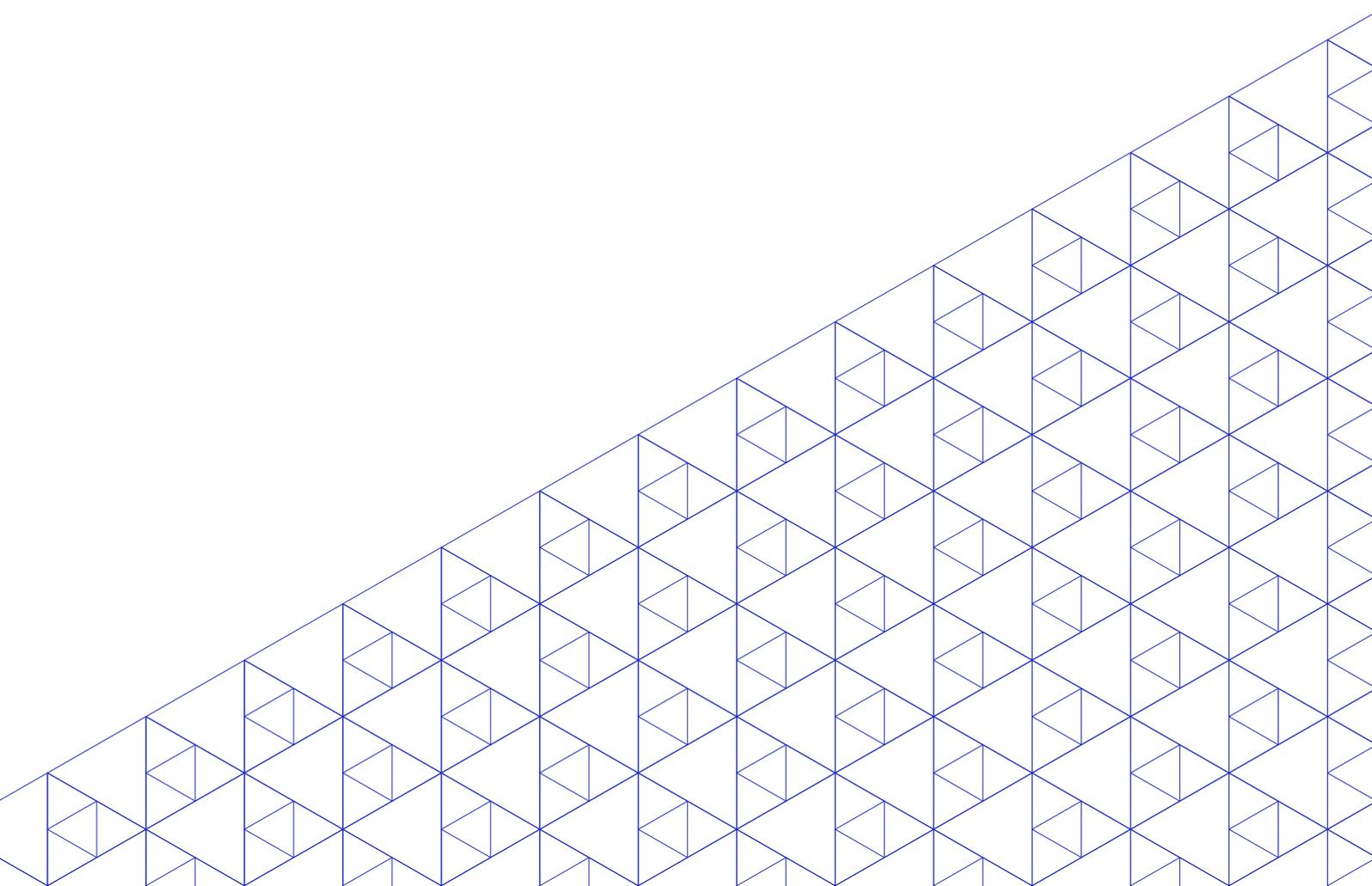




► How to strengthen informal apprenticeship systems for a better future of work?

Lessons learned from comparative analysis of country cases

Authors / Christine Hofmann, Markéta Zelenka, Boubakar Savadogo, Wendy Lynn Akinyi Okolo





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Abstract

This paper undertakes a meta study on informal apprenticeship in developing countries. It compares the findings of country-level research conducted by the ILO and others in the past 15 years to shed more light on apprenticeship systems in the informal economy. It discusses the features and practices of informal apprenticeship systems, their responsiveness to rights at work, and the effectiveness of such systems along criteria such as dropouts, training quality, and transitions to employment. The analysis is complemented by a selected number of country case studies that describe and assess the policies and programmes that were introduced during past years to strengthen and upgrade apprenticeship systems in the informal economy. The findings aim to improve understanding of this complex, heterogenous, yet self-sustained training system in the informal economy for evidence-based discussions and policy dialogue between ILO constituents and beyond.

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Acronyms

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AQB	Attestation de Qualification de Base [certificate of basic qualification]
BPT	Brevet Professionnel de Technicien [professional technician certificate]
BQP	Brevet de Qualification Professionnelle [professional qualification certificate]
CNAB	Confédération National des Artisans du Bénin [National Confederation of Artisans in Benin]
CQM	Certificat de qualification aux métiers [trade qualification certificate]
CQP	Certificat de qualification professionnelle [vocational training certificate]
CVA	Canadian Vocational Association
DACUM	developing a curriculum
DEFTP	Direction de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle, Bénin
EFAT	examens de fin d'apprentissage traditionnel
FAFPA	Fonds d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle et à l'Apprentissage
FRADEV	Formation Recherche Action et Développement en Afrique
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GOPA	Gesellschaft für Organisation, Planung und Ausbildung
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDH	Initiatief Duuzame Handel [The Sustainable Trade Initiative]
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO-ITC	International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex

LuxDev	Luxembourg Development
MC	master craftsperson
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Netherlands Development Organisation)
SW	skilled worker
TVET	technical vocational education and training
UCIMB	L'Union des Chambres Interdépartementales de Métiers du Bénin [Union of Interdepartmental Chambers of Trade in Benin]
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO)
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USIU-Africa	United States International University Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Authority

▶ Introduction

Background

Millions of young people in the developing world acquire their skills in the informal economy. Apprenticeship is established when a skilled worker (SW) or master craftsperson (MC) agrees to train an inexperienced worker seeking to acquire skills. In many countries, apprenticeship in the informal economy by far outnumbers the provision of formal TVET, which in Africa, for example, only reaches six per cent of young workers today. The ILO's *Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015* (No. 204) takes account of informal apprenticeships and recognizes their potential to support transitions to formality – provided countries improve them. In addition to being a leverage for transitions to formality for young people and enterprises, informal apprenticeships can be a source of innovation and entrepreneurship. What is more, they can strengthen a country's TVET system by extending its outreach, labour market relevance, and improving its cost-effectiveness, given the important contribution micro- and small enterprises already play in training delivery.

For centuries, skills have been transmitted from one generation to the next by way of apprenticeship: an experienced person teaches an inexperienced person all the relevant vocational, technical and core skills needed to practice a trade and deliver services demanded in the market. The training process was embedded in normal operations, and hence the workplace was both a place of business and learning. Young apprentices stayed on with their trainer, usually a master crafts- or tradesperson, until they were considered competent and released into the world of work as skilled workers.

Informal apprenticeship refers to the system by which a young learner (the apprentice) acquires the skills for a trade or craft in a micro- or small enterprise, learning and working side by side with an experienced craftsperson. Apprentices and MCs conclude a training agreement that is embedded in local norms and traditions of a society, for which costs of training are shared (ILO 2012a).

Informal apprenticeship – also referred to as apprenticeship in the informal economy – continues to exist in particular in countries with large informal economies. It remains an important provider of skills in many countries in Africa and South Asia and has been the subject of national and international research (Walther and Filipiak 2008; Haan 2006; Ahadzie 2009; Akoojee et al. 2013; Adams et al. 2013; ADEA 2015; Nordman and Pasquier-Doumer 2012; OECD/ILO 2019; Arias Diaz et al. 2019; ILO 2020a; Werquin 2021; Palmer 2020, Avenyo 2021). Empirical studies, however, remain scarce and statistical information in countries, with a few notable exceptions, do not capture apprenticeship in the informal economy sufficiently.

Along with its informal nature, decent work deficits also prevail in the system, such as hazardous working conditions and child labour. Some authors, such as Teal (2016) state that returns to informal apprenticeship can be low, in particular when apprentices join wage jobs rather than set up their own business. However, when upgrading informal apprenticeship, as many pilot programmes have shown, such as in Jordan (ILO 2015a), or in a World Bank intervention in Côte d'Ivoire (Crépon and Premand 2019), positive impacts for youth and enterprises are measurable. It is important to keep in mind that the design and implementation of programmes have important impacts on the overall effectiveness and outcomes of these interventions – as in the case of an experimental assessment of a programme in Ghana (Hardy et al. 2019).

Therefore, policymakers are increasingly reassessing the value and opportunities of apprenticeships in the informal economy and are including them in national skills development policies and strategies. The *African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa* (African Union 2016), the *Continental Strategy for TVET to Foster Youth Employment* (African Union 2018), the *National Skills Development Policy of Bangladesh* (Bangladesh 2011), or the *National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty in Tanzania (2016–2021)* all recognize apprenticeship in the informal economy as a pathway for skills development and highlight the need to improve it.

The ILO has long been supporting knowledge generation and research at country level to understand how informal apprenticeship functions, and how its prevailing decent work deficits, such as poor working conditions and child labour, can be addressed (Fluitman 1986; Fluitman 1992; ILO 2008; Nübler et al. 2009; ILO 2011; Hofmann and Okolo 2013; ILO 2012a). Research has confirmed that apprenticeship is much more than an individual contract between a learner and a workplace trainer. It is a training system, embedded in local norms and traditions, utilizing enforcement mechanisms that involve kinship and the wider community. Knowledge exchange between countries has been supported through technical workshops in 2007 in Geneva (ILO 2008) and 2013 in South Africa (Akoojee et al. 2013), drawing on experiences from over twenty countries.

In 2022 and 2023, the International Labour Conference will discuss and elaborate a new international labour standard on apprenticeship. The draft text incorporates recommendations to improve apprenticeship in the informal economy, recognizing its potential to support the skilling of millions of young people in developing countries.

Objectives

This working paper provides a synthesis on the state of informal apprenticeship in selected countries to draw policy conclusions on whether and how to include informal apprenticeship systems in the reform of skills development systems. It underlines the importance of properly understanding the local rules and traditions that govern informal apprenticeship. The paper also presents selected recent policies and programmes implemented to improve the quality of informal apprenticeship, in some cases turning them into formal apprenticeships. It builds on ILO surveys undertaken between 2007 and 2013, other current research, and on fresh analyses of country case studies published in 2021 focusing on policies and programmes.

The paper aims to draw lessons learned based on a solid understanding of how the systems function, and how government, and employers' and workers' organizations can work together to improve decent work prospects of young apprentices, and dynamize local economies through better performing apprenticeship systems that contribute to transitions to formality. The paper will also point to aspects of apprenticeships in the informal economy that require further research.

Research methodology

The synthesis analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative data from interviews conducted in small businesses with MCs, skilled workers and apprentices in Egypt, Ghana, Malawi, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh as the only non-African country. Secondary data from other country reports and similar assessments is also being used, together with other relevant secondary analysis and reports.

Since ILO studies in Egypt, Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania and Tunisia followed the same empirical methodology and used very similar questionnaires (translated into local languages), the synthesis and comparison tend to emphasize these countries. Data from other countries, such as from two studies in Ghana (undertaken in 2007 and 2013) and Senegal and Zambia, were used when similar questions were asked, in order to further enrich the analysis of the scope and patterns of informal apprenticeships identified. Data from the only country outside Africa, Bangladesh, is used where applicable, to further underline findings in relation to informal apprenticeship systems to either contrast or underpin the findings with insights from another continent.

The exact methodological approach, sampling strategies, etc. can be found in the respective individual country reports (see list of references). In Tunisia and Senegal, the study sample included both formal and informal apprentices. Characteristics or patterns that might be influenced by a mix of formal and informal apprentices in the answers have been specifically highlighted. Geographically, the surveys have focused

on urban and peri-urban areas around the capital or other major cities. Their level of representativity varies, hence findings of individual studies relate to the specific context studied.

Table 1 summarizes the details and sources of primary data in the different countries on which this analysis is based. It provides an overview of the years, main trades, sample sizes and areas. For Ghana, two different studies are included, which are distinguished by their publishing dates 2007 and 2013 (with data collected in 2006 and 2012, respectively). The 2013 study focuses more on qualitative analysis of stories of youth in Ghana than on collecting statistically representative data. Nonetheless, it provides useful insight and hence complements the data gathered in the framework of other studies.

The criteria used for the analysis relate to three dimensions:

1. What makes informal apprenticeship a system? The paper looks at the evolution and role of apprenticeship in informal economies, and the motivation of apprentices and master craftspersons to engage. If informal apprenticeship is indeed a system with shared informal and social rules and enforcement mechanisms, common repeated patterns may be expected, including how apprenticeship is concluded and what apprenticeship agreements entail.

2. Can informal apprenticeship be considered decent? This section of the report applies the ILO's normative approach to decent work, assessing whether international standards on child labour, non-discrimination, working conditions and social protection are met or not.

3. Is informal apprenticeship effective in delivering quality and relevant skills to young people that make them employable and lead to decent jobs? This part of the analysis uses different criteria to assess effectiveness. It looks at sustainability and replication of practice by those involved, dropout rates, quality of skills imparted, the recognition of skills acquired, transitions to employment, and economic returns – as far as data allows.

The paper also includes a selected number of country cases that describe and assess policies and programmes implemented during the past 15 years to strengthen and upgrade informal apprenticeship. The cases look at the number of beneficiaries compared to the overall number of apprentices, the types of measures taken, the financing arrangements, and whether approaches have been institutionalized within a country's skills development system. The cases include examples from West and East Africa and are based on both literature reviews and interviews with key informants.

► Table 1: Surveys included in this meta-analysis: Overview of trades, number of small businesses and persons interviewed

Year	Egypt	Bangladesh	Ghana	Ghana	Malawi	Sudan	Senegal	Tanzania	Tunisia	Zambia
Main trades	2010 Car mechanics Metalwork workshops Furniture/wood-work workshops Textile and readymade clothes (RMC) work-shops	2009 Agro-food processing Information technology Leather and leather goods Transport equipment	2013 Aluminium and glass fabrication Hairdressing Car mechanics Construction work/ Masonry Electrical services Goldsmith/ Jewellery making Tailoring and dressmak- ing/"tie and dye" (pro- duction of batik fabric and clothes)	2007 Carpentry Hairdressing Mechanics Tailoring and dressmaking	2010 Car mechanics Carpentry/ Joinery Food pro- cessing Hairdressing/ Salon Panel Beating/ Spray Painting Welding	2012 Car mechanics Carpentry Car body repair and painting Electricity and Motor rewinding Machining Plumbing Welding & sheet metal-work (Air- conditioning/ Refrigeration Aluminium works Car seat re- pair)	2009	2009 Car mechanics Carpentry/ Joinery Electrical services Food pro- cessing Local arts (wood carv- ing and painting) Plumbing Tailoring	2012 Carpentry Hairdressing Tailoring Welding	2012 Auto elec- trics Car mechan- ics Carpentry Hairdressing Metal fabri- cation Power elec- trics Panel beat- ing/ spray painting Tailoring Welding
No. small businesses	100 (25/ trade)	Not named	Not named	200	106	150 (50/ town)	1103	114	124	60
Sample size	Total: 279 MC/O: 100 SW: 95 App: 84	Total: 147 (in- formal ap- prenticeship) MC/O: 61 App: 86	Total: 136 MC/O: 36 App: 35 Recent grad- uates: 35 Dropouts: 15 Career changers: 15	Total: MC/O: 200 SW: n.n. App: 200	Total: 318 MC/O: 106 SW: 105 App: 106	Total: 388 MC/O: 144 SW: 109 App: 135	Total: 1103	Total: 616 MC/O: 118 SW: 120 App: 389	Total: 309 MC/O: 124 SW: 65 App: 120	Total: 118 MC/O: 60r App: 58
Areas	Cairo (north, east, south, west)	Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Natore, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Noakhali, and Khulna	Jamestown/ Usshertown Nima Abokobi (peri-urban)	Accra, five areas	Peri-urban areas of Blantyre and Lilongwe	Khartoum, Omdurman, Khartoum North	Louga, Saint Louis, Matam	Mtwara Lindi	Tunis Le Kef	Lusaka, high-density commercial- ly operative sites

▶ 1 Informal apprenticeship systems: Features and practices

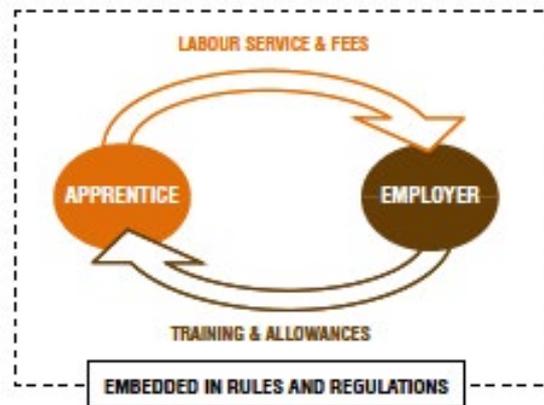
This chapter provides information on common features and practices of informal apprenticeship systems. It looks at both apprentices and MCs and their backgrounds and identifies possible profiles within informal apprenticeship. It studies practices such as the nature of apprenticeship agreements, as well as what they essentially cover and also looks at how apprentices are recruited. It offers an overview of practices on duration, compensation and the actual content of instruction in informal apprenticeship across the countries covered in the surveys.

1.1 Informal apprenticeship: A systemic perspective

Apprenticeship is a training system which is defined by groups of actors, their interactions and inter-relations, and the rules governing them.

The ILO defines Quality Apprenticeship as “a unique form of technical vocational education and training (TVET), combining on-the-job training and off-the-job learning, which enable learners from all walks of life to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies required to carry out a specific occupation. They are regulated and financed by laws and collective agreements and policy decisions arising from social dialogue, and require a written contract that details the respective roles and responsibilities of the apprentice and the employer; they also provide the apprentice with remuneration and standard social protection coverage. Following a clearly defined and structured period of training and the successful completion of a formal assessment, apprentices obtain a recognized qualification” (ILO 2017, 3–4).

The ILO defines *informal* apprenticeship as “the system by which a young learner (the apprentice) acquires the skills for a trade or craft in a micro- or small enterprise learning and working side by side with an experienced craftsperson. Apprentice and master craftsperson conclude a training agreement that is embedded in local norms and traditions of a society. Costs of training are shared between apprentice and master craftsperson” (ILO 2012a). The MC agrees to invest time and resources to train the apprentice at his or her enterprise or workshop. The apprentice agrees to join the MC’s business, to contribute to the work for a certain period of time, and accepts compensation below his or her productivity level. This is how the system is internally financed (Nübler et al. 2009).

► **Figure 1: Informal apprenticeship – a training agreement embedded in rules and regulations**

Source: ILO 2012a, 9.

In many developing countries, informal apprenticeship remains a major provider of skills, often largely outnumbering formal TVET. Among the 16–24 year olds in selected African countries, between 6 and 35 per cent have been informal apprentices (Filmer et al. 2014, 90).

Based on mutual trust, existing rules and norms shape incentives, disincentives and constrain the behaviour of the MCs, the apprentices, their parents, as well as skilled workers and others involved, structuring their interaction. Informal “institutions” and rules build the regulatory framework for informal apprenticeship (Nübler et al. 2009; ILO 2012b). When MCs engage in communities of practice around apprenticeships, they build and maintain relationships around a common interest, collaborate, and influence social practices (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Informal apprenticeship has mostly developed in craft trades and can therefore be found in trades such as carpentry, hairdressing, masonry, tailoring, welding, weaving, etc. Nonetheless, technical and more recent trades such as car mechanics, electrical services, mobile phone repair, and plumbing have also developed informal apprenticeship (ILO 2013). It is most prevalent in informal sector enterprises but could also exist in formal sector enterprises where employment relations continue to be informal and earlier apprenticeship practices are continued. This paper, however, does not focus on formal sector enterprises. Some upgrading interventions in the past years have applied formal structures to informal sector enterprises, and hence have introduced formal(ized) apprenticeship in informal sector enterprises.

Being largely embedded in the informal economy, informal apprenticeship is subject to the precarious conditions of the informal economy in general, where apprentices lack access to rights and protection, or are simply not aware of rights they have, such as to join a local association or trade union, or are not aware of other opportunities for training. Enterprises face a range of challenges related to informal apprenticeship, such as lack of access to financial services, high interest rates, legal insecurity, or shortage of business space. Furthermore, a large influx of persons into the labour market, coupled with low absorption rates in the formal economy, is increasing competition in the informal economy (ILO 2010).

In some cases, existing practices can constitute “bad rules”, such as hiring apprentices below minimum working age, discrimination of women in certain trades, or charging apprentices additional fees for so-called graduation ceremonies that can artificially extend the apprenticeship period. This is why a thorough understanding of the differentiated local contexts of apprenticeship in the informal economy is so important by identifying its weaknesses in rules and/or enforcement, in access to upskilling and new technology, and unearthing its potential for improved quality standards, collaboration among businesses, local economic development and transitions to formality.

Compared to quality apprenticeship, informal apprenticeship falls short of important criteria: usually there is no off-the-job learning, no recognized qualification, contracts are mostly oral, and rules are informal. Informal rules, traditions and customs define the social system in which apprentices and master craftspersons operate. More than in formal training, apprentices learn “to be” rather than only “exert” a profession and hence develop an occupational identity (Alla-Mensah and McGrath, 2021). These underlying social rules in a society, in communities and families, broadly determine how things are done, rather than how they are defined by law or formally established rules. This paper will assess if informal rules and mechanisms, on which informal apprenticeship is largely based, can be as effective as formal rules for apprenticeship.

While upgrading informal apprenticeship should ultimately lead to a quality apprenticeship system, the question remains if all features included in the definitions above will need to be present, or if a contextualization offers a broader variety of options of what constitutes a quality training system that can support workers and enterprises in their transition to formality.

1.2 Age and education of apprentices and master craftspersons

Apprentices

There is no common specific term used for an apprentice within the informal sector in the African countries under study. In general, the ILO defines an apprentice as a person being trained by an MC under an apprenticeship agreement (ILO 2012a). The ILO describes an apprentice as a young person, largely because apprenticeship represents an entry-level mode of training, taking place towards the beginning of a person's working life, rather than a continuous mode of training. The type of learning experienced in apprenticeship is generally better suited for young learners who can accept and respect the experienced worker's authority more easily than older learners (ILO 2012a).

