

POLICY BRIEF

MAIN FINDINGS FROM A PILOT ON UPGRADING INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIPS IN JORDAN

UPGRADING INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIPS: A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

While formal apprenticeship systems have proved to ease school-to-work transitions in developed economies, informal apprenticeships remain the chief mode of skills transfers in most informal economies. “Informal apprenticeship” refers to a system where a young learner (the apprentice) acquires the skills for a specific trade in micro or small enterprises, learning and working side-by-side with an experienced craftsman, based on an informal training agreement embedded in local norms and traditions¹.

International Labour Organization (ILO) projects in Africa have demonstrated that well-designed approaches can enhance informal apprenticeship practices, based on specific improvements negotiated between the master craftsman, the apprentice and a vocational training centre. A methodology was designed for this purpose².

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: A PRIORITY FOR JORDAN

A School-To-Work Transition Survey released in Jordan May 2014 by the Department of Statistics and the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicates that 60.6% of Jordanian youth are inactive, and the youth transition from school to work can be extremely long. This can be partially explained by the fact that almost one-half of the youth population is in education. However, education alone is not a sufficient reason for this high level of inactivity. The youth unemployment

rate in Jordan is also high at 24.1%, almost twice the global average of 12.4 per cent in 2012, and three times as high as those of the 25-39 year-old population, and almost seven times higher than Jordanians between 40 and 54. Informal employment still involves 53.2% of the employed young people in the country, and the majority of working youth receive a wage that is below the average. Youth employment also has a strong gender aspect, with women scoring worse on all indicators.

1 Resource guide on upgrading informal apprenticeship, ILO, 2012 http://ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_158771/lang-en/index.htm

2 Resource guide on upgrading informal apprenticeship, ILO, 2012

TABLE 1

Category	Garages	Printing	Total Respondents
Master craftspersons	28	34	62
Skilled workers	31	33	64
Apprentices	135	33	168
Total respondents	194	100	294

Three projects are being piloted in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia to serve as a basis for an Arab version of this methodology. This article summarizes the findings and the results from the Jordan pilot, carried out by ILO, in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation (IYF), between August 2013 and March 2014, as part of the SIDA-funded project on “Tripartite Action for Youth Employment in Jordan” implemented within the framework of the ILO Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP).

1. Rapid assessment

- **An initial rapid assessment was implemented to understand informal apprenticeship practices in garages and printing workshops.** The sample surveyed included the following respondents in 150 garages and 32 printing workshops in the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid. These three governorates were selected because they account for 71% of the population (Estimated population, DOS, 2013) and the greatest concentration of garages (80%)³ and almost all printing workshops⁴:

The purposeful sampling method targeted 10 respondents of each category in each governorate and in Amman. The number of apprentices in Zarqa was increased as part of a drive to more closely review the child labour situation. Standard ILO questionnaires were adapted to the targeted sectors, and tested with master craftspersons, apprentices, and skilled workers in each of the target areas, to ensure that the questions were correctly understood.

Interviewers were trained on the questionnaires for two days.

Additional qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 key informants including from the Ministry of Labour, the Employer Association for Mechanical Trades, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Al-Balqa Applied University, as well as vocational and technical training specialists. In addition, a specific checklist for occupational safety and health was used through field visits to assess each work environment individually.

- **Most apprentices surveyed came from large families with low income and high dependency rate.** Seventy three per cent of apprentices were living in large families (more than six members). Seventy nine per cent came from families with a monthly income below 500 dinars equivalent to US \$706⁵. As they did not have to pay fees for the training provided and earned money at the same time, informal apprenticeships were an attractive option for them.
- **Technological changes brought in greater opportunities for young women in printing workshops, but the gender division of labour was an enduring feature of all micro-enterprises surveyed.** All master craftspersons, skilled workers, and trainees in the garages were males. In printing workshops, the majority of master craftspersons (94%) and skilled workers (73%) were males, but around half of the apprentices were women, mainly in design offices. However, the rate of female drop out in printing workshops was high, because of the difficulties of being trained

3 National Center for Human Resource Development (NCHRD) study on supply and demand of human resources in Auto Repair sector, 2014

4 Jordan Chamber of Industry, www.jci.org.jo/jci/ar/tabid/117

5 Exchange rate used in this note as those of the Central Bank of Jordan, Daily Official Exchange Bulletin, 8th May 2014

by a male craftsperson, or due to family and social circumstances.

