). In Uganda's southwestern sub-

region, the story is not different. According to the 2014 National census results, 91.8% of the primary school going age did not complete primary seven. Simialry, 95.5% of the secondary school going age did not complete secondary school (UBOS, 2017). Coupled with many factors like cultural norms, political instabilities, disease burden, among others, most of these young people (school dropouts) live a life not dignified enough. This is partly because of limited skills to enable them to get employment or start income-generating ventures. This trend increasingly results in high unemployment rates among the youth rendering them to become a burden to the communities instead of contributing to the socio-economic transformation of their communities.

To avert such trends, the Ugandan government, through Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) with the concerted efforts of other development actors, especially NGOs; other forms of education and training programs have been designed to cater for such early school leavers. NFAE, and training programs, have been emphasized in recent times to take care of those outside the formal education system. These efforts are geared at ensuring the social and economic development of rural areas are a step in the right direction to uplift rural people out of poverty and its associated consequences.

The role played by NGOs is often taken for granted yet it is crucial in the development of countries as implementers, catalysts, and partners (Lewis,2007). As highlighted above, the LNGO in question in this study has performed these roles in the southwestern region of Uganda but not much has been documented regarding their training programs. These training programs are extended to vulnerable groups, especially the youth. The programs are also delivered in a style different from what other development actors employ. It is thus imperative that such a shift in the way training programs especially for the out-of-school youth is carried out, is explored and documented for benchmarking and possible adoption in other areas with similar socio-economic characteristics and social development challenges.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess the role of an NFAE program that has been implemented by the LNGO with support from International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) in southwestern Uganda. The study, it is hoped, will enhance the student researcher's analytical skills in as far as education and training, and development of rural areas and vulnerable groups are concerned.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Globalization and its consequences call for quick responses and a set of new skills and knowledge. For over three decades now, education and primarily adult education has been seen to provide the industry workers, parents, teachers, business owners, church leaders, out-of-school youth, among others, with the required skills to sustain a living in the globalized world. The crucial role played by adult education has according to Bhola (1998), attributed to viewing adult education as the neutralizer of global development challenges. Meanwhile, the social, political, and economic difficulties of the late 1980s and early 1990s led to a series of world summits that pointed to the critical role adult education can play. While the genuine intentions of the various summits and their declarations might not have been met, there is a realization that adult education helps mobilize the masses on the critical issues they face. Such issues include but are not limited to gender-based violence, unemployment, under-employment, population pressures, environmental degradation, poverty, and disease. As Bhola argues, adult education has a role to [...] “promote individual fulfilment and democratic participation and social justice” (Bhola, 1998, p. 503)

From Bhola’s argument, it appears that the central role of adult education is thus to foster skills and competencies that enable people to support themselves, their families and contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of their communities (UNESCO, 2015). While this argument is vivid among policymakers and development actors especially the state, less effort is made to uplift the status of adult education, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Like many other countries in the global south, Uganda has not adequately streamlined the position of adult education in her development agendas yet several government policies and planning documents continue to recognize adult education as one of the requisites for having a strong human capital required to propel development agenda (Bananuka & Katahoire, 2019; NPA, 2015; MoGLSD, 2008; GoU, 1992)

In the context of community development, vocational adult education is critical for nurturing the skills and knowledge necessary to both reduce the risk of poverty and for proving the capacity to withstand pressures that exacerbate poverty (Jinna & Maikano, 2014; Tukundane, 2014). That is why lifelong learning opportunities provided by development actors are crucial for enabling many out-of-school youth to gain knowledge and skills that they could use for their well-being. As argued, adequately designed and organized education, including vocational adult education and training, is essential in preparing young people for the future

labour market (UNESCO 2015, p. 14). Whereas NFAE programs rarely lead to certification that is required for accessing employment in many instances, the knowledge and skills acquired by the graduates could be useful in starting up business ventures and employing themselves.

In Uganda's southwestern sub-region, an LNGO has implemented a program for out-of-school youth. The NGO's mission is to empower communities with innovative solutions that give vulnerable groups an opportunity to realize their full potential through among others education and training. The program is embedded in the rights-based approach. Under this arrangement, young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have not had the chance to continue with the formal education schooling are mobilized from the community and attached to an identified local 'master' artisan for training in specific thematic areas (trades according to study findings). The internet search on the NGO indicates that the program beneficiaries (graduates) are reaping big from the training. Anecdotal findings indicate an improvement in the graduates' household incomes and wellbeing.

To confirm or dispel the anecdotal findings, this study sought to assess the contribution of the program regarding the social and economic empowerment of the graduates and the general socio-economic development of the communities where the program has been implemented. The study findings will bring a body of knowledge to the existing literature on the important role education (especially NFAE) plays in transforming communities but most importantly document what and how NGO implemented programs contribute to the improvement of people's well-being.

### **1.3 Research objective**

Following the discussion in the problem statement above, it can be seen that global challenges need to be addressed contextually based on the factors causing or exacerbating them. The objective of this study was therefore to explore the contribution of NFAE in the specific context of an NGO implemented program towards community development. Studying the role of NFAE with a specific case of a vocational skills training program for out-of-school youth was aimed at gaining an understanding into how such training is helping empower the beneficiaries who in turn use the skills and competencies acquired to transform themselves and the community at large.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

In line with the research objective, the overarching question of this study was ...What role does NFAE play in community development? This question was aided by a set of specific questions that assisted the researcher to understand the gist of the NGO implemented program and enabled him to analyze the study findings with the research objective.

The specific research questions were:

- i. What constitutes the training content of an NGO implemented program?
- ii. How is the content of an NGO implemented program organized and delivered?
- iii. What skills and competencies does an NGO implemented program offer to the trainees?
- iv. How are the skills and competencies acquired by beneficiaries/trainees relevant to employability, active citizenship, and improved wellbeing?

The last research question looks at three main parameters (employability, active citizenship, and well-being improvement) as key indicators of community development.

## **1.5 Thesis outline**

The thesis is structured in six chapters each highlighting specific components of the master thesis. The chapters and the issues discussed therein are arranged in the following order

### **Chapter one: introduction**

The introduction chapter sets the pace for the thesis. It highlights how my internship experience enhanced my interest in community work, thus the reason for conducting the study on a topic that is much embedded in community work and development. I provide a brief background on the causes of the development challenges including poverty and unemployment and how development actors and the general development discourse hinges around education as a means to providing counter remedies to the challenges facing the world. one of the development actors, the NGOs have become active of recent and they implementing education and training programs to some of the vulnerable groups who are more affected by challenges of development. The chapter thus introduces the research questions to assess the role of non-formal adult education in community development taking a case of an education program implemented by an NGO in southwestern Uganda

## **Chapter two: study area and context of the study**

Chapter two contains information about the geography of the study area. It provides a snapshot of the country for the readers who might not be familiar with the country to get a glimpse of it. Uganda, known by its tourist name – the pearl of Africa, once a British colony, has had many challenges. The country is poor with lots of socio-economic challenges including having the biggest population comprised of youth below the age of 35 years. The youth have limited opportunities and most have been forced to drop out of school despite universal education at both primary and secondary levels. This brings into context the reason for choosing the topic for this study. The chapter delves into the country's education system to try to understand how the system could be contributing to the problem of school drop out. But also what has been done to alleviate the issue. The chapter describes that although the Non-formal education subsector is not well streamlined it plays a big role in the development of the country and forms the ground for this study.

## **Chapter three: Literature review and theoretical framework**

In a bid to locate the study in an academic space, chapter three reviews literature related to the study topic and concepts. The literature reviewed peer-reviewed articles, textbooks, and visited websites of organizations both international and local. The literature focused on the concepts in the topic and the theoretical framework. A lot of reading was done on the capability approach espoused by Amartya Sen and then the Critical Capability approach by McGrath and others to try and locate the study in the field of VET. Literature indicated that NFE programs have indeed helped people become better by enabling them to acquire skills which they use to get jobs or start micro-enterprise.

## **Chapter four: Methodology**

Chapter four describes the road map of the study. The chapter tells the reader the path and reasons for taking them. I located the study in a case study research design which is qualitative exploratory and descriptive. It highlights that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the study was delayed and had to change methodology and adopt using telephone interviews contrary to what supposed to be done (observation) several procedures were undertaken to seek permission from both the authorities and the research participants. The sampling strategy used was purposive sampling because the study wanted to purposively get people who would answer the research questions.

## **Chapter five: presentation of research findings and analysis**

In this chapter, I present the background characteristics of the research participants before I present findings and analysis following the research design. The presentation, therefore, follows the structure of the research questions and the subsequent concepts therein. Findings are discussed with the backing of theory and literature. The chapter presents the findings which show that the graduates were young people most of them below the age of 27 and they narrated their ordeal of dropping out of school poverty being the major cause. They are appreciative to the NGO for giving them another chance to acquire knowledge and skills. It was established that the mode of training is community-based and the needs of learners were taken seriously at the enrollment stage. The analysis of the findings using the lenses of the CA and CCA indicated that the program indeed provided capabilities which graduates have used to get jobs and start some business ventures. Majority of the research participants said they benefited a lot from the program. And the benefits are similar to those carried out in Nigeria and South Africa

## **Chapter six: conclusion**

The last chapter provides a summary of the whole report highlighting the program's contribution not being sufficient enough. The chapter proposes some recommendations for policymakers and educators like collaboration efforts, the chapter further suggests possible future research to better understand the challenges and how to better improve such programs



## CHAPTER TWO: STUDY AREA AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

### 2.1 Area of study – a snapshot of Uganda

Geographically, the study was carried out in Uganda. Uganda is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Located in East Africa, Uganda lies across the equator, roughly 800 kilometres inland from the Indian Ocean. It lies between 10 29' South and 40 12' North latitude, 290 34 East, and 350 0' East longitude (UBOS, 2016). The country is landlocked, bordered in the East by Kenya; South Sudan in the North; Democratic Republic of Congo in the West; Rwanda in the South West; and Tanzania in the South. It has a total area of 241,551 square kilometres, of which the land area covers 200,523 square kilometres (ibid), and about a third of the area is covered by freshwater bodies and wetlands (ADEA, 2017).

A former British colony, Uganda gained independence in 1962. Its post-independence years were associated with political turmoil including religious wars, a coup d'état, a guerrilla war that brought in the current president that has ruled for over 30 years. The governance of the country is based on the 1995 constitution which has gone several amendments including the removal of presidential term limits. The country is administratively divided into 146 districts as of November 2020 according to the Electoral Commission website (<https://www.ec.or.ug/electoral-commission-statistics>). These districts are further subdivided into sub-counties and parishes in the local government arrangement of the decentralization policy. These units help in the implementation and monitoring of government programs including education at respective levels.

The last national housing and population census was done in 2014 and put the country's population at 34.6 million people (UBOS, 2018) but The State of Uganda Population Report 2019 put the estimates at 40.3 million people (MOFPED, 2019). According to ADEA (2017), the country's economy has improved over the last 3 decades indicating that since the 2000s the GDP growth has been sustained at an average of 6.4 per cent (ADEA, 2017, p. 14). This sustained growth is attributed to the macro-economic policy and development framework embedded in the national development plans intended to propel the economy towards middle-income status in line with the vision 2040.

## **Geographical Context of the study site**

The study was done in one of the districts that make up the southwestern part of Uganda. The sub-region, also known as the Ankole sub-region is comprised of the greater Bushenyi districts, Ntungamo, Ibanda, and Mbarara districts. The study case district is demographically heterogeneous and thus faces complex issues based on tribal/ethnic backgrounds. The case district lies within the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo and part of the protected area – Queen Elizabeth national park. This geographical location within the western arm of the East African rift valley, with two lakes (Edward and George) and a national park, coupled with other geographical features have a bearing on the social and economic activities of the area. These activities, for example, the fishing activity and the constant wildlife – community interaction shape people’s livelihoods.

## **2.2 Context of the study**

### **Uganda's education system**

Although recurring social and economic trends have called for new interventions and responses, Uganda's education system and the policies and programs therein are informed by the 1992 Government White Paper on Education (MoGLSD, 2008; UBOS, 2017). Like elsewhere, education in Uganda is provided in three forms: formal, non-formal, and informal education (Tumuheki, 2017). The formal education system is highly structured following 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (4 years of lower secondary and 2 years of upper secondary), and [2]/3-5 years of post-secondary education (UBOS, 2017). Although this structure forms what Tumuheki (2017) calls the 'mainstream education' (p. 23), it follows that those who can't pursue it to the last end can divert to a sub-structure she calls 'non-mainstream education' (ibid). This sub-structure includes post-primary education, obtained at technical and farm schools, and post-secondary education, obtained at technical and other post-secondary schools and colleges also known as Other Tertiary Institutions (UBOS, 2017; Tumuheki, 2017).

In many government educational policy and development planning framework papers, the 'non-mainstream education' sub-structure is known as the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET). This education sub-sector is important for this study as the NFAE is often embedded here. As Tumuheki (2017) asserts, this education is largely concerned with the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills for the world of work, social justice, and general socio-economic development of communities.

Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports is charged with setting education standards, provide technical guidance, coordination, and monitoring and evaluating of policies and regulation of sector players. However, adult learning and education (ALE) is particularly a mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MoGLSD). Education is with no doubt a key sector in the development of nations, and Uganda recognizes this impeccable role as articulated in the national development plan (NDPII) and Vision 2040 (UBOS, 2017)

## **The state of Adult Learning and Education in Uganda**

For over a decade now, the official reference for the state of adult education in Uganda is the CONFINTEA VI Report. The report contextualizes adult education and defines it as “all learning processes, activities or programs, intended to meet the needs of various individuals considered by society as adults, including out-of-school youth forced by circumstances to play the roles normally played by adults” (MoGLSD 2008, p. 6). The report highlights the aims of adult education as providing:

1. Basic of fundamental education to make good the deficiencies many people experience because of curtailed education or non-existent period of formal schooling
2. Opportunities for further or continuing education [to] update professional competencies required by the world of work
3. Vocational and technical education necessary for the acquisition of certain specific skills needed for the improvement of job performance
4. Education for building social, political, and civic competencies, including instructions on national and international issues
5. Education for leisure and relaxation.

The above aims notwithstanding, the country has up to now failed to have a comprehensive adult learning and education policy (Bananuka & Katahoire, 2019). It, however, has an adult literacy policy and other policies/regulations that pertain to adult education provisions.

### **Adult learning and education trends**

It is important to note that Uganda’s ALE has had turbulent times. From the colonial to independence and post-independence periods, adult education registered both growth and decline. Colonial officials, the Arab traders, and the Christian missionaries provided adult education. The missionaries particularly were at the peak as they “[...] taught their new adult converts, and lay brothers, various skills including blacksmith work, carpentry, shoe-making, moulding tiles, brick-making, masonry, bookbinding, printing, and binding.” (MoGLSD, 2008, p. 6). The colonial government concentrated on the economic aspect of adult education by promoting and encouraging adults to learn how to grow cash crops (coffee, cotton, and tea). The post-independence period registered a quick growth in adult education until the 1970s as the country was plunged into political turmoil. However, the recovery period (the late 1980s to date) the field has had its share of growth although not there yet. As this study

will show through literature and findings, several institutions and organizations are doing tangible work towards the growth and development of the field.

### **Non-formal adult education provision in Uganda**

This form of adult education refers to all organized educational opportunities provided outside the formal education system. The recognition of NFAE stems from the realization that formal education alone cannot deal with all the modern challenges (Ngaka, Openjuru & Mazur, 2012). NFAE thus includes adult literacy and continuing education programs for adults and out-of-school youth (ibid). NFAE provision in Uganda has the following features:

- It takes many forms including corporate training (self and/or employer-funded), seminars, workshops, functional adult literacy classes, etc.
- It has a short duration.
- The target group includes farmer groups, administrators, community workers, women, out-of-school youth, and many other interest groups.
- It is not hierarchically structured, and it is flexible.
- Its purpose is to respond to specific learning needs.
- Adult education is linked in people's minds to non-formal education, and the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably

NFAE could be said to be a lifelong, life-wide learning adventure where people acquire life skills and knowledge to better themselves and their communities. Some of the common programs provided under this form of education include:

- Community health education
- Cooperative education
- Civic education
- Agricultural or extension education for modern farming methods
- Sex education, family education
- Population awareness
- Adult literacy
- Business skills
- Leadership skills
- HIV/AIDs awareness
- Environmental education
- Personal hygiene
- Poverty eradication

The main providers of NFAE in Uganda are MDAs, NGOs, and Community-based Organizations (CBOs). Other notable providers are libraries, adult education centres, Functional adult literacy classes, and community centres. This master's thesis is framed under the NGO provider.

As a student of global development and planning, my concern for any community development interventions is whether there is an emphasis on the current global development discourses but with a local context. Consequently, this study, overall, bears in mind some of the recommendations and targets of the SDGs. As indicated in the world education forum 2015 final report, the central role of education is to foster skills and competencies that enable people to support themselves, their families, and contribute to the sustainable economic development of their communities (UNESCO, 2015). Specifically, the study endeavoured to understand how the NGO implemented program addresses SDG 4 as this goal relates to education and training, and inclusiveness. Inclusivity in terms of sex and vulnerability was emphasized during participant selection to underscore the fact that females, for example, are often side-lined in taking part in development interventions. During interviews, the issue of vulnerability was also underscored. Also, as the world education forum, 2015 report further stresses, vocational education and training (VET) programs are critical in preparing people for the future labour market (ibid, p. 14). Based on this argument, the study attempted to assess the program's contribution towards producing graduates who have the required skills and competencies that the current and future workforce market demands.

At the country level, the study bore in mind the national development plans and the overarching Vision 2040. These two are Uganda's blueprint and checklist for aligning development interventions. Based on the 2014 population census report for Uganda, people in the case district derive their livelihood from subsistence farming, employment income, business enterprise, family support, and others (UBOS, 2016). Out of these livelihood sources, subsistence farming rates highly with almost 79% of the population exclusively depending on it for their livelihood. The study took interest in other sources of livelihoods especially employment income and micro-enterprises because the age category of program direct beneficiaries form the biggest part of the population that do not own land to practise subsistence farming.

