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Career Preparation and Progression for the Institute of Adult Education Graduates in Tanzania: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This paper presents a follow-up survey on the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) bachelor degree graduates from 2019 to 2023 academic years, assessing their career preparation and progression in Tanzania. As a public institution mandated to provide adult and non-formal education (ANFE) programmes in Tanzania, IAE must evaluate its programmes to ensure they meet occupational demands. A quantitative research method was employed, using a self- administered questionnaire to gather data on graduates' career readiness, professional growth and leadership development at the workplace. Stratified sampling with probability proportional to size (pps) was adopted in determining the number of female and male participants, such that a big group have big contribution in the sample size. The questionnaires were sent to 607 (236 males and 371 females) participants via their email address and WhatsApp. Only 241 questionnaires (female =139 and male =102) were returned, giving a response rate of 40%. The 241 respondents exceeded the minimum sample size of n=235 required to represent the entire population for this study. Data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS version 21. The findings revealed that graduates were satisfied with their education and had achieved their goals. 90% of the respondents stated that IAE prepared them well for employment while 80% were satisfied with earning their bachelor degree. Additionally, 64% reported that their current job positions aligned with their career exceptions, and 74.2% found a strong match between their occupational aspirations and available job opportunities. The graduates rated highly their overall learning experience, and the quality of IAE programmes whereas over three-quarters (80%) believed that they had been empowered to become leaders with the highest degree of ethical

integrity and social responsibility. Given the importance of quality education, this study highlights the need for IAE to extend its focus beyond employment preparation by equipping graduates with additional skills, knowledge and values to support Tanzania's industrialization goal and economic advancement.

Keywords: *Career, preparation, progression, graduates, Tanzania*

Introduction

Despite the notably achievements of the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) in designing and implementing quality adult and continuing education and training programmes, resulting into an increased number of graduates, inadequate follow-up study has been carried out to see how IAE graduates are performing in their career, and whether they are able to navigate the world of work. Currently, IAE offers two bachelor degree programmes namely; Bachelor degree in Adult and Continuing Education (BACE), and Bachelor degree in Adult Education and Community Development (BAECD) with a total number of 607 graduates in which 79 and 548 students completed their bachelor degree programmes in the two programmes respectively from 2019-2023.

As Tanzania strives to improve the skills and employability of its people, many authors argue that it is very important to develop a "place-based curriculum" which matches the reality that graduates will face, and produce people who are equipped to address the needs of the society, both materially and spiritually (URT, 2024; UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2003). For education to be an emancipation tool for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation in Tanzania, IAE strives to ensure that its programmes produce skilled and knowledgeable graduates who are able to think independently, synthesize their skills and knowledge and critically analyse the input, process and learning outcomes of education that are needed for the knowledge economy in the 21st century (IAE, 2024; URT, 2023; IAE, 2020a&b).

In line with the sustainable development goals-2030 and the Five-Year National Development Plan 2020/2021-2025/2026, IAE has incorporated national priorities in its curriculum covering the sectors of education, health, environment and agriculture, especially the latter, as it impacts the lives of majority of Tanzanians living in rural areas. It is crucial for the learning process to focus on realistic outcomes rather than idealistic; thereby failing to deal with the situation existing in the day-to-day teaching and learning world (IAE, 2020a). Addressing national skills and employability gaps calls for strengthening of teaching and research

capabilities of academic institutions to provide graduates with the new knowledge, information and skills. These competences are essential for sustainable development, and achievement of the national development vision of 2025 and the upcoming 2050 development vision while maintaining the middle-income status (URT 2024; URT 1999; URT, 2017). Therefore, this study sought to assess the career preparation and progression of IAE bachelor degree graduates, examining whether the programmes prepared them for employment and leadership roles within 1-5 of graduation.

Methodology

The participants in this study were 607 (371 females and 236 male) IAE graduates of the BAECD, or BACE programmes from 2019-2023 who met the study criteria. The researchers utilized the bachelor degree information files to identify them all. The survey was developed and sent to the female and male graduates via email or WhatsApp between September and December, 2023, with an introductory note explaining the purpose of the survey and encouraging their participation. The sample size required for this study was n= 235. This was computed based on the 0.05 margin of error, p=0.5 and Z=1.97 (Bartlet et al, 2001). The 241 responses make a good representation of the entire population. The stratified sampling with probability proportional to size (pps) was adopted to identify the number of female and male participants. The researchers expected to collect data from144 females and 91 males, but due to reasons beyond the researchers' control, we managed to collect data from 139 females and 102 males (n=241), which is not deviated too much from the actual sample size required of n=235).

