

# Regional experts' knowledge sharing workshop on upgrading informal apprenticeship

Johannesburg, 22 - 25 April 2013



## Workshop Summary

### Context

Apprenticeship systems in the informal economy remain a major provider of skills in most countries in Africa. Young women and men acquire the skills for a trade or craft in a micro or small enterprise learning and working side by side with an experienced practitioner. The Apprentice and master craftspeople conclude a training agreement that is embedded in local norms and traditions of a society. Apprentices learn technical skills and are inducted into a business culture and network which makes it easier for them to find a job or start a business when they finish their apprenticeship.

The ILO's work programme on informal apprenticeship includes country level research to understand what motivates master craftspeople and apprentices to conclude apprenticeship agreements, and to identify ways to improve the system. Some countries, including those with technical assistance from the ILO, are piloting approaches to improve the system by building on the existing good practices while addressing deficiencies. A step-by-step approach combining different types of interventions is promoted to improve; the quality of training and skills acquired, working conditions, skills recognition beyond the local community, financial arrangements, and young women's access to non-traditional occupations.

The *Experts Workshop on Upgrading Informal Apprenticeship* embraces the 5th Conference of the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeship (INAP), which includes a special focus session on upgrading informal apprenticeship featuring country experiences and lessons learnt from policies and programmes. The knowledge sharing workshop provides additional space for focused discussions, exchange of experience and development of solutions and country action plans. Participants in the knowledge sharing workshop were invited to join the full INAP conference.

The workshop aimed to:-

- improve understanding of the different dimensions for upgrading informal apprenticeship
- strengthen participants' capacity to analyse informal apprenticeship realities in their country
- share upgrading approaches in African countries, enhance understanding of challenges faced in order to apply lessons learnt and address challenges in participants' countries
- identify tools that could help promote the improvement of informal apprenticeship systems.

The workshop was attended by around 50 participants from government ministries, social partners, researchers, practitioners, ILO project staff, and representatives of international organizations including the World Bank and the European Training Foundation. The countries represented included: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

### Acknowledgements

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Africa. Wendy Okolo, Jane Auvre, Marie-Hélène Shala and Joyce Seroto provided valuable administrative support before, during and after the event. Boubakar Savadogo, Expert on skills development and informal apprenticeship, supported workshop preparations, facilitated sessions and prepared the workshop summary.

Participants have been sponsored by ILO projects on skills development and youth employment in Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe; by LuxDev in Burkina Faso and the GIZ in Ghana. Several participants have also been funded by their own national organizations.

The workshop would not have been possible without the committed participation of experts and representatives of governments, social partners and NGOs who shared their country's experience and enriched discussions and knowledge exchange on upgrading informal apprenticeship. Thank you.

## Conclusions

The numerous examples presented at the regional knowledge sharing workshop on upgrading informal apprenticeship and the INAP conference on apprenticeship ([www.inap-network.de](http://www.inap-network.de)) demonstrated how beneficial this training mode is for the employability of youth. The ILO Resource guide on upgrading informal apprenticeship<sup>1</sup> was shared and a draft version of a guide to assess skills of apprentices, skilled workers and master craftspersons was validated and completed. The workshop made a strong call for increased attention to upgrading informal apprenticeship underlining the high need for knowledge sharing and institutional support to improve the apprenticeship systems in place.



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<sup>1</sup> ILO. 2012. Upgrading informal apprenticeship. A resource guide for Africa, Geneva, ILO.  
[http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS\\_171393/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_171393/lang-en/index.htm)

## Workshop proceedings

### I. Introduction – Understanding and upgrading informal apprenticeship systems

According to ILO Recommendations R60 and R117, apprenticeship, including formal and informal apprenticeship, is composed of five major elements:

- Apprenticeship is a training system and not simply a way of learning
- The trainer (master craftsperson) and learner (apprentice) conclude a training contract
- The core of training is enterprise-based
- Training is geared towards a trade or recognized occupation
- Systematic and long-term

Apprenticeship is not to be confused with *enterprise attachment*, in which training takes place primarily in a centre; *internships*, which impart only a limited set of skills relevant for an occupation, *family helpers*, whose main purpose is to contribute to business activities. Informal apprenticeship is a training system operating mainly in the informal economy. Apprentices receive training and allowances, while the employer or master craftsperson benefits from the apprentice's labour service. The apprenticeship is embedded in a set of rules and regulations that set the framework for the training agreement.

