

Benin TVET reforms: An exploration of social anthropological field



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Despite the substantial resources traditional or informal apprenticeships has provided for work-based training in developing countries, the structure of the system has shown some weaknesses to provide equitable learning conditions. In most in West African countries, public institutions have introduced reforms to improve the traditional system through the upgrading apprenticeship schemes. This policy brief summarizes the reforms undertaken in Benin TVET system, presents the actors and their interactions and provides some recommendations.

Introduction

In sub-Saharan African countries, small and household enterprises in craft sector play an important role in the growth of the informal economy. To improve informal or traditional apprenticeship, Benin government introduced the Certificate of Professional Qualification (CQP program) and the Certificate of Occupational Qualification (CQM program) reforms. In the implementation of these programs many actors are involved: master craftsmen and their trade union, apprentices and their parents, government, donors, and so on. In the implementation of these reforms, some actors safeguard their interests while others lose theirs. In this regard, each category of TVET stakeholders develop strategies in order to save their position in the system. In his study, Sonnenberg (2012) stated that the traditional apprenticeship has potential opportunities to improve TVET system. He pointed out the practical orientation of the informal learning, its self-regulation and its self-financing. Adams et al., (2013) and Teal (2016) found that the informal sector has been benefit for the skills development in sub-Saharan Africa. To understand Benin TVET stakeholders' position in the reforms, this research is conducted to analyze their interactions.

Methodology of the research

This research has investigated information in the field of TVET sector in Benin. Descriptive qualitative method is used to conduct the study through three techniques. Literature analysis was used to review the existing literature on Benin TVET reforms. For the empirical data, direct and participation observation are used through visits in workshops and in vocational training centres. We have also conducted 46 individual semi structured interviews to collect data on the actors' perception and the effects of these reforms. We interviewed Officials from public institutions, master craftsmen/women, members of professional associations for further research on the reactions of business sector, especially small and household firms regarding the reforms. In Benin, many public and private institutions are located in Cotonou, economic capital, where we interviewed most officials. Those participants were interviewed in Abomey-Calavi and Parakou to extend the empirical data across regions. Data were analyzed through the Actor-oriented perspective.

Results

As findings, we noticed that Benin TVET reforms have led to important changes in the traditional apprenticeship system. Even though the reforms have contributed to design curricula



and improve the pedagogical approach for skills achievement, the evidence from Benin apprenticeships shows the persistence of some traditional practices such as the graduation ceremony. The graduation ceremony is an event organized in informal apprenticeship by master craftsmen and professional associations to release apprentices after their training completion. This celebration is an important for master craftsmen and local community. The graduation celebration gives a social legitimacy by the participation of the whole community (parents, relatives, advanced masters, friends). In this circumstance, master craftsmen with their associations steer their interests by gifts, money and goods, offered to them as a social recognition. However, this practice constitutes limits to other apprentices with limited financial resources. Hence, the reforms have prohibited the celebration and allowed learners to receive directly their certificates. Through these reforms, apprentices receive formal certificates (CQP and CQM certificates) which are considered as higher than those received by their masters in the informal apprenticeship. Thus, master craftsmen train their future competitors. The reform of CQP program involved a good business for the staffs of vocational training centres who develop strategies to receive training contracts from a public agency, the Fund for the Development of Continuing vocational training and apprenticeship (FODEFCA). So far, CQP concerns only 13 craft occupations and CQM 46 out of 311 existing occupations. Moreover, the research illustrates that professional associations were less involved in the decision-making through these reforms.

Policy Recommendations/Policy Implications

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As recommendation, following points can be taken into account:

- 1) Extend CQM and CQP to further craft occupations.
- 2) Undertake actions to adapt TVET innovations to the local context.
- 3) Involve more professional associations and local community for inclusive actions and collective decisions.
- 4) Involve local administrations in CQM and CQP processes in order to motivate them to contribute to financially to the programs.
- 5) Take into account the social functions of the graduation ceremony in the reforms undertaken by the government.
- 6) Allocate enough financial, technical and human resources for the implementation of CQM and CQP programs.
- 7) Support Business sector with a system of loan for TVET workshops.
- 8) Improve the commitment of professional associations in the governance of the TVET system.

This Policy Brief is based on

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