

Traditional Apprenticeship in Ghana and Senegal: Skills Development for Youth for the Informal Sector

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Abstract

The demographic youth bulge, representing large cohorts of youth, coupled with lack of pathways to education and employment and therefore social mobility, have become issues of great concern. As a result, youth employment and technical and vocational skills development have grown in prominence on international and national agendas in recent years. However, skills development strategies often overlook the informal sector despite the fact that in developing countries, income-generating activities in the informal sector often far exceed those of the formal sector. UNESCO's 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* on youth skills development states that traditional apprenticeships are an important way of acquiring transferable and job-specific skills, particularly for the informal sector. An extensive review of the literature of Ghana and Senegal reveals that these two countries have long histories of traditional apprenticeship and that these forms of skills training reach more youth than formal technical and vocational training. This paper examines the approaches these two countries' governments have taken to increase access to and quality of non-formal skills training opportunities. Despite a lack of data on the long-term outcomes of these initiatives, programs and reforms, several important implications arise from these countries' experiences. These implications are discussed as well as areas for future research.

Introduction

In Ghana, a young woman in the capital city sells trinkets in the market for small sums of money. Though she desires to become an artisan so she can create her own quality products for sale and perhaps start her own business, there are no vocational programs that have a flexible schedule that would allow her to continue to work. Hundreds of miles away in Senegal, a young man in the countryside farms on a small plot of land with outdated tools. He dreams of moving to the nearby town and becoming a mechanic. However, he lacks the money to leave his family and join an apprenticeship program, which would require long hours of work and training and little pay. In developing countries around the world, millions of uneducated and unemployed young people inundate slums on the peripheries of cities looking for work and a better life than in the countryside. Meanwhile, young people in rural areas are idle due to lack of adequate pathways to further education, training or employment opportunities.

The issues of youth employment and technical and vocational skills development¹ have been growing in prominence on international and national agendas in recent years. The emergence of demographic youth bulges with large cohorts of youth in many countries, coupled with a lack of pathways to education and employment and therefore social mobility, have become issues of great concern. The repercussions of mass social dissatisfaction of youth with the status quo have become quite visible in recent years with the events of the Arab Spring. Young people have played a dominant role in sparking mass protests against their governments. Indeed, the events of North Africa spilled over into sub-Saharan Africa. In Senegal, a youth movement called *Y'en a Marre* or “Enough Is Enough” formed to protest the government’s inability to support its youth population. Consequently, governments are seeking methods to link post-primary education to the demands of the labor market and re-examining their policies and approaches to youth education and skills development, in order to better prepare their young populations for the workforce.

Nevertheless, skills development strategies often overlook the informal sector despite the fact that in developing countries, income-generating activities in the informal sector often far exceed those of the formal sector. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO 2012) on youth skills development states that traditional apprenticeships are an important way of acquiring transferable and job-specific skills. An extensive review of the literature of Ghana and Senegal reveals that these two countries have long histories of traditional apprenticeship and that this form of skills training reaches more youth than formal technical and vocational training. This paper examines the approaches that these governments have taken to increase access to and quality of non-formal apprenticeship.

Youth, the Informal Sector and Traditional Apprenticeship

There are varying parameters for considering a definition of who may be considered a “youth.” According to the commonly used United Nations definition, youth are 15-24 year olds. In the African Youth Charter (African Union Commission 2006) youth is defined as a person between the ages of 15 to 35. Still others assert that youth is less an age range than a life phase marking movement from childhood to adulthood (Sommers 2007). Accordingly, many experts are quick to point out the need to include those youth above or below the specified age-range who may be engaged in the transition from childhood to adulthood, as defined by a specific cultural context (Ismail et al. 2009). For the purposes of this paper, “youth” refers to those aged 15-35, since that those are the parameters used by many Sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana (Ghana Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010).

For youth in the sub-region of West Africa, the informal sector is the main generator

¹ According to the 2012 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO), there are three main categories of skills: “foundational,” “transferable,” and “technical/vocational”. When this paper refers to skills development, it is referring specifically to technical and vocational skills.

of employment (UNECA 2011b). Whereas the informal sector is composed of small-scale economic activities that are unregulated, the formal sector encompasses economic activities carried out by firms in the modern, formal economy in accordance with government regulations (Walther 2011). The informal sector abounds with trades ranging from high-skilled jobs such as mechanics, carpenters, and artisans to low-skilled jobs such as petty trading. Due to the limited number of jobs in the private sector in West Africa, the informal sector often absorbs those even with high levels of formal education and formal technical and vocational training, as well as those with non-formal skills training, such as traditional modes of apprenticeship.

