

Reskilling and Upskilling Students towards A Better Future

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost all countries including Mauritius and has caused a sharp rise in unemployment and underemployment. Many employees have lost their jobs or been made redundant due to the pandemic. To counter this situation, the Human Resource Development Council, Mauritius in conjunction with the Open University of Mauritius has empowered adults through an upskilling and reskilling course. The purpose of this study is therefore to analyse the learning experiences of learners and perceived satisfaction of the course and to determine whether they have been able to acquire new skills or upgrade their current skills through reskilling and upskilling. This study is of a quantitative nature and an online structured questionnaire has been used to collect data from four (4) cohorts which have successfully completed the course. The findings indicate that reskilling and upskilling were effective and learners were very satisfied with the course. They also had a positive opinion about the course and some of them have been able to upgrade their skills while others have acquired new skills. It can also be observed that they were more satisfied with the Office Skills module. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the respondents have proposed IT skills as an additional skill they might need in the future, to empower themselves. This can be considered while updating the course or by developing a course dedicated to IT skills which learners can apply in their respective workplace.

KEYWORDS: Reskilling, Upskilling, learner experiences, learner satisfaction, lifelong learning

INTRODUCTION

“Learning leads to knowledge creation and skill development not only to progress in life but also to survive and compete” (Umasankar and Padmavathy, 2020, pg. 503).

In 2018, the McKinsey Global Institute published a report, revealing that many people will lose their jobs and there will be an increase in automation of the workforce by 2030. People would have to either acquire new skills or switch occupations. However, no one predicted that the Covid-19 would have affected the whole world and disrupted the global workforce. We are indeed in the VUCA world which stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous and the Covid-19 has worsened the situation and made the environment more complex (Ashokan and Sagayaraj, 2022). Furthermore, this has given rise to the new normal with elements like flexibility, openness and cohesion (Krawczynska-Zaucha, 2019). While many employees have become jobless, others have adopted a more flexible approach to work, that is, work from home. Those who have lost their jobs, will have to learn new skills or upgrade their skills in order to adapt to the various challenges arising in the VUCA world. As stated by Ashokan and Sagayaraj (2022), there is a need to learn new skills and digital skills in order to adapt to the new normal.

The pandemic has affected both the professional and personal lifestyles in terms of emotional stress, economic damage and psychological issues (Kamruzzaman, 2021). Many businesses were also affected by the pandemic and some of them had to close down due to financial crisis. These resulted in many businesses to lay off their workers. In some cases, workers were laid off temporarily and, in most cases, it was a permanent situation (Saxena, 2023). Ando et al. (2022) added that young and low-skilled employees with temporary employment were more affected. The authors further mentioned that many strategies could aid those people to search for new jobs in the same or new sectors. The strategies used could be in the form of subsidies and wage loss insurance and since the problems of skill-mismatch could occur, there is a need to reskill and upskill the workforce for those who may have difficulties in finding a new job. Those people could be provided with adapted educational and vocational programmes to support them in having new skills or upgrading their current skills.

According to Sasmita and Kumar (2018), nowadays, organisations are looking for a workforce who possess several skills such as decision making, problem solving, collaboration and technology. For authors like Yaseen et al. (2022), due to the damage caused by the pandemic, there is a need for organisations and governments to invest in reskilling and upskilling their employees so that they can adapt to the new changing environment. Therefore, reskilling and upskilling programs should be designed and adapted in order to foster continuous growth and development. While designing reskilling and upskilling programs, several considerations should be taken such as new technological advancements and unforeseen changes, for example, the pandemic. According to Doherty and Stephens (2021), these programs should include shorter and faster learning and experiential training in order to cater

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for the changes happening in the world.