The studies confirm that informal apprentices are generally young people. Their age ranges between 15 to 30 years. The most common age range of apprentices was 22–25 years, followed by 26–30 and 18–21 years, respectively. While in Sudan, the average age of informal apprentices stands at 22 years, it is 25.2 years in Malawi, and 23.5 years in Tanzania. In Ghana, apprentices are on average aged 21.5 years, ranging from 14 to 35 years. Most of them are aged between 14–15 years, with only very few above the age of 19 years (Breyer 2007). This confirms the observation that apprentices tend to be younger in West Africa than in East Africa and underlines the perceived higher risk of child labour among apprentices in West Africa (ILO 2008).

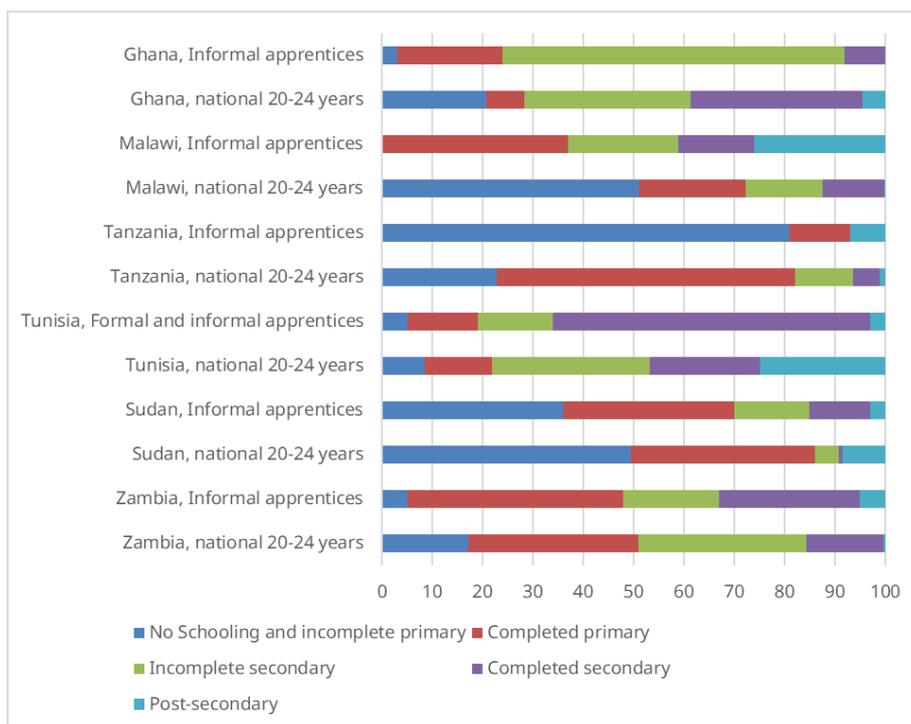
With regards to education, the vast majority of informal apprentices across all countries surveyed have shown to have at least a primary level of education (with the exception of Tanzania). In addition, samples in nearly all countries include apprentices who have graduated from post-secondary studies, an indication that graduates of formal education are likely to lack relevant skills and/or opportunities to enter the labour market.

By comparing educational attainment of apprentices aged between 15 and 24 years to that of national educational attainment structures (Barro and Lee, latest year available), further insights are gained. The samples show that in Malawi and Sudan, apprentices from the sample are clearly above national attainment levels, pointing to MCs selecting the more educated. In Tanzania, informal apprentices in the sample have lower educational attainment rates than the national average, indicating that informal apprenticeship is a chosen career pathway for those not succeeding in formal education. In Ghana, apprentices are mainly drawn from junior secondary school graduates, and less from lower or higher educational levels.

This is confirmed by Adams et al. (2013) who find evidence that a certain level of education seems to be required to access informal apprenticeship. They establish a (reverse) U-shape correlation between the level of education and informal apprenticeship, indicating that the probability of joining apprenticeship rises with the level of education and decreases again with higher levels of education (Adams et al. 2013, 73–74). Data from Tunisia, where the sample included both formal and informal apprentices, supports this. Data

from Zambia, however, refutes this finding. Here, informal apprentices are over-represented among either primary or higher and post-secondary graduates (figure 2).

► **Figure 2: Educational attainment of informal apprentices versus national attainment rates of 20 to 24 year olds, latest year available (%)**



Note: The questions asked in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia did not specifically include TVET. The data on Sudan depicts for junior secondary: incomplete secondary education, for senior secondary: complete secondary education and for TVET: technical secondary education. Furthermore, in the data of Tunisia: the sample includes a mix of formal and informal apprentices. To compare data with Barro/Lee, "incomplete secondary" in the Barro/Lee data set was equated with "junior secondary" in the study samples.

This shows that situations vary from country to country and need to be studied in their separate contexts to understand whether informal apprenticeship can serve as an entry pathway to the labour market i) for the better educated; ii) for those with sufficient basic skills (which seems to be the case in most contexts); and/or for those unsuccessful in formal education as a "second chance". According to study findings, informal apprenticeship seems to be able to cater to all, yet an upgrade will need to consider a range of criteria. If it is to become a training pathway for the most vulnerable, further investments in basic skills will be required to meet expected entry levels of master craftspersons.

Master craftspersons

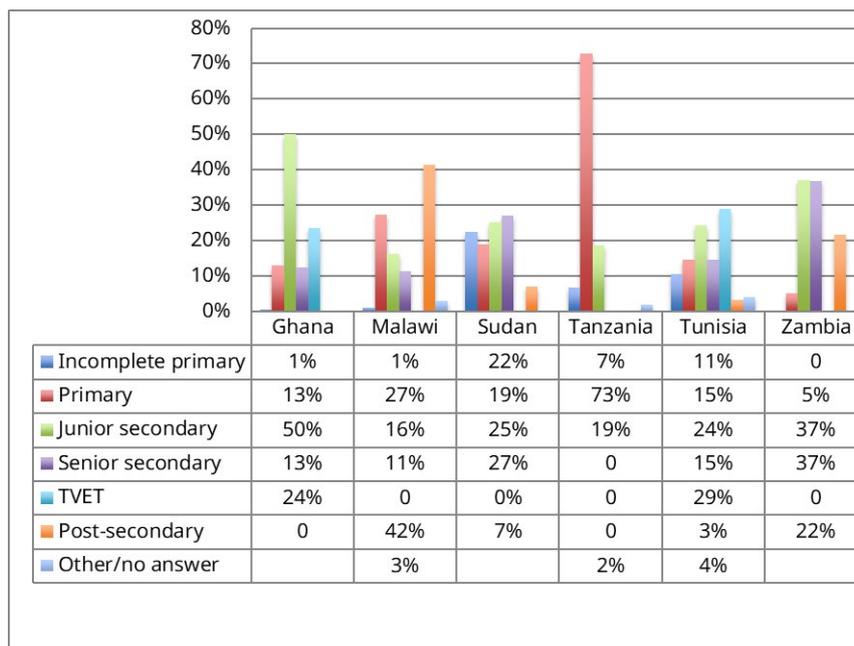
The age bracket of MCs varies across and within the countries surveyed – MCs in informal apprenticeship are on average aged between 20 to 60 years (ILO 2012b), with an average age between 32 to 35 years.

Across the countries surveyed, the formal educational background of MCs is higher than that of apprentices (see figure 3), despite overall growing levels of educational achievement. In Malawi, 42 per cent of MCs have completed post-secondary education (compared to 26 per cent of apprentices). Also in Zambia, the MCs surveyed appear to be well educated: more than a quarter of MCs completed senior secondary education, compared to 13 per cent among informal economy workers, according to national statistics (Ryan 2012, 30). Only in Sudan, Tanzania and Tunisia did the studies find MCs who had not completed primary

education (7 to 22 per cent), which likely compromises their ability to transmit theoretical knowledge based on technical manuals or other sources requiring proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

How MCs acquired their vocational and technical skills is discussed in Chapter 4, section 2, in detail.

► **Figure 3: Education level of MCs (Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia)**



Note: In Ghana, the data for TVET includes 14 per cent apprenticeship training. The questions asked in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia did not specifically include TVET, therefore a valid comparison of TVET across the countries cannot be undertaken. Post-secondary in Malawi includes 42 per cent of completed O-level and 8.5 per cent of tertiary education. The data on Sudan depicts for junior secondary: incomplete secondary education, for senior secondary: complete secondary education; for post-secondary: technical and tertiary education. Furthermore, in the data of Tunisia: incomplete primary includes 2.4 per cent with no education; TVET: includes CC, CFP, CFA with 5.6 per cent; Certificat d’Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP) with 14.5 per cent; Brevet de Technicien Professionnel (BTP) and Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS) with 8.9 per cent.

1.3 Making choices: Pathways into apprenticeship

This section aims to assess if social relations remain an important factor in shaping access to informal apprenticeship, or whether individual or human capital considerations predominate. It looks at the criteria used by MCs to recruit apprentices and at criteria used by young people to opt for apprenticeship, select an MC and apply for apprenticeship.

In Malawi and Tunisia, besides an apprentice’s level of formal education, kinship/family ties, neighbourhood, recommendations from a friend, and trustworthiness were the main criteria used by MCs to select an apprentice. In Tanzania, however, personal traits such as age and talent for the work were given higher priority, pointing to a lower reliance on social networks. In Sudan, 58.6 per cent of the MCs stated that they recruit apprentices on the basis of kinship and neighbourhood networks, as well as on recommendations provided by friends.

► **Table 2: Factors determining recruitment of apprentices by MCs (%)**

	Malawi	Tanzania	Tunisia
Age	0	42	0
Kinship/family ties	19	8	18
Neighbourhood	4	10	20
Recommendation from a friend	10	8	22
Talent for the work	8	41	0
Previous work experience	7	18	22
Trustworthy	63	–	–
Level of formal education	37	35	43

Note: Multiple responses were possible, and not all other categories are displayed. For Malawi, “same ethnic group” and “same religious affiliation” were included in the “kinship” category.

By contrast, the main criterion for apprentices to choose their MCs seems to be the MC’s reputation. In Tanzania, 57 per cent of apprentices, in Tunisia 43 per cent, and in Malawi 21 per cent of apprentices say this. The role of kinship in choosing the MC varies across the countries: with 39 per cent, it plays a major role in Malawi and is still very important in Tunisia with 29 per cent. In Tanzania, it is only named by 8 per cent of the apprentices, confirming the apparently weaker role of social networks compared to other countries. Having had no choice or alternative has been named by 22 per cent of apprentices in Tanzania, 21 per cent in Malawi and 11 per cent in Tunisia (Nübler et al. 2009; Aggarwal et al. 2010; Tunisia 2013).

A gender bias in recruitment – in favour of men for occupations traditionally occupied by men, and vice versa – is furthermore observed in all the countries studied (see Chapter 2 for more on gender). Across all countries studied, MCs expressed the need to recruit apprentices who are “trainable”, in the sense of a combination of willingness and capacity to learn and progress. In Tanzania, MCs have mentioned in qualitative interviews, that they preferred to recruit unmarried apprentices without children (observable in mechanics and carpentry) – an illustration of a bias towards single young men and women.

Young persons with disabilities face serious challenges in accessing informal apprenticeship, and while research suggests that people with disabilities account for around 15 per cent of the global population (WHO and the World Bank 2011), the studies on informal apprenticeship demonstrated much smaller shares: 2 to 7 per cent within the two years preceding the surveys. Equality of access and social stigma are reflected in collective perceptions and therefore are also reflected in individual recruitment decisions, even though the system itself is not exclusive.

Reasons to participate in informal apprenticeship

Apprentices cite different reasons across the countries to participate in informal apprenticeship. Skills development and acquisition of relevant knowledge are cited as motivating factors. Also, participation in informal apprenticeships might be influenced by existing (financial) barriers that impede access to formal learning institutions.

In Zambia, the vast majority of apprentices, 59 per cent, reported that they joined the business primarily to gain skills. Twenty-two per cent joined to earn money. In Tanzania, 22 per cent of apprentices said they wanted to gain knowledge; in Malawi this was only cited by 7 per cent of apprentices. However, in both Zambia and Ghana for most of the apprentices, informal apprenticeship was not the primary choice for vocational training (Ryan 2012, 38) or perceived as only a “second-best” option (Schraven et al. 2013, 26). In Ghana, “vocational training is still largely seen as an option for those lacking the funds or the intellectual capacity for higher education” (Schraven et al. 2013, 26).

The main reason for informal apprenticeship being only the second-best option seems to be the lack of financial resources to access other forms of training or education. In Malawi, for example, 84 per cent of the apprentices cited fees in formal training as being too high, and in Ghana this was mentioned by 51 per cent of the apprentices (Breyer 2007, 10). In Tanzania, however, only 27 per cent cited fees for formal training as a reason to participate in informal apprenticeship. The findings from the study in Sudan suggest that informal apprenticeship is an alternative for poor young people, as neither entry requirements nor fees are required.

Nonetheless, the study in Ghana in 2013 also found that young people still view informal apprenticeship as an “investment into one’s future that promotes independence and sustainability, leads to an improved income and is characterized through better working conditions than in unskilled jobs” (Schraven et al. 2013, 26). In Tanzania and Zambia, a large number of apprentices confirmed this view and said that they participated in informal apprenticeship to gain knowledge and to improve their skills for future employability.

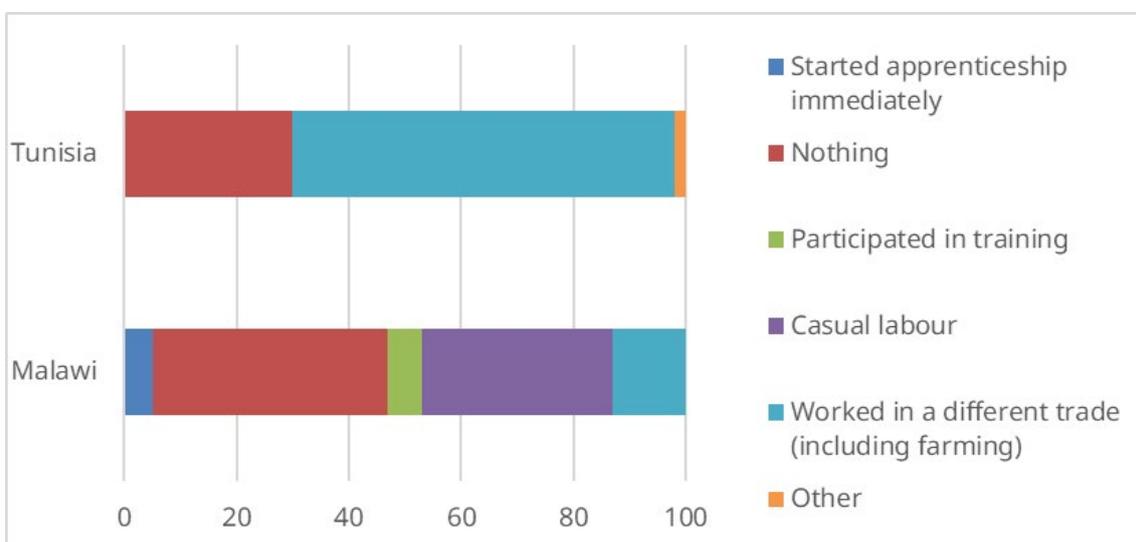
School-to-informal-apprenticeship transition

Underlining the earlier findings on reasons to participate, it seems that in most countries the step towards an apprenticeship is not entirely planned, nor direct, hinting at slow or late school-to-informal-apprenticeship transitions. Data from Tunisia and Malawi indicates that only 5 per cent in Malawi actually started their apprenticeship right away, none in Tunisia. Overall and across the countries surveyed, the average apprentice age shows that there are considerable time gaps between leaving school and joining apprenticeship.

The following figure 4 provides some insights: 30 per cent of apprentices in Tunisia and 42 per cent in Malawi claim not having found a job after leaving school. In Malawi, an additional 34 per cent were involved in casual labour. This data indicates that a number of apprentices only started considering the possibility of an apprenticeship at some point after having had a different job or having been idle.

It is important to better understand the underlying and direct reasons for these seemingly slow school-to-informal-apprenticeship transitions. These context-specific reasons could include a lack of career definition among young people, the need to earn money to pay for informal apprenticeship fees (where they exist), negative perceptions and views in society of informal apprenticeship as a training pathway, or of the occupations it leads to, and/or lack of knowledge about its employment outcomes.

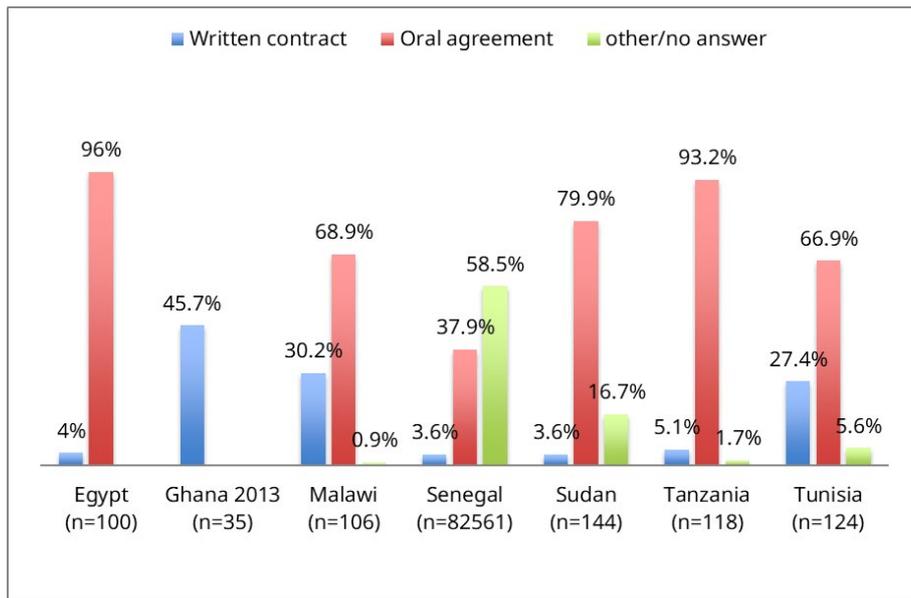
► **Figure 4: What did you do between finishing school and starting your informal apprenticeship? (%)**



1.4 The apprenticeship agreement

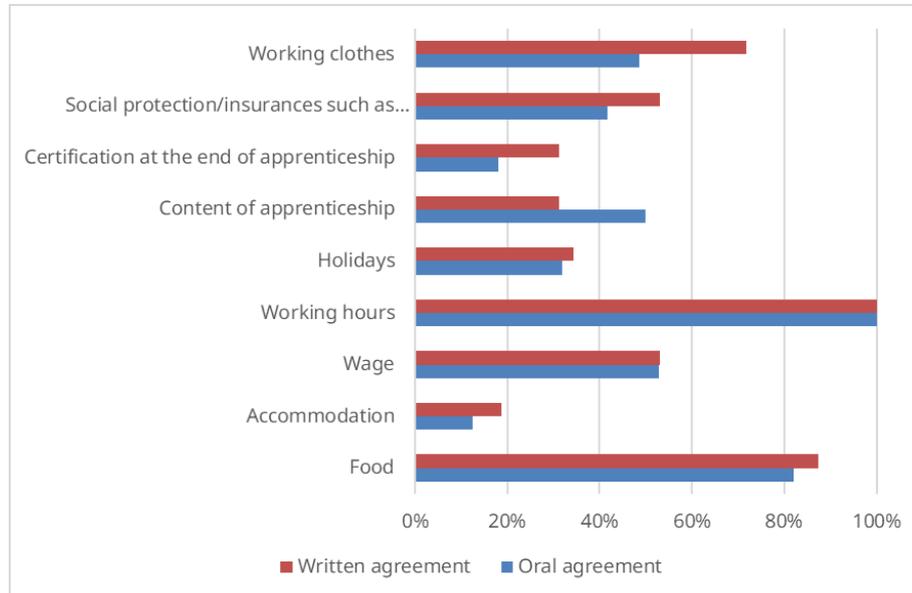
Informal apprenticeship is based on an agreement between the MC and the apprentice. The vast majority of informal apprenticeship agreements between apprentices and MCs are oral agreements, as can be observed in the following figure. Written contracts are also common in Ghana, Malawi and Tunisia.

► **Figure 5: Types of agreements in informal apprenticeship, responses by MCs to “What kind of agreement do you conclude with your apprentices?”**



Note: In Senegal, a large number of MCs said that no “contract” was in place. (LuxDev, FRADEV 2009, 109).

Analysis from Malawi, where 32 MCs offered written agreements, versus 72 who agreed orally, shows that differences in content are rather small. Whereas more written agreements included information on working clothes, certification and social protection, oral agreements more often contained information on apprenticeship content (see figure 6).

► **Figure 6: Elements included in written and oral apprenticeship agreements in Malawi**

An important question relating to informal apprenticeship systems and their functioning is whether these largely oral agreements provide both the MC and the apprentice with sufficient information and security over the terms and conditions agreed.

Congruence of the apprenticeship agreement's content

This section will assess if oral agreements provide sufficient clarity to both sides on the agreed conditions, rights and responsibilities. This can be observed in the level of concordance about the specific terms as stated by apprentices (or, if underage, their legal guardian) and MCs.

The topics and terms covered by the apprenticeship agreement vary considerably between the countries. Yet, overall, there seems to be a relatively high congruence on issues covered between apprentices and MCs, as table 3 shows – with some exceptions. Congruence is high in Egypt and Tanzania and less pronounced in Sudan, and on some topics in Malawi. If congruence is absent, as is the case on apprenticeship duration in Malawi (not available for Egypt and Sudan) or on holidays, wage and certification in Sudan, this indicates lack of clarity and a potential domain of conflict between the two parties.

When comparing studies in countries with higher shares of written agreements, such as in Malawi, to those with higher shares of oral agreements, one cannot conclude that oral agreements lead to lower levels of congruence between MCs and apprentices about the content of the apprenticeship agreement.

The question of who pays for medical expenses in case of sickness or an occupational injury is another area of congruence to be assessed. Figure 7 with data from Malawi, Sudan and Tanzania shows an overall high level of congruence between MCs and apprentices.