- **Informal apprenticeships took place in micro-enterprises with limited staff, a very small number of apprentices and with seasonal activities.** Seventy four per cent of the surveyed workshops had only one master craftsperson; most (69%) had only one skilled worker and less than 20% of them had five or more skilled workers. In 74% of the workshops there was only one apprentice. Ninety two per cent of these workshops were owned by the master craftspersons themselves. Around 60% of the workshops had a sufficient business volume to provide apprentices with constant training opportunities on a year round basis. Sixty seven per cent of master craftspersons in the printing workshops indicated that work is low during vacations, and 65% of master craftspersons in garages indicated that work is low in winter. Master craftspersons quoted the lack of business as the main obstacle to recruit more apprentices.
- **Recruitment methods were mostly informal.** Most youth (62%) chose a master craftsperson who was a close family relation, such as a father (60%), a brother or another close relative. For some, apprenticeship may have been a required step for the future transmission of assets and businesses. Physical and psychological maturity of the trainee as well as trust and honesty were quoted as the most important criteria for selection of the apprentice. Most surveyed youth (90%) chose informal apprenticeships because they wanted to learn a new skill, because they had dropped out of school and needed an income.
- **The contents, process and duration of informal apprenticeships were not agreed prior to their start, and remained changeable.** In most workshops, tasks were clearly distributed among co-workers, but there was no definite training plan for most apprentices. In fact, the training content was discussed in only 23% of negotiations for work agreement. A large share of master craftspersons also thought the training period should not be limited in duration.

The apprentice would typically first get introduced to workshop facilities, tools and customer relations. This first step would also serve as a trial period

with no definite time limit, in order for the master craftsperson to assess the character of the apprentice and decide whether to keep him/her. The apprentice would then observe skilled workers carrying out their tasks (job shadowing). After some time, increasingly complex tasks would be entrusted to him/her, under the guidance of a skilled worker. The master craftsperson himself would get directly involved in the training at a later stage, for the most difficult tasks. The last phase would be the execution of independent work, still under the supervision of the master craftsperson.

- **Working time and working conditions of apprentices were sub-standard.** Forty five per cent of the master craftspersons and 48% of apprentices stated they agreed on an apprenticeship contract but 92% of apprentices acknowledged it was not written. This initial discussion / agreement focused mostly on wages, working hours, provision of food and in-kind support.

Most apprentices (88%) spent 8-10 hours a day, six days a week in the workshops. Ten per cent of workshops had no running water, and 21% had no toilets. Apprentices did not get annual leave and most (92%) were paid a weekly compensation, with 24% of them being paid between 20-30 dinars (around US \$28-42). The majority (82%) of master craftspersons declared they provided for treatment and compensation in case of sickness or injury. Verbal abuse of the apprentice by the master craftsperson and fellow workers was not uncommon. Some cases of physical abuse were reported⁶.
- **There was no record available on accidents and absences, but based on direct observations by OSH specialists, the apprentices were exposed to a high level of occupational risk.** For both garages and printing workshops, observation revealed that high-risk situations often related to the following conditions: tight spaces; uneven floors; lack of proper storage of materials (especially gas cylinders/chemicals);

6 These conditions contravene chapter 5 of the Jordanian Labour Act and its amendments No. 8 of 1996 in articles 36, 37 and 38 according to which a written contract for on the job training should include a training period and specified wages, and requires the trainer to have the relevant qualifications and the trainee to be of 18 years of age or older. The work performed should not threaten his/her health, or put him/her at risk.

wrong labelling; lack of proper ventilation; lack of daily cleaning; lack of proper lighting; lack of proper ladder and staircases; unsafe wiring of cables (not isolated, no earthing, no protection devices;) insufficient distance between the machines and protective barriers on revolving parts; use of old equipment and lack of adequate maintenance; high sound levels; lack of fire alarm systems, evacuation plans, extinguishers and safety exits; lack of safety instructions, safety boards and posters; and lack of adequate safety knowledge, personal protection equipment, first aid equipment and health facilities. Safety and health was also not part of the training programme for 27% of the apprentices.

- **The incidence of child labour was high, especially in garages where it appeared as a cross-generational phenomenon.** Thirty per cent of the apprentices in garages and three per cent in printing workshops were under 16, the minimum age for employment in Jordan. In addition, all working children below 18 were exposed to numerous hazards in these workshops, sometimes in direct contradiction of the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour ratified by Jordan, and the list of hazardous work issued by the Government in 2011 that details occupations from which children below 18 should be excluded.

This was not a new phenomenon: the majority (61%) of the master craftspersons and a quarter of the skilled workers in garages started their profession as apprentices before the age of 16, while 94% of craftspersons and 85% of skilled

workers started after 16 years of age in printing workshops. Almost 26% of garage master craftspersons still prefer to start training youth between 14 and 16 years of age. In printing workshops 50% of the masters argue that the best age to start learning the profession is 17-19, while 31.3% of them think that the best age is 20-22.

2. The pilot process and outcome

An ILO & IYF Collaboration

The ILO, in collaboration with the International Youth Foundation (IYF), implemented a pilot initiative for upgrading informal apprenticeships in 31 garages in Jordan. The initiative aimed at (a) developing apprenticeship contents and processes, (b) linking trainees with employers for on-the-job training, (c) improving occupational health and safety conditions at the workplace, (d) improving organization and workplace management, (e) organizing testing for occupational licenses of the trainees.

The initial training for apprentices included the elements described in Table 2. After initial training, apprentices were matched with garages for on-the-job training. They were provided with transportation allowance, insurance against work-related injuries, work uniforms, skills testing for occupational licenses at the end of the programme, and awards for best trainees.