Both traditional and informal apprenticeship systems are governed by rules based on customs, social norms or traditions. While a traditional apprenticeship is enforced by the family unit, an informal apprenticeship is enforced by social networks, informal associations, and clans. Discussions highlighted the fact that the dividing line between traditional, family-based, and informal apprenticeship is often blurred. A formal apprenticeship differs in that it is governed by legal acts and formal regulations. The formal apprenticeship is enforced by governments, trade unions, and employers' organizations.

Informal apprenticeships are successful for the following reasons. First, they make economic sense to employers. Employers are able to recover their training investment when the apprentice has become productive but still works at a lower wage level than skilled workers. In addition, the best candidates can be retained. Second, apprentices learn while they earn and have incentives to stay until the end, as they receive a higher wage after completion of training. Third, the skills gained by apprentices are relevant. Training is embedded in work processes and carried out by employers, who know what skills are needed on the labour market.

Informal apprenticeships also have weaknesses. Apprentices sometimes leave the company before completing their apprenticeship for a better wage somewhere else. As a result, master craftspersons have little incentive to invest in training and offer more apprenticeship places in the future. Second, we can find exploitative practices: Master craftspersons sometimes keep certain skills to themselves to prevent apprentices from leaving – and thus make apprentices stay for very long periods without imparting skills. And sometimes, informal apprenticeship masks child labour.

The ILO considers that upgrading informal apprenticeship has four dimensions:

- Quality of training, which can be improved by enhancing access to new skills and technology for mentors, providing new skills for apprentices, and monitoring and assuring training quality and content

- Financing, which is all about ensuring that incentives are in place so that businesses and apprentices participate
- Strengthening of linkages between informal apprenticeships and formal systems. This can be achieved through written contracts, an increased recognition of skills in formal labour markets, and support to formalization of unregistered businesses
- Decent work and equality, which embraces abolishing child labour in informal apprenticeships, improving working conditions and health and safety at work, improving social protection and strengthening gender equality

## **II. Assessing skills in the informal economy**

Assessing skills in the informal economy was one of the key areas on which invited experts worked. The first group worked on the validation by governments of skills of those completing an apprenticeship. The second group validated the draft version of a resource guide for the assessment of skills by business associations or professional bodies.

### **II.1 Recognition of apprenticeship learning by governments**

Workshop participants presented current practice, lessons learnt, and recommendations for recognition of apprenticeship learning and systems for the recognition of prior learning in Mauritius, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania.

During the session participants analysed how apprenticeship systems, as implemented in their respective countries, were recognised by governments. Participants discussed the tools and mechanisms employed to address validation and recognition of skills acquired. Amongst the structures and tools adopted by governments, tools for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) were identified as important to validate informal apprenticeship. Amongst the presentations made to participants, was a video on the RPL process, used in Mauritius.

It was noted that Trade Testing systems were still used in many countries, and in some cases, both RPL and trade testing co-exist. As such it was noted that the foundation to recognise apprenticeship systems was already laid through the legal framework of some countries. However, actual numbers of people who have had their skills assessed remain very small. Some of the difficulties faced in the effective implementation of RPL systems are:

- Countries don't have sufficient number of trained RPL experts.
- The capacity to develop standards, assessment tools and methods is weak.
- Training agencies and institutions don't have adequate capacity and resources to implement RPL.
- RPL requires the development of innovative methods for assessing the skills and knowledge of a person, including a portfolio of evidences; this is different from the traditional methods used in formal education and training system. The efficacy of these approaches in different conditions, particularly in the informal economy is not well established. Also, assessors in formal training systems are also not very familiar with such approaches.
- Current practices for RPL, such as portfolio of evidences could be time consuming and expensive.
- In many cases, Qualifications and competency standards, don't meet the needs of workers in the informal economy.

