

Skills Training in the Informal Sector: Perspectives from Ghana

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Abstract

Youth unemployment is a major concern in sub-Saharan Africa. Unemployment usually results from the lack of appropriate skills to enter the labour market. In Ghana, many enter the informal sector to train for a vocation, but the problem with acquiring skills in the informal sector is that the training is usually informal and unstructured. This article explores the modes of training in the informal sector to find out how the skills provided aid the employability of these workers. It provides empirical evidence to anchor policies on education and institutional policy prescriptions towards effectively equipping the youth with both employable and entrepreneurial skills that promote economic growth in the country. This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore training in the informal sector, and follows the grounded theory process to collect and analyse data. In all, 26 participants were sampled using the purposive and convenience methods. The findings indicate that training designed for informal workers is not linked to the development agenda of the state, and the institutions are challenged in the execution of their mandates. Some beneficiaries are unable to implement their learning for lack of start-up capital, and they divert to other entrepreneurial activities as a survival strategy. The government needs to plan for the development of entrepreneurial skills in the informal sector, to extend the coverage of this development and to support the industrialisation agenda.

Keywords: skills training; informal sector; informal employment; sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Training is a learning experience aimed at bringing about a relatively permanent change in an individual's skills, knowledge, attitudes or social behaviour. Training can be formal or informal (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1996; Hellriegel et al., 2001). Formal training



can be described as having an identifiable start and an end, determinable hours and a budget, whereas informal training happens when workers learn from watching others within unstructured settings, and for most of these workers the training never ends (Brown, 1990). In a study in Switzerland on why some firms train apprentices but many others do not, it was observed that the attempt to introduce a training policy to enhance informal training would cause non-training firms to incur significantly higher costs during the apprenticeship period (Wolter, Mühlemann, & Schweri, 2006). In this same study, it was found that the apprenticeship system was a path taken by 60 per cent of youngsters at secondary education level. Upon the completion of their secondary schooling most of them chose the dual education system, that is, combining vocational education at school with training while working for a company (Wolter et al., 2006).

However, the kind of industry support described above does not exist for secondary school leavers in Ghana and they are dependent on informal training. Training schemes in the informal sector are only truly effective when they are tailored to the social and economic situations they seek to improve or develop. The effectiveness of these schemes depends on how integrated they are with the process of implementation and the expected outcomes (Walther & Filipiak, 2007). In a study on training interventions aimed at the development of entrepreneurial skills in the informal sector in South Africa, black micro entrepreneurs in the informal sector were found to have very limited skills (Walther & Filipiak, 2007). These limited skills of entrepreneurs are attributed to a lack of the formal education and training that micro entrepreneurs need to make a success of a business. Skills competencies are acquired mostly through experimental learning (learning by making mistakes) and after start-up initiatives have taken form. Entrepreneurs do not have the technical skills that are a prerequisite for starting a micro business or any business. Due to this, management skills are often lacking in situations where the entrepreneurial skills have been acquired through experimental learning (Smith & Perks, 2006).

Traditional school-based programmes rarely give students the opportunity to apply what they learn, and on-the-job learning also does not fully equip students with conceptual knowledge about their field of activity. Zimmermann et al. (2013) therefore promote dual models of vocational education and training tailored to the labour market. However, the specific conditions in given national or local contexts should be taken into account. Apprenticeships should be better linked with the schooling system and the formal sector in countries where traditional or informal apprenticeships are dominant yet mainly confined to traditional crafts. Such countries need to be open to adopting new technologies and accepting occupational change (Zimmermann et al., 2013). The key to South Africa's economic future lies in the training of young entrepreneurs who can create their own wealth and businesses and jobs for others. The greater percentage of South Africa's population is unskilled, perhaps because the formal education system is unable to absorb the numbers of learners (Erasmus & Van Dyk, 2003). Thus, the acquisition of skills is facilitated by training, but the formal training available is not sufficient to achieve the goals of skills training, hence the need for training in the

informal sector. Though many studies have focused on the importance of training and the impact of training on the skills development of people, this article focuses on how training is implemented for effective skills development to promote the employability of the youth in the informal sector.

