

# Poverty Reduction Efforts in Ghana; the Skill Development Option

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## Introduction

“Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease; it attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one’s dignity and drives one into total despair (Dutch Policy Brief on Poverty Reduction” Dec. 2001.

Ghana, like many developing countries needs to improve economy-wide labour productivity in order to achieve a competitive edge in the rapidly changing economic and technology-driven world. But an equally significant driver of improved labour productivity is the effort to reduce endemic poverty in a country that has a low technological base. Flexibility and productivity of the labour force are dependent on the competent skilled workers. Generally, skilled workers and technicians enhance the quality and efficiency of product development, production, and maintenance, and they supervise and train workers with lesser skills (World Bank 1998 13). For the poor, labour in its crudest form, is a key asset and adding value to that asset could offer a route out of poverty. But the stock of skills required by the poor goes beyond technical and entrepreneurial abilities (ILO InFocus Programme 2004). They need skills that make them confident and capable of exploring and trying new income-earning opportunities within the labour market. Among the critical competencies are skills such as numeracy and literacy, social and communication skills, problem-solving and decision-making, negotiation skills, learning and training to promote social inclusion including understanding of social rights, “citizenship skills”, self organisation.

Rapid and regular changes are occurring on the labour market and these require that the poor continuously update their skills. Given the precarious situation of the poor, of their economic units and of employment relations, adaptability is crucial to their survival. In this regard, argues that the poor need to undergo the type of training that will allow them to learn how to learn in addition to acquiring specific occupational skills.

This paper presents a review of the efforts that have been made to reduce poverty in Ghana over the years through equipping the poor with employable skills. Relevant studies done by others formed a good background to this write-up. But the authors also conducted interviews with managers of programmes targeted at transferring skills to the poor, at the formal, informal and non-formal levels.

The structure of the paper is as follows: firstly, an assessment is made of the nature of poverty in Ghana especially looking at who the poor are. Secondly, a review is made of the broader national efforts at reducing poverty over the last two decades. Thirdly, the formal, informal and non-formal means for the development of skills are examined. Fourthly, an attempt is made to synthesise suggestions that emerge from the review for national and sub-national actions. And finally, conclusions are drawn that are reflective of salient issues that need to be considered in delivering skills and improving the ability of the poor to sustain their own livelihoods.

## **The Nature of Poverty in Ghana**

### ***Poverty Trends in Ghana***

World Bank estimated in 1995<sup>1</sup> that 5.8% per annum GDP growth was required to restore Ghanaian living standards to their 1965 level by the year 2000. On this basis, it would take 10 years for the average poor Ghanaian to escape poverty, 40 years for the poorest of the poor. Subsequent economic growth has been below the assumed level, averaging 4.3% pa in the 1990s.

The proportion of the population defined as poor decreased from 52 percent in 1991/92 to 39.5 percent in 1998/99, based on an expenditure definition of poverty. Poverty in Ghana is overwhelmingly rural phenomenon with 80 percent of those persons classified as poor residing in the rural areas. By ecological zones, the rural savannah tops the list as the poorest zone in Ghana. This zone comprises Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions. The rural forest zone is also poverty endemic area in Ghana. The major areas of concentration in this zone are Central and Eastern Regions. In the rural savannah and rural forest, more than 40 percent of their population are classified as poor in 1999. Within these areas, the Upper East, Northern and Central regions experienced increase in poverty and extreme poverty in the 1990s. The high incidence of extreme poverty (implying inability to meet basic nutritional requirements even if the entire budget is devoted to food) is reflected in malnutrition; indicating that 30 percent of under five years old are stunted, 26percent are underweight, with boys slightly more likely than girls to be stunted. Though high among the poorest, malnutrition is surprisingly widespread, suggesting that other interventions in health and nutrition have the capacity to impact on the problem independently of higher incomes.

By socio-economic groups, poverty is highest among food crop farmers especially in the rural savannah of Northern Ghana. This zone experienced the least improvement in poverty over the period of the GLSS. Among the food crop farmers, women predominate and they experience greater poverty than men.

## **The Government Efforts in Poverty Reduction**

### **Development of Government Poverty Policies**

The Government of Ghana initiated an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983 as a direct response to an economic decline and poverty that plagued the country during the past decade. With the support of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other bilateral donor agencies, the ERP aimed mainly at macro-economic reforms, fiscal and monetary stability, export growth strategy, trade liberalization, rehabilitation of physical infrastructure, improvement in the investment environment through new private investment legislation, privatization of state-owned enterprises, provision of social infrastructure, investment in human capital and institutional capacity building.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, 1995.

The policy reforms since 1983, succeeded in reversing the decline of the economy and improving the overall economic performance. GDP increased by an average of 5 percent per annum between 1984 and 1992. Specifically, there was significant reduction in the fiscal deficit and inflation; infrastructure services were improved and relative prices and incentives were shifted towards tradeables especially towards exports of cocoa, timber and minerals.

Government revenues increased from 6 percent of GDP in 1983 to 13 percent in 1986 and to 16 percent in 1991. Average per capita incomes increased from negative 5 percent prior to ERP to positive 2 percent between 1984-1992. Sustained reduction in money supply reduced inflation from 123 percent in 1983 to 10 percent in 1992. Gross investment increased from 4.7 percent of GDP in 1982-1984 to 8 percent in 1989-1991. During the same period, private savings increased from 4.6 percent of GDP to 5.6 percent while public savings increased from negative 0.6 percent of GDP to positive 2.4 percent.

As a result of this economic growth Ghana made substantial progress or gain in poverty reduction between 1983-1991/92. The GDP growth of 5 percent per annum between 1987/88-1991/92, in per capita terms means 2 percent growth per annum. According to the World Bank, this growth pattern is broad based touching the vast majority of the population in Ghana and therefore reflected positively in poverty reduction in Ghana (World Bank, 1995).

From 36.9 percent in 1987/88, the incidence of poverty declined to 31.6 percent in 1991-92. This suggests that by 1991/92, about 32 percent or 5 million Ghanaians were poor with expenditure of less than US\$25 per month. Similarly, the depth of poverty declined from 11.9 percent in 1987/88 to 8.1 percent in 1991/92. This exemplary economic performance and poverty reduction was not sustained. In 1992, the macro-economic stability was undermined by fiscal shock triggered by increase in public expenditure and a fall in tax revenue. Money supply increased more than 50 percent, the current account deficit widened to almost 9 percent of GDP. The Ghanaian currency (the cedi) depreciated sharply and inflation accelerated. Private investment fell sharply to 4.3 percent of GDP in 1992. The fiscal account dropped from a surplus of 1.5 percent of GDP in 1991 to a deficit of 4.0 percent in 1992. The annual rate of inflation increased from 10 percent in 1992 to 34.2 percent in 1994 and 70.8 percent in 1995.

