JOB SHADOWING AS A METHOD IN FURTHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. *In response to the advanced shifts within the professional era, this study underscores the novel application of job shadowing as a medium of further education. By providing an understanding of the shifting requirements for practical knowledge in career building, this research represents the various scenarios of job shadowing for advanced professional growth. This study employed a mixed-methods approach employed quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The responses of 63 professionals from various industries involved in job shadowing were thoroughly analysed. The responses demonstrate the significant impact of job shadowing on acquiring skills and developing career trajectories. The respondents emphasise the importance of acquiring extensive practical knowledge, obtaining precise and reliable information about various professional job positions, and increasing their confidence to the most extent. Further, job shadowing is also helpful in expanding professional networks. This approach also contributes to a broader scenario on career-building journeys. Other than these positive outcomes, challenges were also underlined. These include a limited number of opportunities and not enough knowledge of employees in this field. This study represents the shifting position of job shadowing and recommends practical suggestions for establishing its efficiency in the professional corporate world. This study provides a detailed overview of the benefits, challenges, and solutions aligned with job shadowing. The study also highlights the important role of new strategies in further education in the recent discussion.*
Keywords: *Career Building, Further Education, Job Shadowing, Professional Development.*

Introduction

In the current dynamic professional landscape, it is crucial to comprehend several career pathways and it requires unique opportunities for further education (Abe et al., 2022). In our modern era, the traditional approaches are insufficient in providing individuals with the necessary practical skills and broad comprehension needed for successful growth. This circumstance necessitates a shift towards conventional approaches. Now, the strategy requires filling the flaw between theory and real-world situations. This challenge takes the researchers to find a balanced approach for further improving education standards. As a result of this problem, one of the methods that have gained importance is job shadowing (Danijela, 2021). Understanding its relevance and novelty shows that job shadowing is a solid method to advance learning in career development. This

method helps individuals in real work scenarios by giving them a solid foundation of what professional roles require. It integrates traditional knowledge with advanced concepts to enhance continual learning and development. The objective is to comprehensively understand various practical situations and provide in-depth insights into the experiences and challenges associated with various occupations. The study highlights the critical role that job shadowing plays in the ongoing development and professional landscape. It reveals different benefits linked with this method. The research focuses on the impact of job shadowing on skill mastery and the progression of an individual's professional development. The detailed experience of the 63 professionals serving in different industries is analyzed. The study aims to understand the progressive aspect of job shadowing in shaping participants' crucial career decisions. The research aims to address the following questions: How does job shadowing impact the professional development and skill acquisition of individuals in further education? What are the benefits and challenges of implementing job shadowing as a method in further education across different industries? To what extent does job shadowing influence career decision-making among participants in further education programs?

Literature review

Job shadowing has gained attention as an experiential learning method in adult further education and professional development. This literature review consolidates current research on the application, advantages, challenges, and results of job shadowing for adult individuals aiming to progress in their jobs or transition to new ones. This review seeks to clarify the important role of job shadowing in modern adult education by analysing empirical data, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights from different industries.

The basis of work shadowing in adult education is founded on experience learning theory, specifically Kolb's (1984) experience Learning Cycle. According to Kolb (1984), learning occurs when experience is converted into knowledge. Job shadowing provides a concrete chance for individuals to observe and reflect, enabling them to extract ideas from the experience and actively explore new positions (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In addition, the concept of situated learning and legitimate peripheral engagement, as described by Lave and Wenger (1991), highlights the importance of social and contextual learning supported by job shadowing. This facilitates the complete integration of adults into a community of practice. Studies continually emphasise the diverse benefits of work shadowing in further education. (see Table 1). Firstly, it improves practical knowledge and skills directly applicable to specific job roles (Johnson & Ridley, 2017). Participants get firsthand experience of the everyday tasks, challenges, and competencies necessary in a job, which cannot be entirely replicated by textbooks or classroom instruction. Secondly, job shadowing facilitates professional

networking, enabling adults to establish valuable connections supporting their job search and enhancing their career advancement (Frost, 2016; Ryan, 2023). Thirdly, it increases individuals' confidence and clarity concerning career paths, since adults can make well-informed decisions about their professional trajectories by gaining practical experience in the actual world (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Table 1 **Potential Benefits of Job Shadowing** *(Danijela, 2021)*