Specifically, this article examines skills development in the informal sector in Ghana. It also looks at the modes of training or apprenticeship that are presented and how these promote the employability of the youth in the informal sector in Ghana. In addressing the given objectives, the following questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the forms of training via apprenticeship in the informal sector?
2. Do these training programmes or apprenticeships promote employability?
3. What are the factors that promote or hinder skills acquisition by means of informal training programmes or apprenticeships in the informal sector?

It is expected that the results of this research will help informal operatives to gain knowledge about best practices for improving skills development. The findings will assist institutions working in the informal sector to adopt suitable forms of training according to the needs of trainees.

Background

Although apprenticeship has been part of the informal sector for years, the youth do not seem to be adequately prepared to make use of entrepreneurial opportunities in the informal sector. The uniqueness of the sector shows that providers, both institutions and individuals, need to offer a different form of training. Workers in this sector must acquire multiple skills but they do not have the time to be trained or to upgrade. The size of the informal sector is significant in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, in Nigeria, Kenya and Senegal. In 2000, it accounted for about 42 per cent of GDP in 23 African countries (Devey, Skinner, & Valodia, 2006; Schneider, 2002). The way the workers in the informal sector are prepared for job activities is therefore critical. If they undergo technical and vocational education or training, these operatives can become entrepreneurs. In the informal sector, the self-employed usually work for employers to acquire skills on the job informally or through apprenticeships. Thereafter they leave to begin their own businesses.

Skills training to prepare workers for informal employment was vibrant in the 1960s, but in the 1980s and 1990s, structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were implemented, governments' budgets shrunk, and institutions could not upgrade skills training programmes to meet the growing changes in the informal sector (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2001; International Labour Organisation, 2002; Walther & Filipak, 2007). Other training provided by governments seems tailored for the formal or literate sector and these programmes are theoretical and difficult to implement in the informal setting (Liimatainen, 2002). In addition, the training is standardised and does not provide the

diverse multi-skills needed in the informal sector (Ziderman, 2003). Public vocational or technical schools require continuous full-time study, which does not meet the needs of those earning a living who need to upgrade their skills. A more suitable approach was adopted in Kenya in the 1990s: through the Jua Kali programme, non-government organisations and experienced craftsmen tailored skills training to the needs of operatives and trained workers after working hours (Adams, 2009).

Today, entrepreneurship education in secondary and tertiary institutions prepares people for entrepreneurial activities in the informal sector, but Farstad (2002) is of the opinion that this kind of training in Botswana, Uganda and Kenya has had no immediate impact on starting a business. This is due to the fact that the traditional way of starting a business is through apprenticeship or employment to gain experience. Partnerships between training institutions and private enterprises in curriculum development and delivery have improved the skills development process, giving those who missed formal education and literacy programmes the second chance they need to be educated (World Bank, 2007). To provide effective training in the informal sector, providers should understand the needs of the people in order to provide them with context-relevant solutions that allow them to cope and sustain their livelihoods. The skills training programmes need to consider education, poverty eradication and development to provide holistic interventions of learning because learning is a personal activity that is influenced by social activity (Singh, 2000).

The informal sector in Ghana is made up of over 90 per cent of the working population who is involved in diverse survival economic activities (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). The government has not included this sector in its development agenda, nevertheless it believes that this category of workers could pay tax. In 2018, the government announced its intention to formalise the sector, which would require every person to register for a tax number. The Ghana government launched its revenue mobilisation strategy, and, to achieve its revenue target for 2018, is implementing measures that will ensure tax compliance and revenue collection from the current taxpayer pool, particularly from the informal sector. Everyone from the age of 18 is expected to pay tax and is required to register for a tax identification number. Only when they produce their tax identification number will they be able to access public services, which include registering for health insurance, applying for a national ID card, and opening a bank account.

