

Driving Growth, Employment and Poverty Eradication by Rethinking Informal Skills Development Strategy in South Africa: A Study of Informal Mechanic Work, Apprenticeship and Training

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Abstract— In South Africa, the unemployment of unskilled and less-educated is rife among the youths. The study provides policy insights towards informal sector improvement, poverty eradication and unemployment effects in South Africa. The study empirically examines the six (6) informal mechanic workshops in KwaZulu-Natal province using qualitative methodology to understand the process through which informal sector recruit its members. The study finding delineates the challenges and limitations of workplace learning and training. These include training needs, environment issues and work safety needs, lack of modern-training facilities, lack of information centers and institutions that speaks to the informal training worldview. The study concludes that most skills obtained through informal training would eventually become obsolete given the rapid technological development due to lack of skills upgrade platforms. The TVET colleges tend to replicate university products and processes in so many ways, instead of providing its own unique brand to resolve the skills lacuna currently existing in the market. The study recommends that skills acquired through informal training be given proper policy recognition, validation and support by the state with the aim to improve the quality of skills obtained, the training and the working condition. The study further recommends social partners to partner with the government and skills providers to develop training programmes that enrich the informal training and work process. The study also recommends the provision of skills-training centres that are furnished with modern (training) tools, and capable of offering skills-upgrade training. Finally, the study proposes a rethink of the informal skills development policy in the country.

Keywords: Informal Skills, Training, Acquisition, Apprenticeship, Informal Economy, Youth, Development, Unemployment, Poverty Reduction, Policy and Development, Policy Insights

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the symptoms of the dysfunction in the South African education system is its failure to match the quality of the workforce with the demand of the labour market (DRD & LR, 2009/2011; SACMEQ, undated; Nnaeme, 2017). In an article that was a response to the 2012 Green Paper on PSET, Hamilton and Baatjes (2012) argue that the South African education-to-training, employment patterns and respective skills development policies are not for the benefit of less-educated individuals. The formal and Informal skills training and development have been described by United Nation (UN) as an effective way to optimize employment and eradicate poverty (UNDP, 2010; Chen, 2018). In [South] Africa, one wonders why the policymakers still focus only on formal sector economy even in this hard time when unemployment is rife (Nnaeme, 2017). One can strongly agree with International Labour Organisation (ILO) that the impact of

the informal economy such as retail, personal services, and artisans in reducing the dimension of unemployment cannot be overvalued or overemphasized (ILO, 2014). In developing nations such as South Africa, part of the ongoing discussions about the undervaluing of informal labour by the current market system are currently framed within the debate about 'precarious' work (Standing, 2014; Nnaeme, 2017). Hence, due to the continuing policy concentration on education-to-training employment pattern, the labour conditions of those who otherwise secured employment through the informal employment patterns have deteriorated in Africa for many categories of workers (Benach et al., 2007; Denning, 2010). The literature and policy logic in the South African context have identified these evolving employment patterns and conditions with different terms such as 'informalization' of formal employment (Barchiesi, 2008, p.54); non-standard work (Cited in Nnaeme, 2014; World bank, 2014); precarious employment (Hadden et al., 2007; Nnaeme, 2017); wageless life (Denning, 2010), contingent work (Barker & Christensen, 1998); 'flexibilization', 'atypical', 'alternative work' or 'peripheral' or 'marginal' work (Hadden et al., 2007) to mention only a few. The above description and terminologies are pointing to the realities describing informal economic conditions. In the South African context, the transformative measures towards reducing unemployment need to be framed around new discoveries and recognition of new empowerment possibilities and/or new capability options (World Bank, 2014; SETA, 2013).

Nevertheless, the inter-linkages between formal and informal employments have become elusive leaving us with the question: do we know all we are supposed to know regarding how less-educated people find their way into jobs amidst a situation that most people describe as 'precarious employment' condition (Hadden et al., 2007; Benach et al., 2000; Nnaeme, 2017). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasises that the increasing importance of finding a feasible developmental strategy to link the informal and formal artisan communities in terms of quality of skills training, qualifications and opportunities (ILO, 2014; Christiaan, 2014). The literature on unemployment in South Africa tends to blame the massive difference between demand and supply for labour as responsible for escalating unemployment problems (Hodge, 2009; Banerjee et al., 2008; Valodia, 2013). Whereas the common trends in recent research regarding unemployment and skills development focus more on institutional failure, low wages or remuneration of the vocationally skilled workforce, employers' apprehensiveness and unsatisfactory concerns regarding lack of generic skills by skill-trained workers, low level of competence acquired resulting in poor performance by these sets of workforce (Burger & von Fintel, 2006; Horn, 2006; Brohat, 2010; SAER, 2012; Wedekind, 2012). According to Green (2013), the workers who have not

