



# Apprenticeship Feasibility Report

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**Brief:** To find out how ATE can support small business owners to hire and utilize apprentices.

## **Introduction**

An apprenticeship is a system of training new practitioners of a trade or profession using on the job training and usually some type of study. A typical apprentice, after achieving measurable competencies will continue their labour for their employer for an agreed upon period of time. The most common apprenticeship usually last approximately 3-6 years.

Apprenticeships are a way for people who otherwise would not be able to afford or receive training on their own to be given the technical skills necessary to enter into a desired profession. Professions that allow for apprenticeships include carpenters, seamstresses, tailors, plumbers, hairdressers/barbers, mechanics etc.

There are many benefits to the apprenticeship model. Apprentices are hired by employers and must pay a fee, usually 300-700 Ghana cedis, in exchange for mentorship and teaching of technical skills. This hands on training will allow the apprentice to quickly enter into their given profession after successful completion of their training program.

While the benefits are great, some of the benefits can present a challenge, specifically for Lawra District. Many would be apprentices cannot afford the fee that must be paid or do not have enough money to provide for the purchase of necessary tools. This detracts many jobless youth from entering into such programs.

This study will examine the possibility for small grants to be provided by ATE to small business owners for the implementation of the apprenticeship support initiative program by: looking at the current community situation and perception of apprenticeship programs, acknowledging other programatic supporters of apprenticeship programs and finally will provide general recommendations to the ATE secretariat.



## **Current Situation and Community Perception**

In the Lawra District, there are many small businesses including weaving, tailoring, hairdressing, fabrication/welding, catering, drinking bars etc. However, surveys revealed that there is a need for apprentices in weaving, tailoring, fabrication/welding, auto/motor mechanics, hairdressing and carpentry. Many youth serving in drinking bars and working for food vendors are hired not necessarily as apprentices but are mainly assisting a relative or friend, and are hired to work and not to learn.

A total number of 10 businesses were surveyed throughout Lawra District, although anecdotal information was also gathered from businesses outside the survey population. Thirteen of the total businesses surveyed currently have apprentices. However, many of these businesses have the capability to cater for more apprenticeships. Many of the tailoring, weaving, fabrication/welding business owners especially have expressed interest in such an endeavor. For instance, Praise Jesus Weaving center has a total of 10 apprentices and still says they can accommodate more people.

Apprentices are given support based upon the type of career they wish to pursue. For example, apprentices in the tailoring are to be supported with the following: a sewing machine, a scissors, a tape measure, 2 packets of sewing threads, 2 packets of office pins, 2 packets of hemming threads, 2 uniforms, 1 bottle of machine oil/lubricant, a stool, a crate of drinks, and must pay to the business owner GHc400. This amount is subject to increase as inflation increases.

Raymond, an owner of a motorcycle mechanic shop and beneficiary of BizATE, noted that any potential apprentice would need; A set of tools, 4 screw drivers, 2 pliers, 2 Lacoste shirts, 2 pair of safety boots and must pay a fee of GHc700.

At Praise Jesus Weaving center, a loom and other items are provided; the apprentice must only pay a fee of GHc200.

Many business owners provide apprentices with lunch, but this is not the duty of the business owner. Raymond the mechanic states, "I provide my two apprentices with lunch if they make enough money by noon but it is not my duty to always provide them with lunch". This is the same with all apart from Praise Jesus weaving center, where they cook lunch for all apprentices on a daily basis.

The survey revealed that only two ATE small business owners currently have apprentices. Seamstresses, basket weavers, cloth weavers, and carpenters have all expressed interest in expanding their apprenticeship programs.

All participants in the survey agreed that they do not advertise for apprenticeships, but are aware of the benefits an apprenticeship model can provide. Many worry that youth are lazy or are not attracted to their kind of business, when in fact, it is many times financial constraints that are detaching youth from entering into such a program.

During the survey period, all business owners could be found instructing their apprentices, correcting errors, and making sure that their work is done well. By 8:00am all apprentices are



to report to work and begin no later than 8:30. Work closes at 4:30pm. Any apprentice who fails to report to work without a tangible reason is sanctioned through the provision of extra work for them in coming days.

According to Madam Korle Bu, the seamstress, the moment an apprentice reports at work, she is directly under her control and and mentorship. It is her responsibility to make sure the apprentice is full trained and keeps her reputation. She does not tolerate laziness and bad habits like sleeping at work, playing and fighting. The same was said by the owner of Praise Jesus weaving center. She added that if apprentices are not well monitored, they will not learn the work well and the good reputation of the mentor could then be ruined.

### **Implications, Rewards and Challenges**

The financial implications are that, the small business increases his/her level of income both through the payment received from the apprentice as well as through increased production. However, the apprentice does in the short term seem to be at a loss.

The reward to the apprentice is more long term and in the end, great... the acquisition of a profession. Acquiring any given profession and being able to employ oneself with a given skill set has the potential to liberate people from poverty. The apprentice becomes socially and economically empowered.

While the benefits of an apprenticeship model are indeed useful, there are many challenges in implementing such a program. Many jobless youth are not interested in paying fees to learn to do these jobs, or are not interested in the length of time they must remain in training. Small business owners are often hesitant as well. They do not want an apprentice who may not do the work properly to ruin their reputation, or worry that they will have to deal with difficult apprentices.



### **Community Perception of the Way Forward**

The community is very supportive of increased assistance for apprenticeship programs. General assertions include an increased level of financial support for apprentices to be able to pay the apprenticeship fees and buy the necessary tools, and that youth should be encouraged to learn an applicable vocation if they refuse to remain in school. Rural communities especially have expressed such interest. Many times, families are not able to pay school fees beyond primary education. Vocational training offers young people the chance to enter into a profession, without necessarily having a proper education.

### **The Lawra District Assembly and the youth employment program**

The youth employment program embarked in 2013 on an employment initiative through apprenticeship programs. Interested youth were matched with an industry professional in their preferred vocation, and were trained for a two year period. Respective business owners were paid monthly by the national youth secretariat, and after the completion of the program, beneficiaries were to be set up with the necessary capital and equipment to begin their own business ventures.

The program was not successful. Many people only joined for various political reasons and were not serious about long term success. Lack of monitoring and evaluation by the implementing agency also played a large role in the programs downfall. For example, the youth employment program was paying money to business owners and those owners would then claim that they had not been paid their full fees. This program for these and many other reasons is no longer in operation.



### **Conclusions and General Recommendations to the Secretariat**

Through various surveys it has been noted that community support in Lawra District remains high for the initiation of assistance for apprenticeship programs. Many business owners are willing and able to accommodate more apprentices, and could also benefit from the added labor. Unemployed youth could find the means for employment and could have long term benefits including means of employment, practical vocational training, and a way to stay out of trouble.

By providing grants for apprenticeships, more youth will be able to enter into a meaningful profession, and will be given the skills necessary to care for themselves and their families in the future. However, more work must be done to establish the rules and regulations for such an apprenticeship model, in order to establish best practice and ensure a fruitful experience for both employer and apprentice.