Given the Ghanaian government's agenda to formalise the informal sector as announced in the 2018 budget, it is relevant to assess the preparedness of the sector to accept this change. Among other things, workers in the informal sector will need to follow survival strategies and acquire the requisite skills to grow their businesses to be able to survive, operate profitably and pay taxes. In this article, we assess skills training in the informal sector aimed at providing the needed capacity for workers in the informal sector to grow their businesses and to pay the taxes the government expects them to in its bid to widen its tax net.

The Context of Training in the Informal Sector

Training to the informal worker is learning to know and understand clusters of enterprises to help solve problems and to acquire competencies to implement solutions (Singh, 2000). The abilities acquired enable the informal worker to develop multiple skills that can aid in switching jobs when one job is found to be unprofitable. The economic activities are survival strategies that allow workers to abandon any unproductive venture and to identify and pursue a new venture (Rodgers, 2000). Informal workers need to take control of their lives by being trained and acquiring skills that will empower them to earn a living at any stage in their lives to secure their income and work (Rodgers, 2000). Given the marked diversity within the informal sector, skills training needs to consider the differences in the sector, and skill-building packages are to be developed on the assumption that workers are almost totally illiterate.

The challenge that the development of such packages poses is to focus on manual instead of mental work and to make provision for the changing competencies that workers need to switch between jobs to stay successful. Another difficulty is that the boundary between informal and formal work is fading, which means that informal workers need mental skills to do manual work effectively. Since the formal sector in developing countries keeps shrinking it is no longer the main source of employment for the working class, and the re-emergence of the informal sector needs to be tabled on the development agenda. Given the diversity in the informal sector, policies in developing countries need to consider training perspectives that support entire communities and self-employment, different modalities and different contexts and work settings (Singh, 1997).

The strategies that ministries and government departments in developing countries adopt in disseminating skills in the informal sector are inadequate for the interventions needed within the sector. The institutions are unable to cover the entire spectrum of skills development and training needed for employment generation, and the traditional apprenticeships do not fully provide the skills needed. The skills training is also unable to accommodate the changing nature of the informal sector (Mamgain & Awasthi, 2001). In developing countries, such as Ghana and Bangladesh, the traditional informal apprenticeship system is the means by which skills training is given in the informal sector, for instance in welding, carpentry, bicycle and auto repair, and dressmaking. The skills transferred are usually limited to particular crafts, there are no defined standards and usually there is no additional support in the learning process. It boils down to a situation of “the master can impart what the master has learned.” The apprentice learns the skills by observing and assisting the master in all kinds of work, extending from personal to home activities. The extension of the apprentice and master relationship becomes exploitative. The learning context is unstructured, flexible and adaptable to the needs of the master craftsman. It is targeted at providing skills for self-employment in the informal sector. After the completion of the programme the apprentice usually

serves the master for a period of about a year before leaving to begin his or her own business (Titumir, 2005).

Research Approach

This qualitative research followed an interpretive process and used grounded theory to study apprentices (learners of a trade), their masters (master craftsmen) and government institutions working with and/or training informal workers. A theory is grounded when it is developed and generated through collected data, and in the current research, data was collected from interviews, field observations and documents. Audio tapes were used in the gathering of data, and the researchers were responsible for interpreting what had been observed, heard and read. The data was systematically and continuously gathered and constantly and comparatively analysed using the constant comparative method (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The verification of propositions was done throughout the research by developing the conceptual density of the data, which was systematically checked by constantly making comparisons, asking concept-related questions and using systematic coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

The study population comprised informal workers and support training institutions in Ghana. The empirical focus was the apprentices and their masters in the informal sector in the Greater Accra region because it is the hub of economic activity in the country. The research used cross-sectional survey data that was collected at a given point in time.

