

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING IN FOSTERING SELF-EMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN NIGERIAN COMMUNITIES: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Indigenous apprenticeship training system (IATS) is a springboard for teasing out self employment among the young adults in African communities. The extent of unemployment, unemployability and underemployment in the 21st century is alarming. The study outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework underlying the practice of IATS in Nigerian context that is geared towards self-employment and corresponding decrease in unemployment. The main purpose of the study is to explore the theoretical basis that guide the practice of Indigenous Apprenticeship Training in Nigeria. In conclusion, IATS in Nigerian context is an informal body of knowledge geared towards enhancing the capability and capacities of the participants to acquire the necessary skills, competencies, and values to become well-seasoned Master craftsmen that will eventually lead to continuity through the transfer of knowledge and self-employment of apprenticeship graduates.

Keywords: Indigenous Apprenticeship Training System, Mastercraftmen, Self-employment

Introduction

The apprenticeship system traces back to periods when weaving, goldsmithing, drumming, hunting, fishing, tie and dye, agbede (iron fabrication), farming, hairdressing, carving, painting, circumcision, incision of tribal marks, and carpentry were the predominant vocations passed down from generation to generation within local communities.”According to Sanni and Alabi (2008), apprenticeship arose in Nigeria as a family institution and as a means of supplying artisans for the various crafts then in existence and as a means of propagating the heritage of the family. United Nations (2011) viewed capacity training as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources that young adults need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. In this study, capacity training is defined as the process of initiating, developing, and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources that young adults need to survive, adapt, and thrive within the apprenticeship system and in a rapidly changing world.

Fafunwa (2004), grouped capacity training in indigenous apprenticeship vocations into three. These groups according to the author include: Agricultural education: comprises farming, fishing, and veterinary science (animal care and animal rearing). Trades and crafts: under these categories are weaving (basket, mat, and cloth), smithing (iron, silver, gold), hunting, carving (wood and bronze),

sculpting, painting and decorating, carpentry, building, barbing, drumming, dancing and acrobatics, hair plaiting, dress-making, boat-making, leather-making, soap-making, gold-washing, dying, esusu collection (banking, thrift or cooperative saving), catering (frying, baking, grinding), food-selling, wine-selling, wine tapping, and trading in all kinds of merchandise (manufactured goods and agricultural products). The third group according to Fafunwa are the professions, under which are doctors, priests, witch doctors, herbalists, civil servants, village heads, chiefs and kings, tax-collectors, heralds, judges, councilors, police and messengers, shrine-keepers, and soldiers (warriors).

Capacity training in the indigenous apprenticeship communities had been a panacea to curb unemployment as well as enhance the capacity of beneficiaries from time immemorial in the traditional community. There is need for every young adult and graduate of higher institutions to be encouraged to acquire vocational skills if the prevalent situation of the high rate of unemployment must be alleviated. Graduate unemployment has become worrisome with over 33% unemployment rate (National Bureau of Statistics 2022) prevailing in the country. Apprenticeship in vocations in indigenous Nigeria essentially solved the problems of unemployment as it equipped the recipients with adequate work skills to function productively and be self-reliant in their immediate or larger community. Self-employment is a state of working for oneself as a freelance or the owner of a business rather than for an employer. Self-employment as a concept is attributed to those people disposing of the characteristics associated with the entrepreneurial self (Anderson 2000 & Warren, 2011). Some of the characteristics of an entrepreneur are taking risks, internal or intrinsic motivation, being innovative, skillful and ability to recognize opportunity. The European Union 2020 employment strategy is illustrative in this regard: it recognizes apprenticeship and self-employment as key for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and as a way to create new jobs. Also, Marioti and Towle (2006) as quoted by Ojeomogha (2011) observed that self-employed mastercraftmen obtained their training through non-formal apprenticeship system.

Tajudeen (2015) emphasised that workers were never too many not to be employed in the indigenous setting unlike nowadays when graduates of various higher institutions in Nigeria are too many than the available jobs. Thus, in the pre-colonial and earliest post-colonial era joblessness was very minimal and only for those who did not learn any trade or vocation at all. Also in modern community, people who suffer unemployment more are those who lack hand-crafts.

Capacity training in indigenous apprenticeship system is not the only means of disseminating hand-craft others include vocational education programmes organised by different groups such as NGOs, Ministries, and individuals which may last for a short period of one week or more. Another one slightly different from the aforementioned is the formalised vocational education attended in schools like the technical colleges, colleges of education, state vocational training schools.

Furthermore, the most indigenous and informal dissemination of vocational skill in this present era which is different from the above discussed is that which has the servant and “oga” (master) relationship. In this sense an individual with or without family bond is taken to the mastercraftsman to learn a vocation for a particular period of years that is verbally agreed upon. In continuum to the above certain theories underly or serve as basis for the practice and indispensability of IATS, hence this paper.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that can be adopted as a basis for this study. However, Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura 1961) and Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory [Collins, Brown & Newman (1987)] were used for this study.

