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FULL PAPER SUBMISSION

**THE ROLE OF ODL IN IMPROVING SKILLS ACQUISITION IN THE
INFORMAL SECTOR IN ZAMBIA**

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Acronyms

CEDEFOP-	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
KRIVET-	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training
RPL-	Recognition of Prior Learning
TEVET-	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
TEVETA-	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority

The Role of ODL in Improving Skills Acquisition in the Informal Sector in Zambia

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Abstract

The Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) piloted Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessments on worksites or project sites. The purpose of this programme was to equip the informal sector personnel with nationally recognised qualifications. The various skills that such personnel acquire through these worksites are usually unrecognised and uncertified, which limits their participation in various national projects.

It was recognised that even though the informal sector mentorship programmes equip the workforce with technical competence and vast experience, there is usually partial compliance to Occupational, Health, Safety and Environment (OHSE) standards in the workshops and worksites. In addition, there is limited value addition by the informal sector of various goods and services.

This paper seeks to explore strategies on how to enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes of the informal sector. The specific objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To identify the causes of low skills acquisition in the informal sector;
2. To describe the effect of skill certification in the informal sector; and
3. To review how open and distance learning (ODL) can be used to improve skills among informal sector workers.

This paper seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on how skills and competences that are acquired from informal worksites can be formally recognised to empower the informal sector with skills upgrading to enable them to participate effectively in national projects.

The 9th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9) provides an appropriate platform to share empirical findings of this paper and benefit from the network of experts and practitioners in various fields of ODL and TEVET.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This section contains the background and contextual considerations of the study; an overview of the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions. It also outlines the significance of the study as well as the key terms.

1.1 Background to the Problem

The informal sector represents a large workforce of semi-skilled or unskilled individuals in society. This caters for various skill areas that these men and women possess, and competences they demonstrate, which assist them in their livelihoods. Most of their worksites are usually unplanned settlements that are eventually given recognition with time; where informal sector on-site training is carried out.

The informal sector makes up 84% of the labour force in Zambia (Central Statistical Office, 2012), and most of these individuals have lower level competences, which can be attributed to the way that they acquire these skills and the certification that most of them possess, since they find it easier to be assessed at Trade Tested Level III. The inertia to advance from Trade Test Level III can be attributed to the informal sector not possessing literacy skills or the unwillingness/opportunity cost of leaving their businesses for a long time in order to advance their studies.

TEVETA through Window 3 of the TEVET Fund for SMEs (small and medium enterprises) also targets the training of SMEs personnel in the informal and formal sectors. This training is meant to sharpen their technical, entrepreneurial, management and social skills. This training fund is disbursed to training providers upon successful application for the funds, which is determined by assessing the training needs analysis (TNA) and proposals that are presented to TEVETA.

The recruitment of the SMEs is done at the discretion of the training providers and in some instances learners who do not need the skills highlighted in the TNA are recruited. Other challenges are abandonment of needs assessment findings, negative work attitude of some learners, poor documentation of the learning and learner files and wrong expenditures. Nevertheless, success stories abound of skill enhancement, improved productivity as well as product/service quality. These assertions call for the need to scrutinise the assumed dis-connect between industry skill needs and competences or qualifications of mentors in the informal sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on establishing the effect of skills training on the competences of informal sector personnel; on an assumption that the skills that are being imparted in the informal sector in Zambia do not adequately address the needs of industry; which, calls for further scrutiny to find out which areas the informal sector have been failing to develop their capabilities in and identify areas for ensuring recognition of current competence for mentors.

The current informal apprenticeships or mentorship programmes that are being conducted in the marketplaces through informal work-based learning do not fully address the skills needs, OHSE and practical hands-on capabilities. Therefore, they do not participate effectively in national projects.

Since, industry and community relevance are indispensable for any skills development programme; the informal mentorship programme should be explored in terms of improving labour market achievement among informal sector personnel. Therefore, this study seeks to segregate the needs of the different industrial sectors in the Zambian economy into generic and specific industry skill requirements in order to document the necessary areas of improving informal sector competences.

1.3 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to examine the adequacy of skills and competences of informal sector personnel in terms of meeting industry needs.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the causes of low skills acquisition in the informal sector;
2. To describe the effect of skill certification in the informal sector; and

3. To review how open and distance learning (ODL) can be used to improve skills among informal sector workers.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed.

1. What is the cause of low skills acquisition in the informal sector?
2. What is the effect of skill certification in the informal sector?
3. How can ODL be used to improve skills among informal sector workers?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Zambia being a member of the WorldSkills International, which is a global hub for skills excellence and development; is supposed to adapt international skills excellence standards in order to effectively mentor youths, and local industry artisans to enable them to be internationally competitive. Therefore, this study could contribute to providing options on raising the competence of the informal sector to international standards.