The public perception at this time was that with the downturn in macro-economic performance since 1993, the plight of the poor in Ghana has deteriorated compared to the pre-1993 gains in poverty reduction. Concerned about these adverse developments, the government of Ghana and its Partners in Development initiated several actions to address the issue of poverty reduction in comprehensive way. At the 1995 Consultative Group Meeting, in Paris, the Ghana Government gave a firm commitment to initiate concrete and comprehensive actions both within the macro-economic policy framework and operational mechanisms to reduce poverty in Ghana. The specific actions to reduce poverty included:

- Institutional mechanism and National focus for poverty reduction;
- Establishment of continuous poverty monitoring systems;
- Formulation of a new agricultural strategy;
- Further progress for decentralization;

- Better policies for gender and environment to help poverty reduction; and related poverty reduction initiatives.

Most of these GoG proposal/strategies for poverty reduction have been implemented. On the institutional mechanism and national policy focus for poverty reduction, the GoG established the Inter Agency (GoG)/Donor Consultative Group on poverty reduction in Ghana, Inter-Ministerial Committee on poverty reduction (IMCPR) and Technical Committee on Poverty (TCOP). (Botchie, G., 1997). The Technical Committee on poverty served as the technical arm of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on poverty reduction.

Continuous poverty monitoring systems have been established by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) through the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) and Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS-4). The CWIQ is a data collection instrument capable of providing timely annual indicators on living standards for different population groups in Ghana. The CWIQ and GLSS-4 are expected to provide important continuous data for monitoring the progress towards poverty reduction in Ghana from 1996 onwards.

These initiatives are complemented by the UNDP initiatives on Common Country Assessment (CCA) and programme for poverty reduction. The CCA provides a comprehensive assessment of a country's profile on an extensive list of indicators for poverty monitoring.

A policy framework for poverty reduction programming has been prepared by the TCOP under the aegis of IMCPR and titled "Policy Focus on Poverty Reduction" in September, 1996. The strategic thrust for poverty reduction in Ghana derived from this document.

- Broadly, the strategy for poverty reduction lays emphasis on integrated rural development, the expansion of the scope of employment for the urban poor, and improving the access of the rural and urban poor to basic public services such as housing, water supply and sewerage, transportation and family planning services.

A new Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development strategy has been completed. The new agricultural sector strategy adopted an interventionist approach to promote large-scale private sector commercial production to ensure food security, create rural employment opportunities and help disseminate agricultural technology and inputs without disadvantaging the small-scale farmers.

Further steps in decentralization are progressing within the scope of political decentralization, decentralized planning and fiscal decentralization. Central to the success of the decentralization policy is the full implementation of the Public Financial Management Reform Programme (PUFMARP) and the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP). Both programmes which are being co-ordinated by the National Institutional Renewable Programme (NIRP) have received support from CIDA, World Bank and DFID to enhance fiscal and administrative decentralization in Ghana.

The fiscal decentralization and PUFMARP includes the production of the Medium-Term Expenditure Plan (MTEP) which is a three year rolling budget that is designed to embrace plans set out in the Medium-Term Development Plan and its Plan of Action. The fiscal decentralization, PUFMARP, CSPIP and MTEP are on-going.

A further support for decentralization policy came from the disbursement of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). According to the administrator of DACF, the Districts utilized ₵47.7 billion in 1995 compared to ₵72.4 billion in 1996 for various development programmes and projects.

Gender issues have been addressed through policies and programmes that focus on:

- improving economic opportunities for women;
- improving women human capital through investment in girl-child education and women's health and
- improving the institutional capacity for policy making to ensure that gender issues are adequately incorporated into the policy making process.

Through the National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPS), the Environmental Protection Agency is actively promoting the mainstreaming environment in major development programmes in the country. The EPA is also building capacity for environmental management and increasing environmental awareness and education.

In addition, the implementation of a US\$7 million GoG/UNDP National Poverty Reduction programme commenced in five (5) pilot Districts namely Bongo, Juabeso-Bia, Afram plains, Dangbe West Districts and Accra Metropolitan Assembly. Also established was a US\$ 18 million GoG/AfDB UNDP funded Social Investment Fund:

The future perspective of poverty reduction in Ghana was expressed in the new development planning process in Ghana. A key element in this process is the preparation of a long-term strategic national development policy document – Ghana Vision 2020 following a highly participatory process in April 1994. The document provides a comprehensive policy framework for development policy-making and planning for the period 1996 to year 2020. The main strategic goal of Ghana-Vision 2020 is to transform Ghana into a buoyant and dynamic middle-income country within the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Based on the long-term framework, a medium-term co-ordinated programme of economic and social development policies was prepared for the first five-year period, 1996-2000 and presented as Ghana-Vision 2020 (The First Step: 1996-2000). Poverty specific policy statements are presented in Section 5.2 of this document. About 50 percent of the policy statements are categorized as focusing on poverty activities; about 21 percent are targeted on the poor and the remaining 29 percent impinge on the policy environment. These poverty specific policy statements underscored the need to ensure equitable distribution of benefits of development, closer integration of women and rural inhabitants within the national economy, elimination of hard-core poverty through the promotion of efficient rural farm and non-farm productive activities and encouragement of innovative spirit of micro and small enterprises.

Poverty is still on the agenda, through the Ghana poverty reduction strategy. This strategy formed the basis for the 2002 budget. It envisaged significant sharpening of the linkages between resource allocation and the strategy including sharper focus on targeting resources to the poorer regions and identified vulnerable and poor groups.

## **Skill Development Efforts in Ghana**

### **General Issues Surrounding Skill Development<sup>2</sup>**

Inequalities in access to education and training are a common feature in Ghana as they are in many developing countries. Even though the Constitution guarantees the right to education and training, this is often not enforced. Consequently the rapidly changing technological environment is resulting in poor people being increasingly marginalised. Access to training by marginalized groups such as women is further hampered by:

- lack of investment in female education and skills acquisition
- low literacy rates
- lack of time available for training due to women's multiple roles
- limited autonomy and decision-making
- restricted mobility
- low level of awareness of training opportunities and other assistance schemes
- lack of opportunities for apprenticeship
- gender stereotyped education and training curricula which tend to devalue women
- low level of awareness of their civic/human rights
- inappropriate time or venue of training activities, lack of child care facilities

As a result, their lack of skills tends to relegate women in low-return economic activities.

Promoting equal access to training is desirable but this must be matched by training that is socially relevant. The practice has been to provide training that may not lead to gainful employment because, in many cases, it perpetuates low skills, obsolete technologies, traditional and usually unremunerative trades, and job stereotypes ([www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/poor/4.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/poor/4.htm)) This is particularly true of poor women who rarely have access to those skills that give access to decent work. It is important to identify economic opportunities and match skills development and other support measures to these opportunities.