Social Learning Theory: Albert Bandura in this theory emphasised that the people who have been observed (Mastercraftsman) in apprenticeship training are referred to as models and the process involved in apprenticeship is known as modelling. Bandura in this theory stated that modelling will occur if the apprentice observes a positive desired outcome in the first stage. In explaining the stages involved he stressed that there are four necessary conditions which are needed in the modelling process of apprenticeship namely: Attention, Retention, Reproduction and Motivation. An apprentice must first pay attention to the model. The more likely it is to gain apprentice attention the more precise the observation gained by the apprentice. As for retention the apprentice must be able to remember the behavior that has been observed through rehearsals. Reproduction is the third condition, it is the ability to replicate the behavior that the model (master) has just demonstrated. The apprentice has to be able to replicate the action. Motivation is the final ingredient for modelling to occur as such reinforcement and punishment play an important role in the motivation of the apprentice. Furthermore, it is apparent that norms inherent in apprenticeship training are in tandem with social learning theory. This position is so because the theory says that where the apprentice is not paid but works shows that rewards are not the sole force behind creating motivation for apprentice. The theory therefore concludes that thoughts, beliefs, morals and feedback altogether help motivate apprentice.

Justification of this Theory to the Study

- i. It explains in detail the communication process between master and servant which expectedly results to successful transfer of knowledge.
- ii. Social learning theory is relevant in this study as it gives insight on the need for reinforcement necessary for the motivation of the young adult apprentice.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (Collins et al. 1989&1991): This theory emphasises the importance of the process in which a master of a skill teaches that skill to an apprentice.

Like traditional apprenticeships, the apprentice learns a trade such as tailoring or woodworking by working under a master teacher. cognitive apprenticeships allow masters to model behaviors in a real-world context with cognitive modeling. After listening to the master explain exactly what they are doing and thinking as they model the skill, the apprentice identifies relevant behaviors and develops a conceptual model of the processes involved. The apprentice then attempts to imitate those behaviors as the master observes and coaches. The coaching process includes providing additional modeling as necessary, giving corrective feedback, and giving reminders, which all intend to bring the apprentice's performance closer to that of the master's. As the apprentice becomes more skilled through the repetition of this process, the feedback and instruction provided by the

master “fades” until the apprentice is, ideally, performing the skill at a close approximation of the master level. This theory is supported by Albert Bandura’s (1997) theory of modeling, which posits that in order for modeling to be successful, the learner must be attentive, access and retain the information presented, be motivated to learn, and be able to accurately reproduce the desired skill.

Justification of the Theory to this Study

The cognitive apprenticeship theory is relevant to this study because:

- i. It gives priority to the processes and procedures involved in indigenous apprenticeship training.
- ii. Cognitive apprenticeship theory is relevant to this study as it does not only explain the processes and procedures of learning in IATS but also explains the evaluation style obtainable in indigenous apprenticeship system.

Observed Weaknesses in the Theories

- As substantial as these theories are they seem not to have established the importance of the transition of the apprentice into being a master that can be self -employable.
- In the event of this, the “output”(Self -Employment)which is the major essence of the Indigenous apprenticeship system was not indicated. As such these theories are not reflective of the focal point of establishing individual businesses or trade. Therefore a conceptual framework is needed to take these weaknesses into consideration.

Fig.1:Conceptual Framework

Strategies for skills transfer

- **Modelling**
- **Imitation**
- **Group Work**

Evaluation Strategies

- Master Assesment
- Client Report
- **Role Play**

Graduation

- Independent practice
- Tranfer of knowledge

Self Employment

Absorption of Apprentice
PROCEDURE FOR ENGAGEMENT IN IATS

Would – Be – Apprentice

Agreement

Parent

Master Craftman

The framework above depicts what obtains in IATS in congruent with the theories, in this vein. The parent, master and would-be apprentice meet and then produce an agreement which forms the contract for the absorption of the apprentice. Upon absorption of the apprentice, he/she is trained using various skill transfer strategies such as imitation, modelling, and observation. After an exhaustive use of the skill transfer strategies, such an apprentice is subjected to some evaluation strategies to ascertain the level of competence. However, based on evaluation, an apprentice earns freedom/graduation. The outcome of graduation is self-employment. The study then imply that the conceptual framework emphasises a relationship between capacity training strategies and self-employment. This, therefore, means that if the master craftsmen employ the right capacity training strategies, it will lead to self-employment with or without the graduation of the apprentice.

Conclusion

IATS (Indigenous Apprenticeship Training System) as an informal body of knowledge, as exemplified in this study, is geared towards enhancing the capability and capacities of the participants to acquire the necessary skills, competencies, and values to become well-seasoned Master craftsmen that will eventually lead to continuity through the transfer of knowledge and self-employment of apprenticeship graduates. In achieving this important goal, the master, community, parents, and apprentice play a key role.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the relevant stakeholders, such as Parents and Governments, should heighten the appraisal and status of IATS. This is to gain more patronage of IATS, which in turn would bring about an increase in self-employment and a corresponding decrease in unemployment among young adults in Nigeria.

There is a need for IATS to be embraced as a form of education and training, as it contributes significantly to young adult employment and empowerment, thereby reducing youth restiveness while ensuring productivity and better employment opportunities.

IATS should be maximally utilised in the country as it is the most non-formal and indigenous form of education still in existence to date. Formerly, IATS was transferred in ancestral nature and has now metamorphosed into IATS.

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