The study is expected to spell out how the linkage to industry affects competences of informal sector personnel in the TEVET sector. It is anticipated that the study will provide evidence to help improve the skills and technical know-how of informal sector mentors. This is in line with the Seventh National Development plan that seeks to improve the quality of TEVET and increase its relevance to the needs of industry without leaving anyone behind.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

The following operational terms will be defined.

1. Competence: Ability to perform assigned tasks that is classified as worthy performance or exceeds the expected outcome.
2. Skills Acquisition: The impartation of psychomotor and hands-on abilities to trainees that are applied in a specific sector.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature that was considered to provide the underpinning theory and what other authors have written on related subject matter to labour market demand, and the informal sector.

2.1 Competence in TEVET

Competence equals worthy performance that leads directly to the most efficient accomplishment of organisational goals because of attention being paid to the process and costs and benefits (Teodorescu, 2006). Competence is fundamental to TEVET because of the highly practical nature or hands-on work that is associated with it. Therefore, this study suggests applying competence in the informal sector on the basis of national and industry needs.

2.2 The Concept of the Informal Sector

Informal sector or informal economy is that part of an economy that is not taxed, monitored by any form of government, or included in any gross national product (GNP) (Lewis, 1979). The mechanism of revenue collection tends to be undefined and the calculation of this revenue is quite variable over a short period of time, which is due to the sudden fluctuations of income generation.

In addition, the formal sector tends to be lower in rural areas and higher in urban areas. There has been a tendency to believe that informal sector is synonymous with lack of training, but this myth needs to be examined because the informal sector does exhibit a level of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The trades that have the lowest enrolments at some Trades Training Institutes are Metal Fabrication, and Carpentry and Bricklaying. It is evident that these trades have been affected by economic activities that thrive in informal worksites. It seems most informal sector players feel that they can readily acquire these skills in the informal worksites at a reduced or no cost through informal apprenticeships.

2.3 Labour Market Demand

According to CEDEFOP (2014) skill needs is demand for types of knowledge and skills on the labour market. In Zambia this demand is reflected in terms of skill requirements districts, provinces and economic sectors in the country, which reflects prescription of various types of activities, trades, industrial or professional duties. These labour market demands are captured in labour standards requirements, job functional, skills, and competence needs analysis.

The demand-driven skills training is mainly based on skills that are required by the formal economy but the majority of the labour force in Zambia is found in the informal economy; this might cause a retrospective on whether the industry skills needs that matter most are those from the formal sector or the informal sector; in most cases the informal sector skill needs also reflect local needs. The balance of the demands from the formal sector and informal sector on effective skills training and competences of informal sector personnel should be evaluated; which, is to address how this information affects on-site open learning.

The Grierson (2002) reports were based on a survey of 13 enterprises in Kenya and Zambia in early 2001. The Kenya and Zambia studies shared a broad mandate and basic approach (case studies), but they were carried out independently of one another and by different authors.

The studies revealed that the principle response of the modern sector has been to look internally for solutions; enterprises are increasingly addressing their skills development needs through Enterprise-Based Training (EBT). That they would do so is both intuitive and readily apparent. Despite this, very little is known about the actual characteristics of modern sector EBT in Africa (Grierson, 2002). The option for enterprise-based learning is preferred because of skills development needs of enterprises are not being met by the training institutions.

In the Zambia Labour Demand Survey that was conducted under the auspices of the (Better Education for Africa's Rise Project (BEAR) by (KRIVET: 2014) in the tourism and construction sectors. The findings on the most important reason for skills gap occurrence was summarised as follows:

Table 1: The Most Important Reason for Skills Gap Occurrence (KRIVET, 2014: 5)

	Total (Case)	Type of Industry		The Number of Employees		
		Tourism	Construction	1-5	6-10	11-2000
1. Curriculum/ Training programme	29.9% (106)	21.0%	40.9%	30.9%	25.2%	33.0%
2. Training system	19.2% (68)	14.9%	24.5%	16.3%	17.5%	23.6%
3. Feasibility of TVET system	14.7% (52)	17.4%	11.3%	12.2%	15.5%	15.1%
4. Capacity of TVET system	18.6% (66)	30.3%	4.4%	22.0%	25.2%	10.4%
5. Training providers' competence	16.4% (58)	15.9%	17.0%	18.7%	14.6%	16.0%
6. Others	1.2% (4)	0.5%	1.9%	0.0%	1.9%	1.9%

2.4 Knowledge Gap and Contribution to Knowledge

This paper seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on how skills and competences that are acquired from informal worksites can be formally recognised to empower the informal sector with skills upgrading to enable them to participate effectively in national projects.