The interest is embedded in the context of the study which is informed by the development work of the LNGO that has been implementing projects and programs aimed at reducing

poverty in the communities. The NGO implemented program aims at enabling vulnerable youth to acquire skills and competencies that can help them get employment or start a business enterprise. The training uses a unique model of identifying out-of-school youth and equipping them with skills in several thematic areas (trades) using local ‘master’ artisans. The thematic areas that had representation in this study include tailoring, motor-bike mechanics, metal fabrication, welding, and Hairdressing. The local ‘master’ artisan in the context of the program is an individual with impeccable experience in a particular trade. The NGO identifies him/her, and the two parties sign a memorandum of understanding. The ‘master’ artisan is responsible for the training of the NGO implemented program beneficiaries.

## **CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Reviewing work done on a subject area is important to guide a researcher in the research journey. This section presents a review of literature related to the concepts and terminologies that have a connection with NFAE; community development; the themes appearing in the research questions; and the relationship between adult education and community development

### **3.2 Definition of concepts**

#### **Adult education/Learning**

The concept of adult education has seen rapid changes over the years just as human needs and aspirations keep changing. It, therefore, cannot be explicitly defined. In this review, I will try as much as possible to bring out what some scholars have said about the meaning and description of the concept and where it stands concerning this study. First, there is a debate between (adult) ‘education’ and ‘learning’ and this has left many writers and readers in limbo about which concept to use. Foley (2004) points out that all human activity has a learning dimension and adult learning is currently preferred to adult education by many adult educators and professionals in the field (Bananuka, 2014). This assertion is supported by Youngman’s (2005) argument that adult learning is broad, embracing formal, non-formal, and informal learning processes in all aspects of people’s lives.

For years, adult education has been described based on the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on Development of 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 apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose: to complete a level of formal education; to acquire knowledge and skills in a new field; to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. (UNESCO 2006, p. 49)



From the definition above, it is evident that the NGO implemented program is an adult education program given the features that describe it. Firstly, many of its beneficiaries are above 18 years – the legal age of an adult in the Ugandan context. Secondly, the thematic areas (trades) are technical, and thirdly, the essence is to provide and enhance skills and competencies to help young people acquire a job or start an income-generating venture. It should be noted, however, that, the broad perspective of adult education has undergone reviews and UNESCO is completely adopting Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in their current publications. The 2015 recommendation of ALE defines adult education and learning as

...[the] entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies (UIL 2016, p. 147)

The upgraded definition discards the idea of ‘organized educational processes’ and instead brings in the notion of ‘learning processes’ and stresses the ‘capability for living and working’. These elements are crucial in the discussion of youth employment and work as well as individual and community development, which are the focus of this study.

In the Ugandan context, adult education definition is no different from the UNESCO definition of adult education. Any development actor with adult education programs must situate their activities within this framework. In other words, the providers of adult education including NGOs should design the curricular based on the context of the country and/or the social issues in their area of operation.

From the description above, it is evident that there is no fixed description of the concepts (Adult) learning and education. The 3<sup>rd</sup> global report on ALE (UIL, 2016) reported some countries substantially changing their definitions of ALE since 2009. An indication that the conceptualization of the meaning and the broader context of adult education and learning keep changing with the changing socio-economic trends. Despite the adoption of ALE as the current preferred concept, this study will retain the use of adult education to remain within the confines of the study’s title. Adult education in this study will encompass descriptions of ALE

## **Non-formal adult education**

Yasunaga (2014) asserts that there is no universally accepted definition of non-formal education. Foley (2004) describes non-formal adult learning as a learning endeavour that occurs when people see a need for some sort of systematic instruction but in a one-off or sporadic way (Foley, 2004, p. 4). Unlike the formal adult education that is done largely in school environments; non-formal adult education is increasingly being provided by organizations and government agencies. Yasunaga (2014, p.7) provides a comprehensive definition from the International Standard clarification of Education (ISCED):

Non-formal education is education that is institutionalized, intentional, and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative, and/or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short and/or low-intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops, or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programs contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programs on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development

From the definition above, it is evident that the NGO implemented program is run under the design of non-formal education mainly because it targets youth out-of-school; imparts vocational skills and aims at contributing to the socio-economic development of the beneficiary's households.

Whereas the above description is general – implying that it encompasses the non-formal education provisions that are often organized by formal education institutions, studies outside the formal education realm that are aimed at supporting the less privileged and opportunity deprived, have come up with various conceptualization but implying the same thing. Such concepts and usage of terminologies depend on the trends in the field and /or in the global discourse (especially spearheaded by UNESCO). Such terminologies that relate to non-formal adult learning/education include Non-formal adult education and training – NFET

(Mayombe, 2017); Non-formal education – NFE (Yasunga, 2014; Taylor, Duveskog, & Friis-Hansen, 2012); Adult and non-formal education (Nnodim & Johnwest, 2016); Non-Formal Vocational Education and Training – NFVET (Manuel, 2017; Manuel, Linden, & Popov, 2017); Non-formal vocational skills training – NFVST (Blaak, Openjuru, & Zeelen, 2013). What all these studies have in common is the emphasis on the provision of educational programs and skills training to people who have been unlucky to achieve full formal education. Such programs are organized by development actors but largely by the NGO. It is not surprising, therefore, that, this study is assessing a program framed in the same fashion as most of the programs that the studies in the literature have concentrated on. However, while most of the studies cited are framed in a somewhat formal VET, this study's focus is on a program designed and delivered in a non-formal way and run by a local NGO with support from international NGOs and international development agencies.

### **Community development**

The development of rural areas has, for some time now been given attention by those in the international development discourse. Nations and states of the global south have since taken the development stance that embraces grassroots. This development strategy is commonly known as community development or rural development. In this study, Community Development is preferred over rural development because a 'community' is easily identifiable and less ambiguous than 'rural'. In the Ugandan context, a community is seen as a group of people living in a geographical area or those that share common culture, interests, and goals (MoGLSD, 2013). While there can exist several communities in one geographical space, it is important to point out that communities are organized in a social setting exhibiting an awareness of a common identity as a group. Many communities in Uganda and elsewhere, are heterogeneous and there will always be a section of people in the community that will be in a disadvantaged position, vulnerability or marginalization brought about by social structures. It is such groups of people such as children, youth, women, people with disabilities, refugees that most need the attention of development actors.

Quimbo, Perez & Tan (2018) describe community development as both an academic discipline and a practice. This study will go with the practice description, which denotes the "process of transforming marginalized communities so that the people in those communities may collectively act on their situations and on the external forces that undermine and

perpetuate their oppressive conditions” (Quimbo et al. 2018, p. 591). Such a description fits in the description given by Eleberi, Mbadiwe-Woko & Owede (2014). Their explanation of community development highlights the importance of people’s efforts, participation in programs, and external assistance. The Ugandan government’s conception of community development is not far away from the description cited in the literature. The Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development that is mandated to oversee social development in Uganda perceive and define community development as processes and programs through which individuals and communities are strategically mobilized and empowered to participate in their own development initiatives as well as interventions of government and other actors (MoGLSD, 2013). The goal of community development is to enable people to improve their social and economic conditions and contribute to national development (MoGLSD, 2013, p.17)

Following the above conceptual definitions, it clear that community development is not a random project of the sort to be attained in a few months or years as it goes through a process involving collaborations and actions. Another critical component of community development is that it revolves around people and their efforts plus external assistance. This viewpoint is supported by Cox (1998), whose concept of people-centred development is built on five pillars of awareness rising, social mobilization, participation, self-reliance, and sustainability (Cox 1998, pp. 518-519). Cox’s approach <sup>1</sup>, like community-based and right-based approaches to community development (see Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; Quimbo et al. 2018), seems to agree with the definitions cited that put the people at the centre of the development agenda.

Given this context, it would seem rather easy to achieve community development. However, as Eleberi et al. (2014 p. 7) note, many developing countries of the south are grappling with poverty, disease, illiteracy, and ignorance, all of which act as barriers to achieving community development. But, as studies have shown, well thought out community development methods<sup>2</sup> such as community education (adult education activities) can lead to community development (Chisholm & Hasan, 2010; Motschilnig, 2012; Jinna & Maikano 2014). Youngman (2005) also notes that adult education is potentially a powerful force for

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<sup>1</sup> A community development approach (CDA) is how and for whom development programs are planned, implemented, and managed. Approaches include participatory, asset-based, community-based, area-based, right-based, welfare, etc. for more information see (Quimbo et al, 2018, pp. 591-592)

<sup>2</sup> A community development method (CDM) is a strategy or technique used in implementing a certain intervention for the community (See Quimbo et al, 2018, pp. 592-593) for the different CDMs

promoting people-centred development and a key to sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

### **3.3 Non-formal adult education content**

Literature suggests that non-formal adult education is finding favor by many development actors for the provision of knowledge and skills required to empower most vulnerable groups especially youth and women and to create responsible citizens (Tumuheki, 2017; Manuel, 2017; UBOS, 2017; Yasunaga, 2014; Blaak et al, 2013). Whether this empowering capacity is embedded in any non-formal adult education program depends on several factors. Blaak et al (2013) argue that non-formal adult education programs should meet certain standards if they must be effective. One of the standards they mention is the content which they say must be in line with the learning needs of the learners as well as integrating issues relating to the whole life-wide and cross-cutting issues. They further stress that the content should also be able to connect to work life. Citing several authors, Blaak et al (2013, p. 91) contextualize African non-formal adult education as requiring aspects of literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, and models of life skills. These aspects are also highlighted by (Sen, 2001; Chisholm & Hasan, 2010; Nnodim & Johnwest, 2016; Manuel, 2017).

According to Gboku & Lekoko, (2007) program content refers to the ‘specific tasks and activities that must be performed [to] achieve the outcomes specified in the objectives.’ Adult education especially the non-formal type has an unwritten canon to always include learners in all aspects about the educational or learning activity. Often referred to as the learner-centred approach (Gboku & Lekoko, 2007) in the learning and teaching realm, is synonymous with what Blaak et al (2013) call bearing in mind the learning needs<sup>3</sup> of the learners. This approach is crucial to determining program content for adult learners. Accordingly, Gboku & Lekoko (2007, pp. 96-99) provide a list of principles that must guide content determination. While most of the principles on the list comprise of the aspects already highlighted by the scholars above, the writers note that the program content must also conform to certain requirements which I think are important to highlight in this review. The requirements are (1) that the subject matter knowledge must be selected and sequenced within the context of the learner’s life, family, community, and society, (2) that all learning activities included in the

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<sup>3</sup> A learning need according to Baker cited in (Gboku & Lekoko, 2007, p. 62) is a state that exists when there is a gap between the present situation (what is) and the required situation (what should be). If an individual adult learner, for example, has a certain level of knowledge but requires a higher level of knowledge

program content must be geared towards the achievement of program goals, and (3) that the anticipated results of the program must be made clear to the learners in terms of expectations that participants would acquire after the program has been implemented.

Needless to say, is that different providers of non-formal adult education develop programs based on their mission and the target groups. Some of the non-formal adult education program content based on the literature reviewed is embedded in the wider programs which include among others functional literacy education, health extension education, public enlightenment education, home management, farmer field schools, environmental education, vocational education. All these programs have specific tasks and activities that the trainees/learners engage in which at the end of the program the learners will have acquired knowledge and skills. Such knowledge and skills form the competencies the learners go out with to forge a new life for themselves and their households. In a study by Nnodim & Johnwest (2016), knowledge and skills cited by their participants included cloth weaving skills, tailoring skills, hairdressing skills, knowledge on effective marketing, knowledge on decision making, and writing, reading, and speaking skills (Nnodim & Johnwest, 2016, p. 90).

Based on the literature, what is clear is that the non-formal adult education program content is embedded in the different program components. In these components, learners are introduced to the basics and given specific tasks that enhance their skills in that component. Also, it is recognized that much of the content often skills-based in the context of vocational education and training, is supplemented with general life skills which are often given informally during teaching and learning sessions or through organized seminars and workshops. Most importantly, program content is determined based on the real-life needs of the learners as stressed by Gboku & Lekoko (2007).

### **3.4 Organization and delivery of Non-formal adult education program content**

The implementation of any educational program involves the preparation and delivery of the program content through a learning activity. While in the formal school systems specifically in the education of children learning outcomes are planned by the teacher and therefore arrange for schedules and methods of delivering the lessons, it is different in non-formal education. As Gboku & Lekoko (2007) note, adult learners grasp the content well when it is

organized, guided, and sequenced in proper ways. They argue that organizing and delivering content from simple to complex is the most common and appropriate strategy used in adult education programs. Besides organizing and sequencing program content, there are other requirements needed to effectively implement a non-formal adult education program. Some of the methods identified in the literature include brainstorming, demonstration, group discussion, case study, problem-solving, presentation/lecture, symposium, panel discussion, and tour/field trips (Mayombe, 2017; Nnodim & Johnwest, 2016; Taylor et al, 2012; Gboku & Lekoko, 2007).

Although the methods highlighted above are general to the non-formal adult education, in the context of VET, the most prominent ones are problem-solving, demonstrations, group dialogue and reflection, case study, and field trips. Besides the methods, Blaak et al (2013, p. 91) like Tukundane & Blaak cited in Manuel (2017) argue for a flexible schedule that is adapted to the needs of the learners for instance “keeping in mind seasonal related work”. They also advocate for easy accessibility where facilities and facilitators should be near or living in the same community as learners as well as ensuring that the learning environment allows for avenues where learners can practise what is learned.

From the review, it can be seen that non-formal adult education program content ought to be planned, organized, and delivered in a bottom-up approach. Bearing in mind the learners’ needs is key in deciding what content to plan, how to organize and deliver it, and when to deliver it. There is a realization for the need to adopt innovative ways of delivering the content considering the factors about the nature of the target group(s) and objectives of the program. To have these factors known, there is a need to carry out a needs assessment to determine the learning needs of the anticipated target group.

### **3.5 Skills and competences provided by Non-formal adult education programs**

Perhaps what is commonly known is the fact that any VET program is purposed to provide skills. Reading through VET literature, one common element is vivid – the use of concepts: skills and competence. In this section, I try to dissect what these concepts mean and their place in the provision of non-formal adult education and training.

While several authors ( López & Rodríguez-López, 2020; Asonitou & Hassall, 2019; Jjuuko et al., 2019; Sagardia et al, 2018; Zadra, 2014; Mulder et al, 2007) have written about the

concept of competence, it remains vague and therefore lacks a precise definition. The reason for the many definitions is because of the concept's ambiguity about learning theories and other innovative approaches to learning (Mulder et al, 2007). Zadra (2014) attributes this vagueness to the use of different terms (such as competency, skill, capacity, capability) to imply the same thing. According to Sagardia, Bengoetxea, & Rodríguez (2018), the usage of the concept was more prominent in business studies until around the 1990s when it became common in the VET field. The authors describe competencies as the fundamental abilities and knowledge that can be taught in a classroom to enable learners to cope with the new challenges posed by both the present and the future. This description is like the one given by the European Commission which notes that the 'key competencies' are a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The commission also defines skills as the ability to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results (European Commission, 2019, p. 5). While Sagardia et al (2018), highlight competences to be taught in a classroom (which applies to formal education provision), the Commission believes the key competencies can additionally be developed through non-formal and informal learning in a different environment, including family, workplace, neighbourhoods and other communities.

Research on the concept of competence has been growing and several traditions have been used to place it. As seen in Mulder et al, (2007, p. 69), competence can be comprehensively categorized under the behaviourist approach, the generic approach, and the cognitive approach. There are however other theoretical approaches that have been used to categorize competence, for example, Weinert, cited in Mulder et al (2007) identifies nine approaches: general cognitive ability, specialized cognitive skills, competence-performance model, modified competence-performance model, motivated action tendencies, objective and subjective self-concepts, action competence, key competences, and meta-competences. A thorough analysis of the key competencies by the European Commission indicates that most of these competencies cut across the three comprehensive approaches described by Mulder et al (2007).

Based on the above description, it is important to locate and situate the study in a single approach that will be easier to analyze. Consequently, since competences imply the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (European Commission, 2019; Mulder et al, 2007), this study will focus on key competencies which include: literacy competence; multilingual competence; mathematical and competence in science, technology, and



engineering; digital competence; personal, social, and learning to learn competence; citizenship competence; and cultural awareness and expression competence (European Commission, 2019, p. 5). The eight key competences zeroed on by the European Commission are a set of competencies that the young people currently need to find fulfilling jobs and become independent as well as engaged citizens.

It is worth noting that (1) the key competence applies to general education and training and (2) they are all important and interconnected, for example, the European Commission (2019) argues that skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, creativity, negotiation, and analytical are embedded in all the key competences. Similarly, a review on the concept of skills indicates similar skills described as generic or soft skills (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019; Nugraha et al, 2016). Such skills, the authors emphasize, are important and required to complement the technical and business, micro-enterprise skills that are a prerequisite for any VET program.

As highlighted above, the concepts of competence and skills are used interchangeably by several authors. Some of the empirical studies done in Africa focusing on the role of VET have outlined some of the impacts. Careful analysis of these studies shows that some VET programs have enhanced beneficiaries' competencies. For example, Nnodim & Johnwest (2016) established that a non-formal education program in Nigeria helped women acquire knowledge and skills including but not limited to hairdressing skills, cloth weaving skills, tailoring skills, bead, and hat making, knowledge on ICT, reading, writing, and speaking skills. The findings of their study are like an earlier study by Onyishi (2004) whose conclusion was that these skills were empowering women to which he argued was influential in poverty reduction. Analysis of the so-called knowledge and skills by Nnodim & Johnwest (2016) can generally be termed as competencies that could fall under some of the eight key competencies. For example, the skills in reading and writing fall under the literacy competence, the skill of speaking could fall on two competencies (expression or multilingual in case the program helped them learn another language). In a related study focusing on the impact of non-formal adult education and training for self-employment and micro-enterprises in South Africa, Mayombe (2017) established that the training program prepared the trainees for the world of work in the business sector but also equipped them with skills to start small businesses. He describes the skills as technical and business which are ideally vocational

skills. But the fact that the beneficiaries were able to start small businesses implies that the training enhanced their competencies in business management and personal development.

### **3.6 Role of competencies**

The role of competencies was interrogated under three themes (Employability, active citizenship, and improved well-being). Before examining the role of competencies in employability, active citizenship, and improved well-being, these concepts must be demystified as below.