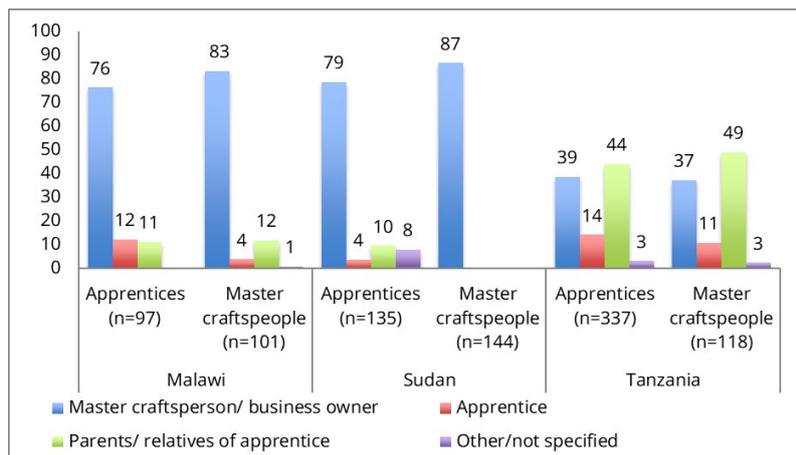
► **Table 3: Congruence on topics covered in the apprenticeship agreement - What is included in the agreement? MCs and Apprentices (multiple answers possible) (%)**

	Egypt		Malawi		Sudan		Tanzania	
	MC (n=100)	App (n=84)	MC (n=450)	App (n=77)	MC (n=144)	App (n=)	MC (n=118)	App (n=378)
Food	4	12	18.7	22.4	88.5	87.2	15.3	18
Accommodation	5	6	3.3	7.0	1.6	0.9	1.7	2.1
Working hours	64	72	21.6	25.3	32.8	32.5	76.3	72.8
Holidays	81	80	7.1	7.0	26.2	2.6	3.4	4.2
Wage	93	91			54.1	34.2	4.2	4.5
Apprenticeship period/duration*			11.8	6.1			49.2	44.4
Certification at the end-of-apprenticeship	2	2	4.9	4.9	6.6	1.7	1.7	1.9
Social protection/insurances +	7	6	10.0	5.8	4.9	5.1	0.8	0
Working clothes	3	3	12.9	11.9	9.0	3.4	0.8	2.4
Others					0.8			

+ such as insurances in case of illness and/or accident

* not asked in Egypt and Sudan

► **Figure 7: Who pays for medical expenses in case of sickness or occupational injury? Responses of apprentices and master craftspersons (Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania)**



In conclusion, oral agreements between apprentices and MCs seem to provide clarity, to a large extent, on the rights and responsibilities agreed. Informal apprenticeships based on oral agreements therefore do not seem to suffer significantly from transparency issues that make them non-effective or provide room for consistent exploitation based on lack of clarity of terms and conditions. Nonetheless, oral agreements are more prone to misunderstandings, and interpretation in case of conflict is likely left to the discretion of the MC. Further research on conflict resolution mechanisms and their effectiveness would be useful.

Enforcement of apprenticeship agreements and social dialogue

The effectiveness of oral agreements, however, also depends on their level of enforcement. In informal economies, enforcement is based on trust, local norms, social networks and traditions. These form the basis for the functioning and effectiveness of the informal apprenticeship system (Frazer 2006; Nübler et al. 2009). Training by the MCs is driven both by economic and social concerns (ILO 2010, 16; Nell and Shapiro 1999). Apprentices in Zambia have expressed a strong sense of loyalty and obligation towards their MCs (Ryan 2012, 3), confirming reciprocity and trust as important building blocks of informal institutions to guarantee the functioning of the system.

For MCs, not keeping the given word and agreement could lead to reputational loss and loss of clients and future business opportunities. For apprentices, it could mean that they will no longer be accepted by another MC in the locality if word about their misbehaviour spreads. All those involved – MCs, apprentices and their parents – have strong incentives to abide by the training agreement, and enforce it through social ties.

Social dialogue¹ between organized businesses offering informal apprenticeship and representatives of apprentices could also be considered as a way to strengthen enforcement of apprenticeship rules. In Benin, as shown in chapter 4, crafts associations collaborate with parents' associations in the organization of end-of-apprenticeship exams. This is a form of social dialogue on apprenticeship. Apprenticeship agreements are negotiated at individual level between the MC and the apprentice (or their parents or legal guardian if the apprentice is under 18), yet conditions are shaped by local norms and practices – as, for example, the different arrangements in figure 6 and table 3 demonstrate. Traditional or religious authorities might also influence apprenticeship conditions. MCs also often network and cooperate amongst themselves. In some contexts, they also form trade or business associations, or cooperatives. None of the studies provided evidence, however, that apprentices associate under the roof of workers' organizations – yet in principle this is possible. Further research would therefore be warranted on the possible contribution of social dialogue to strengthen enforcement of oral or written apprenticeship agreements and how this may advance norms and standards in a trade which can benefit all partners involved.

Duration of informal apprenticeship

The duration of training is not only relevant for the achieved level of competence of the apprentice and their transition to the world of work, but it is also relevant for MCs to be able to recover their initial investment in training. The more productive an apprentice becomes, the easier it is for an MC to obtain positive returns for his or her business. This means that, in principle, MCs have an incentive to artificially extend the training period, potentially leading to a situation of exploitation of the apprentice. The ILO generally considers standard apprenticeship duration to be between one and four years (ILO 2017; Steedman 2012).

The previous section on congruence of issues in apprenticeship agreements revealed that the training period is often not set in advance or agreed upon. In addition, the comparative analysis does not show a clear pattern of apprenticeship duration across countries nor the trades analysed.

In Tanzania, 60 per cent of apprentices and 70 per cent of MCs indicate training durations of one to two years. On average, informal apprenticeships in Tanzania last for 21 months (Nübler et al. 2009, 42). In Malawi, training periods were found to be widely different, both between trades and within the same trade. The survey found that there are “no standard or commonly practiced apprenticeship durations”; the training

¹ Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations), with or without indirect government involvement. Social dialogue processes can be informal or institutionalized, and often it is a combination of the two. See the following ILO website for more details: <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang-en/index.htm>.

period lasts for as long as it takes for the apprentice to acquire the relevant skills (Aggarwal et al. 2010, 21). In Ghana, the average duration of training is about three years (36 months), varying between two and four years (Breyer 2007, 11), depending both on the preferences of the MC, as well as on the learning capabilities of the apprentice. In Sudan, the duration also varies widely, ranging from one to 60 months across the trades.

Analysing the durations for the same trade in different countries, the data reveals that in the case of car mechanics, the average duration was 34 months in Tanzania and 18 months in Malawi. In carpentry, the average duration was 26 months in Tanzania and 10 months in Malawi. The duration of apprenticeship training, however, also differs between trades: in Malawi, Tanzania and Sudan, apprenticeships in car mechanics, panel beating, and electrical services had longer durations than in carpentry, hairdressing and tailoring.

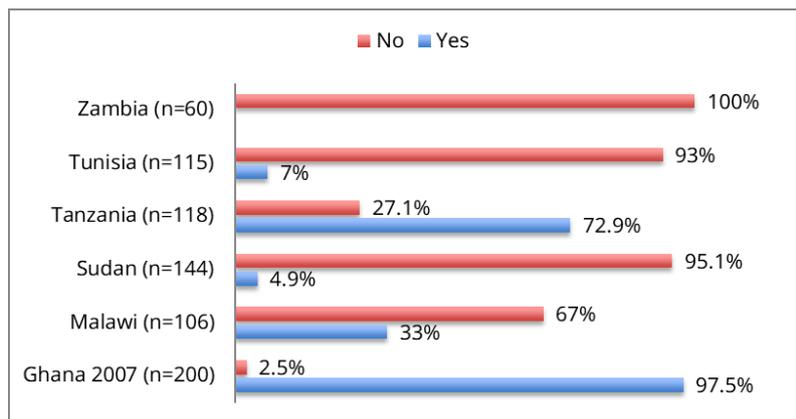
Later chapters provide more insight on how the duration, or rather the end of the apprenticeship, is determined between the MC and the apprentice if the duration has not been clearly agreed upon beforehand.

Training fees

Training fees in general can function as an entry barrier to apprenticeship, in both formal TVET and informal apprenticeship. The data available (see figure 8) shows that the picture is mixed across countries. In Ghana and Tanzania, fees are most common. In Zambia, Tunisia and Sudan, the practice of charging fees is either rare or totally absent.

As the existence of training fees varies considerably between countries, it is worth analysing whether certain trades impose training fees more often than others. Table 4 provides an overview of trades (the first three are named) where fees are most common, based on the studies in Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania, the countries where most training fees are charged. The analysis shows that the trades that charge fees more often prove to be similar. These trades are to a large extent tool-intensive trades, which could suggest that MCs pass on costs to the apprentices.

► **Figure 8: Training fees to be paid by apprentices/their parents (response by MCs)**



► **Table 4: Trades that primarily charge fees – Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania**

	Ghana (2007)			Malawi			Tanzania				
	Effective	Per	Sample size	Effective	Per cent	Sample size	Effective	Per cent	Sample size		
Hair-dressing	49		n=50	Panel beating	4	80%	n=5	Tailoring	29	97%	n=30
Car mechanics	49		n=50	Car mechanics	13	50%	n=26	Car mechanics	17	85%	n=20
Carpentry	49		n=50	Carpentry	9	36%	n=25	Carpentry	21	81%	n=26

When considering fees as possible entry barriers to apprenticeship, their amount, frequency and timing are important factors. All these factors depend largely on the specific country context. In Tanzania, the average amount of training fees is around 84,000 Tanzanian shillings, equalling a five-week wage income of a skilled worker (Nübler et al. 2009, 28), which can be considered a considerable barrier, especially for people from poor backgrounds. In Malawi, the average total fee is around 11,618 Malawian kwacha, equalling US\$83, an amount corresponding more or less to the financial burden in Tanzania. Panel beating and car mechanics are the two most expensive trades in Malawi, with average fees of US\$134 and US\$108, respectively (Aggarwal et al. 2010, 28, table 16). An interesting finding in Ghana (2013) is that the fees do not only vary between the trades, but also within the trades, a concrete example being that the entrance fee in hairdressing in Jamestown/Usshertown varied between 50 and 400 Ghanaian cedi (about US\$29 and US\$234) (Schraven et al. 2013, 13). The mean fee charged (of all fees in all four trades of the survey of 2007 in Ghana) is calculated at US\$159.

According to the MCs' claim, fees also depend on the ability of the apprentice to pay. For example, 64 per cent of MCs in Malawi state adapting the fees according to the financial situation of the apprentice and his/her family (Aggarwal et al. 2010, 27), in Ghana 55 per cent of MCs say so (Breyer 2007, 13). With regard to the timing of fees to be paid, many MCs charge fees either right at the beginning or both at the beginning and the end of the apprenticeship (Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania). This clearly puts pressure on poorer families to cover up-front payments. Yet, as stated before and confirmed through the analysis of apprentices' compensation later in this chapter, the informal apprenticeship system offers a certain amount of flexibility in order to facilitate access for apprentices from poorer families.

Tools and materials

Another potential entry barrier for aspiring apprentices is the cost of tools or raw materials that they might have to bring. Data shows that this practice is country-specific, pointing to different traditions across the country studies. In Egypt and Malawi, for example, apprentices in the sample were not required to bring any tools. In Bangladesh and Tunisia, only an insignificant number had to bring tools – 1 and 7 per cent, respectively. Only in Ghana, as noted in a 2007 survey, 81 per cent of apprentices had to bring their own tools, making it seem a very common practice (Breyer 2007, 14). In Tanzania, the percentage of apprentices bringing tools can also be considered to be relatively high at 34 per cent and varies by trade.

With respect to the trades and tools mentioned, apprentices tend to be asked to bring rather expensive tools, such as sewing machines in tailoring and spanners in car mechanics. The burden on apprentices seems to be particularly high in this regard in Ghana and Tanzania.

A study in Ghana using data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey indeed confirms that participation in apprenticeship increases with the standard of living of apprentices. Within the group of young people aged 15–30 from the lowest income quintile, only 11 per cent have gone through apprenticeship, whereas 47 per cent of the highest income quintile have (Adams et al. 2007). This confirms the finding that in Ghana, fees and costs for tools might pose a significant access barrier to apprenticeship for the poorest.

Compensation

Most MCs compensate their apprentices. Compensation can take different forms such as a regular wage, pocket money or in-kind contributions. Figure 9 shows that in almost all countries in Africa (with the exception of Tanzania) and in Bangladesh, the majority of apprentices receive financial compensation for their work. However, apprentice compensation, in terms of amount and timing, varies between countries and trades.

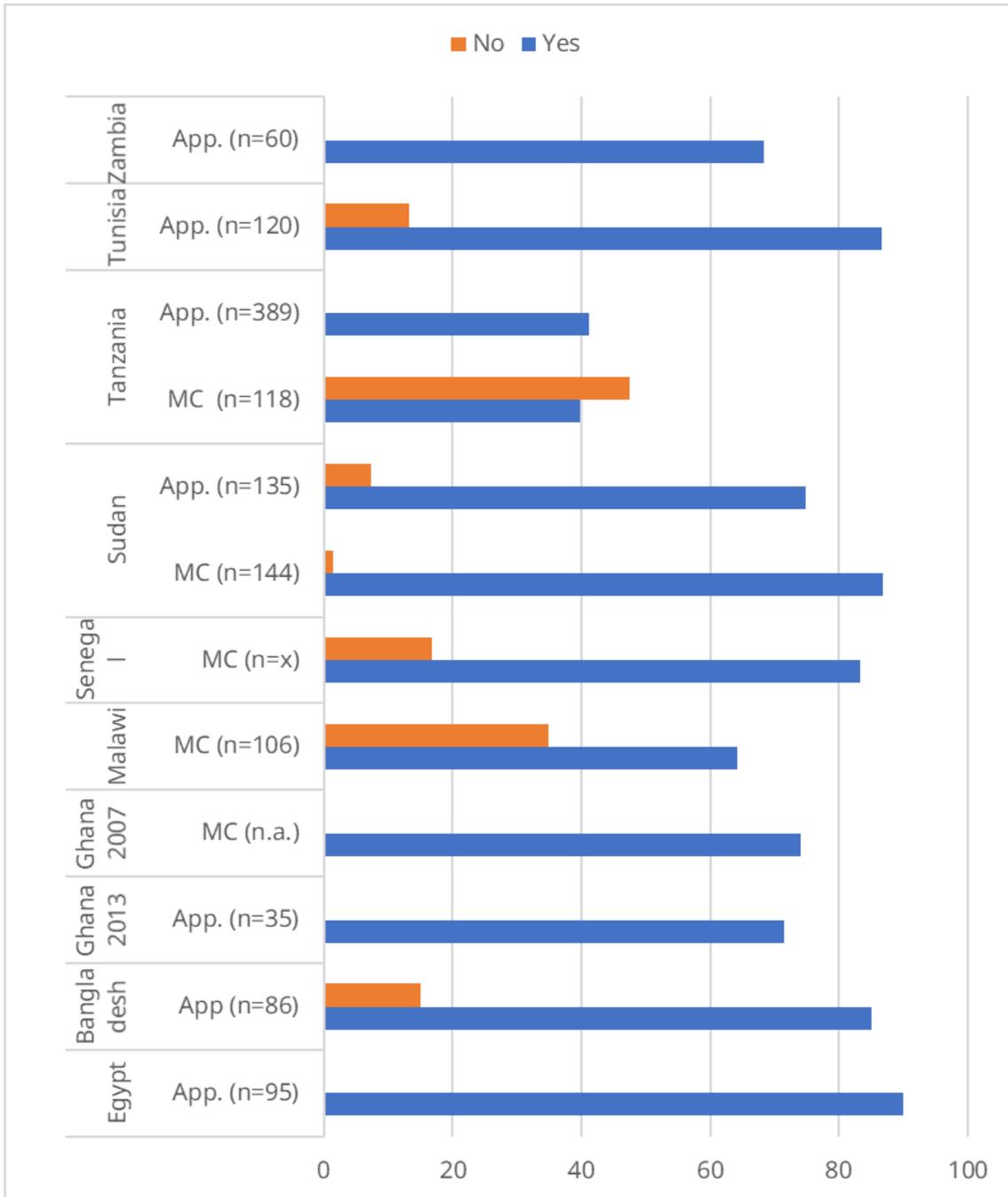
In Egypt, more than 90 per cent of apprentices reported receiving weekly wages; in Malawi, the compensation is also weekly. In Ghana, 71.4 per cent of apprentices said they received money, either daily or weekly – 74 respectively in the 2007 study with a bigger sample than the 2013 study (Schraven et al. 2013, 15). For the majority of MCs they also depend on the performance of the apprentice. Thus, extra efforts are being compensated. Almost half of the MCs said they adjust the pocket money to the needs of the apprentices, which favours the integration of the poor and disadvantaged. In Lusaka, Zambia, apprentices also receive a wage or stipend, but it depends on the performance of the enterprise (Ryan 2012, 10).

Tanzania represents an exception, with only around 40 per cent of apprentices receiving financial compensation as wage or pocket money. Taking into account that 73 per cent of the 118 MCs in the sample charge fees and 34 per cent of the apprentices have to bring their own tools or raw material, apprentices in Tanzania seem to be confronted with higher financial entry barriers to informal apprenticeship than in other countries. However, one aspect might have been overlooked in the data collection in Tanzania: apprentices might receive compensation directly from clients, a common practice in Malawi, for example.

As apprenticeship is a training process, the apprentice acquires skills throughout the training period and his/her productivity and contribution to the business increases. This is reflected in increasing levels of compensation – as is usually the case in formal apprenticeship systems (ILO 2017). In Tanzania, 76 per cent of 51 MCs who responded to the question increase the payment according to increasing skills of the apprentice. In certain trades the adjustment of payment is also much more frequent than in others: in carpentry 58 per cent (n=26) increase payments, in car mechanics 50 per cent (n=21) and in electrical services 33 per cent (n=12), whereas in tailoring it is only 17 per cent (n=30) and in plumbing 10 per cent (n=10). In both Malawi and Zambia MCs increase wages or pocket money with increasing experience and skills of the apprentice (Aggarwal et al. 2010, 28; Ryan 2012, 10), and in Ghana, senior apprentices get paid more due to their higher responsibilities (Schraven et al. 2013, 15).

This underlines that both MCs and apprentices benefit over time – the MC through input of labour and effective services provided by the apprentice, who in turn receives increased compensation. The timing of the pay increase, however, is at the discretion of the MC, which risks being misused by the MCs if not clearly agreed. The longer apprentices stay and receive compensation at levels below what a skilled worker obtains, the more likely they are to quit the apprenticeship – also prematurely. For an effective system, it is important to clarify durations, financial arrangements, and provide incentives to the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship, for example, through a certificate.

► **Figure 9: Compensation of apprentices (%) - Do apprentices receive money for their work (wage/pocket money)?**

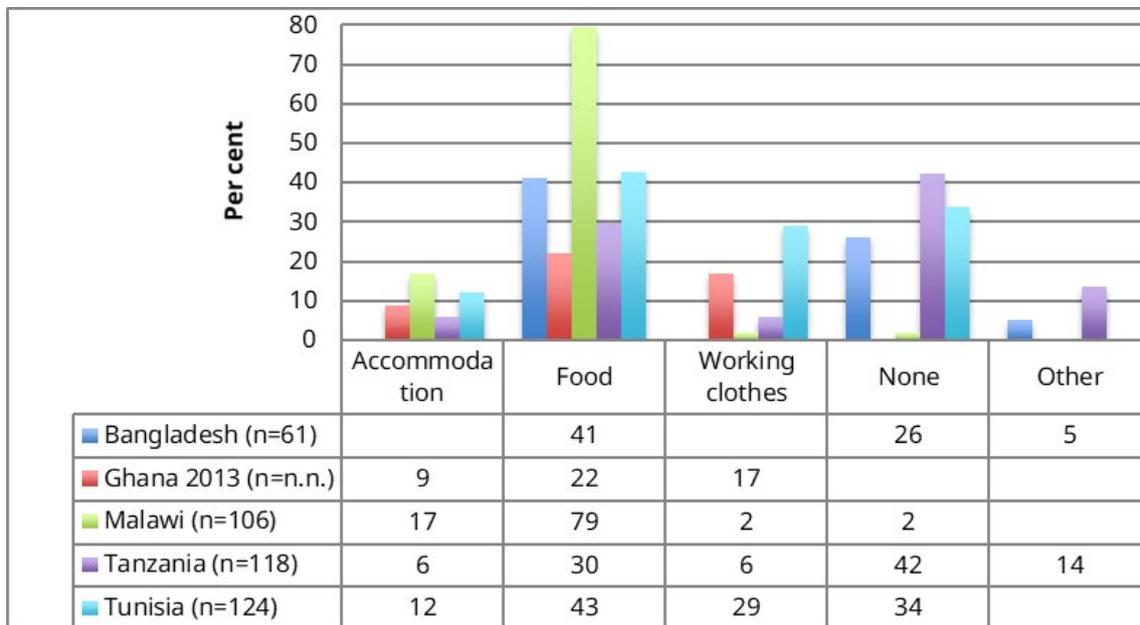


Note: The figures from Senegal are for all workers in surveyed workshops, including contributing family workers (7.9 per cent), apprentices (69.9 per cent) and workers (22.3 per cent). The share of apprentices not being paid any compensation might therefore be slightly higher than the given figure.

In-kind support for apprentices

Besides wages, apprentices might receive non-monetary compensation and in-kind support to secure their subsistence. Figure 10 shows that the majority of MCs provide in-kind support to their apprentices. The extent varies, yet food is the main in-kind support provided to the apprentices. Following the trend already identified earlier in relation to fees and compensation, in Tanzania apprentices receive less in-kind support and more often no support at all compared to other countries. It is furthermore the only study that clearly shows that a considerable group of apprentices do not get any kind of compensation, either in-kind, or wages or pocket money. In tailoring, 40 per cent of apprentices actually do not receive anything from the MCs (Nübler et al. 2009, 28).

► **Figure 10: In-kind support to apprentices by MCs (multiple answers possible)**



Note: the amounts do not add up to 100 per cent, as different questions have been asked or multiple answers were possible.

An important question in relation to apprentice compensation is: *Does compensation cover the cost of fees and apprentice basic needs and living expenses?* The analysis shows a mixed picture. The assessment in Ghana from 2013 revealed that the amount of compensation did not cover apprentice basic needs and costs (Schraven et al. 2013, 15). By contrast, the survey from 2007 in Ghana showed that “the total amount of allowance received by apprentices in the course of the apprenticeship largely exceeds the total amount of fees charged by the master in 68.5 per cent of cases” (Breyer 2007, iii). In Tanzania, among those who received financial compensation (not accounting for possible extra income from clients as mentioned before), the amount largely exceeds the fees charged.