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, traditional apprenticeships between a master craftsman and an apprentice are a common and principal medium for skills development. The main strengths of traditional apprenticeship are its practical orientation, its self-regulation, and self-financing. Its flexible and non-formal nature accommodates individuals who lack the educational requirements for formal training. However, this type of training often is of long duration and low pay, and lacks certification.

Noting that traditional apprenticeship is an important method of skills training, UNESCO's 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* recommends that governments enhance their legitimacy by strengthening the training of master craftspeople, improving working conditions for apprentices, and ensuring that skills can be certified through national qualification frameworks. This important report argues that these measures will help ensure that apprenticeship will meet business and industry standards and improve apprentices' access to a wider range of better-paid jobs. Indeed, over the past decades, there have been several attempts to reform traditional apprenticeship in Sub-Saharan Africa, to improve the quality of training and the efficiency of such training in preparing apprentices for the workplace.

Traditional apprenticeship reform generally appears in two models (Walther 2011). The first type of reform changes the traditional apprenticeship into dual/reformed apprenticeship, in which apprenticeship is carried out in the workshop of a traditional master craftsman and is complemented by theoretical training at a public or private training center². According to research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009), evaluations confirm that the dual system improves skills significantly and contributes to social inclusion and to improved employment. The second type of reform improves the structure of apprenticeship, standardizes certification and upgrades master craftsman training.

Walther (2008) concludes that there has been a disappointing lack of apprenticeship reform in many contexts. This paper will examine approaches to increasing access and quality of traditional apprenticeship in Ghana and Senegal.

² This type of reform was formally introduced in Mali in 1997 and led to a training system that combines work supervised by a trained artisan (80% of the training time) and formal courses in a training center (20% of the training time).

An Analysis of Ghana & Senegal

The sub-region of West Africa is one of the poorest in the world. However, in the past decade, Ghana and Senegal have both experienced economic growth rates that are much higher than the regional average (YEN & IYF 2009). While their economies are modernizing and diversifying, agriculture remains the backbone of both economies, especially in rural areas. Both countries have made great strides in providing basic education for their populations. The most recent statistics show that Ghana had a primary completion rate (PCR) of 99% in 2012, whereas Senegal had a PCR of 63% in 2011³. Nonetheless, both countries have large youth populations, for which there are not enough pathways to further educational opportunities. In 2012, the gross secondary school enrollment rate was 59% in Ghana and was 42% in Senegal in 2011⁴. Tertiary enrollment (gross rates) remains low in both countries: 12% in Ghana (in 2011) and 8% in Senegal (in 2011)⁵.

In recent years, both these countries have identified youth education and employment as a priority in their development agendas (Ghana Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010; UN 2007a). In addition, both countries have a long history of traditional apprenticeship. In fact, traditional apprenticeships are the main type of skills training in the informal sector in both countries (UNESCO 2012). In Ghana, apprenticeship training is responsible for 80-90% of all skills training, compared to 5-10% for public training institutions (Palmer 2009). In the mid-2000s, Senegal had just 10,000 young people in formal technical and vocational education training compared with 440,000 traditional apprentices in the motor repair business alone (Walther 2011).

Ghana

The government of Ghana has two ministries that support youth-related education and employment issues, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Manpower, Youth & Employment. In addition, several institutions and agencies have been developed to promote education and employment including the National Youth Council. This Council, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, has developed the National Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Employment policy. According to a survey by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, youth policies and their implementation vary widely in "type, sophistication, resourcing and

³ Statistics were retrieved from World Bank Data on January 5, 2013 from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.CMPT.ZS>

⁴ According to the World Bank Data database, gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Statistics were retrieved from World Bank Data on January 5, 2013 from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>

⁵ Statistics were retrieved from World Bank Data on January 5, 2013 from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR>

effectiveness” across West Africa (Ismail et al. 2009, p.40). However the survey indicated that Ghana, in particular, has developed extensive youth policies and a coherent plan for development of institutional mechanisms to support youth employment. Indeed in recent years, there has been renewed government focus on skills development and its relationship in combating unemployment (Palmer 2009).

Ghana’s National Youth Policy outlines a list of challenges facing its youth population (Ghana Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010). The first two challenges listed are “access to quality education for the youth in the educational sector with attendant inadequate or inappropriate training for the job market” and “unemployment and underemployment resulting from inadequate and inappropriate training for job the market (p.6).” Subsequently, the policy outlines priority areas for addressing the challenges, including: education and skills training; ICT; modern agriculture and entrepreneurial development.

