

Contribution of Informal Education Skills in Promoting Small-Scale Industries in Mafinga Town Council, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study determined the contribution of acquired skills through informal education in promoting small-scale industries in Mafinga Town Council. It employed a mixed-methods research approach with convergent parallel design. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview methods. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis, and quantitative data were analysed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. The study findings revealed that the modes of skills acquisition for most workers in small-scale industries, who did not go through a formal education system, are collaboration, problem-solving, mentorship, and observation. Furthermore, the skills acquired through informal education are worth giving to the development of small-scale industries as they maximize production and improve the quality of the products the industry produces through innovation. It is recommended to conduct regular training for workers to strengthen their skills by enhancing the modes of skills acquisition.

Keywords: informal education, skills, small-scale industries

1.0 Introduction

Informal education is a kind of education which one gains through several life experiences (Lukindo, 2014). It represents education in practice, often through bodily performance and the learning of skills,

which takes observation and doing rather than written and spoken forms (Smith, 2013).

Informal apprenticeships are the dominant source of training across all sectors (World Bank [WB], 2013). In sub-Saharan Africa, where the proportion of youth relative to the total population is highest, an estimated 89 million youth ages 12 to 24 are out of school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011). These youth lack education certifications and the basic skills they need to succeed in life and work. Equity in school access, promotion, and completion differs for children and youth across marginalized groups, depending on the context.

Recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2015) confirm that informal apprenticeships are a wide spread phenomenon in the Tanzanian labour market. More importantly, the incidence of people having learnt their skills through informal apprenticeships is almost three times as high for those having had formal training.

Indeed, the agenda of industrialization in Tanzania was emphasized by His Excellence of Late President Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli in his term of service. The Late Dr Magufuli used the Swahili phrase “*Tanzania ya Viwanda*” to emphasize and familiarize the urgent need for Tanzania to industrialize to create jobs for millions of young Tanzanians and build a modern economy for the country and its people. His speeches, especially those which focused on industrialization and the industrial economy, have raised enormous debate among scholars (Ntawigaya & Mligo, 2021).

Previous researchers in Tanzania on education have not adequately addressed the contribution of informal education in promoting small-scale industries in Tanzania. Informal education contributes a lot to the development of small industries in Tanzania although its contribution is not given priority as the formal education. However, a growing interest in vocational education and training by both policy makers and the research community in many countries during the 1990s suggests that the time may have come for informal learning to receive some serious attention. There is a need to reconsider the role and relevance of the highly diversified field of informal education in many plans preparing for the development of small industries.

In concrete situations, informal education contributes a lot to the development of small but dynamic enterprises and local industries in rural centres and rural towns (McGrath & Simon, (2018). Also, it targets those in the lower segments of the informal sector employment (Ntwigaya & Mligo, 2021). This is the group of the working class and producers who possess the skills and experiences. It in turn has helped in the emergence and development of local industries like automobile garages, tailoring marts, woodworks, decorations and gardening to mention but a few in different towns and many of them are owned by those who went through informal education.

The fact that informal education contributes numerous in the technical and industrial development of the formal and informal sectors, yet very little attention is given to supporting informal education (Ntwigaya & Mligo, 2021), this calls for a serious and deep study to assess the contribution of informal education in promoting small-scale industries in Tanzania. It is contrary to this background that this study sought to assess the contribution of informal education in promoting small-scale

industries in Tanzania to transform its economy from an agricultural to an industrial economy for the betterment of the citizens of Tanzania. Therefore, the study was guided by the following questions:

- a) What are the modes of informal skills acquisition in informal education in promoting small-scale industries?
- b) How do the informal acquired skills promote small-scale industries?

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Progressive Education theory by John Dewey in 1974. The theory describes that, human beings learn through a hands-on approach. Thus, students must interact with their environment to adapt and learn. Dewey felt that the same idea was true for teachers and that teachers and students must learn together. Students are free to move in and out of classrooms as they pursue their interests (pragmatics). The theory is linked to the study because informal learning focuses on capacity building and mastery of knowledge. Learners are equipped with the skills and experiences, which help them to be competent in their areas of specialization.

Learners also learn through experiences, which come from learning by doing. This includes taking learners to the field to work and experiment with their knowledge. It is this theory that encourages teamwork to the learners that no one can work or build his or her empire by working alone. There must be good cooperation between the people working together towards achieving the same goal by sharing knowledge, experiences and skills as far as the promotion of small-scale industries is concerned due to the contribution done by informal education skills.