Interestingly, an inverse relationship of fees and compensation has been observed, i.e. where no compensation is paid, fees are usually lower (Nübler et al. 2009, 29). There might be differences in how the allocation of fees, compensation and in-kind contributions are organized. This seems to confirm the earlier finding that compensation and fees are being adapted to the apprentices’ socioeconomic background, needs and payment capacity, allowing for flexibility in the system, and possibly facilitating access for poorer apprentices. The manner in which fees, compensation and in-kind support are allocated seems to depend on the local context.

Summary and conclusions

This chapter compared the main features of apprenticeship systems in the informal economy. While country and local contexts and practices differ, there are clear commonalities with regard to who engages, why and under what conditions.

In general, MCs who are on average 10 to 15 years older than their apprentices hire young people between 15 to 30 years old, with the most common age group being 22 to 25 years. A gender bias is observed in accessing informal apprenticeship, with many trades being either strongly dominated by men or by women, and disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities, seem to face entry barriers to informal apprenticeships. The majority of MCs and apprentices have concluded primary level education. To a varying degree across the countries, both apprentices and MCs have also completed secondary education. In general, the educational background of MCs is higher than that of apprentices. A small number of MCs and apprentices has even reached university level.

Local networks largely shape recruitment in the informal system, together with some performance-related factors such as level of education and learning capacity. For apprentices, MC reputation is an important factor. School-to-apprenticeship transitions can be rather slow, given the relatively high age of apprentices. Some apprentices might not consider apprenticeship as the first choice, but the system is nevertheless perceived as relevant to obtaining employable skills and finding a job. In some countries, it is seen as a system for the poor, yet statistics in Ghana show that the participation in informal apprenticeship actually increases with income levels (Adams et al., 2007).

Apprenticeship agreements are principally oral rather than written. Despite this, there is a relatively high degree of congruence on the topics covered in the apprenticeship agreement between the MC and the apprentice, pointing to a certain level of effectiveness of oral agreements. Trust and reciprocity therefore seem to play important roles in the enforcement of apprenticeship agreements, yet more research is needed to better understand the functioning of conflict resolution mechanisms.

Most MCs compensate their apprentices with either pocket money, varying wages and/or in-kind support. However, a certain number of apprentices receive little or no pay, as well as being required to pay entry fees or costs for tools and materials. This clearly raises concerns about exploitative practices in informal apprenticeship which need to be identified and prevented. Financial arrangements may include a certain amount of flexibility which can provide opportunities for apprentices from poorer backgrounds to join.

The duration of informal apprenticeship varies across countries, but also significantly across trades. Some countries have uniform ideas about apprenticeship duration, while in others the duration is not set beforehand, and may depend solely on the MC or the learning capacity of the apprentice. This confirms that the flexibility within informal apprenticeships – on the one hand providing room for exploitative practices – can on the other hand work in favour of the apprentice and apprenticeship durations and costs can be adjusted to the learning ability and payment capacity of the apprentice. Good practice could include specifications for minimum and maximum durations, fees and compensation per trade agreed by local or national actors, including representatives of workers and employers in the informal economy.

▶ 2 Rights at work and social protection in informal apprenticeship systems

Apprenticeship is work-based learning, hence rights at work need to be respected. This chapter takes a normative approach exploring decent work issues which are in particular relevant in a context of informal apprenticeship systems based on ILO labour standards. It assesses issues such as non-discrimination, child labour, working conditions and social protection.

2.1 Gender biases in informal apprenticeship

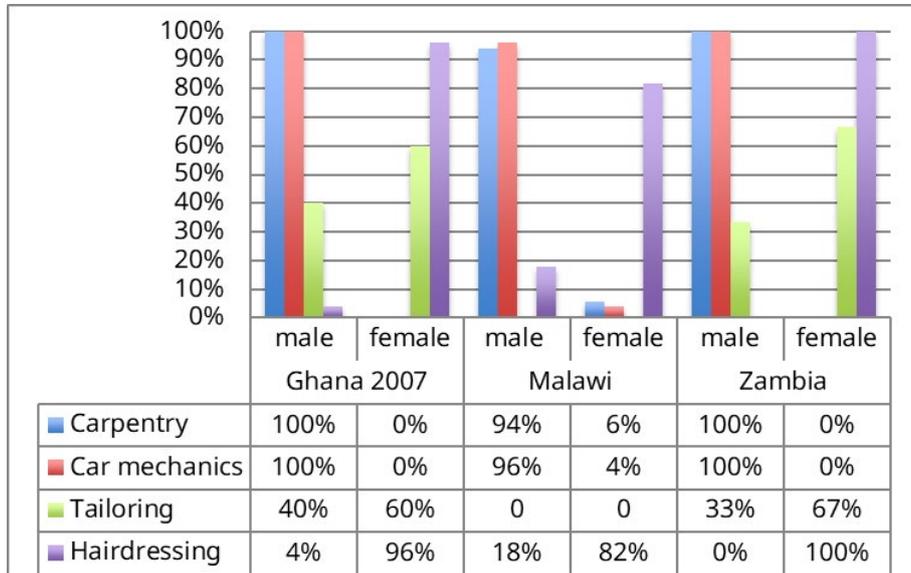
Access to informal apprenticeships for young women and young men is determined by a gendered social structure. All studies revealed a strong gender bias towards male apprentices. Women are to a large extent limited to jobs that are perceived to be feminine such as hairdressing/beauty, and dressmaking/tailoring. Consequently, a clear gender pattern emerges in informal apprenticeship, resulting in occupational segregation. Significant determinants as to occupational choice are the existing social norms, values and traditions, which are largely shaped by gendered norms.

It is important, however, to analyse more in-depth how male and female apprentices are distributed amongst the trades and examine possible underlying reasons for male dominance in some trades.

Female apprentices and trades

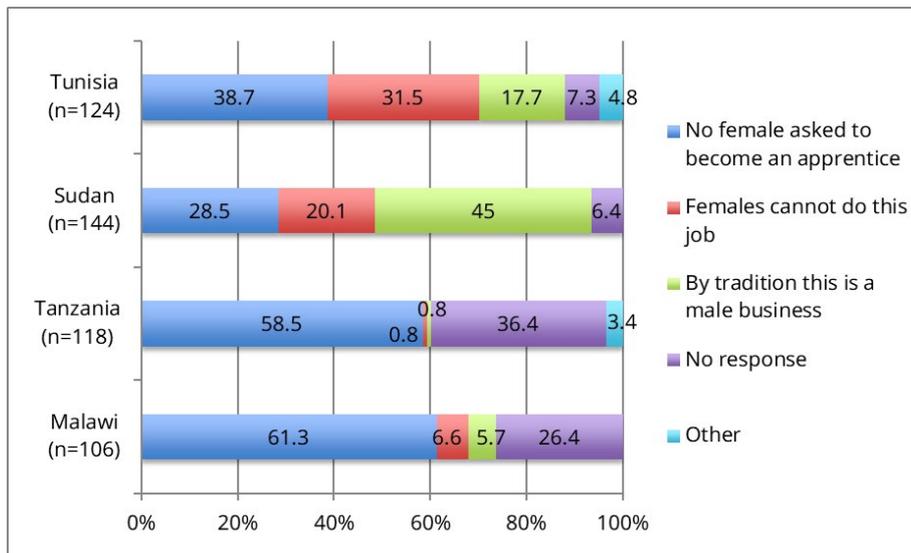
Gender patterns in informal apprenticeship across the countries show strong male dominance in some trades such as carpentry and car mechanics with almost no female apprentices present in those trades (see the following figure for Ghana, Malawi and Zambia). Yet, access for women is possible, as the sample from Tanzania shows, which included a few female apprentices in car mechanics and one in electrical services (Nübler et al. 2009, 10). In Egypt, only two of 95 apprentices in total were female, and in the case of Sudan, no current female apprentices were identified. Researchers in Sudan, furthermore, noted that female apprentices are rare even in female-dominated trades such as hairdressing or tailoring, although these trades were not included in the survey (ILO 2013).

► Figure 11: Male and female apprentices in selected trades (Ghana, Malawi, Zambia)



Trades dominated by female apprentices include hairdressing and tailoring, e.g. in Malawi, in which 82 per cent of apprentices in hairdressing are female. Tailoring and dressmaking in other countries is mixed, as in the case of Ghana. As part of the surveys conducted, MCs were asked to state reasons why there were few or no female apprentices.

► Figure 12: If you have/have had no or few female apprentices, please tell us the main reason



Note: The high number of “no” responses, especially in Tanzania and Malawi, derives mostly from MCs of predominantly female trades, such as tailoring in Tanzania (27) and hairdressing in Malawi (14). As they have mostly female apprentices, they did not respond to the question.

In addition to stereotypes and gendered roles in society that affect MC choices, access to apprenticeship also depends on knowledge about apprenticeship opportunities. Figure 12 confirms that women are either unaware of apprenticeships in male-dominated trades or deliberately choose not to apply. In Tanzania and Malawi, more than half of MCs stated that no female had actually asked to become an apprentice. This was

the most common response in carpentry and car mechanics, two male-dominated trades in Malawi and Tanzania (the countries with the highest percentages of this response).

In Sudan and Tunisia, 20 per cent and 31 per cent of the MCs have stated that females are not suitable for the job, respectively. These notably higher percentages in comparison to the other countries could hint towards more traditional socio-cultural beliefs reflected in informal apprenticeship and the overall society.

In West Africa, 1-2-3 informal sector surveys have shown that women are more likely than men to acquire their skills in the informal sector through informal on-the-job-learning – and not through informal apprenticeship with an MC. In all eight West African countries studied, except for Niger, apprenticeship in a small enterprise (presumably informal) is more common for men (Nordman and Pasquier-Doumer 2012).

Regarding transitions to employment, women apprentices face further disadvantages. Qualitative interviews with MCs in Malawi revealed a strong gender bias in the recruitment of skilled workers. Furthermore, small businesses and workshops across the trades and countries are mostly run and/or owned by men (the MC often being the owner of the small business). In Egypt, only one woman owned a small business and another business was run by a female MC (n=100; 81 per cent of small businesses are managed by MCs rather than their owners), and in Zimbabwe 213 were owned by men and only 36 by women. In Sudan, all 144 identified MCs were men and 96 per cent of the businesses were owned by the MCs (or else a group of people) (ILO 2010).

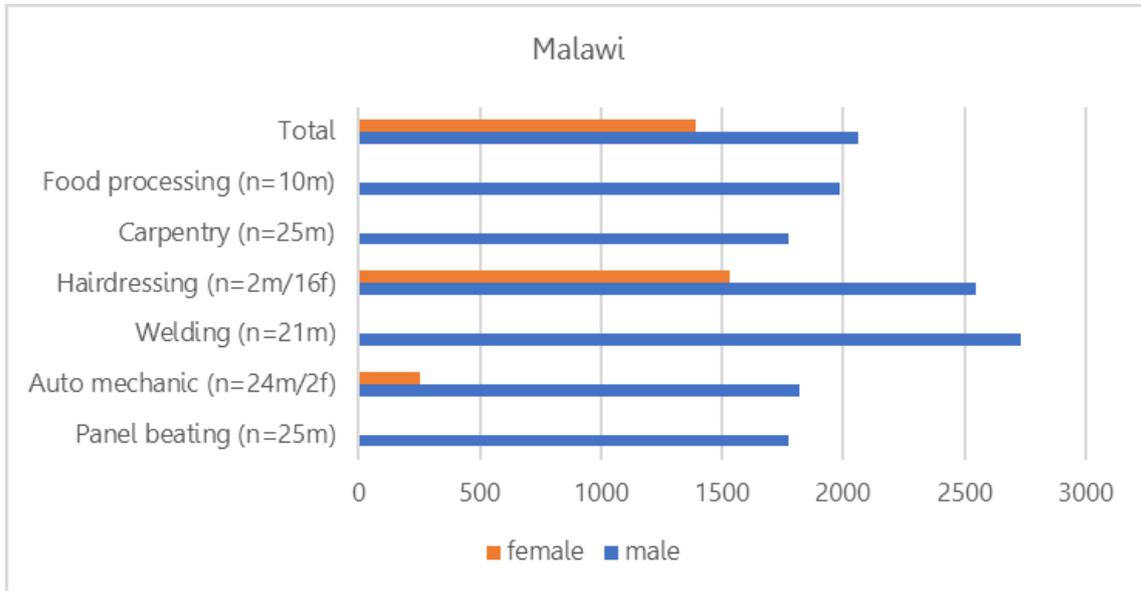
These findings point to more pronounced barriers for women to start their own business. These reasons could relate to access to finance, but also to social norms and roles that expect women to take care of their family responsibilities rather than running a workshop as an MC. However, in some contexts, women seem to be as successful as men in moving up the career ladder and becoming MCs. In hairdressing in Malawi, the number of female MCs (83.3 per cent) is similar to the number of female apprentices (81.8 per cent) and that of female skilled workers (89.5 per cent).

Promoting the participation of women in male-dominated trades, the inclusion of more men in female-dominated trades, and increased apprenticeship opportunities in female trades would go a long way toward improving access of women to apprenticeship and the labour market (ILO 2020b).

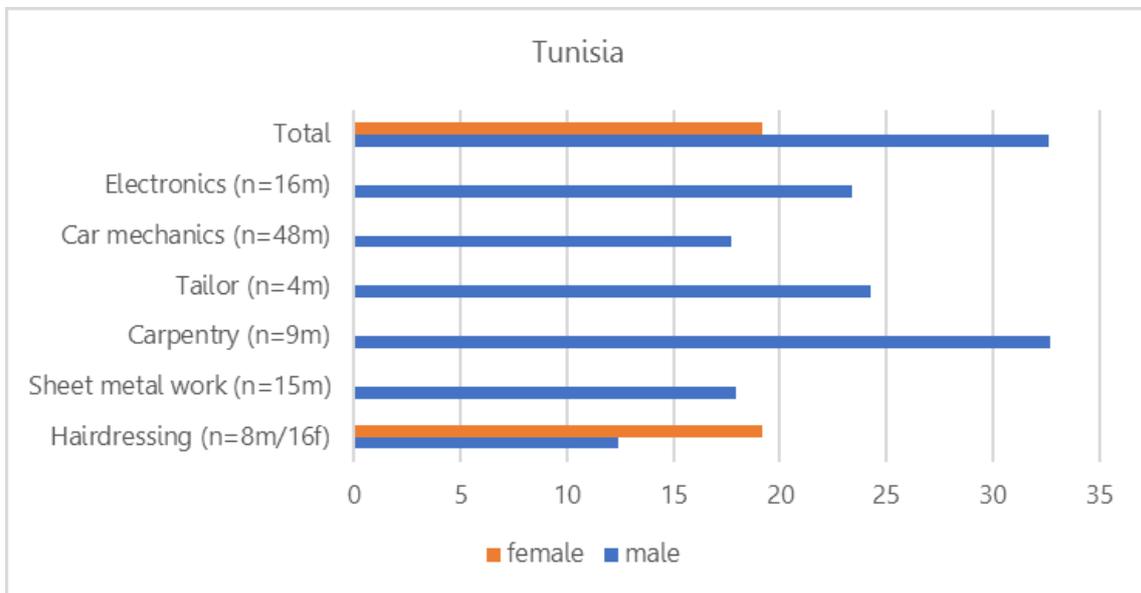
Gender earnings gap

Another important aspect in relation to gender biases is the presence of differences in earnings for men and women within the same trade. The Ghana assessment identified that only 50 per cent of female apprentices (n=12) received a wage or pocket money. In contrast, 19 of 23 male apprentices in Ghana did receive wages or pocket money (83 per cent) (Schraven et al. 2013, 27). In Tanzania, skilled workers in tailoring, a rather female-dominated trade, received 10 per cent less weekly income than skilled workers in male-dominated trades (Nübler et al. 2009, 46). Figures 13 and 14 confirm lower earnings for women in the study samples from Tunisia and Malawi.

► **Figure 13: Difference in weekly compensation between male and female apprentices in Malawi, in Kwacha**



► **Figure 14: Difference in weekly compensation between male and female apprentices in Tunisia, in Tunisian Dinar**



The gendered wage differences found in informal apprenticeship are no surprise, considering that the gender pay gap still persists in the formal economy in developing and in developed countries. Nonetheless, it is an important factor to consider when promoting gender equality in skills and employment in the informal economy.

2.2 Child labour and working conditions in informal apprenticeship

Child labour

One of the general assumptions in informal apprenticeship is that it is prone to fall short in decent work standards and to mask child labour, depriving children of the possibility to go to school, as well as putting them in hazardous working conditions. The ILO has set important standards to fight child labour through the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) – setting the minimum working age at 15 years, or alternatively at 14 years, if social partners agree – and through the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

An analysis of the age structure of informal apprentices (see chapter 1) showed that the average age of apprentices is surprisingly high. Table 5 provides an overview of the minimum working age in the countries studied and the percentage of apprentices below the minimum working age at the beginning of their apprenticeship.

► **Table 5: Average age of apprentices and percentage of apprentices below working age**

Country	Average age of apprentices	Legal minimum working age	Percentage of apprentices below working age when they started apprenticeship	Age and number of apprentices below working age
Egypt	n.n.*	15	1.1% (n= 95) 23.4% (n= 95)	<10 yrs 10-15yrs
Ghana (2007)	21.5 yrs	15	0.5%	14 yrs=1
	22 yrs (2013)			
Malawi	25.4 yrs	14	n.a.**	n.a.
Tanzania	23.5 yrs	15	2% (n=388)	9 yrs=1 12 yrs=3 13 yrs=1 14 yrs=2
Tunisia	21.5 yrs	15	3.4% (n=119)	12 yrs=2 13 yrs=2
Sudan	22 yrs	14	30.4% (n=135) between 12-17	41 apprentices between 12 and 17 years
Zambia	n.n.	15	n.a.	n.a.

* not named

** not applicable

The table shows that child labour (considering children below working age) is present in all countries, yet in small numbers, except for Egypt and Sudan. In the latter, however, the share includes apprentices aged between 12 to 17 years, and has not been further disaggregated in the study unfortunately.

Awareness raising about the legal minimum working age is paramount to prevent child labour in informal apprenticeship, and to engage community-level actors in monitoring. It is also important to point out that age is not the sole determinant of child labour if the child is above working age but below 18. Children should not be involved in hazardous work, endangering their “health, safety or morals” (Convention No. 182, Article 3 (d)). Some work is considered hazardous by nature, other by its circumstances. In the latter

case, occupational safety and health (OSH) measures at the workplace could turn hazardous work into safe work (ILO 2012a, 74).

Working conditions

Working hours

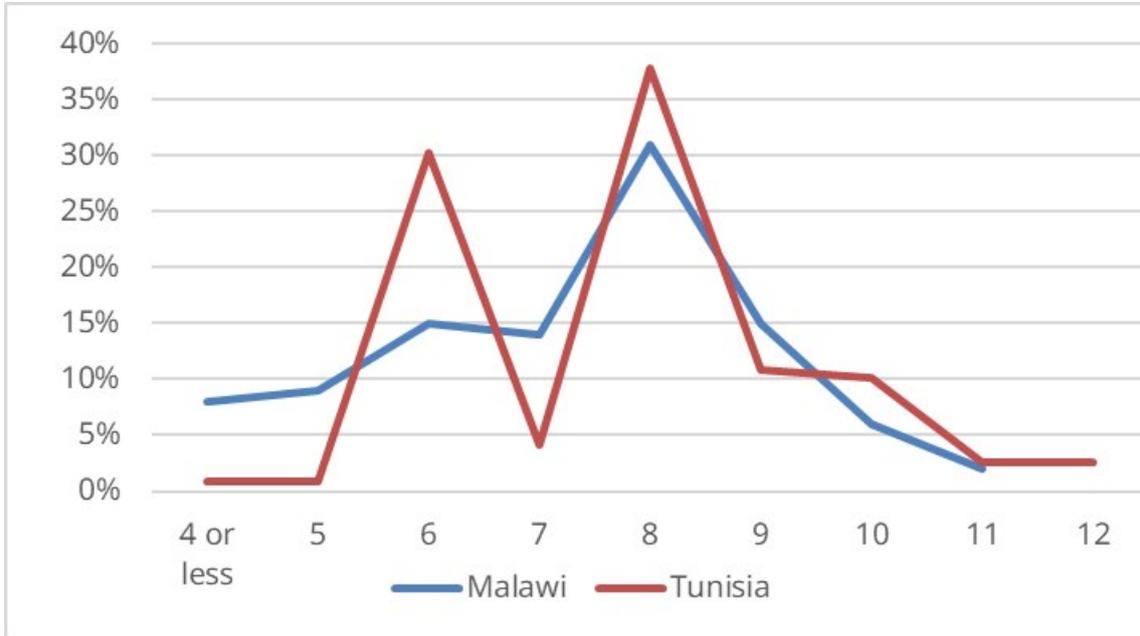
Informal apprenticeship is often associated with poor working conditions and long working hours. According to the ILO Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14) the working time in industrial undertakings should not exceed eight hours per day and 48 hours per week.

Although data are not available for all countries, the average working hours in Malawi and Tunisia lie within the recommended frame of maximum 48 weekly working hours. This is, however, not the case in Sudan and Tanzania and is likely to be the same for Bangladesh and Ghana. Also, it is important to note that apprentices might not be active during the whole time they are at the workplace since training depends on the availability of work and the presence of the MC or other skilled worker to train. The picture is therefore mixed.

In Malawi, apprentices work six days per week. Apprentices in food processing have the longest working hours. Around 8 per cent claim to work less than five hours per day, which indicates low volumes of work, yet 2 per cent in Malawi and 5 per cent in Tunisia work more than ten hours daily, as figure 15 shows. In Tunisia, apprentices from the sample work an average of 7.7 hours per day, on four to five days per week (Tunisia 2013, 32). However, it is important to point out again that this was a mixed sample of informal and formal apprentices, and the latter usually attend centre-based training.

In Sudan, 88.1 per cent of the apprentices said they work six days a week and 9.6 per cent work seven days a week. Working hours usually exceed eight hours per day and in some cases go up to 12 hours per day (ILO 2013). The survey in Bangladesh indicated that informal apprentices worked longer than formal apprentices, with 69 per cent of apprentices exceeding eight working hours per day; however, the study did not clarify how many days per week apprentices work (ILO 2009, 28). The same applies to Ghana (Schraven et al. 2013), where working hours are reported as varying between seven to 14 hours per day (Schraven et al. 2013, 15) without providing the exact number of days worked per week. However, with an average of 11 working hours per day, the maximum working hours per week would already be exceeded with a five-day working week.