#### **Defining employability**

One of the impacts of VET programs is their ability to contribute to increasing employability skills among graduates (López & Rodríguez-López, 2020; Jjuuko et al 2019; Fraser et al, 2019; Tikkanen et al, 2018; Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2018; Munishi, 2016). The general agreement in the literature is that competency-based education (CBE) should aim to equip learners with employability skills which Fraser et al (2019, p. 159) describe as ‘a set of behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and unique personal qualities that enable a person to gain and maintain employment’. The authors outline employability skills including positive attitudes, communication, teamwork, self-management, willingness to learn, resilience, innovation, entrepreneurship, cultural competence, and thinking skills. From the previous section, employability skills form part if not all the key competencies.

Studies on employability tend to focus on the ways of improving the acquisition of these skills. Cranmer cited in Fraser et al (2019) describes three methods for delivering them: total embedding, parallel development, and explicit embedding. The latter method is said to have a high impact while the former two have a low impact. Other authors have called for innovative and creative pedagogical approaches to improve employability skills (Jjuuko et al, 2019; Manuel, 2017).

Following these discussions, the study redesigned the last research question. Initially, the researcher had intended to establish whether the NGO implemented program equipped learners with any skills and competencies and how these are influencing labour productivity. After a thorough literature review, the research decided to opt for employability instead of labour productivity. This decision was informed by the fact that most literature in VET

(where this study is embedded) is using this concept while the former is silent except in business studies. Consequently, the researcher was more interested in understanding whether the competencies gained (if any) were relevant to the graduate in pursuit of a job or starting their micro-enterprises.

### **Defining active citizenship**

According to Green (2012, p. 11), active citizenship means a combination of rights and obligations that link individuals to the state. Such obligations he says include paying taxes, obeying laws, and exercising the full range of political, civil, and social rights. Green further mentions that active citizenship is an important concept ‘because people working together to determine the course of their own lives, fighting for rights and justice in their societies, are crucial in holding states, private companies, and others to account’. The importance of this concept is further stressed by Clarke & Missingham (2009) who argue that active citizenship ‘brings together three well-established principles of best practice within the development, namely the importance of participation; rights-based approaches to development; and good governance’.

Based on the conceptual understanding, in line with the key competencies, to be a fully active citizen, one must possess citizenship competence with skills that relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in the common interest. Consequently, according to the European Commission (2019), one must have critical thinking and integrated problem-solving skills as well as skills to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities, not forgetting decision-making processes at all levels.

### **Defining well-being**

Chambers (1997) stresses that the goal of development interventions in improving well-being. He describes well-being as ‘the experience of good quality of life’ arguing that the concept has several elements hence making it tricky to explicitly define. Chambers also argues that while ill-being and extreme poverty go together, there is no concrete link between well-being and wealth – “reducing poverty usually diminishes ill-being; amassing wealth does not assure well-being and may diminish it” (Chambers, 1997, P. 1748). The lack of explicit (universal) definition for well-being is echoed by McGillivray & Clarke (2006) who

state that the concept is ambiguous with several terms<sup>4</sup> used interchangeably with well-being. In confirmation to Chambers' argument, McGillivray & Clarke (2006 p. 5) also reported that studies had found a discrepancy in the link between wealth and happiness – 'happiness levels actually remained constant despite large income increases'.

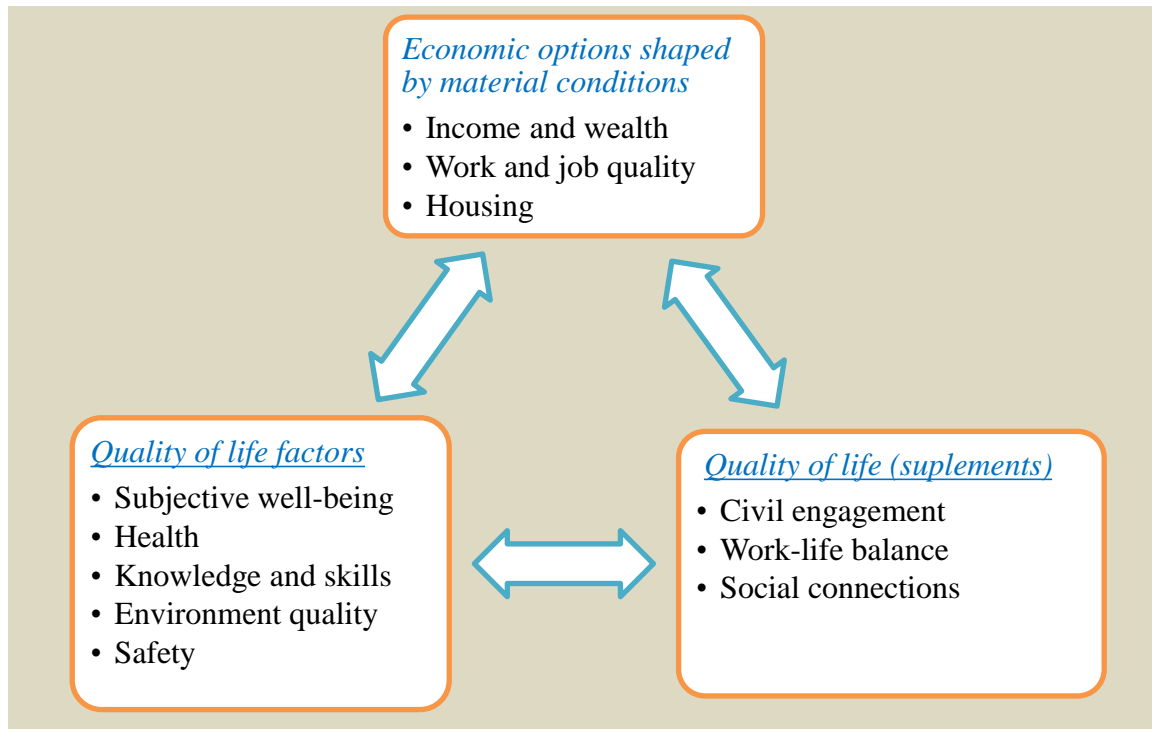
Given the difficulty in conceptual definition, well-being has for years been difficult to measure. However, literature shows that several studies have used certain indicators to measure and determine the level of well-being. McGillivray & Clarke (2006) for instance describe a study by Mathew Clarke in eight South-East Asian countries whose conceptualization of well-being (a function of the extent to which society facilitates the attainment or fulfillment of the ultimate hierarchical need: self-actualization) informed his hierarchical approach in measuring human well-being. Clarke believed that human well-being measures ought to include human needs and therefore formulated his approach around the psychological theory of human motivation espoused by Abraham Maslow. He claimed that fulfilling a set of hierarchical needs leads to the attainment of well-being.

Recent studies in measuring well-being have concentrated on non-material resources. Like Clarke, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD (OECD, 2020) has developed a framework for measuring well-being. The framework is centred on 11 key dimensions (Income & wealth, subjective well-being, work & job quality, housing, health, knowledge & skills, environment quality, safety, work-life balance, social connections, and civil engagements). The OECD framework can be said to be comprehensive covering all spheres of human life. They have dimensions that relate to economic options that often are shaped by material conditions. The other category relates to the quality of life factors which include how well people are (how they feel they are), what they know & can do, and how healthy & safe their places of living are. Quality of life further encompasses how connected and with whom they spend their time. In the figure below, the researcher diagrammatically categorizes and illustrates the key dimensions that the OECD framework for measuring well-being

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<sup>4</sup> Other terms used interchangeably with well-being are: quality of life, welfare, well-living, living standards, utility, life satisfaction, prosperity, needs fulfilment, development, empowerment, capability expansion, human development, poverty, human poverty, land and, happiness (McGillivray & Clarke (2006, p. 3)

**Figure 3. 1: Categorization of key dimensions for measuring well-being**



*Source: Researcher's construction based on the OECD well-being framework*

As established from the literature, VET is a key element of lifelong learning systems that aims to equip people with the competencies that are essential for enabling them to find decent jobs, also, with the soft skills for their current and future lives in society. It is therefore correct to argue that VET is a springboard towards high-quality jobs and increased employability (López & Rodríguez-López, 2020). As studies have shown, the various competencies acquired by learners/beneficiaries help them in many ways. In the case of Mayombe (2017), much of the training impact reported leaned towards the improvement of household income, nutrition, and living conditions of households (Mayombe, 2017, p. 882). Similarly, Nnodim & Johnwest (2016, p. 91-93) outline several of the impacts including improved livelihood activities, developing a greater sense of self-initiative, increase in decision-making about self and families. The authors deduced that competencies improved productivity and increased opportunities for alternative income-generating activities which would in the end translate into an improvement in the overall well-being of women and contribute to the development of the society.

When it comes to active citizenship, Clarke & Missingham (2009) assert that active citizens are a powerful force for 'good' change, and the focus on active citizenship by development

actors will affect future development at the local, national, and regional levels. This assertion is supported by Mayombe (2017) who indicates that NFET was ‘a significant part of the anti-apartheid struggle’ which helped people for democracy in South Africa. In the case of Uganda where youth comprise the majority of the population, it is important that any development program especially an educational one includes a component of citizenship education as a way of promoting and developing social skills among the youth. This study sought the views of the NGO implemented program graduates about the relevance of the program regarding their participation in the wider community affairs.

As regards the role of competencies to the well-being of graduates and their households, it has been established from the literature that the dimensions and approaches used to determine and measure well-being can be improved competencies people possess. Chambers (1997) maintains: “...capabilities are means to livelihood and well-being and livelihood security is basic to well-being”. Chambers’ definition of livelihood security is very key in connecting the role of competencies. He defines livelihood as

adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs and to support well-being. Security on the other hand refers to secure rights, physical safety, and reliable access to resources, food and income, and basic services. It includes tangible and intangible assets to offset risk, ease shocks, and meets contingencies (Chambers, 1997, 1748).

The key dimensions in measuring well-being fit well in Chambers’ description of livelihood security. The flows could be aligned to the material conditions while the tangible and intangible assets are aligned with the quality of life factors. The interconnection between education and livelihood and well-being could best be explained by capabilities as capabilities are a function to both. In the section on the theoretical framework, a capability framework is reviewed and becomes the basis for analyzing the findings of this study.

### **3.7 The link between non-formal adult education and community development**

There are considerable links between education (non-formal adult education inclusive) and development. The 3<sup>rd</sup> global report on adult learning and education (UNESCO, 2016) highlights the individual and societal benefits of ALE in the areas of health, labour, and employment. In Uganda, the development frameworks place education at the centre claiming

it is a factor for human capital that is supposed to propel the development agenda (NPA, 2015).

Borrowing Cox's (1998) approach, community development is founded on awareness-raising, social mobilization, participation, self-reliance, and sustainability. These pillars according to Cox are critical foundations of community development that adult education addresses. *Awareness-raising* focuses on the grassroots need to know their situations, appreciate them before they can decide whether to challenge them. *Social mobilization*, on the other hand, is concerned with the need for people to be organized into groups and local organizations for resource allocation and claiming their right to participate in their affairs Cox (1998). *Participation*, perhaps the most crucial foundations of community development implies having the grassroots take part in their development activities. As Cox notes, [community] development will reflect the realities and needs of people only when the development process is fully participatory (Cox 1998, p. 518). *Self-reliance* relates to community development that is organized, planned, and managed by grassroots using locally available resources. *Sustainability* simply put, relates to community development being continuous. People must continue to reap the benefits of their development as well as maintain it for future generations.

The above pillars, according to Cox (1998), are essential for a people-centred development approach. Its ontological assumption is that people are empowered to cause their development. How people are empowered is, therefore, the question that non-formal adult education can answer. Studies reviewed by Quimbo et al. (2018) indicate that [adult] education is an essential dimension in community development. The studies reveal that adult education strategies that include awareness-raising, training, seminars, and forums are useful in solving community development challenges. Furthermore, and most importantly, the quality of life of the grassroots is improved. Besides, as Quimbo et al. put it, “when people acquire adequate knowledge, they become more aware of what their needs are, which enables them to participate in making decisions about matters that concern them” (Quimbo et al. 2018, p. 600). The adequate knowledge, in this case, should be all-round to cover all spheres of people’s livelihoods. Learning should be supported by skills acquisition to enable people to participate actively.

As Motschilnig (2012) highlights, the benefits of adult education are multi-sectoral. Adult education provides skills necessary for economic development, which could also influence

self-reliance at personal and community levels. The knowledge and skills acquired through sensitization seminars are essential for civic and social engagement. In turn, this could have ripple effects on mobilizing for health campaigns, change in attitude, and crime reduction. Similarly, Eleberi et al. (2014), highlight some adult education and community development programs that development managers use to transform communities. These programs include agricultural extension education, community education, literacy education, health programs to mention but a few.

Literature available shows that community development programs are more likely to succeed if the people are conscious enough of their place in the development agenda. It is with this deduction that adult education is there to create awareness, impart knowledge and skills required to assess what people's needs are, initiate programs that address the issues at hand and people actively participate in the implementation and evaluation of the programs/interventions geared at community development. In this study, the analysis focused on the program's contribution to causing awareness-raising; competencies acquired by the trainees and how these competencies are contributing to self-reliance in terms of income-generating ventures; and the ability to become active participants in all matters pertaining to community welfare.

### **3.8 Theoretical framework**

#### **Introduction**

While there is a lot of unclear positions on what theoretical framework precisely is and its role in qualitative research, Anfara (2008, pp.869-873) points out its general description and tries to unravel its importance. He describes the theoretical framework as any theory [or framework] whether practical or otherwise that relates to either social or/and psychological processes that can help in the understanding of a particular phenomenon. He identifies the importance of a theory or framework in a qualitative study as helping the researcher to “focus a study; reveal and conceal meaning and understanding; situate the study in a scholarly conversation ...”(Anfara, 2008, p. 872). In this section, I highlight the framework that helped me focus the study in the realm of its purpose but also situate it in a scholarly conversation since this study is an academic one framed in a master thesis. The framework was instrumental in choosing the research questions and guiding my analysis of the findings to stay in line with the purpose of the research.



## **The capability approach**

Through reading literature in the field of development studies and particularly literature on [community] development, I was astounded by the many theories that have been used. Cognizant of the place of the study, however, I decided to adopt the capability approach (Sen, 2001) as the main lens to focus, analyze, and guide the discussion on the contribution of non-formal adult education and training in community development. In the proceeding paragraphs, I present an overview of the capability approach, highlight the definitions relating to the concepts embedded in the approach, explain how the concepts and approach influenced the research process, and then situate the approach in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET). I then use the insights from the theories to construct a conceptual framework for this study.

### **Overview of the capability approach**

Some scholars have pointed out that studies in the assessment of individual well-being, evaluation, and assessment of social arrangements, or the level of development of a particular community or country have embraced the use of capability approach as a framework [not theory] (Robeyns, 2006; Alkire, 2005). The capability approach, according to Robeyns (2016) emerged as a new theoretical framework about well-being, development, and justice. Although the approach is popularly attributed to the Nobel prize winner for economics Amartya Sen, the approach has roots in the works of Aristotle, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx (See Sen, 2001, p.14 and 24). Nonetheless, Sen is honoured for pioneering the approach, and philosopher Martha Nussbaum is credited for expanding it further although in a direction adjacent to that of Sen (Robeyns, 2016).

Chambers (1997) and Sen (2001) seem to agree on certain issues on the meaning and measure of development. For Chambers, the whole debate surrounding development comes to one thing – well-being for all. He asserts that the overarching goal of development interventions is well-being which must be supported by capabilities and livelihoods (Chambers, 1997, p.1748). Sen, on the other hand, believes that any evaluation of a development intervention must focus on “the basic freedoms - the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value” (Sen, 2001, p. 74). What seems clear is that both scholars argue

that development discourse must refocus on individuals – the well-being or responsible well-being, as development has been found to mean different things to various people (Chambers, 1997). In Sen’s book *Development as Freedom*, he defines development as a “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” contrary to what most development measures focus on – ‘growth of gross national product’ or a rise in incomes of individuals (Sen 2001, p. 3). From Sen’s writing, two concepts stand out in the usage and explanation of the capability approach. And as argued by Alkire (2005) anybody who writes about this approach without highlighting these two concepts is misrepresenting it. Below, I highlight the two concepts (Capabilities and Functionings)

### **Defining capabilities**

Perhaps one of the great writers on participatory development, Chambers (1997) argues that capabilities are key in ensuring sustainable livelihoods and well-being. He describes capabilities as what people are capable of doing and being, arguing that they are a means to livelihood and fulfilment. Chambers also notes that capabilities can be enlarged through learning, practice, training, and education which can lead to better living and well-being (p. 1748). Similarly, Sen (2001, p.75), talks about capabilities noting that an individual’s capability denotes “alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for a person to achieve and therefore a kind of freedom”

In this study, the concept of capabilities was key in guiding me through the process of formulating research questions. Since the study was assessing the contribution of a training program – which Chambers acknowledges as having the ability to enhance or enlarge capabilities, I was mindful to ask questions that related to the content of the training program. The reason for this was to be able to analyze how and whether the program content imparts competencies (knowledge and skills) that can help the graduates do certain ventures and become what they choose to be.

### **Defining functionings**

Sen’s functionings concept has connotations with the Chamber’s capabilities. For Sen, functionings are the “various things a person may value doing or being” (Sen, 2001, p. 75). The notion of ‘value’ has made some writers use ‘valuable functionings. While the concept

comes off as a vocabulary as Alkire (2005, p.119) points out, functionings imply the different activities and situations people recognize to be important; they represent multiple aspects of life that people value. It could be about anything ranging from knowledge, aesthetics, friendship, to mention but a few. As can be noted, Sen's concepts of functionings and capability seem to go hand in hand as seen in the definition of capabilities above. He informally describes capability as "the freedom to achieve various lifestyles".

The evaluative focus of the capability approach according to Sen (2001, p.75) is twofold: (1) on the realized [valuable] functioning – what a person can do or (2) on the capability set of alternatives a person has – the real opportunities. For this kind of evaluation, Sen further argues that the results would show the things a person does (for realized functioning) and the things a person is substantially free to do (in the case of capability set). Borrowing from these concepts, the study was designed to assess what the training program has been able to accord the learners, the trainers, and the NGO itself. And as will be seen in the findings section, the analysis considered different aspects that would increase the ability to realize well-being or increase chances to navigate the hurdles of life easily.

