



Strategies for Enhancing Training Completion Rates Among Informal Apprenticeship Trainees in Akwa Ibom State

Abstract

The study determined strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used with a study population of 1,403 respondents comprising 237 master craftsmen, 1132 apprentices and 34 TVET lecturers in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. The sample size of the study was 302 respondents, comprising 51 master craftsmen, 241 apprentices and 10 TVET lecturers. Multi-stage sampling method was applied for selecting the sample for the study. Two sets of researchers' developed instruments were used for data collection namely "Strategies For Enhancing Training Completion Rates Among Informal Apprentices in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" and "Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire". The instruments were face validated by three TVET experts in the University of Uyo. The reliability coefficients of the "Strategies For Enhancing Training Completion Rates Among Informal Apprentices in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" and "Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" were 0.88 and 0.76 respectively established using Cronbach alpha method. The researchers administered the instrument directly to the respondents with the aid of five research assistants. The data collected was analyzed using mean with standard deviation and independent t-test. The finding revealed ten strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State and eight emerging approaches in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. There was generally no significant difference between the mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between male and female lecturers on emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended, among others, that there should be a collaboration between the informal apprenticeship training system and the formal TVET providers in the state in order to maximize the enormous benefits of the apprenticeship training system.

Keywords: Informal apprenticeship training, Drop out, Strategies, Emerging Paradigms, TVET.

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Introduction

Apprenticeship is a type of vocational training where youths are

trained to acquire practical skills in specific trades for paid or self employment. Two major forms of

apprenticeship exist and they are formal and informal apprenticeship. Formal apprenticeship is a combination of on the job and related classroom/workshop instruction under the supervision of a journey-level craft person or trade professional through which a worker learns the practical and theoretical aspects of highly skilled occupations (Abari *et al*, 2018). Informal apprenticeship is a traditional form of Vocational Education and Training (VET) where individuals learn skills from experienced practitioners (master craftsmen) outside the formal educational institutions (Udoetuk and George, 2025). Under the system, a young person is apprenticed to a master craftsman who taught him the skills of a vocation and after many years of learning, he will be allowed to start his own workshop or business (Adekola, 2013). The informal apprenticeship system is characterized by the absence of a fixed curriculum or module for training, absence of standardized assessments, and inadequate support systems. Training is based on the work brought to the workshop daily. If there is no work on a particular day, that means that there will be no job/ training for that day. Apprentices are usually given training orientation which include: (i) the introduction to names and uses of tools/ materials found in the trade (ii) parts of machines used in the trade and their functions, and (iii) and good customers service relationships. The training method used is purely by observation,

imitation and guided practice (Olaitan *et al*, 2024).

The informal apprenticeship training possesses features which distinguish it from other forms of education and training. The system is self – regulating and self – financing, with no established curriculum or formal procedure for the acquisition of skills, with the apprentice learning predominantly on – the – job through observation, imitation and trial and error methods (Akaenyi, 2024). The apprenticeship system in Nigeria is not regulated by the government and is left entirely under the control of the master craftsman popularly known as 'Oga' in Nigerian parlance to decide on what to teach and what not to teach (Abari *et al*, 2018). Depending on trade, years of apprenticeship range between 2 to 4 years. Agreement on terms and conditions, including duration are usually made between the apprentice and the master and fee will be paid. At the end of the apprenticeship, a graduation (freedom) ceremony is usually held signifying successful completion of training. Sometimes, apprentices are compelled to perform domestic chores for the master aside from learning the job. Moreover, the informal apprenticeship system is characterized by long duration, low pay, and lack of standard certification, with its success or failure depending largely on the level of skills and knowledge of the master craftsperson (International Labour Organisation, ILO, 2012).

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For any training system such as informal apprenticeship, some level of non-completion, drop out or attrition is inevitable. Attrition in education or training can be considered as the act of leaving an educational programme or institution before graduation (Cyril, *et al*, 2015). Attrition in this context refers to the withdrawal from a training programme before completion of the required period, regardless of the causes of such withdrawal. High attrition rates in apprenticeship may be due to a number of factors which include lack of formal structure and standards, insufficient support and resources, limited career progression and poor working condition (Powers and Watt, 2021). Other factors which may lead to drop out in apprenticeship programme include situational, institutional, dispositional or attitudinal and academic factors (Peter, *et al* 2019) as well as the training conditions, health and several personal reasons (Olaitan, *et al*, 2024).

