NATURE AND FUNDING OF THE INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This paper focused on the nature and financing of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis. A total of 1080 respondents (360 masters craftsmen/women and 720 apprentice) were randomly drawn from 18 different trades in Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A questionnaire tagged 'Assessment of the Management of the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme (AMIAS)' was used for the collection of data it consisted of 19 items and contained five sections. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test retest method, with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient reliability of 0.65. The data gathered were used to answer four research questions and three hypotheses using frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation and z-test statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that majority of master craftsmen/women and apprentices have secondary school certificates, also the gender distribution existing amongst participants of the scheme consisted of more males than females. The study also revealed that the majority of participants in the scheme usually obtain funds through loans, proceeds from the business and fee payments by apprentices. Some of the most intense challenges facing the scheme included funding, inadequate workshop space and absence of stable electricity supply. Based on the findings the researchers recommended the use of curriculum and syllabus that will enable students attend apprenticeship training at trade centers. The provision of stable electricity, grants, loans, credits and incentives such as provision of training equipment should be made available to motivate participants of the scheme.

Keywords: Informal Apprenticeship, Master Craftsman, Apprentice, Economic Empowerment

Introduction

Since time immemorial, people have been transferring skills from one generation to another in some form of apprenticeship training. Four thousand years ago, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi ensured that artisans teach their crafts to youths. Egyptian, Greek, and Roman historical records reveal that skills were passed on from one generation to the next through apprenticeship means (Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia, 2009).

In Nigeria, apprenticeship training existed during the pre-colonial era, clans and families jealously guarded their lineal skills through customs, family lineage and rituals. Skills were passed on within the family by training young people on family trades, crafts and skills. Male children born into a certain family or clan learnt their ancestral crafts and young children were usually recognized as members of a particular family or clan through the crafts they engaged in. The youths were trained on the art of mask-making, fishing, farming, metal works (blacksmith), boat-making, hunting, carving, sculpting, mat-making and dyeing. Most young apprentices during this period were mostly males, because female children were usually found in the kitchen learning how to cook (Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia, 2009).

Informal apprenticeship scheme has become very popular in Nigeria. It is a major source of livelihood, means of being employed and actively engage in an economically worthwhile ventures. There are different enterprises that engage in apprenticeship schemes, which include; wielding, auto-mechanics, auto-electricians, tailoring, generator repairing, mobile phone repairing, carpentry, furniture making, catering, manicure/pedicure, and plumbing. These trades of the informal apprenticeship scheme are recognised as a means of absorbing and training unemployed youths through manpower development and economic empowerment (Ariyo, 2001).

Objective of the Study

The prime objective of this study was to assess the nature and management of the informal apprenticeship scheme. Specifically, the study was designed to achieve the following objectives: a) Investigate the nature of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. b) Determine the funding arrangement of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. d) Identify the challenges of running a functional informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Questions

Explicitly, the following research questions were addressed in the study.

1. What is the nature of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
2. How is the informal apprenticeship scheme funded in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
3. What are the challenges being faced by the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypothesis tested at 0.05 alpha were formulated to guide this study:

1. There is no significant difference between the funding methods adopted by master craftsmen and the funding methods adopted by apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the challenges of master craftsmen and the challenges of apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Methodology

A combination of simple random sampling, stratified sampling and accidental sampling were employed in the sample selection. Through a process of simple random sampling, 11 (50%) communities were sampled from each Local Governments. This generated a total of 22 communities that were sampled from the stated Local Government Areas. The sampled communities had a combined total of 2456 master craftsmen and 3361 apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme. Then through the process of accidental sampling, the researcher sampled 360 (15%) master crafts persons from, 720 (21%) apprentices of the informal scheme from the selected communities in Rivers state. In the same way, through a process of simple random sampling, a sample comprising of 18 informal enterprises were sampled (wielding, fabrication, carpentry, tailoring, auto-mechanics, auto-electrician, furniture making, catering, plumbing, painting and hairdressing). The instrument used for data collection in this study was a fixed response questionnaire, titled “Assessment of the Management of the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme (AMIAS)”. The questionnaire was

designed specifically for two different groups of respondents namely; masters and apprentices.