The sample was selected based on the purposive and convenience methods. The purposive selection of participants enabled the researchers to obtain the information needed from different economic sectors. Among the apprentices were four seamstresses, five welders, and 10 aluminium and glass fabricators. The masters consisted of one seamstress, one glass fabricator, and three institutions that trained informal workers. Information obtained from the providers of the training (the masters) explained the factors that influenced the choice of mode for the training. The apprentices were selected using convenience sampling as their selection depended on their availability.

In order to gather empirical evidence, the researchers used interviews to collect data from the participants. The views of the service providers, apprentices and masters were sought on the forms the training took, the duration of the training, problems faced during the period of training, and the way forward. The transcribed text was coded and analysed to generate results (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The variables were discussed to assess the general effectiveness of the training programmes. The ethical requirements relating to informing the selected participants and organisations about the study were strictly adhered to.

The data collected was thematically analysed (Creswell, 2012). The results of the analysis were discussed to arrive at conclusions relating to theoretical formulations and implications.

Discussion of Empirical Evidence

The data was analysed to find out how apprenticeship processes and training programmes in the informal sector were conducted in Ghana and to establish whether the skills training provided promoted employability. The analysis further explored the factors that promoted or hindered training attempts in the informal sector.

The Ghanaian government and some of its institutions train informal workers using different modalities depending on the focus of the institution. Whereas one institution focuses on the manufacturing and services sectors, another provides general technical and vocational training across the formal and informal sectors at the pre-tertiary level. This indicates the tendency for these institutions to duplicate their efforts and cross-train in the informal sector because the scope of focus of organisations overlaps. The development agenda for the informal sector needs to be clearly mapped out or planned for the limited efforts by government to be focused and for a wider coverage of these workers to be reached. A participant employed in a government institution explained their focus when he was asked if they trained street hawkers.

It is all about industrialization in Ghana, so we train people in the manufacturing and service industry. We help the hawkers but they are not our primary beneficiaries. We don't do commerce but when there are special programs then we can train them; we do, but our principal clientele bases are those into manufacturing and service industries; we talk of block manufacturers, welding, auto spraying, barbers, hair dressers, interior décor, and general printing. It is about industrializing the country; buying and selling high-quality goods made in Ghana.

Another institution is a regulatory body for those providing technical and vocational education and for those who train at the pre-tertiary level in the formal and informal sectors. In response to a question about who in the informal sector they train, the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) indicated as follows:

Those who are operating their own shops, having their own containers, at least having a minimum of two learners to be trained, or even if you don't have any training at all but you are operating your own shop in the technical and vocational trade. These are the people who are operating in the informal sector. This includes those who are not operating in a well-structured system, for instance the absence of laid-down rules for work. Their work is more of a "one-man business," whether registered or not.

The National Board for Small-Scale Industries defines informal work as a small business or a micro enterprise. Whereas informal work needs to have more than one apprentice to qualify for a training programme offered by one government institution, it

needs to have up to six employees to receive help from another government institution. The government has not been able to define the category of workers in the informal sector it is dealing with. As a result, it has not been able to develop workable skills training interventions for its people.

Skills training or apprenticeship in the informal sector takes on several forms, such as oral presentations, observations, trial and error situations, modelling, coaching, and mentoring. At the shop, the master craftsman explains the work to those who start working for the first time or to those who encounter specific work processes for the first time. The trainees observe the master doing the work and the apprentices observe the processes being executed. The master usually requests an apprentice to assist with the work so that some of the skills can be learned gradually until the apprentices can perform the activity unaided. In response to a question about how training is conducted and the forms it takes, one participant gave the following description:

It's a practical one. In the workshop we give the theoretical lecture (explanation), then they do the hands on. Our training is mostly on the hands on. Say you can produce this fan, not just writing the procedure or the processes of producing it. Do it and let's see. That's why we call it competence based; you become competent in doing it. Do it and let's see. So ours is practical, hands on, always done in the workshop.