It was also noted that each country was functioning autonomously without having reached a consensus in their approach. The need for general guidelines and increased knowledge sharing was clearly felt.

The discussion demonstrated that RPL systems remain at very initial stages in nearly all countries. Participants identified a number of challenges for the implementation of RPL systems that can help recognize informal apprenticeship learning.

The following measures are proposed as the way forward:

- To further disseminate the concept, current practice and implementation challenges of RPL in African countries;
- To draft general guidelines on recognition of informal apprenticeship and share them amongst other countries; and
- To encourage the development of legal frameworks to enable recognition of informal apprenticeship.

## **II.2 Validation of skills testing guide by small business associations**

After a brief presentation of the draft guide's content, which had been shared prior to the workshop, participants were divided into smaller groups to work on specific sections of the guide. In conclusion, it was decided that in determining the procedure for assessing skills, these are the stages to follow:

### **1. Creating a skill matrix**

This will be done with the help of the DACUM methodology, which consists of bringing together a committee of practitioners in the field to describe the trade or craft concerned. The main recommendations from the participants for this stage are:

- There are other methods for analysing trades and crafts, and DACUM should not be the only one used.
- Before holding a DACUM workshop, other resources can be consulted such as the database of OHIO skill charts, drawing upon the existing skill matrices.
- A matrix should show not only the skills that are specific to the trade or craft concerned, but also key skills and priority skills.

### **2. Developing assessment tools**

The tests should relate to specific skills (the essence of the trade or craft), the key skills and the non-technical portable skills. The tests for apprentices may therefore take a tripartite form. Points for assessment which relate to non-technical skills should be further developed in the ILO guide.

It is also proposed that reference is made to existing examples of assessment tools in the informal sector, such as those developed in the ILO project for training craftspeople in Harare.

### **3. Organising and carrying out the test**

The organisation of the assessment tests should be entrusted to craftspeople chosen or elected by their peers. These craftspeople will constitute the organising committee.

- As for the assessment panel, this should be appointed by the professional bodies and the public authorities. The members of this committee will not necessarily be the same people as the members of the organising committee. However, the two committees will work together in performing their tasks.

#### **4. Promoting and marketing the system**

When a skills assessment system is set up, there is a need to publicise it so that the target public can take an interest. For this purpose it will be necessary:

- To define standards that are acceptable and accessible for the exercise of the various trades. If the standards are not accessible to those in the target public, it will be difficult to attract them.
- To define a reasonable and flexible period of time for taking the tests. If the time allowed is too long, craftspeople will be reluctant to leave their work and come to take them.
- To agree on a reasonable cost which is manageable for the target public.
- In promoting the assessment system, it is crucial to bring out the following advantages :
  - o Passing the test is a guarantee of the quality of the service provided by the craftsman.
  - o Passing the test is a key to career advancement.
  - o Passing the test is an indication of the learning and a validation of the skills acquired by the craftsman, showing that he or she is competent.
  - o Passing the test enables a person to achieve a professional status and reputation.

#### **5. Calculating the cost of the process**

The process of introducing skills assessment into the informal sector incurs costs of various kinds, namely:

- a) The cost of preparing the skill matrix ; this cost comprises the recruitment of a specialist in the DACUM methodology, the cost incurred through the participation of experts who are practitioners of the trade or craft concerned, and the expenses incurred through the provision of amenities.
- b) The cost of compiling and publishing the skills matrix.
- c) The cost of promotion and information activities among professionals and craftspeople concerning the content of the skills matrix.
- d) The cost of designing topics for assessment.
- e) The cost of training the members of assessment boards.
- f) The cost of carrying out the test, comprising: preparing the subjects and materials to be examined, the expenses of board members, the hire of premises for the test, the certificates and the certificate award ceremony.

Costs a) to e) can be financed by the professional bodies, NGOs or the State, and cost f) would be borne by the candidates themselves.