2.5 Summary

The section has considered the underpinning contextual studies that informed the current proposed study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This section presents a description of the theoretical framework of the research and conceptual base of the area of study.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be employed in this study is adapted from a framework by Gilbert (1996: 17). Thomas Gilbert's in his book *Human Competence* defined Human competence as a function of worthy performance (W), which is a function of the ratio of valuable accomplishments (A) to costly behaviour (B).

Or

$$W = A/B, \text{ Performance} = B + A$$

Competent people are those who can create valuable results without excessively costly behaviour (Gilbert, 1996: 17). This is a very useful formula for performance improvement but does not consider the values or attitudes associated to the job. Behaviour is a highly subjective matter and rigorous measurement instruments must be put in place (to avoid biasness and adhere to validity) to measure the attitude and soft skills.

3.2 Review of Theories

Activity Theory

Rather than being unitary and objectively constituted, domains of human activity have diverse geneses, values and forms. It is also based on activity that prompts the consideration of the sources of factors that shape the activities and interaction, norms and practices at the local level (Billett, 2003). Therefore, it might not be applicable to other contexts that apprentices are exposed to.

This training paradigm considers the breaking down of training content into tasks that should be carried out for effective experiential learning to occur, which is directed towards specific outcomes and encourages incremental training and could be referred to as task-based training. However, not all training content can be clustered into activities and some activities involve the use of multiple theoretical applications.

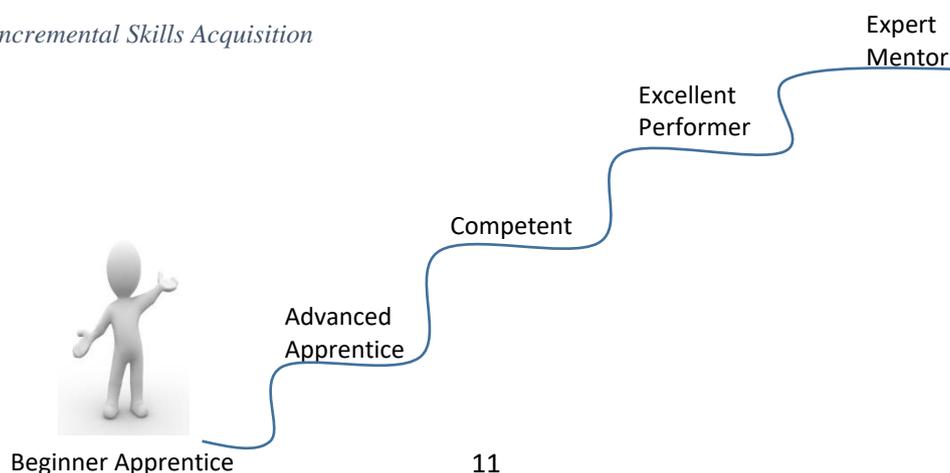
Expert Theory

The Expert Theory is also known as the Novice to Expert Theory, which considers increments in skilled performance based upon experience as well as education. It also provides a basis for clinical knowledge development and career progression in clinical nursing (Benner, 1982). This theory that was coined by Patricia Benner was founded on the Dreyfus model of Skill Acquisition; the Dreyfus model posits that, in the acquisition and development of a skill, one passes through five levels of proficiency:

