

## **DISTRIBUTION OF THE INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Human resource development, human capital development and manpower development are all major economic and education concepts studied by educational economist, educational planners and educational managers. The informal apprenticeship scheme is an exercise designed specifically to promote human capital development, manpower development and economic empowerment of the people. This study examined the management of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used in this study, the study was carried out on 20 different trades, 779 respondents (395 masters and 384 apprentices) in 21 Local Government Areas of the State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Test-Retest method and the coefficient was determined using Pearson Correlation at 0.79. The results of the study revealed that majority of masters and apprentices have some form of formal education, also gender distribution existing amongst members of the scheme shows that more males and females are participants of the scheme. Additionally, it was discovered that majority of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme usually obtain their funding through personal means and flexible financing, while funding through government assistance and loans are rare. In terms of management techniques, it was exposed that real jobs are used in specific trades to train apprentices and the progress of apprentices are monitored by masters on a

**regular basis. Based on these findings it was recommended that more effort is required to strengthen and grow the scheme in Nigeria.**

**Keywords:** management, techniques, informal, masters & apprenticeship

## **Introduction**

In recent times, the apprenticeship scheme has appeared to be the most practical and constructive educational tool for addressing unemployment issues in both developing and developed countries of the world. This is based on its ability to provide on-the-job training, skill acquisition and experience to individuals who otherwise would be redundant. These skills once acquired can be immediately transformed into setting up income generating activities that would make graduates of the apprenticeship scheme to become employers of labour or more employable. It is a non-formal educational means of providing practical training to both youths who are not academically inclined towards the formal education system and those who are inclined to classroom based instruction but also possess a natural vocational proclivity. The scheme has an added advantage of contributing massively to the informal sector as a source of livelihood, economically worthwhile venture and the provision of essential manpower for the society (Asodike, 2005).

Apprenticeship scheme refers to a system of learning skills of trade for a set period of time under the tutelage of an expert or master craftsmen/women, on a contractual agreement reached upon by the master craftsman/woman and apprentice (inexperienced worker). This method of learning or training involves a blend of preparation, teaching, repetition, rehearsal and drill, in a more organized system it also involves learning the theoretical aspects of a highly skilled enterprises. This includes more than 50 different trades such as carpentry, plumbing, welding, barbing, hair making, tailoring, pedicure, manicure, auto-mechanics, auto-electrical, phone repair among others, which are common in the informal economy of developing countries (Salazar, 2008).

The yardstick to measure the failure or success of the informal apprenticeship scheme is hinged on its marketability and the ability of graduates to knowledgably apply the skills acquired. These are hampered by socio-economic factors, cultural impediments, poor instructional content, training methods, ignorance of the craft master's needs and values, occupational skills and poor conduct of participants which contributes in creating an unhealthy relationship between masters and apprentices. Which ultimately results in the production of unsatisfactory, wasteful and unproductive graduates of the informal apprenticeship scheme. Additionally, given the fact that apprenticeship programme is perceived by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education as an essential ingredient for human resource development (FRN, 2004). There is a need to investigate the distribution, structure, composition and nature of the informal apprenticeship scheme as a tool for lowering unemployment, reduce the gap between white collar jobs and the local artisan industries.

These were the issues bothering the researcher in this study, and therefore formed the aim of the study. The study is expected to provide a robust overview of the scheme in terms of types of trade, educational qualification, graduate certificate, registration with the government among others.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective was to assess the upgrade measures adopted in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State. The study is specifically designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Categorize the types of trades within the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- 2) Identify the profile of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- 3) Examine the duration of training in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- 4) Ascertain the role of government in the operation of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

- 1) What are the types of informal apprenticeship scheme trades in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- 2) What is the profile of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- 3) What is the duration of training across the various trades in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- 4) What is the role of government in the operation of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria?

