

AN INVESTIATION OF STRATEGIES TOWARDS IMPROVING INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME IN WOODWORK TRADES IN NIGER STATE

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Abstract

This study was designed at improving informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades. A survey designed was adopted, the respondents of the study consisted of 120 masters craftsmen and 58 apprentices. The total population was 178. A structured questionnaire was pilot tested on 80 respondents who are not part of the population for the study, after being subjected to face validation by four experts. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was yielded to be 0.86 using cronbach Alpha. Three research questions and 2 hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study revealed among others that the training programme is not back-up with well integrated element of theoretical knowledge about the field concerned, lack of adequate training in facility and non-accreditation of the programme in order to maintain standards. Based on theses findings, the study recommended among others that, Seminars, workshop and evening part-time programme should be organized for mastercraftsmen and the programme should accredited. Labour and productivity ministry should solicit for funds/materials from international organizations, government agencies and philanthropist for the training of apprentices.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, woodwork, Trades, craftsmen, Training programme.

Introduction

Informal education refers to indigenous or traditional education. It is the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage to continuously foster the well-being of mankind. House and Parramatta (2009) noted that informal education is non-credential based. However, it contains recognizable and valued knowledge, skills and attitudes which are essential for meaningful role playing in the society. Informal education begins at birth and it is long term and multivariate in nature. When a child is born, his experiences are confined to what he learns from the parents and the environment as a member of a cultural group (Esu & Junaid, 2008)

According to Mayer (2003), apprenticeship is a contractual agreement undertaken by the master craftsman and the apprentice through which the apprentice is trained for a prescribed work process through practical experience under the supervision of the master craftsmen. It is a form of work price learning which enables the apprentice to have on-the-job training. (Ritta 2003, Singh, 2000). Hence, Okoro (2009) point out that apprenticeship was the first method prevalent in Nigeria before the establishment of vocational and technical institutions. He stated further that even today, the apprenticeship programme produces the bulk of skilled and semi-skilled work force in the country. Apprenticeship varied from district to district and from craft to craft (Mohammed, 2004).

Oluseun (2002) describes woodwork technology as one of the most prominent early technical occupations in the history of human civilization, especially in the areas of art work, design, hand tools, tools for farming and hunting, ritualistic objects for worships, etc. woodwork technology is popular technical occupation practiced in virtually all parts of the country in different forms.

Continuing education is crucial to the acquisition of essential life skills that enable individuals to live in literacy society. Christopher and Grubb (2006) observed that continuing education applies not only to formal sector individuals, but also to small and macro-enterprises and rural and urban informal sector, to improve their skills, products services to the society and to enhance their competitiveness. Continuing education is increasingly been seen as a productive of life and overall development growth, and it is an improvement for out of school youth and non-literate adults (Christopher & Grubb 2006 UNESCO, 2008).

Niger state is located in the North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. 90% of the indigenes are predominantly farmers, Blacksmiths, brass; copper works and bead manufacturing were practiced in Bida area of the state long before the nineteenth century (Osuala, 2004). The local smith forged spears and arrows which were used for hunting other farm implements and household tools were made from locally mined iron. So many youths were trained in blacksmithing and foundry works. The emphasis later shifted to other trades such as carpentry, foundry, forging electrical works, fitting and machining of mechanical companies and a host of others. Majority of the furniture craft practitioners were found in urban towns, they produce furniture to cater for individual domestic needs in other to enhance good quality of goods by these practitioners, a research of this nature is necessary in order to help diagnose these trades to a greater height.

Statement of the Problem

Apprenticeship system constitutes principally vocational training, which is concerned with securing skills for an occupation. Like any unorganized system, the Nigerian information apprenticeship training programme has the problem of imparting to the learner's the theory and the principles underlying what they are learning. Mayer (2003) notes that the training is neither structured nor systematic. He observed further that during the training, the apprentice copies whatever his master does and in so doing, a good amount of unsatisfactory practices are picked up.