Regrettably, in spite of the enormous benefits associated with apprenticeship training system, its popularity in many parts of Nigeria is fast waning with no conscious efforts made for integrating it into the formal skill acquisition process. This is because of the presence of some limitations, problems and shortfalls in the apprenticeship system that tend to hinder its effectiveness in skill acquisition. It is worthy to note that contemporary educational, technological, social and economic transformations are currently reshaping vocational training systems

globally. This has placed significant pressure on the informal apprenticeship training system. To effectively address the problem of attrition, it is crucial to make necessary' modifications in the training process. One of the methods of making modifications is by integrating or adopting some innovative and emerging paradigms in TVET in order to improve the informal apprenticeship system. Such approaches include competency based training, recognition of prior learning, establishment of occupational standards, establishment of a regulatory institution, and linkage with the formal TVET programmes (Schmid and Stalder, 2012; Olaitan *et al*, 2024).

It is also worthy to note that this attrition is more prevalent among technical trades trainees than among other professionals. Obviously, this attrition affects the supply of technical manpower through gradual reduction or weakening of the workforce. This can be very detrimental to the economy if allowed to continue. Given that the success of any apprenticeship training in the society is adjudged by the extent to which the apprentices complete their training and since their contributions to the society's Gross Domestic Income (GDI) depends on the number of skilled apprentices produced through the training, there is an imperative need to identify strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees as well as integrating some innovative approaches in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in order to improve the

informal apprenticeship system in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The informal apprenticeship training system has long been recognized in Akwa Ibom state as one of the most feasible solutions to curbing the rising tide of unemployment among youths and the attendant crimes associated with it. Regrettably, the potency of the apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria is fast diminishing due to the high drop out and low completion rates among the trainees, especially in technical trades. The high attrition rates and low completion rates within the informal apprenticeship system can have severe socio-economic implications in the state. Obviously, apprentices who drop out prematurely may not acquire the necessary skills to secure gainful employment or become self reliant economically, hence, the poverty cycle and underemployment will be increasing. In addition, they may be exposed to psychological problems which may compel them as idle youths to join the bandwagon of militants, kidnappers and several other dissident groups to pose security treats to the innocent citizens. Besides, no conscious efforts have been made for integrating some innovative approaches in the formal Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) into the informal apprenticeship system in the state in order to strengthen it. This situation has continued to pose a significant obstacle to workforce development initiatives in the

state. Moreover, some studies such as Olaitan *et al* (2024) and Udoetuk and George (2025) have identified causes of drop out among informal apprenticeship trainees in some parts of Nigeria without determining the strategies for improving completion rate among apprentice trainees in technical trades. This has created a gap in literature. The problem of the study therefore is to determine the strategies for improving training completion rate among apprentice trainees in technical trades in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of the study was to determine the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. determine strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State
- ii. identify emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State?

2. What are the emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypotheses The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State.

2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female TVET lecturers on the emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate as it involved the use of survey questionnaires to gather information from a sample of the population. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of 1,403 respondents, comprising 237 registered master craftsmen and their trainee apprentices (1,132) across the 31 Local Government Areas in the state as well as 34 experts (lecturers) in Vocational Technical Education. The master craftsmen were drawn from government approved workshops certified to train apprentices in technical trades such as motor repairs

(auto mechanics, auto-body repairs (panel beaters), spray painters, and auto electricians), welding and fabrication, electrical installation, carpentry, masonry, plumbing and motorcycle repairs. The experts were lecturers in Vocational Technical Education in tertiary institutions offering Technical Education and related programmes in Akwa Ibom State namely University of Uyo, College of Education, Afaha Nsit and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua.

