

Original Research Article

Exploring the Challenges of Apprenticeship Training System in Dressmaking and Tailoring (Clothing) in the Kumasi Metropolis (Ghana)

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Abstract: Garments are produced in either large or small-scale industries. The situation in Ghana is not different but most of the garments manufactured in Ghana are made by master craftsmen and apprentices. This phenomenon has however, influenced the establishment of countless traditional apprenticeship training centres in the country. Irrespective of the numerous small-scale clothing or fashion industries in Ghana, consumers still rely on the importation of western garments. This is because apprenticeship training in garment has not been fully accorded the necessary attention and recognition as compared to formal training. The study was therefore conducted to examine some challenges facing the traditional apprenticeship training system in dressmaking and tailoring. Qualitative research design was employed and under it, descriptive method was used. Purposive sampling technique facilitated in selecting thirty (30) master craftsmen and apprentices who have spent three consecutive years in the trade within the study area. Questionnaire appeared to be the main instrument for gathering the requisite data for the study. The study reveals that key measures proposed by Past and Current governments for improving the standard of apprenticeship training in the dressmaking and tailoring sector have not been very effective. The absence of universal training modules and monitoring is affecting the industry. A national structured modules and support from higher clothing institutions, among other important factors are recommended for helping improve and sustain the traditional apprenticeship system in the garment production sector.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, Clothing, Dressmaking, Garment and Tailoring, Traditional.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment has become the topic of the day and in most communities it is viewed as a social canker. This is predominantly seen among basic school leavers in Ghana. It is undeniably fact that majority of the Ghanaian youth prefer formal training to informal because those who opt for the traditional apprenticeship training system are tagged as academically weak. Despite the uncountable benefits accrued from apprenticeship in respect of economic development, many people especially the elite in the society still look down on individuals who go through this kind of training (Amenuke et al., 1990).

The traditional apprenticeship method in Ghana from the perspective of Anokye and Afrane (2014) has been an important aspect of its informal economy, especially for its major role as a secondly means of skills transfer and the development of the

country's manpower needed for the total national growth.

It is obvious that past and successive governments in Ghana over the years have tried to make apprenticeship training better and interesting. In the course of supporting this agenda, some governments voluntarily included in their policies the modalities for training people in the informal sector of the economy. To buttress this phenomenon, McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh (1975) write that, the first president of Ghana in one of his speech outlined certain measures in relation to his vision, which had skills acquisition in national development as the fulcrum.

The apprenticeship training system that catered for the diverse needs of the society before and after independence has been downplayed in the year that followed. This development in the 21st century has

affected the garment industry (dressmaking and tailoring) in Ghana.

Donkor (2006), commenting on the importance of apprenticeship training relates that it offers the youth on the job training skills under the tuition or direction of a certified trade master. For better enhancement of apprenticeship training in the clothing industry, Donkor further believes that an aspect of formal education should be integrated into the traditional training method in the guest of harnessing a speedy acquisition of skills by the apprentices. Inclusion of few aspects of formal education as argued by Donkor (2006) is uncommon in the local garment industries. Apprentices in the dressmaking and tailoring sectors are virtually trained formally. Some have to battle with reading skills and more importantly solving minor mathematical problems. A handful of apprentices in the clothing sector could write legibly and even express themselves well in the English Language. The manner in which the traditional apprenticeship training in the clothing sector is organised make learners spend a lot time in the course of their training. Unfortunately, upon completion, some are not able to establish themselves and when engaged or employed into existing companies or shop, they are unable to meet the requirements and expectations of their employers.

A major contributing factor of this study is about the situation and nature of the apprenticeship training system in Ghana. Apparently, hundreds of thousands of young people are engaged as traditional apprentices in the informal or private sector but the Ghanaian youth continue to live in poverty and consumers still rely massively on the importation of Western clothing (garments). This situation ends up building and developing the economy and market of foreign nations. To some extent, consumers of Western clothing cannot be blamed because the traditional apprenticeship training in dressmaking has not been able to inculcate into the trainees the kind of skills and ideas that can enhance their skills acquisition; thereby making them competitive on the clothing market.

Another pertinent issue could also be attributed to the mode of selection and admission criteria of apprentices into the clothing industry. It is also obvious that the tools and equipment employed to train these young ones do not meet international standard. Another crucial thing is that, there is no universal document such as training modules for preparing apprentices in dressmaking and tailoring in the traditional sector as it is in the formal sector.