### **Financing of training on a sustainable basis poses a problem**

Financing training on a sustainable basis for the most disadvantaged groups is a major stumbling block. Government must always assume primary responsibility for investing in basic education and initial training, and it should also invest in other forms of training, in particular with the aim of combating social exclusion or discrimination. Indeed, responsibility for skills acquisition cannot rest only with individual workers. Of course,

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<sup>2</sup> Much of this section is adapted from the ILO's Skills for the Working Poor

as far as possible, end-users – even the poor - should share in the cost of the training. However if the poor are to share in the cost of training, there should be clear financial benefits for them. For instance, in the case of apprenticeship, apprentices contribute with their work. In most other cases end-users' contributions are unlikely to cover the whole cost of training, let alone the cost of a whole range of business support services. Therefore other sources of funding need to be found, including loans to trainees - possibly through micro-credit schemes - and subsidies from the community and the State. Cost-effective training mechanisms should be found to minimize the cost of training while safeguarding its quality.

### **Efforts towards Skill Development.**

Evidence of commitment to employment generation, has remained an integral part of past and present major development policy objectives. For instance, Nkrumah's, **Seven-Year Development Plan (1963/64-1969/70)** set full employment, the security of the worker, rapid industrialization, a revolution in agricultural production and a structural reorganization of the entire production system as its main objectives. In addition to the provision of the foundation for self-generating growth through efficiency in the use of investment resources, the **2-Year Development Plan (1968-1970)** of the Busia regime targeted the reduction of unemployment and poverty as major goals. We note further that the **Five-Year Development Plan (1975/76-1979/80)** of the Military government of General Acheampong among other things sought to ensure full employment, equity in the distribution of income, the reduction of poverty and the acceleration of the growth of real gross income.

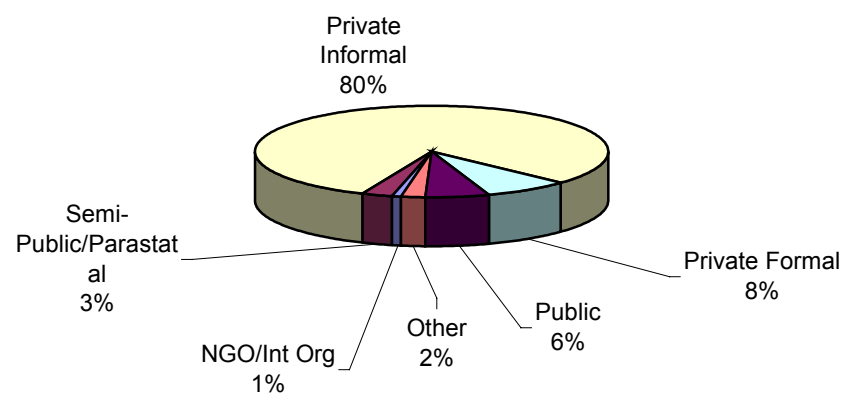
Ghana's long-term employment goal as provided for in the 1992 Constitution and as articulated in the **National Development Policy Framework, Vision 2020**<sup>3</sup> was intended to afford all citizens the right to work. The goal targeted accumulated expansion of formal sector employment to contribute about 60 per cent of total employment as compared to the current rate of less than 10 per cent.

The pattern of employment and the rate of unemployment show that these plans have not led to any significant increase in the level of skills nor have they changed the sectoral spread of employment in Ghana. The depiction of the employment situation in Figure 1, suggests that the private sector provides employment to the bulk of working population. The private informal sector attracts the largest number of the working population, and much of this is in the agriculture and related activities (GSS 2000 11).

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<sup>3</sup> The Vision 2020 Policy Document was the long-term development policy framework for Ghana developed by the past National Democratic Congress.

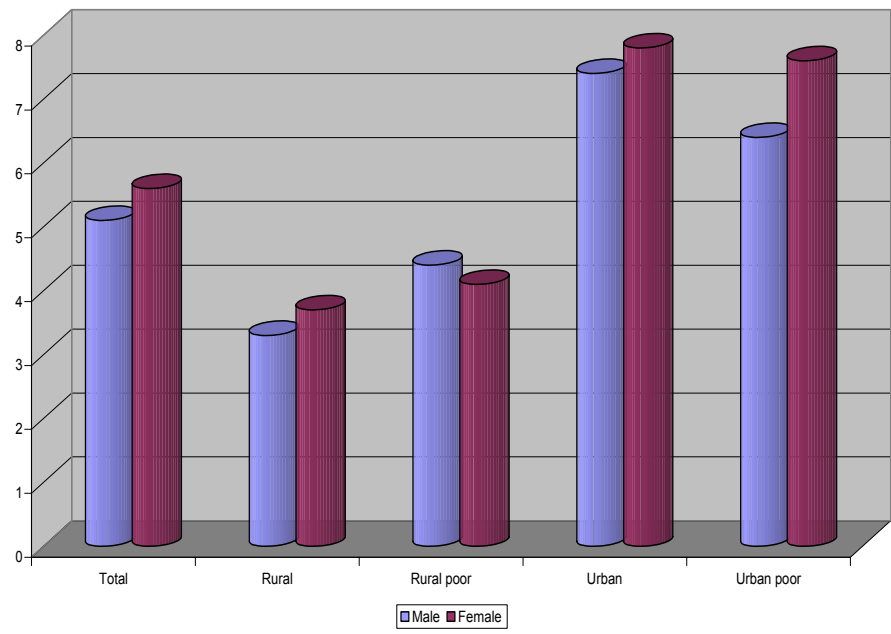
Figure 1: Sector of Employment



Source: GSS 2000 Population Census

Similarly the unemployment rate shows obvious biases on the grounds of gender and location.

Figure... The Unemployment Rate by Gender and Location



Source: constructed from CWIQ 2003

The persistence of these patterns is indicative of several factors including the weak growth of the stock of skills systemwide, the slow growth of public sector wage employment and the lack demand-led training opportunities across the system. Some have attributed this to policy failure (Abugre and Alexander 2000: 6). Bennell (1999: 16) on the other hand, asserts that the limited, often tokenistic support to public sector training largely patronized by the poor is symptomatic of the weak overall commitment by many governments to eliminate poverty. The case is worse for the informal sector training schemes. Citing an ILO (1995) study, he contends that the approach by governments to improve the operations of the informal sector could at best be described as 'minimalist'. He argues that the assumption by government that easing access to credit without complementary support will generate a corresponding expansion in informal sector operations has been found to be untenable.

The evidence suggests that the growth of the labour market is driven by many other factors. Teal (2000: 2) notes that the Ghanaian labour market generally is characterised by low skill levels due to the low absolute number of educated labour and to the low ratio of educated labour to land endowment. The result of the low amount of schooling per capita and the high amount of land per worker is the excessive dependence of the country on primary and extractive activities and therefore a reduction of the comparative advantage in manufacturing activities that are skill-intensive. To Owens and Wood (1997), it is possible for natural resource-intensive economies to be able to efficiently export the goods in processed form. They postulate that for any appreciable level of processing to be achieved, African economies require higher levels of skills than are currently available. Natural resource exports would remain the predominant export activity of developing countries in Africa unless means are found to increase productivity per worker.