acquired enough skills to cope with a job or work are most likely to become stressed and unproductive in an era marked by rapid technological advancements. For instance, in the automobile industry, the majority of informal mechanics can neither handle modern cars nor tools which diminish their productivity, confidence, competitiveness, income and self-esteem. The alarming rate of unemployment increase in South Africa is further compounded by what the NDP refers to as a mismatch between available skills and needed skills in the labour market (NDP, 2014). The South African political past has been explained by the simultaneous existence of huge unskilled labour and scarcity of certain needed skills (Hodge, 2009; NDP, 2014). Thus, the situation which aggravates labour insecurity, social and economic inequality, lack of social income and lack of work-based identity as could be seeing in post-apartheid South African economy. There is an increasing need to provide analytical insights that can support the development of policies and intervention programmes across skills training, development and employment systems of the country (INSSO, 2010; ILO, 2014). This remains a vital step in tackling social problems facing developing economies or nations such as South Africa (ILO, 2014). The typical unemployment crisis in South Africa includes (1) situation whereby less-educated are jobless resulting from lack of needed skills; (2) unemployment caused by mismatch between formal training qualification and market-needed skills or competence; and (3) unemployment where informal skills operators risk losing relevance resulting from skills obsolete (ILO, 2014). This study focuses on the informal sector economy which is confronted with the grave challenges of having been deprived of policy and formal development attention.

The study draws its major objectives from the mother project named the *Labour Market Intelligence Partnership* [LMIP]. The major aim of the LMIP project is to interpret and analyse the market information and knowledge in the light of policy, sectoral needs, and other education, training and skills development needs (NSF, 2011). The objective is to build models that can create labour market intelligence. Hence, the market intelligence that can provide evidence and insights upon which government's proper decision making, strategic planning and interventions can be based (NSF Discretionary project – Application documents, 2011, pp. 10-11; <http://www.lmip.org.za>). The LMIP's objectives gear towards suggesting new ways of looking at empowerment, skills development and unemployment relieve initiatives through a better understanding of how people gain access to jobs or work as professional in the technical professions such as mechanic. *This study aims to understand the work and training processes of the informal mechanics, interaction, and challenges facing them as they negotiate the transfer of skills from the more knowledgeable to apprentices.* The study's objectives include (1) to work experiences of informally and self-employed (or road-side) mechanics in order to gain better understanding on patterns of accessing employment as a motor mechanic; (2) to investigate how the workers begin to identify themselves with the skills as motor mechanics; (3) to gain a better understanding of how it is that informal processes of learning induct novices into becoming motor mechanics; and (4) to illustrate and provide a fresh

perspective on how informal learning processes should be reinforced in South Africa. In order to achieve the above objectives, the study poses the key research question of: *How do people learn to become informal mechanics and gain access to employment in the informal economy?*

Community of practice as a social learning framework. This framework is currently being used to analyse and facilitate knowledge transfer in a wide range of organizational environments (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Wenger (2000), learning is central to human identity and socialisation. The primary focus of learning as *social participation* requires an individual, as an active participant in the practices of social community, for the construction of his or her identity through the community. The community of practice requires the participants to possess the desire to develop skills from the people they look up to, learn from or admire possess the same skills (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The community of practice as a social learning framework which encompasses a procedural process that integrates the aspiring members and/or trainees such that (1) the domain of common goal and individual interest are integrated and well taken care of; and (2) the acceptance into the learning domain means or translated into a commitment to the domain which gradually develops and capacitate the (trainee) individual. These individuals (both trainer and trainees) socially build relationships that enable them to learn from each other, maintain individual goals and group interest, as well as support one another (Wenger, 2000). The development of practice or “practical” helps to facilitate the sharing of problem-solving techniques, provide learnable information, create experience for members of the community, and self-development approach. Thus, development of practice includes (but not limited to) mapping knowledge, identifying gaps, relating, consulting and networking with other practitioners or professionals which eventually leads to and signifies occupational identity formation (Wenger, 2000). Wenger (1998) puts *situated learning* at the centre of human identity formation. For instance, if you are taught to become a nurse and you learned the skills you are most likely to become a nurse, hence, the construction of the identity. This implies that an individual actively learns or becomes by participating in the practice of a specific social community through which identity is then constructed (Wenger, 1998). The Community of practice has been criticized for the possible implications of its power dynamics which remains an important part of determining the quality of skills the learner acquires, level of trust, and successful identification to the particular skills (Wenger et al., 2002). The community of practice framework allows a deep insight into understanding the social and learning strategies that underlie the discipline of training informal operators of technical work, in this case mechanic. The framework is used as the lens through which I tried to understand how informal mechanics come to become professionals through a social learning process. It helps also in evaluating, categorising, and understanding the emerging themes, contrast and similar traits from the data collected.