The sample size of the study was 302 respondents, comprising 51 master craftsmen and 241 apprentices drawn from different technical trades as well as 10 expert lecturers in Vocational Technical Education. The sample size was determined based on Research Advisors' Sampling Model (2006). Multi-stage cluster sampling, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were applied for selecting the sample for the study. Each senatorial zone in the state was made a cluster. From each cluster, three local government areas were selected. Thereafter, craftsmen in various technical trades and their apprentices were selected from major towns and cities in the nine local government areas using stratified and purposive sampling techniques that considered only master craftsmen that have trained apprentices for at least 5 years. Random sampling was also used to select 10 lecturers in Vocational Technical Education in tertiary institutions in the state.

Two sets of researchers' developed instruments were used for data collection

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in the study. These were the "Informal Apprenticeship Training System in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" and "Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire". The Informal Apprenticeship Training System in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire was designed for the master craftsmen and their apprentices. It had two sections A and B. Section A contained 4 items on the demographic data of respondents while section B contained 10 items on strategies for enhancing training completion rates in informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. The "Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" was designed for TVET lecturers in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. It contained 10 items on emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. All the items in the two questionnaires were structured on a four point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points; Disagreed (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 point.

The instruments for the study were face validated by three experts in Vocational Technical Education from the University of Uyo, Uyo. The experts reviewed the instruments in terms of wordings, language and appropriateness of the items for measuring what it intended to measure. To establish the

reliability of the instruments, the Informal Apprenticeship Training System in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaires was trial tested on 30 respondents (10 master craftsmen and 20 apprentices) while the "Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire" was trial tested on 15 TVET lecturers who were not used in the main study. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability test and reliability coefficients of 0.88 and 0.76 respectively were obtained for the two questionnaires. These high indices indicated that the questionnaires were reliable for use in the study.

The researchers administered the instrument directly to the respondents with the aid of five research assistants who helped to cover the study area effectively. The identified workshops and apprenticeship training centres were visited. After a brief introduction and explanation of the purpose of the study, the "Informal Apprenticeship Training System in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaires was administered on the master craftsmen and their apprentices. For those who could not comprehend English language, guided response was used and the items were interpreted to them. The researchers also visited lecturers of Vocational Technical Education courses in tertiary institutions in the state to administer the second questionnaire to them. The data generated for this study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while

independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State ?

Table 1: Mean responses on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among

informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State (n=292)

S/n	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Subsidizing cost of training for apprentices	2.64	1.12	Agreed
2	Linking all apprenticeship training to the National Directorate of Employment for sponsorship	2.85	1.06	Agreed
3	Payment of training allowances to apprentices	2.90	1.16	Agreed
4	Counseling trainees on the need to persevere despite challenges	2.85	1.18	Agreed
5	Advising master craftsmen to be soft with trainees	3.06	1.08	Agreed
6	Reducing the fees and materials demanded from trainees	3.15	1.10	Agreed
7	Granting automatic start-up capital to successful trainees	2.86	1.16	Agreed
8	Reducing period of training	2.94	1.14	Agreed
9	Stopping apprentices from engaging in domestic work for the master	3.07	1.01	Agreed
10	Giving some days off to apprentices during training	3.05	0.92	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.94	0.59	Agreed

The mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State presented in Table 1 shows that the mean ratings on all the 10 items as well as the cluster mean exceeded the cut-off point of 2.50. This result implies that majority of the respondents agreed that the 10 items are strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2: What are the emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Mean responses of TVET Lecturers on the emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the Informal Apprenticeship Training System in Akwa Ibom State (n = 10)

S/n	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Integration with formal TVET programme	3.30	0.95	Agreed
2	Standardization of the informal apprenticeship system	3.50	0.85	Agreed
3	Mentors' training and support	3.10	0.74	Agreed
4	Adoption of competency based training approach	2.80	0.63	Agreed
5	Linkage to the National Vocational Qualifications Framework	3.00	0.82	Agreed
6	Integration of entrepreneurship training into the apprenticeship system	3.00	1.05	Agreed
7	Use of Technology Enhanced Learning	2.20	0.78	Disagreed
8	Use of Blended Learning models	2.18	0.94	Disagreed
9	Establishment of occupational standards	3.00	0.67	Agreed
10	Establishment of an agency for quality control	3.30	0.64	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	3.08	0.24	Agreed

The mean rating of TVET Lecturers on the emerging paradigms in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State presented in Table 2 shows that eight out of the 10 listed items as well as the cluster mean have mean rating that exceed the cut-off point of 2.50. This result implies that majority of the respondents used in the study agreed that the eight items are emerging paradigms

in TVET that can be adopted to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State while they disagreed on the other two items.