### **Methodology**

The survey design was used for the purpose of this research, since it entails the collection of data from a sample drawn from a given population in its unchanged natural environment. The study population for this research consisted of master craftsmen/women and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme in 55 different trades in Rivers State of Nigeria. These trades include; plumbing, barbing, furniture making, welding, generator repairing, electric repairs, painting, carpentry, GSM repairing, tailoring, auto-mechanics, auto-electrician, paint making, catering, block moulding, decorating, pedicure, manicure, hairdressing among others. At the time of this study, there was a total of 47,184 made up of 37,820 masters and 9,364 apprentices in the informal apprenticeship schemes in Rivers State, Nigeria (NDE Report, 2016). Through the use of Taro Yamane sampling technique the sample size of 395 masters and 384 apprentices which constituted the sample of the study became necessary. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was a fixed response questionnaire, titled "Management of the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme Questionnaire (MIASQ)".

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was designed to cover only the informal apprenticeship enterprises operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research has been delimited to this State in Nigeria and the various Local Governments within this State. The research has been structured to determine the distribution of masters and apprentices within the informal apprenticeship system, the financial

methods, management strategies, development practices, rules applied and the challenges plaguing the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State.

### Literature Review

#### *Distribution of the Informal Apprenticeship System*

In most developing countries, the informal apprenticeship system plays an important role in the areas of skills transfer, knowledge acquisition, manpower development and economic empowerment. This can be attested to by the fact that, it accounts for about 85% of skills training and transfer, it contributes to income generation, reduces unemployment, increases revenue of an enterprise and contributes significantly to the GDP of the nation. Thus, the scheme is an efficient, cost effective and flexible means of skills transfer and absorbing a larger number of youths into economically worthwhile ventures (National Directorate of Employment Annual Report, 2016).

Written contractual agreements and unwritten agreements tend to always indicate the obligation of both parties involved in the training as shown on figure 2. Nonetheless, written agreements are usually finalized with the signature of the master, the parents or sponsors, and a witness to the agreement. Additionally, as shown on figure 2 training services provided by the master craftsman of the informal apprenticeship training agreement may include other essential items such as: training duration, method of training, provision of training materials, rules governing the scheme, amount of allowance to be given to apprentices either during the training or at the end of the training programme or if the apprentice will be “settled” with a startup capital to begin his/her own trade. While the labour services and training fee provided by the apprentices may include items such as: fees paid by the apprentice or the provision of “drink money”. Nnamani (2011) stated that in Nigeria, written contractual agreements are not prepared in a court of law or under the supervision of lawyer. Thus, whenever there are disputes between masters, apprentices and their sponsors, such misunderstandings are settled between the parties concerned outside the legal court system.

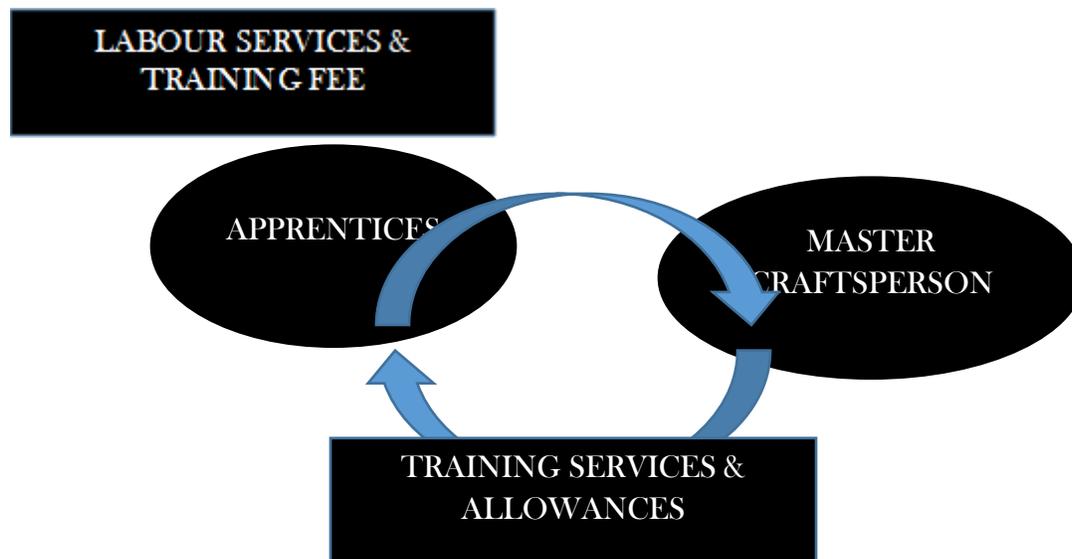


Figure 2: The Informal Apprenticeship Agreement

**Source:** Modified from International Labour Office (2016). Skills for employment policy brief. Upgrading informal apprenticeship scheme.