Scope of the Study

The study covered only the informal apprenticeship schemes operating in Port Harcourt Metropolis which comprises of Port Harcourt City Local Government and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The research was limited to these local governments because of their cosmopolitan nature, also they possess the highest concentration of informal apprenticeship trades in Rivers State, in addition to time and budget constraints. It determined the distributive characteristics of masters and apprentices within the informal apprenticeship system, the financial involvement, and contributions of private and governmental agencies to the informal apprenticeship system and the challenges of the informal apprenticeship scheme.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Nature of the Informal Apprenticeship System

Skill training in Nigeria occurs in the private and public sectors, the most significant institution that provides such training in the private sector is the informal apprenticeship scheme. This scheme is no doubt the most important method of skills transfer in the country's informal economy. This is because they offer a more cost effective and flexible means of skills transfer that absorbs a larger number of youths in Nigeria than their formal and publicly financed counterparts. Informal apprenticeship is very popular in most urban centers in Nigeria, they account for about 85% of skills training and transfer in most parts of the country (National Directorate of Employment Annual Report, 2009).

According to Ariyo (2001), the informal economy is regarded as the powerhouse of developing economies of the world. Its importance is based on the fact that it accounts for more than 80% of agricultural employment and 95% of new jobs in these countries, including a vast number of unemployed youths and young people that enter the labour market annually. As a form of education and training, informal apprenticeship contributes significantly to youth employment and empowerment, thereby reducing youth restiveness, while ensuring productivity and better employment opportunities.

Although the informal apprenticeship provides a vital training route for skills acquisition in many countries, women in Nigeria and parts of West Africa do not have access to apprenticeship training. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2006) in its School-to-Work Transition Survey, which is a statistical tool constructed to help countries ensure gender equality is adopted in their employment policies and programmes, provided guidelines on upgrading the informal apprenticeship system. Such guidelines included the provision of more gender friendly and welcoming strategies for both men and women. Some of these strategies by the ILO are yet to be implemented in Nigeria and other developing countries.

Women of all ages in Nigeria often face greater obstacles when choosing, starting and taking part in an informal apprenticeship skill. This is because they usually lack access to training, information, capital and are sometimes victimized or discriminated against during training. The situation is even more severe for poor and uneducated women who lack the knowledge and will power to stand up for themselves. In Nigeria, it is assumed that most of the trades where informal apprenticeship is practiced tend to be male dominated. The only trades dominated by women are hairdressing, catering, decorating, while in tailoring it is sometimes equally divided in terms of number of men and women (Asodike, 2005).

In addition, understanding the age distribution in the informal apprenticeship scheme is crucial to understanding the distribution of population in the system. The age range from apprentices to masters in the informal apprenticeship training system is from 11 to 60 years of

age in Nigeria and differs from enterprise to enterprise. It is in a bid to help young people find employment outside the formal system that informal apprenticeship admits applicants below the legally acceptable age. In some parts of the country children between the ages of 10 to 14 work, as apprentices and in some cases 49% of school age children are in the informal apprenticeship system in Nigeria (Ariyo, 2001). Majority of these children if not in the informal apprenticeship end up on the streets hawking just to make ends meet. It is in recognition of this fact that the government is making it possible for more and more young people to be apprentices in certain enterprises rather than wander the streets. Most of these children are from poor homes, they are abused physically, emotionally, and if they are young girls, sexually abused at their apprenticeship training centers.

According to Breyer (2007) apprentice on average have some level educational attainment, only about 3% of apprentices do not have any form of educational qualification whatsoever. The informal apprenticeship training is embarked upon by apprentices as an alternative to formal education this is because most of them cannot afford secondary, higher or technical education. As such they result to apprenticeship schemes as a means of acquiring some skills that will make them employable in the society. It has been noticed that there is a disparity amongst the educational qualification attained by masters compared to apprentices. Masters tend to have attained a higher level of education compared to their apprentice counterparts, a reason for this is that masters are much older and have had the chance to go through technical/secondary/higher education at some point in time, although not in all cases.

Funding the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme

In developing economies such as Nigeria, the funding of the informal apprenticeship system differs from State to State. There are a variety of funding sources which can financial and non-financial involvements of informal apprenticeship in the country. The level of contribution to the economy also differs from one region to another. While some areas are strict about the financial requirement of applicants, trainers and trainees, others are more liberal and tolerating. Generally, it agreed that financial resources are essential to the organization and management of the informal apprenticeship scheme in developing countries (Velenchik, 2005).

