

Informal collaborative Learning opportunities at Mozambique's TVET institutions and Industry

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Introduction

This research study **paper discusses the current situation and different approaches** to prevailing neglect of informal learning both at technical vocational education a training (TVET) institutions and industry in Mozambique.

How the TVET institutions and industry should be convinced to acknowledge that there are useful informal learning settings?

Informal learning concept at workplace is an elusive and yet hard to define.

✓Eraut (1994) “learning happens on a daily basis almost from birth, but the majority of what is learned over a lifetime is likely to be restricted to facts and abilities learned through school, college, or from in-plant training courses.”

Examples from practice

Most workplace neglect and do not codify the knowledge workforce acquired from informal settings within or outside the company.

However, there are **good practices**:

- ✓ *Instituto Nacional de Formação Profissional e Emprego* (INFPTE) committed to
 - ✓ ISO 9000 (City & Guilds)
 - ✓ Vast and profound curriculum reform
 - ✓ Shaping apprentices competences respond to the industry needs
- ✓ *Mozambique aluminium* (Mozal) company has:
 - Specific training activities catering for working processes.
- ✓ The core belief is then that these organisations (amongst other) trace and identify a little of the vast amount of informal learning that takes place. These experiences can be adapted in other contexts.

What do we really understand by informal learning?

- ✓ **Pickerden** (2004) affirms that “learning (...) takes place at work, formally or informally” vis-à-vis outside workplace with a learning syllabus designed and approved by the employer to meet its commercial needs, improve practice.
- ✓ **OECD** (in Ainsworth & Eaton 2010) names informal leaning as that “type of learning never organized. Rather than being guided by a rigid curriculum, it is thought of as experiential and spontaneous”.
- ✓ The ambivalence between formal and informal learning prevails while many studies are one sided.

For informal learning at workplace...

- ✓ **Dale and Bell** (1999) conceptualise it as that which “*takes place in the **work context**, relates to an individual’s performance of their job and/or their employability, and which is not formally organised into a programme or curriculum by the employer* (ibid.).
- ✓ **Billet** (2001) suggests that the **workplace** *is the only or most viable location to develop further their vocational practice*. The workplace is commendable venue most work see it as conducive to their learning experiences.
- ✓ **Pickerden** (2004) adds that Informal learning is within the control of the learner (*self-directed learning*) but, “*if the learners know that they want to learn, decide how, when and where to learn it, and decide themselves whether they have then learnt it*, that would fall within this definition of informal learning” (ibid.).

- ✓ **Cullent Report** (2000) proposes four ‘key defining’ dimensions of informal learning:
 - ✓ *Domain* – the environment in which learning is deemed necessary by the learner;
 - ✓ *Context* – e.g. whether self-directed or community action or education outreach; arrangements for learning – pedagogic characteristics, and
 - ✓ *The process* – how it originates and what it does.

- ✓ Cullent’s (ibid,) study *reflects the generic informal* learning in community based groups not the acquiring work-based technical skills and gaining qualifications on-the-job learning.

- ✓ **Livingstone** (2007) cautions that “in light of general conceptual confusion, varied measures, and the very limited amount of comparative data, researcher knowledge of extent, processes, content, outcomes and trends of (...) *informal learning and training remains very crude*” (p.218) *yet workable field of knowledge generation and skills development*.

Methodology

- ✓ **Qualitative *small-scale case study*** was conducted. An ***in-depth interview technique*** of data collection was used to elicit ***17 respondents'*** insight over the informal learning opportunities (nine apprentices of a TVET institution and eight workers of a company).
- ✓ The study used a ***purposeful sampling*** to collect data from workers' and apprentices' communities in their formal and informal settings.
- ✓ An 'informal learning' theory generation was through ***an iterative, reflective and cyclical research procedure*** to capture the *main themes, story lines, feelings and point of views and perceptions* of 'informal learning' conceptually *emerging from data setting and yet remain there undistorted or not manipulated*.
- ✓ A more thorough discussion with participants led to data ***in-depth analysis, saturation and theorizing the actual respondents' understanding of 'informal learning'***, thus the *generation of an indigenous 'informal learning' knowledge*.