In the current **Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) 2003-2005**, a number of strategies have been proposed for increasing production and gainful employment. The programme on production and employment seeks to improve public sector delivery programmes and also provide sufficient incentives to stimulate the private sector to increase and sustain the production of basic staples, production of selected export crops, and a vigorous expansion of employment in sectors such as tourism. Among the ten activities that have been listed as the mechanisms for poverty reduction only one is directly related to the development of skills. See Box 1

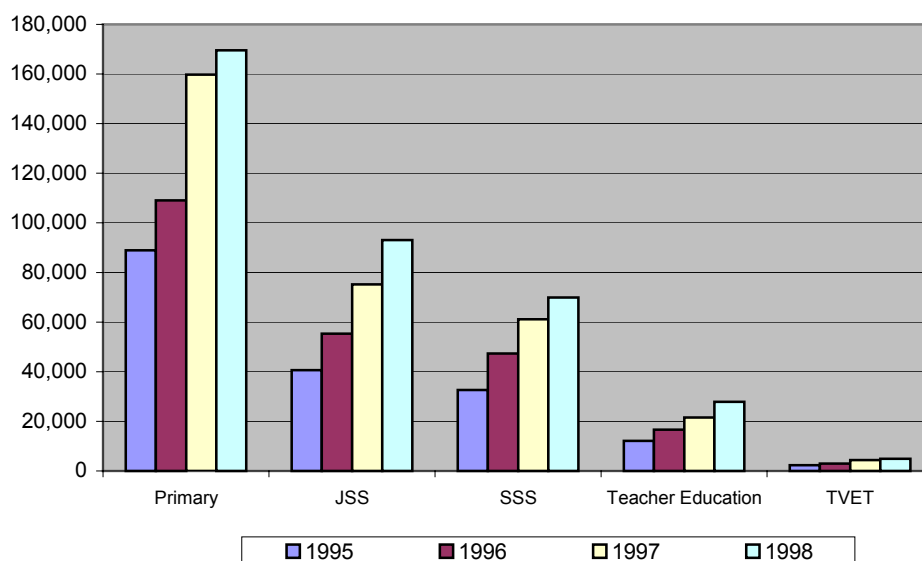
#### **Box 1. Poverty Reduction Activities in GPRS**

1. Provision of small-scale irrigation schemes that will allow better use of the land especially in the Savannah areas
2. Investing in the provision of good drinking water
3. Ensuring all school-age children receive education and health care
4. Provision of free basic education
5. Empowerment of women to participate in economic and social decision-making
6. Provision of adequate information on how to avoid problems such as HIV/AIDS, floods and bush fires
7. Developing simple technologies that process local materials into semi and finished products
8. Ensuring equitable provision of basic services to rural and urban areas
9. Facilitating access to land for farming and other businesses
10. Making it easy for people to acquire vocational skills and credit to do business.

Source: GPRS 2003

Figure 3 presents a picture which shows that the effort to improve the skill level of workers has not attracted commensurate fiscal resources in the past. The allocations to selected sub-sectors within the Ministry of Education indicate low levels of support to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Of the three post-basic programmes, TVET has received the least amounts over the period. Also, while the other sub-sectors recorded significant increases over the period, the TVET sub-sector recorded only marginal increases.

**Figure 2: MOE Programme Expenditure Estimates 1994-1998 (C '000,000)**



Source: compiled from GOG Annual Estimates (1994-98)

The current government has shown renewed interest in correcting the anomaly. During the 2003 fiscal year, an amount of 18.7 billion cedis from the GETfund was allocated to support skills and training programmes in vocational technical schools. The fund was used mainly for the rehabilitation of workshops in vocational schools. Also, an amount of 11.16 billion cedis was allocated to the Ministry of Manpower and Employment in 2003 to implement the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP)<sup>4</sup> programme. A total of 4,800 people have so far acquired various skills training under this programme (Annual Progress Report on GPRS 2004).

<sup>4</sup> The STEP programme provides training to unemployed youth registered in 2002 as a fulfilment of the electoral promise of the NPP government.

## The Architecture of Skill Development in Ghana

We review the structure of training and the training opportunities that exist for the development of the appropriate sets of skills for the labour market in this section. A discussion of the training-related conceptual issues precedes the review.

Workers generally acquire skills in a variety of ways. In investigating the types of training opportunities available in the system, we came across different approaches and training types that are in operation in the labour market. A classification of three mutually reinforcing training/education<sup>5</sup> types based on methods and sources of learning has been suggested (Coombs, 1973). These are informal, formal and non-formal training. The unstructured process by which every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influence and resources in his or her environment from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the media is referred to as INFORMAL education or training. Despite the characteristic that makes it largely unorganised and unsystematic, it forms the largest source of knowledge during the lifetime of an individual, whether he or she is highly educated or not.

Where the system is hierarchically structured and chronologically graded, as is the case of moving from one level in a technical or vocational institution to a higher level, it is termed FORMAL training. NON-FORMAL training, on the other hand, covers any organised training activity outside the established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives. What is implied here is that instead of seeking to provide a broad, multi-purpose and common form of training to the population as a whole, the focus in this case is to identify different groups of people, diagnose group-specific learning needs and then seek the most appropriate means of meeting those needs.

Based on this approach, Coombs and Ahmed (op cit) conclude that there are three main groups of learning needs and three main groups of people who may be considered in the rural areas in which they situated the approach. The learning needs included;

- **General or basic education** which offered elements of literacy, numeracy and understanding of one's society and environment. An illustration of this is family improvement education which seeks to develop knowledge skills and attitudes to help people raise their standard of health education, nutrition, homemaking, child care, family planning home construction and repair for purposes of improving the quality of domestic lives.

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<sup>5</sup> Education in this context is defined as a process that promotes the development of academic skills and the acquisition of occupational, household skills (commonly referred to as training); the development of aesthetic appreciation and analytical modes of thinking; the formation of attitudes, values and aspirations and the assimilation of pertinent knowledge and information of many sorts.

- **Community improvement education** aimed at providing further strengthening of local and national institutions and organisations to enable people participate more effectively in civic affairs, in the management of cooperatives, credit institutions, associations and clubs and in undertaking community improvement projects
- **Occupational education** to assist people make a better living for themselves and to contribute more effectively to the economic development of their communities and countries. The bulk of the existing non-formal provision falls into this category.