2.1 Literature Review

The study done by Bulus (2015) in Nigeria on the skills acquisition in informal education suggested that informal education is a lifelong learning. As learning occurs every day in life, people can acquire skills and knowledge by participating in doing the work. Skills are acquired anytime and everywhere through observing what others are doing, through speaking and questioning an interesting thing. There is the chance to connect with questions, issues and feelings that are important to people. Fayomi (2018), in his study of soft skills for young adults, suggested that informal skills come from everyday life activities either as an individual or a group. Formal and non-formal activities are supplemented by various learning opportunities outside the classroom ranging from casual conversation to formal dinners and talk. Informal education takes place in everyday life.

In their study on the Contribution of non-formal education to young people's decision to start a business, Umihana, Bajhrija and Mirela (2017) revealed that experiences in daily life settings take into consideration skills acquired in domains such as home, the marketplace, the workplace or community. We do not only learn when we sit in the class, we learn a great deal during social and other activities we are involved in daily or when volunteering to do work for free. Learning experiences could assist in generating income, either through temporary or permanent work, developing how to start a small business, acquiring knowledge and skills that could enable you to meet the entry requirement into a formal programme that leads to a qualification and lastly improving your self-esteem and the confidence that is gained from having acquired skills that can be used to benefit yourself, your family and the community at large.

The study done by Latchem (2012) on the contribution of informal education signifies that informal education is a problem-solving education as its domain is oriented on designing, developing and evaluating human mechanical resources efficiently and effectively to facilitate all aspects of learning. Informal education prepares people to be problem-solvers, the person who solves other peoples' problems always creates room for innovation and opportunity for entrepreneurship, through problem-solving in society someone can grasp the opportunity. There are a lot of problems in society when someone who is trained to solve people can see the problems as an opportunity and can establish an office.

For example, a youth can see the problem of obesity in society as a chance to open a centre for working out and people can pay for that service, hence, creating no jobs for people. Bulus (2015) revealed that the development of local technologies as the knowledge acquired by individuals could transform into a small technical office capable of employing or training others. This is also witnessed in Tanzania youths employ themselves as smart phone repairs and they create employment for others through repairing cell phones.

3.0 Materials and Methods

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a contingent parallel design. The study was conducted in Mafinga Town Council involving ten small-scale industries. The respondents of this study consisted of 15 managers of small-scale industries and 84 industrial workers. Managers were purposively selected because of their virtue in their positions as they have sufficient information about the nature of the industries and their subordinates. Workers were randomly selected because of having the character of possessing related information as regards the study

questions. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability before being administered in the field. Data analysis involved coding, entry and analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Qualitative data were analysed thematically under research themes and sub-themes.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

Two research questions were used in this study to obtain the study findings.

4.1 What are the Modes of Informal Skills Acquisition in Informal Education in Promoting Small Scale Industries?

In attempting the question workers were asked to indicate various modes which assisted them in acquiring specific skills to suit their industrial needs by rating the listed modes of informal skill acquisition by either strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The findings regarding this theme are presented in Table 1 and follow the interpretation of those responses after the table.

Table 1: The Mode of Skills Acquisition Used in Small-Scale Industries

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Cumulative %	Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Cumulative %
	F	%	F	%		F	%	F	%	F	%	
Collaboration	2	2.4	5	5.9	8.3	0	0	56	66.7	21	25	91.7
Problem-solving	0	0	2	2.4	2.4	3	3.5	19	22.6	60	71.4	94
Speaking and questioning	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.2	52	61.9	31	36.9	98.8
Mentoring	1	1.2	1	1.2	2.4	0	0	64	76.2	18	21.4	97.6
Observing	0	0	2	2.4	2.4	2	2.4	63	75	17	20.2	95.2

From Table 1, it is evident that collaboration, problem-solving, speaking and questioning, mentoring and observation are the modes of skills acquisition used in small-scale industries. These modes of skills acquisition were rated by more than 90% of respondents as the acquire skills through that way. That means observation had a cumulative per cent of 95.2, mentoring had 97.6%, speaking and questioning had a cumulative per cent of 98.8, collaboration had a cumulative per cent of 91.7 and problem-solving had a cumulative per cent of 94. These findings are in line with study findings by Fayomi (2018), who showed that informal skills come from everyday life activities either as an individual or a group. Formal and non-formal activities are supplemented by various learning opportunities outside the classroom ranging from casual conversation to formal dinners and talk. Informal education takes place in everyday life. In a similar case, the findings correspond with Tumen (2019) which revealed that experiences in daily life settings take into consideration skills acquired in domains, such as home, the marketplace, the workplace, or the community. Therefore, based on the empirical evidence provided and the data presented in Table 3.1, it is concluded that skill that is possessed by the majority of a worker who did not go through a formal way of acquiring such skills, chiefly acquired through the aforementioned modes such as collaboration, problem-solving just to remind the previously mentioned modes.