The decision to adopt this framework was informed by several factors. Firstly, the approach has been tried on small-scale development projects (Robeyns, 2006) that are almost like the program under assessment in this study. In the projects evaluated using a capability analysis by Alkire in Pakistan, it was observed that there were non-quantifiable effects like the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of friendships which can be instrumental in transforming the beneficiary's functionings and capabilities. In this study, the training program as will be seen in the analysis, aimed at assessing how the competencies gained from the training are useful in improving the graduates' well-being. Secondly, the capability approach is full of concepts that are useful in the analysis of the study's findings. Such concepts include livelihoods, competencies, capabilities, freedom, well-being, incomes, poverty, empowerment, among others.

### **Capability approach in the context of the VET**

As already noted, capabilities can be enlarged through learning, practice, training, and education which can lead to better living and well-being (Chambers 1997, p. 1748). It is on

this postulation and cognizant of the context of the study that I looked further into the literature to locate the place of the capability approach in the field of VET.

In their book *Skills for Human Development, Transforming Vocational Education and Training*, Powell & McGrath (2019) present several topics, analyses, and findings on various aspects relating to the capability approach in the framework of VET. While the authors present literature on the application of the approach in the field, their studies were done in the framework of formal vocational education and training. Although this in many ways presents literature that this study might not correspond very well with due to context, their writings present background information in the understanding of situating the capability approach in the field of VET. Powell and McGrath (2019, p. 22) correctly put it ‘despite its increasing application to schooling and higher education, the capability approach has only recently begun to be applied to our understanding of VET’. As mentioned, however, the VET in their writing is the formal one yet this master thesis focuses on non-formal vocational skills training (NFVST). It is therefore worth mentioning that there was not much literature to read about the capability approach in the context of the study.

It is important to note that the capability approach has had a share of criticism especially on the issue of identification of capabilities. It is not surprising that the two prominent proponents of the approach (Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum) have disagreed on this subject. While Sen has distanced himself from developing a capability list, Nussbaum developed a 10 list of capabilities<sup>5</sup> that she believes should be universally used to determine well-being (Powell & McGrath, 2019, p. 57). For Sen, whose position was borrowed for this master thesis, believes that it is not right to impose a pre-determined canonical list of capabilities because, like Chambers, Sen prefers and prioritizes the vital role of community participation and deliberation. It is for this reason that he emphasizes the local contextual dimension of capability lists. As Powell & McGrath (2019) state, Sen, has in his lectures highlighted a list of capabilities including the freedom to be well-nourished; to live disease-free lives; to be able to move around; to be educated; to participate in democratic debates and local contexts. In fact, the first two of these capabilities appear severally as examples in (Sen, 2001, pp. 74-76).

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<sup>5</sup> Nussbaum’s list of capabilities are life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination & thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one’s environment

While Powell & McGrath (2019) adopted an approach by Alkire and developed a capability list for college students (see chapter 6 of their book), my study did not choose to create a capability list. The reason for this decision was based on the fact that most studies that choose to use or create a capability list are intended to measure or evaluate the impact of a social intervention/initiative (Powell & McGrath, 2019, p. 117) yet, this master thesis was merely assessing the contribution of a training program to the expanding of capabilities that would enhance the well-being of the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, some of the capabilities dimensions listed although not exact were borrowed by this study and included in its design. Specifically, the last research question of this study was partly influenced by the capability dimensions list<sup>6</sup> developed by Powell & McGrath (2019).

### **Critical capability approach**

Whereas several studies have used the capability approach, Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova (2018) agree with Powell & McGrath when they argue that these studies have tended to be more focused on formal education especially higher education and children's education. They add that this trend is driven by the fact that such studies are concerned with vulnerable groups especially women, children, people with disabilities. And that all this is attuned to evaluating the role of education in human development (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova (2018, p. 271). This scenario has led some scholars with an interest in lifelong learning in the context of VET to start theorizing on the transformation of VET for Africa.

Consequently, McGrath et al (2019) have reviewed the literature on VET for African development. Their review highlights literature in themes like the economics of training; practice-focused research; policy, systems, and institutions; vocational knowledge; critical capability approach; VET for community development; and skills for sustainable development. Out of these themes, the last three are key for this review and were instrumental in the design of this study. The reason is that the study is embedded in all the three themes but also and more importantly, the critical capability approach (CCA) is more applicable to the non-formal VET that I consider key in the analysis of the study findings.

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<sup>6</sup> The specific capability dimensions that had an influence on this thesis are: active citizenship and occupational knowledge (see Powell & McGrath, 2019, p. 119)

According to McGrath et al (2019), the CCA largely focuses on paying attention to ‘young people’s voices in articulating their freedoms, ambitions for decent work and lives, and on their intersectional experience of [vulnerability] and disempowerment. The focus of this approach fits well into the mission and strategic plans of the NGO in this study. The authors highlight eight elements that comprise the approach. While it is not my intention to delve into the elements, I will highlight a few that correspond to the mission of the NGO and which I think are more important for a critical analysis of the programs’ contribution.

Firstly, the authors believe that CCA like the capability approach insists on analyzing how poverty and its consequences impact the livelihoods of the VET beneficiaries. It is widely known that most VET programs implemented by NGOs (in this case the NGO implemented program) target early school leavers (ESLs). Most often, the reasons for school dropout is the unfortunate truth of poverty.

Secondly, the approach maintains a broader conception of work where work is seen beyond income acquisition and production to embrace the wider human needs. It stresses that interventions (in this case the training) must labor to impart soft skills. In the analysis of findings, this element was born in mind to identify whether the training provided avenues for the trainees to know their self-worth and become empowered.

Thirdly, the approach argues that the social initiatives using a VET approach ought to focus on how it will support the beneficiaries with what they want and can do for them to become better. The study borrowed this element and embedded it in the design. Question prompts in the interview guide considered this element to ascertain what their preferred trade was at the time of enrolment.

What seems clear from the literature is that while the twin-concepts that form the backbone of the capability approach are both vital in the evaluation of social initiatives (like the program under assessment in this study); capabilities are more crucial than functionings. This deduction is confirmed by Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova (2018, p. 269) when they argue that “it is not so much the achieved outcomes (functionings) that matter, but the real opportunities (capabilities) that one has for achieving those outcomes”. The study adopted the capability approach in general and CCA to contextualize it in the NGO implemented program. It should be clear however that the study was not intended to evaluate and measure the impact of the program towards the development of the community, but to assess its

contribution to enhancing capabilities that would enable the trainees to achieve valuable functionings. As Sen (2001) contends, the individual's freedom to achieve a variety of valuable lifestyles is what development is all about. And when the individual achieves personal well-being the ripple effect it is assumed will go to the households and then the community from which they live.

In summary, the literature review and theoretic concepts described above shows a network of links between theoretical approaches, development initiatives, and community development. In the figure below, I create a conceptual framework based on the above arguments and conceptual understanding to show how this study was designed and its findings analyzed with the study objective.

**Figure 3. 2: Conceptual framework**



*Source: Researcher's construct*

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the selected methodology. It comprises the research design and approaches, sampling strategies, data collection procedures, data management, and data analysis procedures. It also presents ethical issues that were considered in this research. But first, the chapter highlights the stance the study took.

### 4.2 Research Paradigm

While several writers underscore the importance of the research perspective or orientation, they have not fully helped novice writers to concretely understand what these traditions are. Besides, there is plenty of confusion about their conceptual understanding. In this research, the choice of the term research paradigm takes precedence. According to Babbie, cited in Hennink et al (2020, p. 13), paradigms are “the ways of looking at reality; the framework or lens that is used to interpret reality”. In addition to the methodology (which forms this chapter), the writer argues that a paradigm consists of guiding principles on epistemology and ontology. From my earlier studies in philosophy, I understand epistemology as a branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge. Often questions asked under this branch of philosophy are: what is knowing? What is known? What is knowledge?. My crude understanding of epistemology is not far from what the writers present. According to Bryman (2012, p. 711), epistemology can be described as a stance on what should pass as knowledge. Bryman’s description is not so different from Mason cited in Hennink et al (2020, P. 13) who describes epistemology as what counts as knowledge/evidence. Ontology on the other hand refers to what we think reality looks like and how we view the world (Denzin & Lincoln, cited in Hennink et al, 2020, p. 12). Bryman (2012) calls it a theory of the nature of social entities. These two aspects or rather considerations as Bryman (2012) calls them are key to understanding two dominant paradigms.

Writers have stressed that every researcher ought to know their paradigm. Researchers from the natural sciences field are normally inclined to the positivist paradigm. However, the paradigm can also be used in the study of phenomena in the social sciences (Hennink et al, 2020). According to Bryman (2012, p. 28), positivism is an ‘epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality



and beyond'. It follows the principle of objectivity and is the foundation for experimental research (Hennink et al, 2020). The epistemological orientation under this paradigm, therefore, calls for researchers to formulate hypotheses following certain theoretical concepts or statistical models and then collect data which they measure to find out whether the findings support the hypotheses (Ibid). such a research strategy according to Bryman (2012) is known as the deductive theory. The objective principle of the positivist paradigm has been the basis for its criticism. Hennink et al (2020) note that positivism separates the researcher and the researched and fails to acknowledge the interactive nature employed by social researchers in the methodology. It is against this background that the interpretive paradigm was started to counter such drawbacks (ibid). consequently, the epistemological position of the researcher employing the interpretive paradigm follows that the study must aim to understand people's lived experiences from the people themselves. This insider perspective is important for those trying to influence what and how social interventions can best work. Under this paradigm, the ontological position is that reality is socially constructed as people's experiences occur within social, cultural, historic, and personal contexts. Unlike positivism that emphasizes objectivity, the interpretive paradigm emphasizes the subjectivity of humans thus underscoring the position of the researcher in influencing the research data.

Based on the above positions, this study chose to adopt the interpretive paradigm. The choice was influenced by the research skills of the researcher – being more conversant with the qualitative research approach which uses the paradigm chosen. Secondly, answering the research question required understanding people's lived experiences concerning the program to be able to analyze the findings with the study objective. The position taken influenced the design of research questions and formulation of a list of prompt questions on the semi-structured interview guide for all the samples. Also, the viewpoints of the research participants and the researcher's insights from his own experience and literature review were weaved following the principles of this paradigm.

### **4.3 Research design and approach**

A research design according to Bryman (2012) is a framework through which a researcher can collect evidence that will answer the research questions. Yin (2018) calls it a plan that connects the research questions with the evidence to be collected and later be analyzed logically. From these descriptions, a research design could be a roadmap that helps the researcher to collect and analyze research data in line with the research questions. In

qualitative research designs (in which this study is framed), the design process often begins with formulating a research question (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). For my case, the idea of this study's research question was born during the face-to-face sessions when the lecturer stressed the need to start thinking about the thesis title. The research question then became my working research title in the subsequent assignments in the research methodology course assignments. It therefore has been undergoing several refining based on my lecturers' insights and the literature reading.

According to Bryman (2012), there are several types of research designs including but not limited to experimental design; cross-sectional or survey design; longitudinal design; case study design; and comparative design. Each design is chosen based on the nature of the research question under investigation. This study adopted a case study research design. According to Yin (2018, p. 4), a case study design is used when the study is focused on answering the "how" and/or "why" questions and when questions require digging deeper to understand the phenomenon. Yin further notes that a case study is an empirical method that seeks to inquire into a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context (Yin, 2018, p. 15). This study employed a case study design because it sought to understand and explain the context and modality the NGO implemented program has been conducted. The program was the case and its exploration and description were based on the conversation with the grassroots who have lived the program.

In the same stance, the study employed an explanatory qualitative case study (Yin, 2018; Baxter & Jack, 2008) as it depended on the narratives of the different stakeholders' experiences and perceptions about the program to explore the program's contribution towards the well-being of the people. Whereas the focus was on the case, the questions were answered by three categories of samples, that is, the organization staff, the 'master' artisans, and the case beneficiaries – the graduates. For this reason, a holistic single-case design (Yin, 2018) was ideal as the focus was on the program's contribution to improving people's well-being.

#### **4.4 Sampling strategy**

Sampling refers to the way research participants are selected from the study population (Hennink et al, 2020). Before deciding which sampling techniques to apply it is important that the sampling frame is defined. According to Blaikie (2009, p. 172), a sampling frame is

“an aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of criteria”. In this study, the sampling frame consisted of all parties affected directly or indirectly by the NGO implemented program in one of the implementing districts in southwestern Uganda. For purposes of managing a small study embedded in the framework of a master thesis, a representation of the sampling frame was selected. This is known as a sample which according to Creswell (2012) is a group of participants in a study selected from the sampling frame. In this study, three samples were considered. One sample comprised of some senior staff members at the NGO who have been overseeing the implementation of the program; the second sample comprised the program graduates; the third sample comprised the ‘master’ artisans who facilitate the training. Each sample was important in putting into context the research questions.

The first sample (NGO staff members) were key in answering questions related to the philosophy of the NGO, procedures for recruiting trainees and trainers, the model and approach adopted by the NGO among others. The second sample (the program graduates) was the basis for the research. They were key to understanding the whole program processes since they have lived it. The questions they answered regarding their motivation to join, how they joined, their views on the training methodology, and the effect of the training on them was important in connecting the contribution of the program towards people’s well-being. And of course, the third sample (the trainers) was the best category to answer questions related to the training model, a model that is often sidelined but very crucial in the education and training of out-of-school youth in Uganda.

Bearing in mind that the study was guided by the interpretive research paradigm and the nature of the samples, the study used purposive sampling to strategically choose participants that would be able to adequately answer research questions (Bryman 2012, p.418). Consequently, maximum variation sampling (Coyne, 1997; Creswell, 2012; Bryman 2012) was born in mind while recruiting participants to arrive at a wide variation in terms of experiences and perceptions in as far as the NGO implemented program’s role in impacting people’s livelihoods is concerned. The checklist for each sample included age category, gender, area of residence, the period the participant has been involved in the program, the field of training (trades) for example, tailoring, carpentry, motor-bike mechanics; and consent to participate in the study. The study aimed to reach between 20-30 participants in total bearing in mind the principle of saturation (Hennink et al, 2020)

Why did I choose the NGO implemented program and the southwestern region of Uganda? As mentioned in the background section of this thesis, I spent two months in the case district working with and experiencing the real-life situations of the people. I represented a district official at one of the events organized by the NGO implementing the case program not to mention attending consultative and evaluation meetings of the NGO held at the district headquarters with district officials. Against this background, I was first, inspired by what I saw and the chance to go back to understand more of the NGO programs was to undertake a study for this academic journey. Second, the majority of the population speak the language I understand. The language perspective was therefore at the back of my mind while choosing the study population for I would not find trouble making rapport and having engaging conversations with the research participants

### **Participant recruitment**

After determining the samples, the next step was how to get them. According to Hennink et al (2020), there are various strategies for recruiting research participants including using gatekeepers, registers, snowballing, formal and informal networks (Hennink et al, 2020, p.98-99). I chose to adopt the gatekeeper strategy for the fact that I was not able to go physically to the field because of the covid-19 pandemic. My gatekeeper was a person who worked with the NGO for several years. He was the link between me and the NGO top managers with whom he worked to select the participants based on the criteria I gave him. In collaboration with the program coordinator, a list with telephone contacts of 20 graduate participants from five (5) trades, 05 trainers, and 03 staff officials was emailed to me. The list of the selected participants was diverse comprising both male and female and various age categories.

My gatekeeper was also acting as my research associate by the fact that he helped me to deliver, read, and interpreted the information letter to the participants who did not know how to read and/or comprehend text in English. My duty was then to call the participants on phone and introduce myself and ask them whether they had received any information relating to the study. This telephone conversation was for building rapport and asking them whether they will be willing to partake in the study. For the participants that accepted to take part in the research process, I asked to schedule an interview date and time and urged them to recharge their cell phones and find a place with better network signal since rural areas in Uganda lack steady and strong mobile network. In fact, I could not reach some participants because their

mobile phones were not available. Those that I managed to reach and accepted to schedule for an interview were the ones that comprised the initial research participants. I must, however, acknowledge that since my gatekeeper was an insider in the organization, issues of bias in selecting the participants cannot be overruled. However, what is important is that they followed my criteria in the process of selecting the participants. The research participants I managed to interview gave me rich narratives regarding the research questions. Below is a list of the 28 research participants that were selected to take part in the study. Note that the names have been replaced with codes for purposes of confidentiality.

**Table 4. 1: Research participants recruited**

Sample category	No. of participants	Sex		Trades				
		F	M	Tailoring	Hairdressing	Mechanics	Welding	Metal fabrication
Graduates	20	11	9	7	5	4	3	1
Trainers	05	02	03	01	01	01	01	01
Staff	03	01	02	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	28	14	14	08	06	05	04	02

*Source: Field findings*

#### **4.5 Data collection procedures and management**

After getting the necessary permissions, I was set to start gathering data from my research participants to get data to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 14). This stage of the research process is critical and therefore considerations must be made regarding the form, type, and source of data (Blaikie, 2009). Since the study is embedded in a qualitative research approach and considering the nature of the research, primary data was more appropriate.

Initially, I had planned to go to the field physically to interact with research participants in their localities. This was not possible with the emergence of the covid-19 pandemic. I was thus compelled to use only one major method of collecting data – interviewing research participants via telephone. Although this method has its downside like missing out on social cues (Hennink et al, 2020; Bryman, 2012), it can be useful to get personal stories and experiences of people.

### **Telephone interviews**

As already mentioned in the last section, Telephone conversations were organized to make rapport and schedule for and conducting the interviews. The study adopted telephone interviews as a key method of data collection. This method was supplemented by document reviews. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to protect participants from the risk of infection, it was not possible to carry out participant observation and focus group discussions two major data collection techniques that were going to be used alongside interviews. Before the interviews started, I asked the participants again, for their permission to record the interviews, and only when they said yes on record, I went ahead and interviewed them. The interview was guided by a semi-structured interview guide. Each sample category had a separate interview guide. The guide had prompt questions that helped me have a conversation that flowed in the context of the research. The recording device was borrowed from the University Library. For confidentiality and the need to have a conversation with fewer distractions from my side, I asked SIA<sup>7</sup> to lend me the common room which they did. Following the appointment schedules, the interviews took two weeks.