Aspect	Findings/Impacts	References
Skill Development	It enhanced practical skills through active participation in real-world problem-solving.	Mafinejad et al., 2022
Career Development	Improved understanding of professional roles, aiding informed career decision-making.	Harrington & Earhart, 2020
Confidence Building	Job shadowing correlated with increased confidence gained through real-time application.	Diz, 2018; Martin et al., 2013
Networking	Expanded professional networks, building valuable relationships within industries.	Frost, 2016; Ryan, 2023
Organizational Impact	Job shadowing contributes to organizational development, fostering a culture of learning and innovation.	Ahmed Farouk Radwan & Sheren Ali Mousa, 2023

The benefits mentioned above are the outcomes individuals will obtain when implementing the job shadowing method. This method is strategically advantageous for one's career and personal growth trajectory. It combines traditional and innovative strategies for career and professional advancement. This helps motivate self-confidence and make professional growth and networks wisley (Harrington & Earhart, 2020).

Although job shadowing has advantages, it faces several challenges. The availability of shadowing experiences is frequently constrained, as organizations and professionals may be unwilling to dedicate time and resources to facilitate shadowing experiences (Radwan, & Mousa, 2023). Moreover, the efficacy of job shadowing relies on the host professionals' interest in guiding and actively engaging with participants (Martin & Leberman, 2018). Additionally, there is the matter of ensuring a meaningful learning experience that corresponds to the educational objectives of adult learners (Radwan, & Mousa, 2023).

The challenges and solutions are summarized and described in Table 2.

*Table 2: **Challenges and Solutions** (Yoo, 2012)*

Challenges in Job Shadowing	Recommendations
Limited Availability of Opportunities	☐ Actively create and advertise job shadowing opportunities (Rony et al., 2019). ☐ Implement a transparent and accessible process to address the scarcity issue.
Employee Misconceptions	☐ Establish transparent communication methods. ☐ Help understand the mutual benefits for individuals, hosts, and the organization (Shan et al., 2022). ☐ Organize the workshops. ☐ Provide communication to understand the positive impact of job shadowing on career and organizational growth (Linnehan, 2004).
Lack of Knowledge about Job Shadowing Advantages	☐ Increase awareness through communication and education about the benefits of job shadowing. ☐ Highlight its role in creating a learning culture within the organization.
Need for Structured Program Design	☐ Provide well-structured programs. ☐ Clear guidelines, objectives, and evaluation metrics are needed for these programs (Nomakuchi et al., 2013). ☐ There is also a need for both hosts and participants to be well aware of expectations. ☐ It will help provide a more knowledgeable and fruitful learning experience.

The literature review examines the impact of incorporating job shadowing into various professional development programmes. The results indicate significant improvements, suggesting crucial practical approaches, an in-depth understanding of professional knowledge, enhancing self-confidence, and an expanded professional network (Oswald et al., 2017). Job shadowing is an evolving method that reduces the discrepancies between theoretical study and real-world application. These outcomes contribute towards the person's growth and have maximum opportunities for organizational development. Comprehending this process offers a chance for further exploration and progress in its implementation.

Empirical studies reveal evidence of the efficacy of work shadowing in adult further education. A study by Gonzalez and Nunez (2019) demonstrated that job shadowing substantially impacted participants' comprehension of job prerequisites and industry norms. Furthermore, a study by English (2018) revealed that work shadowing improved career preparedness and developed a stronger professional sense of self among adult learners. Nevertheless, these studies also highlight the necessity of organised reflection and support to improve learning results.

The literature analysis supports the creation of job shadowing programs. This also facilitates the establishment of a path for well-informed endeavours that can address problems, optimise accessibility, and enhance the influence of work shadowing in assisting individuals in adapting to the newest demands of their professional journey. Moreover, the transformative impact of job shadowing establishes a solid foundation for a more adequate understanding of experiential learning in further education and the professional field.