4.2 How Do the Informal Acquired Skills Promote Small-Scale Industries?

Under this part, the question sought to identify the contribution of acquired skills through informal education in promoting small-scale industries. In identifying the contribution of acquired skills in promoting

small-scale industries, 8 items from the questionnaire were asked of workers for valuation and the results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: The Contribution of Acquired Skills through Informal Education in Promoting Small-Scale Industries

Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Cumulative %	Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Cumulative %
	F	%	F	%		F	%	F	%	F	%	
Development of other small-scale industries	2	2.4	7	8.3	10.7	17	20.2	46	54.7	12	14.3	69
Encouraging entrepreneurship	3	3.5	10	11.9	15.4	0	0	50	59.5	21	25	84.5
Improvement of the quality of the product	1	1.2	6	7.1	8.3	12	14.3	46	54.7	19	22.6	77.3
Increase employment opportunities	9	10.7	16	19.0	29.7	9	10.7	36	42.8	14	16.7	59.5
Creativity	4	4.7	13	15.4	20.1	17	20.2	28	33.3	22	26.2	59.5

4.2.1 Development of other small-scale industries

From Table 2, the study findings revealed that 2(2.4%) strongly disagreed with development of other small-scale industries as the contribution of the acquired skills through informal education in small-scale industries, 7(8.3%) disagreed, 17(20.2%) neutral, 46(54.7%) agreed and 12(14.3%) strongly agreed. This implies that 69.0% of industrial workers have an overview of development of other small-scale industries in promoting small-scale industries, not a contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries, while 69% have a positive view that the development of other small-scale industries in MTC is the contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries. This finding revealed that the acquired skills have contributed

in promoting small-scale industries in Mafinga Town Council as one SSI Manager says:

Those people who acquire informal education after a certain period can afford to initiate their workshop by starting with a few types of equipment and will proceed to buy the other equipment as the need arises. As you can witness, the presence of bakeries, salons, welding workshops and timber are seen as the source of employment (Interview with Manager₂, SSI, April 2022).

The quote implies that many young men particularly those who work using their experiences without attaining formal education create their employment through initiating different small projects, such as bakeries, owning saloons and other related activities.

4.2.2 Encouraging entrepreneurship

From Table 2, the study findings showed 3(3.5%) strongly disagreed on encouraging entrepreneurship as the contribution of the acquired skills through informal education in small-scale industries, 10(11.9%) disagreed, 50(59.5%) agreed and 21(25%) strongly agreed. This implies that 15.4% of industrial workers have an overview on encouraging entrepreneurship as not a contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries, while 84.5% of the respondents have a positive view that encouraging entrepreneurship in small-scale industries is the contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries. Therefore, this finding revealed that encouraging entrepreneurship contributes to promoting small-scale industries in the Mafinga District Council.

Likewise, the managers said that during an interview session, the presence of many entrepreneurs is because a lot of people possess skills

through informal education and the intention is to apply skills. Possessing informal skills stimulates the spirit of entrepreneurship as one of the SSI Managers says:

Once one possesses informal skills, it is obvious he or she will apply skills in different areas. Informal skills normally raise the spirit of entrepreneurship in different angles of life, for example, from this workshop three workers moved out and opened their workshops, which operate very well. The spirit of entrepreneurship cannot be developed if the skills are not possessed by an individual (Interview with Manager₃, SSI: April 2022).

This implies that individuals who possess one or more informal skills are in a good position to self-employment. That means an informal skill makes the individuals creative and innovative. They can invent businesses and manage them accurately in the same way and sometimes beyond the level of the one who acquires such skills formally.

4.3.3 Improvement of the quality of product

From Table 2, the findings revealed that 2(2.4%) strongly disagreed with improvement of the quality of the product as the contribution of the acquired skills through informal education in small-scale industries, 7(8.3%) disagreed, 17(20.2%) neutral, 46(54.7%) agreed and 12(14.3%) strongly agreed. This implies that 10.7% of industrial workers have an overview on the improvement of the quality of the product as in promoting small-scale industries, not a contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries, while 69% of the industrial workers have a positive view that development of other small-scale industries is the contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries. Therefore, these findings revealed that the acquired skills have contributed in promoting small-scale industries in Mafinga

Town Council. During the interview with managers, one of them was quoted saying:

The development of small-scale industries has advanced in one way to another stage through the contributions of the acquired skills by our workers. I remember, at the time I started the industry, I was in a very hard situation as very few of our workers possessed the required skills for production. This situation leads our industry to hang behind in production. As a manager realized this, I started encouraging every worker with a certain skill to start sharing such skill with others with no skills to increase the effectiveness in production (Interview with Manager₄, SSI, April 2022).