1. Novice;
2. Advanced beginner;
3. Competent;
4. Proficient; and
5. Expert (Benner, 1982).

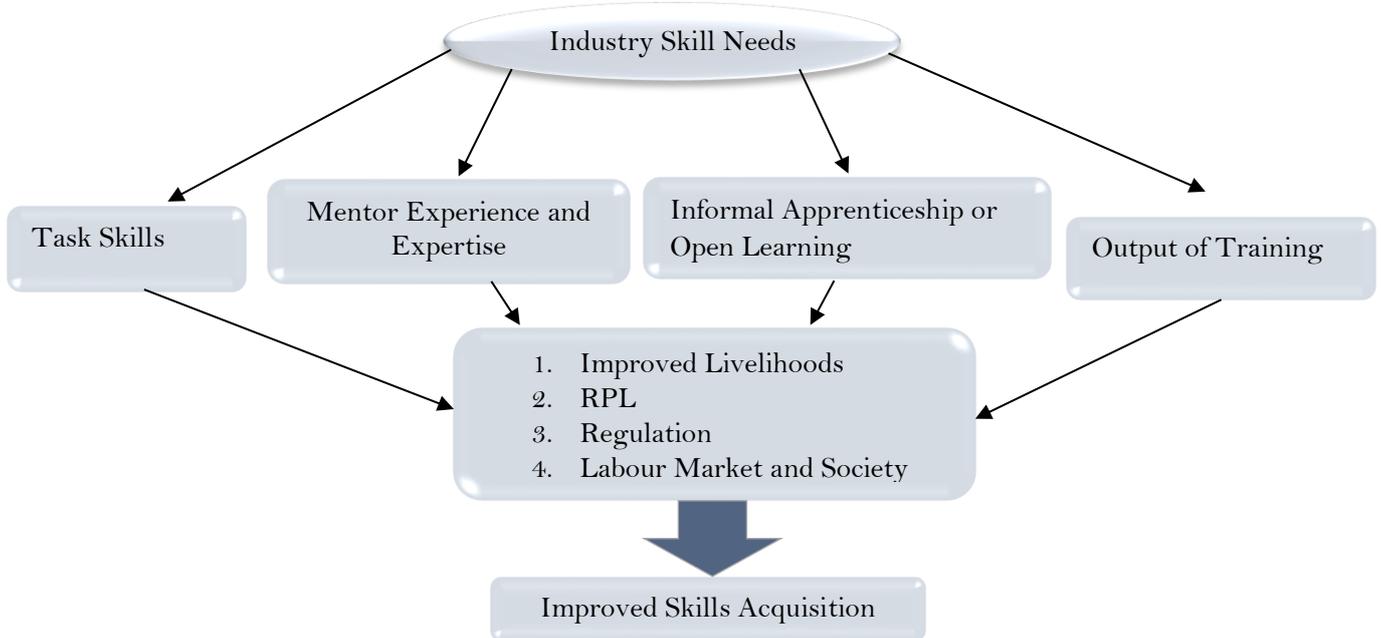
This model shows that there is an incremental development in terms of skill acquisition from novice to expert; that is from abstract underpinning knowledge to concrete experience as well as perception of a situation or task from its aggregate parts into a complete whole. The expertise theory is important in TEVET because it depicts the incremental nature of skill acquisition. However, the varied proficiency levels are not explicit, and individuals are assumed to systematically up-skill to the subsequent level.

Figure 1: Incremental Skills Acquisition



Conceptual Framework

Figure 2: Industry Skill Needs effect on Informal Sector Training



Summary

The theories detail an account of various strategies that are used in TEVET to enhance the quality of training and make it relevant to the needs of industry. It also highlights mechanisms for improving competence of the informal sector personnel. The theory that was adopted is the Expert Theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This section presents the research design and methodology that will be employed in this study. It also highlights the data analysis and presentation procedures that will be used.

4.1 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Assumptions

Since, the study will use mixed methods research it will be informed by pragmatism. According to Cresswell (2014), pragmatist researchers look to the “*what*” and “*how*” to research based on the intended consequences- where they want to go with it. Pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions. This implies that there must be a justification for mixing quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of mixed methods research is to establish the feelings “whys” behind people’s perspectives and experiences.

Table 2: Summary of Key Concepts that Structure Philosophical Assumptions

Subjective	Theoretical Assumptions	Objective
Nominalism	Ontology	Realism
Post-positivism	Epistemology	Positivism
Voluntarism	Human Nature	Determinism
Idiographic	Methodology	Nomothetic

4.2 Research Design

The study will use a descriptive design. Survey questionnaire, document analysis and interviews will be used to collect information from a sample of informal sector industry representatives. Phenomenology will be used for the qualitative method. The focus is on the participants’ perceptions of the event or situation, and the study tries to answer the questions of the experience. Therefore, the study will employ mixed methods research and will be explanatory in nature.

Target Population

The target population are the informal sector personnel. The informal sector industry representatives will be obtained from the. The study will focus on Lusaka Province.

Table 3: Sampling Frame for the different Strata of Survey Respondents

Stratum	Population	Sample Size
Industry Representatives	300	169
Total	29,840	879

4.3 Description of Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample size can be determined using the following formula will be used for calculating sample sizes for known populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

In the formula, n is the sample size required, e is the level of precision expressed as a decimal, N is the size of the population and the confidence level is 95%, at 5% precision.

4.4 Description of Research Instruments

Survey questionnaire, document analysis and interviews will be used to collect information from a sample of industry representatives. The survey questionnaire will be used to capture data from Industry Representatives on the effectiveness of informal sector training programme.