► **Figure 15: Number of daily hours effectively worked by apprentices in Malawi and Tunisia**



In Tanzania, apprentices worked on average 6.36 days per week, a little less than MCs and skilled workers who worked 6.45 and 6.43 days per week respectively (Nübler et al. 2009, 57, Table A.8). This is more than in Malawi and Tunisia. However, the stark difference lies in the hours worked per day – which on average and according to the MCs is 9.48 hours (according to apprentices 9.96 hours). The average hours worked per week in Tanzania therefore amount to 60.3, according to the MCs, ranging between 54.9 in tailoring to 68.6 in car mechanics. These numbers are alarming and exceed by far the 48 hours stipulated in ILO standards.

The study in Bangladesh enquired how apprentices perceived their overall working conditions. One in two *informal* apprentices considered their working conditions to be “good”, compared to three in four *formal* apprentices who said so. The individual perception of “good” working conditions, however, might lie below or above the internationally agreed standards and tends to be shaped by local comparisons more than anything else.

Annual leave

Another important indicator relating to working conditions is the right to annual leave, for which table 6 provides an overview:

► **Table 6: Right to annual leave**

How many weeks of leave do you have per year?			
	Malawi (n=106)	Tanzania (n=388)	Tunisia (n=116)
No leave	67%	62%	3%
1 week	10%	7%	13%
2 weeks	12%	5%	17%
3 weeks	12%	7%	
4 weeks		8%	61%
more than 4 weeks		11%	

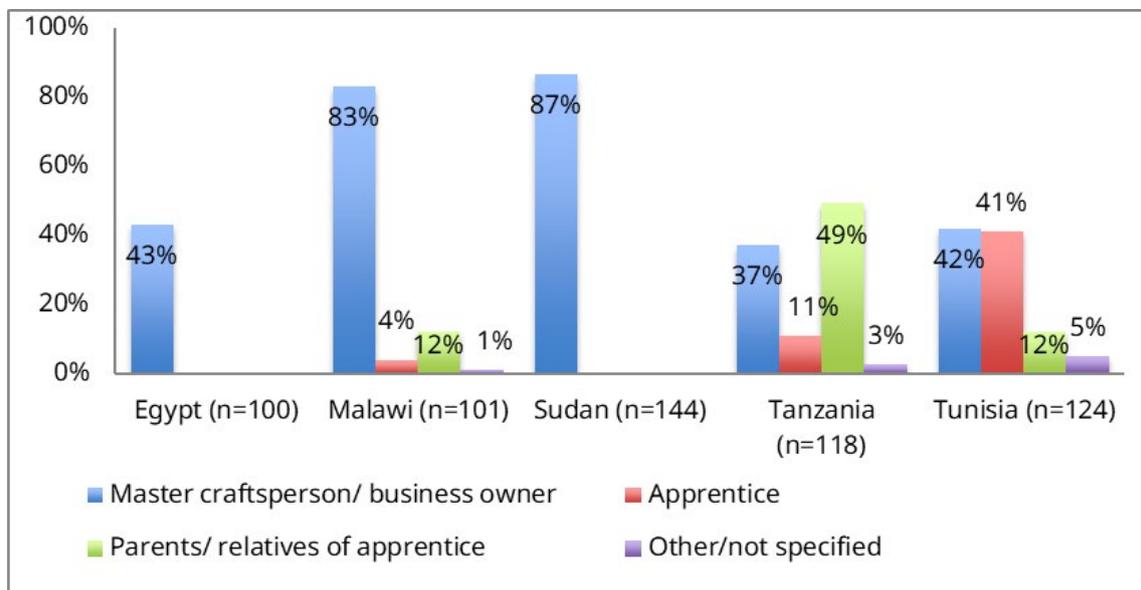
In Tunisia, 61 per cent of apprentices state they have four weeks of annual leave, which can be explained by the mixed sample (50 to 54 per cent are formal apprentices), but also shows that some informal apprentices benefit from the same level of annual leave. Here, very few apprentices have no right to annual leave. By contrast, in Malawi, 90 per cent, and in Tanzania 74 per cent enjoy two weeks or less of annual leave only, with 67 per cent in Malawi and 62 per cent in Tanzania claiming to have no right to annual leave. This clearly shows that certain labour rights have not yet reached the reality of informal apprenticeship systems. It is, however, likely that MCs would grant leave under certain conditions, for family festivities, funerals or other reasons connected to social and cultural norms of the local context.

2.3 Social protection, accidents and liability

This section looks at social protection provisions for apprentices, including who bears the responsibility for covering the cost of broken tools or equipment, or medical expenses should the apprentice fall sick or have a work-related accident during the apprenticeship period.

Comparing the available responses from MCs in figure 16 reveals that expenses are only covered to a certain extent, and levels vary. In Sudan and Malawi, the percentage of apprentices whose health expenses are covered by the MC is fairly high at 87 per cent and 83 per cent. In Egypt, Tanzania and Tunisia, in contrast, apprentices and their parents cover the expenses in more than 50 per cent of cases.

► **Figure 16: Who pays for medical expenses in case of sickness or occupational injury? Answers of master craftpersons**



Note: In both Egypt and Sudan the question was not given with the other options of responses.

In general, medical expenses seem to be covered in a number of countries for the (vast) majority of apprentices in informal apprenticeship, showing the “caretaker” mentality of MCs. Therefore, it is not considered a general weakness of informal apprenticeships but still requires careful assessment, as many apprentices are not covered. Tanzania stands out as having low levels of coverage, representing an additional burden for parents, guardians and relatives should the apprentice become sick or experience an occupational injury. Moreover, if apprentices have to shoulder the cost, it could impede them from continuing their apprenticeship and be a potential reason to drop out.

Summary and conclusions

Apprentices, along with MCs and skilled workers, are compromised in their exercise of rights at work, given that the apprenticeship system operates in the informal economy. There are strong gender biases in access and selection of occupations which require urgent attention. Discrimination against disadvantaged groups in the labour market, such as persons with disabilities, is also found in informal apprenticeships. While working hours can be excessive, child labour has not been identified as a major issue in the surveys covered.

Social protection, such as the coverage of medical expenses when apprentices become sick or suffer from occupational injuries, is more often shouldered by the employer/MC than by the apprentice or their parents. Coverage, however, is far from universal, and mechanisms need to be devised, for example, through community schemes or provisions by business associations, to avoid dropout risks when apprentices cannot pay for health expenses.

While formal structures and systems are absent, informal practices in some areas partly fill gaps and provide mechanisms for the exercise of rights. MCs, for example, join business or craft associations to voice their interests at local and national levels, and in some countries, MCs play an important role in contributing to policies and programmes that improve informal apprenticeship. Apprentices are also sometimes represented by parents' associations (see Chapter 4).

▶ 3 The effectiveness of informal apprenticeship systems

This chapter looks at the effectiveness of informal apprenticeship in terms of outcomes and potential benefits. Effectiveness is measured in terms of the four following variables, and various indicators are applied for which the surveys provide data.

1. **Quality and relevance of training** (content, training methodology, skills upgrading courses, innovation, recruiting skilled workers)
2. **Training in the full set of skills** (dropout rates)
3. **Skills recognition in labour markets** (certificates)
4. **Employability/labour market outcomes for apprentices upon completion** (type of employment, transition period, matching career aspirations, income/economic return)

The first variable assesses effectiveness in terms of the quality and relevance of informal apprenticeship training. This will be measured by several indicators: i) the content and mix of technical, vocational, business, literacy and core skills provided during apprenticeship training (ILO 2021); ii) the type of training methodology used; and iii) the responsiveness to new skill needs. Three sub-indicators are used to analyse if skills delivered keep pace with changing demands: a) the participation of MCs in skills upgrading courses; b) innovation strategies used; and c) recruitment of skilled trainers who bring new skills to the business.

The second variable assesses effectiveness in imparting proficiency in all relevant skills of the apprenticed trade. Dropout rates of apprentices are used as the indicator to measure this. Low drop-out rates would be associated with a large share of apprentices respecting the apprenticeship agreement and therefore acquiring the full set of competences considered necessary by the MC for completion of apprenticeship. High drop-out rates point towards a less effective system. High dropout rates can also indicate that insufficient incentives are available to apprentices to motivate them to complete their full training: they find better options elsewhere, or are otherwise dissatisfied with their apprenticeship experience.

The third variable assesses effectiveness of apprenticeship systems in terms of the scope of recognition of acquired skills by labour market actors. The scope of recognition determines whether apprentices can transfer their skills to jobs in different enterprises, in different regions and in the informal and formal economies. Indicators used are certificates, skills assessments conducted and participation in formal skills assessment processes.

The fourth variable is employability/labour market outcomes, measured by: i) the type of jobs apprentices take; ii) the time it takes to successfully transition to a job after completing an apprenticeship; iii) the extent to which jobs match their career expectations and; and iv) economic returns. The job obtained might be offered in the same enterprise where they trained, in another small and informal enterprise, or apprentices might opt to open their own business. Obtaining a job in a formal enterprise could be considered as a particularly successful transition, given that jobs in formal sector enterprises have a higher likelihood of complying with decent work criteria.

3.1 Quality of training in informal apprenticeship

Content of instruction

Good quality skills development is expected to combine vocational and technical skills with core skills such as communication skills in dealing with customers, being creative and developing new product ideas, and basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Practical skills also need to be combined with theory knowledge and cognitive skills related to the trade to facilitate a broader and deeper understanding of the occupation and related work processes. The balance between these skills will differ by trade, yet awareness of their importance is crucial for MCs to impart quality training.

Technical skills are the main focus of training from the MCs' point of view, as table 7 reveals with data from Malawi, Sudan and Tanzania. This is demonstrated by country responses indicating that between 27 per cent and 65 per cent of MCs emphasize that relevant knowledge and by extension theory instruction, is commonly part of the training. Skills for workshop organization and maintenance of machines vary between the countries and are less prominent.

Little emphasis is put on literacy and numeracy (except for Sudan, where much higher numbers of apprentices are illiterate than in other countries). Also, little attention is paid to creative skills such as the development of products (with the exception of Tanzania with 31 per cent). These skills are, however, important for innovation within the respective trade. MCs in Tanzania pay more attention to negotiation skills with customers, unlike in Sudan and Malawi, which might be due to the types of trades covered requiring more interaction with clients such as tailoring, plumbing and electrical services. Business skills such as accounting, costing and purchasing material are not mentioned frequently by MCs, despite the fact that many apprentices aspire to open a workshop of their own in the future.

The safe handling of tools is not taken into consideration in Tanzania and of low importance in Malawi – which is clearly of concern to the ILO given the importance of OSH international labour standards. In Tunisia, however, 92 per cent of apprentices state that their MC has talked about the relevance and risks of safety measures relating to the trade in question (Tunisia 2013, 35).

► **Table 7: Content of instruction: MC (multiple answers possible) (%)**

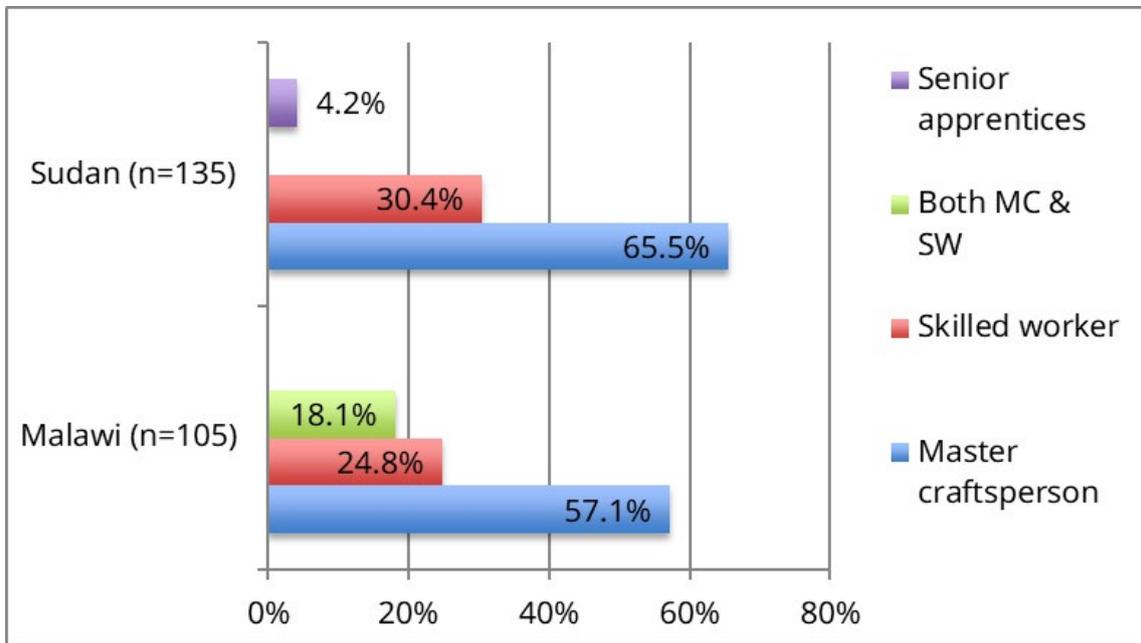
	Malawi %	Sudan %	Tanzania %
Technical skills	100	81.5	93
Relevant knowledge	27	27.5	65
Workshop organization	12	29	33
Maintenance of machines	9	41.9	38
Literacy and numeracy	0	23.4	5
Accounting and costing	2	8.9	7
Purchasing materials	1	4	0
Negotiation with customers	2	14.5	45
Marketing and advertising	1	8.1	13
Safe handling of tools	16	46	0
Developing products	0	0	31

The analysis shows that the effectiveness of informal apprenticeship measured by the type of skills imparted (as highlighted by MCs) could clearly be improved.

Training process

To assess the effectiveness of informal apprenticeship, it is also useful to understand how training happens within the enterprise. Figure 17 shows that training is mostly delivered by MCs, according to 65.5 per cent of apprentices in Sudan and 57.1 per cent in Malawi. Skilled workers also train the apprentice (30.4 per cent of apprentices in Sudan say so, versus 24.8 per cent in Malawi), often when the MC is absent or busy with clients or administrative tasks. The shared training responsibilities of both (in 18.1 per cent of cases in Malawi) could be seen as good practice, since apprentices have more than one experienced trainer to address, and the different training styles of both could possibly better address different learning styles of apprentices. In Sudan, 4.2 per cent state that they are taught by senior apprentices, in addition to skilled workers or MCs.

► Figure 17: Who is teaching you the skills of your trade?



As to the timing of instruction, the data in table 8 shows that a lot of training happens in idle hours, hence it is flexibly organized. Some MCs state that training can take place at given times, and a few choose to use evening hours. The majority of apprentices in Tanzania, however, stated that instruction happens “when the MC works”. This clearly confirms the work-based training nature that is inherent in informal apprenticeship.

► Table 8: When do you usually instruct your apprentices (multiple answers possible) (%)?

	Malawi, MCs (n=106)	Tanzania, apprentices (n=388)
At given times	20.80	27.60
In idle hours	44.30	31.70
In the evenings	12.30	14.40
On weekends	0.90	4.90
When the MC works*	-	75.80

Note: *This question was only posed to apprentices.

While informal apprenticeship does not seem to follow uniform training processes, the flexibility applied in terms of timing and use of trainers seems to cater well to the work-based nature of the training. Qualitative interviews in Tanzania also confirmed that MCs follow an informal training plan, starting with the handling

of tools, and moving from simpler to more complex tasks. In order to improve training processes, certain minimum standards could be set in terms of time devoted to instruction and feedback, training methodologies applied, and in terms of learning outcomes achieved to enable the apprentice to advance and monitor their own learning progress along with the MC.

Responsiveness to new skills requirements

Effectiveness, understood as good quality training, needs to look at the responsiveness of skills to changing market demands. Informal apprenticeship systems have often been described as not being conducive to innovation, since skills are merely passed on from one generation to another, with little new and external input (Teal 2016; Walther and Filipiak 2008). Several indicators have been used here to measure how effective these systems are in providing quality and up-to-date skills, which are then assumed to inform and improve training practice.

Participation of MC in formal vocational training and skills upgrading courses

Most MCs have been trained through informal apprenticeship: between 53 per cent in Tanzania to 90 per cent in Senegal² (LuxDev and FRADEV 2009) with Malawi, Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia following with 87, 85, 75 and 57 per cent, respectively. Formal vocational training is not widespread among trainers in informal apprenticeship, except for Tunisia, nor is non-formal vocational training (mainly through NGOs). In Egypt, Malawi and Tunisia, on-the-job training outside the remits of apprenticeship constitutes an important element for further skills acquisition, and observation and guidance by others is common in Egypt and Malawi, but not in the other two countries (see table 9).

► **Table 9: Forms of skills development of MCs and skilled workers (SWs)**

Where else did you learn the skills for the trade of this business/Where did you mainly learn the skills?*(multiple answers possible)								
Countries	Egypt		Malawi		Tanzania		Tunisia	
	MC (n=100)	SW (n=100)	MC (n=106)	SW (n=105)	MC (n=118)	SW (n=120)	MC (n=124)	SW (n=65)
Formal vocational training	2%	1%	18%	8%	30%	18%	38%	48%
Non-formal vocational training	4%	6%	11%	9%	14%	16%	7%	19%
On-the-job (no apprenticeship)	59%		18%	53%			19%	26%
Observation/guidance from relatives or friends	25%	36%	47%	30%	1%	1%	3%	5%
Other/no answer			6%	1%			33%	2%

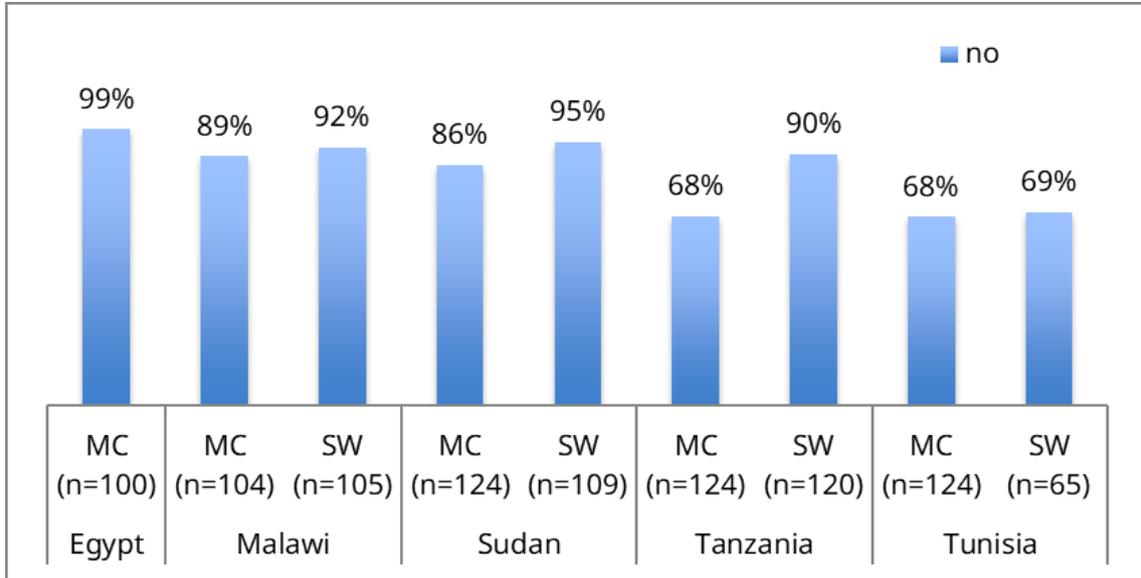
* Question as asked in Tanzania

Note: the question has in most cases been asked in addition to the question on participation in informal apprenticeship, therefore the “where else” dimension is the most important one and the answers are therefore not conflicting with the percentages of MC/SWs having attended informal apprenticeship.

Regarding additional training courses, figure 18 shows that across the countries surveyed, the vast majority of MCs and skilled workers did not participate in skills upgrading or business-related courses.

² The data for Senegal includes MCs, skilled workers, workers and apprentices.

► **Figure 18: Have you attended any other skills upgrading or business-related courses?**



In Tanzania, participation in skills upgrading courses, such as on new tools and techniques, was highest in trades such as car mechanics (29 per cent of MCs and skilled workers) and electrical services (27 per cent). A likely explanation is that in these – rather technology-intensive trades – awareness about the need for and access to skills upgrading is relatively high.

When looking at the participation of apprentices in skills upgrading courses, it is not surprising that the data available suggests that this is not a common practice in informal apprenticeship systems. Data for Malawi, Tanzania, and Ghana (Breyer 2007, 11) shows that apprentices do not participate in complementary off-the-job training courses. In Tunisia, a relatively high rate of 40 per cent of apprentices attend complementary courses, since the sample includes formal apprentices, too. In Bangladesh, only 8 per cent of informal apprentices were given classroom training by the employers (ILO 2009, 28).

The primary reasons for low participation of MCs (and skilled workers) in formal upgrading courses are direct training costs, opportunity costs (time they could otherwise have spent on production), and their availability (ILO 2013). MCs in the studies in Egypt, Tanzania and Sudan have expressed a very low capability to pay for such courses. Some MCs also think that they do not need additional skills, such as in Malawi (35 per cent) or Sudan (3.6 percent) (ILO 2013).

Throughout all countries, however, the majority of MCs expressed interest in attending skills upgrading courses, as the following table shows:

► **Table 10: Would you be interested in participating in further training (MCs)?**

	Malawi (n=106)	Sudan (n=144)*	Tanzania (n=118)	Tunisia (n=124)
Yes	87.7%	64.6%	93.2%	53.2%
No	9.4%		5.9%	48.8%
Blank/no answer	2.8%		0.8%	

* The answers in Sudan relate to the question “would you have liked to participate in further training”

Innovation and the role of networks

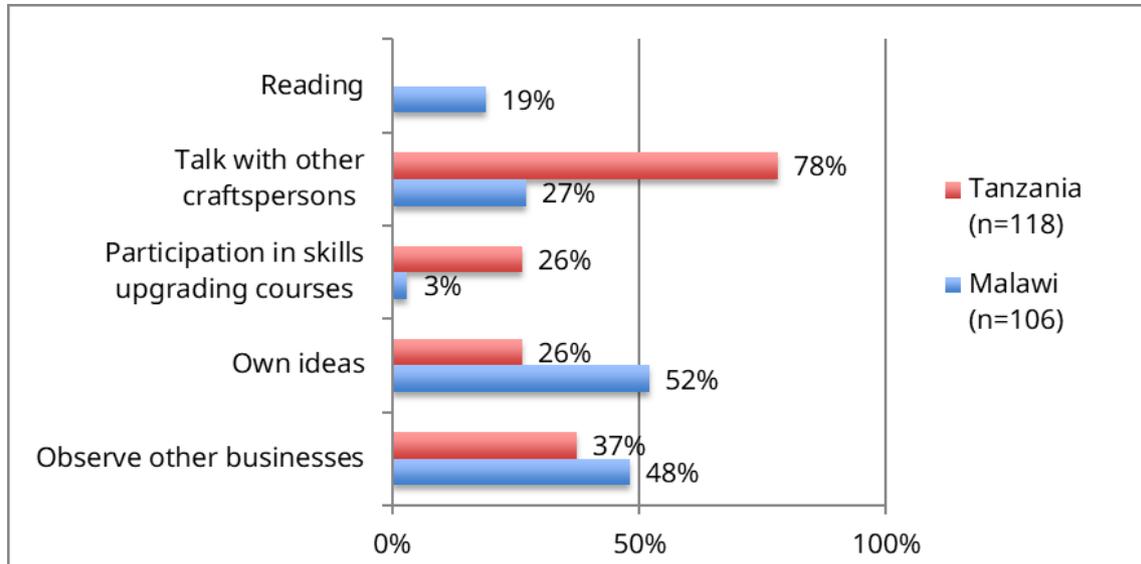
Innovation is another way to react to changing technology and skills demands. In order for innovation to take place within businesses offering apprenticeship, MCs and apprentices need to be equipped with the right skills to be able to innovate. The ability to innovate depends on different types of skills and competences, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and an open mindset, among others. Innovation can also happen as an interplay between different team members (Im et al. 2012).