### **Data preparation and management**

Interviews were recorded and notes were taken as the interviews went on. At the end of every interview, the audio file was uploaded to the University's protected server in line with the *Code of practice for processing personal data in research and student dissertations*. The card where the audios were kept was destroyed at the return of the Dictaphone to the library. Each interview conducted was recorded in the excel sheet indicating the particulars of the research participant, the time of the interview, the challenges that could have happened for instance if the participant was disrupted during the interview or if it rained and the interview was rescheduled. This excel sheet was also in the university secure server (see the section on data

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<sup>7</sup> SIA is the Student Association of Agder. They are responsible for student housing in the region

protection) and helped me track my interview schedule and coding of participants' audio files and transcripts. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim but with translations for the interviews that were done in the local language. Consequently, there could have been some loss of meaning in the process of translation (Van Nes et al, 2010, p. 314). While I did transcription and translation simultaneously, Hennink et al (2020) mention that there is a second approach that involves transcribing the verbatim in the language the interview was conducted and thereafter translate it into English. They also argue that this second approach is the best for it guarantees validity and analysis of such data accurately captures the emic perspective. Nonetheless, since I understand the local language and given the time factor, I chose to do translation and transcription concurrently. To safeguard the research data transcribing was done and transcripts kept within the protected University server.

### **Data analysis**

After audio interviews were transformed into textual data through a verbatim transcription, I embarked on the step of preparing the data for analysis. This step involved reading the transcripts to identify any text(s) that could lead to the identification of research participants. To preserve the anonymity of my research participants, I, therefore, had to anonymize data by removing possible identifiers such as names and places of residence (Hennink et al, 2020). Data analysis was generally done thematically, and coding followed inductive and deductive logic. Inductive coding was largely done on participants' experience while deductive coding was done while analyzing data related to the theory. The deductive logic of coding followed the structure of the interview guides which were also formulated based on the research questions. So ideally, deductive coding was largely used. To help me ease the coding process Atlas. Ti 8 was used to assist in analyzing the information collected from the interviews. These data analysis approaches are best suited for exploratory studies (Blaikie, 2009) but also because the study was situated in the interpretivism research paradigm (ibid). In total eight transcripts which were presumed 'rich' than the rest were fed into the software. These generated several codes which, with the help of the software, were merged and themes developed. It is the themes that were used in the writing of the subsequent chapters.

### **4.6 Permissions**

Before undertaking any research project at the University of Agder, student researchers are required to familiarize themselves with the university's guidelines and regulations. Key of

these is the *code of practice for processing personal data in research and students' dissertations*. One of the clauses in this code is the responsibility to know whether one will be collecting and processing personal data in their research project. And thereafter take responsibility to notify the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), an agency charged with the handling of assessment of research projects in respect to personal data protection guidelines and laws. Since this research involved collecting and processing personal data, it was my obligation as a student in collaboration with my research supervisor to seek permission from all stakeholders that were key in enabling the research project to progress.

Consequently, a notification form was filled with the help of my research supervisor and the faculty data protection officer. The form was then submitted to NSD for assessment. After the assessment was done by NSD and permission granted to move forward with data collection, an introductory letter was sought from the faculty. This letter helped me in securing necessary permission from the NGO. In turn, the NGO issued me a letter of acceptance to carry out my research project with them. I was supposed to use these letters to further seek permission from Makerere University School of Social Sciences Research and Ethics Committee. My initial inquiries with the committee chairperson seemed promising but the follow-up with the secretary seemed sluggish and was going to hinder the progress of the research. Given the fact that I was not going to the field moreover their approval was going to be based on NSD's approval, I deemed it unnecessary to delay the progress of the research because of bureaucratic procedures. The other permissions that were undertaken during this research concerns seeking consent from research participants. This is covered in the section on ethics self-assessment.

#### **4.7 Challenges and Risks**

Research in the social sciences has many challenges and risks. One of the challenges is limited finance for field visits. To make matters worse, the pandemic left many laid off (the researcher inclusive). This had financial implications even though I was not going to the field. The cost of calling abroad is high but it was relatively cheaper compared to travelling. So, even if it was not the peak of a pandemic, the adoption of telephone interviews would have been a better alternative to reduce the financial burden. Time is another challenge that is always anticipated. To minimize this challenge, an effort was made to ensure proper planning to avoid unnecessary time wastage. For example, scheduling of time for interviews was done



to prepare research participants to be ready and available for interviews. This meant that they ensured that their cell phones were charged enough to avoid battery-cuts during the interview. Time agreed for interviews were appropriate for both the researcher and the participant although the final consideration was largely on the side of the research participants (Yin, 2018, p. 98).

Although telephone interviews provided a cheap alternative, it had its downside. I failed to interview some participants because their cell phones had issues – they could hear me, but I could not hear them. Also, some participants kept getting distractions and necessitated rescheduling interviews which sometimes encroached on my time plan.

High expectations on the side of participants for money or other benefits in return for their time and knowledge sharing had been anticipated to be a risk in this study. But a few cases surfaced in which one participant asked whether it was possible to find her a job and two others seemed to propose when I will be visiting since they gave me their time. As a Ugandan who knows the culture of my research participants, I could read between the line what their propositions meant. Such challenges of expecting benefits from researchers are not new. I had anticipated this and curtailed its pronouncement by explaining in the introductory letter that the study was purely an academic study. And therefore, participation is voluntary. Since the information letter was in English and was read and explained by another person, it can be assumed that for those few cases, it was not understood well.

## **4.8 Ethics Self-Assessment**

### **Overview of ethical issues**

Ethics is generally seen as a set of general principles or rules that should be upheld and applied in certain situations (Simons & Usher, 2000). In social research, ethics is an important issue of discussion that looks at the role of values in the research process (Bryman, 2012). The issues surrounding ethics have been discussed in different ways by different researchers and based on the subject area or type of research. Ellis (2007) for example highlights dimensions of ethics including relational ethics, procedural ethics, and ethics in practice. The procedural ethics which according to Ellis deals with informed consent, confidentiality, rights to privacy, deception, and protecting human subjects from harm is the most given attention in most social research projects that deal with collecting and processing personal data. Diener and Crandall cited in Bryman (2012, p. 135) also provide a breakdown

of ethical principles into four main areas, thus: harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy; and deception.

While nobody intends to harm a research participant helping them carry out research, harm can be inflicted on a person without knowing because harm can be emotional. Emotional harm can be inflicted on a participant without knowing. For instance, even if the interview was agreed upon, anything could have happened before the interview time, and the participant's mood changes. But because of cultural aspects, one might go ahead and give you the interview but with a reserved mindset due to personal life challenges. In such circumstances, there is a degree of harm. I tried as much as possible to minimize any form of harm like for instance, for those that were working, I encouraged them to consider when their businesses are not at peak. Consequently, I had two interviews scheduled for night-time after they had gone home after work. Another participant preferred early morning before work. This consideration was in order not to harm them economically.

### **Risks for participants**

As Bryman (2012) stresses, research that is likely to risk harming participants should not be accepted in the first place. Harm can be seen in many ways including physical harm, loss of self-esteem, stress, and harm to participants' development (Bryman, 2012, p.135). In this study, the student researcher ensured that the risks of harming participants are reduced. The study was carried out during the covid-19 pandemic and therefore, there was a risk of exposing research participants to the virus in case the researcher and/or his research assistant/network were carriers. The student researcher consequently did not go to the field to have face-to-face interviews for purposes of avoiding the risk of exposing the virus to the participants.

Also, the student researcher's gatekeeper who delivered, read, and interpreted the information letter to the research participants who did not know English was asked to take the necessary measures and guidelines to ensure the respective participants are not exposed to the risk of infections during the research. The gatekeeper followed the regulations and guidelines provided to the staff of the case study organization.

## **Risk for self**

The procedures against the risk for participants were ultimately helpful in the same manner to the student researcher. By not going to the field, and opting for telephone interviews, the student researcher shielded himself from possible contact with the Coronavirus during the data collection phase. Similarly, the student researcher's gatekeeper guarded himself with protective gears especially a face mask, and carried with him sanitizers whenever he went to meet the potential research participant(s). This, while it was done to protect himself, it was, in turn, helping to protect the participants as already highlighted above.

## **Informed consent**

Bryman (2012) notes that the issue of informed consent is one of the most debated issues in social research. And as Ellis (2007) also points out, under the procedural dimension of ethics, informed consent appears to be one of the core procedures that the Ethics and Research Committees (REC) emphasize on. It is not surprising that the University of Agder's *Code of practice for processing personal data in research and students' dissertations* places consent in paragraph 5. It states as the main rule that "consent must be obtained from the registered person if personal data relating to this individual will be collected for research purposes". In line with this regulation, which further requires that a declaration of consent be sought based on the information letter that highlight specific information related to the research project. This study adhered to the University rules and regulations regarding seeking consent from research participants. To that effect, an information/consent letter was drafted based on the template provided by the NSD. The information letter contained such issues as the purpose of the research project; person(s) and institution(s) responsible for the research project; why the prospective participants are asked to partake and what the participation involves; their rights if they choose to participate among other issues.

As explained above this research project involved three categories of samples. Some of the participants in the two sample categories are not well conversant with the English language. It was, therefore, planned that the information letter leading to the declaration of consent be read and translated, explained to them before asking them for their consent to take part in the study. Also, because the interviews were conducted on the telephone, consent was again sought and given orally. Every interview audio has recorded oral consent for partaking in the

research. Besides, each sample had its information letter since the reasons for each sample participants' participation were different.

Consent seeking did not stop at asking participants to be part of the research. I sought consent while booking appointments for interviews. This was more like a mutual deliberation between me and the research participants. After several phone calls to establish rapport, it was easy for me to engage them at a personal level especially after they found out I was an African who has lived in their community. One participant confessed that she was scared of talking to a white person as the information letter showed the researcher was from a Norwegian University. At several times, I asked some participants if it was alright to reschedule their interviews because they could not be available for various reasons on the first scheduled date and/or time.

### **Personal data protection**

Personal data as described in the *Code of practice for processing personal data in research and student dissertations* implies “any information related to an identified or identifiable person. A person may be identified by name, images/video, email, IP address or a number referring to a list of names, through photo/video of recognizable faces, or through a combination of background information”. Collecting and processing personal data in any research project is the basis for notifying the NSD and having the project assessed. This study involved interviewing research participants and that made it liable to collect personal data. As mentioned noted earlier, the proposal for this study went through NSD notification and assessment as a requirement for approval.

Based on the definition of personal data, the other ethical issues fall under here. They include confidentiality, recording, usage, and storage of personal data. Again, these ethical issues were highlighted in the information letters. On the issue of confidentiality, participants were assured of effort to upholding confidentiality following the laws, and how personal data will be processed and protected. For example, the records of the study will be kept private and immediately transferred to the university's own password-protected servers (Office 365-OneDrive).

However, as Hennink et al (2020) stress, it is difficult to assure complete confidentiality because qualitative researchers often use quotations of participants' own words. Nonetheless,

anonymity can bridge this confusion. Consequently, in this study, when transcribing, participants' names were altered using codes, and some background information that would identify them was removed completely. Data analyzed and the text used in the report, therefore, is anonymized unless where it was important to keep. As mentioned above, the audio recordings were safely kept in the University's protected server, and only I had access to them. So no unauthorized persons had access to the audio recordings as well as transcripts.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Introduction

The overarching question for this research was what role does NFAE play in community development? Following the conversation I had with the research participants, their perceptions, and views on the NGO implemented program and the effects it has had were carefully analyzed following the approaches described in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I present the findings of the study that relate to the research questions and an analysis of the findings concerning the study objective following the established research context and theories and concepts. The presentation is structured in the following format: first, I present the background characteristics of the research participants before I present findings and analysis following the research design (Hennink et al, 2020). The presentation, therefore, follows the structure of the research questions and the subsequent concepts therein.

### 5.2 Background characteristics of research participants

Information relating to the sample categories, sex, age, and trade/designation of research participants was collected. This information is presented in both tables and text in the proceeding paragraphs.

*Table 5. 1: Categories of research participants interviewed*

<b>Sample category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Graduates	12
Trainers ('master' artisans)	02
Staff (NGO senior staff)	02
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

*Source: Field findings*

While it was reported in the previous chapter that the study had recruited twenty-eight (28) research participants, only sixteen (16) participants were interviewed. Out of these, twelve (12) comprised of the graduates who were purposively selected based on their rich knowledge of the NGO implemented program. Two (02) participants were 'master' artisans whose selection was based on their knowledge of the program implementation, especially regarding the training part. The other two (02) participants that were interviewed were senior

staff at the NGO whom the study selected for their rich knowledge about the NGO philosophy and the program implementation. A deficit of twelve (12) participants was registered by the study for reasons including failure to reach them. Poor network connection, and issues related to malfunctions in some participants' cell phones made the interviews hard to be recorded due to poor sound. Although the study did not achieve its target number of research participants, such eventualities were taken into consideration through the application of the saturation principle (Hennink et al, 2020). Also, the selection of samples was influenced by such factors that is why the study had three samples and, in each sample, maximum variation was considered. All these factors enabled the study to achieve data saturation with the number of participants that were interviewed.

**Table 5. 2:Distribution of research participants by gender**

<b>Sample category</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Total</b>
Graduates	08	04	12
Trainers ('master' artisans)	01	01	02
Staff (NGO senior staff)	01	01	02

*Source: Field findings*

In the course of the research design, the gender perspective was considered key. It was key because the NGO's mission is to empower the vulnerable groups and women are considered part of this group. Also, the literature showed that girls are more susceptible to dropping out of school compared to boys. It was therefore important that the aspect of gender be considered in the design of the study. **Table 5. 2** above shows that the study had more females than their male counterparts. Out of the sixteen (16) participants interviewed, the majority – ten (10) were females. Out of the ten (10), eight (08) were graduates while the other sample categories shared one (01) for each. The figures paint a picture that more girls embraced the training program. As will be seen in the distribution of participants by trades and designation.

**Table 5. 3: Distribution of research participants by age**

<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Number</b>
18 – 22	07
23 – 27	05
28 – 32	00
Above 32	04

*Source: Field findings*

Age was another aspect considered in the recruitment of participants. Besides being the criteria for ensuring the diversity of participants, the program beneficiaries (graduates) were supposed to be between sixteen (16) and twenty-five (25) years old if they were to be enrolled in the program. Findings from the study indicate that majority of the graduates were between the age range of 18 and 22. The other significant observation from the table is that 05 participants were between 23 and 32 an indication that there could have been those above 25 the upper age cap for entry into the program. However, there was one case where a graduate confessed begging to be enrolled after the NGO had declined her application twice on grounds that the research participant was exceeding the required age category. Of the four (04) participants that reported being above thirty-four (34) years old, three were from the other sample category while one (01) was the case described before this sentence.

**Table 5. 4: Distribution of research participants by trades and designation**

<b>Trade/designation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Tailoring	05
Hairdressing	04
Motor-bike mechanics	01
Welding	01
Metal fabrication	01
Program coordinator	01
Program officer	01

*Source: Field findings*

Through document review about the NGO during the design stage of this study, it was found out that the NGO implemented program comprises of various trades. It was therefore taken into consideration to select participants from a variety of trades for a diversity of views and



experiences from research participants. From table 5 above, it can be seen that tailoring and hairdressing were the most represented trades in the study. Further analysis of field findings shows that the same trades are mostly embraced by females. The reason for this trend is attributed to culture, aspirations, and the market forces prevailing in the community at the time of enrolment. For more reasons on the choice of a particular trade, see **Table 5. 6**

**Table 5. 5 Distribution of research participants by level of education**

Education/ dropout level	Number
Bachelors	02
Advanced secondary level	01
Ordinary secondary level	01
Senior three (S.3)	03
Primary seven (P.7)	04
Primary six (P.6)	03
Primary five (P.5)	02

*Source: Field findings*

The education level of research participants was deemed important in this study. While education level was not a criterion for selecting research participants, research participants were asked about their level of education. Basic education tends to have an impact on someone’s general perspective. Also, since the NGO implemented program targets the out-of-school youth or ESLs, it was important to understand how far they had gone in their formal education trajectory and how long they had been out of school. From table 5.5 above, it is evident that the majority of the research participants (12) had not completed ordinary secondary level (O’ level), a level seen by many Ugandans as the first measure of an educated person. It was interesting to note that one of the ‘master’ artisans was also a P.7 dropout. Such personal characteristics were also used to inspire and motivate the trainees as a way of preparing them for the training. For instance, one artisan narrated that ‘... I told them first get inspired from me, I have land, I manage my own family, I am not a beggar... so, you just take it from me that you people will also be like me’. Such life stories told to inspire and motivate ESLs will certainly prepare their mind for the hard task of learning ahead of them.

## **Summary of background characteristics of research participants**

Understanding the research participants' profiles was an important component of this study. It was essential for contextualizing the background factors that pushed them to enrol for the program. The age, gender, education, and the trade the participant undertook or their designation was put into perspective in analyzing the information they provided. As discussed in the methodology, each participant was selected because of the unique perspective they brought to the research. Analysis from the findings on research participants' background information shows that overall, the program benefits a big number of females and they were more interested in hairdressing and tailoring. In the proceeding paragraph, I highlight the factors for school dropout in the subregion as a precursor to the idea of starting the program to support some of the ESLs.

### **Reasons for school dropout**

There is a lot of contextual factors that contribute to young people dropping out of school. Analysis of study findings indicates that most of the research participants interviewed dropped out of school because of a lack of means to pay school fees. Asked why they did not study from 'free' government primary schools (Universal Primary Education - UPE) and Secondary (Universal Secondary Education - USE), they grudgingly commented that there is no free education. They claimed that even if the school is offering 'free' education, there are still other fees to be paid by the learner. Yet, as reported by one of the research participants, the program trainees are selected from "extremely poor families and those whose parents died". Such orphaned children find it hard to pay for other fees and end up dropping out of school.

The issue of lack of means to pay school fees and other school costs is reported in several studies (Yasunaga, 2014; Tukundane et al, Blaak et al, 2013). Tukundane et al (2014) provided cases of ESLs whose accounts correspond to the findings of this study. Yasunaga (2014) on the other hand, while documenting NFE for specific target groups, observed that girls are prevented from staying in school due to early marriage, pregnancy, poor households, or cultural bias. These additional factors were similarly reported by the research participants interviewed. For example;

... there are [some illiterate households], they do not value education as something which can help someone. They say for us we never went to school, but we survived, or we have money. So, that illiteracy also contributes to school dropout here.

