

The perceived objectives of roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the objectives of roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria. Seven statements of objectives were derived for the study, and respondents were required to score each of the seven statements between '1' and '7' in their order of importance and representative of the objectives. The instrument was administered to 150 master craft trainers and 750 apprentices. Four out of the seven statements were rated the most important and most representative of the objectives of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship program in mid-western Nigeria – (a) to acquire technical skills, (b) to provide pre-employment opportunity for youths, (c) to instil discipline among youths and (d) to provide opportunity for interpersonal relationships.

Introduction

Education as a means of survival is referred to as the change in the behaviour of an individual from birth to death. This means that what an individual learns as a way of acquiring knowledge and

knowing about a certain concept(s), which brings about changes in the individual, is education. During the 1940s (the colonial era), education in Nigeria was geared towards the training of people who would be able to read and write and subsequently be employed as clerks and interpreters (Fafunwa 1974). The observation above seems to have narrowed the meaning of education, as its boundary did not extend beyond reading and writing.

The national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998) states that education is an instrument of change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society. The policy, however, focuses on the total transformation of the society at large as a contribution from individuals who have been educated. The policy identifies what could be referred to as positive change and development of the society, which can be traceable to the education of its citizens; the intellectual ability and brainpower developed by human beings to perfectly operate within their environment.

Education does not only imply the process of going to school, as it is more than just having a formal education, hence education is described by Urevbu (1991) as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. From this definition, school is only one agent through which education is provided. There are other agencies of education as well: the home, the family, the peer group, the mass media, churches and so on. Acquisition of knowledge is realised through informal, non-formal and formal means. These forms of education will be carefully harnessed, with detailed emphasis on non-formal education as it forms the pivot on which this research is hinged.

Formal education is the form of education which is organised under the direction of the school and runs from primary to the university level. It includes, in addition to general/academic education, studies in a variety of specialised programs and institutions for full technical and professional training. Formal education in Nigeria is given to

a person from the age of six and is broken into six years of primary school, three years each for junior and senior secondary, and four years in higher education – hence the 6-3-3-4 system of education.

Informal education, on the other hand, is the process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences in his/her environment (families and neighbours, from work and play, the marketplace, library and mass media). Through informal education, a child learns how to use the rudiments of some language or languages before going to school. This form of education, which is as old as the origin of mankind, is unorganised and unsystematic, as different individuals could learn about a particular concept or vocation in different ways, since there were no pre-arranged plans for learning procedure. This form of education does not require any basic quality to qualify an individual in acquiring it, and it is acquired through observation, imitation and so on. According to Oriaifo (1999), agencies for informal education include organisations such as youth clubs and associations, as well as political parties where participants select learning objectives. The above clearly shows that informal education programs were usually open and non-competitive and this indicates high plurality of potential clientele, which the overall system can accommodate.

Non-formal education, which serves as the bedrock of this research, is the form of education which can be publicly organised to educate its recipients outside the normal school setting. This implies that this form of education is given to individuals in a non-school setting. Non-formal education is also as old as the existence of humans, as it was a concrete means of educating youth through apprenticeship to take over from their parents and old ones. Over time, there have been some innovations in non-formal education. Today, non-formal apprenticeship programs are provided in many areas such as tailoring, hair weaving and iron bending, carpentry, brick laying, auto-mechanics, auto-body repairing, air conditioner maintenance,

tyre vulcanising, electrical installing, furniture making, welding/fabrication, sheet metal work, machining (turning), fitting and foundry work and so on. An important component of the non-formal apprenticeship programs in Nigeria is that a contract agreement is entered into between the master craftsman and the apprentice. Such contractual agreement incorporates the fee payable by the apprentice and the period of training. Also spelt out is the penalty when either party breaks the contract.