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory is also part of the conceptual framework of this study with focus on scaffolding and Modeling. Scaffolding refers to social

learning methodology whereby the novice or apprentice learns through the support of an older or more experienced adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding incorporates the support given during the learning process which is learner-oriented and designed to help the learner toward achieving his/her learning goals (Sawyer, 2006). These supports include the provision of resources, exposure, a compelling task, templates and guidance on the development of cognitive and social skills (Sawyer, 2006). Scaffolding is associated with developing learning communities, the community of learners' environment, collaborative learning and group work, hence an interactive-based learning. The interactive process of learning supports social learning such that learners take up a task, together with the master, where a common theory is developed and modelled by the master (Vygotsky, 1978). The learner is allowed to reflect while observing the procedure and interacting with the master. In reflecting and Modeling of the procedure the learner must practice the procedure repeatedly to remember (Sawyer, 2006). The three essential features of scaffolding include; (1) scaffolding is founded in the interaction between the learner and an expert. This interaction should be collaborative to be effective; (2) learning should take place in the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD highlights the gap between what a learner (or novice) can do by himself and what can only achieve with the support of a knowledgeable master or instructor (i.e., the pedagogical stage). Modeling requires a teacher within the cognitive domain or professional to demonstrate a task so that the learner can experience and construct a conceptual model of the task (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, Modeling involves the demonstration of desired practice by the master for the learners to observe, emulate and practice. This concept helps me to schedule my observation, focus on step-by-step engagement pattern that the master and apprentice indulge in when handling a particular task.

The capability approach by Amartya Sen (1993; 1999), as used in this study context, represents a broad normative framework used to evaluate individual well-being vis-à-vis social arrangements surrounding the individual. The capability approach is centred on freedom(s) to achieve in general and the capabilities to function in particular (Sen, 1993). The major constituents of the capability approach are functionings and capabilities. Simply put, functioning is your achievement, whereas capability is your ability to achieve. At the human development level, Sen's capability approach is part of the general recognition that a failure to design poverty reduction programmes from the individual's context can fail the overall programmes (Sen, 2009). The basic concern regarding the human development approach focuses on the enhancement of individual choices (or 'freedom') and opportunities (Sen, 1993). This implies that the effort to create capabilities should transcend the usual concentration on technical and 'formal' processes to incorporate the context of the individual (Sen, 1993). Sen (1993) maintains that any attempt to raise human capability should concurrently improve the choices, wellbeing and 'freedom of people'. In other words, to raise human capabilities is synonymous to providing a social environment that enhances social transformation, gives the individual access to training (in his or her context), job mobility and employment opportunities.

In this study, the capability approach helps me (the researcher) to conceptualize possible policy design, purpose and propose a plausible social change(s). The framework also helps to conceptualize the philosophy underlying this study which claims that the processes of the individual development must be fully matched with the external opportunity of the individual for total liberation and freedom to ensue. This would produce 'genuine' capability that can lead to increased productivity, and socio-economic liberation of the individual (Sen, 1993, p. 7). In South Africa the TVET colleges (which were formal FET colleges) could have concentrated in developing its own brand rather than replicating university product and processes. There is no reason why an artisan who dropped out of primary or secondary school for over a decade, who has family and financial commitment be compelled to learn how to learn in formal education system. The capability approach stipulates that the learning or skills training process must conform to the context of the trainee. In South African unemployment and socio-economic realities, one would expect the TVET College to respond to this call rather than duplicating university brand.