It seems that little is achieved when trying to present formal, academic schooling because the workers get disinterested and exit the programme due to illiteracy. The inability of most of the population in the informal sector to read and write makes them shun formal education or training. According to one institution, the workers do not show interest in attending their training programmes because they think they should be able to read and write. This institution finds it difficult to get the workers to participate because they do not want to make them feel uncomfortable. The inability of the workers to read and write makes it impossible for the trainers to give out printed materials—all information must be passed on by word of mouth. Sometimes it is difficult to communicate because of a language barrier. Even though the institutions find this difficult, the researchers observed that a lady in the informal sector, who is a master seamstress and who speaks Twi, has been able to successfully train her apprentice for two years even though the apprentice speaks Ewe and they could hardly understand each other's local language. Contrary to the trainer in the formal sector, the informal master craftsman is able to provide effective skills training by circumventing the language barrier through demonstrating the work and giving the workers practical experience.

Promoting Employability through Skills Training

From the interviews conducted, the researchers established that while the institutions mainly targeted the training of informal workers who were already in employment, the masters trained anyone who was ready to learn the trade, whether they were young people or adults, educated or not educated. The institutions focused on skills improvement whereas the master craftsmen assisted people to start a business. The

researchers noted that both the government institutions and the masters trained minors (people younger than 18 years) to prepare them for adult life. When one participant was asked about the minimum age of trainees, she reported as follows:

The people who come to us are beneath the approved eighteen years. Some come at the age of sixteen. We train them so that when they are of a legal age to register a business, then they can do that.

People younger than 18 years cannot be employed in the formal sector, but the reality is that they are either employees or self-employed in the informal sector. Most people who train with the institutions have started their businesses; some attend the training to polish up their skills, but some drop out along the line. Some also diversify because trends are changing. The institutions do not usually follow up on their training but when they do they find that some of the trainees are able to maintain the skills they learned, that some want to start an enterprise or business but lack the money to do so, and that some go into a different direction to raise capital to begin with the activity as they intended originally. Sometimes when the government institutions run entrepreneurship programmes, corporate bodies contact them to support entrepreneurs with start-up kits. A participant from an institution claimed that, “That’s why we need so many friends.”

At the time of the research, the researchers interacted with an apprentice who had completed training but was still at the master’s workshop. According to the participant, when apprentices had no sponsors or donors to support them, they lacked start-up capital to put to use the skills they had learned and they ended up lurking around the master craftsmen’s businesses hoping to receive stipends in return for helping out. On being asked how much she earned, an apprentice who had completed her training, reported:

If I’m able to sew something then she gives me something from that. Like a commission. There is no place in my house. I don’t know where I will stay and work from and I don’t have space. I don’t have a machine.

One institution indicated that some trainers, especially institutions, trained street hawkers to provide them with skills and enable them to establish some form of business. For this category of trainees, the total cost of the training is borne by the sponsor or the donor. For example, a participant from COTVET explained as follows:

We recently ended one. We call it DSIP (Development of Self for Industry Project). And it was for the informal sector. The master craftsmen who are working include those in the cosmetology, the garment and the electronics [fields]. So we pick the youth who are on the streets and are not doing anything, we assign them to these masters, they train them and their training fees are paid for.

From the data obtained, it is observed that these workers are engaged in survival strategies and that training them but not providing start-up capital does not make the skills acquisition process meaningful. If institutions have no or limited funding at the

time they complete their skills training process, they leave the trained workers to their fate.

On the other hand, the researchers observed that one institution provided support for one year's training, whereas it took an average of three years to fully complete apprenticeship training in the informal sector. This means that the trainees do not complete their training and that they are unable to set up and manage the business in their chosen area because they have only been partially trained. As a result, this institution looks for those who have already established their trade to help them improve. If the project does not include funding to supply the apprentices with the upgraded equipment or the technology they were trained to use, the institution will teach the trainees and leave them to find their own tools. If the apprentices do not use the new technology, they will have to go back to their old ways and improvise by using cheap technology.