This non-formal means of education, training, skills transfer and economic empowerment called the informal apprenticeship scheme is a crucial aspect of the informal economy of most developing countries of the world such as Nigeria. The informal economy is the powerhouse of developing economies around the world, based on its absorptive capacity to employ millions of otherwise unemployed people and create an income generating activity. This segment of the economy accounts for an estimated 80% of agricultural jobs and 95% of new jobs in the informal sector of developing countries. As such the role of the informal economy and the contributions of the informal apprenticeship scheme to this segment of the economy cannot be underestimated (Adebisi & Oni, 2012).

### **Mode of Entry into the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme**

In Nigeria, the structure of the informal apprenticeship scheme can be delineated into various characteristic features such as mode of entry or recruitment, age structure, gender, duration of training, educational qualification, training fee structure and labour market experience amongst others. Adebisi and Oni (2012) specified that the mode of entry into the informal apprenticeship scheme tends to differ from trade to trade and location to location. However, the basic process of entry into the informal apprenticeship mostly beings with a decision taken by parents, relatives or sponsors of apprentices to approach a master craftsman/woman for the training of their children or wards in a particular trade. Alternatively, those apprentices who make the entry decisions themselves, are either orphans or children who live alone, married women or adults who are above the age of parental supervision.

Once the entry decision into a particular trade has been taken and the choice of a master craftsman/woman has been made, a contractual agreement is usually arrived at by both parties. Such a contractual agreement could either be a written contractual agreement or an unwritten agreement, however in most cases agreements are unwritten. Unwritten contractual agreements are entered into via spoken words on issues such as the length of the training period, the fees to be paid, and whether a young apprentice will live with the master craftsperson or live with their parents (Nnamani, 2011).

### ***Entry Age and Age Distribution of Participants in the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme***

Rogerson (2010) stressed that another essential aspect of the nature of participants within the informal apprentice scheme is the age range of apprentices and masters of scheme. There is no specified age limits or age restrictions in Nigeria, thus infants as young as four years of age can be found assisting their parents (master crafts men/women) and learning the skills of a family trade. Also adolescents who have freshly graduated from primary school can also be seen in some city centers apprenticed in different trades, which is against child labour laws in most countries including Nigeria. However, such laws are loosely enforced by authorities, as such it is not uncommon to see children being used as apprentices in most of these enterprises. Similarly, youths (young men and ladies) of all ages migrate from the villages to urban centers to be apprenticed in different trades. In some cases, even unemployed adults engage in training

and learning the skills of a trade as a result of the harsh economic realities they are confronted with in the society. It is also common however, to see parents and sponsors apprentice their children at a moderately young age (between fourteen to twenty years old). Hence, the age composition of apprentices within the informal apprenticeship scheme has no fixed entry or exit age, instead individuals of all ages engage in the enterprise.

On the other hand, master crafts persons differ in age depending on the trade and duration of training required to master that particular trade. Nonetheless, master craftsmen/women are usually never below eighteen years of age and rarely above seventy years. This is because it is believed that in order for an individual to be regarded as master craftsman/woman, he/she must be mature and have successfully operated in his/her enterprise for no less than five years. Hence, the age range for both masters and apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme lies between seven to seventy years of age (Udu, 2015).

Since Nigeria, is believed to have one of the largest rates of child labour in the world, it is important to understand the age distribution within the informal apprenticeship scheme. Udu (2015) further stated within the informal apprenticeship scheme demographic data is critical because it provides managers, organizers and administrators with vital information needed for the organization of the scheme in Nigeria. It also provides ample information on the age structure of applicants and ensures that there is a legal backing for children below a certain age who may be found in the system. This is important because if these children are not catered for by the law, most of them are abused by their masters or end up on the streets hawking just to make ends meet. Thus, it is essential that the age structure of apprentices in various trades and enterprises within the informal apprenticeship scheme is clearly understood, so apprentices of various age brackets can be engaged in enterprises rather than roving the streets.