Methodology

This research employed a mixed-method strategy to collect insights (Sakoda & Takahashi, 2014). The 63 professionals represented several industries: 21 respondents were from the care sector, 15 respondents were from the building industry, 13 respondents were from the catering sector, and 14 respondents were from the sewing sector. They completely understand the ins and outs of their selected career path. This method was chosen to gain insight into the participants' circumstances, experiences, environments, and perspectives surrounding the practice of job shadowing. An additional 15 interviews were carried out to enhance the depth of understanding for this study (Nomakuchi et al., 2013). The survey and questions enabled participants to highlight their experiences easily. This mixed approach makes this study helpful to gather the information strategically for this research problem. These responses were found helpful in observing the benefits and challenges associated with the problem of this research in different professional journeys.

Research results

The study's quantitative phase involved analysing responses from 63 profesionals across four sectors. The descriptive statistics indicate that in the Sewing and Construction sectors, the mode and median for professional experience are 0.60 years, indicating a greater prevalence of individuals with less than one year of experience. In contrast, the Catering sector exhibits a higher mean professional experience of 2.08 years, suggesting significantly more seasoned personnel in this industry. The predominant age range in most industries is 25-34, except the Care sector, which exhibits a slightly older workforce in the 35-44 age range. Figure 1 illustrates various professional experience and age distribution across different sectors, which suggests different levels of maturity and expertise in the workforce.