A survey consisted of 24 questions dealing with the three main constructs of career preparation, career progression, and leadership development. The construct of career preparation dealt with graduates' level of academic preparation and the competencies acquired. The construct of career progression related to the level of employability and job-related demands, and leadership development related to how graduates felt about their ability to function effectively and competitively as leaders in and outside their work settings. To ensure validity and reliability of a survey the following issues were considered:

1. The pilot study was conducted with a small sample (n=44) randomly selected in order to identify issues concerning survey questions and the methodology.
2. Continuously revise the survey and interview questions based on feedback from the pilot study (participants) and experts in the field.

3. Clear and concise instructions were provided to participants to minimize misunderstandings and errors
4. The Cronbach's alpha was computed for all the three constructs and the values found to be between 0.7 and 0.8 which is acceptable range.

The collected data were analysed quantitatively by descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS version 21. The descriptive statistics produced the frequency distribution table for the social and demographic variables, as well as the mean and standard deviations for the scales of the three constructs, namely; career preparation, career progression and leadership development. The inferential statistics was used to test the significance of the pair-wise correlations between the scales of the aforementioned three constructs. An independent t-test was also conducted to compare the significance of the average score of the three constructs by sex (male versus female graduates) to identify whether they were the same or different.

A further comparison was done between graduates who are employed and those who are not. Each test was given a type I error rate of 5 percent.

Findings

Social and Demographic Information

The first eight questions in the survey centred on obtaining demographic information from the respondents. Their ages ranged from 20 to 55, with a mean age of 29.4. Given the fact that the respondents represented graduates of IAE with one up to five years since graduation from 21 regions of Tanzania mainland, and whose ages differ at graduation; these appear to be a representative sample of graduates.

The majority of respondents (86%) had been employed before joining bachelor degree programmes at IAE. This is an added advantage for IAE as the unemployment rate climbs as high as 30.8 percent among university graduates due to the short demand by the labour market for those who are highly skilled (ILO, 2014).

Several features of the respondents deserve a mention. The majority were full-time teachers in public schools (77%), and predominately females (57%). This may reflect the characteristics of the target population, in that the majority of graduates (57%) over the past five years were female. It is worth noting that the public sector accounts for 33.7 percent of total formal employment, mostly in public

administration and education, due to graduates' perception of its stability and benefits (ibid).

Tables 1-4 provide descriptive information about the sample that returned the survey instruments in this study.

Table 1: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	102	42
Female	139	58
Total	**241**	**100**

Source: SPSS data output

A reasonable distribution of returns was attained by graduation year (See table 2)

Table 2: Respondents' year of graduation

Year graduated	Frequency	Valid Percent
2019	21	9
2020	18	7
2021	49	20
2022	74	31
2023	79	33
Total	**241**	**100**

Source: SPSS data output

7 out of 10 respondents reported working as full-time educators in public schools (77%), 1 out of 10 reported working as school administrators, and 0.5% of graduates reported having quitted the teaching profession (not teaching). The data on employment status are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Employment status of respondents

Employment status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Full-time teachers	177	74
School Administrators	29	12
Not Teaching	4	2
Other	29	12
Total	**239**	**100**

Source: SPSS data output

Table 4 indicates that more than a half of the respondents (57%) reported their occupational level as being primary school teachers, followed by secondary school teachers (22%) and heads of schools (17%). As more years of graduate that follow-up data are collected, it will be increasingly possible to disaggregate by programme. At this point (2023), it is probably expeditious to produce separate reports for BACE and BAECD.

Table 4: Current position/title of respondents

Position	Frequency	Valid Percent
Primary school teacher	131	54
Secondary school teacher	55	24
Heads of schools (Administrators)	34	14
Education officers (Administrators)	13	5
Nursery school teachers	8	3
Total	**241**	**100**

Source: SPSS data output

Career Preparation

The survey was interested in learning about graduates' experience of being at IAE, their reasons for choosing IAE, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and their objectives in terms of advancing their career. Experience of IAE is defined as students' involvement in academics and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including student organizations, para-professional roles, sports and games, as well as engaging with the IAE community.