### **Educational Qualification of Participants in the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme**

The demographic structure of the informal apprenticeship scheme can also be categorized in terms of the educational qualification of apprentices and masters within the scheme. The process of entry into the informal apprenticeship scheme does not generally require any form of educational requirement. Since apprentices are recruited irrespective of their educational background and as such individuals who have no particular educational qualification are enrolled into the scheme. The scheme thus consist of both educated and uneducated apprentices learning the skills of different trades. Furthermore, primary school leavers, secondary school graduates or dropouts and graduates or dropout of tertiary institutions and even illiterates can be seen being apprenticed in different enterprises in the country. Likewise, within the informal apprenticeship scheme there is no pegged educational attainment required of masters in the scheme; that is, they are not usually expected to have attained a certain level of educational qualification to be regarded as masters of a trade. The masters of various trades tend not to have acquired any particular educational prerequisite to be regarded suitable to teach the skills of a trade to an apprentice.

Nonetheless, both masters and apprentices of the informal apprenticeship scheme in developing countries such as Nigeria, on average have some level of education. Studies in developing countries have shown that, 23% of apprentices do not have any form of educational

qualification and 9% of masters do not possess any form of educational qualification. This could be attributed to the fact that the apprenticeship training is regarded by many uneducated people in the society as an alternative to formal education. As such people who cannot afford primary, secondary and tertiary education for their children or ward use the apprentice training as a remedy. This has contributed to the educational qualification disparity that tends to exist between masters and apprentices of the scheme. Thus, it has been statistically proven that in most enterprises masters have higher levels of education compared to their apprentice counterpart (Walther, 2008).

### **Gender Distribution of Participants in the Informal Apprenticeship**

In Nigeria, there is a general notion that most of the participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme tend to be men. This assumption is based on the cultural stigma associated with woman participating in certain trades that are considered exclusively preserved for men. As such women are frowned upon when they are seen indulging in trades supposedly meant for men. Some of these male exclusive trades include; welding, carpentry, furniture making, generator repairs, auto mechanic, auto electrical, plumbing, barbing, dry cleaning, among others. While the trades likened to women are: hairdressing, catering, beauty therapy, decorating, pedicure and manicure among others. However, tailoring one of the few trades that is equally culturally accepted in Nigeria to be engaged in by both men and women (Adebisi & Oni, 2012).

Studies have shown that in Nigeria, 61% of apprentices in a particular trade are usually male while 39% female, the study showed that male masters and apprentices dominated the carpentry and mechanics enterprises of the informal apprenticeship scheme. While the females dominated in trades such as hairdressing, pedicure, manicure and catering, while tailoring and dress making are relatively evenly distributed between both genders with 45% male and 55% female (Nnamani, 2011).

Regardless of the fact that the informal apprenticeship provides a vital training route for skills acquisition in Nigeria for both young men and women, the stigma associated with gender disparity amongst various trades acts as a hindrance to the ability of scheme to successfully empower many. International Labour Organization (ILO, 2016), in its statistical picture of men and women in the informal economy, advocated on the importance of gender equality in employment policies and training programmes in developing countries of the world. This includes the provision of more gender friendly and welcoming strategies for both men and women notwithstanding the trade, enterprise or profession. However, in Nigeria and other developing countries most of these measures have not been implemented as a result of deep rooted cultural beliefs.

This has led to a situation where women and young girls of different ages are in a state of confusion when choosing or taking part in an informal apprenticeship scheme that is culturally seen as an exclusively male enterprise. In some cases, they are not supported or given access to training materials, information or capital whenever they choose to venture into such trades. Also women who choose to be involved in male dominated trades are sometimes abused, raped or discriminated against during the period of their training. This is even more

worrisome for uneducated women who lack the knowledge of their right and are financial incapable of seeking legal redress through judicial means (Asodike, 2005).

The benefits of the informal apprenticeship scheme to both genders cannot be overemphasized, this is because people with employable skills or who have embarked upon some form of informal apprenticeship training will not be engaged in human trafficking and prostitution. Additionally, issues such as teenage pregnancy which is a social stigma for young women and rape can be addressed via this means. Hence, the informal apprenticeship system is an important means of guaranteeing gender equality and social integration of various genders (Asodike, 2005).