As mentioned by Taylor et al. (2021), there is a need to upskill and reskill the unemployed through various programs to equip them with the relevant employability skills and the higher educational institutions should collaborate to deliver these types of programmes. The authors also emphasized on the fact that universities have the capabilities to produce talents and to develop particular courses for future skills development. Mahboubi and Mokaya (2021) mentioned that the government with several stakeholders should work together and identify the skills needed and then develop strategies to support workers and the unemployed by encouraging them to consider reskilling and upskilling training programs. Several other authors agreed that there should be a collaboration between educational institutions and industries in order to provide educational programs which are up to date and in various disciplines. These programs will be able to meet the needs of the market (Golfetti et al., 2021). Reskilling and upgrading programs can make the individual to be successful at his workplace or provide an opportunity for him to move into a new job position (Mgiba, 2019).

As per the information from the International Labour Organization (2021), around 225 million of jobs were lost in the last quarter of 2020 and those who lost their jobs were mainly women, younger workers, low and medium skilled workers and self-employed. Sectors such as hospitality, retail and tourism were heavily affected and would require many years to recover unless the workers are well equipped with the relevant skills which can meet the changing demand of the industry. The rise in unemployment is mainly due to the lockdowns and restrictions derived from the pandemic (The World Bank, 2021) and many governments of the world had to support businesses and employees through different policy measures and packages. Among the strategies put forward to reskill and upskill individuals, some governments invested in short courses where demand for specific skills are high. These short courses were designed based on the skills needed in the emerging labour market and were offered to those who lost their jobs during the pandemic (Murgatroyd, 2021).

At the end of 2020, the Government of Mauritius came up with the implementation of an Economic Recovery Programme. The programme was implemented following the adverse consequences of the pandemic on the Mauritian labour sector. The programme consisted of several measures aimed at improving the GDP growth, protecting jobs and creating new ones, minimizing the dependence on imports and also enhancing the well-being of the Mauritian population. Among the key elements of the programme, was the National Training and Reskilling Scheme (NTRS). The main objective of the scheme was to train and reskill around 9,000 people who became unemployed directly or indirectly due to the pandemic. The scheme consisted of training courses up to 6 months, in various areas such as ICT/BPO, E-commerce, Transport and Logistics, Construction, Aged, disability and Social care services, Renewable Energy and Circular economy, Health care and Medical devices and other economic sectors. In order to implement the NTRS properly, the Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training and the Human Resource Development Council explored the possibilities to work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders such as approved training institutions. The Open University of Mauritius registered for the NTRS and was selected to offer the Office Management Skills to some 80 unemployed people with the aim to facilitate their access to employment. Four cohorts of 20 students each have successfully completed the course as at date.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Till now, no such studies have been carried out to investigate the impact of the reskilling and upskilling programs on the students in Mauritius and this has motivated the researcher to identify the effects of these courses on the students aspiring to be employed.

The following objectives and hypotheses were formulated:

The objectives of the research are to:

- 1) Analyse the opinion of learners about the course;
 - 2) Measure the level of satisfaction of learners about the course;
 - 3) Compare the skills before and after joining the course;
 - 4) Identify which module has led to greater satisfaction among the learners and
 - 5) Identify which main type of additional skills learners might need to empower themselves in the future
- The following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho: Reskilling does not lead to a positive learning experience H1: Reskilling leads to a positive learning experience

Ho: Upskilling does not lead to a positive learning experience H2: Upskilling leads to a positive learning experience

The concepts of Reinventing, Retooling and Reskilling (3Rs)

Reskilling, is part of the 3Rs of the human capital development strategies (Raimi, 2021). The 3Rs which stand for reinventing, retooling and reskilling are strategies which can save jobs and stimulate the economy and have become essential mainly in the post pandemic era. Furthermore, these strategies also help to manage the challenges of irrelevant skills and changes in the labour markets. According to Walker (2019), reinventing refers to a work change, task change or position change where the employee takes up a new role and task. Retooling means employees getting training and new knowledge or updating their skills with the aims of

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meeting the needs of the changing labour market, for example re-joining the workforce or starting a new career. However, Raimi (2021) stated that reskilling is about employees acquiring a completely new set of skills, abilities and knowledge. Through reskilling, people aim at finding better jobs or new jobs with new tasks. For the strategies to be successful, several partners such as employees, businesses and governments need to work together. Moreover, Raimi (2021) added that governments have the responsibility to develop policies which will support people in developing new and adequate skills and competencies to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market.