Figure 1 **Comparison of Professional Experience and Age Demographics Across Sectors**
(the authors)
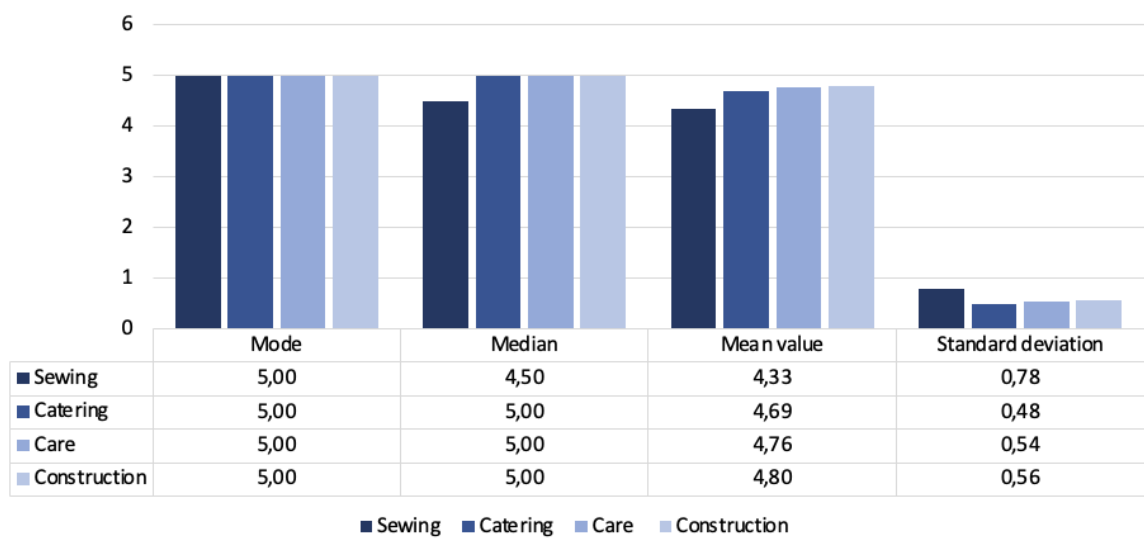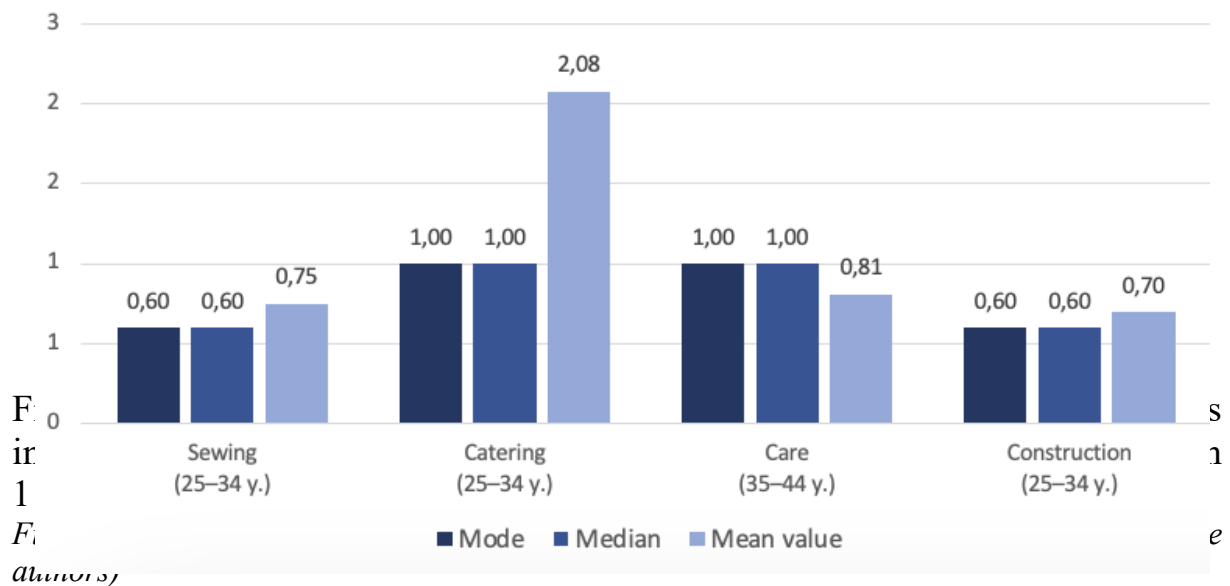
Each sector highly values job shadowing, with modes of 5.0, indicating that the most common response was "very effective." The mean values range from 4.33 in Sewing to 4.80 in Construction, suggesting positive perceptions. The medians are also high, with the Construction, Care, and Catering sectors all at 5.00 and Sewing at 4.50. Standard deviations are relatively low (0.48 to 0.78), indicating that responses were generally consistent within each sector. This could indicate a common perception that job shadowing is useful for developing practical skills, regardless of the sector.

Qualitative data analysis was used to understand the more profound meaning and context of the data collected. The study collected qualitative data through 15 interviews, which provided a deeper insight into the participants' experiences with job shadowing. The research systematically analysed 15 interviews, using

thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and narratives. At first, the interviews were transcribed and carefully examined to become acquainted with the content. Subsequently, initial codes were produced by identifying and annotating relevant data characteristics associated with the research objectives. The codes were further grouped into four main themes: goals for participating, insights gained, challenges encountered, and additional comments, which represent overarching trends observed throughout the dataset (see table 3). The themes were thoroughly reviewed and revised to ensure that they appropriately reflected the information obtained from the interviews. Ultimately, the identified themes were connected to this research question, offering an in-depth understanding of the benefits and challenges of job shadowing in various industries. This methodological approach facilitated a thorough investigation of qualitative data, complementing the knowledge acquired from the quantitative phase.

Table 3 Overview of Job Shadowing Experiences (the authors)

Theme	Code	Quote
Goals of Participating in Job Shadowing	Exploring Work Conditions	Find out the working conditions and how quickly the work can be done
	Gaining Experience	Get new experience
	Assessing Profession Suitability	Find out if I can and will like the profession
	Learning Specific Skills	Learn about the types and execution of finishing works
	Understanding Job Roles	Shadowing a consultant to see their responsibilities
	Career Decision Making	Choose a suitable profession
Professional Development Insights	Gained Skill Acquisition	I observed all kinds of techniques
	Understanding Professional Roles	The observation gave an insight into the presence of the counselor
	Gaining Practical Knowledge	I found out whether the wallpaper should be covered with glue or the wall
	Workplace Realities	I saw how a vicar works and what the working conditions are like
Challenges Encountered During Job Shadowing	Emotional Challenges	It was a very emotional experience
	Physical Challenges	Health problems
	Adapting to Work Environment	Change of work clothes, working conditions - construction dust
	Learning New Technologies	With new construction technologies and materials
	Teamwork Dynamics	Work in a men's team
	A limited number of opportunities	There is not a large enough offer in the country for job shadowing.