Notwithstanding, discrimination in terms of earnings between the genders is another major factor affecting the informal apprenticeship programme. Studies in developing countries have indicated that male apprentices upon completion of their training programme tend to earn at least 7% more revenue than female apprentices (Nnamani, 2011). Such earning disparity between the genders is indicative of wage inequality that exist between the genders regardless of the profession globally. This is even more depressing given the fact such inequality could still exist despite the equal amount of time, energy, finance and otherwise put into the training exercise by both male and female apprentices. Existing gender inequality and discrimination could be detrimental to the overall success of the informal apprentice scheme as a potential tool for manpower development and economic empowerment of the masses.

### **Government Participation in the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme**

Some state governments in Nigeria, partner with certain apprenticeship training centers to provide skill acquisition programmes to young people in relevant trades and areas of specialization. For instance, the Anambra State Motor Manufacturing Company (ANAMMCO) Training Centre affiliated with Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, for the issuance of Diploma Certificate, National Diploma (ND) to their graduated trainees of its apprenticeship training programme. The management of the programme was structured on a sixty percent (60%) practice and forty percent (40%) theory training programme (Oni & Adebisi, 2012).

While in Rivers State, the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), which was established under the Sustainable Development Agency Law No. 3 of 2007. Promoted programmes and activities aimed at eradicating poverty, developing rural areas and manpower development (Mitee, 2010). In a recent entrepreneurship training exercise, the agency provided over 200 youths with relevant information and training to succeed in the non-oil sector of the economy. In addition was the initiating of the Songhai farm a pet project of the RSSDA to train future farmers and ensure that the region is food sufficient. However, as a result of dwindling government revenue most RSSDA projects have been neglected including the Songhai farm to the detriment of trainees and apprentices.

The Federal Government of Nigeria on its part has guaranteed that informal apprentices who acquired non-formal education through the apprenticeship means will be accredited by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (FRN, 2004). On its part, the Economics Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2002 established Technical Education and

Vocational Training (TEVT). To improve access citizens to technical education and vocational training at all levels of the educational system, to strengthen the training capacities of TEVT and to establish and promote TEVT centers of excellence across member countries.

However, not much is known about the distributive characteristics of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria, in terms of methods of training, input materials utilized and methods of assessment. Moreover, the methods of record keeping, adherence to high standards of training and level of assistance from the government and private bodies remains largely unknown.

## Results

The results and discussions which included answers to the research questions and brief discussions are presented below:

**Research Question 1:** What are the types of in informal apprenticeship trades in Rivers State, Nigeria?

The first research question, determined the types of trade existing within the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria. The various trades were categorized into six categories namely: welding; mechanic; construction works; residential services; crafts making and fashion designing. The results of the data analyzed are presented in Tables 1.

**Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the Types of Trades in the Informal Apprenticeship Scheme.**

S/N	TYPES OF TRADE CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
1.	Welding (General welding, pipeline welding, fabrication).	109	14.3
2.	Mechanic (auto-mechanics, auto-electrical, paneling, tire repair).	191	25.0
3.	Construction Work (GMP, block molding).	159	20.8
4.	Residential services (generator repair, phone repair, dry cleaning).	109	14.3
5.	Crafts making (carpentry, furniture making, joinery)	94	12.3
6.	Fashion design (tailoring, barbing, hair dressing, pedicure, manicure, decoration)	102	13.4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>764</b>	<b>98.1</b>
<b>MISSING SYSTEM</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>

As clearly shown, a total of 6 trades were surveyed extensively. Based the frequency and percentages presented, it is apparent that the mechanic (auto-mechanics, auto-electrical, paneling, tire repair) category had the highest of 191 (25%) and this is closely followed by

construction works (GMP, block molding) with 159 (20.8%), while crafts making (carpentry, furniture making, joinery) has the lowest frequency of 94 (12.3%).

**Research Question 2:**What is the profile of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria?

The second research question, determined the profile of participants of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria. The profile of participants was categorized into three categories namely: age; sex and educational qualification. The results of the data analyzed are presented in Tables 2.