Uwameiye and Iyamu (2002) stated that the set-up for the training workshop involves the master craftsman (trainer), the journeyman and the apprentice (trainee). The master craftsman has full control of the workshop. The roadside workshops are organised along the line of the master/apprentice situation, where the master craftsman owns all the tools, workshops and skills from which the apprentices benefit. Ugonabo and Ogwo (1991) reported that the system is faced with the task of providing a range of training and technical competence needed by the society and the economy, and through articulated measures, enhances the economic well-being of the nation. According to Okogba (1991), the often illiterate or semi-illiterate master models develop training programs lacking basic theoretical concepts. Although local tradesmen may function successfully in the labour market, they remain in the final analysis in the lower cadre of manpower personnel and their practical expertise degenerates into mechanical manipulation. It is no gainsaying that the roadside apprentice program has contributed immensely to the Nigerian economy. It has provided training opportunities to many Nigerians who would have become social nuisances to the public. It has become an indispensable complement to formal education. A lot of demands are being made on it. However, although the contribution which the roadside apprenticeship is making to the national economy is high, leaving the master craftsman to control the training situation of the apprentice seems to place too much responsibility on that person.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's realisation of the importance of the roadside apprenticeship can be seen in its policy which states that "the question of accreditation for roadside mechanics and others who complete training programs through non-formal education will be undertaken by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)". It is more than three decades since this policy was promulgated, but no roadside mechanic has been accredited, and there is no plan for implementing the policy. Also, there have not been any objective statements written for these apprentice programs. This aspect forms the focus of this paper to investigate the perceived objectives of these training workshops.

Research method

Research question

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following research question was established: What are the perceived objectives of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship training programs?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for this study: There is no significant relationship between the perception of the master craftsmen and the perception of apprentices.

Population and sampling

The population of this study consisted of all master craft trainers and apprentices of roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria made up of two states, namely Edo and Delta States. From each state, three towns of heavy industrial activity were purposively selected for the study. In each town, five roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs (auto-repairs, auto-electricity, furniture making, iron bending, and carpentry) with workshops that have not less than five apprentices were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. In each workshop, five apprentices were used

for the study. Where the number of apprentices was more than five, random sampling was carried out to obtain the five apprentices. In each of these programs in a town, five workshops were randomly selected. In total, 150 master craft trainers and 750 apprentices were included in the study.

Instrumentation

The Roadside Mechanic Apprenticeship Programmed Objective Questionnaire (RMAPOQ) comprised seven items of objectives of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs, and these were derived from the literature. Respondents were required to score each of the seven statements between '1' and '7' in their order of importance and representative of the objectives of roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria. The scoring order was such that the highest score of '7' was given to the statement of objective that was most important and most representative of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs, while '1' was given to the statement of objective that was least important and least representative of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs. The questionnaire was given to five colleagues in vocational education and adult education to ascertain the validity of the items.

For reliability the questionnaire was administered to 15 master craft trainers and 20 apprentices selected from the target population, but who were not included in the study. The questionnaire was administered on the same group two weeks after the first administration. The test-retest method using the Pearson r Product Formula was used to obtain the reliability co-efficient of 0.78.

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to master craft trainers and apprentices, and completed questionnaires were collected and responses were collated.

Data analysis

The data analysis was carried out using mean rank order.

Table 1: Rank order of perceived objectives of the apprenticeship programs

No.	Objectives	Apprentices' mean responses	Rank	Master craft trainers' mean responses	Rank	Average mean	Rank order
A	To provide pre-employment training opportunity	5.04	2 nd	3.10	3 rd	4.07	2 nd
B	To acquire basic knowledge for further advancement	2.44	7 th	2.28	6 th	2.36	7 th
C	To provide opportunity for interpersonal relationships	3.42	4 th	3.20	2 nd	3.31	4 th
D	To instil discipline among the youth	4.88	3 rd	2.58	4 th	3.73	3 rd
E	To provide opportunity for upgrading knowledge and skills	2.94	6 th	2.19	7 th	2.57	6 th
F	To acquire professional attitude	3.26	5 th	2.45	5 th	2.86	5 th
G	To acquire technical skills	5.60	1 st	3.66	1 st	4.63	1 st

Results

Table 1 indicates that the four most important objectives of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship training programs as perceived by the respondents were: (a) to acquire technical skills, (b) to provide pre-employment training opportunity, (c) to instil discipline among youths and (d) to provide opportunity for interpersonal relationships. They obtained overall weighted means of 4.63, 4.07, 3.73 and 3.31 respectively to rank 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively.