This implies that everyone with a particular skill can train others to have the same skill hence increasing the strength of the industry through high and quality production of goods.

4.3.4 Increase employment opportunities

Regarding the findings in Table 2, the findings revealed that 2(2.4%) strongly disagreed on the increase of employment opportunities as the contribution of the acquired skills through informal education in small-scale industries, 7(8.3%) disagreed, 17(20.2%) neutral, 46(54.7%) agreed and 12(14.3%) strongly agreed. This implies that 10.7% of industrial workers have an overview of development of other small-scale industries as in promoting small-scale industries, not a contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries, whilst 69% of the industrial workers have a positive view that increase of employment opportunities is the contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries. These findings revealed that the acquired skills

have contributed in promoting small-scale industries as one of the SSI Managers says:

Most workers get knowledge and skills through core workers, hence ensuring that facilitators and trainers have the appropriate networks, are recognized, trusted and respected by all other workers and industry owners is important to minimize the challenges (Interview with Manager₆, SSI, April 2022).

This implies that most workers get knowledge and skills through co-workers. From that assertion, it is a fact that managers and industrial owners ought to facilitate and ensure that the trainers have appropriate networks, trusted and respected as well.

5.3.5 Creativity

Concerning Table 2, the findings revealed that 4(4.7%) strongly disagreed on creativity as the contribution of the acquired skills through informal education in small-scale industries, 13(15.4%) disagreed, 17(20.2%) were neutral, 28(33.3%) agreed and 22(26.2%) strongly agreed. This implies that 20.1% of industrial workers have an overview of creativity as not a contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries; while 59.5% have a positive view, that creativity is the contribution of the acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries. These findings revealed that the acquired skills lead to creativity in promoting small-scale industries in Mafinga Town Council. During the interview with managers, one of them has to say this:

Workers do challenge themselves on the smartness of the work, on doing new work, which seems to be tough and not known to them through challenging each other and helping each other to accomplish certain work creativity is

observed and generated. It is not easy to accept a new project on your own you must communicate with your fellows to share if someone can manage to do it correctly (Interview with Manager⁷, SSI, April 2022).

This implies that industrial workers propagate their skills through the challenges they get from their colleagues. Through challenges, most workers take them as an opportunity to learn how to perform their work diligently and effectively.

The results from the interview also show that the contribution of acquired skills in promoting small-scale industries in Mafinga Town Council include: having adoptive product innovation, increase in creativity in development of products (modification of the product), customers getting quality products, improvement of customer services, provisions for knowledge and skills for those who did not attend schools and those who have no practical knowledge, existence of business competition among the producers of same product, prepare people to be problem solvers, increase employment opportunities, likewise, it's a primary stage toward creativity and establishment of large scale industries.

Therefore, the findings obtained through questionnaires and interviews are in line with the findings by Bulus (2015), which indicate that the development of local technologies as the knowledge acquired by individuals could transform into a small technical office capable of employing or training others. This is also witnessed in Tanzania youth employ themselves as cell phone repairs and they create employment for others through repairing cell phones.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Small-scale industries get their manpower to a large extent from workers, who did not formally acquire skills to be used in production in those industries. The informal educational skills contribute in different ways to the promotion of small-scale industries. Informal educational skills encourage creativity, encourage entrepreneurship, create employment and improve the quality of products. Based on that fact, for better and quality production small-scale industrial workers need to be frequently trained and encouraged to train one another. For example, the use of personal talks as it was noted in the findings that no class, they attend to learn such skill; instead, they acquire such skill through interaction. In this regard, it can be concluded that learning is an endless process for anyone, especially those who are engaging in production.

Therefore, due to the good and recommendable job these workers perform, it is recommended to conduct regular training for workers to strengthen their skills by enhancing the mode of skills acquisition. Curriculum developers should find a good mode to enhance informal education by creating a good means for assessment, and training likely provision of certificates for those who meet the qualification to be set. Lastly, the industrial owners should find a way to eliminate the challenges facing their workers such as underpayment and unfair treatment due to their level of education.

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