A recent study on learning processes in small enterprises in Ghana, however, challenges this perception. It finds a strong positive effect of apprenticeship on the likelihood of introducing product innovation and on the performance of product innovation (Avenyu 2021). Informal sector enterprises with a higher number of apprentices were more likely to introduce and sell product innovations, which would support the assumption that apprentices have the potential to add new competences to a team to become innovative. The study argues that apprentices contribute to the “exchange of knowledge” which “improves the internal absorptive capacity of enterprises and may enable enterprises to identify, imitate and transform knowledge into new or significantly improved goods and services” (Avenyu 2021).

The studies in Tanzania and Malawi provide evidence that informal networks play an important role in getting access to new knowledge and skills. Exchanges with other MCs and observation of other businesses were indicated as the most important means. Business networks therefore seem to fulfil multiple roles in informal apprenticeship, including for filling skills gaps. At the same time, apprentices’ ideas, ideas from clients and demand for new products and design can lead to innovation, as MCs in Tanzania have expressed (Nübler et al. 2009, 37).

Recruiting skilled workers

Another strategy to bring in new skills and increase the innovative capacity of the enterprise would be hiring skilled workers that bring fresh knowledge and skills to the business. In Tunisia, 41 per cent of the workers employed in the workshops had been trained in the same workshop while more than half of the enterprise team had been trained elsewhere. This figure is lower in Egypt where 75 per cent of skilled workers had been trained in the same workshop. Nevertheless, this data indicates that enterprises offering apprenticeships also hire skilled workers with external experience to bring new skills to the business.

► **Figure 19: If you need new skills and knowledge, how do you acquire them?**

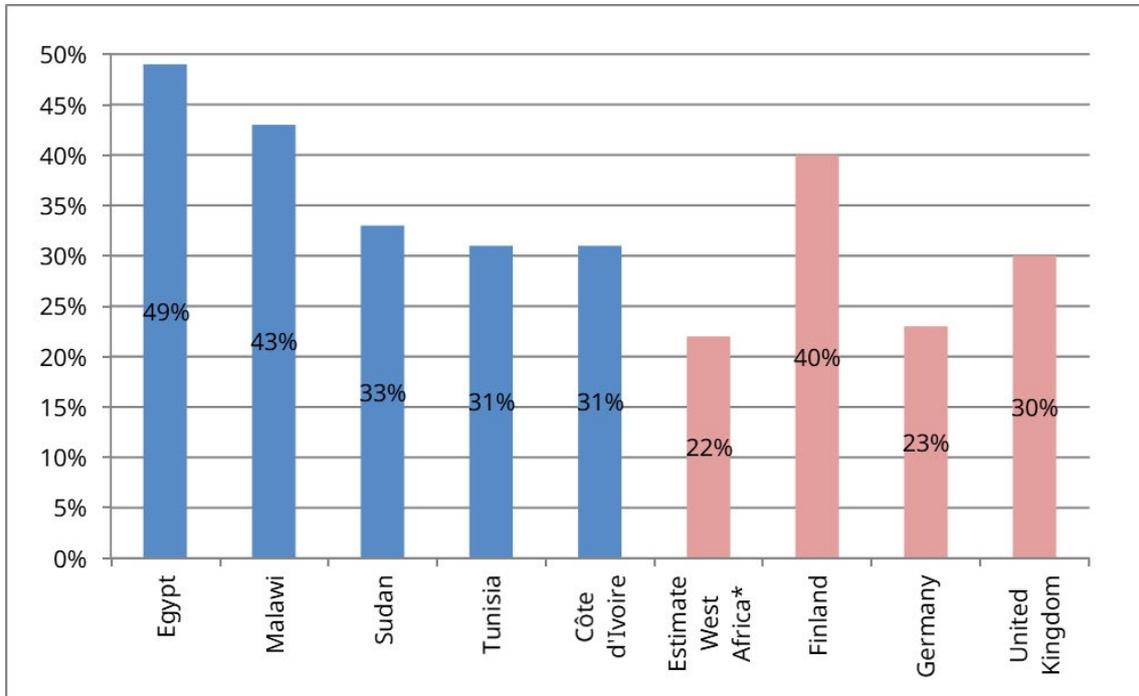
Analysed through different dimensions of training quality, the effectiveness of informal apprenticeship can be described as mixed. Informal apprenticeship offers a flexible training process and potential for innovation, yet MC access to up-to-date skills requires strengthening and the development of non-technical and core skills for MCs would also benefit from capacity building to improve their overall training practice.

3.2 Dropout rates or completeness of skills acquired

Effectiveness of informal apprenticeship is also assessed in terms of the goal of providing a full set of skills of the trade. It is assumed that apprentices are more employable when they complete apprenticeship and acquire all the skills a competent worker in the trade is expected to have. If many informal apprentices leave their employer before completing, this could point towards poor working or training conditions, a poor choice and match of apprentices to the selected trade, conflicts with the MC or other workers, or a lack of vocational support. Many of these factors can also be found in formal apprenticeships around the world.

Reasons for dropout, as mentioned by apprentices in the analysed studies, include changes in career choice, conflicts with the MC, financial difficulties, care responsibilities, pregnancies (either by the apprentice or the partner, as this requires higher financial gains to sustain the family) or the loss of family support. This means that reasons of individual choice dominate, yet are followed by conflicts and other external factors. In the study conducted in Ghana, financial problems were named as the major reason for dropping out. However, 12 out of the 15 apprentices that dropped out aspired to take up an apprenticeship again (Schraven et al. 2013).

Figure 20 shows a comparison of apprentices' dropout rates that is the share of apprentices leaving the first training enterprise they had joined as an apprentice, between formal apprenticeship systems in Europe and informal apprenticeship systems in Africa (Hofmann and Okolo 2013; Cedefop n.d.; Social Mobility Commission 2020). Considerably higher dropout rates in informal apprenticeship systems would point towards a less effective system.

▶ **Figure 20: Overview of dropout rates of informal and formal apprentices**

Note: *The estimate from West Africa is taken from Ahadzie, 2009.

The analysis shows that dropout rates in Egypt and Malawi are considerably higher than in other countries. However, formal apprenticeship systems also display varying levels of dropout rates. Those in West Africa, based on an estimate from Ahadzie (2009), are comparable to those of well-performing European formal systems. A World Bank study in Côte d'Ivoire (Crépon and Premand 2019) found that dropout rates of a formalized apprenticeship programme are very similar to those found in informal (traditional) apprenticeships in the country, 31.2 per cent in formal versus 32.5 per cent in informal. This highlights that despite their informal nature, informal apprenticeship systems are as effective as formal apprenticeship systems in keeping apprentices committed to completing their training, confirming the strong role of informal institutions, incentives and enforcement mechanisms.

The higher dropout rates in some countries point to evident weaknesses in an informal apprenticeship system and deserve further analysis. Apprentices might leave if the benefits for completing are not sufficiently evident. While undertaking the apprenticeship, they accept a lower wage; so if they find a better paying opportunity with another business, they might leave. In this case, as the informal apprenticeship system is based on the recovery of costs for the MC, businesses risk losing their training investment. Repeated high rates of dropouts can therefore be a disincentive for MCs to engage in apprenticeship altogether.

Recognized certificates upon completion can act as an incentive for apprentices to stay until apprenticeship is completed, and thus ensure that MCs recoup their investment. The studies have further shown that strong social ties, including kinship relations that can help solve conflicts, and offer possible future prospects from a good collaboration with the MC, can assist in preventing early dropout. Improved career guidance and counselling services in the community can also reduce dropout rates by eliminating poor matches between apprentice interests and aptitudes and the requirements of the chosen trade.

3.3 The scope of skills recognition

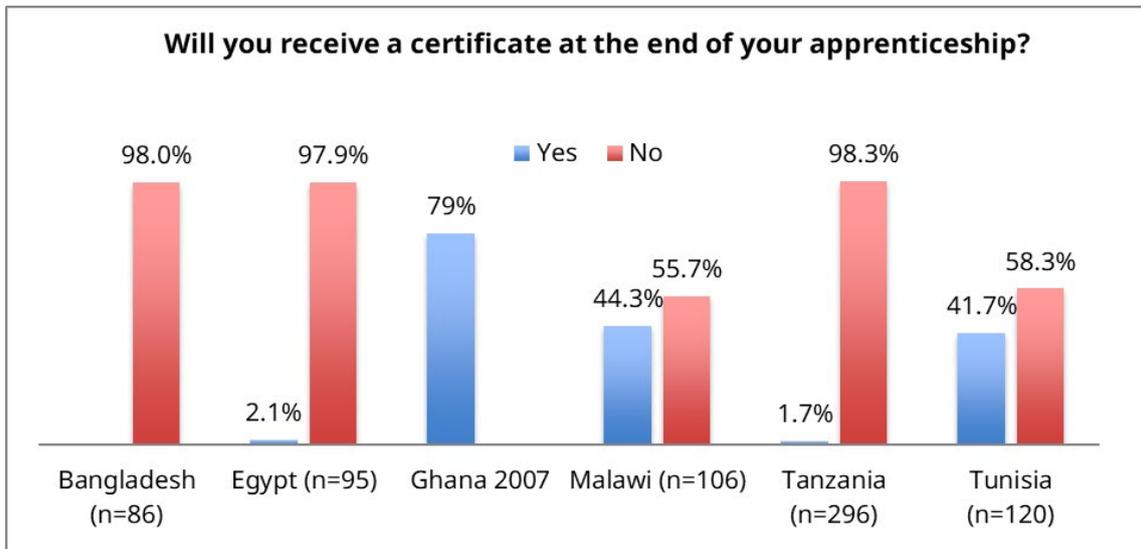
The effectiveness of informal apprenticeships is also assessed in terms of skills recognition. The recognition of skills acquired through informal apprenticeship plays an important role for the apprentices’ employability, for the portability of their skills in the labour market, and for transitions towards formal work. In formal apprenticeship systems, apprentices usually sit an exam or skills assessment at the end of their training period. The assessment typically follows pre-set standards and, depending on the country and system in place, is overseen by a formal trade association, a qualifications authority or education institution.

Traditionally, apprenticeship systems in coastal countries in West Africa such as Ghana, Togo or Benin have marked the end of the apprenticeship through a graduation ceremony (Fluitman 1992, Walther and Filipiak 2008, Hofmann and Savadogo 2021). This event introduces the freshly graduated worker to the community and other business owners in the locality and serves to publicly announce and recognize their acquired skills. However, this approach limits the scope for skills recognition in the labour market. Some countries aiming to widen the scope for recognition introduced formal certifications and assessments to complement or replace this practice (see Chapter 4).

Certificates

End-of-apprenticeship certificates help to document and prove the skills of the apprentice, make them visible, and ultimately aim to increase the portability of apprentices’ acquired skills. Certificates also act as incentives for apprentices to complete apprenticeship; yet, the market value of certificates depends on the credibility and reputation of the MC (Hofmann and Okolo 2013, 4). Informal apprenticeship certificates are usually not recognized within the national formal system, but can still have certain benefits, as the following sections will demonstrate.

► **Figure 21: Apprenticeship certificates in informal apprenticeship**



The comparison across countries in figure 21 suggests that the practice relating to certificates in informal apprenticeship is mixed. Certificates are provided in some countries, for example, in Ghana (79 per cent), Malawi (44.3 per cent) and Tunisia (41.7 per cent). In Ghana, national associations in some trades organize their own end-of-apprenticeship assessments. Therefore, some of the apprentices receive a certificate from trade associations after assessments organized by craftspeople from the association, such as the Hairdresser’s Trade Association (ILO 2015b). Formal certificates from the National Vocational Training

Institute (NVTI) are also available, if apprentices sit the national trade test (Branka 2016; Schraven et al. 2013, 19). However, the data also reveals that informal apprenticeships in a number of countries end without the awarding of a certificate, as is the case in Tanzania, Egypt and in Bangladesh.

It is important to note that informal apprenticeship certificates usually have a limited geographic reach, are not recognized by the national formal system, and have value only within the local area where the MC is known. Outside of this area, the certificate might not be recognized at all. Linking informal apprenticeship certificates to national qualification systems and players with a wider geographical reach provides possible avenues for upgrading.

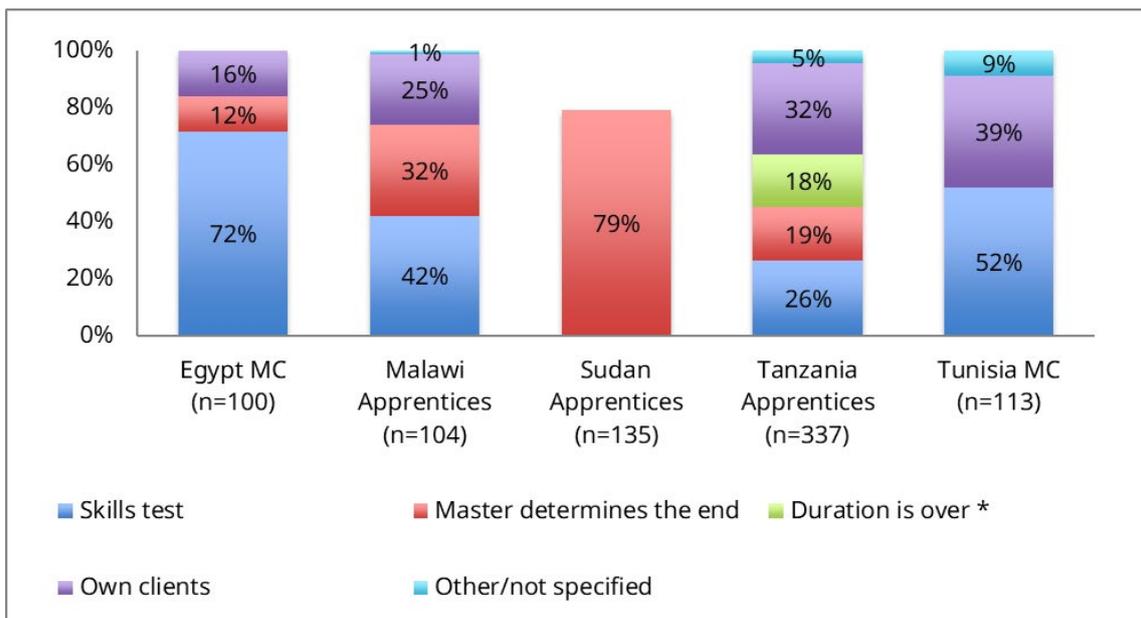
The surveys did not provide insights on the reasons why certificates are common in one country and not in another, nor why the assumed benefits – higher levels of employability and stronger incentives for apprentices to finish their apprenticeship – have seemingly not led to adaptations in the practice in all of the countries surveyed.

Skills assessments in informal apprenticeship

Skills assessments are a tool to track training progress, verify if learning outcomes have been achieved, provide access to a certificate, and can also be used to determine the end of the apprenticeship. Figure 22 shows that skills assessments are common and also indicates that these often determine the duration of an informal apprenticeship.

In Egypt, Tunisia and Malawi, the largest group of MCs in the sample uses skills assessments to determine the end of the apprenticeship. In Sudan, it is solely the MC who determines when an apprenticeship ends, without a dedicated assessment of the apprentice’s skills. Apprenticeships end when apprentices have their own clients in Tanzania and Tunisia (32 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively), but only in Tanzania does the agreed training duration determine the end of the apprenticeship, for roughly one in five apprentices.

► **Figure 22: How do you know the apprenticeship is over?**



* This response was not a provided option in Sudan.

When comparing results for skills assessments and certificates, the case of Egypt shows that both phenomena do not seem to be linked. In Malawi and Tunisia, however, the share of MCs using skills assessments (42 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively) is similar to the share of apprentices receiving certificates (44.3 per cent and 41.7 per cent), which seems to indicate that MCs who assess skills also provide certificates.

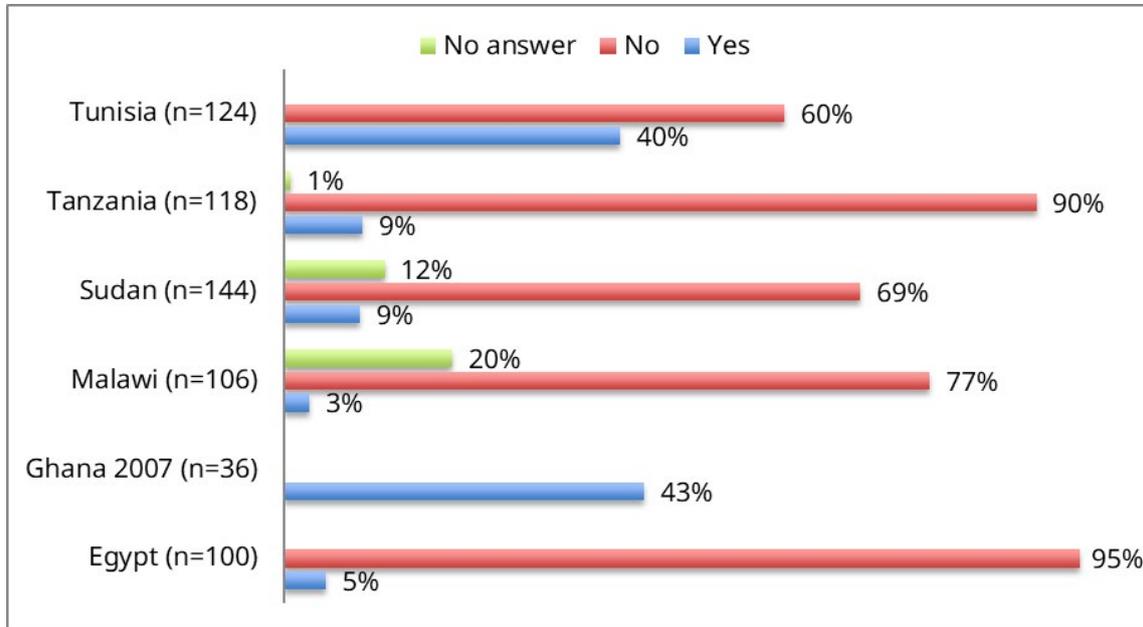
Participation in formal assessments through recognition of prior learning

Participation in formal assessments to receive formally recognized certificates, often referred to as recognition of prior learning (RPL), can provide an important avenue to link informal with formal training systems, and provide pathways to formal employment for apprentices. Formal assessments can include trade tests offered by training providers or industry bodies that are open to all interested candidates, assessments conducted by local or national level trade or crafts associations, or be part of national RPL systems. Trade tests were most common in the countries covered at the time of the survey.

The data in figure 23 shows, however, that the majority, in some cases the vast majority, of informal apprentices does not participate in formal assessments and certification schemes, conducted by third parties. In Malawi and Egypt, the share of apprentices participating in formal skills assessments is particularly low, 3 and 5 per cent, respectively. It is surprising that 9 per cent of MCs in Tanzania and Sudan seem to participate in formal assessments and certification schemes, while only 2 per cent of MCs provide certificates (data missing for Sudan). The only two countries with relatively high shares of apprentices benefiting from formal assessments or certification schemes are Tunisia (40 per cent) and Ghana (43 per cent). In Ghana, several well-organized trade associations offer structured end-of-apprenticeship exams that enjoy popularity, with some associations offering bridging courses to allow informal apprentices to pass national exams successfully (Branka 2016; ILO 2015b).

The data also clearly shows that informal apprentice participation in existing formal trade tests is not very common throughout the countries. Reasons include the costs involved for taking the tests and the fact that the trade tests are usually designed for those that have participated in formal training. Informal apprentices thus are likely to lack the required theoretical foundation. What is more, formal assessments also often have to be presented in English or French, which in some cases poses an additional barrier for apprentices.

While in many contexts, skills assessments and/or certificates for apprentices upon completion are a common practice, skills recognition mainly remains limited to the local area, and participation in formal assessment and certification is minimal in most countries, except Tunisia and Ghana. The effectiveness of informal apprenticeship could certainly be improved if skills recognition were extended to national levels and institutions.

► **Figure 23: Participation of apprentices in formal assessments and certification schemes**

3.4 Labour market outcomes: Employment status, transition and economic returns

Employability and employment status of former apprentices

Employment outcomes are certainly the key indicator for the effectiveness of an informal apprenticeship system in terms of labour market insertion. In the absence of tracer study data, this section uses proxy questions included in the surveys, as well as quoting data from other studies. Figure 24 data shows that between 67 per cent and 82 per cent of interviewed MCs in Malawi and Tunisia, respectively, had found a job immediately after their apprenticeship training. The percentage for skilled workers in Tunisia is similarly high at 74 per cent.

Interviewing the current workforce on how fast they transitioned from apprenticeship training to employment is based on a positive selection. A more complete picture on transitions was obtained by asking MCs about the whereabouts of their apprentices who completed the apprenticeship during the past two years.