Reskilling

Since the past few years, there has been a need for employees to possess certain skills and this has been strengthened following the pandemic. According to Hamburg (2021), employees need to have recourse to reskilling and lifelong learning and besides digital skills, they also need to acquire skills such as problem- solving, management and communication. The concept of reskilling has become a crucial element for employees since the pandemic. According to Agrawal et al. (2020), reskilling occurs when employees learn new skills in order to join new positions, either within their current organisations or new ones. Authors like Sawant et al. (2022) described reskilling as a process where one learns new abilities while forgetting previous ones and in today's world, it is becoming increasingly relevant. Raimi (2021) further stated that reskilling can be viewed as a human development strategy where people are trained with the aim of acquiring new abilities, skills and knowledge. This situation arises due to many circumstances, for example, their previous skills are not relevant nowadays due to the pandemic and therefore need to have recourse to reskilling. This is also confirmed by Thuraivelvam (2022) who stated that skills which are not in conformity with the post pandemic, need to be changed or upgraded. Reskilling is normally conducted for those who have been made redundant or laid off (Kalita and Singha, 2021). In the case of the post pandemic, many employees have lost their jobs. Employees can learn new skills through training or joining fresh courses where they will be taught the required skills to adapt to the changing work environment. For example, nowadays, digital skills are a must due to remote working and through reskilling, employees can learn these new skills through training if they do not possess them. Through reskilling, the employees are able to stay up to date with the current trends happening in the work environment. Reskilling is important for both the workforce and for organisations. In the case of the workforce, the employees are able to learn new skills and adapt to the changes happening in the organisations or in the work environment and in the long run lead to better productivity and efficiency (Mercy, 2022). Furthermore, through reskilling, a person is able to acquire the right skills, attitudes and knowledge which will enable him to maintain his job or look for a new job. In today's world, reskilling also helps in proper understanding of digitalization (Verma and Bandi, 2018). Reskilling tends to boost the morale of the people following the training and this in turn can make them more employable (Akanji and Baderinwa, 2021).

Upskilling

Upskilling mainly occurs due to changes in the work environment, for example, the adverse effect pandemic on the workforce (Edeh et al., 2021). According to Mercy (2022), upskilling is the process of upgrading the skills which employees already possess through different types of training programmes. Employees are taught additional skills which increase their capabilities to become more competent at work. Upskilling also means building on the current skills set already possessed by individuals and teaching them additional skills so that they can upgrade their capabilities and become more competent. Upskilling is an important process to enable employees to grow in their career path as it provides them opportunities for improvement. With the skills acquired through upskilling, employees tend to perform better, which is not only beneficial for them, but also for the organization in which they work. Mercy (2022) stated that upskilling should be a continuous learning process due to the changing work environment and it is fundamental for organizations to invest in their employees which later can become loyal employees. In certain cases, upskilling can lead to reskilling when employees no longer need to upgrade their skills and knowledge but instead learn new ones (Sawant et al., 2022).

Reskilling and upskilling are important tools as they provide the necessary skills needed to face the post pandemic situation and also, they can be useful for the new job roles which will be created in the future (Sawant et al., 2022). Reskilling and upskilling help to equip people with the required skills and competencies to solve the potential problems during crises and to adapt to uncertain future job situations (Weber, 2019). The pandemic has also forced people with higher degree qualification to have recourse to reskilling or upskilling to be able to adapt to the changes in the labour market (Brown et al., 2021). Many people had to learn new skills or upgrade their skills.