II. INFORMAL SECTOR AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA:

Since 1994, South African socio-political and economic environment has been widened to incorporate previously disadvantaged groups (Zuma, 2013). The rapid economic growth continues to record fewer employment opportunities as would be expected from such a booming economy (SAER, 2012; Nnaeme, 2017). The increasing unemployment rate continues ravaging the economy as less-educated persons still have to eke out a living in the informal economy as vendors, motor-mechanics or road-side mechanic, streetwalkers and other related businesses (Nzimande, 2012a; Nnaeme, 2017). Although the informal sector has shown a potential to reduce the devastating job shortages, and the ability to contribute, and facilitate the redistribution of resources, the policymakers, the market and state officials tend to neglect the sector (SAER, 2012). Consequently, the informal sector continues to be confronted by limited access to credit, unsupportive labour frameworks, among others (ILO, 2014). Other problems confronting the informal sector include how to standardise and harmonise the skills training needs of the entrants, as well as how to achieve the market required competence. Thus, despite the effects of the country's political past, which denied many people the opportunity of getting a basic and quality education, yet improving informal skills training and development through formal policy remains unrealistic (Nnaeme, 2017). Whilst the situation of limited availability of formal sector employment in the country remains particularly very problematic, and South Africa as a developing nation continues to struggle. For instance, the problem of unemployment, poverty and income distribution, such that the government and policymakers seem adamant to the fact that without the informal sector most of the households would not survive (Nnaeme, 2014).

Meanwhile, the challenges of economic growth and high-tech jobs confronting South Africa is an implication that

those rationed out of formal employment might turn to the informal employment as a preferred alternative (Nnaeme, 2017). This would continue to increase the informal sector base of the country. Thus, the problem is critical and requires government immediate response through formal policy to revamp its socio-economic implications. Similarly, many developing countries seem to share the same fate in terms of unemployment, and the abundance of the low-skilled labour force which then produces a huge informal sector base (ILO, 2014). According to the World Bank (2014) statistics, the bulk of unemployment in South Africa has been among the primary and secondary education leavers (i.e., the less-educated). This group combined with those who never attained any form of formal education are categorized as 'low-skilled' labour (Nnaeme, 2014). In a perfect world, formal sector education or qualifications suggests 'high-skilled' or 'better-paid' jobs, whereas, in reality, the opposite is the case. The country's preference for the formal sector was epitomized by the NDP's wish that the struggling informal sector would constantly maintain its 22%, while the formal sector continues to supply the remaining percentage (Nnaeme, 2014). On the contrary, evidence has shown that informal sector and informal skills acquisition offer more realistic job opportunities most convenient to peoples context and life situations. Until when would the developing nations' governments and policymakers stop living in denial? There is a high level of 'context-denialism' embedded in the country's political rhetoric, corruption is heightened, while academics seems to be engulfed by their usual 'intellectual patriotism' of repeating and quoting one another. South Africa needs a paradigm shift towards more inclusive policymaking that equally accommodates formal and informal sector, and the 'perception engineering' that truly represents the country's socio-economic milieu need to emerge (Zuma, 2013). The country's attempts to circumvent the ravaging impacts of poverty and increasing unemployment rate, the rethink of the current skills development policy is a sinequanon.

III. RESEARCH METHODS:

The study adopted a qualitative research method using the interpretivist paradigm. The qualitative methodology and methods applied in this study helped to gather information on how the informal operators gain access to work or employment as informal motor mechanics. According to Cohen et al. (2007), the interpretivist approach allows for meaning to be sought within the context through observation of, and conversation with people in their own environment or study environment (Cohen et al., 2007). The interpretivist approach relies heavily on qualitative methods such as interviewing and participant observations (Henning, 2004). The interpretive approach remains the most flexible and appropriate tool for this study as it allows the continuation of the researcher's ability to interpret and represent his or her experiences (Cohen et al., 2007). Arguably, one of the major aims of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world by learning about people's social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories (Neuman, 2011). The study chooses six (6) participants who were interviewed, and

their workshops observed. Narrative inquiry was applied. Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling. Twenty-five (25) semi-structured questions were listed or designed to explore the experiences of the participants narratively. The interview provides the researcher with an in-depth insight and understanding on how people get employed or self-employed as informal mechanics; their hopes, regrets and expectations (Cohen et al., 2007). The appropriate measures were taken to ensure that the reliability and validity of the study are maintained. For instance, participants were asked to bring any (3) items that are symbolical in terms of their work-life which include tools, objects, work of art, and pictures. This was to guard against possible complexities that could emanate from participants constructing their narratives based on what they assume I would want to hear.