The marginal objectives of the training programs included: (a) to acquire professional attitude, (b) to provide opportunity for upgrading knowledge and skills and (c) to acquire basic knowledge for further advancement, with means of 2.86, 2.57 and 2.36 to rank 5th, 6th and 7th respectively.

The means of the two groups (apprentices and master craft trainers) were ranked and correlated to establish relationship between their views. The calculated value of 0.93 is greater than the critical value of 0.71 at a degree of freedom of 7 and alpha level of 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected at $p < 0.05$. The conclusion, therefore, is that there is a significant relationship between the apprentices and master craft trainers in their perceptions of the objectives of the training programs.

Discussion

Table 1 reveals that "to acquire technical skills" had the highest mean average and was the highest ranked objective of the training programs. Roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs enable recipients to acquire technical skills. These practical operations involve the forming or shaping of materials, or the assembling of parts. These practical skills are mostly devoid of knowledge information. Because of this deficiency, apprentices are hardly able to perform any operations that are new to them, except those they have

seen their master carry out. In the practice of skills, the recipients observe the master trainer perform the operations, and through imitation, the apprentices then practise the skills until they become proficient in them.

The data also indicate that “to provide training for employment” is the second rated objective. The focus of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs is geared towards training for employment. Graduates of mechanic apprenticeship programs may be self-employed or take up employment with government and parastatals. Graduates interested in taking up employment with government or parastatals take the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity ‘trade test’ examinations, which enable them to seek jobs in these areas. It is usual that a recipient be able to operate the type of workshop he/she receives training in. These workshops are mostly small-scale businesses. In order to be well acquainted in the trade, recipients may undertake journeyman opportunities. Such opportunities allow the recipient some monetary allowances, while at the same time expanding his/her practical know-how.

The data further show that “to instil discipline among youth” was the third rated objective for the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs. Youth restiveness in the form of ethnic conflicts and religious wars are very rampant in Nigeria. Social vices such as armed robbery, gangsterism and cultism are on the increase. Many youths do not possess skills and cannot find themselves in any paid jobs or in self-employment. The high discipline stressed in the apprenticeship programs and the hope of gainful employment help to curb the excesses of apprentices. They are expected to be punctual and regular at work, show respect to customers and conduct themselves adequately. Punishments are given when wrongs are committed.

The fourth rated objective for the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs was “to provide opportunity for interpersonal relationships”. Interpersonal relationships have to do with

relationships between members of the same organisation and other people in society. Apprentices are trained to relate to other apprentices by making them work in groups, which instils a group orientation in the apprentices.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, this research study recommends that:

- the four highly rated objectives should be adopted as the objectives of the roadside mechanic apprenticeship programs in mid-western Nigeria;
- the much awaited accreditation of apprenticeship programs in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998) by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should be carried out without any further delay. The accreditation program will help to set a base for the operation and organisation of apprenticeship programs in Nigeria;
- technical colleges should organise evening programs for the master craft trainers and journeymen to acquire or update their level of technical information. The acquisition of knowledge of technical information will provide a sound basis for the recipients to be able to make judgment about technical situations; and
- government should set a program for reforming these numerous apprenticeship programs scattered across the country. This program should be comprehensive, setting in motion the policy for the organisation of roadside apprenticeship programs. It should also incorporate a program for literacy training for the master craftsmen and journeymen who are mostly illiterate.

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~~An evaluation of the National Teachers' Institute's manpower training program for teaching personnel in mid-western Nigeria~~

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~~This study evaluated the manpower training program for teaching personnel in mid-western Nigeria by the National Teachers' Institute. Overall, 240 participants involved in the training program who were randomly selected from the area constituted the sample for the study. A questionnaire designed by the authors was the major instrument used for data gathering. Analyses of the results showed that the programs are fairly effective in upgrading the skills and knowledge of the participants. It was also discovered that the programs have impacted on the level of performance of the participants in the area. It was recommended, inter alia, that the institute be adequately funded to enable it achieve its mandate to the fullest. Since the programs are considered relevant to the training needs of the participants, it would be proper to do everything humanly possible to consolidate on the gains of the programs.~~
