

Perceptions of Craftsmen and Apprentices Regarding Self-employment Skill Acquisition in the Kenyan Informal Sector

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In recent years, the Government of Kenya has embarked on a new economic development strategy which emphasizes job creation in the informal sector through self-employment and apprenticeship training (Republic of Kenya, 1986). Informal apprenticeship training takes place at ordinary workplaces in the informal sector and makes production tasks part of the instruction as a means for acquiring technical skills (Bas, 1988). Craftsmen demonstrate the desired quality of performance for apprentices and then serve as coaches while apprentices complete the same tasks. Apprentices learn the correct actions and procedures by observing and then assisting craftsmen in providing products or services that are sold to customers. Performing these tasks enables apprentices to acquire the skills and knowledge of their trade (King, 1987).

Apprentices may also acquire self-employment skills and knowledge of business practices through the same process of observation and participation (McLaughlin, 1990). However, this process is more indirect and depends on the craftsmen's willingness to involve apprentices in the business aspects of operating businesses (e.g., ordering materials, supervising other workers, and interacting directly with customers) (Allen, 1977; King, 1989). According to

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Fluitman (1992), informal apprenticeship training extends well beyond the acquisition of technical skills. Apprentices also learn a wide range of self-employment skills, such as how to negotiate with customers and how to determine the cost of producing a product (Bas, 1988; Ferej, 1994; McLaughlin, 1990).

Previous research about informal apprenticeship training has largely focused on the general characteristics of training systems as well as on technical skills acquisition (Allen, 1977; Chepkong'a, 1990; King, 1977). However, very little research has been conducted to determine *self-employment skills* acquired through informal apprenticeship training systems (Republic of Kenya, 1992; King, 1990). Previous research (Bas, 1988; Fluitman, 1992) indicates that extensive apprenticeship training exists in the informal sector and although it has obvious shortcomings, the informal apprenticeship system has merits that cannot easily be achieved through formal training systems. Therefore, it could be important to build on what already exists in the informal training system rather than to initiate a new training system. For example, Fluitman (1992) focused on the importance of understanding how those already working in the informal sector acquired their skills.

Training interventions in the informal sector should be based on knowledge of informal sector craftsmen and apprentices. Their major problems and aspirations should also be examined (King, 1989). The extent of self-employment skill acquisition in the informal sector is not evident. It is, therefore, important to determine, in a systematic manner, what self-employment skills are needed, what skills are taught, and whether training interventions might be feasible and cost-effective (Tomecko & Aleke-Dondo, 1992; Engleman, 1993; Yambo, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which self-employment skills were taught by craftsmen to apprentices involved in informal apprenticeship activities. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of craftsmen and apprentices regarding the degree that self-employment skills are taught in informal apprenticeships?
2. What are the perceptions of craftsmen regarding their own self-employment skill competencies?
3. What are the perceived training needs of craftsmen regarding self-employment skills?

4. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of teaching self-employment skills within the informal apprenticeships?

In view of the pivotal role of the informal sector in enhancing economic development and creating employment in Kenya, an assessment of traditional apprenticeship training is crucial to understanding the dynamics of entrepreneurial and self-employment skill acquisition in the informal sector (Republic of Kenya, 1989; House, Ikiara, & McCormick, 1990). In many developing countries, the resources of formal vocational training systems can serve only a small segment of the population and are generally aimed at meeting the needs of formal sector businesses (Fluitman, 1989; Yambo, 1992). For this reason, informal apprenticeship training has received a great deal of attention as a viable alternative source of skill training (Bas, 1988; King, 1990; McLaughlin, 1990).

Method

Subjects

The population for this study was defined as craftsmen and apprentices who were involved in apprenticeship activities in the informal sector in Nairobi, Kenya. The craftsmen and apprentices in this study worked in small manufacturing and service businesses in the auto-repair, metalworking, and woodworking trades. For the most part, the businesses employed between one and five workers and most often, these workers were apprentices who were trained on-the-job. The primary mechanism used by craftsmen to recruit apprentices was through relatives and friends.