In 2006, Ghana introduced its strategy on youth employment, the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP). This program aimed to train and employ 500,000 young people in various trades and occupations between 2006 and 2009. Because the wages paid by the NYEP were high in comparison to market wages, the program was expensive. A survey of the program by the World Bank revealed that it was not a cost-effective approach compared to other traditional rural public works programs and it had a bias towards urban and relatively wealthier areas (World Bank 2009a)⁶.

Ghana has a highly developed apprenticeship system where young men and women undertake sector-specific private training in skills that are generally utilized in the informal sector. Presently, non-formal apprenticeships training accounts for 80-90% of all skills training in Ghana, compared with 5-10% from public training institutes, and 10-15% from NGOs (Palmer 2009). Skills are also acquired through non-formal training centers, such as vocational training institutes operated by the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment. Finally, employers also play an important role in skills development through skills learned on-the job, through short-term training, and of course traditional apprenticeships offered mainly by the informal sector.

A survey of the apprenticeship system by Monk et al. (2008) concluded that apprenticeship is by far the most important institution for training and is undertaken primarily by those with junior high school or lower levels of education. In fact, apprentices make up nearly 25% of working-age Ghanaians and 28% of urban residents. Monk et al. (ibid) report that 55% of those working were a current or past apprentice compared with 17% who had a vocational training background from a school or training center. Another 25% acquired their skills on-the-job. Beyond that however there is little research on apprenticeship as a form of skills training in Ghana.

⁶ This report concluded that the program targeted youth who had completed junior secondary more education and operated in areas where the issue of youth unemployment was most visible. Wealthier areas had already had a network of firms and non-profit organizations that could employ youths. The report concluded that the impact of the program on poverty was likely limited.

The government has attempted several reforms to traditional apprenticeship. Early efforts at regulating non-formal training included the 1970 National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) and the 1990 National Coordinating Committee on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACVET). These coordinating bodies and complementing legislation were ineffective due to a failure to create national policy, capacity issues, and diverse inter-ministerial objectives (Palmer 2009). Other skills training development projects have included the Vocational Skills and Informal Sector Support Project, the Rural Enterprise Project, and the Skills Training Entrepreneurship Programme.

In 2008, ambitious plans were put in place to develop a regulated, or formalized, informal apprenticeship system, called the National Apprentice Programme (NAP). This program's key components include targeting junior secondary school graduates who could not access further schooling and providing them with twelve months of skills training. During the training, the apprentices receive toolkits, which they can keep after completion of the training. The program was officially launched in 2011, in Sogakope in the South Tongu District of the Volta Region (Akpalu 2011). The programme, also referred to as "apprenticeship as a means of self-employment," was to be organized and monitored by the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET). The first cohort of 5,000 junior high school graduates was assigned to master craftsmen recruited and trained by COTVET in five trades: automobile/engineering, electronics, cosmetology, garment making, welding and fabrication.

Ghana has been credited with having a comprehensive youth policy outlined in its National Youth Policy and implemented by various agencies. However, it is too soon to determine the impact of the reforms to traditional apprenticeship. Research on Ghana's experience with reforms has indicated that initiatives to standardize skills training have been biased towards young people who have relatively higher levels of education (secondary school) and who live in the wealthier areas and urban areas. However, there is little data on how current approaches affect disadvantaged or marginalized youth.

Senegal

Senegal has several ministries that oversee youth-related programs, but the government's strategy towards youth is principally channeled through the *Ministre de la Jeunesse, de l'Emploi et de la Promotion des Valeurs civiques*, or the Ministry of Youth, and its agencies. There are several ministries responsible for various levels and forms of education and training, including the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training, which is responsible for technical and professional training centers⁷. In addition,

⁷ In Senegal, the Ministry of Education is responsible for overall governance of the education system, with responsibilities divided between five ministries: pre-school, elementary, and middle schools (Ministry of Education); secondary schools and universities (Ministry of Higher Education); technical and professional training centers (Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational

there are several institutions that have been established to support youth, most importantly, the National Agency for Youth Employment (ANEJ); the National Youth Promotion Fund (FNPJ); the National Office for Suburban Youth Employment (ONEJBAN); and the Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public (AGETIP).