The construct of career preparation sought to find out what IAE graduates gained in terms of knowledge and skills pertaining to their career. The majority of graduates (99.5%) decided to study at IAE because they believed its curriculum would help to develop their career and enable them to function better in their workplaces. Over the past five years, only 0.5% of graduates were automatically selected by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) to join the IAE's bachelor programmes. It is worth mentioning that the majority of graduates acknowledged IAE's wide experience in equipping graduates with the competencies that employers expect of new bachelor degree holders. Their practical field experiences, the "student teaching programme" was extremely valuable to the majority of learners (90%) because it enabled them to reflect on what they had learned in the class, thus, improved their performance and contributed to develop their career.

It is heartening that the majority of the respondents appreciated that IAE lecturers and other staff were approachable and helpful. More than three-quarters of the respondents (86%) shared what was expressed by one female graduate who felt she had a good relationship with many lecturers and could utilize their skills and knowledge. She commented that the lecturers understand and use formal and informal assessment strategies to ensure the continuing intellectual, social and physical development of learners. The statements below describe the extent to which the respondents rated their experience of IAE.

Table 5: Responses on all individual items on career preparation (descending order by percent satisfied/agreed level- Strongly Agree=4, strongly Disagree=1)

Statement	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of satisfaction/agreement
Satisfaction with my bachelor's degree	234	1.6	0.5	99%
Quality of bachelor's degree	234	1.5	0.5	98%
Adequate training for work	231	1.4	0.5	95%
Relevance of curriculum	239	1.4	0.6	95%
Preparation for further education	229	1.9	0.1	94%
Competitiveness of IAE bachelor's degree	213	1.9	0.9	79%

Source: SPSS data output

A large number of respondents indicated that some improvements are to be made on key areas of the programmes delivery with the exception of the curriculum, which over a half of the respondents indicated no needed improvement, as it can be seen in Table 6. However, due to the wind of change in education as far as the Tanzania Education Policy of 2014 (version 2023) and the need to update its curriculum to respond to national demands, a review of the curriculum and development of IAE programmes are in the final stages of approval.

Table 6: Responses on Programme Delivery Improvement in Descending Order (Substantial improvement 3; Some improvement 2; No improvement 3)

Statement	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of agreement
Some improvements are needed in instructors' competencies	234	1.9	0.4	82%
Some improvements are needed in teaching and learning environment	227	1.9	0.4	81%
Some improvements are needed in instructors' commitment to quality delivery	234	1.9	0.4	81%
Some improvements are needed to increase opportunities for practical school	234	2.0	0.5	79%
Some improvements are needed in content knowledge (theory)	234	1.9	0.5	78%
Some improvements are needed in instructional delivery methods	234	2.5	0.5	62%
Some improvements are needed in language level and textbooks	237	2.5	0.6	58%
No improvement is needed in curriculum	235	2.5	0.6	56%

Source: SPSS data output

Career Progression

With regard to the career progression of IAE graduates, more than a half (64%) of the respondents indicated that their positions in their career were close to what they hoped for, while almost three-quarters (71.5%) reported that their current positions do require them to have a degree.

The findings further revealed that 74.2% of teacher respondents indicated that they are teaching the subjects that they specialized at IAE, revealing a good match between graduates' occupational aspirations and existing employment opportunities. However, in a few cases, the respondents commented that their specialization limited them from taking advantage of wider employment opportunities or from being able to switch professions. This can be attributed by the fact that the IAE bachelor programmes for primary (55%) and secondary school teachers (26%) are confined to their respective disciplines.

A large number of respondents (93%) were able to identify areas where they had seen professional growth and took advantage of, while actively "owning" and managing their careers.

Table 7: Responses on Career Progression in Descending Order (Strongly Agree =4, Strongly Disagree =1)

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	% Some form of agreement/achievements
Degree of effectiveness in the work/job performance	1.6	0.5	98
Employers' satisfaction	1.6	0.6	95
Current job/position satisfaction	1.6	0.5	94
Ability to identify areas of professional growth, take advantage of opportunities and manage career	1.7	0.6	93
Employment flexibility in the area of specialization	1.8	0.9	75
Subject specialization	1.3	0.4	74
Bachelor's degree requirement for the current position	1.3	0.5	72
Ability to get a job/adjust to existing one	1.9	0.9	69
Closeness between the position and career aspirations	2.2	1.2	64
Continuation with further education	1.9	0.3	8.7

Source: SPSS data output

Leadership Development

Table 8 shows graduates' responses in descending order on how IAE helped them to develop leadership traits in general. The majority believed that attending IAE programmes improved their critical thinking and problem-solving skills (97%), oral/written communication skills (90%), collaboration/teamwork skills (91%) and digital technology skills (83%). Over three-quarters of the respondents stated that they gained leadership skills (87%) whereas (92%) increased their work ethic professionalism.