### **II.3 Skills recognition – combining top-down and bottom-up approaches**

The ensuing "fishbowl" discussion brought both approaches to improving skills recognition together. It revealed that countries which opted for top-down approaches do so usually in the absence of well-organized business or trade organizations. Yet in order to have meaningful outcomes for skills recognition systems, the involvement of the private sector is paramount. Some countries that have developed bottom-up systems are working on linking these to, or shifting them into, formally recognized structures, as

in the case of Ghana or Benin. Participants agreed that ideally, both systems should merge in an effective partnership between the government and the private sector on skills recognition. Yet for the majority of countries, where RPL is still in its pilot phase and only few trade or business associations offer skills assessment systems, this remains a long- rather than a short-term objective.

### **III. How to improve informal apprenticeship systems**

Following the two days of the INAP conference – contributions are included in the conference proceedings<sup>2</sup> – the workshop reviewed the points and topics to which the experts had given most attention. The following characteristics were examined for the various topics in the numbered list below,:

- the lessons learned during the conference
- the matters remaining unresolved (open questions)
- the aspects requiring research
- the tools to be introduced in order to develop the topic

These were the topics identified:

- 1) The role of the business associations and public sector actors in improving vocational training in general, and apprenticeships in particular
- 2) The recognition of learning in the informal sector
- 3) The role of State actors
- 4) The link between formal and informal apprenticeships
- 5) Fundraising and finance for apprenticeships
- 6) Social protection in the informal sector
- 7) Involving young people in choosing the route of vocational training, and especially apprenticeships
- 8) The entry of apprentices to the labour market on completing their training
- 9) The issue of gender in vocational training, and especially in apprenticeships
- 10) The quality of training in the informal apprenticeship system

The group working on the recognition of learning in the informal sector expressed a particular wish for support from the ILO to develop and intensify their work.

#### **1.a Role of Trade Association (English-speaking group)**

Trade associations need to clarify their role in assessment and certification and in monitoring and evaluation.

##### Open questions

- 1) Who finances the associations?
- 2) The linkage between the association and the government?

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<sup>2</sup> Akoojee, Salim; Gonon, Philipp; Hauschildt, Ursel; Hofmann, Christine (Eds) 2013. *Apprenticeship in a Globalised World. Premises, Promises and Pitfalls*. Reihe Bildung und Arbeitswelt. LIT. Münster

### Tools

- 1) Legal framework
- 2) Advocacy
- 3) Capacity building
- 4) Structures
- 5) Monitoring instruments

### Further research

- 1) Effectiveness and impact of trade association
- 2) The impact / support of LTA on apprenticeship training

## **1.b The role of business associations (French-speaking group)**

In the various countries, many sectoral business associations come together in an employers' organization. There are also associations of craftspeople or chambers of trades and professions, and regional or national forms of representation. These business associations are strong and organised, acting as a counterweight, with the role of i) taking account of the concerns of the members, ii) expressing the concerns of their members within consultative fora, iii) taking part in policy formation, iv) informing the members of policies, v) encouraging the members to implement policies, and vi) following up the policies.

Unfortunately, there are shortcomings as regards a lack of commitment on the part of the members, regulations unsuited to the members (as in the case of Burkina Faso where there is as yet no crafts code), and the predominance of informal work in the member enterprises.

### Tools

- 1) Conducting an overview or drawing up plans of action
- 2) Promoting the application of rules by the members
  - a. The reduction or staggering of tax payments
  - b. Technical and financial support for business associations or trade unions and their members
  - c. Introducing designer labels
  - d. Involving the trade unions in discussions on training

### Research

- 1) Understanding why something is not working

## **2. Recognition of informal apprenticeship learning – outcome statement**

RPL is a relevant topic for all countries (public and private stakeholders), yet in most countries, RPL remains in the development phase. For shaping an individual country's RPL strategy, the question of why RPL is needed should be answered first. This concerns a) Mobility, b) Self-esteem/status, c) Progression / Lifelong learning. In any case, RPL should be a partnership of public and private actors.

Outcome statement: RPL is an important aspect for human resource development of every country but "One size does not fit all".

### Open questions

- 1) What are the capacities to implement RPL / the expertise required, and where and how do we get it?
- 2) Who should take the leading role in RPL?
- 3) Cost, financing and funding?