The overall aim of the study is to identify some challenges of traditional apprenticeship training in the clothing industry and propose recommendations so that upon completion, trainees can either set up their

own shops or work to the satisfaction of their employers.

The specific objectives directed at answering the research questions are to identify the challenges of trainers and trainees in the clothing industry and determine how formal basic skills could be integrated into traditional apprenticeship system. It also looks at recommending appropriate admission criteria for selecting apprentices into the clothing sector, and identifying some interventions made by past and current governments on informal apprenticeship training in Ghana.

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, the following questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges of informal apprenticeship training in the traditional clothing industries in Ghana?
2. How would formal acquisition of basic skills be integrated into traditional apprenticeship system?
3. What criteria should be used to select and admit individuals into apprenticeship training?
4. What measures have governments and economic stakeholders put in place to enhance traditional apprenticeship?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The overview of Apprenticeship Training

The issue of apprenticeship first started in the later middle ages and gradually came to be supervised by craft guilds. In the early dispensation, a master craftsman was responsible for engaging young people as cheap form of labour in exchange for providing foods, lodging and training in a particular craft. Males dominance overshadowed that of females. Women apprentices were also found in typical traditional crafts such as seamstress, tailoring, and baking (Ryan and Lorna, 2001).

Considering the specific age at which people were offered the opportunity to be trained as apprentices, Adewale (1979) believes that the youth who were between the ages of ten to fifteen years were made to live in the master craftsman's household and start their training course right from that period.

Most apprentices wishing to becoming masters' craftsmen themselves on completion of their contract agreement (usually a term of seven years) were made to spend additional significance proportion of their time while looking for their own shops.

Deissinger (2000) looks at apprenticeship training from different angle but shares similar views as Adewale. Deissinger argues that apprenticeship training is all about building or developing a new generation of practitioners of structured competency in a basic set of

skills. Apprentices pass through strict training programmes in order to acquire certain skills to prepare themselves for their desired career or trade in which they want to pursue and obtain license to practice.

In the early days of apprenticeship training, individual trainees had their career training and development while working for an employer who helps the apprentices acquire their needed skills (Deissinger, 2000).

Donkor (2006) and Olatumi (1980) relate that, in practice, every skilled occupation requires fundamental knowledge in arithmetic and the ability to read write and speak well. Modalities regarding apprenticeship in the traditional sector vary. In some context, there are prescribing entry requirements while in other jurisdiction, there are little or no policies governing age and proof of literacy of apprentices (ILO, 1988).

Depending on the nature of the trade, the master craftsmen and the apprentice, the training may take from months to years. Working hours of apprentice are usually long; mostly six days a week with weekly hours ranging from 50 to 60. In terms of compensation to the master craftsman, some apprentices pay for their training while others forfeit income for the work they do for their masters.

In some cases, they are given free board and lodging or pocket money or occasional bonus. It is worthy to note that some master craftsmen permit their apprentices to sell what they produce in their free time with the tools, equipment and materials they find in the workshops (ILO, 1988).

Challenges of Traditional Apprenticeship in the Garment Production Sector

Human resource has been a very crucial component for a nation's growth and development. Over the years, some governments and their various ministries have tried to champion the problems that confront apprenticeship in Ghana. As mentioned earlier on, the first president of Ghana in one of his speech of the old Legislative Assembly in 1987 outlined some modalities concerning Ghanaian educational system. One of the key issues emanated from the president's speech was about the means of tackling fundamental causes of low productivity, hence the focus on traditional education and skill transfer system. (Anokye and Afrane, 2014).

This brilliant idea which should have helped the country in curbing unemployment among the youth was de-emphasized and considered unachievable in the years that followed (McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

There are always people who will drop out from formal school system on the grounds of high school fees, cost of textbooks, parental neglect, peer pressure influence and such like. Fox and Gaal (2008), believe there should be a survival strategy and coping mechanism for those who drop out at the Basic and secondary educational level and more importantly those who have not stepped their foot in school before. The best option as devised by these authors has to do with learning a trade and settling in the informal or traditional sector of the economy. It is at this point that most of them find themselves in the clothing industry (dressmaking and tailoring). Traditional apprenticeships in West Africa are widespread. However, it is very common in Ghana to see Dressmaking and Tailoring training centres at the four corners of the country. The market for apprenticeship has gained a toe hold in Ghana and is especially common place in urban centres, but some of the problems facing this sector have not been managed well (Monk, et al., 2008).