From four randomly-selected informal sector centers (Gikomba, Jericho, Kamkunji, & Ziwani), a total of 52 craftsmen who met the criteria of at least one year of work experience were selected. They were also required to have apprentices with at least six months of experience as trainees. Out of 52 craftsmen, 24 were from auto-repair, 16 were from metalworking trades, and 12 were from woodworking trades. Each of the 52 craftsmen was asked to identify an apprentice who had completed at least six months of training in their trade area. A total of 52 apprentices were identified by the 52 craftsmen. Thus, 52 craftsmen and 52 apprentices were established as correlated-groups or matched-pairs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Guides for interviewing the craftsmen and apprentices were developed by the researchers after reviewing the literature and

obtaining input from various experts. In this study, self-employment skills were defined as skills related to small business management and business operations including: (a) business planning, (b) marketing, (c) simple bookkeeping and financial management, (d) costing and pricing, (e) simple inventory control, (f) public relations, and (g) time management.

For the most part, the instruments used for interviewing craftsmen and apprentices were similar; however, the instrument used for interviewing apprentices excluded the items related to business characteristics and self-employment skill competencies. These items were judged to be of marginal relevance for apprentices.

The instrument for interviewing craftsmen was organized into five main parts. Part I of the instrument was designed to address general characteristics of craftsmen and apprentices such as (a) gender, (b) age, (c) marital status, (d) formal education, (e) source of skill training, and (f) trade test certificates acquired. Specific business characteristics of craftsmen were (a) self-employment skill training received, (b) trade association membership, (c) training or work experience, (d) number of apprentices, and (e) methods of recruiting apprentices.

Part II of the interview guide addressed the degree to which self-employment skills were taught in informal apprenticeships. These included (a) business planning, (b) marketing, (c) simple bookkeeping and financial management, (d) costing and pricing, (e) simple inventory control, (f) public relations, and (g) time management. Five items were developed to assess the extent to which each self-employment skill area was being taught. A four-point rating scale where 1 represented "Very Rare" activity while 4 represented "Very Frequent" activity was utilized to measure the perceptions of craftsmen and apprentices regarding the extent to which self-employment skills were taught by craftsmen and learned by apprentices involved in informal apprenticeship activities.

Part III of the interview guide addressed the competency of the craftsmen in the seven self-employment skill areas (described above). The craftsmen indicated their perceived competency level on a four-point rating scale where 1 represented "No competence" and 4 represented "High competence."

Part IV of the instrument was designed to gather data on the craftsmen's perceived training needs related to the development of self-employment skills. The craftsmen were asked to indicate their training needs in each of the seven self-employment skill categories

in rank order format. They were then asked to indicate their preferred training delivery option from a group of five choices including customized training, seminars, evening classes, weekend classes, and full time courses. These preferences were also to be placed in rank order format.

Part V of the instrument was designed to gather data from craftsmen and apprentices on perceived strengths and weaknesses of teaching self-employment skills within the informal apprenticeship system. Craftsmen and apprentices were also asked to provide suggestions for improving the informal apprenticeship training system.

All the craftsmen and apprentices in this study were interviewed using a structured interview guide. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. The interview method of gathering data was chosen due to the possible illiteracy of craftsmen and apprentices. Efforts were also made to observe training activities and workplace facilities during the visits.

Results

The findings of this study revealed that apprentices had more formal education than the craftsmen. Approximately two-thirds of the apprentices had completed primary education, and almost one-third had completed secondary education. In contrast, 9.6% of the craftsmen had no formal education, 61.5% had completed primary education, and 28.9% had finished their secondary education.

A large majority (76.9%) of the craftsmen interviewed had acquired their technical skill training through informal apprenticeships in the informal sector. Only 13.5% of the craftsmen had acquired their technical skills through formal apprenticeships in medium and large businesses. The craftsmen who had received institutional training through the Youth Polytechnics accounted for only 9.6%.

Self-Employment Skills Taught through Informal Apprenticeships.