Table 8: Responses on Leadership Development in Descending Order (Strongly agree=4, Strongly disagree=1)

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of satisfaction
Critical thinking/problem solving	1.7	0.44	97%
Professionalism (work ethic)	1.5	0.58	92%
Teamwork/Collaboration	1.8	0.48	91%
Oral/written communication	1.1	0.41	90%
Leadership skills	1.5	0.46	87%
Digital technology (use of computers, etc.)	1.8	0.66	83%

Source: SPSS data output

Correlation and Scale of Constructs

Table 9 shows the correlation between each of the constructs. The findings indicate a weak positive pair-wise correlation between the three constructs as the values approach zero. The coefficient of correlation between career preparation and leadership development was 0.1164, with p=0.0950.

With regard to career preparation and career progression, the coefficient correlation was 0.0122 with p=0.8619 while the coefficient of correlation between leadership development and career progression was 0.0962 with p=0.1679. This indicates the conceptual and statistical inter-dependence of the constructs measured. In each case, the correlation coefficients are statistically insignificant and are treated as equal to zero because p>0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the degree of closeness between the three constructs is weak but positive as they all move in the same direction.

Table 9: Correlation matrix & reliability analysis

Construct Number	Constructs	C1	C2	C3	α
C1	Career preparation q14, q16, q17, q18	1.000			0.681
C2	Career Progression q20a-q20h	0.0122^{NS}	1.000		0.901
C3	Leadership dev q21-q27	0.1164^{NS}	0.0962^{NS}	1.000	0.723

NS-The correlation coefficient is not statistically significant at α=5% (p-value>0.05), ***α=*** *Cronbach's Alpha*

Independent t-test

A comparison was also made between female and male graduates in all three constructs, namely; career preparation, leadership development and career progression. Of all the three constructs, only career progression was seen to be statistically significant at 5% level [t (190) =-2.802, p=0.006, d=0.18889]. The construct of career preparation comparing female and male graduates is statistically insignificant [t (204) =0.226, p=0.821, d=0.0171], and leadership development [t (182) =-1.913, p=.0.057, d=0.07198]. This means that there are no differences between female and male graduates in terms of career preparation and socially related leadership development.

Table 10: Independent t-test for the equality of means of the constructs based on sex of respondents

Construct	t-test for Equality of Means (male and female)						
	t	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% CI of the Difference**	
Career preparation	.226	204.771	.821	.01709	.07558	-.13193	.16612
Career progression	-2.802	190.896	.006	-.18889	.06742	-.32187	-.05590
Leadership development	-1.913	182.608	.057	-.07198	.03763	-.14623	.00227

Note: Equal variance not assumed

A further comparison was made between employed and unemployed graduates in all constructs. In terms of career preparation, the test showed a significant difference between employed and unemployed graduates [t (45) =-6.197, p=0.000, d=0.5473]. The graduates who were unemployed (M=2.208) showed that they were better prepared for a career than their employed counterparts (M=1.66). For the other constructs of career progression [t (41) =1.955, p=0.057, d=0.1785), and leadership development [t (-2.44), p=0.809, d=0.1275), both tests showed to be statistically insignificant at 5% level. This means that there is no difference between employed and unemployed graduates in terms of career progression and leadership development.

Table 11: Independent t-test for the average score of the scale of constructs by employment status

Constructs	t-test for Equality of Means (employment status)						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Career preparation	-6.197	45.542	.000	-.54732	.08832	-.72514	-.36949
Career progression	1.955	41.102	.057	.17846	.09131	-.00592	.36284
Leadership development	-.244	39.799	.809	-.01275	.05232	-.11851	.09301

A further comparison was made between graduates who are primary school teachers and those who teach in secondary schools. All three constructs of career preparation [t (73) =-0.199, p=0.843, d=0.0207], career progression [t (71) =-0.381, p=0.704, d=0.0364] and leadership development [t (84) =-0.711, p=0.479, d=0.0335] showed insignificant differences between primary and secondary school teachers at 5% level. This suggests that career preparation and progression as well as leadership development do not depend on the level of school at which someone teaches. The mean scores for the constructs of career preparation, career progression, and leadership development were 1.766, 1.666 and 1.609 for secondary school teachers, and 1.746, 1.6293 and 1.5752 for primary school teachers. Although the differences were insignificant, the mean scores indicate that secondary school teachers were better prepared career-wise, progressed better, and developed more leadership skills than primary school teachers.