### Tools

- 1) Policy strategy
- 2) Institutional arrangement eg: bodies, authorities, committees, etc.
- 3) Capacity building (expertise): training and knowledge sharing
- 4) Marketing / advocacy
- 5) Implementation : Tools development (assessment toolkits, curriculum or RPL)

## **3. Role of state actors**

State actors face the following principal problems : 1) Setting up a framework for standardisation, such as a national certification scheme, 2) Devising transition pathways between diplomas and systems, and 3) financing informal apprenticeships.

### Open questions

- 1) Apprenticeship as a vector of development
- 2) Obstacles to the creation of transition pathways
- 3) Sources of funding

### Research needs

- 1) The contribution of informal apprenticeship to national economies
- 2) Factors that facilitate or restrict the creation of pathways
- 3) Funding mechanisms for informal apprenticeship
- 4) The facilities to be introduced to provide access to credit

### Necessary tools

- 1) Consultation meetings
- 2) Awareness-raising sessions
- 3) Studies
- 4) Setting up referencing systems

## **4. Link between formal and informal apprenticeship**

The discussions proved that formal and informal apprenticeship have many things in common. Often, apprentices in both systems have benefited from basic education, both strive to acquire skills and be employed after completing their apprenticeship. National recognition is scarce in informal apprenticeship but needs to be achieved in order to create links to formal apprenticeship. Informal apprenticeships need to be certified and officially recognized.

### Major open questions

- 1) How should we review the definition of informal apprenticeship on an ongoing basis?
- 2) Why should we formalize the informal?

### Further research questions

- 1) Refer to open question 1
- 2) Analyse and compare competencies acquired through informal apprenticeship with those in formal apprenticeship
- 3) How do we upgrade the informal apprenticeship without losing the ingrained social community cohesion benefits?
- 4) Can apprenticeship be one of the solutions to the global economic crisis?

### Tools required to link informal and formal apprenticeship

- 1) Curriculum (tailor made)
- 2) Assessment, certification and accreditation
- 3) Social dialog consensus building and collaboration
- 4) Financing models for linking formal and informal apprenticeship

## **5. Funding and financing apprenticeship**

### Main points learnt

In formal apprenticeship, governments usually support with a subsid (eg Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa and Benin). This subsidy can include tax rebates, student monthly grants, teacher salaries, materials, startup loans for new businesses. Some governments fund informal apprenticeship, but still to very limited extents. The learner usually carries the cost. Formal employers often pay a training levy (1-2% of profit or payroll).

### Open questions

- 1) How do informal / traditional apprenticeships get financial support?
- 2) How can apprentices be supported in the transition to the world of work?
  - a. Retooling, reskilling, loan, grants?

### Tools required

- 1) (levy based) financing models
- 2) Data collection and analysis
- 3) Registration / accreditation
- 4) Monitoring and evaluation (efficiency evaluation)
- 5) Capacity building

### Further research

- 1) Comparative study on incentive mechanisms for master crafts persons
- 2) Assess feasibility of transforming from informal to formal systems (by occupation...)

## 6. Social protection

Participants stated that it was unsatisfactory that social protection was not properly dealt with by the conference. Social protection is a means of ensuring that trades are preserved. However, in most cases there is no social protection in the informal economy in African countries, and therefore none in informal apprenticeship, but there are formulas which can be extended to apprenticeship in the informal sector.

### Open questions

- 1) How can social protection safeguard human resources in the informal system, especially for people involved in informal apprenticeship?
- 2) Which social protection system is best suited to our needs?

### Tools

Expand the existing social protection measures to the informal apprenticeship sector

## 7. Mobilization strategies for youth enrolment in TVET or apprenticeship systems

NEETs (Persons Not in Employment, Education or Training) are also an important target group in African countries. Unfortunately, there remains a stigma for TVET by society. In particular in rural areas, youth suffer from a lack of information about training and job opportunities. At the same time, jobs in vocational /craft trades need attractive working conditions, which they often do not have. Self-employment is often more attractive for youth, therefore, advocacy is required. Skilled manual occupations should be promoted as a career of choice.