Some of the major challenges confronting apprenticeship in the clothing sector from the perspective of Opoku et al. (2015), Donkor (2006) and Olatumi (1980) have to do with the lack of adequate formal vocational or technical training. Traditional apprenticeship training is structured quite different from the formal school system. In the formal educational sector, there are policies and curriculum of instructions that learners go through but this is absent in the traditional sector.

Ngethe and Ndua (1992), commenting on this issue observed that, master craftsmen teach their apprentices the way they were taught and there has been little infusion of new technology and new designs. Master craftsmen mostly transfer their skills and ideas to apprentices but rarely create new knowledge. This phenomenon limits the theoretical base of apprentices and negatively affect productivity.

Another problem apprentices and their respective masters go through in the clothing industry is that there is inadequate essential machinery for training. Although, there are state of the art machines on the market, the master craftsmen lack the logistics for acquiring such facilities.

In some cases, upon completion, apprentices find it difficult to secure a piece of land to put up their shops and there are also not enough existing garment industries to absorb them. Irrespective of the apprentices having the requisite knowledge and skills, they sometimes become redundant in the community (Olatumi, 1980).

It has also come to light that there is little or no national monitoring of the activities that transpire in the traditional dressmaking and tailoring centres. Some of

the master craftsmen have organised themselves into associations and the leaders of these groups from time to time go round to offer some checks on their members.

Mode of Apprentice Recruitment

According to Fadipe (1970), much of the data on apprenticeship in Ghana focused on the concept of socialisation and productive activity. In the same vein, Fortes (1949) relates that the family of procreation was responsible for the process of socialisation whereby individuals were instilled with the skills and attitudes necessary for playing social roles. It is also believed that in the early stages of apprenticeship, skills were passed from father to son, thus, flexible recruitment was exercised in order that other kinsmen may learn the trade (Fortes, 1949 and Nukunye, 1969).

Adewale (1979) considers this process of skill transfer as “intergenerational mobility” but observed that with economic and technological development, the kinship-based transfer of skills has given way to a wider scope of recruitment. In his survey of craftsmen in Ibadan, Nigeria, Adewale revealed that minority (less than 10%) of his respondents were engaged in trade similar to those of their parents.

Smutylo (1973) and Ninson (1991) investigated the mode of apprentices’ recruitment and came out with two different modalities with each having its own characteristics and outcomes. The two major modes are fostering and vocational apprenticeship. Fostering apprenticeship from the view of Ninson (1991) happens between kin relatives; meaning the master craftsman is no doubt related to the apprentices’ family under this category, there is little or no requirement of cash payment for the training. In view of this, the apprentice has to be inducted into the trade at a very tender age, mostly in the late childhood (11 – 12 years) and stay with the master. Conclusions from Ninson’s investigation on fostering apprenticeship indicated that, the boys who live with the master craftsman have opportunity to use tools and materials belonging to the master. However, this enables them to practice on their own account during their spare time. A major characteristic of this style is that, the apprentice has no freedom because he is regarded as part of the master’s household and takes active role of other activities that are not related to the training.

Vocational apprenticeship requires a shorter training period. This usually starts from late adolescent (17 – 19 years old). With regard to the vocational apprenticeship, substantial payment of drinks, food items and cash are required in exchange for the training (Smutylo, 1973). Deductions made from the two mode of recruitment indicate that, relationship with the master craftsman has influence on the amount paid for the training. Furthermore, age is also a determinant factor

on duration as well as the quality of training apprentice received.

The nature of apprentice recruitment has not changed so much even though there have been few moderations. In this present dispensation, everyone can just walk into any training centre and register without necessarily involving parents. Another trend which is prevailing currently in the urban centres is that some serious youth begin petty trading and when they get money, they enroll themselves in apprenticeship training by footing all the necessary requirements. Ministry of Education (2010) believes that master craftsmen are mandated to graduate from Basic School and if possible Secondary School now that both Basic and Secondary Education are free in Ghana.