Most workshops do not have the required tools and machines. They are able to carry out repairs and production due to adaptation to tools and machinery. The educational level of the master craftsmen and apprentices is very low. In fact majority of them are primary leaving certificate holders. The occupational success of an individual as well is upgrading of his or her technical skills are closely linked to the possession of basic education. Eze (2005) suggests that some element of formal training in the form of part-time evening classes could enhance the learning process for those in the information sector. Based on some of the deficiencies associated with the information apprenticeship training as highlighted above, the outcome of the study will assist in improving the programme.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine:

- (i) Ways of providing the facilities needed for improving the training of apprentices in woodworks trades
- (ii) Ways of accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades.
- (iii) Suitable strategies for conducting educational programme for master craftsmen.

Research Questions

- (i) What are ways could facilities be provided in order to improve the training of the apprentices in woodwork trades?

- (ii) What are the ways for accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades?
- (iii) What are the suitable strategies required for conducting continuing education programme for master craftsmen.

Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of master craftsmen and the journeymen on ways through which facilities could be provided for the training of apprentices in woodwork trades

Ho₂ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of master craftsmen and the journeymen as regard accreditation of the training programme.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The study was conducted in seven educational zones in Niger state namely; Bida, Borgu, Minna, Rijau, Kutigi, Kontagora, Lapai and Suleja. The population for the study focused on six urban towns. The choice of these towns was based on their cosmopolitan nature, which make them very attractive to young people migrating into them. A list of woodwork trades and crafts that are registered with the Ministry of trade, commerce and Industries in these towns were obtained. The entire population for the study comprises 640 master craftsmen and apprentices.(Niger state Ministry of Trades, Commerce and Industries 2004). Face validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts in Industrial & Technology Education Department of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha (α) formula. The choice of Cronbach Alpha was based on the fact that, it provides for a more stable measure of homogeneity (Ezeh 2005). Pilot testing of the instrument was carried out in Nassarawa State with 150 respondents comprising of 100 master craftsmen and 50 apprentices. This forms 58.6% of the total respondents. The result of the reliability coefficient reanged from 0.88 to 0.98 while the final reliability coefficient was 0.86.The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers with six (6) research assistants. This was to ensure prompt and timely return of the questionnaire and to avoid questionnaire mortality. The return rate was 100%.The data obtained for the study was analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviations and t-test statistics. In taking decision for the research questions, any item with mean of 3.50 and above was considered ass agreed, while any item with the mean of less than 3.50 was considered as disagreed. For the hypothesis, if the t-cal is more than the t-table, the null hypothesis is rejected but if the t-cal is less than the table, the null hypothesis were accepted.

Research question 1

In what ways could facilities be provided in order to improve the training of the apprentices in woodwork trades?

Table 1: Means and standard deviation of respondents on ways facilities could be provided for the training of apprentices in woodworks trades

| S/No | Ways | X | SD | Remarks |
|------|--|------|------|---------|
| 1 | Central equipment borrowing center. | 4.62 | 0.48 | Agreed |
| 2 | Linkage with nearby technical college or polytechnics for sharing facilities | 3.03 | 1.31 | Agreed |
| 3 | Support from non-governmental organization (NGO') | 4.78 | 0.41 | Agreed |
| 4 | Grant from National Directorate of Employment (NDE) of employment/ tools acquisition | 4.50 | 0.50 | Agreed |
| 5 | Support from philanthropist/philanthropies for tool acquisition | 4.51 | 0.50 | Agreed |

| | | | | |
|---|--|------|------|--------|
| 6 | Support from industrial training fund | 4.92 | 0.24 | Agreed |
| 7 | Support from machine tools companies | 4.92 | 0.26 | Agreed |
| 8 | Support from science and equipment center for borrowing tools. | 4.53 | 0.52 | Agreed |
| 9 | Provision of soft loan to trainers by ministry of labour and productivity to procure necessary tools' materials and equipment. | 4.55 | 0.49 | Agreed |

Table 1 shows that 8 items have their means scores ranked above the cutoff point of 3.50 only one item which mean score ranked below the cut-off point of 3.50, this indicates that some of the respondents are not in agreement on sharing of facilities with near by technical colleges or polytechnic. The least standard deviation of 0.24 as shown in the table, is an indication that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that support from industrial training fund (ITF) for tools and equipment will assist in improving the training of apprentices in Woodwork trade.