### Major open questions

- 1) How do we mobilize the youth?
  - a. Communication channels + content
- 2) How to adapt the training to diverse needs of youth?
- 3) How can micro,small and medium enterprises be supported to become sustainable?
  - a. Support for youth to start own business?
- 4) How do we bring youth from informal to formal apprenticeship?
- 5) How to tackle the issue of child labour in apprenticeships?

### Further research topics

- 1) Share best practice for innovative startup capital (collateral) for youth to begin a business (e.g. Nigeria)
- 2) Tracer studies, of using different methodologies, on success of graduating youth in business and employment?
- 3) As above but compare impact evaluation of opportunity costs of apprentice versus non apprentices in terms of (production) labour market performance
- 4) What are the motivations of youth in certain trade areas?
- 5) How best to profile youth's interest and opportunities?

### Tools required

- 1) Career guidance +information
- 2) Interest inventory for profiling and placement

- 3) A mechanism which links schools and enterprises especially for school dropouts and NEETs (youth not in education, employment or training)
- 4) Models of financing for startup funds for new enterprise/sustainabilities
- 5) Thematic based sports and recreation programmes
- 6) Charities and NGOs
- 7) Communication campaign targeted

## 8. Apprentices' insertion in the labour market

Apprentices can either become self-employed or work as an employee for a salary. If apprentices prefer to become self-employed, they should gain maturity through longer periods with their master craftsperson or in another business (as journeymen). Business development services are needed. Apprentices interested in wage employment require certificates that have the same value as certificates from formal training.

### Open questions

- How to link apprentices with formal employment

### Research questions

- 1) What are the best modalities of financing informal apprentices for employment?
- 2) How local and central government can promote employment for informal apprentices

### Tools

- Policy and strategy

## 9. Gender

In Africa, both formal and informal apprenticeship shows lower participation of women than of men. None of the practices presented at the workshop and conference addressed gender issues in particular, while gender remains a highly important development issue. Overall, there is still limited consciousness around this issue. What is needed are more female role models in apprenticeship, and male role models who join a typically female trade.

### Open Questions

- 1) How to eradicate gender disparities in apprenticeship?
- 2) How to infuse gender analysis in data management?

### Research questions

- 1) Gender dynamics and apprenticeship
- 2) Trade, occupation change: discourse in apprenticeship

### Tools required

- 1) Gender analysis
- 2) Awareness creation
  - Sensitization
  - Mindset change
- 3) Data management
- 4) Gender mainstreaming

## 10. Training quality in informal apprenticeship

There is a variety of forms of training via apprenticeship in the informal sector, both within and between countries. The quality of training depends on the training instructor (some instructors are accredited by the government or by the professional bodies, others are not), on the environment (infrastructure and equipment), the learner (his or her level and motivation), and the culture. It is obvious that there is a need to strengthen capacity among the instructors.

### Open questions

- 1) Is there a need for a regulatory framework for the development of informal apprenticeships?
- 2) What should be done to standardise training in informal apprenticeships?
- 3) What should be the level of standardisation?
- 4) Should each level have a certificate?
- 5) What are the responsibilities of the various actors (the State, business associations) for quality assurance?
- 6) What scheme of accreditation should apply to training instructors?

### Research

- 1) The overview (models, number of apprentices, number of training instructors, sectors and trades)
- 2) Trade directories (skills matrix)
- 3) Referencing systems for training

### Tools

- 1) Studies
- 2) Supporting business associations in producing skill charts
- 3) Sharing knowledge (building networks...)

## IV. Country agendas for the coming months

Before the end of the workshop, the participants from the various countries were invited to describe their plan of action for the next 3 months. The participants devised this plan of action in the form of a letter addressed to a colleague.

Action plans included stakeholder consultations with business associations and youth, promotional events to raise awareness about informal apprenticeship, efforts to strike public-private partnerships, capacity building and strengthening of trade associations, sensitization of master craftspersons on the importance of quality control, conducting gender assessments, developing RPL toolkits, devising a strategy to issue a common trade certificate for both formal and informal apprenticeship, discussing financial options to support informal apprenticeship, and a framework to train workplace trainers (master craftspersons).