Again, the craftsmen must be assured of the seriousness of the prospective apprentice’s intention to learn and abide by the rules, routines and the rituals of the trade. There is also an extension of fee(s) payment by the guarantors and the signing of the apprenticeship agreement.

Governments and Stakeholders Interventions in Apprenticeship Training

Apprenticeship as organised in the informal industry is mainly by private initiative, meanwhile some state institutions offer limited apprenticeship programmes (Education Reform Review Committee, 2002). A common feature of apprenticeship training in Ghana is the lack of uniformity in training duration, certification and programme content.

The government of Ghana in 2002 constituted a committee to look into apprenticeship training and come out with modalities to regulate the system. Upon several deliberations, the committee recommended that there should be enactment of policies to control and supervise registration of apprenticeship providers and standardization of training content, duration and certification. The government was to collaborate with the industry, identifiable trade associations and other training providers in order to achieve this vision (Donkor, 2006).

In the White Paper Report on Education Reform Review, the government through its agencies (Education Ministry, Youth and Sports) in 2004 made the following recommendations to help plan and manage apprenticeship in a more systematic manner.

The government’s package for streamlining the informal apprenticeship involved constituting a National Apprentice Training Board to oversee and regulate apprentice training and handle issues regarding registration, programme content, duration and certification.

Another step taken by the government was the formalisation of community-based apprentice training schemes in all the Districts in Ghana to cater for the unemployed youth in the society.

In March 2003, African Heads of State adopted the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) ‘e-school’ initiative as a continental priority aimed at ensuring that the youth of Africa graduating from African Schools and other sectors are equipped with skills that would help them participate effectively in the global information society. The presidential initiative on garment production introduced in 2004 also helped in training some youth in the clothing sector (Donkor, 2006; Kwarteng, 2008).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative data on traditional apprenticeship system in Kumasi. It thus, used descriptive research methods.

A non-random sampling method known as purposive sampling was used. In this technique, the sample was chosen to suit the purpose of the study.

Certain elements of the population were deliberately selected on the judgment of the researchers and nothing was left to chance. The sample size of the study constituted thirty (30) respondents which, included apprentices and master craftsmen. The sample size as indicated was strictly controlled to involve apprentices who have spent three (3) years and above in the establishments visited by the researchers. In all a total number of ten (10) dressmaking or tailoring shops were used for the distribution of the questionnaire. In each case, the master craftsmen and two apprentices were chosen and the questionnaire being administered.

Questionnaire was used as the major data collecting instruments. Data accrued from the questionnaire were descriptively analyzed using percentage score on a two-point Likert Scale. A secondary source of data was not left behind as it provided the framework for the analysis of data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges of Apprentices and Master Craftsmen in the Garment sector

Table-1: Challenges of Apprentices and Craftsmen

Characteristics	Agree Frequency	Percentage	Disagree Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adequate tools and equipment	11	36.7	19	63.3
Similar finishing characteristics	9	30	21	70
Competency of garment craftsmen	13	43.3	17	56.7
National fund for apprenticeship training	12	40	18	60
Apprentices setting up their businesses	16	53.3	14	46.7
National models for apprenticeship	7	23.3	23	76.7
Illiteracy rate among craftsmen and apprentices	18	60	12	40
Tax exemption of traditional clothing industry	10	33.3	20	66.7

Analysis of the results indicated that 19 (63.3%) respondents believed garment production craftsmen and apprentices lack the requisite tools and equipment for apprenticeship training in the garment industries, whilst 11 (37.7%) respondents asserted that craftsmen and apprentices have the necessary tools and equipment for training and production.

Donkor (2006) writes that craftsmen and apprentices lack access to current technological knowledge with regard to modern tools and equipment in the traditional apprenticeship system. This particular problem is quite different from the formal apprenticeship (government and private institutions) and that has brought a vast gap between apprentices trained in the traditional sector and that of formal sector. Comparing the quality of clothing articles produced by local craftsmen to that of Western origin, 21 as against 9 respondents supported the idea that

clothing produced in the western world are of high quality than locally manufactured ones. This however, buttresses the point made by Donkor (2006) that traditional craftsmen and apprentices in the garment industries in Ghana lack modern tools and equipment. Considering the competency level of craftsmen in the clothing industries, Nge'the and Ndua (1992) write that most craftsmen are not competent enough and this is clearly seen in the way instructions are given to their apprentices. They further asserted that most craftsmen pass on their skills and knowledge to apprentices, but rarely create new skills and knowledge. There are no formal instructions and this has limited the theoretical knowledge base of apprentices and impacts negatively on productivity. Collectively, about 56.7% of the respondents admitted that traditional garment craftsmen are not competent enough to handle apprentices both in theoretical and skilled base whilst 43.3% were of the

view that craftsmen are competent in training apprentices.