Reskilling and Upskilling training programs

The recent pandemic has disrupted the labour market and reskilling and upskilling programs have become necessary to help the workforce to become more agile, competent and resilient. Monear (2020) stated that in the post pandemic era, many unemployed people need further training and education to obtain a new job and they prefer short term reskilling and upskilling programs to support them. They prefer short term, non-degree but certificate programs since they already have other personal commitments. These programs need to be short and include experiential training and competent trainers in order to be effective. Lang and Triantoro (2022) stated that the post pandemic situation has accelerated the need for reskilling and upskilling programmes and

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there is also a need for organisations and governments to invest in reskilling and upskilling their employees so that they can adapt to the new changing environment (Yaseen et al., 2022). Therefore, individuals need to continuously acquire new skills or upgrade their skills due the changing demand of the labour market (Muchiri, 2022). Due to the pandemic, skills gaps have emerged and reskilling and upskilling programmes can aid in bridging those gaps. Individuals after upgrading or acquiring new skills can match the skills that employers are now looking for when recruiting employees. As Sawant et al. (2022) further mentioned, an individual might possess a degree to be educated but possessing or acquiring the right skills make him employable. That is why many unemployed, having either undergraduate or postgraduate degrees or even both had to follow reskilling or upskilling courses.

Student satisfaction, learning experience and learners' perceptions

For many years now, student satisfaction has been given considerable attention and is one of the main objectives of educational institutions (Osman et al., 2017). Many educational institutions have reviewed their teaching and learning strategies in an attempt to reach higher student satisfaction among their learners. As per Arambewela and Hall (2013), student satisfaction simply means the satisfaction which is derived by students from their overall learning experience. Students become highly satisfied if the educational institutions are able to meet their educational experience. Vavra (1997) in his research explained that there is a relationship between quality and student satisfaction whereby higher quality education leads to higher student satisfaction. Higher educational institutions experiencing strong student satisfaction is crucial for their existence and can also maintain existing students and attract new ones as well (Ibrahim et al., 2014). As per Zakaria et al. (2018), student satisfaction can also lead to higher enrolment, higher and better graduates and less dropouts. It is important to measure satisfaction in order to determine whether an organisation is successful in providing products or services to its customers. In the case of education, students are referred as customers and organisations as educational institutions. Therefore, these educational institutions need to ensure that they are providing quality education to their students. The satisfaction of the students will be based on the difference between their prior expectation and perception of their learning experience (Zakaria et al., 2018). The authors further added that it is important to identify the factors which can lead to student satisfaction and that these factors vary among educational institutions. Student satisfaction surveys should be conducted regularly to determine the level of satisfaction among the students. To achieve a high student satisfaction, a course should be well structured (Konstantinidou and Nisiforou, 2022). It should include several elements such as problem-oriented activities, practical activities linked to job related needs, activities which are engaging and meaningful, interaction among peers, collaborative learning and also include some aspects of technologies.

According to Dornyei (2019), learning experience can be defined as the learner's perceived level of engagement with different elements of the learning process. For example, the learner interacting with the learning material can either have a positive or negative learning experience based on the quality of the learning material. Learning experience is also about the learning elements such as the course or the programme that engage students either in classrooms or outside the classrooms, be it traditional education or online education (Sivanandan et al., 2014).

Learner perception can be described as the opinion of learners on what they have done in class and what they have learned (Sidhu, 2003). According to Ortese et al. (2006), there are many factors which affect the perception of the learners. The factors identified are attention, interest, motivation, thinking and creativity. Learner perception is different for each student based on what might appear difficult for one student and easy for another. Perception is divided into positive perception and negative perception (Solso et al., 2017). Positive perception arises due to an individual satisfaction with an object while negative perception arises due to dissatisfaction with an object. When a learner is satisfied with the learning experience obtained, he will create a positive perception about it. Negative perception takes place when he is not satisfied with the learning experience.

Learner perception is strongly linked with learner satisfaction (Sweeney and Ingram, 2001). If learners are satisfied with their learning experience, this will create a positive level of perception among them. If a program has been able to meet the different needs of a learner, he will be satisfied and in return, this will influence his perception about the course in a positive way. Moreover, learner perception can also determine if a program has been successful or not (Park et al., 2006).

It is important to investigate the perception of students to know their opinion about the course, whether they are satisfied or not (Van Petegem et al., 2007). Since learners spend a lot of time in the learning environment, it becomes important to enquire about their opinions for future decision making. It has been found that low- skilled adults might form a negative perception of learning which has been developed in their early stages of education, which resulted in fear or resentment (Cedefop, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to use appropriate training programs to stimulate their attention and involvement in learning so that they can acquire the proper skills and knowledge.