In addition to the above, the data indicated that one of the institutions recruited its trainees from the informal workers' associations through their national headquarters. However, the majority of the hawkers and the self-employed or own-account workers do not belong to these groupings. This government institution has one office in Accra and is expected to provide skills training to and upgrade 90 per cent of the Ghanaian working population in the informal sector (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). On being asked how this institution included those who were not affiliated to these associations in the training, the participant explained that:

That is a disadvantage. When you want to be in the informal sector, it means that you should be in an organized body for you to enjoy these benefits. There are a lot of associations. But because those who are not in associations are more than those who are, it limits the coverage. For instance, if I learnt how to sew from helping an aunt and I'm not practising, the dressmakers' association will not accept me.

Therefore, many of the informal workers do not benefit from the services provided because they may have chosen not to belong to the associations or were unable to belong. The inability to use these learned skills add up to factors that hinder skills training in the informal sector as discussed in the next section.

Factors that Promote or Hinder Skills Training in the Informal Sector

Skills training in the informal sector has helped some informal workers to grow and register their businesses. An informal worker who had acquired a specific skill, found that the exposure and support she enjoyed enabled her to expand her trade. The institution where she had trained reported on her success story:

When you go to Kumasi we have one person there who was an informal sector worker in cosmetology. After giving her training in doing nails, make-up etc., she has

transformed her training into a formal one and is now running an institution: admitting learners, operating like a formal institution, teaching and then it is accredited.

Apart from reported successes, skills training efforts have also grappled with many challenges. The main challenge has been the lack of funds to complete the training processes and to support the trainees to purchase equipment or provide them with start-up capital to begin business ventures of their own. Some trainees learn about the improved technology in their field of trade but they cannot put the learned skill into practice because of a lack of money to purchase the modern equipment required. In addition, institutions do not have adequate personnel to use as resource persons. Out of necessity, institutions charge the informal trainees or small and micro enterprises for some of the programmes and then make up the shortfall by using the money they get from the government or donations they receive from other partners. One of the institutions writes proposals to seek partnerships to support it.

Another difficulty that skills training in the informal sector has to contend with is the inability to manage the wide dispersal of potential trainees.

They are too scattered. Mobilizing them, bringing them together and even creating the awareness. For instance, making them know that COTVET is there to assist them, and whatever we do, we should let the country be aware of it so that if there is any support, not only financial, but say technical, we will make it available to them. That awareness is not there. Some people are working at home but people wouldn't even know that someone is sewing in the house.

Some apprentices do not have space in their homes to begin a business, and even when they are able to enrol as apprentices and go through the training, they do not have the needed tools to learn the trade effectively. Some masters allow the poor to enrol without paying the initial fees. Sometimes, when trainees have helped their masters to complete a contract, the masters give the trainees stipend to purchase food to sustain them through the day. Masters are craftsmen who can train illiterates to take measurements and cut materials to specification so that they can do the work. However, some masters are unwilling to pass on knowledge and skills to the learners when they regard them as being disrespectful. For example, a secondary school leaver could feel that the pace of teaching is slow and that he or she could do much more. When he or she raises these concerns, the master may feel challenged and may hold back some of the training. The masters do not tailor the apprenticeship programmes to categories of workers or levels of learning. Everyone who shows up begins the same way and goes through the same process to the end. At the end, the trainee serves the master for a minimum of six months before leaving.

In the next section, the implications of the findings about skills training are discussed.

Discussion of Findings

The data collected indicates that institutions and workers in the informal sector follow fixed training schedules but that trainees who do apprenticeships with local masters/craftsmen are often unsure when their training will end. Institutions train beneficiaries based on the availability of funds—when the funds are exhausted the training ends irrespective of whether the trainees are able to utilise the skill or not. Institutions' training periods last from six months to one year, whereas full apprenticeship training with a master takes an average of three years. As a result, most of the trainees often feel that their training does not provide them with all the skills they require to establish a business (refer to Brown, 1990).