Looking at the issue of national fund allocated to support craftsmen and training of apprentices in the clothing industries in Ghana, it was observed that 12 respondents representing 40% said there is a national fund allocated to support and encourage apprenticeship training in Ghana while majority of the respondents 18 constituting (60%) shared different view by saying that there is no fund set aside to ensure apprenticeship development in Ghana.

It could however, be concluded that the challenges confronting craftsmen and apprentices in the clothing industries cannot be solely curb down by themselves. As a result, the government and other stakeholders need to intervene in order to assist traditional apprenticeship development in Ghana. If possible, there should be a well-structured modules accompanying by prescribe tools and equipment for training apprentices in the clothing industries. From the point of the researchers, illiteracy rate among craftsmen and apprentices could be eradicated or minimized if apprentices would be mandated to complete basic and secondary schools before embarking on apprenticeship training. This will even go a long way helping them to establish their own businesses upon completion of training.

According to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) human capital has been cited as a critical ingredient for a nation’s growth and development and this particular resource emanate mostly from the informal sector. This means that much is expected of apprentices upon completion of their various programmes. Apprentices are expected to set up their own businesses and others employed to feed the existing companies.

The results from Table 1 indicated that 16 (53.3%) of the respondents admitted that apprentices graduating from the traditional clothing industries are able to establish themselves while 14 (46.7%) of respondents were not in support of the fact that apprentices are able to set up their own businesses or even employ to large industries.

A major characteristic of apprentice training in Ghana is the lack of uniformity in training content, duration, modules and certification. These weaknesses in the training system need to be addressed in order to ensure a unique uniformity and conformity in apprenticeship training especially when planning and developing training modules. From the survey, it was gathered that 7 (23.3%) respondents believed there are no national modules for training traditional apprentices in the clothing industries while 23 (76.7%) respondents asserted that it is common to find a well uniform and structured modules in the clothing industries in Ghana.

Considering illiteracy rate among garment craftsmen and apprentices in the clothing industries, 18 (60%) as compared to 12 (40%) of the respondents admitted that illiteracy rate among garment craftsmen and apprentices is too high. This is in line with the assertion made by Fadipe (1970) and Fortes (1949). They reported that in the traditional apprenticeship system, skills were passed patrilineal from father to son without any concentration on reading and solving simple mathematical problems. Whether tax levies should be lifted from traditional clothing industries or not, majority of the respondents (20; 66.7%) admittedly said that traditional garment industries should not be exempted from paying taxes but less than 34% of the respondents were not in support of this assertion. The former were of the view that these taxes are used for developing the nation’s economy.

Apprenticeship Recruitment

Table-2: Mode of Apprenticeship Recruitment

Characteristics	Agree Frequency	Percentage (%)	Disagree Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completing of basic school before apprenticeship	26	86.7	4	13.3
Uniform duration for apprenticeship	17	56.7	13	43.3
Less training fees	20	66.7	10	33.3
Initial examination of apprentices	22	73.3	8	26.7
Apprentices should not be allowed to marry	19	63.3	11	36.7
Apprentices serving their masters	12	40	18	60
Trade calculation added to trade content	23	76.7	7	23.3

Donkor (2006) asserted that the current situation of apprenticeship training in Ghana mandate craftsmen and apprentices to be Basic or Middle school graduate. Collectively, 26 respondents representing 86.7% admitted that apprentices in the garment industries should be allowed to complete Basic school

before entering into apprenticeship training while 4 (13.3%) of the respondents did not follow this assertion.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Education (2004), ‘the government has constituted a National Apprentice Training Board to oversee and regulate apprenticeship training and handle issues

concerning registration, content, duration and certification'. The study revealed that 17 respondents representing 56.7% believed that there should be a national duration or time frame for apprenticeship training but 13 (43.3%) respondents argued that, the current system which encourages differences in training duration should be allowed to continue since most of the apprentices exhibit different personality trait and academic capabilities in the course of training.