Research Question 2

What are the ways for accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades?

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the respondents on ways for accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades

| S/No | Ways | \bar{X} | SD | Remarks |
|------|---|-----------|------|---------|
| 10 | Examining the availability of adequate tool box used by the trainees | 4.42 | 0.06 | Agreed |
| 11 | Ensuring a well organized and properly structured training programmes by labour and productivity ministry. | 4.37 | 0.53 | Agreed |
| 12 | Regular supervision of trainees by the trainers in every activity | 4.42 | 0.84 | Agreed |
| 13 | NABTEB involvement in conducting a standardized practical examination for trainees at the end of their training programme for certification | 3.17 | 1.39 | Agreed |
| 14 | Preparing a comprehensive training guide for the trainers by labour and productivity ministry so as to attain the programme objectives. | 4.39 | 0.63 | Agreed |
| 15 | Involvement of resource personnel for expert advice. | 4.49 | 0.53 | Agreed |
| 16 | Affiliating the programmes to NDE | 4.37 | 0.73 | Agreed |
| 17 | Stipulation of age limit for new entrants is 15 years and above. | 3.26 | 1.39 | Agreed |
| 18 | Training duration for each trade should be 3 years | 3.15 | 1.31 | Agreed |
| 19 | Verifying whether the recruitment of new entrants is done based on the availability of workshops tools and equipment. | 4.43 | 0.59 | Agreed |

From Table 2, 7 items have their mean scores ranked above the cut-off point of 3.50, while 3 items have their mean scores ranked below the cut-off point. This is an indication that some of the respondents are not in Support of items 13,17 and 18 respectively. This could also mean that some of the respondents are not in Support for the inclusion of these three items as way for accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades.

However, items 11 and 15 received the least standard deviation of 0.53 each. Consequently this is evidence that greater number of respondents agreed on ensuring a well organized and properly structured training programme by labour and productivity ministry and also involvement of resource

personnel for expert advice as ways for accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades.

Research Question 3

What are the suitable strategies required for conducting continuing education programme for master craftsmen?

Table 3: Respondents means and standard deviation on suitable strategies required for conducting continuing education programme for master craftsmen

| S/No | Ways | \bar{X} | SD | Remarks |
|------|--|-----------|------|---------|
| 20 | Organizing seminar by experts from colleges of technology, polytechnic and the universities. | 4.52 | 0.51 | Agreed |
| 21 | Organizing evening classes for master craftsmen and journeymen by instructors from technical colleges and colleges of technology | 4.42 | 0.66 | Agreed |
| 22 | Introduction of field trips to other enterprises by NDE, labour and productivity ministry | 4.51 | 0.05 | Agreed |
| 23 | Introduction of videotaped CD/CD Rom programme by ministry of information and national orientation. | 4.55 | 0.49 | Agreed |
| 24 | Mass media and broadcasting programmes by ministry of information and national orientation. | 4.45 | 0.55 | Agreed |
| 25 | Conference type group study in each of the urban towns by ministry of labour and productivity, NDE and ITF. | 4.23 | 0.57 | Agreed |

Table 3 indicated that all the 7 items have their mean scores ranked above the cut-off point of 3.50 with the least standard deviation of 0.49. This indicates that greater number of respondents agreed on the introduction of field trips to other enterprise by NDE;labour and productivity ministry will be suitable strategies for conducting continuing education programme for master craftsmen.

Hypothesis 1

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of master craftsmen and the apprentices on ways which facilities could be provided for the training of apprentices in woodwork trades.

| Groups | No of Subjects | Mean | S.D | df | p-level | t-calculated | Table -t | Remark |
|-------------|----------------|-------|------|-----|---------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| Craftsmen | 120 | 23.69 | 5.51 | 138 | 0.05 | 0.83 | 1.98 | Significant |
| Apprentices | 58 | 23.90 | 5.13 | | | | | |

Table 4: t-test comparison of mean responses of master craftsmen and the apprentices as regards ways through which facilities could be provided for the training of apprentices in woodwork trades