Table 12: Independent t-test for the average score of the scale of constructs by occupation level

Constructs	t-test for Equality of Means (Primary-secondary school teachers)						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Career preparation	-.199	73.432	.843	-.02065	.10385	-.22761	.18631
Career progression	-.381	71.299	.704	-.03641	.09563	-.22707	.15425
Leadership development	-.711	84.862	.479	-.03354	.04717	-.12732	.06024

Future contacts

All the respondents were glad to be in contact and network with IAE in one way or another, and showed great interest in enhancing an Alumni Association by providing the Institute with their contact details.

Discussion

In this era of the internationalization of education curricula and systems, IAE has continued to ensure that its teaching forces are motivated and capable of equipping graduates with competencies in how curricula should be adapted to meet the demands of the knowledge economy and real world of work. IAE has proven to respond to this demand as large number of respondents (98%) reported that they had become more effective in their current jobs using the skills they had acquired, and had been given a high rating by their employer for their performance at work; which is similar to other studies that highlighted teachers' commitment and their ability to improve the quality of teaching and students' learning outcomes (Mnubi, 2018; Mkumbo, 2012).

The Tanzania Education and Training Policy of 2014 (version of 2023) highlights the urgent need to recruit, train, deploy and retain an adequate number of qualified and motivated male and female teaching force (URT, 2023). In line with this policy, although the majority of respondents (94%) agreed that IAE degree programmes prepared them well for continuing with further education, a few (8.7%) only pursued further education due to financial constraints and competing social and family priorities. As large percentage of those who pursued further post graduate education (70%) were pushed into it by the rise in wages and the chance of obtaining a stable job.

Young leaders are powerful change agents and the greatest country's asset in Tanzania and the rest of African countries, but they are not given enough opportunities or support to enable them to take up responsible leadership positions and be involved in socio-economic development. The African Union and United Republic of Tanzania define youth as a person aged 15-35. According to census data, more than 75 percent of Tanzanians are under 35 (URT, 2022), a similar age to this study with a mean age of 29.4. Therefore, IAE needs to empower its students with leadership skills and ensure that they possess the highest degree of ethical leadership with integrity which will enable them to tackle Tanzania's major challenge of poverty, socio-economic instability and irresponsible leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Many studies have identified achievements, prospects and challenges that academic institutions face in relation to the quality and relevance of their programmes, employability of graduates, preparation of students for the transition from school to the world of work, as well as responding to the needs of the community (Kibona, 2024; ILO, 2014; World Bank, 2002). This study has provided solid evidence that IAE is dealing with these challenges while advancing its graduates' career development. A great number of graduates reported that they were satisfied with the quality of training they had received while studying their bachelor degrees. Therefore, IAE proves to be a good training ground in terms of graduates being equipped with academic qualifications and leadership skills since majority of them were progressing well in their careers. In addition, graduates had received a good quality education, their skills had been developed and they had acquired the competencies, attitudes and values that would make them responsible and productive members in the society as emphasized by other research findings and documents, including the World Bank, CCM manifesto 2020 and the Education and Training Policy of 2014 (version of 2023); which are central for realizing the sustainable development goals and reducing poverty while promoting social well-being among Tanzanians.

Based on the findings and the given importance to higher learning institutions in Tanzania to provide high quality education, this study highlights the need for graduate teachers to be exposed to teaching and learning strategies/philosophies other than the traditional rote learning methods, and to behaviour management strategies when teaching students with challenging behaviour or those who are disabled. IAE teaching force should consider encouraging more use of interactive approaches to teaching and learning such as; discussions, debates, brainstorming and projects, to produce new ideas and encourage creative thinking, which are little utilized.

IAE should invest more in teaching and learning facilities and materials. The ongoing efforts to improve access to adult education in Tanzania in which there is a growing demand need to be matched by the efforts to produce graduates exhibiting creativity and independent thinking.

IAE should consider using Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) more than it does as a means for enabling acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes as it was noted that ICT was hardly used by the lecturers.

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