Considering training fees for apprentices, more than half (20; 66.7%) of the respondents admitted that, training fees for apprentices should not be too huge but nearly 34% of the respondents argued by saying apprentices should be made to pay huge training fees. The former were of the view that since apprentices spend more years in training and at the same time serving their respective masters, there is no need to pay huge amount of training fees.

Even though apprenticeship training is not free in Ghana, some people enroll and later on quit without any apparent reasons. This phenomenon calls for initial examination pertaining to individual apprentice's interest before recruitment (Smutylo, 1973).

From the survey, it was gathered that 22 (73.3%) respondents believed that initial examination of apprentice's interest in the specific trade is very necessary especially in clothing designing since most of the apprentices recruited or admitted into this sector are not able to graduate but drop out along the line. About 8 (26.7%) respondents were not in support of the fact that apprentices need to be first examined to ascertain their interest in dressmaking and tailoring before given admission. As indicated earlier, some of the apprentices drop out because of marriage. Whether apprentices are to be allowed to marry or not was another issue among the respondents. Collectively, 19 (63.3%) respondents believed that apprentices should not be allowed to

marry in the course of their training, while 11 (36.7%) argued differently by admitting that, since some of the apprentices sponsor themselves, they can decide to marry anytime they wish.

Considering additional services or duties of apprentices aside the actual training duration, more than half of the respondents 18 (60%) strongly believed that apprentices should not be allowed, neither forced to spend additional years serving their respective craftsmen upon completion but 12 respondents representing 40% shared contrary views. The later contended that apprentices should be allowed to serve their master craftsmen upon completion for some few months in order to attract the blessing of their 'masters'.

Introduction of trade calculation in dressmaking and tailoring is very important since it prepares and develops the skills of apprentices in measurement taking and fabric cutting. From Table 2, 23 respondents constituting 76.7% believed trade calculations should be introduced into the training content while 7 (23.3%) respondents did not support this assertion. It could be deduced from the discussion that apprentices must be allowed to complete Basic school before embarking on apprenticeship training so as to sharpen their brain and skills. On the other hand, there should be a universal training duration in the country in order to ascertain when apprentices are coming out into the job market. This will however, be in line with the formal institutions.

From the point of the researchers, training fees should not be expensive and apprentices should not be allowed to marry in the course of training since this will disturb or distract their commitment in the training.

Government(s) Interventions on Apprenticeship Training

Table-3: Apprenticeship Interventions

Characteristics	Yes Frequency	Percentage (%)	No Frequency	Percentage (%)
Interest of government in apprenticeship.	16	53.3	14	46.7
National apprenticeship centres.	6	20	24	80
Access to bank loans.	10	33.3	20	66.7
National fund in support of apprenticeship.	12	40	18	60
Employment of apprentices in the formal sector.	8	26.7	22	73.3

The importance of apprenticeship system cannot be downplayed in any nation. In Ghana, the informal apprenticeship contributes over 70% of employment among the Ghanaian populace. The government is doing everything it can to promote and sustain apprenticeship training system. The survey conducted revealed that nearly more than half of the respondents (53.3%) admitted that the government has interest in promoting and developing traditional

apprenticeship training system whilst less than half of the respondents (46.7%) argued that the government has but little interest and commitment in the informal sector.

Considering the establishment of national apprenticeship centres in District capitals, 24 (80%) respondents as against 6 (20%) respondents believed it is hardly to see or locate national apprenticeship

training centres in District capitals. Access to bank loans is one of the major sources of fund for apprenticeship set up globally but what is happening in Ghana is somehow different. Table 3 indicates that 20 (66.7%) respondents were of the view that craftsmen have little or no access to bank loans while 10 (33.3%) respondents believed craftsmen have easy access to bank loans and other facilities. If banks are refusing to grant loans to craftsmen, then it is expected that the nation set aside some funds to support the activities in the training centres. In view of this 12 (40%) respondents asserted that there is a national fund for supporting apprenticeship training in Ghana while majority of the respondents believed there is no fund for apprenticeship training.