The result presented in Table 4 shows that, craftsmen obtained a mean score of 23.69 and standard deviation of 5.51. The apprentices obtained a mean score of 23.90 and standard deviation of 5.13. The table also revealed that, the calculated t-value obtained was 0.83 while the table-t value at 0.5 level of significance was 1.98. Since the calculated t-value of 0.83 is not greater than the t-value of 1.98, then there is no significant difference between craftsmen and apprentices. This hypothesis is thereby upheld, despite the fact that there is difference in the mean score of the craftsmen (23.69) and that of apprentices (23.90). This hypothesis is upheld because, the difference in craftsmen and apprentices is not significant.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of master craftsmen and the journeymen as regard accreditation of informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork trades.

Table 5: T-test analysis of the mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on accreditation of informal apprenticeship training programme in woodwork

| Groups | No of Subjects | Mean | S.D | df | p-level | t-calculated | Table –t | Remark |
|-------------|----------------|-------|------|-----|---------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| Craftsmen | 120 | 23.69 | 5.51 | 138 | 0.05 | 0.83 | 1.98 | Significant |
| Apprentices | 58 | 23.90 | 5.13 | | | | | |

The result presented in table 5 shows that, craftsmen obtained a mean score of 23.26 and standard deviation of 5.86. The apprentices obtained a mean score of 25.01 and standard deviation of 3.64. the table also revealed that, the calculated t-value at 0.05 level of significance was 1.98 since the calculated t-value of 0.08 is less than the table-t value of 1.98, then there is no significant difference between craftsmen and apprentices. This hypothesis is thereby upheld. Even though there is difference in the mean score of the Craftsmen (mean score 23.26) and apprentices (mean score 25.01), the difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the data collected and analysed, the following principal findings were made.

1. The training programme is not backed up with related theoretical contents. Based on this fact's, the contents for improving the training programme for the trades used in the study were identified by the respondents.
2. Lack of adequate training facilities.
3. No financial assistance to master craftsmen and the apprentices by the government in terms of loan to procure tools and equipment.
4. No assistance from NGOs and other philanthropists/philanthropies for tools and equipment.
5. Competencies and skills acquired by the trainees are not back up with relevant and recognized certificate.
6. The training programme is not accredited.
7. No statutory "Body" appointed by the government or any other agencies to oversee the activities of the training programme.
8. No consultancy service(s) rendered to master craftsmen and the apprentices by any government agency/specialist in order to broaden their knowledge.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, it can be agreed that even though informal apprenticeship training has contributed in producing bulk of skilled and semi skilled work force in Niger state, yet the training programme is neither structured nor systematic.

Evidence from the study revealed that majority of' master craftsmen and the journeymen belong to low socio-economic bracket and therefore, cannot afford to procure modern tools and equipment. Though they identified various ways which facilities could be provided for the training of apprentices in these trades?

Financing from the study also reveals ways of accrediting informal apprenticeship training programme and suitable strategies required for conducting continuing education programme for

master craftsmen. Therefore, improving informal apprenticeship in woodwork trades will bring about increased patronage in the quality of product produced by these woodwork practitioners.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

- (i) Ministry of Labour and Productivity should develop a training guide for all vocational and technical trades.
- (ii) Re-introduction of mobile workshops to assist master trainers for tools borrowing.
- (iii) Government should assist master craftsmen and the journeymen with soft loan to procure tools and equipment.
- (iv) Ministry of labour and productivity should solicit for financial assistance from philanthropists, local or international organizations, example of some of these organizations are; UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WORLD BANK etc...These organizations are highly spirited with voluntary donations viable for improving the training programme.
- (v) Operators of informal apprenticeship training programme should be supervised by labour and productivity ministry of the state.
- (vi) The training programme should be affiliated to NDE& YES.
- (vii) The minimum age of new entrants should be clearly stated by labour and productivity ministry.
- (viii) Training duration for each trade should be clearly stated by labour and productivity ministry.
- (ix) The number of apprentices taken by master craftsmen should be commensurate to the size of his workshop. No master trainers should be allowed to take more apprentices other than he can properly train.
- (x) Ministry of labour and productivity should organize continuing education programme for master craftsmen and the journeymen.

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