The study focuses on informal motor mechanics, those who specialise in repairing car engines not on automotive or automobile engineering. The automotive engineers design the vehicle parts including the engine and can take any critical parts of the vehicle and enhance it, spray the vehicle, repairs vehicle parts, electrical and general bodywork (Vyas et al., 2011); whilst the motor mechanics maintain the engines. The reason for choosing informal motor mechanics over automotive engineering is because the latter is formally established and has long been identified as a priority, and a leading manufacturing sector in South Africa. The informal mechanic has every ingredient needed to represent other informal businesses that are underdeveloped and bereft of formal policy attention. The KwaZulu-Natal province was selected because it presents and possesses the rich circumstances suitable for this study context and objectives. For instance, at the time of the study, KwaZulu-Natal was the province with the highest level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, school dropout, domestic violence and people with English language challenges. The recruitment criteria require participants to possess relevant formal qualifications or training like N4, or N5 or less; self-employed; having own workshop with at least two apprentices; not registered according to South African Company Act of 2008 nor held membership of National African Association Automobile Service Providers (NAAASP), and must be informally operational at the time of the study. The participants were purposively selected to ensure that the criteria were met. During the interviews and participant observation, I strictly adhered strictly to the ethical consideration principles. The consent form was administered, and a photo camera was used to take photos of observed sites for depiction and presentation in the dissertation. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw participation at any time should they so desired. The research authorisation or approval was secured from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa through the Ethical Committee.

The data analysis includes transcription and translation of IsiZulu language to English followed by coding. The emerging themes and sub-themes were identified and arranged according to the study's sub-research questions. The field notes obtained through the observation were

compared to the interview data to establish clarity, similarities, contrast and correlation. The data analysis combines both open coding and thematic analysis. The thematic analysis enabled the provision of a comprehensive rich data set and report pattern that responds adequately to the

research question and study objectives (Cohen et al., 2007). The data collected were analysed manually, and similar themes and sub-themes were merged for clarity, precision and logical presentation purposes.

Task	Sources of Information for data collection				
Methodology	Primary Sources	Participants	Secondary Sources		
Qualitative	Narratives inquiries (using interviews)	Informal motor mechanics of self-employed, road-side, and street corner dealers	Books, relevant published and unpublished articles; documents, project guidelines, policy papers, and statistics; research;		
	Participant Observation (using digital camera and field note)	Informal motor mechanic workshops of participants who were interviewed	Internet and online journal articles; notes from conference, meetings, discussion papers, online articles among others;		
Sub-research questions		Sources of Data [interviews were in form of Narrative]	Method of Data Collection	Type of Data	Analysis
How do people gain access into informal mechanic work?		interviews	interviews	transcripts	Thematic
When do they consider themselves motor mechanics and why?		interviews	interviews	transcripts	Thematic
How it is that informal processes of learning induct novices into becoming a motor mechanics?		interviews and observation	interviews	transcripts	Thematic
			Observation	Fieldnote	
What kind of guidance and training opportunity exists?		interviews and observation	interviews	transcripts	Thematic
			Observation	Fieldnote	
Key Research Question		How do people become informal mechanics and gain access to employment in the informal economy?			

Table 1: The data collection techniques applied are summarised as follows:

IV. FINDINGS:

The six (6) workshops observed were represented as the following pseudonyms: Workshop 1 (W1), Workshop 2 (W2) to Workshop 6 (W6) and so on. The study's findings were presented using the sub-research questions. The sub-questions include: (1) how do people gain access into informal mechanic work? (2) when do they consider themselves motor mechanics and why? (3) how it is that

informal processes of learning induct novices into becoming motor mechanics? (4) what kind of guidance and training opportunity exists? The extracts from data collected are attached to the prevailing themes to provide evidence and the particular participant concerned is referenced also using pseudonyms such as: P1 (participant 1), P2 (participant 2); and P3. This was to ensure the anonymity of the participants. The letter 'I' and 'me' refer to myself as *the researcher*, or to the direct speech of a participant. The demographic data of the participants are summarized as follow:

Participant Codes Of interviewees	Age	Gender	Education	Work Experience	Items brought to interview	Number of Apprentices	Location of workshop
P1	38 years	Male	Grade 10	18 years	None	3	Township
P2	46 years	Male	Grade 10	26 years	Baby picture	2	Rural
P3	26 years	Male	NQ 4	7 years	Photo of his Dad	4	PMB Town
P4	29 years	Male	Grade 11	11 years	None	3	Street corner
P5	25 years	Male	Diploma	9 years	Cell phone, few engine tools	2	Township
P6	52 years	Male	Grade 12	19 years	None	4	Suburb Durban

Table 2: Represents participants' profile:

Nevertheless, in order to ensure that the study's research question is adequately answered, the themes were arranged according to the study's sub-research questions:

1) How do people gain access to informal mechanic work?

- Hired by a family member: the responses showed that informal mechanic operators gain access to informal mechanic training and employment as hired by a family member. This is evident in the response by [P2] *...it is a family thing, even if you*

- are not working for your uncle or father, they are the ones who would find the person to take you.*
- A child employed by the parent: the participants also pointed out that most people were employed as children by their parents, uncle or an extended family member. [P1] puts it well: *...I was informally employed by my father. I started by helping him at the workshop. I use to go to school but whenever I come back from school I work with my father in his workshop....* The responses show that the

apprentices got employed or introduced to the skills learnership as they developed an interest to follow the footsteps of a family member. However, this does not indicate or express when their identification to the skills or identity formation began or happened.

- c) Informal apprenticeship works in a family member's workshop: the evidence gathered shows that the informal mechanic apprentices gain access to training at the workshops owned by a relative or an extended family member. [P4] *...My father was a motor mechanic working for Peugeot in town; a few years later he bought his own workshop and started his own where he fixes any type of car.* Being trained by a family member may reduce the implications of power dynamics although the experience of an apprentice who is not a family member may differ.

2) When do they consider themselves motor mechanics?

The relevant responses and themes show that workshop ownership helps to boost full identification of the profession.

- a) Own workshop: participants were unanimous that the ownership of a mechanic workshop does confer automatic identity as a mechanic. [P4] emphasized that *...I knew I had to take over from my father's workshop because I am the one my mother and sisters have. I didn't want to disappoint them...it was amazing own workshop, and became the wiz....*
- b) Absences of any better alternatives: another identity formation catalyst is life's responsibilities. This creates pressure or a watered-ground for full-identification to ensue. [P3] highlights that *... I applied many places [for jobs] and most employers require practical training which must include In-service training under the supervision of a qualified tradesman, three to four years depending on your experience and qualifications before the apprenticeship, and a compulsory trade test set by the Department of Labour which is the final examination that qualifies you as an artisan. I didn't get any job...so I started fixing cars....* The P3's response actually links informal skills training to occupational identity formation. The response also portrays how the informal sector economy goes to increase the number of small, medium and micro-enterprises [SMMEs], as well as create more jobs.
- c) Sense of master-hood: also the ownership of the workshop and being a trainer boosts the operator's confidence towards the work or profession. The (P5) stresses that *...when you are called the boss, you don't want to disappoint, so you do everything possible to maintain (being) the master. If you do not do the job properly....* This theme indicates a strong correlation between competence level, sense of worth, and professional confidence of informal mechanic operators.
- d) Financial independence and working for self: again most participants mentioned that they joined and stayed as informal mechanics simply due to the lack of a better opportunity which could guarantee their financial independence. In other words, informal mechanic work, in the absence of any better

alternative, represents a best form of livelihood to the operators in their context. [P2] expresses... *I wanted to go back to school but after working for two years I need money you know. My girlfriend was not working she had to go back to school and I was supporting her because I love her... So, I say to myself you know this is where you (i.e., P2) found yourself and you must make every good use of such opportunity....* In most cases, the context and life realities present informal skills training as the 'best' option for self-development to the less-educated and the previously marginalized.

3) How it is that informal processes of learning induct novices into becoming a motor mechanics?