Using a four-point rating scale (1 = Very Rare, 2 = Rare, 3 = Frequent, 4 = Very Frequent), the craftsmen and apprentices were asked to indicate their perceptions regarding the degree that self-employment skills were taught in informal apprenticeships. For analysis purposes, mean ratings of craftsmen and apprentices for each item were calculated.

The findings of this study indicate that the degree of teaching self-employment skills such as business planning, bookkeeping,

marketing, and inventory control was rated low by both craftsmen and apprentices, while the degree of teaching public-relations and costing was rated moderate. The degree of self-employment skill acquisition through the informal apprenticeship system appeared to be limited to skills that were used regularly by craftsmen in their day-to-day business operations. For example, most of the craftsmen interviewed in manufacturing and service businesses provided customized products and services that required craftsmen to determine production or service costs. These activities provide apprentices with opportunities to observe and practice costing techniques. Similarly, most of these businesses conduct their sales on a personal level in very competitive markets which encouraged craftsmen to emphasize customer-relations to their apprentices.

Most of the craftsmen interviewed did not maintain financial records or have written business plans. According to a report by the International Labor Organization (1991), this lack of documentation among informal sector craftsmen might be due to an inability to write numbers, or to attitudes that recordkeeping is "too much trouble" and that they can remember the necessary information. In some cases, the lack of formal recordkeeping was motivated by the fear of taxation.

The specific self-employment skills examined in this study were (a) business planning, (b) marketing bookkeeping, (d) costing and pricing, (e) inventory control, (f) public relations, and (g) time management. Craftsmen thought they were teaching apprentices these self-employment skills. Apprentices disagreed, indicating that these self-employment skills were not taught by craftsmen during their informal apprenticeship training. These differences in perceptions between craftsmen and apprentices could be explained by considering the structure of the informal apprenticeship training system.

Informal apprenticeship training is poorly organized and does not follow any set curriculum. For the most part, there is no demarcation between training and normal production activities. The training is mainly characterized by incidental and unorganized activities structured around the day-to-day operations of the business. As a result, it is difficult for craftsmen involved in informal apprenticeship training to evaluate what they have taught and determine what should be taught next. More importantly, these findings indicate a need for a more structured curriculum to guide the training process and enhance effective self-employment skill acquisition through the informal apprenticeship training system.

Craftsmen Perceptions of Self-Employment Skill Competencies

The findings of this study indicated that the majority of the craftsmen rated their competency-level in bookkeeping, inventory control, time management, business planning, and marketing as low while they perceived their competency level in public relations and costing to be moderate. They felt least competent with bookkeeping skills and 90.38% reported that their competency level in business planning skills was low. Only 9.62% reported moderate competency in business planning skills. Most of the craftsmen interviewed indicated a need to expand their businesses; however, none of them had prepared a written plan for business expansion.

A positive relationship was detected between the competency level of the craftsmen in the self-employment skills and the extent to which the craftsmen taught these skills. The effectiveness of informal apprenticeship training in self-employment skills was limited to the capabilities of craftsmen to teach these skills. This suggests that upgrading the self-employment skills of the craftsmen could improve the effectiveness of the overall informal apprenticeship training system.

Perceived Needs of Craftsmen Regarding Self-Employment Skills

The craftsmen were asked to specify their training needs from a group of seven self-employment skills including (a) business planning, (b) marketing, (c) bookkeeping, (d) costing and pricing, (e) inventory control, (f) public relations, and (g) time management. They were required to rank order the seven self-employment skills in order of their training preference with 1 as "Most Needed" and 7 as "Least Needed." To determine the most required skill training by the craftsmen, a mean rank score was calculated for each self-employment skill (see Table 1).