The categories above serve three main beneficiaries a) persons directly engaged in agriculture, for example farmers, herdsmen, fishermen and so on, b) general service personnel including local civic leaders and planners administrators and managers responsible at various levels for the supply, storage and marketing, the running of cooperatives, farmers association and community organisations and c) persons engaged in off-farm commercial activities such as large and small traders, repair and maintenance workers construction and transport workers manufacturers including the small roadside producers of domestic implements and tools as well as tailors and dressmakers and all those engaged in service activities. Our analysis shows that these approaches are delivered through existing formal and informal institutions in Ghana. For ease of analysis these are examined under the broad headings of a) formal education and training, b) informal training and c) informal apprenticeship

### **Formal Education**

A starting point of the institutional analysis of the delivery of training is the formal education system. Education raises productivity, innovation, and output. It gives people new skills and empowers them to take advantage of new opportunities. Formal education here is that form of instruction that occurs in formal institutional settings both as compulsory basic education as well as secondary and tertiary education. Formal education affects occupational success as well as upgrading of technical skills of individuals (House and Paramanathan 1994). The Psarchalopoulous and Woodhall(1997) Mbaya and Streffeler (1999) state that investments in basic education have higher pay off than those in higher levels of education. The ILO argues that basic education should not be leapfrogged. It helps in the development of “core work skills” such as communication and problem-solving skills-skills which are critical parts of the effort to prepare individuals for the knowledge and skills-based society ([www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/policy.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/policy.htm)) . In the sub-Saharan region, World Bank data show that completion of primary education raises the output of farmers by about eight per cent. The data also establish that among the urban poor, each additional year of education increases earnings by 5-10 per cent. The obverse is also true; the lack of basic literacy and computational skills impedes the participation of informal sector workers in future training. These considerations seem to have triggered the disproportionately high investments government has made in the basic education sector over the last two decades. But the indicators of quality, access and completion of basic education however, show that the there is still a serious problem with delivery.

According to the Population Census (2000) only 53.3 per cent of the population (15 years and older) is literate in either the English language or a known Ghanaian language. Another worrying statistic is that, of the total population, only 18.6 per cent has attained primary education as the highest level of education. Progress towards achieving universal basic education is slow. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) which measures the participation of the primary age group (6 – 11 years), though variable and not showing a consistent trend, indicates that Ghana is far away from achieving the hundred percent enrolment which has long been a national goal and now a constitutional requirement.

**Table 2: Primary School Enrolments (1986 to 2003)**

Year	Gross enrolment Ratio	Gender parity
1986	77.3	0.81
1990	79.3	0.82
1991	79.0	0.84
1992	77.6	0.85
1993	78.1	0.85
1994	75.9	0.87
1995	74.6	0.87
1996	76.5	0.88
1997	77.5	0.89
1998	78.4	0.90
1999	79.4	0.91
2000	78.6	0.91
2001	79.5	0.91
2002	81.1	0.92
2003	88.5	0.93

*Source: SRIMPR Division MOE, Ministry of Education, 2003 Performance Report..*

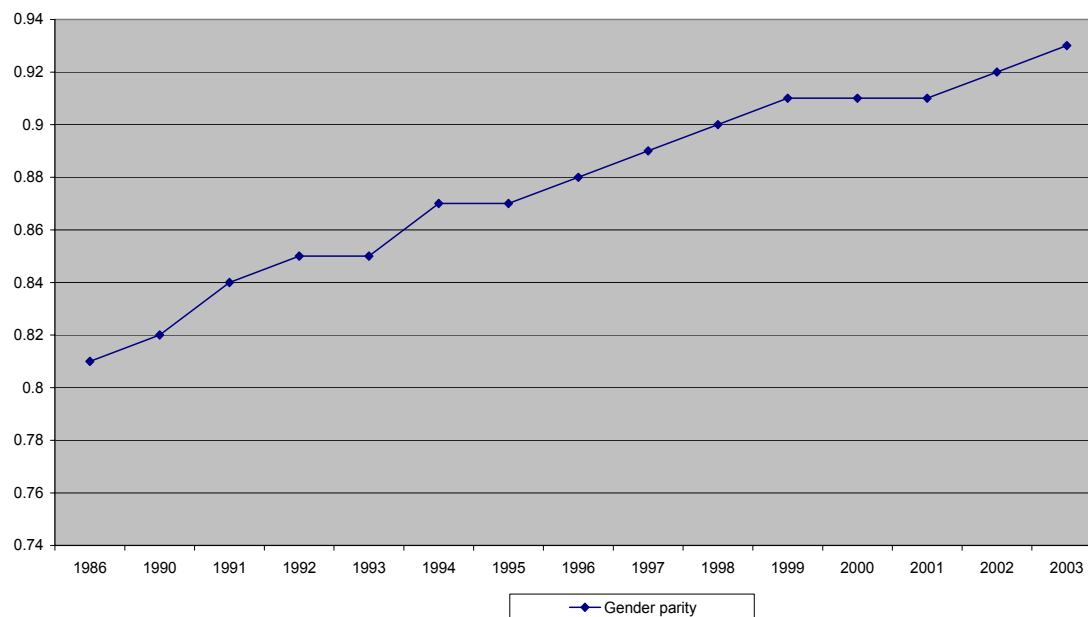
*Note:*

The GER has grown from 77.3 per cent in 1986 to 88.5 per cent in 2003. Ghana has taken 17 years to achieve an 11.2 percentage point growth in the GER. Unless new approaches are explored to get all children into school, Ghana will be unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goal of getting all eligible children into school by 2015. A large proportion of school-age children who remain outside the education system enter the labour market with rudimentary or no employable skills and are not likely to acquire any skills as a result of their low educational status.

Gender parity of 0.93 in 2003 at basic education level represents an improvement over that at the beginning of the Education Reforms in 1986 (See Figure 3). Primary enrolment figures at the end of the 2002/2003 academic year suggest that girls' enrolment rates have grown to 48.4% while boys' enrolment has dropped to 51.6%. Gender parity at the post basic levels however still remain low. The main gender issues and inequalities relate to **the high dropout** rates of girls at all levels and poor transition rates between Primary to JSS levels. Drop out rates for girls are higher than boys at all levels of the education system. Girls' transition rates are lower than that of boys between P6 and JSS

1 and between JSS3 and SSS1 (Sutherland-Addy, 2002). These disparities point to the need to pay special attention to girls' access to education in order to enhance their ability to improve their skill acquisition prospects. The high rate of illiteracy also means that still a large proportion of the economically active population is virtually incapable of taking advantage of existing opportunities for improving their living conditions.

Figure 3: Gender parity (1986-2003)



### Delevering Formal Training

The formal sector training is critical in orienting training systems to meet the challenges of new production and organization technologies, international competition and globalisation. The recognition that international comparative advantage in most of the key growth sectors is now largely determined by human resource endowment means that training systems must spearhead the process of skill driven modernization (Bennell 1999:18). Bennell contends that this challenge for expansion in training is not matched by increased budgetary allocations. The effect is that core TVET institutions are compelled to find alternative ways of funding training to maintain current training activities. In the process, they have gained de facto autonomy, which allows them to look for new resources of revenue from both enterprises and individuals. This is putting skill acquisition beyond the reach of the poor.

A major problem of the current formal training system in Ghana is that it has had virtually no effect on the employment situation. This derives from a number of factors. First, formal training lacks relevance and has not been able to address the realities of the low absorptive capacity of the wage sector, underemployment and low performance at the work place. Formal training systems are largely supply-driven; that is, based on

assumptions of varying degrees of relevance of skill types that are in demand on the labour market.

They tend to target the wage sector and they are time and occupation-bound. The training is not responsive to the needs of the poor in the sense that it is straightforward and not closely integrated with other support measures that other institutions would typically give to the poor. For the public training institutions, the additional costs and risks of providing training for the poor is a major disincentive.

