

CONCEPT PAPER

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION/TRAINING AND INDUSTRY/WORLD OF WORK

BACKGROUND

Education and skills development constitute a major ingredient in the economic transformation of countries. It generally underpins any strategy of human development and productivity and facilitates the employability of the labour force of every country. In Ghana, governments and other agencies over the years have made significant efforts to improve access, financing and provision of infrastructure and facilities at all levels. However, the quality of education and training and the employability of such skills have been a matter of national interest. The problem of supply-demand gaps in education and skills training output in Ghana has been partly blamed for the problem of unemployment and high incidence of joblessness in Ghana (see Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong, 2002). NDPC (2010) identified weak linkage between tertiary education and industry as a major cause of emerging graduate unemployment in the country. Baah-Boateng (2012 and 2013) estimate higher unemployment rates among the educated than uneducated and argue that besides the slow expansion of employment-oriented growth, the skills mismatch between what is churned out and what industry requires cannot escape blame. It is also argued in certain quarters that the education and training institutions are mandated to provide general training and that the unwillingness of industry to provide short-term specific top up training in line with their skill demand does not help to solve the problem of educated joblessness in the country.

Some efforts have been made over the years to help address this challenge. These include manpower needs assessments, aligning curriculum at all levels of education to meet the demands of industry as well as encouraging entrepreneurship among others. It is clear that these efforts were to a larger extent based on lessons learnt at the global level in the quest

to address challenges in this area. Reference could be made to countries like Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, and recently China that have shown remarkable success through rapid industrialization and deploying curricula at institutions of higher learning to address its challenges.

One of the policy objectives of the Ministry of education as enshrined in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (2010-2020) is to strengthen links between education and industry and thus promote employability of education and skill training at all levels of education. The strategy is to promote education and programmes and research activities relevant to national development in collaboration with the private sector. The ESP further identified six (6) indicative activities in a bid to achieving this objective. It is noteworthy that this has been a priority area for the development agenda of His Excellency, the President, John Dramani Mahama.

It is on this note that the Ministry of Education is organising a National Conference devoted to bridging the gap between industry/world of work and education/training. Apart from fulfilling requirements of the ESP, the conference is to further provide a broad platform to engage all stakeholders to help address challenges in this area.

JUSTIFICATION

Despite much effort by Government to address challenges in the education sector, education quality issues remain a matter of national interest. It seems quite clear that the country over the years has not managed to create the needed link between education and training on one hand and industry on the other. Emerging trends in the global economy are making the situation more complex as it pertains to other economies as well. National policies to produce graduates at all levels with the right mix of skills to meet the demands of industry and the general world of work have been considered inadequate and quite ineffective. The challenge appears compounded by Ghana's rising population. Who is to be held responsible? Is government really committed to rapid industrialization with focused priority in key sectors? What then is the missing link? It is on this note that the National

conference seeks to provide the platform for the relevant stakeholders to deliberate on key issues.

OBJECTIVES

The dialogue shall provide a forum for:

- Engaging with all relevant stakeholders to address emerging unemployment through well-thought sustainable solutions.
- Establishing on-going debates on the respective roles of education and industry in the development of human capital formation.
- Examining existing proposals in this area in a bid to practically harmonize them for the desired result.
- Making recommendations to ensure that education/training produce citizens with employable skills; that the economy expand to be able to absorb the growing number of educated/trained citizens.

INVITATION TO THE CONFERENCE

Pursuant to these objectives, the Conference will see the participation of His Excellency, the President who is expected to open the conference and also deliver the keynote address, Members of the Council of State, Ministers, Senior Government Officials, Parliamentarians, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission, representatives of the business community, think-tanks, civil society organizations, members of the tertiary education sector including Vice-Chancellors of universities, Chairpersons of University Councils, Rectors of Polytechnics, and Principals of Colleges of Education, representatives

of Lecturers and Students, Trades Union Congress, Association of Ghana Industries, Ghana Employers Association, the Informal sector, representatives of registered political parties, the media and development partners.

During the workshop, renowned resource persons will facilitate the discussions by outlining the key themes around which participants could focus the discussions, in addition to other emerging perspectives which participants will identify.

It is expected that the ideas generated from the conference will inform joint education and industry collaborations, aimed at using high-level links to address technically challenging problems in the area.

INDICATIVE PLAN OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference will be highly interactive and will be organized as follows;

The conference is scheduled for two (2) days from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm each day. About Two Hundred participants are expected to attend.

Opening Ceremony: This will be the official opening of the conference where His Excellency, the President will deliver the key note address after the Hon. Minister of Education has welcomed members to the conference. The Ministers of Trade and Industry and Employment and Labour Relations will also deliver brief remarks. Two papers will be presented to set the tone for the conference on what has been done so far and what pertains in our present situation by two Guest Speakers - Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the current Rector of GIMPA

Plenary Session: Selected resource persons will deliver papers on identified areas in relation to the conference to be coordinated by identified chairpersons.

Syndicate Groups: Following the plenary sessions, participants/workshop themes are grouped into a suitable number of working groups in which participants brainstorm on what they regard as the best ways forward in achieving the theme's objective. Each

syndicate group will appoint a leader and rapporteur who will present their key ideas and suggestions.

Panel Sessions: The ideas from the syndicate groups are discussed and main rapporteurs collate them. Small working groups may be formed to collate the ideas into a communiqué for eventual circulation to all conference participants and the media.

Closing Plenary: The participants meet in a closing plenary session, examine the communiqué, and adopt it as a true representation of the key ideas covered. Structured interest groups and other experts will be constituted to work on follow-up actions. Minister of Education declares conference closed.

DELIVERABLES

The following shall be delivered and made public at the end of the conference:

- Communiqué
- Presentations and Papers
- Proceedings of the meetings
- Briefs arising from discussions on identified sub-themes
- A comprehensive Report on the two-day conference

POST-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

- Suggest Action Plan on way forward.
- Present Report to H.E. President John Dramani Mahama.

REFERENCES

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