Based on the results obtained in frequency and percentages, the number of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme, who are less than the age of thirty is 282 (36.9%), while those between thirty and forty-nine is 253 (32.5%) and those sixty years old and above represented just 2.6% of respondents. Additionally, results from the sex distribution of participants it is clear that there are 550 (70.6%) males and 214 (27.5%) females. This means that more males constitute the number of respondents than females in the scheme. In terms of educational qualification, 291 (37.4%) of the participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme confirmed that they have completed secondary education, while 240 (30.8%) of participants in the scheme indicated that they have only obtained their First Leaving School Certificate. Amongst the respondents only 109 (14%) indicated that they completed some form of tertiary education, be it OND, HND, University degree or their equivalent, while 124 (15.9%) specified that they have not acquired any form of formal education.

**Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Age, Sex and Level of Educational Qualification.**

S/N	PARAMETERS	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
1.	Age	Less than 30	282	36.9
		Between 30 & 49	253	33.1
		50 to 59	209	27.4
		60 and above	20	2.6
		<i>Total</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>98.1</i>
		<i>Missing System</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1.9</i>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	Sex	Male	550	72.6
		Female	214	27.5
		<i>Total</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>1.9</i>
		<i>Missing System</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1.9</i>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>
3.	Educational Qualification	No formal education	124	15.9
		First Leaving School Certificate	240	30.8

	Secondary School Certificate	291	37.4
	NCE, OND or Equivalent	84	10.8
	University degree	25	3.2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>98.1</i>
	<i>Missing system</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1.9</i>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>

**Research Question 3:** What is the duration of training across the various trades in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria?

The third research question determined, the duration of training across various trades of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria. The duration of training was categorized into four categories namely: less than 1 year; 1 year; 2 years; 3 years and above. The results of the data analyzed are presented in Tables 3.

**Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Training Duration of Apprentices.**

S/N	DURATION OF TRAINING IN YEARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
1.	Less than 1 year	87	11.2
2.	1 year	247	31.7
3.	2 years	181	23.2
4.	3 years and above	249	32.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>98.1</b>
	<b>MISSING SYSTEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1.9</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 in frequency and percentages, characterized the duration of training of apprentices in the informal apprenticeship scheme. 249 respondents representing 32% are undergoing a training duration of 3 years, while 247 (31.7%) of respondents indicated that training takes place within a year. 181 (23.2%) of participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State indicated that duration of training within 2 years, while 87 (11.2%) participants indicated that training duration is less than 1 year.

**Research Question 4:**What is government participation in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State Nigeria?

The fourth research question, determined government participation in the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria. The issue of government participation was categorized into two categories namely: award of government recognized certificates to graduates; and registration of enterprise with the government. The results of the data analyzed are presented in Tables 4.

**Table 4: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Graduate Certificates Award and Registration of Enterprise with the Government.**

S/N	PARAMETERS	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
1.	Graduates Receive Certificates	Yes	150	19.3
		No	614	78.8
		<i>Total</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>98.1</i>
		<i>Missing systems</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1.9</i>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	Registration of enterprise with government	Yes	200	25.7
		No	564	72.4
		<i>Total</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>98.1</i>
		<i>Missing systems</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1.9</i>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 specified in frequency and percentages, the awarding of government recognized certificates to graduates of the informal apprenticeship scheme and registration of the enterprise with the government. A total of 614 (78.8%) of respondents pointed out that the awarding of certificates to graduates is not carried out in their training, while 150 (19.3%) of respondents pointed out that the graduates of the training exercise receive of certificates. This is an essential aspect of the informal apprenticeship scheme that marks the end of the training. On the other hand, registration of the informal apprenticeship enterprises with the government is not undertaken by majority of the enterprises, as shown by 564 (72.4%) of respondents who identified that their informal enterprises are not registered with the government.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings study of the study on the distribution of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State, has enabled the research to arrive at some implications which are connected to the findings reached. The study categorized twenty-four (24) enterprises into six (6) categories (welding, mechanics, construction works, residential services, crafts making and fashion design). Majority of the trades surveyed were in mechanics category (25%) and construction works category (20.8%), while the crafts making category (12.3%) had the least number of participants surveyed. In terms of the distribution or composition of participants according to age, gender and educational qualification. The study discovered that a majority of participants (master craftsperson and apprentices) in the scheme were below the age of 30 years (36.9%), while only twenty (20) persons which constitute 2.6% of participants are 60 years and above. It was also revealed that males (72.6%) constituted a large segment of participants and the most participants attested to have attended some level of formal education (82.2%). In support of this assertion, Phiri (2009) stated that in most developing countries informal apprenticeship enterprises are made up of several youths (apprentices) under the tutelage and mentorship of a few experienced masters (adults). Thus, a prodigious number of people in the scheme are mostly below the age of 35 years, they include, school dropouts, street children, orphans, children from the villages who are in search of a better life in the city. The implication of this fact to manpower development and economic empowerment is that it provides young