Bookkeeping skills ranked first ($M = 1.7$) among the craftsmen as the type of training most needed to improve their businesses. Marketing was ranked second ($M = 2.4$), while business planning was ranked third ($M = 2.9$).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (ILO, 1991; McCormick, 1988; Ndua & Ng'ethe, 1984; Tomecko, 1991) which concluded that most craftsmen in the informal sector were limited in self-employment skills such as bookkeeping, marketing, and business planning. The findings indicated that almost all the craftsmen had acquired their skills training through the informal apprenticeship systems. Most appeared to lack basic self-

Table 1*Skill Training Needed by Craftsmen*

Self-Employment Skills	Mean Rank	Training Need Distribution						
		Most Needed					Least Needed	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	<i>M</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>
Bookkeeping	1.7	26	16	8	2	0	0	0
Marketing	2.4	11	20	13	4	4	0	0
Business Planning	2.9	9	12	15	10	5	1	0
Costing & Pricing	3.7	5	3	11	24	3	4	2
Inventory Control	5.3	1	0	2	4	26	10	9
Public Relations	5.8	0	1	3	5	6	21	16
Time Management	6.2	0	0	0	3	8	16	25
	<i>N</i>	52	52	52	52	52	52	52

employment skills. Few kept business records or had written plans for business expansion. Most reported low competency in the self-employment skills that were the focus of this study. This indicates that the informal apprenticeship system is ineffective in preparing apprentices with self-employment skills.

The craftsmen in this study were asked to rank the various training delivery options from a group of five choices including (a) customized training, (b) seminars/workshops, (c) evening classes, (d) weekend classes, and (e) full time courses. A vast majority of craftsmen indicated that customized or on-site training ($M = 1.31$) was the best option through which they could be taught self-employment skills while attending to their businesses at the same time. Of the 52 craftsmen, 38 ranked customized training as their first option.

Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Teaching Self-Employment

Six categories of responses regarding the strengths of the informal apprenticeship training system were examined. These were (a) affordable in terms of fees paid, (b) provided incentives (pocket

money for trainees), (c) provided relevant skills for potential jobs, (d) provided a variety of marketable skills, (e) provided flexibility (individually paced), and (f) apprentices were able to meet and interact with potential customers. Approximately 54% of the apprentices and 48% of the craftsmen indicated that the main strength of the informal apprenticeship system was its ability to provide skills training that was relevant to potential employment opportunities in the informal sector. Most often, apprentices started their own businesses or worked for craftsmen after the training was completed. Some craftsmen observed that former apprentices were rarely unemployed.

Five categories of responses regarding the weaknesses of the informal apprenticeship system were identified. These were (a) lack of tools and equipment, (b) training activities are product or service dependent, (c) inadequate workspace, (d) lack of theoretical knowledge, and (e) loose contracts with apprentices. Approximately 77% of the craftsmen and 67% of the apprentices reported a lack of tools and equipment as a major weakness of the informal apprenticeship training system. In addition, approximately 60% of the craftsmen and 50% of the apprentices reported product or service dependency of the informal apprenticeship training activities as a major weakness. Most often, training activities were conducted only when there were customer requests for products or services. Similarly, inadequate workspace was reported as a major weakness of the system by 53.9% of the craftsmen and 44.2% of the apprentices. The craftsmen observed that they did not have space either for tool storage or product display.

Of the 52 apprentices, 38.5% reported a lack of theoretical knowledge in the trade area as a major weakness of the informal apprenticeship training system. None of the craftsmen reported this as a weakness of the training system. However, 9.6% of the craftsmen reported contractual agreement between craftsmen and apprentices as a major weakness of the system. Apprentices could leave at any time, even before acquiring adequate skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (Fluitman, 1992; ILO, 1991; King, 1989) which concluded that informal apprenticeship training only provides basic technical skills that are vital to production and commercial survival in the informal sector, but fails to provide adequate self-employment skills that can

enable apprentices or craftsmen to improve productivity or facilitate growth of the businesses.

Studies of the informal sector (Fluitman, 1989; ILO, 1991; Poschen, 1989) have indicated that the needs of the informal sector craftsmen are many and that training alone will rarely be effective. A variety of supplementary measures may be required at both macro- and micro-levels if the growth of informal sector businesses is to be realized. Fluitman (1989) indicated that training should be viewed as a mechanism that causes other inputs to yield success. This suggests that interventions that address training as well as access to credit, technology, and markets are more likely to have an impact on productivity and growth of the informal sector businesses.