Skills in the post pandemic era

Many authors agreed that reskilling and upskilling have grown in importance mainly after the pandemic and there is a need to identify and make effective use of new skill sets, for example, digital technologies (Yaseen et al., 2022). According to Ukonu and Habu (2022), the pandemic has given rise to new norms and both hard and soft skills. Hard skills are those skills that are technical and can be taught whereas soft skills are interpersonal and are more directed towards relationships. The authors argued that both

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skills are needed in the future, for example, digital literacies as part of hard skills, communication, problem solving as part of soft skills. Roe (2002) defined skills as a variety of attitudes, knowledge, abilities and capabilities that a person learns through experience or training, which will help him to achieve a task in a competent way. There are many ways in which a person can develop his skills; upskilling and reskilling. Upskilling can help people to improve their performance while reskilling can help people to adapt to new job functions. Higher education is evolving, driven by innovative digital learning experiences which blend advanced technologies with interpersonal skills nurtured for students in the classroom. Universities need to conduct an analysis of skills needed in various areas and provide specific training programs, in partnership with other stakeholders, to unemployed people. Modern educational platforms employ technology to provide personalised training materials and customize courses to address the unique requirements of individuals and organisations (Hasan, M, Haque, A., Nishat, S.S & Hossain, M., 2024). As mentioned by Yaseen et al. (2022), universities play an important role in reskilling and upskilling people. The main stakeholders such as government, academia and organisations need to work together to assist unemployed people to acquire new skills or upgrade their skills (Abe et al., 2021). The skills acquired will enable these people to exploit new job opportunities in the future. Workers also must embrace lifelong learning to remain competitive and take advantage of flexible upskilling and reskilling. In the future of jobs report by WEF (2020), the following important skills to possess were mentioned; self- management skills, people skills, technological skills, problem solving skills and leadership. It is also stated that by 2025, 50% of employees will need reskilling. After the pandemic, new skills set which include leadership and management skills, critical thinking and decision-making skills, digital skills and interpersonal skills have become important for people to acquire in order to adapt to the changing job environment (Akanji and Baderinwa, 2021). Gen Z workers expect to change careers three times in their lives and 73 % of Gen Z are not afraid to take a pay cut to pursue a more fulfilling career with proficient skills and are more likely to prioritize their wellbeing and happiness than other generations (Bhaimiya, S. 2023). There is a need for people to reinvent themselves through the skills acquired for a promising career. In his study, Odwori (2021) found that there are several skills which are needed after the pandemic. Workers need to have the following skills to become efficient and effective; teamwork, thinking skills, effective communication, technical skills and creativity. According to Li (2022), several skills will be needed by 2025 such as analytical thinking and innovation skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, leadership skills and technological skills. Kotsiou et al (2022) stated that in order to adapt to the changing demands of work and post pandemic situations, lifelong learning is an essential process for many people. They need to learn new skills or upgrade their skills in order to survive in today's labour market. People with the right skills can work efficiently and adapt to the changing needs of the labour market. As a result, for the benefits of an organisation, these people can bring improvement in productivity, business practices and efficiency and also reduce wastages (Mercy, 2022).