The participants interviewed were unanimous regarding the following themes:

- a) Modeling: this plays an important role in improving their knowledge during training. The term modelling includes mentoring, coaching, prompting and giving hints, thinking out loud, dialogue, planned and spontaneous discussions which the master utilized to assist or help the apprentice(s). This is clearly expressed by [P3] who emphasized that: *when the apprentices start learning how to couple an engine. Firstly, I ask more experienced apprentice or worker to show the new or less-experienced ones how to dismount the engine and fixed it back....* The participants in their responses agreed that the rapid technological advancement that characterises modern times requires constant mentoring for both the apprentices and 'master' as a skills training upgrade.
- b) Learning of theories, regular engine faults, signs and problems: the response data collected confirmed that certain narratives or theories are often attached to different engine model or various vehicle brands. The stories have practical application for a proper diagnosis and repair to ensue. The [P6] emphasised that *...firstly the master must make sure the apprentices know or learn what causes the obvious engine problems. Some of these problems or their proximate causes are manufacturer's fault depending on the vehicle brand and engine model. When a car with such a problem comes you must show them the problem and make sure they understood how....* Although there are no ways to confirm the authenticity or verification of the story sources, as well as the theories.
- c) Consultation through participation and practice: the idea of practice makes perfect applies as the apprentice must begin and allowed to fix less-complex faults and then work his/her way up competence ladder. [P5] asserts that... *Sometimes you can decide to invite them (i.e., master) or send the particular engine part to them to inspect the fix or make suggestions....* This implies that efficient learning and competency may not be actualised without participation and consultation between the master and apprentices.

- d) Scaffolding (or guidance) through interaction: the proper guidance according to the participants must be in form of Scaffolding. Scaffolding involves presenting learners with proper guidance that effectively aids them towards their learning objectives. [P5] states that: *to learn many things, you need to have interaction with other people or professionals because any new thing you learn helps to improve your work...* Thus, the consultation between master and apprentices are centred on guidance which is tantamount to what Vygotsky (1978) describe as Scaffolding (see section above).

4) What kinds of guidance and training opportunity exist or not lacking?

The themes such as resource constraints, lack of funding, limited access to modern tools, lack of context-based training support, absence of skills-upgrade opportunities, and lack of government support were identified. [P6] highlights that: *one thing about this our job is that the government does not care because some of us are not registered and they said we do not pay tax... Some of us cannot start their own workshops due to fundraising complexities...you cannot borrow money because the government does not recognize you...*[P1] added that: *even now there is this education for adults here and there in community halls but I don't this is not what we need right now... we need is a kind of training like workshops, something or some kind of training that can help us meet up (meaning to keep up) with the (rapid) technology (or technological change)* [emphasis added]. Similarly, (P4) stated that: *some of us do not even have an idea of what modern technology looks like, how much it's sold and where to buy...*The points raised above by the participants are crucial to this study. The social stereotype that classifies mechanic work as 'dirty work' must be reversed; government need to demonstrate the importance of skills training through development policy.

V. OBSERVATION FINDING:

The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of how the informal processes of learning induct novices into becoming motor mechanics. The study observation aims to observe first-hand activities of the informal mechanics as they worked and negotiated skills acquisition in the work place. The apprentices face difficulties and challenges including (but not limited to) inability to cater for needs relating to apprenticeship such as procurement of work attire (or uniform), meals, learnership or apprenticeship fee, among others. The environmental related challenges (or issues) such as oil-leak pollution, limited working space, work-place hazards, among others were revealed through observation. *The observation helped to identify three practical learning procedures and technical skills acquisition patterns during training.* The study's observation also revealed that the learning and skills training process can be improved with the intervention of the government and other relevant stakeholders. The apprentices need the aid which the government and other role-players can offer. The finding also exposes that informal mechanics' risk dropping out from the work due to skills obsolescence created

by a lack of continuing training opportunity or skills upgrade. The government's provision and policy must address the identified shortfalls to the benefit of informal mechanic trainees, reduce the risks of structural unemployment, increased competence level and environmental-related issues. The observation finding consolidates data gathered to answer the last two sub-research questions. The observation finding discloses more invaluable information that would otherwise remain concealed.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE FINDING:

The major implication of the study's finding is that certain artisans and operators whose skills were obtained through informal training are risking structural unemployment due to rapid technological change (ILO, 2014). The contextual and socio-economic needs of an apprentice include social security, physical safety at work, further training opportunities, awareness of possible alternatives, access to modern tools, skills improvement options and opportunities to economic autarky. The finding suggests that informal mechanics require the government to play a facilitation role in establishing reliable coordination and reliance between formal specialists, training institutions and informal mechanics. The relationships could entail putting in place mechanisms that can facilitate meaningful and realistic learning interaction among the operators. The informal mechanic operators lack access to advance technological tools, and knowledge upgrade. The state's negligence of the informal sector has been blamed on the sector's 'poor coordination' especially in terms of assessing competency level, provision of suitable or needed skills training, accreditation of individuals without qualification, and evaluating or grading individuals with qualifications obtained through informal structures. The government's justification seems to place blame on factors outside itself without having a closer look at its policy lacuna and implementation failures. For instance, serious implementation and coordination problems exist between relevant stakeholders (ILO, 2014). In South Africa, this problem is further compounded by the differences and the gap existing between the Department of Education, Labour and industries, SETA and colleges (SETA Newsletter, 2013). The government must put its house in order. The social partners must be fully involved in developing the training programmes that can effectively improve the informal sector training and skills development processes.

VII. CONCLUSION

The informal sector requires enabling arrangements that allow access to financing, resources, further training and (some sort of) certification or, at least, licencing to improve the challenges confronting the sector. The problems associated with policy implementation that exist at national and provincial level must be taken seriously. The improvements to informal sector artisans at the micro-level cannot be effective and sustainable if they are not integrated into a wider national skills training policy framework. The program or curriculum designers must know that formal training projects and/or programs cannot be efficiently

designed in isolation, without necessary inputs by the informal sector. The problems such as access to credit, infrastructure, resources, legislative or policy support among others, must be availed equally for all artisans and workers in both formal and informal sectors. Getting these priorities right is required for the successful utilization and optimization of the skills acquired through vocational education and informal training (ILO, 2013). The policies should encourage a multifaceted, flexible and coherent approach to skills development in the informal sector. The state alone cannot cater to the training needs required to boost skill training, employment, productivity and competency in the informal economy (South Africa, 2012c). There is an increasing need for the state to encourage state-private partnership, collaboration, cooperation and coordination between private sector training providers, public suppliers and non-governmental organisations that provide formal, non-formal and informal training (Zuma, 2009; Nzimande, 2011; Nnaeme, 2017). The training process must transcend a training program which is designed, planned and developed externally and later administered to the participants. The training programme proposed by this study should begin with or be based on long-established local strength and then transcend to more advanced knowledge. Skills transmission and acquisition should be linked and drawn from socio-cultural mechanisms in the workplace. The formal and informal skill acquisition must be advanced, promoted and encouraged concurrently through formal policymaking for the optimal human development.

A. Recommendations

The minister Nzimande reaffirmed that to improve the skills training, attention must be focused on the needs of small enterprises (Nzimande, 2012). The former South African president, Jacob Zuma added that the production and service sector must provide training programs that target less-educated artisans (Zuma, 2013). The stakeholders including NGOs, NPOs and training institutions must be encouraged and co-opted by the government to inculcate better training that targets informal workers' establishments. The social psychology and perception that undermines artisan work and regards informal mechanic work as 'dirty work' must be changed such that; (1) the developmental policies should show that access to skills training is important to the government and communities at all level (NDP, 2010/11); (2) the concept of 'training' and 'education' must be redefined to encapsulate skills training and acquisition (ILO, 2014; Zuma, 2013); and (3) the government must create an environment where 'training' for work in the informal sector should be broadly conceived and not merely understood as 'schooling'. The policies should encourage a multifaceted, a flexible and coherent approach to skills development in the informal sector. The mixed economic system run by South Africa implies that state alone cannot cater for the training and competency needs of the informal economy, employment, and productivity (ILO, 2014). The policy must make completion of primary and secondary education necessary condition of entering into an apprenticeship (Nzimande, 2012b). The basic and generic skills, social and political awareness, basic numeracy and literacy must be aggressively

pursued at the primary and secondary school level. In terms of the unavailability of modern equipment, this study recommends the provision of training centres that are furnished with modern tools by the government. These centres can be used for (re)training or skills-upgrading purposes for workers and operator whose skills were obtained through the informal training. The subsequent studies must explore the perception of the informal mechanic apprentices as that may add useful value to the policy design. Women participation and involvements in informal sector training and employment must be investigated. Finally, more comparative studies are needed on the topic of improving skills development and informal sector training (Telegraph Commentary, 2014).

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