TABLE 2: COMPREHENSIVE INITIAL TRAINING

Subject	Purpose	Light Vehicle Repair	Quick services for trucks / buses
Technical English language skills	identify related terms for auto repair and service of trucks and buses, based on a glossary	30 training hours	15 training hours
the IYF Passport To Success (PTS)	develop personal competencies, problem solving, behavioural skills, and conflict management skills	48 training hours	48 training hours
Basic OSH awareness	identify hazards and learn how to protect one-self	24 training hours	10 training hours
Basic computer skills	get into source information and organize knowledge	30 training hours	15 training hours
Technical skills		300 hours (2/3 practical)	150 hours (2/3 practical)

Mentoring at the core of the apprenticeship process

Three mentors were responsible for following-up with apprentices through weekly field visits to workplaces. Skills acquisition was tracked through score cards and logbooks filled out first as self-assessment, validated by the master craftsperson and by the mentor. These score cards were developed with simple competency profiles based on the Arab Standards for Classification of Occupations (ASCO 2008). The mentors also played the role of mediator with apprentices, master craftspersons and even parents, in order to limit programme drop-out. The feedback from these mentors insisted on the importance of a positive relationship between the apprentice and the master craftsperson for successful skills acquisition.

Efforts to improve the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) situation

An OSH expert also conducted field visits to garages for evaluation and coaching. A list of required improvements was agreed with garage owners. Follow up visits and evaluations were conducted. Some workshops also benefitted from fire extinguishers, first aid kits and occupational safety posters as emergency measures. Some modest improvements were noticeable, especially in terms of cleanliness and workplace arrangement. The main reasons for non-compliance were identified as the lack of financial means, but also excessive self-confidence of garage owners and their indifference to the subject.

Work improvement support

A qualified expert conducted site visits to garages participating in the programme for evaluating workplace management, and provided coaching on work improvement⁷. The main areas of improvement included the availability of technical information to the client and correct billing. In addition, two times five half-day skills upgrading sessions were conducted by experienced engineers on hybrid cars and vehicle electronic systems for 11 master craftspersons.

Positive outcomes

Seventy trainees between the ages of 18 and 27 benefited from this programme. Of these, 53 (76%) completed the basic training and the on-the-job training component. Sixteen (23%) opted for basic training and

a two-week internship instead⁸. Of the 53 apprentices, 18 (34%) had community college diplomas, 18 (34%) had secondary school certificates, 10 (19%) completed 10th grade (basic education), six (11%) were Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) graduates and finally one (1.89%) was an UNRWA vocational training graduate. Forty one (77%) of the apprentices were trained in the field of repair of light vehicles and 12 (23%) in the field of quick service for trucks and buses.

Forty seven (89%) apprentices out of 53 were granted an occupational license at skilled level by the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, after testing. Four have not applied yet for the test, and two have failed it. These licenses will facilitate the graduates' mobility through the national recognition of their skills by both employers and training institutions.

Forty nine apprentices (92%) obtained a job mostly in the same repair shop in which they were trained. The four who did not yet pass the test were not employed at date of publication. Out of the 49 former apprentices employed, 44 (90%) earn a salary above the minimum wage of 190 JD (US \$268), while 34 (69%) receive a salary between 200 and 250 dinars (US \$282-353), and 10 (20%) earn a salary above 250 dinars (US \$353). Both apprentices and master craftspersons provided very good feedback on the overall effectiveness of the programme.

The pilot showed positive results in **reducing the transition period** for the apprentices to become employed skilled workers, with less than one year of training, as opposed to up to five years in traditional informal apprenticeships. The dropout rate from the programme was also significantly reduced. The employment rate of the pilot graduates and the salaries are comparable to those of informal apprenticeships.

CONCLUSIONS

Upgrading informal apprenticeships has a great potential as a poverty reduction method as it directly targets the main skills training to which the poor have access. It is a step by step process, based on constant

7 Based on ILO methodology Work Improvement in Small Enterprise (ILO WISE)

8 Most of these 16 wanted to finish their studies in community colleges, universities and sign-up for high secondary school exam (Tawjihi). One dropped out because of a job offer abroad.



negotiations with the employers; i.e. not all improvements in terms of contract, OSH, training contents and working conditions can happen at once, and trust building is as important as the immediate outcomes in the training process.

The pilot showed positive results in terms of employment of graduates, and shortened school to work transition, but there are issues in terms of (a) the absorption capacity of trainees by small enterprises, a matter requiring a flexible approach, (b) the OSH and work improvement components that must be embedded within a more comprehensive strategy, in order to achieve their potential.

There is tension between the Jordanian legal framework on Child Labour, which rules out the hiring of children between 16 and 18 years of age in several occupations, and the complex reality of the informal economy that requires preventive and participative approaches. There is scope for a revision of the list of hazardous works in terms of hazardous tasks rather than hazardous occupations.

There is also a need for more rigorous and longer term impact evaluations on larger scale samples to identify the net employment impact of the upgraded apprenticeship model, and the return on investment for this innovative intervention.

REFERENCES

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