These institutions have a diverse range of activities. ANEJ was established in 2001 to facilitate links between youth and potential employers. FNPJ was established to promote access to credit. ONEJBAN was developed to: assist suburban youth in searching for employment; provide short-term training; and provide funding to support individual and group projects. AGETIP was developed as an implementing agency for infrastructural programs. It trains and employs unemployed youth on a temporary basis to work on public infrastructure projects. In addition, the *Projet de Renforcement des Capacités de Suivi et Evaluation des Programmes d'Emploi des Jeunes* was established to create an electronic youth employment management system with data on job seekers and job offers as well as indicators for monitoring youth employment.

In 2006, Senegal was one of the first countries to draft a National Action Plan for youth, entitled the National Action Plan for Youth Employment (PANEJ). The purpose was to mobilize donors, local stakeholders, and government to provide youth with access to counseling, economic information, and technical, legal and financial support services. Moreover, it was one of a few countries to incorporate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the plan both during implementation and at the conclusion. These indicators include the number of jobs created for youth and the number of microenterprise start-ups (UN 2007a). In addition, the 2010-2015 National Employment Policy stated that it would support the informal sector with an objective to create 700,000 new jobs during the period. Moreover, Senegal's Accelerated Growth Strategy has defined a developmental plan for key sectors to boost youth employment and economic growth⁸.

In the technical, vocational, and non-formal education sectors, the government of Senegal has formalized training and apprenticeship programs, provided continuing education to approximately 18,000 professionals through the Technical Education and Vocational Training Development Fund and the National Vocational Training Office, and developed an action plan to reduce adult illiteracy while expanding vocational skills. However, the number of formal TVET opportunities remains low nationwide. While 80% of participants surveyed for a 2011 USAID-sponsored youth mapping activity, YouthMap Senegal, expressed the desire to learn a skill or trade, vocational and technical training resources and opportunities are limited, particularly outside the capital city of Dakar, and are often mismatched with labor market needs (IYF 2011)⁹. The majority of

Training); adult literacy and non-formal education (Ministry of Culture); school construction (Ministry of Public Works).

⁸ High potential sectors include agriculture, fisheries, textiles, information and communication technology, and tourism (Diene 2011).

⁹ YouthMap is a multi-country initiative that assesses both the "supply side" of services available to youth and the "demand side" of youth perspectives, needs, challenges, opportunities, and assets, particularly in the areas of education, employment, citizenship, and health. This project utilizes the

youth interviewed who are working in the informal sector said they had learned their trade through apprenticeships, which required a commitment of several years with little income. The Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training launched an effort to provide nationally recognized certificates and is working on accreditation of these programs, although the YouthMap reported that stakeholders noted that its capacity is limited, and employers should be more involved overall to improve relevance and placement.

Senegal, like many countries in West Africa, has embarked on reforms to modernize traditional apprenticeships, with a goal to integrate non-formal training into the national TVET system. Unlike several of its neighboring countries that have pursued dual reform, Senegal is unique in that its theoretical and practical training take place in the workshop. Moreover, the government defines the role of public and private training colleges as resource centers whose purpose is to provide additional technical and standards-based input regarding the profession, depending on the requests made by the master craftsmen (Walther 2008). Unlike neighboring countries' reforms, the government distinguishes between groups of apprentices with different starting educational levels and provides a variety of pre-requirements and lengths of training courses. In addition to this restructuring of the non-formal skills training, there have been several projects through the country around non-formal skills training¹⁰. They have had various levels of success, and there is little documentation on these projects and their outcomes.

The aforementioned YouthMap survey of Senegalese youth found that though there are many agencies devoted to youth education and employment, the government lacks a comprehensive youth policy and PANEJ has "not yet made its mark" (YEN & IYF 2009, p.34). Moreover, though a large number of youth, principally in Dakar, are served by non-formal education and training, the survey found that many of these young people are concerned about the formal recognition of their certificates or diplomas. The government has created numerous agencies, organizations and initiatives to address this complex issue of youth skills training for the workplace. Still, AGETIP is often cited as a success story for reaching disadvantaged youth and providing them with training. As a result, it has been imitated in other West African countries (OECD 2009). An evaluation of the first seven years of the program found that the number of engineering firms more than tripled, the number of construction firms increased five-fold, and 35,000 person-years of employment were generated (IYF 2011). However, the skills training programs do not reach those outside the capital. Moreover, there is little accessible data to evaluate whether the reforms to traditional apprenticeship are having an impact on Senegalese youth.

United Nations definition of youth: 15-24 year olds.