	Not enough knowledge of employees and employers	I came across the fact that many people were unclear about what it all meant at the workplace where I shadowed.
Additional Comments or Experiences	Value of Shadowing Experience	Dispels doubts and stereotypes
	Skill Building	A suitable method for building skills
	Job Suitability Confirmation	I confirmed that the job is for me
	Real-World Insights	Shadowing reveals the essence of real work
	Network building	An opportunity to meet professionals in the field and create a network of like-minded people (with similar interests).

The goals of participating in job shadowing reveal various motivations, ranging from understanding working conditions to making well-informed decisions about one's career path.

The value of the job shadowing experience was highlighted, along with its role in skill building, comprehending professional roles, acquiring practical knowledge, job suitability confirmation, offering real-world insights, network building, and learning about the reality of the workplace.

Adapting to new work environments, using new technologies, a limited number of job shadowing opportunities, insufficient knowledge of employees and employers about job shadowing, and negotiating the dynamics of teamwork are the most frequently mentioned challenges that have been encountered. Additional obstacles are confronting emotional and physical challenges. According to the findings of this research, job shadowing is a diverse learning experience that provides opportunities and challenges, both of which significantly contribute to the process of professional development and making decisions regarding possible career development.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, job shadowing is an essential medium for future further education as they blend theoretical learning with practical application. The study highlights its transformative potential in advanced skills, keen understanding, and expanding professional networks.

According to the research findings, work shadowing significantly promotes professional growth and career decision-making across various sectors. After examining the experiences of 63 professionals, it has become apparent that work shadowing is an efficient method for bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and actual application. Participants reported improved practical skills through hands-on experiences, greater understanding of professional roles, increased confidence, and expanded professional networks. These outcomes are

achieved by actively participating in real-world problem-solving, gaining insights into daily job responsibilities, and interacting with professionals in their field. Job shadowing includes direct application of practical knowledge, networking opportunities, and clarity in career paths. Challenges involve limited availability of opportunities, the need for structured program design, and ensuring meaningful learning experiences. Solutions proposed include creating and advertising job shadowing opportunities, establishing clear program guidelines, and increasing awareness of job shadowing benefits. Job shadowing substantially influences career decision-making by providing participants with a clearer understanding of job prerequisites, industry norms, and a stronger professional identity. This experiential learning method allows individuals to assess their suitability for different professions and make informed decisions about their career paths, enhancing their career preparedness.

Furthermore, future research could explore the longitudinal impact of job shadowing on career paths and delve into unique approaches for program implementation. As organizations continuously recognize its value, job shadowing plays an essential role in the future of experiential learning and career development.

Additionally, there is a need for developing frameworks to enhance the accessibility and quality of job shadowing experiences.

Practice recommendations include establishing partnerships between educational institutions and industries, developing structured reflection activities to accompany job shadowing experiences, and leveraging technology to facilitate virtual job shadowing opportunities (see Table 4).

Table 4 **Research recommendations** *(the authors)*

Approach	Recommendations
Program Design	☐ Establish clear objectives and guidelines ☐ a structured framework for shared understanding of expectations
Opportunities	☐ Develop a centralized platform for job shadowing opportunities ☐ Implement a streamlined and accessible process for expressing interest ☐ Facilitate virtual job shadowing opportunities
Awareness	☐ Conduct informational workshops ☐ Share testimonials and success stories ☐ Dispell misconceptions about job shadowing ☐ Gain leadership endorsement and support

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