... There are also early marriages, early pregnancies...these affect mostly girls- they get married before reaching P.7. So, as they get pregnant or married, they stop going to school and of which remember at that age they cannot manage a family. She goes, gets married for 1 or 2 years then gets back at her father's home. So, those are the kind of people we support

Such narratives and more others like having many children, and socio-economic activities seem to be contributing immensely to the rampant school drop out rates in the southwestern region of Uganda. These findings correlate with the 2014 population and housing census results which showed that 13.8 % of the population in the southwestern region of Uganda has never gone to school and that 24% of the population is non-literate (UBOS, 2017). Luckily, development actors like NGOs lookout for such vulnerable groups of people and provide alternative education and training to enable these people to live a meaningful life. These alternative education and training programs for vulnerable groups are the focus of this study and in the next sections, I highlight how an LNGO in Southwestern Uganda pitched a right-based, community-based, and market-driven vocational skills training program for boys and girls who have been out-of-school for some time.

### **A brief overview of the program implemented by the NGO**

In the last paragraphs of this study's problem statement, I introduced that to reduce the risk of poverty and improve the capacity to withstand pressures exacerbated by it, development actors have looked to vocational adult education (VAE). The aim of turning to VAE is so that people are empowered with the necessary required competencies to deal with the challenges of development. In this section, I present a brief overview of the case of an empowering VAE program that aimed to address the plight of ESLs in one of the districts in the southwestern region of Uganda.

The NGO implemented program under assessment in this study is one of a few programs that was until last year implemented by an LNGO. The program according to findings was conceptualized under the theme of livelihood. Although the NGO's work started way back in the early 2000s, to strengthen the capacities of communities to provide for the rights of

children, the NGO implemented program started in 2008 with support from INGOs. The program's target group is youth (both boys and girls) of ages between sixteen (16) and twenty-five (25) who have been out of school for two years. As seen above, the factors for school dropout in the region can be attributed to poverty, illiteracy, and cultural bias (Yasunaga, 2014).

Based on conviction to protect the rights of children (especially those out-of-school), the NGO guided by its philosophy of strengthening the capacities of communities developed a series of programs within the framework of livelihood. While other programs target the rest of the community members, the NGO implemented program specifically was designed to provide vocational and lifeskills to the said target group. These competencies it is assumed are critical for the graduates to live decent lives and contribute to the wider improvement of their communities. Several trades prominent in the communities where the youth reside form what competencies they will acquire. Accordingly, the program had several trades but the major ones are tailoring, hairdressing, Motor-bike mechanics, welding, and metal fabrication. According to the findings, these are the most likely to offer the graduates employment or even ground for micro-enterprises.

The training follows a hands-on approach with the use of a local 'master' artisan as the person in charge of the training which is done within the community of the trainee for purposes of mitigating the causes of dropout. Training duration differs according to trades. While others take less than a year, others take more than a year. After successful training, the graduates are given start-up kits to boost their progression in starting up their micro-enterprises.

Since the program was conceptualized within the framework of development, I asked the research participants what their perspectives were concerning the program and the SDGs. The findings show that the program uses an integrative approach where vocational skills are integrated with lifeskills. And by and large, it contributes to several SDGs some directly and others indirectly. More discussion on these issues is discussed in the proceeding sections that are structured following the research questions and concepts from the literature review.

### **5.3 Content of the program implemented by the NGO**

The first research question sought to understand the content of the NGO implemented program. This was aimed at understanding the kind of training offered to the youth and

whether the training was relevant to the general question of the research. In the course of collecting data, the graduate participants were asked about the kind of training they received while the senior staff at the organization were asked about the program elements. These questions were followed by prompt questions in a bid to contextualize the research question into the literature and principles guiding the design of training programs in NFAE. The findings presented here followed an analysis of findings based on the literature review which also guided the formulation of interview questions.

The study findings indicated that the program content is embedded into two broad categorizations. The vocational skills content which is embedded in the different trades offered by the program. The trades include tailoring, hairdressing, catering, carpentry, welding, motor-bike mechanics, and metal fabrication. On the other hand, the program through its integrative approach offers content on life skills. As mentioned earlier, the NGO implemented program is conceptualized under the livelihood theme which has several other programs. Therefore, these programs are integrated to enhance their effectiveness as one research participant explained

... livelihood theme has different programs but the most important is vocational then we have food security and nutrition, commercial farming with different models like the commercial village model. So, we always integrate, we integrate those programs under livelihood, for example, where you find youth under the NGO implemented program, we also integrate backyard gardening and those you get different livelihood skills which sometimes helps them to earn more money in addition to the vocational skills training.

The inclusion of other supplementary content on top of the main vocational skills training mirrors most of the NFAE programs in the African context which require aspects of literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, and models of life skills (Blaak et al, 2013). Empirical findings in studies done by Chisholm & Hasan (2010); Nnodim & Johnwest (2016); and Manuel, 2017) show similar training content.

Blaak et al (2013) argue that NFAE program content must be in line with the learning needs of the learners as well as integrating issues relating to the whole life-wide and cross-cutting issues. While the integration of soft skills and vocational skills meets this criterion, the study sought the views of graduates on what they were doing before joining the program and what

motivated them to choose the trades they chose. This was intended to understand whether the program content met their learning needs. While many of the graduates interviewed said they were doing nothing substantial, they intimated to have been involved in subsistence cultivation with either their parents, grandparents, or guardians. A few others reported having been involved in fishing-related activities like spreading nets on the lake. Two participants reported having been previously tried to learn vocational skills although they were still struggling with raising the training costs.

The learning needs of learners were taken care of in the recruitment process (discussed in the next subheading). It was however interesting to note that during this process trainees were freely allowed to choose their preferred trade after taking part in a meeting between themselves, their parents, the 'master' artisans, and NGO representatives. Graduates were asked what motivated them to choose the trades they did and the responses showed their interests and needs. Some of the responses given included easy to get money/job, easy to learn, passion for the trade, easy to set up, prior learning experiences, not conversant with English, and other trades requiring a lot of money to set up. These responses indicate that the orientation the NGO accorded to the program candidates was reflective based on the responses graduates gave during the interview. For example, one graduate participant said

... why I chose mechanics is because it is a simple job and easy. When you are done with training and you have your toolbox, you can set up anywhere even on the roadside, or a stage, and start work without much capital needed. Unlike those others like welding, tailoring requires a lot of money sometimes. You must rent space, if there is no power, the welding guy will not work. For me, whether it rains or not, I can work; whether there is power or not, I must work. So, that is why I chose this trade.

Another had this to say «...one of the reasons is that it is not common among people and I had a passion for it because if you do not have passion, you will not succeed at something. The other thing is the occupation is money-minting». Another reflective choice for a trade can be seen in this participant's response:

... why I chose tailoring is because I have a passion for it. The other thing is because even without money to rent a house, you can ask someone to give you a veranda and you work from there. You can also work from home, the neighbouring households in

the community will know and will help spread the message that there is a girl that sews. I knew that even a poor person can run the tailoring business as long as they have trained and learned.

The above responses from graduate participants imply that the program adhered to one of the principles that guide the determination of program content which state that the subject matter knowledge must be selected and sequenced within the context of the learner’s life, family, community, and society (Gboku & Lekoko, 2007, pp. 96-99). it can be seen in the quotation that the participant understood themselves and the community well to know the conditions that will favour them to start their micro-enterprises after acquiring the competencies. Analysis of the reasons for choosing a certain trade was based on factors unique to the individual. But by and large, the market analysis conducted by all parties at the orientation stage seem to have had much influence as the economic benefits associated with a particular trade were cited most. And while girls were more attracted to tailoring and hairdressing, no explicit factor from the interview transcripts can be attributed to such gender-disaggregated data. A summary of the reasons for choosing a particular trade is given in **Table 5. 6**

**Table 5. 6: Reasons for choosing a trade**

Trade	Reason for choosing
Tailoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior knowledge and training</li> <li>• Passion for the trade</li> <li>• Lack of competence in speaking English required by catering for example</li> <li>• Easy to manage</li> <li>• There is money in the trade</li> <li>• Work from home – no need for renting a fancy house</li> </ul>
Hairdressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to master</li> <li>• Easy to earn money</li> <li>• Passion for the trade</li> </ul>
Motor-bike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanted to be a mechanic</li> </ul>

mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple job and easy</li> <li>• Passion for the trade</li> <li>• Easy to learn</li> </ul>
Metal fabrication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not common among people</li> <li>• Passion for the trade</li> <li>• Money minting</li> </ul>
Welding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not many do it</li> </ul>

*Source: Field findings*

#### **5.4 Organization and delivery of Non-formal adult education program content**

Developing and planning for educational training is not enough. It requires a concrete plan to deliver it to the beneficiaries. The NGO implemented program content as seen in the previous section is well thought out depending on the opportunities available in the district and subregion. In this section, I present findings and analysis regarding how the program content is organized and delivered. But first, I highlight how the parties involved in the teaching and learning process are recruited into the program by the NGO.

##### **Recruitment of trainees**

Understanding the learning needs of learners means including them in the process. To understand whether this was followed, the study interrogated the recruitment process of learners. It was noted that the program stresses the principle of integration and participatory methods seen in the process of recruiting trainees. The checklist for one to be recruited into the NGO implemented program according to senior NGO staff interviewed include (1) the age bracket of 16-25 years old, (2) been out-of-school for two years, and (3) must be from a vulnerable household. This criterion was interrogated by asking the graduate participants questions related to the criteria list. According to the findings, the age of the youth was stressed at the time of registration. The strictness on age was reported by a graduate who narrated that it was difficult to get into the program because of her age. She expressed her gratitude to the NGO for later considering her despite her age

... my age was beyond the age they were accepting. So, every time I went there, they told me that. Then, suddenly, the chance came to my sub-county, I went and begged



as they hesitated to register my name because of my age. But finally, they agreed to just put my name down. After a few weeks, they rang me and told me to go to (name of the artisan) and I start training in tailoring.

Concerning the second criteria list, the study sought the views of senior NGO staff on the measures to ensure that the registered candidates had been out-of-school for two years. Responses from both participants echoed the approach of integration of NGO programs and projects and trust in the local community leadership structures «... [the] majority of them [trainees] are identified from the village, the households which are benefiting from VSLAs or Community Management Microfinance [CMMF] groups.» The CMMF is a component the NGO implements up to now (time of research) aimed at improving household incomes through a savings and loaning methodology. The NGO implemented program, therefore, used the VSLAs to put out information regarding the trades available that the out-of-school youth could register for. Similarly, the VSLA members were trusted with identifying from among themselves the critically and moderate vulnerable households and children that could benefit from the training opportunities. The identified households and youth are then assessed by the NGO team to ascertain whether the guidelines (age, and the period of out-of-school) were followed

... we have structures in the communities – we use local leaders. These local leaders know all the households and know what is going on in that household. So, when selecting the trainees, we go to such households identified by the local leaders and go there, ask questions to ensure they fit.

While the NGO staff maintains this is the process followed to recruit trainees, the perspectives of graduates seem contrary. According to the graduates, the news about the program and registration procedures were gotten from different sources. Some knew about the program from friends who were already undertaking the training, others overheard announcements in church services, while others were told by relatives who knew the NGO by working there or by association. Graduates also mentioned that they went to the NGO office and registered themselves and were later called to come to the office with their parents or guardians.

The meeting at the NGO office involved the successful candidates, their parents, the ‘master’ artisans, and the NGO responsible persons. This meeting also referred to by some graduates

as orientation was where the dos and don'ts of the program were highlighted. Each party was told their responsibility in the training process, for instance, parents/guardians urged to provide lunches and small training requirements. This meeting was also vital because it was in there that the variety of trades were discussed and opportunities the graduates had with each trade. It is this study's observation that this meeting provided the youth with the necessary information to decide which trade they took. The importance of this meeting can be seen in this quote

... we involve the parents and the youth in the meeting and tell them how the program works. In that meeting we conduct something like a trade survey or market analysis, it is from that meeting where children[youth] select the trades of their own choice depending on the number of reasons.

### **Recruitment of trainers**

The recruitment of the 'master' artisans, like the trainees, follows particular criteria. According to the NGO staff, for one to be selected to train the youth in vocational skills, they must have enough experience in the trade and must be from the same community that the trainees come from. As explained by the research participant, the same process for identifying the youth for training is the same the 'master' artisan is selected «... and it is the meeting which is attended by the youth, the parent and the master artisan. Of course, during the other process of assessing the households, we also identify the master artisan.» This account of how the trainers are selected is contrary to what the trainers explained. It was argued that a call for all experienced artisans in the district for a particular trade was made and those interested went for an interview at the NGO. And those that met the requirements took the job «... we were called, hairdressers from the entire district, we were given an interview and those that performed very well are the ones that were retained to train».

Another trainer from a different trade said that the NGO approached him and asked if he could train some youth. Perhaps this trainer's account fits into the process described by one of the NGO staff. Despite the contradiction in the accounts, what is evident from the data is that experience and knowledge in the trade were taken seriously. The two trainers interviewed for this study had a considerable number of years in the trade (eight years and over ten years). The other issue identified from the data is how busy the station was «... If you look around the whole district, there are several garages, but they would look for one that

is remarkably busy. Like in this my town, there are around 4 garages, but they chose mine.» Whereas this issue was not further interrogated, it can be deduced that the training methodology the program used required busy workshops so that trainees could get a chance to learn practically.

Another important element in the recruitment of trainers is the binding agreement between them and the NGO. Consequently, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is henceforth signed upon agreement. The MOU spells out the responsibilities and duties of both parties. The MOU also included clauses of how disagreements between the trainer and the trainees were supposed to be handled, for example, the contact details of the trade focal point person at the NGO

### **The training model used by the NGO implemented program**

Having looked at how the trainees and the trainer were recruited, it is important to describe how the training was organized and conducted/delivered. While most literature reviewed did not match the model used in the NGO implemented program, guiding principles in the delivery of NFAE content were identified as having been followed. Following the description so far, it can be observed that the training model uses an experienced and knowledgeable person who acts as a guide and mentor to the youth. Depending on the number of youth selected for a particular trade, a trainer was selected from within the vicinity of where the youth lived. The youth were then attached to a trainer who trained them from his/her workshop<sup>8</sup>. The model emphasized training from within the same community as seen in the trainer recruitment process. This aspect of training from within the community relates to what writers have advocated for. For example, Tukundane & Blaak cited in Manuel (2017) and Blaak et al (2013) advocate for easy accessibility where facilities and facilitators should be near or living in the same community as learners as well as ensuring that the learning environment allows for avenues where learners can practise what is learned. Practising what is learned is one way of enhancing mastery of the skills learned. The program offered this avenue. From the interviews, graduates narrated that after they had mastered some level of skills, they were allowed to not only practice but also to work on clients.

So how exactly was the training prepared and delivered? This study sought to understand this process. Accounts by both the ‘master’ artisans and the graduates show that the training

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<sup>8</sup> By workshop I mean the work station of the trainer. It could be a garage, a salon, or carpentry workshop

followed a more relaxed approach. After trainees arrive at the workshop, they are introduced to the rest of the trainees. By this time, they most likely have met with the trainer since they were both engaged in the meeting (referred to in the recruitment process). The method of training was hands-on and watching what the trainer is doing was very much emphasized. The NGO provides some training materials for starters, for instance, spanners for mechanics, fabric for the tailors. The length of this master thesis is not enough to describe the detailed process of training for each trade sampled in this study. But generally, trainees were introduced to basics about the trade and the equipment involved. For instance, those training in mechanics were introduced to the different parts of the engine and the entire motor-bike while the tailors learned about the parts of a sewing machine.

By and large, the trainees were first given tips and given inspiration but also cautioned on the dangers and risks involved in the training. The metal fabrication graduate narrated such a scenario when asked how he was prepared for the training

... he told me to be careful. That the occupation is full of occupational hazards and therefore I must be vigilant and careful not to get cut by iron sheets since they might cause some illnesses. And that I must put interest and passion in the job or else I will not learn because the job is tough. He then showed me how and what I will be doing, and I started the training.

Participants from the tailoring trade mentioned being given tasks upon tasks. Once a task was learnt, then another one was assigned. They, for instance, started with learning how to pedal the sewing machine before they were introduced to threading and fabric cutting. The hairdressing graduates, on the other hand, were given a dummy head from where to practise different hairstyles. When one style was perfected, they would be paired and start working on each others' hair.

While the above description is particular for vocational skills training, trainees were also equipped with life skills. This extra training was given as a way to prepare the trainees for vocational skills training. This was done through seminars organized by the NGO at separate training grounds. The objective was to provide trainees with a variety of life lessons and soft skills to prepare them for the world of work. Emphasis was put on the need for trainees to know their human rights and how to demand them but also to learn to be resilient in times of hardship. These pieces of training were also aimed at providing basic literacy and numeracy

for those that needed it. Other key issues in the training were revolving around the integration of life skills with vocational skills.

The training duration differed among the different trades. While some took six (6) months, others took a full year. The training hours and dates were nonetheless the same. The training ran from Monday to Friday from morning to evening with breaks for meals. However, trainees were allowed to attend training on weekends as long as their parents agreed. Since it did not require incurring any costs, and the motivation to learn and earn, almost all trainees interviewed said they were taking also training on Saturdays. The concept of learning and earning is seen as a motivating factor to learn faster the necessary skills. Graduates reported that after they had mastered the skills, the trainers would often leave them at the workshops to run for some time as they (trainers) went about doing personal or business-related errands. While this gave them confidence, it was reported by some that it landed them into trouble with clients as narrated by one participant

... the challenge is that you want to learn fast, and in the process, you accidentally cause a loss. For instance, in trying to remove a tire you might end up puncturing it and the result is that you must fix it or buy a new one to replace. There are times when you get a job, and the trainer is not available. You must work on that client and it might happen that what needs to be done you have not mastered it yet. But you must protect the garage and try to fix it. Also, when the owner of the garage also the trainer is around, he will tell you to take your time and do something with caution unlike when he is not around that the customers put you on pressure, that they do not have time, that they are on a hurry. These are the things that make you pressured and you end up messing up. And he does not want to know, if you damage the tube, you must replace it.