► **Figure 24: After your apprenticeship, how much time did it take you to find work?**

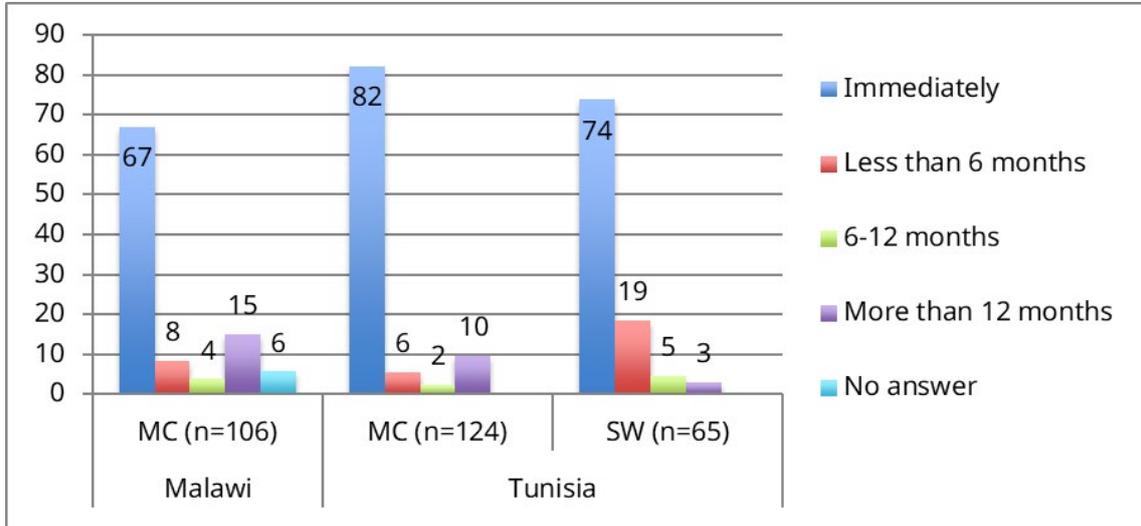
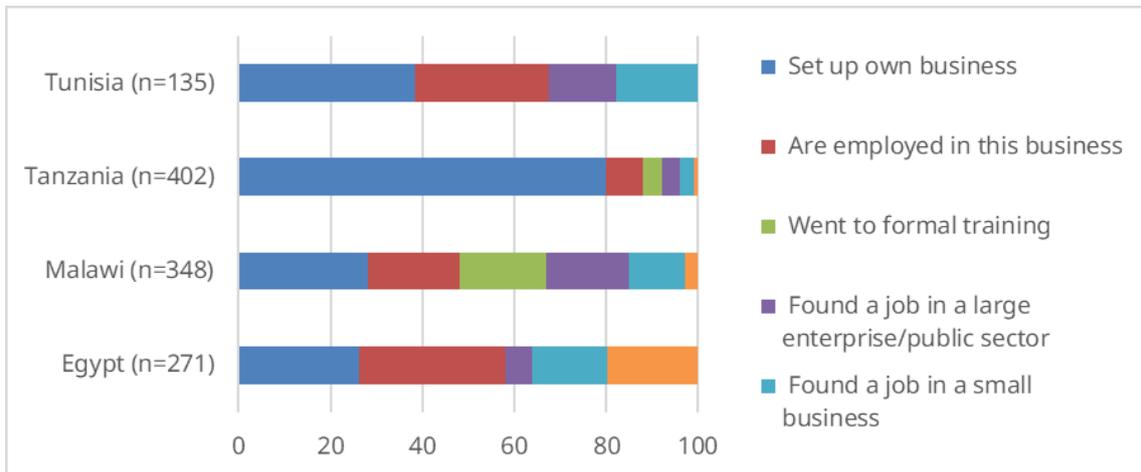


Figure 25 shows that in all countries the majority, if not the vast majority of apprentices, have either set up their own business or are employed in the business where they learned the trade. Others have found a job in another small enterprise. In Tanzania, the rate of those who set up their own business is surprisingly high and might also imply that some of these are “survivalist enterprises” rather than business start-ups by choice if former apprentices were unable to find another job. Yet there is no further data from these studies to substantiate this.

► **Figure 25: Employment outcomes of apprentices after graduation**



Regarding transitions to formality, the surveys confirm that in all countries, some of the apprentices have found employment in large or public sector enterprises, confirming that transitions to formal employment are indeed possible (Hofmann and Okolo 2013). Eighteen per cent in Malawi, 15 per cent in Tunisia, 6 per cent in Egypt and 4 per cent in Tanzania successfully transitioned to formal employment, which is remarkable given the highly informal context and limited job opportunities in the formal sector. A World Bank study analysing labour force survey data in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa also confirms that the formal sector employs graduates of informal apprenticeship (Adams et al. 2013). Some informal apprenticeship graduates also opted to continue learning and enrolled in formal training after finishing informal

apprenticeships, e.g. in Malawi (19 per cent) and in Tunisia (4 per cent), further improving their chances to obtain formal employment thereafter.

The case of Malawi is interesting to assess if apprenticeship certificates, awarded by MCs only, increase the chances of apprentices to obtain formal employment. Out of the 16 workshops (n=106) that report that apprentices were hired in large or public sector enterprises after graduation, 11 provided certificates (or reference letters) at the end. When looking at all apprentices who graduated from workshops that provide certificates or reference letters, 31 per cent of apprentices obtained formal employment afterwards. By contrast, only 5 per cent of apprentices who graduated from workshops that do not provide certificates, obtained formal employment. This clearly indicates that certificates increase the likelihood that apprentices transition to formality, despite the fact that the certificates provided are in most cases not formally recognized.

In Egypt, the share of workshops that provide for formal assessment and certification schemes matches the share of workshops that have seen apprentices obtain formal employment. This further confirms the positive link between certification – whether formally recognized or not – and chances for formal employment.

Matching career aspirations

Employment outcomes – independent of whether they are formal, informal or self-employment – also need to be measured against apprentice aspirations, and whether informal apprenticeship is able to meet these. While available results do not allow the comparison of aspirations with actual outcomes, they can at least confirm that starting a business is a desirable outcome for many apprentices, a finding confirmed also by Alla-Mensah and McGrath (2021). In Zambia, 44.8 per cent of apprentices aspired to start their own business and in Malawi around 50 per cent. These figures are in contrast to the MC reports that indicated only 28 per cent of the apprentices actually started their businesses two years after graduating. In Ghana, around a third of the apprentices surveyed planned to start up their business immediately after graduating, and another third wanted to do so 2–5 years later (Breyer 2007, 21). In Zambia, 13.8 per cent wanted to remain in the same business and in Ghana, 14.5 per cent aspired to stay in the training business, which roughly matches results in other countries (Ryan 2012, 44).

In sum, the data reflects that graduate apprentices are indeed employable: the vast majority of them find a job or start their own business, whether by deliberate choice or not, and very few end up still looking for a job.

Economic returns

People investing in skills development expect to increase their income or earnings. Comparisons of wages of skilled workers in Tanzania have shown that workers with an informal apprenticeship earn more than those without (e.g. day-wage labourer). Table 11 on weekly income of skilled workers surveyed in Tanzania also shows that the combination of informal apprenticeship with other training measures (Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) for formal training, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for non-formal training) yields the best results in terms of wages.

► **Table 11: Weekly income of skilled workers, Tanzania (in Tanzanian shillings)**

Sector	Average Total	Skilled worker (n)	Informal apprenticeship	Formal training	Non-formal training	Informal apprenticeship + formal/non-formal training
Car mechanics	20 120	29	20 891	14 500	–	22 500
Carpentry/Joinery	18 242	33	19 900	21 400	12 125	–
Electrical service	19 157	19	21 166	11 167	21 250	28 333
Local arts	15 056	9	12 583	–	20 000	–
Plumbing	22 000	5	15 000	21 166	–	30 000
Tailoring	18 130	23	15 117	23 333	25 000	–
Total	18 745	n=118	18 534	17 476	17 176	26 667

Source: Nübler et al. 2009.

A World Bank study (Hardy et al. 2019) used labour force survey data in five African countries to assess the effect of different types of skills training on earnings in the formal and informal economy and draws a more complex picture. In Tanzania, it finds that wage/formal workers indeed have positive returns of informal apprenticeship in terms of earnings from work, yet that non-wage/informal workers do not. In Rwanda, effects are positive for informal workers, but not for formal workers. In Nigeria, no significant effects were measurable, and in Ghana, effects of informal apprenticeship on wage/formal workers were negative at medium and higher levels of education, and positive at lower levels of education. (Adams et al. 2013, table 3A.2). A randomized impact assessment in Ghana concluded that characteristics of the master craftsperson (experience and income) had significant effects on the level of earnings of graduate apprentices (Hardy et al. 2019), which underlines the need to invest in skills of trainers.

Nonetheless, more research including tracer studies and randomized impact assessments needs to be undertaken across countries in order to draw accurate conclusions, making economic returns and career trajectories a strong future research area.

Summary and conclusions

Informal apprenticeship systems prove effective in a number of respects, and less so in others. Differences between countries are notable, which underlines once again the importance of further research and understanding of the way local norms and traditions shape the mechanisms and outcomes of apprenticeship systems in the informal economy.

Training quality is dependent to a large extent on the skills and training capacity of MCs. The content of training mainly focuses on technical skills and to varying degrees on theory knowledge and machine maintenance, while OSH, business and core skills are covered only sporadically. Training processes display a good level of flexibility, yet effective apprenticeships finally depend on the pedagogical skills of MCs and other staff involved in training. While MCs tend to apply various strategies to acquire new skills through business networks, observation, and recruiting new staff – and though apprentices might be a source of innovative capacity – very few MCs have participated in skills upgrading courses. This is evidence of both the limited availability of these courses and the associated costs and opportunity costs for MCs and apprentices. Improving access to skills upgrading courses, in particular for MCs, is an important intervention to increase the effectiveness of informal apprenticeship.

Dropout rates range between 20 and 30 per cent among the better performing systems and between 30 up to 45 per cent among countries with less effective systems. These numbers apply to both formal and informal apprenticeship. Reasons for dropout are a mix of individual and external factors. To help reduce

dropout and strengthen effectiveness of the system, a combination of improved career guidance and counselling services is needed in the community, and the provision of completion certificates could serve as an incentive. Conflict resolution mechanisms or short-term financial support could also be offered by, for example, a local industry or business association.

Skills of apprentices who complete an informal apprenticeship should be recognized in the local community. MCs determine the end of apprenticeship, either through skills tests, their own judgement, whether apprentices start having their own clients, or because the agreed duration has ended. Only two countries (Ghana and Tunisia) significantly use both end-of-apprenticeship certificates and third-party assessment or certification schemes – despite the fact that trade tests exist in most countries. RPL schemes, however, which are better adapted to the needs of informal economy workers have still not been well established at the time of the studies. In Malawi, a good number of apprentices also receive informal certificates from their MCs.

Analysis of transitions to employment and economic returns shows that most apprentices find employment, with very few being out of work, and some even manage to obtain formal employment. Business start-ups are common and seem to match with apprentices' aspirations to a great extent. Data for Malawi shows that certificates (even though only provided by MCs) significantly increase the likelihood of apprentices transitioning to formal employment. One of the surveys provided evidence for economic returns to informal apprenticeship in terms of earnings, yet findings from a World Bank analysis of labour force data only partly confirms this (Hardy et al. 2019).

This chapter showed some of the complex inter-relations within informal apprenticeship systems in order to assess their effectiveness to deliver employable, relevant and quality skills to young people in the informal economy – and for transitions to formality. The analysis shows that despite significant shortcomings and barriers, the system provides a range of choices for many young workers and offers a solid pathway into employment, including informal, formal or self-employment.

▶ 4 Country case studies

This chapter reviews policies and programmes put in place in the last ten to fifteen years to improve apprenticeship in the informal economy, either by: i) introducing a dual type of apprenticeship that is complementing work-based learning of apprentices with off-the-job learning; ii) improving technical, vocational and pedagogical skills of MCs; iii) introducing end-of-apprenticeship exams for apprentices at agreed skills standards; or iv) strengthening apprenticeship contracts and oversight by business associations, or by a mix of several of these. The countries covered included Benin, Niger and Tanzania and information was based on case studies published separately (Savadogo 2021a; Savadogo 2021b; Kirsch and Okal 2021).

4.1 Upgrading informal apprenticeship systems in Benin

In Benin, access to TVET is conditional on finishing the second year of secondary school, equivalent to completing nine years of education. However, among children aged 5 to 17 years, the median years in education is four. As a result, only 5 per cent of secondary age youth are in TVET, totalling around 50,000 young people. For those not in TVET or formal schooling, the informal economy offers skills development opportunities. It is estimated that around 300,000 young people participate in apprenticeships in the informal economy (PAFPAA 2017).

Craftspersons in Benin are represented at national level by the National Confederation of Artisans in Benin (CNAB), which has divisions (groups) at the level of department and municipality. In addition, there is the Benin Union of Interdepartmental Chambers of Trade (UCIMB) at national level, and the departmental chambers of trade at departmental level.

In 2001, the Government of Benin adopted a policy and guidance document on TVET in which the modernization of traditional apprenticeship features as a priority area for action. As part of this, two types of qualifications were introduced to recognize the skills acquired through traditional/informal apprenticeship, with a view to replacing traditional graduation ceremonies held in the country. These are the trade qualification certificate (CQM) and vocational training certificate (CQP).

The CQM is awarded to apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship in an enterprise (without any obligation to go to a formal training centre) and passed the examination organized by the ministry in charge of technical and vocational training. Candidates for the CQM are not obliged to take complementary off-the-job courses. Apprentices are enrolled in the CQM and end-of-apprenticeship exams by their employer. Tests comprise practical and oral elements.

The CQP is awarded to apprentices who have finished primary education, completed a three-year dual apprenticeship in an enterprise and at a training centre, and passed the examination organized by the ministry in charge of technical and vocational training. In the dual system, apprentices preparing for the CQP must take additional theoretical and practical courses at a vocational training centre. Apprentices are enrolled for the certificate by the training centre. There are practical and written tests.

The organization of the CQM examination is entrusted to a public professional committee, operating at the level of the municipality, composed of: i) representatives of the ministries responsible for vocational training (Chair), crafts, and rural development; ii) the mayor of the municipality (Vice-Chair); and iii) craftsperson representatives. Professional trade bodies, namely CNAB and its divisions (groups) at the level of department and municipality, as well as UCIMB, are heavily involved in running the CQP and CQM, in collaboration with government bodies (the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DETFP), Craft Trade Support Department (DAMA), and Examination and Competition Department (DEC)). They contribute by raising awareness among stakeholders, resolving disputes, selecting enterprises, enrolling apprentices,

developing curricula, delivering training in enterprises and at training centres, monitoring apprentices in enterprises and at training centres, and selecting examination subjects, among other things.

The first apprentices to enrol in the dual system in 2003 obtained their CQP in 2005. Between 2005 and 2018, the CQP was offered in 13 trades. While the CQP was awarded to eligible apprentices (a small number), the other apprentices continued to receive recognition of their qualifications through the traditional apprenticeship completion examinations (EFAT), organized by local crafts associations (Davodoun 2011). The CQM was first awarded in October 2013, on a trial basis in 29 municipalities in departments with experience in organizing the EFAT. Between 2013 and 2018, the CQM was offered in around 60 trades out of the 311 listed in the Benin craft trades register. The CQM replaces the EFAT across the whole country.

► **Table 12: Number of apprentices receiving CQM and CQPs**

Session (year)	Passed CQM	Passed CQP
2003		
2004		
2005		293
2006		301
2007		303
2008		474
2009		994
2010		734
2011		853
2012		682
2013	1 148	797
2014	5 177	853
2015	6 908	767
2016	3 795	Unknown
2017	Unknown	Unknown
2018	9 135	1 402
Total	25 015	8 453

Source: DETFP 2018, available at: <http://cnab2017.org/index.php/statistiques-des-apprenants-admis-aux-cqp-cqm>.

The CQM is awarded to more women (70 per cent on average between 2013 and 2018) than men, which reflects the gender distribution in the craft sector in Benin.

Despite the fact that the CQP and CQM are being organized and awarded, traditional leaving ceremonies for apprentices still take place at the end of the apprenticeship. However, the scope of employers' requirements has significantly decreased.

A training fund known as the Development Fund for In-service Training and Apprenticeship (FODEFCA) was set up to finance in-service vocational training for workers. The FODEFCA, despite the existence of an apprenticeship tax paid by formal enterprises, is topped up by a subsidy from the public treasury. Part of this subsidy is allocated to financing training for those in the traditional apprenticeship system, notably employers (advanced training) and apprentices (dual/CQP training). FODEFCA finances 90 per cent of the training costs at training centres (with the apprentice, their employer or guardian, or technical and financial partners providing the remaining 10 per cent). FODEFCA does not contribute to financing the CQM examinations. This is funded from the public budget allocated to the Examination and Competition Department (DEC) within the ministry responsible for vocational training, and from apprentices' contributions, namely the registration fees.

While both systems constitute laudable advancements to upgrade informal apprenticeship, the following areas for improvement have been identified (Savadogo 2021a; ILO 2020):

- The system needs to be expanded to cover all 310 trades of the Benin craft trades register. Currently, the CQP only covers 13 and the CQM fewer than 100. This requires the training of a sufficient number of methodology experts across all departments nationwide. In addition to these methodology experts, trainers in all crafts and trades need to be trained in sufficient numbers.
- The FODEFCA funding available to support the CQP fluctuates considerably, given it passes through the public treasury, posing challenges to the sustainability of the system. Funding for the CQM and its expansion also needs to be availed timely and regularly for DEC.
- MCs cannot have their own skills recognized. As a result, some employers still refuse to enrol their apprentices for the CQP or the CQM, as they fear that their apprentices will surpass them. It is therefore important to introduce a mechanism for validating and recognizing the skills of employers.
- Post-apprenticeship support to apprentices including employment services and entrepreneurship support, as well as tracing of graduates should be strengthened.
- The CQM is more popular among craftspeople, since the conditions for the CQP – namely educational level (completing primary education), attendance at a (dual) training centre, preparation for and successful completion of an admission test, and the irregular financing of the FODEFCA – constitute obstacles. If these conditions are not reviewed or improved, there is a risk that the CQP will lose its candidates.
- UCIMB demands responsibility for organizing the CQP and CQM examinations in accordance with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) community code on crafts. Dialogue between this body and the ministry responsible for training should make it possible to resolve the matter of the transfer of powers. Moreover, the participation of social partners under the CQP needs to be ensured throughout the process.
- Since the two qualifications were first awarded, the CQP in 2005 and the CQM in 2013, no tracer studies have been undertaken to assess whether the introduction of the two qualifications has improved quality, employability and services within the trades concerned.

4.2 Upgrading informal apprenticeship systems in Niger

The education system in Niger has one of the lowest enrolment rates in Africa. The majority of young people outside the education system learn trades in enterprises in the craft sector, which in Niger comprise at least 900,000 workers (Niger 2017a) in 206 trades (Niger crafts trade register). Assuming that all of them have one apprentice, there would be 900,000 apprentices, while the formal vocational and technical training system has fewer than 30,000 students (Niger 2017b).

Craftspersons in Niger are represented by the National Federation of Artisans in Niger (FNAN), which is organized into regional federations of artisans. The FNAN is in charge of selecting enterprises and registering apprentices eligible for training. The Chamber of Craft Trades of Niger (CMANI) contributes to developing curricula, training apprentices in enterprises and at training centres, and organizing advanced training for craftspersons.

In contrast to Benin or Togo, where apprenticeship in the informal economy is an institution that is recognized and valued by the parents of apprentices as a way to prepare for entry into the labour force, apprenticeships in Niger have a stronger connotation of moral upbringing and are considered to be less structured. Agreements only very loosely set out their terms and conditions, including their duration which is at the discretion of the MC. There are no graduation ceremonies or apprenticeship leaving certificates (Hofmann and Savadogo 2021 and ILO 2020a).

The sectoral policy on TVET adopted in 2006, however, recognizes the important role of traditional apprenticeship as a way for young people in Niger to gain skills and proposes modernizing the system. This reform

involves setting up training support units (such as the Nigetech vocational training programme (ILO 2011)), supported through private initiatives, and units created by the technical ministries and local authorities; updating and adapting the legal framework for apprenticeship; creating apprenticeship monitoring tools; capitalizing on experience and the use of national languages; setting up a qualification system suited to requirements and potential; training trainers specifically for apprenticeship; and introducing incentives to encourage employers to accept apprentices. The reform also planned to support professional bodies involved in apprenticeship in technical, educational and financial terms, by supporting them in creating training materials and advocating for and promoting their trades to young people.

The reform also created the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund (FAFPA), funded through a training levy, and a state subsidy. The fund was meant to cover the training of apprentices and apprenticeship instructors.

From 2007–10, a pilot dual apprenticeship programme was introduced in ten trades: modern jewellery, two-stroke mechanics, audio-visual maintenance, bricklaying, sanitary plumbing, electrics for construction, truck mechanics, leather work, electrical installation and forging/foundry work. From 2012 on, other projects by international development agencies (in Switzerland and Luxembourg) continued to support upgrading apprenticeships in the informal economy. In 2013, national regulations introduced the National Steering Committee for Vocational Training through Apprenticeship, and regional committees, as tripartite bodies for consultation, guidance and coordination regarding all actions taken in relation to vocational training through apprenticeship in Niger. Challenges, however, persisted due to poor engagement by professional bodies who preferred that enterprises remunerated apprentices, and a lack of resources in the training fund. In 2018, the Government passed a decree stipulating that craftspersons who take on apprentices shall receive payment in return, funded through the training levy in Niger, and that apprentices shall receive an allowance, also funded through the training levy in Niger.

Based on the act setting out the fundamental principles of TVET in Niger in 2015, and the demands of professional bodies in November 2018, the Government introduced a qualification system to recognize the skills acquired through informal apprenticeship. This RPL system foresees to offer the award of any of the following qualifications to people who were trained by means of informal apprenticeship: the basic training certificate or AQB, which represents accreditation of one or more qualifying training modules of the trade qualification certificate (CQM), so several AQB's make it possible to obtain the CQM; the vocational training certificate or CQP; the vocational skills certificate or BQP; and the technician certificate or BPT. In 2021, a total of 15,917 candidates (7,799 women) in 12 trades registered for assessments to obtain a CQP. Around 90 per cent of the candidates were successful (Niger–METFP 2021).

The FAFPA finances training for apprentices and master craftspersons. Table 13 shows the number of MCs (2016–2018) and apprentices (2014–2017) whose training has been financed by the FAFPA. It shows that the FAFPA only reaches a very small number of craftspersons and apprentices.

► **Table 13: Master craftsperson and apprentice training funded by FAFPA (2014–2018)**

Year	Master craftspersons trained	Apprentices trained			
		Men	Women	% women	Total
2014	Unknown	1236	1385	52%	2 661
2015	Unknown	2 672	1133	30%	3 805
2016	780	3 056	3 039	50%	6 095
2017	123	1079	747	40%	1826
2018	46	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
TOTAL	949	8 043	6 304	44%	14 387

Source: Savadogo 2021b.