people within this age bracket the opportunity to be gainful engaged in economic ventures while developing on the skills of the trade.

Other distributive factors considered in the study includes: duration of training and the award of graduation certificate to participants and registration of the enterprise with the government. The findings show that, in terms of the length of time spent training apprentices on the skills of a particular trade (duration of training), majority of those surveyed (32%) indicated that it takes approximately 3 years and above to train apprentices the skills of a trade. According to Oda (2015) there are factors that determines the pace at which apprentice completes a training exercise these include; apprentice's productivity, commitment to learning, level of contribution to the enterprise, efficiency and effectiveness of the master, teaching and learning materials, proficiency and the learning speed of the apprentice. The training implication of the duration of training is that most young people are restive as such, they may not be willing to exercise the patience required to learn the skills of a trade for three years and above.

The research also uncovered the hidden fact that most enterprises are not registered most informal apprenticeship enterprises are not registered with the government (72.4%), only a fraction of these enterprises are recognized by the government (25.7%). This possess a serious threat to the survival and substance of the scheme. This is because benefits accrued to the informal apprenticeship scheme from the government in the form of loans, subsidies, incentive training programs and so on will elude enterprises that are not registered with the government. Additionally, the lack of registration with the government makes it impossible for the government to accurate tax operators of scheme. It also makes it difficult for the government to plan towards the development of the scheme, since accurate statistical data of the number of registered participants is absent.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusively, based on the current state of the informal apprenticeship scheme in Rivers State Nigeria, it is evident that the scheme lacks the necessary capacity to sufficiently train apprentices and prepare them to be self-employed and possibly employers of labour. This is because the training and skills acquisition programmes on offer in the various apprenticeship trades lack properly structured educational programmes, lessons and the ability to transmit proper trade skills to apprentices. Poor government assistance and support has also contributed to limiting the capability of the scheme to cater for the needs of the youths and the society as a whole. With such a disturbing conclusion concerning a scheme that is geared towards human capital/resource development and manpower development, the future of skills acquisition particularly as it relates to the informal apprenticeship scheme seems bleak. If the present state of affairs in the informal apprenticeship scheme is left unattended by the government and private bodies it would lead to scheme that is filled with apprenticeship graduates who lack the training and experience that will make them functional.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to help improve on the scheme and reduce the difficulties encountered by participants:

- 1) There is need to ensure the informal apprenticeship system is not left behind in the overall scheme of things, it should be given equal attention as the formal apprenticeship scheme in order for it to succeed. This can be done through collaborations with the government and private organizations in terms of the operations of the scheme.
- 2) It is important there is stable electricity supply to cater for the needs of the informal apprenticeship schemes in Rivers State, this will reduce the production cost significantly and thus reduce the price of goods and services produced through the scheme.
- 3) The government should provide operators and participants in the informal apprenticeship scheme with necessary grants, loans and credits that will enable them function optimally and reduce the financial burdens they face.
- 5) The NDE should endeavor to harmonize its activities with the informal apprenticeship scheme in such a way that apprenticeship activities are carried out even in informal enterprises.
- 6) Governmental initiatives such as N-Power, YouWin, Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) that are designed to reduce poverty, reduce unemployment and develop human capital in the country should regularly collaborate with informal apprenticeship enterprises.

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