Office Management skills program

According to Fasae (2022), an office management skill program should offer learners the following main skills; office skills, managerial skills, ICT skills, communications. Learners after completing these programs should be able to perform several tasks such as work with people, be goal oriented, handle stress, make decisions, solve problems, write, speak and listen effectively, be technologically savvy, be able to plan and organise their work and so on. This is supported by the authors Omoniyi and Elemure (2014) who stated that the main objective of an office management skill program is to equip learners with the necessary managerial, office and technological skills so that they can be successful in their respective workplace in the future. Esene (2017) further added that through these types of programs, learners can develop their skills, attitudes, abilities and work ethics which are required for employment. This course was conducted through a synchronous and asynchronous delivery which allows learners to self-pace their learning with all supported resources.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research is grounded on two main theories namely the Constructivism and Connectivism learning theory which are both learner-focused. As per Olusegun (2015), the constructivism learning theory implies learners constructing their own knowledge and understanding of the world through new information merging with what they already know and reflecting on these experiences. The learning of every learner is unique, based on their individual experience. In constructivist learning, teachers act as facilitators rather than instructors in creating a collaborative learning environment. Students have their own experiences, mindset, emotions and imagination which need to relate to new learning contexts. Such learning contexts happen in a constructivist learning approach where learners develop social skills, confidence and self-assurance in shaping their future. This course was customised based on the learner's prior experiences and to facilitate the learning process in acquiring new knowledge and skills, several activities such as real-world problem-solving tasks, role playing, peer-group activity and practical exercises were incorporated. Furthermore, the tutors have tried to create a constructivist classroom to make space for active learning, viewing concepts from multiple perspectives, collaboration, reflection, student-centeredness so that students are able to construct their own understanding and to reflect on employability skills.

In addition to the above, modern learning occurs through technology and network connections as individuals are able to interact and

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share their opinions, experiences and interest in virtual learning environments (Dunaway, 2011). The connectivism learning theory advocates that technology is an important part of the learning process. According to the connectivism learning theory, learners acquire knowledge when they interact with other learners and network and this gives rise to a learning community (Boyras and Ocak, 2021). It is also about how learning and sharing of information have been facilitated through the internet and other online technologies such as web browsers, email, online discussion forums and most recently social networks. Connectivism learning also encourages learners to search for information online and share their findings with their peers. During this course, learners had the possibility to participate in collaborative learning where they were allocated in different groups to work on certain activities. The tutors also encouraged the learners to do research on the Internet with regards to their activities. Moreover, the use of the Moodle platform was also observed for the interaction between tutors and learners, for example, online discussion forums. Additional materials were shared on the platform or through email. In each cohort, a WhatsApp group was created where learners discussed their activities or any subject related to the course.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this research, a quantitative approach was adopted in the form of an online questionnaire, which was designed in Google Form to collect data from the participants who completed the program. The questions set were mostly derived from the objectives and elements from the literature review and the questionnaire consisted of 18 items divided into 5 sections whereby 17 questions were close-ended and only 1 was open-ended. Furthermore, the study uses a non-probability sampling technique as only those who completed the program were concerned with the survey and no random selection was involved (Etikan et al., 2015). Pilot testing was conducted among 10 participants and no amendments were bought, based on their feedback and the questionnaire was finalised. The questionnaire was sent by email to 80 participants who completed the program. The survey was conducted over a period of 2 months and two reminders were sent to the learners and only 62 responses were collected. Respondents gave their consents before participating in the survey and their responses were treated as confidential and were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of the result of the data analysis which is presented as the objectives set and supported by specific discussion

Reliability test

In order to test the reliability of the survey in terms of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. As per table 1, reliability of the data collected was tested through the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient which gave a value of (0.996). This coefficient indicates that there is high internal consistency of data and may be used for further statistical inferencing.

Table i: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.966	73

The results in table 2 show the following information; 75.8% of the respondents were within the age range of 18-30, in terms of gender, there were more female (77.4%) than male (14%) participants and 72.6% of the respondents rated their level of IT skills as good. Furthermore, this would imply that women and younger workers were mostly affected and it is in line with the report from the International Labour Organization (2021) in which it was mentioned that self-employed, younger workers and women were mainly those who lost their jobs.

Table ii: Demographic details of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	
Age (years)	18 - 30	47	75.8
	31 - 40	7	11.3
	41 - 59	8	12.9
Gender	Male	14	22.6
	Female	48	77.4
Level of IT Skills	Moderate	4	6.5
	Good	45	72.6
	Excellent	13	21

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Table 3 shows that most participants had a positive opinion about the course. Many respondents had stated that they enjoyed the course activities during the sessions ($\mu=4.48$, $SD=0.987$) and they were encouraged to explore additional learning materials on the internet ($\mu =4.48$, $SD=0.936$). Moreover, they also made new friends in the course ($\mu =4.35$, $SD=1.103$). Various activities were conducted in the course such as individual

and group assignments and presentations, role playing, practical exercises and peer assessment and some of them required further research on the internet. During the group activities, learners were put into different groups and this resulted in making new friends. In general, it could also be deduced from the table that Mean score values were greater than 4. This would imply that learners exhibited a general tendency to either agree or strongly agree with the below mentioned Likert scale statements. The highest score being reported, corresponded to 4.48.