Looking at the apprentices' employment in the formal sector of the economy, the study revealed that 22 (73.3%) respondents as against 8 (26.7%) respondents were of the view that graduates from traditional apprenticeship training are not employed in the formal sector.

It could however be deduced that if the nation really wants to develop apprenticeship training, then much is required from the government and other stakeholders. There should be establishment of national apprenticeship training centres especially in most of the District capitals which, would be supervised by the government agency. National funds and loans should be made available for craftsmen and those who want to venture into apprenticeship training system.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study set out to identify some challenges of traditional apprenticeship in the dressmaking and tailoring sector of the economy. The government and other industry players are jointly doing their possible best to sustain this sector, but their effort has not been much felt. Most of the government policies on education favour only the formal sector.

As the study shows, traditional apprenticeship training especially in the clothing sector has not received the needed recognition over the years. Quite the number of proposed measures by past and current governments for improving the standard of informal apprenticeship have since not been very effective.

There are issues on monitoring and standardization of activities that go on in the various dressmaking and tailoring shops in Ghana. The study reveals that some of the master craftsmen entrusted to train the apprentices lack the necessary facilities (tools and equipment) to adequately prepare their trainees to fit well into the garment production sector.

It has also become obvious that modalities for admitting apprentices into the garment industry is

lacking. There is no specific age that qualifies someone to be admitted into apprenticeship training, even though, there have been several proposals concerning admission criteria. Some individuals are admitted at pre-adolescent age, adolescent and post adolescent respectively. It has been observed that this phenomenon normally make the master craftsmen engage the younger apprentices in household chores aside their mandated training. However, this affects the apprentices because whilst their colleagues are in the shops studying, they may find themselves outside the premises of the shops. Not only does this affect their skill acquisition, it also prolongs the assigned duration of the programme.

It was also recorded in some of the shops that if an individual has not completed Basic school, that person would not be admitted into the facility. Having completed Basic school to some of the master craftsmen, is a good opportunity for them to smoothly deliver or transfer the needed skills to the apprentices. In the same vein, the apprentices will also find it easier to absorb any competency required to learn from the master craftsmen.

One other issue that came on board as going through most of the dressmaking and tailoring shops was that, there is no documentation on training modules for developing the apprentices in the clothing sector. It should be understood that garment production is not only about operating the sewing machine and for that matter joining the garment pieces together. There are equally important processes that one has to pass through should that person wants to produce quality garment. These processes are well structured in the curriculum for those who go through formal fashion schools.

Moving forward, the government and other stakeholders should institute some measures to help develop and fully sustain the informal apprenticeship system in Ghana.

It is also recommended that workshops and seminars should be frequently organized by the Tailors and Dressmakers Association and Corporate groups for the craftsmen in the quest of keeping them abreast with current technology and issues pertaining to their trade.

National training modules for handling apprentices in the clothing sector should be collaboratively prepared by the Accreditation Board and Trade Associations or better still, the Curriculum Developers in order to make apprenticeship training more efficient and attractive.

Public higher institutions such as Technical Universities which offer clothing and Textiles or Fashion Design must work hand in hand with traditional

clothing manufacturers so that they can offer them the needed assistance or support.

Newly established dressmaking and Tailoring Centres should be exempted from taxation so that there will be money for expansion and purchasing of modern machines.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study attempted to address some the challenges involved in apprenticeship training system in dressmaking and tailoring in Ghana and the recognition given to this particular industry by both present and past government. It also touched on the efforts made by master craftsmen, apprentices and stakeholders towards developing and promoting apprenticeship training in Ghana.

After close examination, the study revealed that the traditional apprenticeship training in the clothing industry has not received a better attention from the general public even though its major contribution cannot be underestimated. It also focused on the quality aspects of training apprentices, which are mandatory in other parts of the world but not observed or practiced in the Ghanaian clothing shops or centres.

As indicated earlier on, training materials and modules were found not to be available in most of the training centres. The onus therefore lies on the government, Standard Board, textile producers, local garment consumers, corporate institutions, tailors and dressmakers' associations, garment manufacturers and agencies who are concerned about the improvement and development of apprenticeship training in Ghana. These bodies are to emerge to upgrade the standards of traditional apprenticeship training in tailoring and dressmaking so that master craftsmen and apprentices would have a comfortable and smooth running of their training exercises.

Authors Contributions

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Conflict of interest

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