¹⁰ Including Partnership for Apprenticeship and Opening Up Training System, PROMECABILE; PAO/sfp Project, and dual training initiatives with development partners (Walther 2008).

Discussion

This review of skills development for youth in the informal sectors of Senegal and Ghana has revealed that traditional apprenticeship is an ubiquitous form of training for youth, essential for providing skills to those unable to access formal training. The governments of both countries have created policies and programs to increase access to and the quality of these non-formal skills training approaches to better prepare their populations for work in the informal sector. Unfortunately, there is little data on the long-term outcomes of these initiatives, programs and reforms. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the impact that these changes have in providing the pathways for young people to obtain the skills they need to prosper in the workplace.

Nevertheless, there are several important implications. First of all, even from the available data, it is clear that these countries' strategies to confront youth unemployment do not provide enough support services to disadvantaged and marginalized youth, especially those youth with no education or low levels of education. Many of the programs to modernize traditional apprenticeship are biased towards those with higher levels of education and those in urban areas. Ghana's National Employment Policy states one of its chief employment policy challenges is "high unemployment and under-employment rates among vulnerable groups including youth, women and persons with disability, the challenges for mainstreaming the vulnerable and excluded to make them productive (p. xx)." However, national skills training programs such as Ghana's NAP have generally targeted youth in urban areas and those with a minimum of basic education. Therefore, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which these initiatives have improved access to skills training for those who currently have little education. Moreover, it is not clear whether these initiatives have improved the basic education levels of youth with no prior education or who have dropped out of basic education.

With respect to increasing quality, both Ghana and Senegal have attempted to standardize apprenticeship schemes, in order to modernize and improve the efficiency of traditional apprenticeship. Senegal has proclaimed that it will integrate non-formal and formal skills training. Other initiatives include increasing the amount of time apprentices spend practicing the trade and decreasing the theoretical curriculum, upgrading the skills of the master craftsman, establishing stand certification, and decreasing the time it takes to become certified in a skill. The extent to which these initiatives have been implemented in traditional apprenticeships, and the extent to which they have had an impact on the quality of skills training are also unknown. However, in YouthMap (2011)'s recent study, Senegalese youth, young people lamented that non-formal skills training was long in duration, low in pay, and often lacked certification. It seems clear that these approaches have not reached sufficient numbers of Senegalese youth to make a difference.

A major problem is the lack of data collection on youth-related education and employment. There are staggeringly few statistics on youth unemployment. The unemployment data for Senegal varies broadly from one estimate to the other and is often

lacking (YEN & IYF survey 2009). Moreover, Ghana's National Employment Policy recognizes that one of its chief employment policy challenges is "poor labour statistics and ineffective labour market information system (p. xix)." There remains a stark gap in data on which types of skills training programs have the greatest impact on the access for vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly female youth, those with disabilities, and those who have been displaced (UNECA 2011a).

Moreover, there is a gap in research on skills development in the agricultural sector. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO 2012) emphasizes that skills development in the agricultural and rural sector must be a priority for African countries. Currently young people who might stay in rural areas have little incentive do so because low-efficiency agriculture has low economic returns. However, much of the work on skills training in Senegal and Ghana focuses on skills in non-agricultural fields such as carpentry and mechanics.

Furthermore, there is little information on the potential for expanding and supporting new, innovative youth-friendly industries, particularly in information and communications technology (ICT). ICT represents an important skills area in and of itself as well as its potential to increase the value of other training. While the 2011 *African Youth Report* has reported that both Senegal and Ghana have integrated "culture" into their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, there is a dearth of information on programs that foster culture-related skills and opportunities, such as dance and art, and how these skills could contribute to growing sectors, such as tourism (UNECA 2011a).

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research on skills development in Ghana and Senegal should focus on outcomes of national programs as well as targeted programs implemented by various providers in order to assess what programs work and how they can be scaled-up to reach all youth, especially the most marginalized and disadvantaged. Impact evaluations of current programs could shed light on those approaches that have successfully increased access and quality of traditional apprenticeship.

In order for policymakers to establish youth strategies that are genuinely comprehensive, the relationship between supply-side interventions, such as education and training, and demand-side needs, such as the creation of jobs, should be examined and better understood. In contexts where private sector growth is limited, assessments of successful strategies to prepare skilled workers for the informal sector could provide the links necessary to assist even the most disadvantaged with pathways to better pay and faster social mobility within the informal sector. Micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship could provide those pathways. Therefore, further research on those areas could provide insight on how to expand skills training.

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