

Functions of Juakali Artisans

Abstract:

Mounting demographic pressures, rising unemployment among school leavers, the rising cost of education against diminishing resources and shrinking jobs in both formal public and private sectors are some of the key challenges facing education systems in most African countries. Specific responses to these challenges may vary from one country to another, but a notable convergence has been a growing interest in and emphasis on the role and potential of the informal sector in employment generation. A variety of literature has emerged which, to a large extent reflects current thinking about the nature of knowledge and skills possessed/required by informal sector workers, the mode of training by which those skills are/should be developed, and certain characteristics of informal apprenticeships as a mode of training. However, there is a danger of widening the gap between policy and practice in contexts where policies and strategies for economic and educational development are based on impressionistic assumptions rather than empirical assessment of reality. This article examines policies and strategies of skills development for Kenya's Jua Kali sector, isolates underlying assumptions, and reports the findings of a study carried out in Kenya (in late 1997) that subjected those assumptions to empirical evaluation. It is argued that prevailing policies and strategies of skills development for the informal sector are largely based on fallacious assumptions. Suggestions for alternative strategies for enhancing skills development within the sector are made