

Vocational skills formation in the informal economy in Tanzania

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Empirical study

Artisan ventures within seven crafts and trades:

- Basketry
- Car mechanics
- Carpentry
- Charcoal stove making
- Mattress making
- Paper craft
- Radio repair

The notion of informal economy

.. unincorporated enterprises owned by households with characteristics such as not being separate legal entities, goods or services for sale, activities carried out inside or outside owner's home, no account...



The notion of skills formation

A process whereby individuals develop skills necessary for everyday life and gainful employment

A focus on form and content i.e. tasks, activities, tools and social organization related to concrete social and material circumstances

Research methodology

Instruments were intertwined observations and interviews on average three sessions

Still photograph was taken of work processes, tools and materials

The photographs were an integral part of the work and a means to enhance the artisans' communication about their work and apprentices' communication about their skills development

Broad areas:

Entrance to the craft/trade

Operations (products, raw material, tools and work processes)

Formation (curriculum and practices)

Markets

Community (shared repertoire of routines, tools and ethics)

Apprentices were also interviewed on the formation process, what learnt and how, motive for joining, qualities required to learn the craft/trade

Results – the artisan ventures

- Single or partner enterprises were the main organizational set-ups
- Size varied from 1 to 15
- Average ten years of operation
- 3 to 21 apprentices attached
- Acceptance of apprentices on kinship basis was weak
- Inheritance from elders within the ward
- Primary school leavers (masters and apprentices)
- Work sites outside own premises

Formation practices and processes

Apprenticeship built on:

- Apprentices accepted on mutual understanding
- No specific length of training- duration not fixed in advance
- Masters had an ideal curriculum (not made explicit to the apprentice)
- Skills formation based on the task/order of the day
- Skills formation and production processes were reversed (carpentry)
- Common formation instruments included co-working, apprentices observing in practice or while practicing and doing individually
- Craft/trade specific ones were hand-on-hand within the charcoal stove makers and apprentices asking questions in the garages
- Written texts were absent (no records, manuals)
- Trust and being trustworthy the core values

Concluding

Specific form of apprenticeship

The loose framework

The allowing framework

The low level of technology

The commitment to take on the own youth

The absence of forming craft/trade associations

The unique character of skills formation in whole
but also in specific crafts

Critical areas

Vulnerable in relation to developments in the formal economy and national policies and mostly in relation to supply of raw material.

A critical question is what happens after the training when the market is not there any longer. What skills are portable?

Need for follow the life course of apprentices to see what happens over time

Interventions or not? In relation to the character of most of the activities in this study (low educational background, low level of technology, the actual products, lack of capital accumulation) it would be difficult to improve their productivity and income-earning capacity