Hypotheses 1 (HO 1). There is no significant difference between the mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean rating of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State

S/n	Status	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	P	Decision
1	Master craftsmen	51	2.95	0.59			
2	Apprentices	241	2.94	0.58	0.13	0.90	NS

DF = 290. NS = Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The t-test analysis of the mean rating of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State presented in Table 3 shows that the t-value is 0.13 while the p-value is 0.90. Since the obtained p-value is greater than the stipulated p-value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is retained. This implies that there is no significant difference between

the mean responses of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State

Hypotheses 2 (Ho 2): There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers on emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean rating of male and female TVET lecturers on emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State

S/n	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p	Decision
1	Male	7	3.05	0.30	-0.45	0.66	NS
2	Female	3	3.13	0.15			

DF = 8. NS = Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4 presents the t-test analysis of the mean rating of male and female TVET lecturers on emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. Table 4 shows that the t-value is -0.45 while the p-value is 0.66. Since the obtained p-value is greater than the stipulated p-value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is retained implying that there is no significant difference between male

and female lecturers on emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State.

Findings and Discussion of the Findings

1. Strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State.

In the study, 10 strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State were found. These include, among others, subsidizing cost of training for apprentices; linking all apprenticeship training to the National Directorate of Employment for sponsorship; payment of training allowances to apprentices; counseling trainees on the need to persevere despite challenges; advising master craftsmen to be soft with trainees and reducing the fees and materials demanded from trainees. Testing of the corresponding null hypothesis confirmed that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of master craftsmen and apprentices on the strategies for enhancing training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State. These findings are not surprising as they point to the fact that many psycho-social as well as economic strategies need to be put in place in order to enhance training completion rates among informal apprenticeship trainees in Akwa Ibom State thus strengthening the traditional apprenticeship system in the State.

The findings of this study agreed with that of Fries, Gobel and Mater (2013) who recommended the payment of training bonus as a means of boosting the

apprenticeship system in Nigeria. It also agreed with that of Powers and Watt (2021) who proposed strategies such as subsidizing cost of training for apprentices and advising master craftsmen to be soft with trainees as some of the measures for boosting the apprenticeship training system in Nigeria.

2. Emerging paradigms in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State

The study also found eight emerging paradigms or approaches in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. These include, among others, Integration with formal VET programme; standardization of the apprenticeship system; mentors' training and support; adoption of competency based training and establishment of occupational standards as well as an agency for quality control. Testing of the corresponding null hypothesis confirmed that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female TVET lecturers on emerging paradigms or approaches in TVET for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is in line with that of Peter *et al* (2019), Okadi *et al* (2020) and Olaitan, *et al* (2024) who in their separate studies suggested strengthening the capacity of master craftsmen, collaboration with formal educational institutions, development of suitable occupational standard, training of the trainers and establishment of certification bodies as some of the strategies for

enhancing the apprenticeship programme in Nigeria.

Conclusion

There is imperative need to revamp the informal apprenticeship system in Akwa Ibom state by implementing strategies found in the study for reducing drop out rates and enhancing completion rates among the trainees. Also emerging paradigms or approaches in TVET need to be integrated into the system in order to improve the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State. This would obviously reduce the high level of unemployment among youths in the state, thus paving way for the socio-economic as well as technological development of the state and nation at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for improving the informal apprenticeship training system in Akwa Ibom State:

1. The appropriate government ministry and agencies should organize regular capacity building programmes for master craftsmen on how to improve their training practices.
2. There should be effective collaboration between master craftsmen and the formal TVET providers in the state in order to maximize the enormous benefits associated with the apprenticeship training system.
3. Entrepreneurship training should be incorporated into the informal

apprenticeship training system and a start up package should be provided for successful apprentices by the government to enable them set up their businesses immediately after training

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