Table iii: Opinion of the learners about the course

Descriptive Statistics			
N		Mean	Std. Deviation
Q 6 [The course was well built and structured]	62	4.26	1.023
Q 6 [The course has met my expectations]	62	4.18	0.897
Q 6 [The modules were up to date]	62	4.21	0.871
Q 6 [I made new friends in this course]	62	4.35	1.103
Q 6 [I enjoyed the course activities during the sessions]	62	4.48	0.987
Q 6 [The tutors' explanations were up to the level]	62	4.19	1.069
Q 6 [This course has helped me to explore additional learning materials on the internet]	62	4.48	0.936
Valid N (listwise)	62		

Table 4 shows all the 8 modules that the learners had to complete and their level of satisfaction with regards to each of them. It could be observed that learners were mostly satisfied with all the modules but were very satisfied with the Office skills module ($\mu=4.71$, $SD=0.492$). This could be due to the way the module was taught and included several units such as using Microsoft word to create reports, mail merge, letters, using Microsoft Excel to create worksheet, graphs, formulas, using Microsoft PowerPoint to create slides, animations, understanding diagnosis/ troubleshooting related to keyboard, screen, printer and understanding issues related to virus and antivirus. Another element which could have contributed to respondents being more satisfied with the Office skills module is that for most of them, their level of IT skills was good.

Table iv: Modules to be completed and level of satisfaction with regards to each of them

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Office Skills]	62	4.71	0.492
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Work-Life Balance]	62	4.48	0.864
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Organisation Skills]	62	4.48	0.671
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Time and Priority Management]	62	4.39	0.776
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Communication Skills]	62	4.26	0.922
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Customer Care]	62	4.31	1.001

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Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Digital media]	62	4.29	1.014
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Health and Safety]	62	4.56	0.738
Q 10 - In this course you had 8 modules and a reflective journal. How far are you satisfied with each of them? [Reflective journal]	62	4.45	0.843
Valid N (listwise)	62		

From the data in table 5, it can be concluded that most students were mostly very satisfied with the course (62.2%). This could be due to the curriculum of the program in terms of modules and range of different activities and the efforts from the university in terms of support and the tutors in terms of their expertise, to make the course effective.

Table v: level of satisfaction after completing the course

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	umulative Percent
Valid	Very Dissatisfied	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	neutral	5	8.1	8.1	11.3
	Satisfied	16	25.8	25.8	37.1
	Very Satisfied	39	62.9	62.9	100
	Total	62	100	100	

This objective was to identify which main type of additional skills learners might need to empower themselves in the future. As per the chart in table 6, it could be observed that the main skill that the respondents have proposed is the IT skills (13 responses). However, it should be noted that out of 62, only 38 learners responded to this question. Skills such as Advanced Administrative and Management also obtained high responses. This is in line with several authors (Akanji and Baderinwa, 2021; Li, 2022 and the WEF, 2020) where they mentioned that these are among the main skills to possess in the post pandemic era. As mentioned by Abe et al. (2021), the acquisition of new skills will benefit employees in being highly demanded in more excellent jobs. In terms of IT skills, workers will need them in order to adapt to the future digital innovation in their workplace.

Table vi: Main type of additional skills needed in the future



To compare the skills before and after joining the course, composite variables were derived from the series of Likert scales from Questions 8 and 9 to create the variables 'Reskilling' and 'Upskilling'. The variables created were then subjected to Normality Tests to decide upon which correlation coefficient to be considered for testing of hypotheses. The Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk tests were used and the result revealed that only one variable (skill before training) followed normal distribution ($p > 0.05$). As such, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used to test the difference between these 2 variables. A computed Z value (-6.768, $p < 0.05$) indicated that there were significant differences between level of skills before and after

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training.