Youths engage in apprentice training in Nigeria as a means of skills development and employment. These youths make some form of cash or in-kind payments to the master craftsperson, usually paid at the commencement of the training or during the training (instalments) or at the end of the training exercise (graduation payment). The cost of training fees depends on the cost of the training, cost of training materials used for the training exercise, and the opportunity cost of the master craftsperson's time. The contributions of the master in terms of training time, expenses incurred both living expenses or damages from the apprentice are usually higher at the beginning of the training, but in the long run both (apprentice and master) benefit from the exchange.

Challenges of the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme

According to Hofmann, Nubler and Greiner (2000) there are several problems facing the organization and management of the informal apprenticeship scheme in developing countries such as Nigeria, most of these difficulties are peculiar to the various trades. There are also difficulties that are common to all trades and some of these challenges include stable electricity supply, poor training facilities, workshop space, funding, among others. These problems tend to increase the cost of production good or service. For instance, most trade centers require electricity but in the absence of stable electric power in most developing countries, these trade centers result to using generators to carry out their activities and this increases their running cost.

In developing economies, each enterprise has its own challenge, in the tailoring enterprise, availability of electrical sewing machines and modern facilities for tailoring are

limited. While in the carpentry enterprise, carpenters tend to suffer from the use of outdated tools, they also have poor access to quality timber, poor use of safety materials, maintenance, poor designs and methods of construction. While in auto-mechanics, the obvious challenges are lack of expert training courses in skills improvement and use of modern technologies, and increasing complexity of modern cars, and also a lack of quality vehicle parts (Hofmann, Nubler and Greiner, 2000).

Results

The presentation and analysis of the data contains the answers to the research questions and the results of the test of hypotheses on the management of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Frequencies, percentages, mean, mean set, standard deviation, z-test and p-value were all utilized in the presentation of the results of findings from the research.

Research Question 1: *What is the nature of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?*

The researcher first determined the nature of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The various features such as the age of participants, gender, educational qualification of participants in the various trades, age distribution, duration of training, award of graduation certificate and the enterprise registration with government, were used to achieve this and the results of the data analysis are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of participants by age, sex and level of educational qualification.

S/N	Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
1.	Age	Less than 30	605	56.0
		Between 30 & 45	417	38.6
		Above 45	56	5.2
		Total	1078	99.8
2.	Sex	Male	904	83.7
		Female	174	16.1
		Total	1078	99.8
3.	Educational Qualification	No formal education	125	11.6
		First Leaving School Certificate	301	27.9
		Secondary School Certificate	561	51.9
		NCE, OND or Equivalent	8	7.1
		Total	1064	98.5

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

As clearly shown in frequency and percentages, the number of respondents in the informal apprenticeship scheme in the age range less than thirty is 605 (56%), while those between thirty and forty is 417 (38.6%) and those above forty five is 56 (5.2%). Also the sex distribution of respondents indicates that 904 (83.7%) of respondents are male while 174 (16.1%) are female. This means that more males constitute the number of respondents than females. Similarly, 561 (51.9%) of the respondents attested that they have completed secondary education, while 27.9 percent of participants indicated that they have obtained their First Leaving School Certificate and 1.5% of respondents indicated that they completed some form of tertiary education. This means that majority of master craftsmen and apprentices have acquired some form of formal education, although majority have secondary school certificate, followed by those with primary school certificate.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of training duration of apprentices.

S/N	Duration of training in years	Frequency	Percent (%)
1.	1	5	0.5
2.	2	286	26.5
3.	3	646	59.8
4.	4	131	12.2
5	5	10	0.9
Total		1078	99.8
Missing system		2	0.2
Total		1080	100.0

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

Table 2 in frequency and percentages categorized the duration of training of apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme between 1 to 5 years. The results as shown has revealed that 646 respondents representing 59.8% are undergoing training lasting durations of 3 years, while 5 (0.5%) of respondents indicated that training takes place within 1 year. Most training last between 2 and 3 years and only few (.5%) takes place within one year and above 3 years (13.1%).