Institutions have independent programmes and all of these target the same category of workers in the informal sector—one focuses on manufacturing and services and the other on the informal sector in general. The lack of demarcation is likely to lead to a duplication of the processes, the outcomes and even the beneficiaries of the programmes. If institutions work together on planning their activities, they are likely to provide more complete skills training programmes as opposed to short-term training programmes.

In the case of other institutions, the beneficiaries are those who have already started their entrepreneurial activity or micro business, so the focus of the training is to provide them with technical skills to strengthen or grow their trade. Therefore these workers lack management skills and they have no knowledge about management principles and legal provisions relevant to their trade. The schooling system in Ghana, which provides some basis of formal learning, does not provide the leavers with entrepreneurial skills and as a result they are not ready to start work. In this regard, Zimmermann et al. (2013) proposes a dual system of education and training to equip the youth with work skills.

Skills training in the informal sector takes various forms. Training at institutions takes the form of lectures or practical studies, and experienced craftsmen are invited to share their skills with adult learners. Sometimes, the institutions give participants recorded copies of their lectures on CD. A programme targeted at the youth leaving school to be trained in a pre-vocation is now being piloted for a training institution to link interested persons with master crafters. A training programme at an institution often focuses on a specific area of trade, and even the workers themselves choose to be trained only in a specific trade. However, they need multiple skills because when they find that a particular trade is not viable they can easily switch to other entrepreneurial activities if they already have multiple skills. They often do not have the time in between jobs to undergo training to acquire another skill. Neither the institutions nor the craftsmen who train the apprentices have a solution to this problem.

It is important to note that the nature of the informal sector in itself poses a problem for both the institutions and the workers as regards the skills development process. The

institutions find it difficult to create awareness in the sector because the workers are scattered over a wide area. They do not know how to reach workers to invite them to take part in their programmes, so they resort to contacting workers through the associations in the informal sector, but not all workers belong to associations. The institutions direct their invitations to the head offices of the associations and rely on them to nominate participants from their branches. However, this is a disadvantage to those who are not unionised by choice or who do not qualify to belong. As most workers do not belong to associations, the coverage of the training programmes is limited. There are nine informal associations affiliated with the federation of informal workers (Union of Informal Workers Association) and there are a few unaffiliated ones scattered throughout the country.

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions were reached.

Conclusion

Skills training in the informal sector is a necessity to empower the workers to begin and grow their entrepreneurial activities in the private sector, which is considered to be the engine of growth in an economy. The impact of the training provided by the institutions is minimal because it does not cover a significant proportion of the target sector, and efforts to achieve wider coverage are limited. Unfortunately, training programmes geared at providing the needed support are not coordinated for maximum output. The institutions that support skills training in the informal sector could cross-train the same workers without knowing, and in this way training is duplicated.

The government needs to provide a development plan for the institutions to clearly focus on specified training activities or a specific training agenda in the informal sector. This development agenda should include the facilitation of learning and skills development and utilisation. Facilities (start-up capital or equipment) could be advanced to the trainees, which they could pay for according to their ability once they have started or established their businesses. The equipment or start-up kit or capital can be granted as a loan. For instance, the apprentice who completed training but is unemployed could be supported to acquire a sewing machine, and when work starts to come in, the person could start to pay for the machine. At present, the skills training in the informal sector is not adequately targeted and the institutions are not resourced to ensure that the efforts lead to the employment of trainees.

The institutions and the informal workers have different concepts and perceptions of the informal sector. Consequently, service providers target the same workers, which leads to the duplication of efforts in the informal sector. It is important for the state to clearly define informal work, informal workers and the boundaries of the informal sector so as to help service providers to focus their efforts.

Another problem is the level of illiteracy in the country (9.1% of the population). Often, informal workers can communicate only in the local languages (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015), which makes it difficult for the formally trained staff who cannot speak the local languages to train the workers. The government needs to promote adult literacy to give those without formal schooling another chance to learn to read and write. This will enable the workers to apply available technology to their trades. When learning cannot be effectively transferred because of a language barrier, employability cannot be guaranteed.

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