From the above quotations and the description of the method of training, it is seen that the NGO implemented program used similar methods identified in the literature. For example, problem-solving, demonstration, brainstorming, and group discussions were cited in studies done and emphasized by Mayombe (2017), Nnodim & Johnwest (2016), Taylor et al, (2012), and Gboku & Lekoko (2007). Whether the methods employed by the NGO implemented program were effective was not among the key issues this research investigated. However, the findings indicate that some trainees could not complete the training on time. For some, the training duration elapsed before they mastered the skills while others completely dropped

out of the course or defaulted even after the NGO had paid their training fees to ‘master’ artisan. For the ones that dropped out, it was argued that they had started earning money through odd jobs and they slide back to their old ways

... You know, the boys they bring are those that have not been studying and had previously learned some unpleasant habits in the villages. Some have tasted getting money through doing odd jobs such as carrying timber, fishing, etc. So, such end up quitting, you look for them and cannot find them.

For the ones that had not mastered the skills when the training duration ended, one trainer said he would let them stay and complete the training. He argued, he would rather miss on the training fees but produce a graduate with skills instead of passing someone who will tarnish the name of his garage.

As a way of reducing cases of dropping out and a means of measuring progress, the study was interested in understanding how the evaluation of learning was done. Findings on this aspect can be summarised under the subheading strategies for enhancing mastery of skills. Some of the strategies have already been mentioned. They include hands-on training methodology, conducting the training from within the community so that trainees do not suffer similar extra costs as when they were still in the formal school system but importantly, to reduce on the long distances. The NGO provides successful trainees with start-up kits and for that matter, they cannot afford to hand over kits to people who have not mastered the skills. They, therefore, offer an extra training period as explained in the following quote

... we add them like say 3 or 4 months until they get enough experience. What we do not want is to give the start-up kit to someone who is not yet ready to work. We do not want young ladies and boys to go with start-up kits and keep them at home. We want them to start working directly. We keep monitoring them after the start-up kit for like a year depending on the situation. Because we want everyone to be either self-employed or employed by other people.

The monitoring mechanism, it was noted continued even after the graduation. The NGO still follows them and supports them in their micro-enterprises (for those who were lucky to start).

## 5.5 Skills and Competencies provided by the NGO implemented program

The third research question of this study focused on understanding the different skills and competencies acquired by the graduates. The findings show that the various trades provided vocational/technical skills while the various pieces of training provided in form of seminars and orientations were influential in providing soft/life skills. The study adopted to use the concept of competences to denote both skills and competences since the concept 'competence' encompasses skills, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours (European Commission, 2019)

During the interviews, it was observed that most of the research participants could not explicitly identify a list of competencies they acquired from the training. All that was said was gaining competencies in the trade. However, responses to prompt questions about what kind of job or micro-enterprises they held at the time of interviews could tell which competencies they acquired. The competencies could be identified from the responses on the benefits of the program to the different stakeholders as well.

Analysis of findings shows interesting perspectives on competencies. While the artisans' perspective is more embedded in the vocational skillset, the NGO staff perspective is broader encompassing both the vocational and soft skills. These contrasts are understandable given the background of each participant. The artisan is more interested in protecting his/her legacy by ensuring the graduate has all the basic knowledge of the field as not doing a good job in the field reflects badly on the trainer. This analysis is confirmed in the following quotes from the research transcript «... they should know the bike parts inside and out. If one does not know the parts of a bike, what will they do for the client when they have their garages? They will be cheating their clients and that is bad for business»

Another artisan said that

... they learn a lot of different styles, we have cutting, plaiting, re-touching and relaxing, we have even make-up, and bridal styling. ... I had to introduce all of the styles to them so that if they go to a place, a workplace and no one can do let me say plait, then it would be easy for her to get a job for plaiting.

While the artisans were concerned about their reputation, it was observed that they also had good intentions for their graduates. It is not surprising that some graduates, the best ones were retained by the artisans.

**Table 5. 7: List of competencies gained from the NGO implemented program**

Trade-based competencies	Soft skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills in bridal styling</li> <li>• Hair plaiting &amp; weaving skills</li> <li>• Skills in make-up</li> <li>• Door and window designing &amp; welding skills</li> <li>• Skills in fabric cutting, stitching &amp; sewing</li> <li>• Basic skills in repairing sewing machines</li> <li>• Competence in making traditional wears -Gomesi, Bitengi</li> <li>• Competence in making school uniforms</li> <li>• Knowledge of motor-bike parts</li> <li>• Skills solar electricity wiring</li> <li>• Motor-bike mechanics</li> <li>• Motor-bike riding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence</li> <li>• Knowledge of human rights</li> <li>• Business management skills</li> <li>• Survival skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of empowerment</li> <li>• Knowledge of saving</li> <li>• Working in teams</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Living independently</li> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Customer relations</li> <li>• Interpersonal relations</li> </ul>

*Source: Field findings*

The integration of different programs is seen as the basis for the perspective given by NGO staff regarding competences. They seemed to understand that the youth not only require the vocational skills but also other soft skills to increase their chances to get employment or boost their micro-enterprises. Statements like this

...before we take them for the vocational skills training, we first take them through the LifeSkills training. Here we do different things - we introduce them to savings schemes, we do entrepreneurship, we do financial literacy, we keep introducing them to new things



attest to the magnitude the NGO sees for integrating several components to provide a range of competencies to the graduates so that they can use the competencies to better themselves and their households.

The graduates, on the other hand, spoke enthusiastically on the competencies they acquired from the seminars and the inspirations they got from their trainers. One graduate narrated how the seminars literally changed her life

... I can tell you that before the training I was in my own life. I was one person who would never imagine myself on the roadside selling pancakes because I thought boys would never take me seriously, I would be ashamed. But after the training, I learned that there is no shame in doing any business that will fetch you money ... The other experience, I got is that I grew up knowing that a girl is supposed to look good for a man and when she gets married the man is the sole provider. But we were told that now, women should not be expecting everything from the man, that it makes the man tired of your dependence. So, I now know that when I get married, I will be independent since I know how to run the small businesses that fetch me money.

Several other narratives shared by the graduates indicate that the one/two-day seminars that the trainees were complemented with taught them a lot about life. To some, their self-esteem was developed, others became more confident.

In the wider theoretical framework, it can be concluded that the NGO implemented program provided some competencies that fall under the European Commission's 'key competencies'. For instance, most of the soft skills highlighted in table 5.7 can be categorized under the personal, social, and learning to learn competence; citizenship competence; and cultural awareness and expression competence (European Commission, 2019). Similarly, the findings on competencies also are in agreement with findings from studies done in Nigeria and South Africa which found out that NFAE programs provide competencies like hairdressing skills, cloth weaving skills, tailoring skills, business management, and personal development (Mayombe, 2017; Nnodim & Johnwest, 2016)

By and large, the NGO implemented program provided competencies that could be argued to be just enough to turn around the life of a once 'hopeless' school dropout. This, however, is possible with other enablers such as the start-up capital the NGO was providing, the social

connection for employment opportunities, and the general state of the household they come from. As the next section will show, the competencies have a role to play in the life of a graduate and the people around him or her.

## **5.6 Relevance of competencies**

Bearing in mind the overarching question for this research, after understanding the competencies the program offers, an analysis must be made regarding the links between the competencies and community development. The study chose to analyse the link using three parameters that were deemed crucial gauging the level of personal and community development. The presentation of research findings on this research question follows the pattern in the order of the concepts starting with employability, active citizenship and then improved well-being

### **The relevance of competencies to increasing employability**

Most literature reviewed indicated that VET programs contribute to increasing employability of program graduates (López & Rodríguez-López, 2020; Jjuuko et al 2019; Fraser et al, 2019; Tikkanen et al, 2018; Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2018; Munishi, 2016) by equipping them with employability skills. In this study, employability implies both getting employment and being able to start a micro-enterprise since the skills required for being a good employee are similar to those required for a successful micro-enterprise. While few graduates reported having had a chance to get employed, they expressed a yearning for being self-employed.

The power of vocational skills one would argue exceeds the complementary nature of soft skills. One requires vocational skills first because they are the ones required in the production of a product. One graduate expressed this importance in the following quote when asked whether she has higher chances of being offered a job as a result of attending the NGO implemented program

... yes, I can find a job. I went to [neighbouring] district, there was a woman who had a big store for Bitengi (special fabric from specific countries). She gave me an interview in form of making a kitenge dress with a specific fashion. I did it and she hired me. Even though the salary was small, I was feeling excited by the fact that I left home to look for a job and I got it.

The graduate was able to get a job offer because of her vocational skills but that does not negate the equally important soft skills. For example, the competence of personal, social, and learning to learn could be seen in the same graduate. She said that after the training, she took another course where she learned how to bake. And now, on top of working from home, she gets orders for cakes which supplements her income from the sewing micro-enterprise.

Additionally, competencies are crucial for not only getting a job but also for keeping it. And while the soft skills are very key here, for instance, the customer relations skills, the skill to work in teams, and having confidence are necessary for being an asset to anyone employing you. But, it is equally very important that one possesses extra vocational competences. The findings indicate that trainees were not only given basic skills but also skills in maintaining the machines. A tailoring graduate, for example, narrated how the trainer made them open, clean, and reassemble the sewing machine. Mastery of such skills is good for maintenance purposes. The same kind of skills was stressed by a trainer who said he had to make sure that the trainees mastered opening and reassembling an engine for him to tell that they have mastered and can work on a client's motorbike. It thus can be said that for one to start a garage or work at someone's garage they must be well conversant with such technical skills.

Employability skills were emphasized in the program approach. This was seen in the fact that trainees who could not have mastered the skills by end of the training duration were given extra time to complete the training

... we add them like say 3 or 4 months until they get enough experience. What we do not want is to give the start-up kit to someone who is not yet ready to work. We do not want young ladies and boys to go with start-up kits and keep them at home. We want them to start working directly. We keep monitoring them after the start-up kit for like a year depending on the situation. Because we want everyone to be either self-employed or employed by other people.

A trainer mentioned that other strategies are devised to ensure that the trainees get a skillset that would enable them to get a job. In response to a follow-up question on what happens to trainees who fail to master skills by the end of the training, the artisan stressed that

... that learner would be retained and given a chance in another intake. And for me, I would note them and ask them what and where the problem is and what should we do? And then they would tell me that me now madam, I have totally failed this

fashion[style] but at least this one I can try and that one I am sure I can do. So I would encourage them to keep doing those fashions again for 6 months, at least it is better than nothing.

Such strategies are embedded in the NGO's goal of ensuring that the trainees acquire a set of skills that would enable them to not only find something to do but also be prepared for the challenges presented by the dynamic world. That is why the training integrated both technical/vocational and life/soft skills

... we train them on LifeSkills ... there is a way it shapes the youth - to know their trials, to know the challenges they go through, to know how to deal with the challenges, the expectations in life and to really prepare them to be ready for the training until they finish. So, the LifeSkills training helps them so much and they become resilient to the challenges.

This complementary nature of skillsets is a prerequisite for any vibrant VET program ( Asonitou & Hassall, 2019; Nugraha et al, 2016)

### **Role of competencies in active citizenship**

The ability to actively participate and engage in community affairs requires a certain set of skills. The skills highlighted as soft skills in table 5.7 are important to understand how the graduates contribute to community development through community engagement. As argued by Clarke & Missingham (2009), active citizens are a powerful force for 'good' change, and the focus on active citizenship by development actors will affect future development at the local, national, and regional levels. Analysis of study findings indicates that indeed some level of participation in community affairs and henceforth contributing to community development has been realized. This has been through taking part in forming and managing VSLAs, establishing micro-enterprises, and demanding rights.

As highlighted by one artisan,

... for them participating in community activities depends on them getting jobs and earn money, at least now we see they are now saving in groups, the village savings and loans associations at least they can save and at the end of the day they can manage.

The ability to take partake in savings groups can be said to have been enhanced by competencies such as knowledge of saving, interpersonal relationships, working in teams, survival skills among other soft skills. However, one cannot find money to save if they have no income. Therefore, the competencies in the various trades are equally important for providing opportunities for jobs and starting and managing micro-enterprises. Community engagement in terms of providing goods and services was seen in the transcript. One graduate highlighted that even though she had not gotten a job, and was working towards starting her business, she expressed happiness that the training provided her with confidence that she never had «... I could not envisage myself going to open markets or standing in front of people and speak, I could not do that. But now, I can do all that». The graduate also mentioned that she was training other fellow youth skills in sewing.

Active citizenship for some people relates to taking part in civic education, and democratic processes which this study did not delve much into. However, some graduates expressed having gained knowledge of human rights and empowerment which some used to demand what is rightfully theirs. For example, one graduate said that she had taken some defaulters to the local community leaders for redress.

### **The relevance of competencies in improving well-being**

Ideally, employability and active citizenship can be said to contribute to well-being. This assertion is based on the idea that employability skills and citizenship competencies create avenues for economic options and quality of life factors as seen in **Figure 3. 1**. Analysis of study findings attests to this notion as well.

Most responses regarding the benefits of the program indicate that the competencies graduates acquired have helped them contribute to the economic options dimension of measuring well-being (Housing, income and wealth, and work and job quality). It was reported that some graduates have constructed houses for their parents. One graduate narrated how she told her mother plans to build a permanent house and the mother could not take her seriously

... I told her by the end of the year I want us to construct a permanent house. She thought I was joking and started laughing at me. But I knew it was possible. I told her I was saving in the group and I have money there totalling to about a million [Uganda shillings] and we could borrow some more money since I work, I can be able to pay

back. She supported me and we did it and they were thanking me for it was my effort. Even the community members were surprised and asked where we got the money. They even started insinuating that we sold land, yet we did not. All this was my knowledge about and competence in sewing.

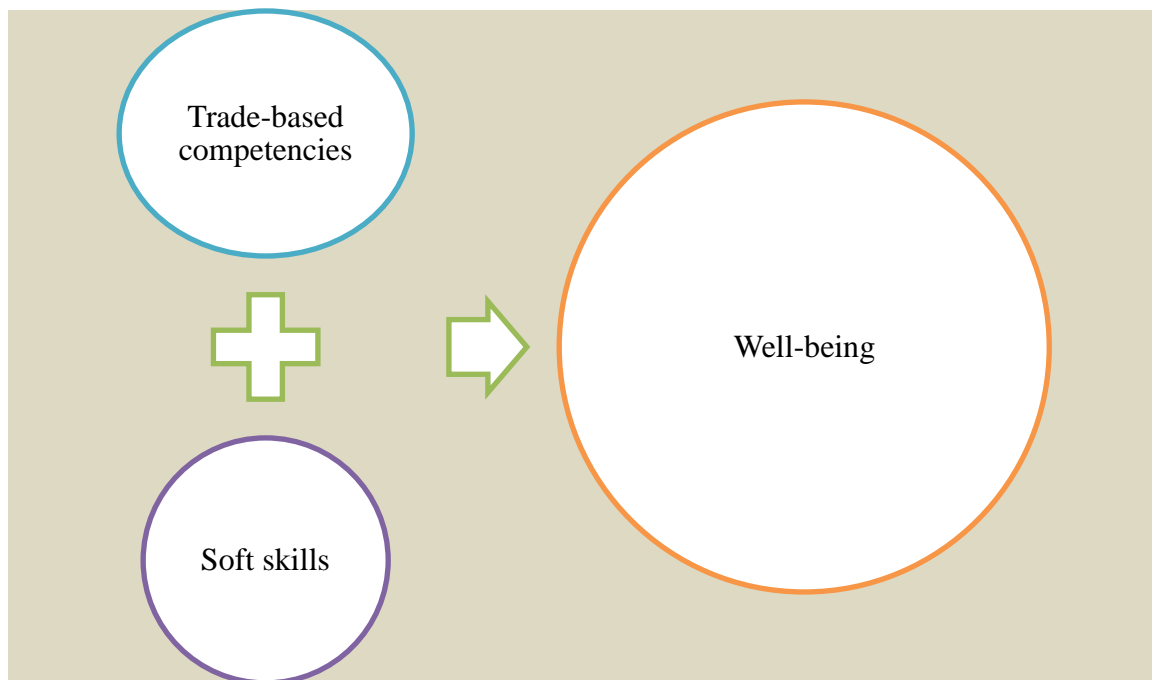
This graduate and others like her have not only helped improve themselves but also their households. And they act as examples to the rest of the unlucky youth who think they can not make it in life.

Another graduate whose competencies were put to use for the greater good of the community said, «... when I completed the training, I mobilized the youth, and we started a savings group. I invited someone from the organization who gave us more training and we started the group where I was elected chairperson». Such VSLAs formed by the youth themselves have according to responses helped the youth to save some money as well as borrow it for income-generating projects. These projects have in turn helped to make life easy for most group members. Some said that they have been able to buy land, help their family and community members which has improved their status in the community

... before the training, I could not express myself even in my family because I was ignorant. But now, even relatives run to me when they have problems or functions. They will call asking if can contribute or bail them out of a financial predicament. This makes me feel proud and important.