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of graduate certificates award and registration of enterprise with the government.

S/N	Parameters	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1.	Graduates Receive Certificates	Yes	176	16.3
		No	902	83.5
		Total	1078	99.8
2.	Registration of enterprise with government	Yes	169	15.6
		No	911	84.4
		Total	1080	100

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

Indicated in frequency and percentages, is the awarding of certificates to graduates of the informal apprenticeship scheme. 902 (83.5%) of respondents indicated that the awarding of certificates to graduates is not an integral aspect of their training, while 176 (16.3%) of respondents indicated that the receiving of certificates is an essential aspect at the end of their training. While the registration of the informal apprenticeship enterprises is not an essential aspect of most enterprises, as shown by 911 (84.4%) of respondents who stated that their business are not registered.

Research Question 2: *How is the informal apprenticeship scheme funded in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?*

The second issue scrutinized in this study is the subject of funding of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, master craftsmen and apprentices were compared and the result of the analysis addressing this is stated in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean of the assessment of the funding among masters and apprentices.

S/N	Funding Method	Mean		Mean set
		Masters	Apprentices	
1.	Personal funding	1.06	1.11	1.10
2.	Government assistance	1.77	1.77	1.77
3.	Fees from trainees	1.84	1.89	1.87
4.	Loans	1.82	1.90	1.88
5.	Proceeds (profit) from trainees	1.81	1.85	1.84
6.	Apprentices pay fees to masters	1.17	1.18	1.84
7.	Apprentices make an in-kind contribution	1.23	1.22	1.22
8.	Apprentices buy toolboxes for training	1.73	1.61	1.64
9.	Masters provide toolboxes to apprentices	1.28	1.33	1.31
10.	Apprentices are paid allowance	1.71	1.77	1.75
Aggregate Mean		1.54	1.56	1.56

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

As reflected in the Table, a total of ten possible funding features were considered. Based on the mean weighting for these factors, 1.06 and 1.84 for masters and 1.11 and 1.90 for apprentices, it is obvious that the range of response weighting falls below the 3.00 approximately, which is agreed by the questionnaire response mode. Similarly, the highest aggregate mean set is 1.88 on the issue of loans, which has a mean of 1.82 and 1.90 for masters and apprentices respectively. While the lowest aggregate mean set is 1.10 on the issue of personal funding, it has a mean of 1.06 and 1.11 for masters and apprentices respectively.

Research Question 3: *What are the challenges being faced by the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?*

The final issue to be examined in this study is the challenges or difficulties being faced by participants (masters and apprentices) in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis. In view of this, the masters and apprentices were compared and the results of the data analysis addressing this issue are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean of the assessment of the challenges facing the Informal apprenticeship scheme, among masters and apprentices.

S/N	Challenges	Mean		Mean Set
		Masters	Apprentices	
1.	Funding challenges	3.42	3.40	3.41
2.	Availability of training facilities	1.66	1.66	1.66
3.	Stable electricity supply	3.14	3.06	3.08
4.	Poor Access to Materials	1.48	1.49	1.48
5.	Irregular Attendance	1.28	1.42	1.38
6.	Poor Participation	1.29	1.46	1.41
7.	Inadequate Workshop space	2.83	3.22	3.12
Aggregate Mean		2.27	2.13	2.34

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

As shown on Table 5, a total of 7 possible challenges were studied. Judging by their mean response weighting, it is clear that three of these problems relate to both masters and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This is as result of the fact that the mean weighting for challenges facing the scheme range from 1.29 to 3.42 for masters and 1.42 and 3.40 for apprentices. In addition, the mean set ranges between 1.38 and 3.41, funding challenge (3.41), inadequate workshop space (3.12) as revealed in the picture extract in figure 1. Stable electricity supply (3.08) was amongst the highest ranked challenges faced by both masters and apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme. The least challenge being faced in the scheme was irregular attendance and this can be attested to by a combined mean set of 1.38.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference between the perception of master craftsmen and apprentices on the funding of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.*

This first hypothesis compared the mean opinion scores of master craftsmen and apprentices on funding. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: z-test of the difference between the funding methods and apprentices on nature of funding of the apprenticeship scheme.