Some countries, like Kenya and Mali, have attempted to improve the business environment for the informal enterprises through special legislation or by introducing special development zones for the informal sector. Kenya and Malawi have attempted to include the informal sector in their development programs, making it an integral part of national development policies (Peters-Berries, 1993).

Most of the craftsmen in this study did not use power tools, instead they were using obsolete hand tools. The craftsmen indicated that, due to lack of capital or access to credit, they were unable to purchase appropriate tools for production and training. Only a few craftsmen were able to borrow or hire equipment for special jobs (e.g., spray painting equipment in auto-repair or special knives for carving decorative patterns in wood). A few of the craftsmen interviewed appeared to have potential for growth. With appropriate tools and the skills to utilize these tools, these craftsmen might improve the quality of their products or services and expand their businesses. As informal sector businesses expand, they create more employment and training opportunities for many young people in Kenya who are unemployed or underemployed.

Training interventions in the informal sector are more likely to be successful if they are supported at both the macro- and micro-levels. At the macro-level, training interventions for the informal sector should be part of the national training policy which is regularly reviewed and reformulated according to labor market demands and training needs of the country (Fluitman, 1989; King, 1989). Macro-level interventions should help create an enabling environment in terms of policies and infrastructure.

Intervention efforts at the micro-level require the full cooperation and participation of informal sector craftsmen through their

trade associations, particularly those craftsmen who are already involved in apprenticeship training. In his study of traditional apprenticeship in West Africa, Fluitman (1992) concluded that trade associations were important to successful interventions in the informal sector. According to Fluitman, these associations could act as sounding boards and channels for providing assistance to the informal sector craftsmen.

The findings of this study revealed that the craftsmen were pessimistic about the activities of their trade associations. It appeared that most of the informal sector associations had not addressed major development issues that affect their members. For example, a study by the International Labor Organization (1992) concluded that trade associations could be important to efficient management of credit schemes in the informal sector. However, the capacity of these associations needs to be strengthened to enable them to play an effective leadership role in the informal sector activities with respect to training and credit.

To train craftsmen and apprentices effectively at a low cost, it would be reasonable to upgrade the skills of local successful craftsmen within the informal sector who would then pass on their improved skills to other craftsmen and apprentices. Upgrading the self-employment skills and presentation skills of these craftsmen is important in order to ensure both effective instruction and management of their day-to-day business activities. Research studies (Fluitman 1989; Harper, 1989) indicate that there are advantages to relying on craftsmen who combine training with modeling what they teach. Thus, potential entrepreneurs should be taught by successful craftsmen with business experience. Moreover, close personal relationships and trust between craftsmen and apprentices have been shown to be particularly desirable for training in the informal sector (Bas, 1988; House, 1981; King, 1977).

According to Fluitman (1989), many craftsmen and apprentices in the informal sector have mixed feelings about learning in formal settings; thus, successful local craftsmen have some advantages over "outsiders" in serving as trainers in the informal sector. Not only are they more familiar with the background and aspirations of their trainees, they can also communicate with them more easily.

The majority of the craftsmen in this study indicated a preference for customized or on-site training. They indicated that they were not able to leave their workplace for any length of time since this would lead to an unacceptable loss of income. This finding

indicates that training activities in technical training institutions (TTIs) might not be appropriate for informal sector craftsmen. Such training activities are typically based on the assumption that participating craftsmen will conform to prescribed programs, time schedules, and locations. In addition, many informal sector craftsmen may be illiterate, thus making it impossible to use conventional training methods.

For training interventions by TTIs for the informal sector to be acceptable, there should be a closer interaction between TTIs and informal sector craftsmen involved in apprenticeship training. The TTIs might need to revise their curriculum and training methods to reflect the training needs of the informal sector craftsmen as well as apprentices. Studies of informal sector training by Bas (1988) indicated that a modular approach to training, with emphasis on visual and oral presentation, might be more suitable for skill upgrading and retraining in the informal sector. This suggests that TTIs could provide training to informal sector businesses by developing training packages for technical skills taught in the informal sector as well as self-employment skills such as simple bookkeeping, marketing, business planning, and cost estimating.