4.5 Description of the Data Collection Procedures

The researcher after obtaining permission from the Industry and informal sector Representatives that will be willing to participate in the study. This will be confirmed by the participants signing consent forms after the purpose of the study was explained to them. The questionnaire survey and document analysis will be used to collect data for the quantitative phase of the study.

The following methods will be used to collect data for the qualitative phase: Researcher Participant Observer, Interview Guide and Observation Template.

4.6 Description of Data Analysis and Presentation Procedures

Frequencies, tables, graphs, and pie-charts will be used to display descriptive data of the findings of the study, which will be derived and processed from Microsoft excel. In addition. Chi-square tests will also be used to test the strength of relationships of variables. Qualitative data will also be presented through themes and subthemes that will be deciphered through content analysis.

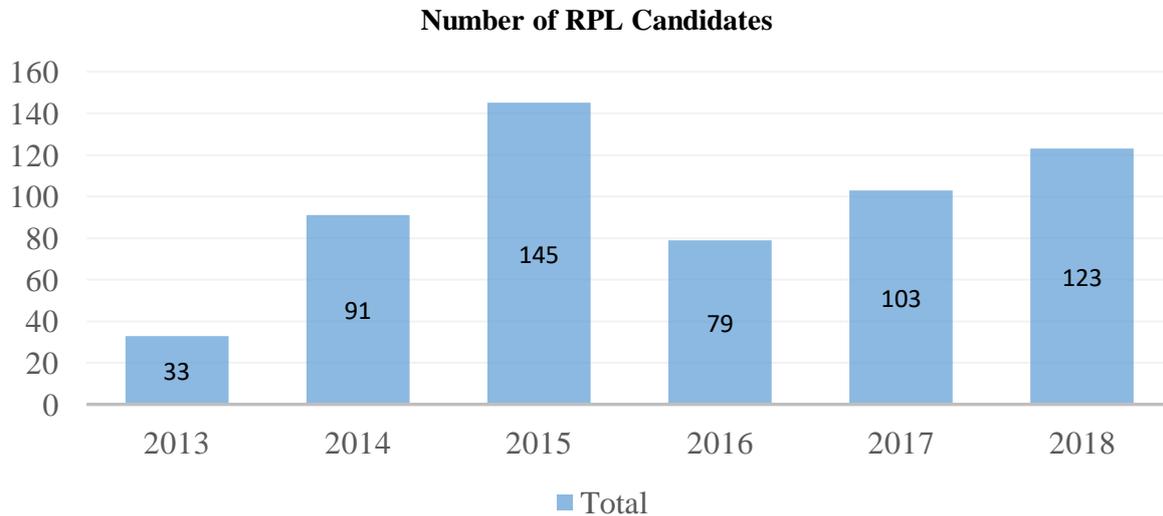
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This section presents the research design and methodology that will be employed in this study. It also highlights the data analysis and presentation procedures that will be used.

5.1 Findings



Case Studies of the Informal Sector

S/N	Trade Title	Years of Experience	Certification Level by RPL	Use of Self-learning (ODL) Materials
1.	Carpenter	6	Trade Level II	Yes
2.	Metal Fabricator	10	Trade Level III	No
3.	Plumbing and Sheet Metal	5	Trade Level III	No
4.	Tailor	13	Trade Level III	No
5.	Shoemaker	30	Not Yet	No
6.	Construction Foreman	7	Trade Level II	Yes

5.2 Conclusion

The informal sector possesses a large workforce, which has a vast potential for acquiring and improving skills. Most of these informal sector workers acquire skills informally or non-formally, and sometimes this training lacks the OSHE aspects. It is, therefore, necessary to empower the informal sector through ODL, which will enable them to participate in national socio-economic demands, while up-skilling or re-skilling themselves. Therefore, the thrust of this paper was to highlight outcomes that will contribute to the socio-economic benefits of the informal sector through sustained skills improvement through ODL.

5.3 Recommendations

1. The lower productivity levels that tend to characterise informal sector workers needs to be conscientiously tackled by making them realise that production of good quality goods and services will enable them to get better earnings.
2. A lot of enterprises tend to be informal because of the relative ease of entry into the business environment, therefore, it is important for organisations that work with MSMEs to carry out mobile sensitisation programmes on how to formalise business enterprises. In addition, the cost and procedure of registration of enterprises should be eased up and simplified for those with low level literacy skills, qualifications and nominal capital.

3. The business acumen of the informal can be fostered by up-skilling and re-skilling, which is most favourably available through ODL and self-learning materials. Most of these workers cannot afford to go into full-time training because of the socio-economic obligations that compel them not prioritise skill acquisition and improvement.

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