Second, organised training is accessible to relatively small number of those who need it primarily because of the smallness of training opportunities. This study found that it provides opportunities for only a small fraction of market entrants. The annual combined training capacity for both public and private TVET institutions is estimated at 35,000 (Report of Committee on Reform of TVET System 2000). The annual pool of labour market entrants is about 300,000 (World Bank 1997). The limited coverage also means, in effect, that training opportunities do not exist for people in employment to upgrade their skills in response to changes in the work environment.

An equally important factor that has reduced the effectiveness of formal training in increasing the employment rate, borders on equity. Access by different social groups is unequal. Disadvantaged groups such as women and the disabled encounter social barriers as they seek access to organised training. The generally low educational backgrounds of women and girls place them in a disadvantageous position in their bid to secure formal training. Where they gain access they are compelled to learn skills that accord 'females' low status, are low-paying and have little prospects for career advancement. Similarly, the disabled have very narrow opportunities to access organised training. Training environments are unfriendly and unresponsive to the training needs of people with disabilities.

The fourth problem noted is the low quality of training offered in formal institutions principally as a result of insufficient numbers of qualified instructors, inadequate and inappropriate training materials and high student participation rates. Even though per capita costs are relatively higher in training than in education, the expenditure figures show a more rapid decline in allocations in real terms to formal training institutions. Maintenance of equipment falls behind schedule and the purchase of training materials becomes irregular. In such situations trainees receive very little hands-on experience. Inadequate investment in instructor training and competitive salaries has caused a migration of staff to industry.

Another system-engendered problem that constrains the ability of formal training systems to meet demand on the labour market is the considerable rigidity in the system. The situation of security of tenure for instructors does not make the system respond adequately to changes in the relative sizes of industries and techniques that demand a flexible corps of instructors. Instructors whose skills are incongruent to new labour market demands, and who are incapable of switching cannot be fired on account of protection from labour unions. The result is over production in those skill areas where there are instructors but for which demand on the labour market is dwindling. The

institutions are incapable of taking immediate advantage of new demands for skills that emerge on the labour market.

The limited reach of formal training and its inability to influence the development of skills in the informal sector in a significant way, does not obviate the need to improve its delivery. Formal training plays an important role in meeting skill requirements of modern industry that depends on educated and well-trained labour. It also assumes primacy in the race for information and communications technology. It needs reforming and this implies making additional and regular resources available to the sector. It also means changing the content of training as a way of responding to the demands of formal industry and the informal sector. We agree with Overwien's (1994) suggestion of linking vocational training with the promotion of small enterprise development by involving small enterprise owners in the formal training processes. It will help design curriculum that links theory and practice and that is relevant to local labour market needs.

**Table 3: Programmes and Estimated Annual Capacity of Formal TVET Institutions**

Number	Institutions	Programme Offered	No Enrolled
<b>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports</b>			
30	Technical Institutes	Technician & Craft courses	4,500
12	GES technical teacher training colleges	Technical and vocational subjects	700
10	Polytechnics	Diploma/Technician/Craft courses	2,500
110	Functional Literacy centres	Functional literacy	3,200
1	University of Cape Coast	Undergraduate courses in technology	250
3	University of Winneba (Mampong and Kumasi Campuses)	Undergraduate courses in technology	470
7	Youth Leadership Training Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	985
<b>Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment</b>			
32	NVTI Centres	Tradesman/Artisan courses	3,700
66	ICCES Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	4,500
8	Boys/Girls Vocational Training Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	560
14	Rehabilitation Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	125
<b>Ministry Of Local Government And Rural Development</b>			
1	School Horticulture	Horticultural practices	35
18	Women's Training Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	235
2	School of Local Government Studies	Local government studies	420
4	Vocational Training Centres	Vocational/Technical courses	110
<b>Ministry Of Communications</b>			
1	Technical Training Centre (NAFTI)	Professional Photography	65
1	Ghana Institute of Journalism	Journalism	50
<b>Ministry of Food and Agriculture</b>			
3	Farm Institutes	Vocational Agriculture	105
5	Agricultural Colleges	Vocational Agriculture	175
<b>Ministry of Environment, Lands and Forestry</b>			
15	Regional Technology Transfer Units	Technical/Artisan courses	1200
1	School of Forestry	Forestry	25
<b>Ministry of Tourism and Modernisation of the Capital City</b>			
1	Hotel Catering & Hospitality Training School	Pre-service Hospitality studies	20

<b>Ministry of Health</b>			
16	Nurses Training Colleges	Specialised courses	800
10	Midwifery Training School	Specialised courses	200
1	Public Health Nurses School	Specialised courses	60
4	Community Health N.T.S.	Specialised courses	35
1	Health Training Institute	Specialised courses	35
2	School of Hygiene	Specialised courses	40
1	School of Med. Lab. Tech.	Specialised courses	18
1	Radiography School	Specialised courses	12
1	Ophthalmic Nursing School	Specialised courses	25
1	Critical Care Nursing	Specialised courses	7
<b>Non-Governmental/ Religious Organisations and Private Proprietors</b>			
450	Private for Profit institutions	Vocational/Technical courses	10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>35,162</b>

*Source: Modified from NACVET Document on TVET Policy 2000*

### **Non-formal training**

This is training provided outside the education system, mainly by a variety of voluntary or non-governmental organizations as well as governmental and private institutions. It is considered an effective means of providing cost-effective, accessible and participatory training for specific target groups. This type of training is also a means of making training available to hard-to-reach groups. Its clientele include people at the grassroots. Non-formal training is characteristically short, demand-driven, flexible and simple in its organization. It is usually delivered in formal settings except that it is not rigidly as chronological as formal training. Liimatainen (2003: 10) notes that one innovative training approach used in the informal sector mainly by government departments and NGOs is mobile teams, which provide training in immediate work contexts and provide on-site assistance to workers. Singh (2000) has categorized non-formal training into the following,

- Vocational training for those who are already working,
- Training for young people to facilitate access to formal vocational training
- Improving the entrepreneurial and training abilities of mastercraftsmen
- Training within community development schemes (counseling, women's groups and youth activities).

We identified a number non-formal training programmes used in the past or are currently being used by NGOs, government departments or parastatal agencies to improve the skills of the poor and the marginalized. Examples of non-formal training delivered are as follows

**Table 4: Non-Formal Programmes for Skill Development.**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Description of Programme</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>
Women's World Banking	training in accessing and managing micro-credit	Women micro and small entrepreneurs
National Council on Women and Development	Training women in the use of new appropriate technologies	Women food processors
December 31 <sup>st</sup> women's movement	Training in food processing	Women Micro and Small entrepreneurs
Non-Formal Education Division (MOE)-	Training in Income-generating activities integrated into literacy programmes	Illiterate men and women
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research	Training farmers, entrepreneurs in snail farming, animal rearing, new methods of cultivation, use of new seed varieties.	Targeted at the rural poor, unemployed youth and retired officials
The Social Investment Fund	Training in vocational skills	Poor and disadvantaged communities
The Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP)	Provision of short, practical vocational training. Started in 2002	Unemployed youth. 4800 youth have received training
Community-based poverty reduction project (CPRP)	Delivery of essential packages to help reintegrate street children in communities and families.	Poor communities
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	Training for good agronomic practices and food processing	Women in poor rural communities
International and local NGOs	Short Training in various skills	Poor and disadvantaged groups and individuals.