S/N	Funding Variables	Master		Apprentice		z-value	p-value	Remark
		Weighted Mean	S.D	Weighted Mean	S.D			
1.	Personal funding	1.059	.237	1.112	.344	-1.529	.127	Not Sig.
2.	Government Aid	1.771	.442	1.773	.427	-.045	.964	Not Sig.
3.	Apprentices buy tool kits for Training	1.729	.517	1.609	.489	-2.248	.025	Sig.
4.	Loans	1.822	.384	1.900	.300	-2.251	.025	Sig.
5.	Profit from business	1.805	.398	1.848	.368	-1.055	.292	Not Sig.
6.	Apprentices pay fees to master	1.170	.377	1.177	.382	-.184	.854	Not Sig.
7.	Apprentices are paid allowances	1.712	.455	1.771	.429	-1.250	.212	Not Sig

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

As shown on table 6, the two categories of respondents were compared on the nature of funding of the apprenticeship scheme using 7 funding variables. The result shows that master craftsmen and apprentices differ significantly on use the purchase of toolkits by the apprentices and loans as funding requirements. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected for those two funding variables, for the remaining five funding variables there is no significant difference.

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant difference between the challenges of master craftspersons and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.*

The second hypothesis was tested to compare the challenges participants encounter in the informal apprenticeship scheme, the results are presented on table 7.

Table 7: Z-test of the difference between the challenges of master craftsmen and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme.

S/N	Challenges Variables	Master		Apprentice		z-value	p-value	Remark
		Weighted Mean	S.D	Weighted Mean	S.D			
1.	Funding challenge	3.424	.659	3.398	.650	.364	.716	Not Sig.
2.	Availability of training tools	1.655	.781	1.656	.807	-.011	.991	Not Sig.
3.	Stable electricity supply	3.136	.978	3.060	.890	.772	.441	Not Sig.
4.	Poor Access to Raw Materials	1.475	.701	1.486	.683	-.151	.880	Not Sig.
5.	Irregular Attendance	1.280	.508	1.456	.667	-2.047	.041	Sig.
6.	Poor Participation	1.288	.634	1.456	.667	-2.480	.014	Sig.
7.	Inadequate Workshop space	2.839	1.086	3.222	.849	-3.862	.000	Sig.

Source: Research Fieldwork 2012.

As revealed on Table 7, the p-value for challenge variables 1 to 4 are all higher than 0.05 at which the test was conducted, the differences are therefore not significant, thus the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the master craftsmen and apprentices on the challenges they face in the informal apprenticeship scheme. However, the p-value for irregular attendance (0.041), poor participation (0.014) and inadequate workshop space (0.000) are all less than 0.005 at which the test was conducted. Thus, there is a significant difference in the opinion of master craftsmen and apprentices on these variables this means that the null hypothesis is rejected. Since the mean for inadequate workshop space is high than the other variables, it is the most significant challenge affecting master craftsmen and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme.

Discussion of Findings

As a result of the study, some findings were reached and revealed in terms of the informal apprenticeship scheme. It was discovered that the age distribution of masters and apprentices in the informal apprentice scheme depicts that a vast majority of participants in the scheme are below the age of 45 years. Velenchik (2005) agreed with this finding by stating that small apprenticeship enterprises are made up of mostly youths (apprentices) with a few experienced masters (adults). The overwhelming number of youths in the scheme can also be explained by the increase in the rate of school dropouts, particularly at the secondary level. Most of these youths are either forced by their illiterate parents to leave school and begin apprenticeship training to earn income and acquire skills.

The study revealed that the funding of the informal apprenticeship scheme is in a manner such that majority of the funds for the scheme are obtained through loans, proceeds from the business and training fees charged. The amount of fees charged seems to be based on the turnover, duration of training, the cost of training and cost of training equipment. This confirms the findings of Breyer (2006), who stated that entrepreneurs who do not have access to bank loans tend to charge significantly higher fees than their counterparts who do. Therefore, difficulty in obtaining bank loans can be considered a major factor that determines the cost of training.