From the descriptive statistics, it could be further deduced from the Mean Scores i.e skill level before training (2.88) and skill level after training (4.42), that the overall skills level has increased considerably after training. It could be established that the learners have been able to either upgrade their current skills or learn new skills throughout the course.

Difference in skills before and after joining the course

Descriptive Statistics

N Statistic		Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness	
				Statistic	Std. Error
Skills level before training	62	2.8831	.73686	.263	.304
Skills level after training	62	4.4214	.51774	-1.444	.304
Valid N (listwise)	62				

Tests of Normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a				Shapiro-Wilk		
Statistic	df	Sig.		Statistic	df	Sig.
Skills_Before	.089	62	.200*	.973	62	.183
Skills_After	.132	62	.009	.880	62	.000

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

	Skills level after training - Skills level before training
Z	-6.768 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

Hypotheses testing

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

Ho: There is no correlation between Upskilling and the learning experiences of learners H1: There is a correlation between Upskilling and the learning experiences of learners Ho: There is no correlation between Reskilling and the learning experiences of learners H2: There is a correlation between Reskilling and the learning experiences of learners

Tests of Normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a				Shapiro-Wilk		
Statistic	df	Sig.		Statistic	df	Sig.
Reskilling	.256	62	.000	.680	62	.000
Upskilling	.226	62	.000	.691	62	.000
Learning_Experience_Leane rs	.207	62	.000	.690	62	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Correlations

		Learning_Experience_Leane rs		Upskilling
Spearman's rho	Learning_Experience_Leane rs	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.767**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	62	62
	Upskilling	Correlation Coefficient	.767**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	62	62

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Correlations

		Learning Experience Learners	Reskilling
Spearman's rho	Learning Experience Learners	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.784**
		N	62
Reskilling	Reskilling	Correlation Coefficient	.784**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	62

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

Composite variables were derived from the series of Likert scales from Question 7 to create the variables 'Reskilling' and 'Upskilling'. Likewise, a composite variable was created for learning experience of learners from the series of Likert scales questions corresponding to 12.

The variables created were then subjected to Normality Tests to decide upon which correlation coefficient to be considered for testing of hypotheses. Since the p values (0.00) were less than (0.05) for the Shapiro Wilk's and Kolmogorov Smirnov tests, it could be concluded that the upskilling and reskilling variables were non- parametric. Therefore, the Spearman's rho coefficient was utilized as the statistical tool to test the correlation mentioned in the above hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

The Spearman's rank correlation gave a coefficient of 0.767 which was significant at the 1 % level with p value (0.00). We can conclude that there is a high correlation between the learning experience of learners and upskilling. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis H1.

Hypothesis 2

The Spearman's rho was again used to test the above hypothesis which gave a correlation coefficient of (0.784) which was significant at the 1 % level with p value (0.00). It could be deduced that there is a high correlation between the learning experience of learners and reskilling. We therefore accept the alternative hypothesis H1.

CONCLUSION

The study had several objectives and the findings revealed that learners had a positive opinion and learning experience about the course. In essence, it could be observed that most learners were very satisfied with the course and its different units and the module which led to greater satisfaction was the Office skills. The various activities in this unit, ranging from assignment to role playing and online discussion could have contributed to this positive outcome. The findings also revealed that both reskilling and upskilling had a strong correlation with the learning experiences of the learners, meaning that learners enjoy both the activities related to reskilling and upskilling. For some learners, it was about upgrading their current skills while for the others, it was about learning new skills and this contributed to their learning experiences. It could be concluded that there was indeed a difference between the skills before the course and skills after joining the course and reskilling and upskilling have successfully been conducted whereby 66% of the respondents strongly agreed that they have learnt new skills throughout the course.

In terms of limitations and future research, the current study was based on only one institution providing the course. Future research could be considered on comparing other institutions offering the same course and also conducting a study to determine if the learners have been able to apply the acquired skills in the respective workplace. From the findings, it was revealed that the main additional skill which could be provided is the IT skills. This proposal could be considered when updating the course in the future.

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