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Some shortcomings of this approach have been noted (Liimatainen 2003:11). The training provided by the NGOs tends to be very specific and reaches only a limited number of the intended beneficiaries. The impact on the training arrangements on the labour market is negligible. Training services are often provided by inexperienced staff who are not necessarily familiar with the needs of the informal sector workers. The scope of training is determined by the focus of the organization and often the focus is on civic/development education and literacy programmes with limited involvement in vocational training. Furthermore coordination among NGOs and between various programmes is poor leading to duplication of training activities for the same target groups. Where this happens, too many workers are trained in certain trades such as crafts leaving other trades without a sufficient number of skilled workers.

Since much of this training is localized, the district assemblies should be empowered to regulate and coordinate the type of training offered under this approach.

## Informal Training

This system of training is characterized by lack of uniformity, the absence of underlying curriculum and the absence of rigid start and end dates. The thrust is usually on practical skills, with minimal or no instruction on trade-related theory. Training may occur within the family setting or within the community, in the streets or during the working process. Informal training includes informal on-the-job training or apprenticeship, community-based training and mentoring. The most prominent and pervasive form of informal training in Ghana is traditional system of apprenticeship.

As a component of the diverse systems of training in the country, traditional apprenticeship accounts for the largest proportion of skills training. It is estimated to account for between 60 and 80 per cent of skill development in the labour market (Fluitman 1976; World Bank 1995). The system recruits its trainees broadly from underprivileged groups, a fact that is consistent with the composition of the labour market in terms of income groups. The results of a survey of about 3,500 apprentices done by the Ghana Statistical Survey (**See Table 3**) show that the most prominent trades that are learnt in the informal apprenticeship system are tailoring (including dressmaking), carpentry and mechanical trades. Tailoring is the most patronized. About 37 per cent of apprentices are engaged in tailoring. Of this, 66 per cent are females. Males predominate in the other trades such as carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, mechanical electronic/electrical and painting and spraying males. Only 2 per cent of the sample is female.

**Table 4; Distribution of apprentices by main trade learnt, sex and locality (percent)**

Trade learnt	URBAN			RURAL			GHANA		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Carpentry	16.0	0.4	8.5	15.7	-	9.0	15.8	0.2	8.8
Masonry	8.5	-	4.4	11.4	-	6.6	10.2	-	5.7
Tailoring	13.2	64.4	37.8	12.5	68.1	36.6	12.8	66.4	36.8
Blacksmithing	4.0	-	2.1	3.4	-	2.0	3.6	-	2.0
Mechanical	17.2	0.3	9.1	11.2	0.4	6.6	13.6	0.3	7.7
El'ctronics/El'ctrical	8.9	-	4.6	5.0	-	2.9	6.5	-	3.6
P'nting/Spraying	4.8	1.1	3.0	3.1	0.7	2.1	3.7	0.9	2.5
Other	27.5	33.7	30.5	7.7	30.8	34.8	33.6	32.1	33.0
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: GLSS 4

The poor in Ghana come from the predominant occupational group of farmers. A study (Ahadzie 2003) found that almost 50 per cent of apprentice respondents had fathers or guardians who are smallholder farmers. For these people, apprenticeship is the most probable way of entering into self-employment. It also served as a vehicle of social mobility. Closely related to the poor income background of apprentices is the matter of educational qualification. Even though the trend points to relatively increasing levels of educational qualifications of apprentices, general educational levels are still low. Contrary to what the Education Reform policy intended, entry into apprenticeship is not driven by pre-disposition of students at basic education level to vocational and technical subjects. Apprenticeship appears to be rather responding to labour market conditions that are external to the education system.

The weak external efficiency of the basic education system accounts for a large number of graduates of the education system seeking further skill development opportunities. Their weak numeracy and literacy skills have been found to be one main reason they choose the apprenticeship option. Articulation between basic education and traditional apprenticeship has become an enforced link instead of an officially formulated one. The weak basic education system therefore, seems to be undermining the rate and quality of knowledge and skill absorption in the traditional apprenticeship system. The importance of education in skill absorption in skill building was emphasised by the master-craftsmen themselves. Their expectations of a shorter period of apprenticeship and advancement and skill acquisition beyond what they themselves possess is a strong reason for placing emphasis on educational qualifications beyond what they possessed. As is happening in many contemporary learning environments, it will become commonplace for the next few generations of craftsmen to recruit only apprentices of with levels of education higher or better than what is available now. As basic education becomes universalized, the training system will benefit from recruiting only educated apprentices.

There is no uniformity in duration of training in the informal apprenticeship system. On average training lasts for about two and a half years. The data in Table 4 show that training in blacksmithing, mechanical work and electrical work take the most time. It needs to be noted that the average duration of training for males is longer than that of females. For the males, it takes close to 34 months to acquire a skill, while it takes about 26 months for females to complete apprenticeship. The data also indicate that the average length of apprenticeship is longer in urban areas than in rural areas. The differences are based more on the type of trade than on the location or on the gender of apprentices.

Table 5 Average length of apprenticeship by main trade learnt, sex and locality (month)

Trade learnt	URBAN			RURAL			GHANA		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Carpentry	39.5	29.6	39.2	29.4	-	29.4	33.4	29.6	33.4
Masonry	31.2	-	31.2	30.0	-	30.0	30.4	-	30.4

Tailoring	37.1	29.4	30.8	31.4	26.0	27.0	33.7	27.5	28.6
Blacksmithing	55.5	-	55.5	39.3	-	39.3	46.3	-	46.3
Mechanical	36.9	19.1	36.5	35.9	29.2	35.8	36.4	22.7	36.2
El'trnics/El'trical	36.7	-	36.7	41.7	-	41.7	39.0	-	39.0
P'nting/Spraying	32.6	16.6	29.1	37.1	23.7	35.2	35.4	20.1	32.8
Other	35.3	24.1	28.9	29.7	21.5	26.5	31.5	22.8	27.4
All	37.2	27.3	32.4	31.8	24.5	28.7	31.5	25.8	30.2

*Source: GLSS 4*

The physical working environment poses health and safety risks to both apprentices and masters. Non-use of protective clothing has led to sustenance of injuries (in some cases, permanent disability) by apprentices. It has also been found that the gender-neutral facilities provided at the workshop inhibit access by girls to non-traditional vocations. The poor physical environment reduces the effectiveness of instruction and therefore fails to enhance optimisation of skill acquisition. The instructional process itself does not conform to any sequenced approach. The most common approach to skill acquisition revolves around observation, imitation and later repetition. This is not surprising since the majority of craftsmen have received no training in instructional methods. Much of the instructional techniques in use is in-bred and therefore has proved incapable of expanding beyond the system limits. Providing training to craftsmen on how to transmit skills can redress this shortcoming. The informal-formal sector collaboration found at Suame and Odawna, where instructors from formal training institutions offer additional training to both craftsmen and apprentices is one method of raising the capability of craftsmen to instruct better.