The emerging results show that informal learning encompasses :

1. Setting a clear vision and mission of a learning vocational education organization

“...a [learning] organization (...) without vision and mission is a failing institution” (Apprentice-Respondent1).

A TVET organization should indicate very clearly what constitutes its vision and mission to the members (A-R3).

The industry which thinks of and considers what vision and mission to take (...), it develops both the product it produces and people are smart and competent (Employee-R17).

TVET should cover all programmes and schemes that contribute towards the development of knowledge and skills required for world of working (CARICOM Survey (p.48) cited in Ministry of Labour and Social Security/Barbados, 2001).

2. Operationalize a codified informal learning culture catering for improving practices, processes e qualifications

....codified informal learning is mainly threefold:

First, that it “would have been better *if our college approves and imparts a culture that will help apprentices not only to use informal learning moment to improve what they do but also this type of learning to be recognised and coded accordingly.*” (Apprentice-Respondent 1).

Secondly, that (...) *coded informal experiences of learning increases productivity and values apprentices’ efforts.*” (A-R9)

Lastly, that “(...) ‘*uncodified’ learning practices still many than the codified ones.* (E-R14).

(...) **imparting a coded informal learning takes policy/political will and off course decision making.** (...) the best form of vocational education is one which helps students to develop their capacity to learn, to think critically, to adjust to rapid changes in technology, and to gain some understanding of their later-working environment (Cantor 1989).

3. Research, development and utilization of knowledge in all its dimensions

One respondent's (A-R7) view shows that ***“we need more training ...”[in RD&U]*** and informal learning opportunities is ***“a major field of investment (...) needs resources to work out.” (E-R13)*** ***“(...) more knowledge-based and transformative research [what the] industry should strive for.” (E-R15).***

For Smith (2012), the research studies on ***learning in informal settings/opportunities may not yield exactly what one might anticipate or, at the outset, even hope for.*** (...) As researchers learn that informal learning settings may or may not provide much support for acquiring everyday school objectives (as important as they are), ***they learn that they may well support broader and deeper goals.*** Educators look for growth in personal development, the ability to analyse and critique (...).

4.Situated learning

Situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is organised in such way that **“we always *share what we know to each other*”**. (A-R7).

Indeed, in a sharing atmosphere, **“*there has to be a more collaborative learning between learners so that different dimensions of learning to be utilized*”**. (A-R2). ***Situated learning is participatory in nature and procedural in its approach.***(A-R5). ***Situated learning is activity-based accompanying a variety of fields of learning...***” (E-R17).

Clancey's (1995) study classifies the theory of situated cognition looking at learning as:

- (i) Entailing the individual's **identity and participation**, the **"production of persons in-activity."**
- (ii) Evolving **membership and capability** to participate in different forms.
- (iii) The means of **reproduction and development of communities of practice."**

5. Employees and employers' contract over informal learning needs

The way companies reject apprenticeship is an indicative of a real world of work and that of learning cut-off (A-R2). The employer needs smart attitude towards employees' continual learning needs" (A-R8). Lack of understanding of the contractual value of learning does always impact negatively on the learning needs... (E-R15).

Dale and Bells' (1999) study suggest that **the employer to design opportunities for informal learning at agreeable schedule** while pursuing the work contract (induction, refresher courses, and apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) and knowledge usefulness (Barnett (999)

.....
In conclusion, there has to be a relationship between work-based learning and opportunities for informal collaborative learning to allow a **more reflective learner-based control of the experienced learning** through employers and/or TVET institutions face-to-face and 3D virtual (Fominykh et al, 2012) support bearing in mind that, as Livingstone (2007) points out, **much of [informal learning] may well continue to occur in irregular time and space patterns.**

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Thank you for listening!

Muito obrigado!

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