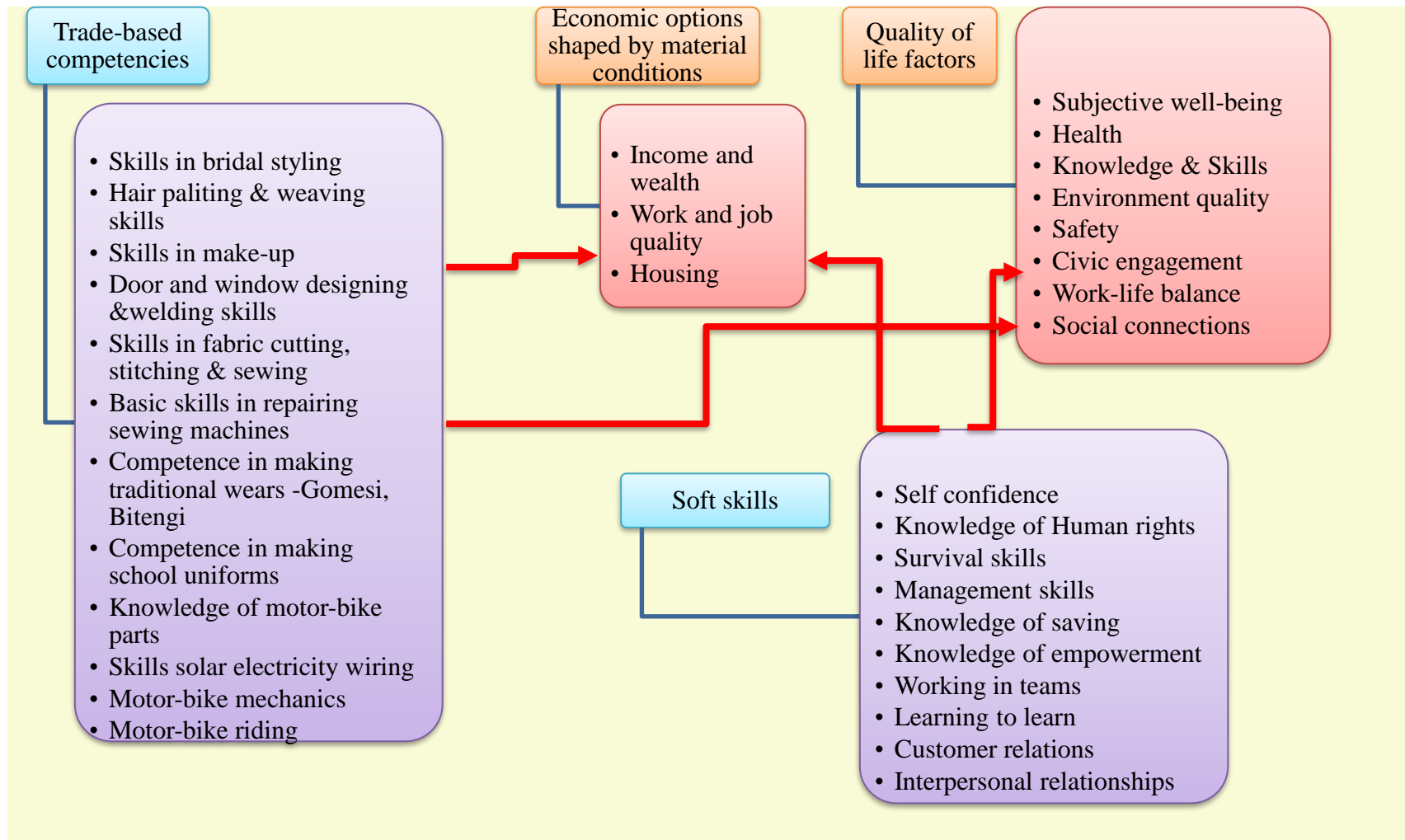
In summary, based on findings, it can be confirmed that the skills and competencies gained by the graduates are contributing to their well-being and the well-being of their households and the community at large. Drawing on the OECD well-being framework (see **Figure 3. 1**), it can be argued that the mix of competencies and soft skills, directly and indirectly, contribute to the different factors used to measure improved well-being as seen in **Figure 5. 1**. For a more nuanced figure, see figure 5.7

**Figure 5. 1: Relationship between competencies and improved well-being**



*Source: Researcher's construct*

It is not easy to separate the magnitude of either category of competence. What can be deduced is that both vocational/technical (trade-based) contribute immensely to one getting a job. The competence to produce however is not independent. One requires other life skills (soft skills ) to stay at a job or motivate his or customers to stay in the competitive market. Both categories of competencies are therefore key in improving the well-being of people.



**Figure 5. 2: Relationship between Competencies and improved well-being**

Source: Researcher's construction



## 5.7 The link between non-formal adult education and community development

The relationship between competencies and well-being forms the basis for understanding the role of NFAE in the development of communities. Based on the findings of this study, several links can be identified to explain the contribution of the NGO implemented program to the transformation of the beneficiaries, their households, and the immediate communities. **Table 5. 8** presents a summary of responses from the research participants on what they perceived as the effect of the program to them and the community.

The analysis of the findings on the perceived effect of the program was categorized under four subheadings – the graduate, the artisans, the community, and the NGO. Based on the list of competencies in figure 5.7, the graduates reported having had multiple opportunities in their lives. Those that got employed through retention by the trainers seem to have progressed much faster than those that went out to look for employment. Also, a few that had access to capital to supplement the start-up kit and start their workstations reported much more progress than those that are still struggling to find start-up capital. One key benefit the graduates highlighted was the ability to diversify their options. They argued that they have been able to create alternative sources of income

... before, I used to depend on the season. You spend three to four months waiting until harvest. That was hard. But now, I can be waiting as well as getting my essentials things. And by the way, I was training while my child was also at school. So now I do not struggle to find school fees for my child as I did before.

**Table 5. 8: Benefits of the NGO implemented program**

Category	Benefits
Graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment opportunities</li> <li>• Established micro-enterprises</li> <li>• Acquired household assets</li> <li>• Improved food production and food security</li> <li>• Achieved financial independence</li> <li>• Improved standard of living</li> <li>• Responsible living</li> <li>• Alternative sources of income</li> <li>• Opportunity for more training</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to family members</li> </ul>
Artisans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Increase in volume of business</li> <li>• Social connections</li> <li>• Wage earning</li> </ul>
The community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services extended nearer to the community</li> <li>• Reduced vices like stealing, prostitution, and early pregnancies</li> <li>• Reduced dependence burden on parents and guardians</li> </ul>
The NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracted more funders/donors</li> <li>• More livelihood projects established</li> <li>• Trained more youth – achieved the goal</li> <li>• Constructed a youth empowerment centre</li> </ul>

*Source: Field findings*

From **Table 5. 8**, it is observed that the program benefits were not only for graduates but also for other stakeholders. This finding corresponds to a UNESCO report that highlighted the individual and societal benefits of ALE in the areas of health, labour, and employment. While the findings cannot explicitly demarcate which benefits fall under health and labour, it can be argued that the highlighted benefits can contribute to improved health conditions. Besides, as mentioned one graduate, other benefits like increased incomes and asset stock can help ensure better health. Being there to take care of your people in the African context is considered a better social protection approach. One graduate narrated that she quit her job to take care of her sick mother “... I worked there for 7 months. The reason I left the job was that my mam got sick and there was nobody to take care of her. So, I had to come back home»

Another important observation is that graduates became aware of their needs. As seen in the program organization section, graduates were involved in assessing different things related to the training. While they could choose, this was after a thorough analysis of the ability to train, and the opportunities available for the job market. Such pieces of training organized in seminar form also provided them with skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship and business management. They were encouraged to form VSLAs which have since become avenues for

capital acquisition thereby business growth. This mindset change can be reflected in a quote like this one

... I started with nothing but now I have a shop for bitenge and I have things at home. I am transforming myself slowly. Secondly, I am in two groups where I save and can get a bigger loan. Before I would wait or beg for stuff like body lotions but now, I can afford these things myself. My life has transformed, and I thank the organization for that and for giving us start-up kits so we can start our businesses.

The ripple effects of the program have been seen as a lasting opportunity for the community. By the fact that the youth are becoming busy and concentrating on the new opportunities they have, the community has benefited in several ways. Some have started workstations, garages, salons in their communities hence extending services nearer. But what is perhaps the most important aspect of this is that the graduates are sharing their skills with other out-of-school youth. They are on their way to becoming 'master' artisans themselves. The NGO sees this as a sustainability strategy no wonder it was used as an exit strategy by the INGOs that were supporting the implementation of the program.

By and large, as Cox's (1998) community development pillars of awareness-raising, social mobilization, participation, self-reliance, and sustainability were seen at play in the NGO implemented program implementation. The benefits heightened also shows that across the four categories. To wrap up this chapter, and to place the findings into the theoretical framework, a conceptual framework suggested in this study is expanded (see figure 5.3) using the research findings. It explains that a non-formal adult education/training program, in this case, the NGO implemented program with its various components described in this study as trades are organized and delivered to trainees with supplementary pieces of training in soft skills. The framework does not show the model instead it highlights the skills and competencies acquired by the graduates. These competencies categorised under trade-based and soft skills can be taken as the capabilities in the theoretical framework espoused by Sen (2001). The CCA espoused by McGrath et al (2019) was included in the design and analysis of study findings although some of its elements are not catered for in the conceptual framework. Nonetheless, its tenet of conceptualizing work as not about gaining an income alone but also wider human needs is embedded in the soft skills and that lead to what the OECD termed as the quality of life factors in its framework for measuring well-being.

Well-being and livelihoods is another key component of the framework adopted in this study. It was noted that the competencies acquired are influential in helping graduates to get jobs and start micro-enterprises. These opportunities lead to what was analysed as program benefits. In the framework, the benefits were distilled and contextualised into the livelihood assets and well-being measures. According to findings, jobs and micro-enterprises fetch lots of benefits which contribute to improving the well-being of the graduates, their households members, and the community at large. Some of these benefits can as well lead to enhancing other competencies. For example, this study found out that a graduate used her acquired knowledge and inspiration to go for another course to learn extra skills. This kind of scenario is the reason the framework has no single component independent of itself. There is an interconnectedness between the components. Community development is in the centre because all other components feed into it.

Figure 5. 3: Understanding the link between non-formal adult education and community development



Source: Researcher's construct

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary

The overarching question of this study was ‘what role does NFAE play in community development? Taking a case of the NGO implemented program, the study set out to answer four specific questions. This chapter, therefore, presents the researcher’s insights into what the study found out. The presentation thus is structured following the research questions. the chapter also presents some new insights and proposes recommendations for policy considerations and further research.

First, the study gathered quite a lot of data concerning the background information. In a bid to understand the nature of the program beneficiaries, the study assessed the causes of their dropping out of school. The results revealed that the most common cause of school dropout in the region is poverty. But other confounding factors exacerbate the problem. The problem of poverty and its related consequences (school dropout) was the major reason for starting the NGO implemented program to mitigate the consequences of poverty as well as provide the school dropouts with occupational and soft skills.

Secondly, the study established that the content of the program is embedded in the various trades that are common in the district and the region as a whole. The most common trades are tailoring and hairdressing and the majority of the trainees are girls. The study found out that the program designers were keen on embedding participatory practices and principles. The trainees, for example, are allowed to choose which trade to undertake based on the market analysis and the ability of the trainee to do the training. It was important to note that besides trades, the trainees were given other courses concerning life skills which were organized in seminar approach. The graduates expressed a lot of enthusiasm about those seminars and commended the NGO for them.

The program uses an affordable yet effective mode of training that has been informally practised centuries. The model uses experienced and knowledgeable artisans chosen from the community where the trainees live. The methods used in the training are therefore hands-on with a demonstration as the most common. Trainees watch and learn what the artisan is doing and later practice what they have seen being done. However, before they commence with

vigorous ‘watching and learning’ they are first prepared and taken through the basics of the specific trades. It was noted that the NGO provides learning materials to ease training but also to mitigate the causes of dropping out again if parents or guardians were asked to part with heavy training costs. Also, successful trainees are given start-up kits. The goal is to encourage graduates to start micro-enterprises but also finding employment.

The other issue the study examined was the kind of competencies the graduates acquired from the training. It was revealed that occupational competences and soft skills were gained although as mentioned earlier, the soft skills were more appraised. This revelation was quite noteworthy as the current studies on VET are encouraging emphasizing these skills because they contribute to enhancing critical capabilities many see as an empowering tool for vulnerable groups.

The competencies were then analysed for their role in improving well-being a concept that was used as a parameter for community development. It was revealed in the findings that well-being is improved by the ability to get a job or start an income-generating venture which both translates into assets acquisition, and meeting the rest of the basic needs. While active citizenship was also used in the analysis little was found out about it. What was close to active citizenship was basically what families do. most graduates hinted on being more engaged with their family members. Only one participant seemed to have realised that she must ‘fight’ for what belongs to her when she mentioned taking community members defaulting her.

The study’s adoption of capability approach (CA) and critical capability approach (CCA) as theoretical lenses influenced the design of the study and analysis of findings. While the CA was more influential in the analysis of the trade-based competencies, the CCA was vital for soft skills. It was revealed that graduates received much critical awareness of themselves and their environment when they were attending the seminars.

By and large, to answer the research question, the assessment indicated that there is a somewhat degree of contribution by an NFAE program to community development. It is however curtailed by the lack of enough capital available for graduates. The findings revealed that whereas the NGO was providing start-up kits, they could not immediately start using them because they needed extra capital to start their micro-enterprises. They, therefore, end up waiting on the mercy of those with opportunities to hire them. This further

exacerbates the problem of unemployment and underemployment which are, again, contributing to poverty.

## **6.2 Recommendations for policy considerations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

Development actors taking the approach of VET must ensure that graduates are supported with enough initial capital to start enterprising instead of looking for a job which is never decent in the African context. Start-up kit in form of equipment that is not enough to start a viable micro-enterprise is not helping. To achieve this, a collaboration between actors could increase the financial standing needed for meaningful start-up.

The use of ‘master’ artisans as trainers is exceptional. They have had enough experience in the field and provide hands-on training. The formal VET schools and colleges could consider partnering with such people in communities. The collaboration could then lead to a community-based research hub where formal VET schools/colleges can take their students for projects and improve on their skill set to supplement the largely theory-based curriculum. The collaboration could also act as a tool for awareness-raising among the community members who view VET as the last resort for those who have failed at making it to the straight education pathways. Yet graduates trained by the ‘master’ artisans have far more practical vocational and technical competences than the graduates from the formal VET schools

Literature review revealed that the European Union has over the years taken a keen interest in the competencies the citizenry must possess for them to live better in a globalized world. policy instruments have been provided and resolutions made on particular issues. This sense of direction is lacking in many African countries. Uganda has put much emphasis on the formal VET and NFAE for those that have not been able to go to school due to war and other causes. There is, therefore, need for realizing that NFAE programs especially the ones with VET component are crucial for everyone, not just the out-of-school youth. The African Union could perhaps rethink the ALE strategy and emphasize the VET component for the growing number of youth who are not finding jobs even with degrees. Transforming communities with practical competencies would go a long way.

Government programs aimed at supporting the youth with incentives to start income-generating ventures could adopt the methodology used by the NGO – involve the intended



beneficiaries in a rigorous needs assessment to identify what the youth can do best. Relatedly, local governments can collaborate with local NGOs to do the needs assessment.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further research**

From the findings, it was noted that many trainees do not master the competencies required in time of the training duration. Given the fact that the artisans run their businesses during the training, it could be that sometimes training is not given the seriousness it deserves. An ethnography study on the artisanal model could bring such issues to the light.

This study did not have the opportunity to observe the graduates which could have been very helpful in triangulating their views with their real-life in their real environment. A study combining interviews and observation and covering the wider community (including community members in the sample) would depict a bigger picture when it comes to wider benefits of the program.

Relatedly, this study adopted the CA and CCA as its theoretical foundations. Another study using the sustainable livelihood framework could provide more insights into the importance of such programs. Or, using the experiential learning theory to understand the nitty-gritty of the learning and training using the artisanal model.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview guide for NGO staff**

### **a. Biodata**

- i. Name .....
- ii. Gender .....
- iii. Age .....
- iv. Marital status.....
- v. Level of education .....
- vi. Designation .....

### **b. About the program**

- i. What inspired the NGO to come up with this program? Which philosophy informs this program?
- ii. What are the key elements/components of the program?
- iii. What key competencies does the program instil in the trainees?
- iv. As a development NGO, how would you describe the approach the program uses?
- v. In your view, how is the program relevant to achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals? which SDGs would you say the program addresses?

### **c. The artisan**

- i. Why is the program hinged on the artisan?
- ii. What kind of arrangement does the NGO have with the artisans
- iii. What happens if there is a disagreement between the trainee(s) and the artisan?
- iv. How does the NGO monitor the training process?

### **d. The trainees**

- i. Take me through the process of identifying and recruiting the trainees
- ii. How does the NGO prepare trainees for training? And what is expected of them?
- iii. What relationship does the NGO have with the program graduates?

### **e. Benefits and challenges of the programs**

- i. What would you say have been the benefits of the program to:
  - The trainees
  - The artisans
  - The NGO
  - The community



- ii. What challenges has the NGO met in implementing the program? And how has it addressed them?
- iii. What is the future of the program moving forward?

**Thank you for taking part in this study**

## Appendix 2: Interview guide for artisans

### a. Biodata

- vii. Name .....
- viii. Gender .....
- ix. Age .....
- x. Marital status .....
- xi. Level of education .....
- xii. Occupation.....
- xiii. Sub-county .....

### b. Involvement in the program

- vi. How long have you been doing this occupation? And how long have you been associated with the NGO?
- vii. Take me through how you came to be one of the implementors of the program
- viii. Briefly, how do you gain from both the trainees and the NGO?

### c. The training

- v. The training is based on what you do at your workshop/workstation, how do you prepare the trainees for learning?
- vi. What and how do you plan for the trainee(s)?
- vii. How do you evaluate the learning process?
- viii. What happens when the training period ends before the trainee(s) have mastered the skills?
- ix. Which competencies do you expect trainees to have acquired by the end of the training period?

### d. The program relevance

- iv. In your view, how relevant is the training to the trainee(s) in terms of:
  - Finding work opportunities
  - Participating in community activities
  - Standard of living
- v. What challenges do you see hindering the program and how would you advise to deal with them?

**Thank you for your time and for taking part in this study**

### Appendix 3: Interview guide for program graduates

#### a. Biodata

- xiv. Name (optional) .....
- xv. Gender .....
- xvi. Age .....
- xvii. Level of education .....
- xviii. Year of training .....
- xix. Area/theme of training .....
- xx. Sub-county .....

#### b. The motivation for joining an NGO implemented program

- ix. What were you doing before joining the program?
- x. How did you learn about the program?
- xi. How did you join the program?

#### c. The training

- x. What kind of training did you acquire?
- xi. How were you prepared for the training?
- xii. Briefly take me through the training process, how was the training conducted?
- xiii. How did the training affect your daily routine?
- xiv. What special knowledge and skills did you learn from the training?
- xv. How long did the training take and what happened after you finished the training?

#### d. The relevance of the program

- vi. How do you relate the knowledge and skills you acquired to the following?
  - Your chances of getting a job
  - Your ability to start your own enterprise
  - Your ability to take part in community affairs
  - Your standard of living
- vii. Would you recommend the program to others? Explain your response, please
- viii. What challenges did you encounter while in the program? What would be your advice to deal with them?

**Thank you for your time and for taking part in this study**