It was also found out through the study that the major challenges plaguing the scheme was funding, stable electricity, duration of training, irregular attendance, inadequate workshop space amongst others. Funding is a foremost problem facing the scheme, because it directly determines the quantity and quality of the enterprises. Access to financial facilities according to Manu (2003), is of great importance to both masters and apprentices, this is because the cost of training, cost of materials, running cost of the business are all major financial factors that small scale enterprises require.

As a final point, the study discovered that other serious challenges facing the scheme besides funding include inadequate workshop space and stable electricity supply. Most enterprises lack enough space for their operations and this can be attributed to several reasons such as congestion of buildings in the cities, cost of renting or buying a larger space among others. This inability of entrepreneurs to afford a large enough workshop space is another factor that creates the problem of inadequate workshop space. It is vital to point out that limited workshop space makes it difficult for trainees to be properly educated as a result of cramped conditions and lack of adequate training facilities for the limited space, thus reducing efficiency and effectiveness of the training exercise.

Conclusion/Implications

Considering the present status of operation of the informal apprenticeship scheme and the challenges confronting it, the scheme does not have the prospects of adequately realizing its overall objective of functionally employing youths into different sectors of the Nigerian economy. Also it lacks properly structured training programmes and lessons that will guarantee that the fundamentals of a particular trade or skill are taught to apprentices. This is because the scheme is not receiving adequate attention and support from the government, the general public and the organized private sector.

The implication of this conclusion is frightening, at this present level of operation these training centres will at best produce half-baked graduates who can neither employ themselves nor train others functionally. This is true considering the fact that most training centres are ill equipped and manned by master craftsmen without much education or skill to offer apprentices. Furthermore, it was discovered that the funding arrangement of the scheme is inadequate; particularly funds for developmental purposes, provision of necessary materials, tools and technology are generally deficient. This has resulted in shockingly awful training centers and enterprises with little or no equipment for training purposes. It also was

discovered that most masters require some form of financial payment from apprentices in the form of training fee.

This implies that the prospects of developing functional low and middle level manpower through the apprenticeship scheme may not be realized if no attention is given to the scheme urgently. Similarly, the transmission of knowledge and skills to apprentices through non-formal education means will be seriously jeopardized, thus preventing youths from being able to acquire skills that will make them more employable, self-employed or employers of labour. These poorly trained graduates from these schemes with sufficient material empowerment will only go back to the labour market for white collar jobs.

With such implications as the above all the resources such as money and time spent on the informal apprenticeship scheme would have been a colossal loss to the economy. This is a type of loss that the economy can hardly afford, in this era of growing educated unemployment and global economic crisis. As such there is a need to remedy and transform the scheme so as to attain its desired objectives in the country and for it to meet up with its counterpart in developed parts of the world.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following suggestions are made to solve the challenges of the informal apprenticeship scheme and to ensure that the potentials of the programme are harnessed. There is a need to create a link between the formal apprenticeship scheme and the informal apprenticeship scheme, through a process of coordinating both formal and informal apprenticeship institutions to work as a team. This will guide and improve the scheme in terms of funding, administration and management. That is, formal educational institutions where apprenticeship training takes place should be structured in a manner that allows information, personnel and materials to be exchanged between the formal and informal institutions. This will ensure that the informal scheme isn't left behind and it is given equal attention as the formal scheme.

New apprenticeship techniques with flexible programmes, which will provide students of formal educational institutions the opportunity for on-the-job training at trade centers while they are still in school. For instance, students may spend three days in their respective schools and released for the remaining two days for on-the-job training at small scale enterprises within their communities. This will reduce the rate of school dropout in the various institutions in the country, while providing an opportunity for children to acquire necessary vocational knowledge.

A vital characteristic of the apprenticeship system is that apprentices take part in the production process of enterprises and learn the trade through observation, learning by doing, demonstration and instructions. Masters usually train their apprentices on all aspects of the trade, without focusing on a specific production process. This technique has its benefits, but it is also filled with disadvantages especially if not properly carried out. As such it is vital that masters are constantly trained and retrained using mobile workshops, so as to enable them obtain current methods of educating trainees in their trade.

Electricity is an essential requirement needed by most informal apprenticeship centers, because these businesses tend to operate with electricity and in the absence of stable electricity supply, these enterprises use generators, thus increasing their operating cost and the cost of training. As such it is vital that the government solves the problem of electricity supply in the country, since it will reduce cost and create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

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