TTIs could be involved in training craftsmen as trainers for the informal sector, either through small business centers or extension services. The fact is that craftsmen in the informal sector are constantly involved in training apprentices. By upgrading their teaching techniques through the use of a simplified curriculum, training activities could be more efficient and effective. Informal sector businesses involved in this collaboration might be able to provide students from TTIs with internship or attachment opportunities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which self-employment skills were taught by craftsmen to apprentices involved in informal apprenticeship activities. Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were reached.

In general, the degree of teaching self-employment skills by craftsmen to apprentices in this study was low. For the most part, this lack of teaching self-employment skills in the informal apprenticeship system was attributed to skill deficiency on the part of the craftsmen. The craftsmen reported either low competency or no competency in most of the self-employment skills examined in this study.

Perceived competency of the craftsmen in self-employment skills was influenced by their level of formal education. Those with more education felt more competent than those with less education in the self-employment skills examined.

An urgent need exists to provide self-employment skills training through associations to the informal sector craftsmen who train apprentices. There is also an urgent need to provide informal sector apprentices with theoretical knowledge in their trade areas as well as self-employment skills. Access of informal sector craftsman to modern technology (i.e., terms of tools and equipment) is also needed. Most craftsmen appeared to be using obsolete hand tools. Access to credit will be essential to improving the technology used by informal sector craftsmen.

Informal apprenticeship training depends on production activities and day-to-day business operations. However, it might be possible to develop and use standardized training packages because most of these activities are repetitive and routine. Curriculum packages could be developed to provide self-employment skills training through associations to the informal sector craftsmen who train apprentices. Self-employment skills training packages might include simple bookkeeping and accounting, marketing, business planning, cost estimating, quality control, and delegation techniques.

Training interventions in the informal sector should include provision of credit to craftsmen who teach apprentices how to acquire appropriate tools and equipment. This might be achieved by establishing a revolving loan fund or by creating opportunities for accessing credit through informal sector associations. Apprentices who have completed training and require start-up capital should be provided with access to credit through a revolving loan fund managed by the association.

Successful local craftsmen should be identified and trained as trainers of other craftsmen in the informal sector. This might be achieved by upgrading their self-employment and presentation skills. It might also be necessary to provide them with incentives such as credit or capital for business expansion.

Training activities for upgrading the skills of informal sector craftsmen and apprentices should either be conducted on-site or customized because of the specific training needs and inflexible work schedules. The training activities for upgrading the skills of informal sector craftsmen and apprentices should emphasize visual and oral presentations methods because of their low literacy level.

In view of a large number of young people who acquire their skills through the informal apprenticeship training system, curriculum packages for various technical trades taught in the informal sector should be developed so that an organized approach to training can be adopted. This will require upgrading the technical, presentation, and management skills of apprentice instructors.

A closer interaction or collaboration between TTIs and the informal sector businesses involved in apprenticeship training should be developed. In such a collaboration, the informal sector businesses might provide students from TTIs with internships or practical attachment opportunities. The TTIs could provide short training programs for informal sector craftsmen and apprentices. The skill upgrading program could include self-employment skills and technical skills as well as related theory in the technical trades.

The capacity of informal sector associations should be strengthened to provide an effective channel for implementing training interventions in the informal sector. This might be achieved by providing leadership training for association officials and creating awareness of government policies and regulations through seminars or workshops.

Sheds, used by informal sector craftsmen, could be converted to business incubators which would be managed by the associations. This might be achieved by providing (a) shared secretarial services, (b) common business management consultancy services, (c) shared machines and equipment, and (d) product design and technology transfer units. To enhance sustainability of these centers, subsidized rent should be charged. A time limit (perhaps 5 years) should be established so that older businesses leave as they become stable enough to obtain their own premises. This will create space for new start-up businesses.

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