A study conducted in 2017 (Swisscontact Niger 2017) showed that additional training for apprentices and MCs over the previous three years as part of an upgraded apprenticeship (2014, 2015 and 2016) had the following major effects:

- MCs improved the organization of their work and diversified their services, and some became trainers of other craftspersons;
- customers expressed greater appreciation of the quality of services in the concerned enterprises;
- after completion of an upgraded apprenticeship, the majority of apprentices stayed with their employer or switched to another employer;
- apprentices learned to read, write and calculate thanks to an add-on literacy programme; and
- apprentices received support with their share of the training costs from their employers or a technical and financial partner.

The Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training has a Department of Rural Vocational Training and Apprenticeships (DAFPR), which is responsible for managing and implementing the strategy to modernize traditional/informal apprenticeship in collaboration with the professional bodies representing craftspersons. Within the DAFPR, there is the Apprenticeship Development Service.

In addition to subsidizing complementary training for apprentices and MCs, the government has set up Centres de Formation aux Métiers [trade training centres] (CFMs) where young people can learn craft trades and MCs can receive advanced training. The CFMs aim to develop a new generation of craftspersons who achieve a minimum educational standard and learn their trade under more structured conditions than previous generations. CFMs call upon craftspersons to deliver training.

The following main challenges and areas for improvement have been identified:

- Professional bodies representing craftspersons need to be strengthened to actively engage in the implementation of the new regulations (the decrees of November 2018).
- The decrees of November 2018 need to be implemented with respect to payments to craftspersons taking on apprentices, and allowances given to apprentices; the operationalization of the five qualifications (AQB, CQM, CQP, BQP and BPT); and the operationalization of the standardized apprenticeship contract.
- The training fund (FAFPA) requires sustainable funding and topping up through the apprenticeship tax paid by enterprises in the formal sector. In addition, it should be considered if enterprises in the informal sector could also contribute to the FAFPA in order to benefit from it.
- The improved system needs to be extended to a significant number of MCs, distributed across the whole country, and in all 206 trades on the national craft trades register.

- As Niger experiences food crises almost every year, the Government and international development partners need to pay particularly attention to apprenticeships in agricultural trades, as the issues of self-sufficiency, sovereignty and food security constitute major challenges for the country.

4.3 Upgrading informal apprenticeship systems in Tanzania

The Tanzanian Government first recognized the importance of informal education and training in its 1995 Education and Training Policy, which states that non-formal and informal education and training shall be “recognized, promoted, strengthened, coordinated and integrated into the formal education and training system” (para 2.3.9). Until 2011, however, implementation of these policy pronouncements was lacking. Whatever training took place, was conducted through informal apprenticeships in individual enterprises and had little to no ties with formal training or recognition (Nübler et al. 2009; Adams et al. 2013). Acknowledging the importance of establishing bridges between informal training and formal employment, the new Education and Training Policy (2014) thus devotes issue 3.3.6 to the establishment of a system of recognition of competencies gained outside formally recognized institutions (Tanzania 2014). Moreover, the latest national strategy for growth and the reduction of poverty (2016–2021) pledges to assess and recognize the skills of 200,000 informal apprentices and workers by 2021 (Tanzania 2014, para. 4.3).

Data from the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS) of Tanzania (Tanzania 2014) confirms that informal apprenticeships are the most common form of skills acquisition followed by formal apprenticeships and on-the-job training in the Tanzanian labour market (Adams et al. 2013). The incidence of people having learned their skills through informal apprenticeships is almost three times as high as for those having had formal training. Formal apprenticeships as well as vocational certificates seem to have no bearing on whether someone will work in the formal or informal economy. The share of people having been formal apprentices in the overall economy is 10.6 per cent compared to 11.7 per cent when looking at people working only in the informal economy. This is similar for those with vocational certificates G1–G3. Despite this surprising finding, informal apprentices are more likely to remain in the informal economy. The incidence of those reporting informal apprenticeship completion at some point in their lives increases from 26.2 per cent to 38.8 per cent when looking only at workers in the informal economy (Tanzania 2014).³ The majority of all apprentices (67.4 per cent) are men and trades display a strong occupational gender segregation in Tanzania’s informal apprenticeship system, with female apprentices almost exclusively pursuing training in tailoring and textiles.

Informal apprenticeships have thus gradually become a recognized part of the TVET system in Tanzania. The responsibility to regulate and provide formal vocational training and to implement policies regarding the upgrading of informal vocational training falls on VETA which operates under the Ministry of Education. As part of its mandate to use the potential of informal apprenticeship to close the national skills gap, VETA, with the support of the ILO, implemented a pilot for the establishment of a system of RPL in 2011.

Between 2011 and 2015, VETA developed five competency-based occupational standards covering occupations with a high incidence of informal apprenticeships, namely: motor mechanics, carpentry and joinery, masonry and bricklaying, food production, and food and beverage services. Another set of occupational standards was developed later between 2015 and 2018 and covered tailoring and sewing, plumbing and pipe fitting, auto body repair, welding and metal fabrication and electrical installations. The baseline requirement to apply for RPL are three to four years of work experience. Based on this, around 40 per cent of interested candidates are rejected before the assessment stage (VETA 2018). Informal apprentices and workers may submit an application (together with a portfolio if applicable), which is evaluated by a VETA-registered assessor. If the application is successful, the assessor guides the candidate in overcoming shortcomings and in preparing for the final assessment. Moreover, he or she seeks the MC’s endorsement of the candidate prior to the assessment and conducts the assessment (VETA 2016).

³ Percentages are reported as subsets of the population that stated having received any training (ca. 12 per cent).

By 2018, 5,282 informal apprentices, who successfully passed the admission stage (60 per cent) had been assessed. The vast majority of these (89 per cent) were men, given the trades selected. Almost 90 per cent passed the assessment resulting in a national vocational award. Before receiving the award, however, successful candidates have to participate in free short-term skills upgrading courses offered during the summer months. These courses aim to supplement practical skills with theoretical knowledge and core skills. While candidates may possess the relevant practical skills to pass the competency-based RPL assessment, they may not have sufficient theoretical knowledge relevant to their occupation. Skills upgrading courses thus allow candidates to bridge identified gaps in knowledge and contribute to quality assurance of awarded certificates. In fact, skills upgrading has become the most attractive part of the RPL system with many applying for an assessment in order to get access to upgrading offers.

Demand for RPL increased rapidly, and the central government pledged to contribute to VETA's budget with an active budget dedicated to RPL. Increasing government funding and involvement has allowed VETA to scale up the initiative, increasing assessment numbers in recent years, while ensuring the sustainability of the intervention.

Despite these successes, upgrading informal apprenticeships remains a challenging task, and the following areas for improvement have been identified:

- To further strengthen sustainability of the RPL system, a small fee for applicants should be considered, in addition to sustained funding from the public budget and VETA.
- On-site assessments involving the respective MC have proven successful, especially in sectors like construction, and improved the efficient use of raw materials. This practice should be extended and used widely in other sectors, too.
- VETA assessors have been seeking MCs' endorsements of all applicants. This has proven beneficial in three ways. First, it led to the identification of an additional source of demand for RPL, with many applications being filed by MCs themselves. Second, it allowed identification of skilled MCs able to support the establishment of RPL by contributing their expertise to assessment design and development. Finally, involving MCs in assessment development as well as offering them the possibility to apply for RPL, ultimately helped to gain the support of the informal networks that govern informal apprenticeships.
- In the absence of vibrant trade and business associations able to cooperate with VETA with regards to standard setting and assessment, VETA's capacities to offer assessment as well as skills upgrading remain constrained. It is essential to continue building capacity among MCs so that they actively support the system, act as multipliers, and ultimately are encouraged to build stronger networks within their trade.

Summary and conclusions

The three country cases describe reforms and policy measures that were all taken to introduce systemic improvements to informal apprenticeship systems. They have been carefully designed taking into account local customs and practices.

The country's reform efforts have primarily focused on improving the effectiveness of apprenticeship in terms of training quality. This was achieved through better access of MCs to skills upgrading courses, including in pedagogical skills, and in some cases also for apprentices. Countries also developed skills standards and implemented end-of-apprenticeship exams, or strengthened skills recognition through RPL, creating stronger incentives for apprentices to complete apprenticeship, and assuring training quality. Decent work concerns, however, have not been fully addressed by all interventions.

All country cases have benefited from a strong partnership with and involvement of MCs and their business and crafts associations in reform processes. The involvement of workers' organizations is less apparent in the policy process to upgrade informal apprenticeship. It would be important to engage them more actively to ensure the voice of apprentices and wage workers in the informal economy is also heard.

What seems to be lacking in all countries is a regular mechanism to track employment outcomes of informal apprentices, and of those who have benefited from improved systems. This absence of empirical evidence makes it difficult to evaluate policy measures taken and further develop them.

Another important challenge faced is the scaling up of measures taken. While approaches are institutionalized and applied by national agencies, the limited number of apprenticeship trades covered, and the financial resources allocated, only allow reaching a small fraction of the large numbers of apprentices and MCs engaged in informal apprenticeship.

▶ 5 Conclusions: Moving informal apprenticeship systems towards quality apprenticeship

5.1 Possible measures to upgrade informal apprenticeship systems as part of inclusive skills development systems

An increasing number of countries – as the three case studies have shown – opt for approaches to build on the existing informal apprenticeship system, utilize its strength to improve outreach, inclusiveness and relevance of skills development system, and address its current weaknesses. Certain informal practices and institutions are being supported, complemented or replaced by formalized institutions that provide third-party monitoring, increased quality assurance, or inject funding and new skills. As long as they leave social enforcement mechanisms intact, the upgrading of informal apprenticeship systems can succeed.

In the light of rapid changes in communication technologies and transport, social media, and urbanization, it is worth considering how apprenticeships might be affected if social structures risk being eroded or if there are new opportunities for collaborative action, better outreach or access to skills services. Several areas for action emerge from the analysis of empirical data presented in this paper, and the case studies presented.

Collaboration and association

The informal apprenticeship system is based on reciprocity, social norms and traditions. Networking, communication and cooperation amongst MCs is a general feature. MCs benefit from strong working relations and networking arrangements with other MCs to exchange and borrow equipment, tools and sometimes labour, as well as cooperating in apprenticeship. Cooperatives, small businesses or trade associations, where they exist, play an essential role in strengthening collaborative action, and improving the quality and reputation of apprenticeship within a trade and locality – as a joint interest. Workers' and employers' organizations can also strengthen collaboration with these businesses or craft associations, apprentices or parents' associations to increase their membership base, help have a voice in the informal economy and support the transition of apprentices and enterprises to formality through the upgrading of informal apprenticeship systems.

Apprenticeship agreements

1. Apprenticeship agreements between the MC and the apprentice are in a majority of cases oral and their content is determined by local practices, reciprocity and trust. However, oral agreements might be subject to misunderstanding or abuse. Written apprenticeship contracts or agreements could therefore increase transparency and commitment, for both parties involved, as they outline responsibilities and rights for both MCs and apprentices. Their transaction costs, however, need to be kept low.
2. In addition, or if MCs and apprentices are illiterate, introducing witnesses to join conclusions of apprenticeship agreements has evolved as a good practice. Witnesses, who could also help prepare written contracts, could come from a local business or crafts association, or any other community organization that is trusted by MCs and apprentices, or a public authority (such as a mayor or national or local police representative) and hence make apprenticeship agreements more reliable. Social partners can play an important role in the development of formats for apprenticeship agreements, their monitoring at local level, and ensure the respect of fundamental principles and rights at work.

In order to address decent work deficits in informal apprenticeship systems, it should be considered which aspects to include and clarify as part of the apprenticeship agreement.

Skills assessments and certification

Apprenticeships in the informal economy in some contexts lacks a clear passage from the status of apprentices to the status of skilled workers. This increases the risk of exploitation and prolonged apprenticeship durations and makes the recognition of apprentices' skills more difficult. An end-of-apprenticeship assessment and awarding of a certificate – ideally recognized at national level – solves this problem and should be included in the apprenticeship agreement. In this case, certificates function as an incentive for apprentices to avoid early dropout and complete apprenticeship. National RPL systems, or systems particularly set up for graduate apprentices through business or crafts associations, can serve the purpose of linking informal apprenticeship to the formal TVET system. The availability of partial qualifications should also be considered.

Maintaining flexibility

Informal apprenticeship systems are generally characterized by high flexibility through the absence of standards and norms regulating every detail of the training. On the downside, this provides room for exploitative practices. However, this flexibility can also work in favour of the apprentice, when, for example, MCs shorten or prolong the training phase based on the learning progress and ability of the apprentice. MCs can also charge fees according to the payment capacity of the apprentice. A possible solution can be an agreed minimum and maximum duration for apprenticeship in a particular trade, and an agreed maximum fee, and a minimum compensation.

Financing upgrading of informal apprenticeship systems

The self-financing nature of informal apprenticeship systems is their clear strength yet this does not prevent abuse in the absence of clearly established and enforced arrangements. For upgrading, the key question is what to finance and how to incentivize MCs to participate and adapt their practice. Some interventions, like in Benin or Tanzania, have deliberately abstained from intervening in financial arrangements between MC and apprentice through fees and compensation, but rather focused on subsidizing skills upgrading of MCs, off-the-job training for apprentices, setting skills standards, monitoring training, end-of-apprenticeship assessments, etc. Others have provided subsidies to enterprises or apprentices, directly affecting selection decisions of MCs/enterprises (like the National Apprenticeship Program in Ghana). Business associations have also been compensated for upgrading courses and other services provided for an improved system. The question of how financing upgrading is best organized remains non-conclusive and should be addressed in further research. Yet it is important to note that the design of incentives can be adjusted to informal apprenticeship by imposing light quality standards while safeguarding flexibility. Existing practices of training funds should be rigorously evaluated and potentially expanded.

Linking informal and formal systems

While informal apprenticeship might not be the first option of choice for all, it remains an important provider of skills. Skills development, education, and employment policies therefore need to recognize and reflect on informal apprenticeship. They can complement formal TVET systems with often high entry requirements, sometimes outdated technology, and relatively high costs. Both systems can gain if pathways between the two systems are strengthened, through end-of-apprenticeship certification and/or recognition of prior learning, collaboration between TVET trainers and MCs, and targeted upskilling courses for MCs and skilled workers in the TVET system that support bridging. Small business and trade associations and cooperatives are important actors to help design and implement bridging courses, such as in Ghana, and can play the role of watchdog and conflict resolution entity to help prevent and resolve conflict and abuse.

Sector skills councils could possibly also play a stronger role. This has the potential to support transitions to formality of both graduate apprentices and enterprises in the informal economy.

Some upgrading interventions have introduced a dual apprenticeship approach, offering complementary off-the-job training to apprentices. Challenges include the geographic vicinity of enterprises to group apprentices, the reluctance of formal training providers to adapt practices and accept informal apprentices, the willingness of MCs to release apprentices at a fixed time, and the high additional cost involved posing important barriers to scaling up to significant numbers.

Better information and career guidance on the benefits of the informal apprenticeship system, and how to prevent its weaknesses, as part of the general career guidance offered in schools, employment services, social partners and through other service providers, should also be considered an important strategy to strengthen transitions and inclusion of informal apprenticeship in countries' skills and lifelong learning system. Guidance services should also extend to apprentices while in training so that dropout can be prevented and possible conflicts addressed.

Quality and content of training

Skills upgrading courses can complement apprenticeships, on a compulsory or voluntary basis for the MCs – and for apprentices depending on the upgrading approach chosen (off-the-job training or not). MCs would benefit from pedagogical skills, and awareness of occupational safety and health, while possessing clear preferences for up-to-date vocational or technical skills and modern technology training. This training offer needs to be available and affordable, ideally in collaboration with business or crafts associations, cooperatives, or trade unions. Digital and distance learning solutions, both on- and offline, have the potential to significantly expand access to learning resources for MCs and apprentices.

Skills standards for apprenticeship could be agreed through small business or trade associations in collaboration with other local actors, together with certain milestones to be achieved during the training process. Social partners have an important role to play in the setting of skills standards. Applying these standards to the monitoring of training progress and to end-of-apprenticeship assessments would greatly increase transparency and comparability between apprenticeships. The registration of MCs as providers of apprenticeships, with certain agreed minimum requirements, for example, in terms of working experience, available tools, equipment, and working space, is also a useful measure to improve quality assurance.

Increasing gender equality

Women tend to be underrepresented in informal apprenticeship and concentrated in a few traditionally female trades. The existing gender segregation is based on socio-cultural beliefs, values and stereotypes, and reflects the situation in the labour market in general.

In order to break gender barriers, young women should be actively encouraged to apply for informal apprenticeships in occupations that interest them, even though these may be perceived as male dominated – and vice versa for men joining traditionally female trades. Existing stereotypes can be altered through role models and change agents, such as female business owners and successful “non-traditional” female and male apprentices.

Career guidance, providing impartial information, and sensitization of MCs and the wider community of apprentices' parents, friends and community leaders, are all crucial to the effectiveness of an apprenticeship system. Career guidance and counselling services should include information on non-discrimination, the fight against violence and harassment, as well as emphasize ways to overcome “gendered” choices.

5.2 Future research needs

The paper has revealed a number of types and topics for future research.

Types of research

More empirical research is required to better understand differences and complementarities between systems, their internal dynamics and grounding in local norms and traditions, including from a sector perspective. For future multi-country research, methodologies should be kept uniform (see, for example, ILO 2012a), and available data from labour force surveys should be better utilized (see “topics for research” below).

Tracer studies would allow tracking transitions of apprentices to employment and the specific challenges they face over time. This information would give more insight into the functioning, effectiveness and shortfalls of informal apprenticeship, in particular in terms of employment outcomes, and in the context of comparing different cohorts and types of training.

The effectiveness of existing interventions to improve the system should be assessed more regularly. Experiences on upgrading informal apprenticeships should be subjected to rigorous research, in particular in light of the upcoming standard-setting discussion on quality apprenticeship at the International Labour Conference in 2022 and 2023.

Furthermore, it is recommended to better integrate informal apprenticeship into regular data collection and monitoring on education and training. National labour force and/or economic surveys should improve distinctions between centre-based TVET, formal apprenticeship, informal apprenticeship, and unstructured on-the-job learning.

Topics for research

A number of topics for further research are listed in the following.

Building on informal institutions for local learning ecosystems. Apprenticeships in the informal economy are a major contributor to local skills development and therefore could become a stronger driver of skills and lifelong learning ecosystems at local level. Research could apply institutional analysis and look at: i) ways to improve interaction between formal and non-formal skills; and ii) business development and employment service providers, and how to strengthen these links. This kind of research should include examining if and how regular exchanges between MCs and other local players can be linked to new technologies and market developments (for communities of practices, see Lave and Wenger 1991). Target partners could be research institutions, and large enterprises that supply or source from local markets. The research would assess the specifics of how a better integration of informal apprenticeship within learning networks might improve the performance of institutions involved, and thereby contribute to better learning, employment and decent work outcomes for those involved.

Assessing policy measures, in particular country contexts, to stabilize informal practices and support upgrading. Research could focus, for example, on the following six proposed areas concerning informal apprenticeship systems:

- 1. Certificates and their value:** Research could further explore the use and importance of certificates in informal apprenticeship systems for skills recognition, employability, and transitions to formality. This could include: i) formal versus non-formal certificates (provided by MCs only, or by craft associations); and ii) identifying the effects that the certification of MC skills, including through RPL, might have on business performance or training quality.

2. **Compensation and social protection:** Research could assess ways to: i) determine the minimum level of compensation needed to cover apprentice basic living costs; and ii) cover the main financial risks that apprentices face during apprenticeship, such as health-related costs or liability for broken tools. National, local or community-level insurance schemes could be assessed for their applicability to apprenticeships, strengthening already existing (informal) mutual support mechanisms and expanding access to those currently not covered.
3. **Financial incentives and returns:** Some studies seem to indicate that financial returns of informal apprenticeship are small or non-existent. More research is needed to compare this criterion between apprentices from improved systems and those going through informal apprenticeship, where participants do not benefit from any public support. Better understanding of why MCs take on apprentices in the first place would also be useful. Another important research need is to identify the types of financial support that would prove the most effective to: i) improve training; ii) secure the best employment placement outcomes; and iii) allow for the widest possible outreach to and recruitment of apprentices. The objective of outreach might also include: i) tying subsidies for skills upgrading of MCs to registering apprentices; ii) financing skills assessments of both MCs and apprentices; iii) awarding qualifications (RPL); iv) funding off-the-job training of apprentices (possibly also in blocks rather than on a regular basis); and v) subsidizing business associations to improve oversight and offer insurance schemes, etc.
4. **Dropout:** Research needs to better assess the level of dropout in informal apprenticeship systems compared to other skills development systems. It should: i) explore the reasons for dropout; ii) assess measures to improve pre-apprenticeship guidance and vocational support during apprenticeship; and iii) better prevent dropout by strengthening incentives for completion.
5. **Conflict resolution:** Conflict resolution is crucial to keeping apprentices and MCs on a successful track to reach the full duration of an apprenticeship period. Identifying the mechanisms which are in place, or are needed to prevent and resolve conflicts, is fundamental to an effective informal apprenticeship system. As well as identifying criteria and mechanisms for conflict resolution, research should establish how these could be strengthened and sustained.
6. **Gender equality:** More research into what makes women take up typically male-dominated occupations, and vice versa, would help to promote gender equality and address occupational segregation. This should include: i) identifying measures to enhance gender equality, such as awareness raising of success stories and the effective use of role models; and ii) highlighting how women and men might overcome socio-cultural beliefs and norms that often act as barriers to the choice of trades. Research could also look into differences in pay, countering violence and harassment at work, and promoting successful approaches to creating inclusive and gender-responsive learning environments.

Analysing employment outcomes and transitions. More research should look at employment outcomes of different national skills development pathways, including formal and non-formal TVET, apprenticeships in the formal and informal economy, and upgraded informal apprenticeships. Elements to assess this include transition times, status of employment, formality of employment, job satisfaction and income levels. Longitudinal studies could also look at career trajectories of former apprentices and how they compare to learners with different training backgrounds. Given that this paper found that transitions from school to informal apprenticeship are rather lengthy, it would be interesting to better understand the underlying reasons.

Fostering innovation, skill needs and structural transformation. A final set of research questions should apply a dynamic development perspective and look at the innovation potential of apprenticeships in the informal economy. This would broaden our understanding of how a learning and collaborative culture – established within businesses and local economies and encouraged through apprenticeship – could be better used for local economic development. Innovation in small workshops and firms in the informal economy may be critical for local development, diversification and structural transformation of economies. Sectoral and value chain perspectives should be examined to better identify MC skill needs and clarify how different skills, attitudes and mindsets support innovation. The findings of such research would contribute invaluable insights into how informal apprenticeship systems can link local communities to wider economic value systems as a leverage for a dynamic sustainable development process.

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