Apart from the lack of pedagogical skills, the characteristic haphazard training also derives from the absence of training standards and training guides for most informal sector crafts. Craftsmen in dressmaking, tailoring, electrical installations, especially those with some level of education, were found to be using training curriculum that have been adapted from NVTI and GES by either the craftsmen themselves or by their trade associations. The need to train to given standards is motivated by the fact that the apprentices in some of these crafts are encouraged to take trade tests administered by these institutions. The pass rate obtained by those apprentices who take the trade tests, suggest some measure of internal quality control. For a training system that is hardly evaluated by external assessors, developing training standards that is amenable to regular review in response to changing technologies will increase its internal and external efficiencies.

Expanding the traditional apprenticeship system depends on pursuing policies that reduce the costs of training, and improve access to credit, raw materials, technology and markets for the craftsmen. These are beyond the immediate control of the craftsmen. The responsibility to formulate the respective policies falls essentially on state and non-state

actors outside the apprenticeship system. Collaboration among all such actors will create the appropriate policy intervention that will expand the training system.

### **Towards an Improved Skill Development Environment.**

The Skill development environment is extremely heterogeneous. This requires the formulation of policies that respond to the specific training needs in the labour market. Given that training is an important route for the poor to ease themselves out of poverty, the kinds of policy reform required must be pro-poor or anti-poverty. As the largest training system, the informal sector needs assistance that goes beyond helping to provide minimum livelihood. The survival and livelihood related informal sector activities have to be transformed into entrepreneurial activities that would generate income beyond survival of the entrepreneur (Liitmatainen 2002). Fluitman (1989) suggests that macro-level interventions should primarily aim at building or strengthening the institutional framework and creating an enabling environment that permits the transfer of skills and competencies and link training authorities to the training needs of the informal sector as well as adopting national training policies to reflect these needs. The skill development approaches that can help reduce poverty are those that promote employability and are capable according to the ILO of:

- identifying the capabilities of the target group -in particular educational and social background- and finding ways to upgrade their skills;
- identifying potential opportunities;
- match both in a timely manner while differentiating the modalities of skills delivery between various target groups (women, youths, ethnic minorities, those who are illiterate, disabled, etc.);
- ensure linkages with adequate support services other than training;
- strengthen institutional capacity of training organizations and other support services as well as organizational capacity of target group;
- address issues related to inadequate policy and regulatory framework

The ILO recommends other equally important features of a skill development approach targeted at poverty reduction.

#### **An integrated approach**

Higher productivity is needed to improve job quality but training alone does not necessarily result in higher productivity. A combination -and, most important, coordination- of different support services is often needed. Complementary support services may include literacy and basic education, micro-credit, business development services, social services. Also, since many poor people work in the informal economy, a policy and regulatory environment that is conducive to employment creation, equity, micro-enterprise development, is crucial, as is institutional strengthening.

#### **Gender**

Skills development is one of the instruments to further gender equality. Unless skills development initiatives have an explicit gender equality agenda there is a real risk that

they may contribute to increasing gender gaps rather than promoting gender equality. However training on its own is not sufficient to overcome labour market segmentation and it should be part of a wider policy framework.

### **Training methods**

On-the-job training or in circumstances familiar to the trainees are the most effective ones, the aim being to tackle as far as possible immediate problems with exercises that have an immediate effect. Depending upon the circumstances this may be combined with flexible modular systems that include various components of different levels of complexity. This enables individuals to move from one module to another, according to their needs. There is scope to increase the coverage and cost effectiveness of training through the use of distance learning and ICT in training programmes. This is an area with a lot of potential provided such technology is carefully adapted to the characteristics and needs of the end-users in the informal economy.

### **Community-Based Training (CBT) Programme for (Self-) Employment and Income Generation**

One of the most appropriate tools for the poor in the field of training is the Community-Based Training (CBT) Programme for (Self-) Employment and Income Generation. This programme combines skills development with other support services, including capacity-building for policy formulation. The CBT aims at developing capacities of government agencies, social partners and other institutions and mobilises support among communities. It advocates an area-cum-target group approach aimed at utilising available local opportunities and resources. It emphasizes workplace learning. The ILO is planning to produce an updated generic training manual on the basis of experience gained so far in various developing and transition countries.

### **Grassroots Management Training**

This very basic small business management training manual is aimed at strengthening the capacity of micro-entrepreneurs and self-employed persons in the informal economy. It uses pictures and drawings that relate to the entrepreneurs' everyday life. Various versions have been developed in English (Grassroots Management Training), in French (under the name *ça fera l'affaire*) and in Spanish for the Andean countries (*Elementos de Gestión Empresarial "EGE"*). This manual has been adapted and translated into several African languages, including Kiswahili, and it has been adapted to the needs of specific target groups such as the rural poor in the Andean region of Peru and Bolivia, as well as rural women. In the case of EGE, this programme emphasises such aspects as gender issues, decent work and the elimination of child labour. The ILO is also developing analytical tools for assessing the effectiveness of training systems in responding to the requirements of different segments of the very heterogeneous informal economy in order to evolve strategies for improved skills delivery and acquisition.

### **Concluding Word**

We have observed in this paper that skill development is a critical aspect of the effort to reduce poverty. This is because the main asset the poor have is their labour and adding

value to this asset is the way to assure an exit out of dire poverty, other things being equal. Governments have over the years recognised the need to improve the stock of skills in the country, at least in principle. But we noted a huge gap between policy prescriptions and the commitment of fiscal resources for the realisation of the objectives of the policies. The effect is that we as a country still experience low skill levels. The training systems that should deliver the skills are under-funded, or in the case of the traditional apprenticeship system, not funded at all. The different types of training systems have specific problems that stretch across relevance, equipment and tools, pedagogy, duration, access and quality.

Our focus in this paper has been providing training for the poor. In thinking about the nature of a pro-poor training strategy, we think two critical issues should receive attention. First, there is need to increase resources into the training sector. Second, we propose that a look be taken at issues of management, planning, funding and actual delivery of training within the training system.

We totally agree with the conclusion drawn by Bennell (1999) that skills development for the poor must be part and parcel of community-based economic and political development. Skills development should be driven by a people-centred pedagogy which maximises locally available skills and empowers the poor to learn for themselves. Support for skills development should be directly linked to the actual skills needs of the poor and, invariably will need to be closely related to on-going production activities as one finds in the traditional apprenticeship system. This is not discounting the need to include many of the main characteristics of market-driven TVET reform strategies into the design of pro-poor training strategies. We expect that the state will assume an oversight responsibility and cede the actual training delivery to more efficient training agencies. Such reforms would in our view restore the eroded dignity of the large number of economically active persons who are living on the margins of Ghanaian society.

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