

## Relevance of vocational training programme for persons with disabilities in the Ashanti Region of Ghana

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### ABSTRACT

Providing employment for persons with disabilities is very important because it provides opportunities for self-sufficiency and improvement in their living condition. The aim of vocational training for persons with disabilities is to enable them to acquire skills that are relevant to the current labour market demands. This study investigated the relevance of vocational training programmes at three vocational training centers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana to persons with disabilities. A mixed methods design was used to assess the relevance of vocational training programme at the three vocational training centers. A total of 118 participants participated in the study. They consisted of 108 past trainees who took part in the survey, and three directors and seven institutors who participated in in-depth interviews. The findings indicated that the vocational training programmes were not all that relevant to the employment needs of many of the graduates although some of the graduates had benefited immensely from the training. The findings are an indication of the need to restructure vocational training programmes in Ghana to make them more relevant to the employment needs of all trainees.

*Keywords: Employment, persons with disabilities, Ghana, vocational training*

### INTRODUCTION

Employment is an important ingredient for combatting poverty and achieving inclusion for all persons, including persons with disabilities (PWD). Employment increases self-sufficiency, social connectedness and creates a sense of self-worth and dignity for individuals.<sup>1</sup> For persons with disabilities, employment is considered a vital step towards their rehabilitation and empowerment in that it provides a sense of belonging, independence, and increases their social inclusion and overall well-being.<sup>2</sup>

Although persons with disabilities can perform virtually every job, and with the enabling environment and support services, majority of persons with disabilities can be as productive as persons without disabilities, there are limited employment opportunities for them.<sup>3</sup> Studies have revealed that globally persons with disabilities have lower employment rates than persons without disabilities and the few who are employed, work fewer hours and in lower-paid or lower-skilled positions.<sup>3</sup>

In Ghana, persons with disabilities experience a lot of challenges securing jobs and when they are employed, they often engage in jobs that are of low quality.<sup>4</sup>

A number of factors account for the low employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Notable among these factors are employers' fears of cost of providing reasonable accommodation, inaccessible infrastructure and information on job vacancies as well as prejudices and misconceptions about disability among employers.<sup>6,7,8</sup> In addition to these factors, lack of appropriate education and training have made it impossible for persons with disabilities to take advantage of policies and programmes meant to increase their participation in the labour market.<sup>9,10</sup> In other words, persons with disabilities lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, needed for the available jobs in the competitive market place.<sup>8,11</sup> Thus, providing employment quotas, without equipping persons with disabilities with appropriate employable skills and competences will not solve the unemployment problems among them.<sup>6</sup>

### Overview of vocational training

Vocational training involves teaching people to acquire a particular skill meant to prepare them for a particular occupation.<sup>12,13</sup> Vocational training plays a crucial role in the social and economic development of every country. For example, the provisions of appropriate skills open access for the under-privileged and marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, to compete successfully on the labour market.

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Vocational training therefore helps to reduce poverty and to empower persons with disabilities.<sup>14,15</sup> Vocational training for persons with disabilities must be seen as urgent and should be made to complement general education.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore important to give children with disabilities, especially those who could not enroll in schools or further their education, vocational training so that they can become productive and independent in future.

As in many countries, the main purpose of vocational training in Ghana is to provide young people with skills in order to reduce unemployment.<sup>17</sup> The government of Ghana has therefore placed emphasis on vocational education and technical training.<sup>18</sup> To increase access to vocational training for persons with disabilities, the policy on special education enjoins all special schools to have vocational training departments in addition to their academic programmes to help children with disabilities acquire vocational skills.<sup>19</sup> Also, the Persons with Disability Act (715) <sup>6</sup> of Ghana has provisions that requires that Junior High School graduates who are unable to further their education be provided with appropriate vocational training.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of its importance and the emphasis placed on vocational training by the government of Ghana, many obstacles are hindering the smooth running of vocational training schools and centers. These obstacles include outdated training contents of vocational training programmes, limited number of vocational schools, lack of facilities and materials, inadequate qualified staff or facilitators, lack of funds, and problems relating to career progression.<sup>21,22,23,24</sup> Another major challenge affecting vocational education in Ghana is the misconception that those who choose vocational training are unable to undertake rigorous academic programmes.<sup>22,24</sup> This perception appears to have influenced the greater emphasis on vocational training for person with disabilities.

While a number of Ghanaians have benefited from vocational training, irrespective of the challenges facing vocational training institutions, it appears PWD have not benefited much from vocational training programmes. Unemployment is still high among persons with disabilities and many of them are beggars on the street because they are unable to acquire jobs.<sup>4,25</sup> Many of these beggars are products of vocational training programmes suggesting that vocational training may not be yielding the expected results for persons with disabilities. This study examined the capacity of three vocational training centers to offer appropriate skills to persons with disabilities. The study specifically assessed the types of skills being offered at the training centers, employment outcomes of graduates from the centers, and the challenges of the vocational training centers.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study design and type

A mixed method design was used to assess the relevance of vocational training being offered to persons with disabilities in three vocational training centers in Ashanti region of Ghana. The perspectives of directors on the nature of the training being offered and challenges they were facing were explored through in-depth interviews while questionnaires were administered to

graduates from the centers to ascertain their perception of the relevance of the training they received. The qualitative and quantitative methods complemented each other and provided comprehensive data that offered deeper insights and understanding of the relevance of the training programmes.

### Study sites

The study was undertaken in three vocational training centers located in three different towns in Ashanti Region of Ghana. The centers are Edwinase Rehabilitation Center, Physically Challenged Action Foundation and Jachi Training Center. All the three centers focused solely on persons with disabilities.

Edwinase Rehabilitation Center provides vocational training to all categories of persons with disabilities. The center provides social rehabilitation (daily living skills, attitudinal skills, and resocialization skills) and vocational rehabilitation (tailoring, dress making, beads making, batik and tie and dye, rural crafts, hair dressing, animal rearing and farming). The school had a population of about 70 trainees at the time of the study. Jachi Training Center which had 30 trainees at the time of the study, provides vocational rehabilitation (tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry farming and animal rearing) to all categories of people with physical disabilities. Physically Challenged Action Foundation focuses only on persons with physical disabilities. The center provides vocational rehabilitation (tailoring and shoemaking, farming and animal rearing) and also assist some people with physical disabilities to undergo surgery. The school population was 40. Both Edwinase and Jachi Training Centers are public institutions, while Physically Challenged Action Foundation is a private institution, established by the Ghana Society of Physically Disabled.

### Study population and sample size

The population of the study comprised of all past trainees, directors and instructors of the three vocational training centers in the Ashanti region of Ghana. A total 108 past trainees answered questionnaires. Of those 16 were from Edwenase, 28 from Jachi and 64 from the Physically Challenged Action Foundation (PCAF). The Physically Challenged Action Foundation had the highest turn out rate and that accounted for the majority of the participants being chosen from center. All the directors of the three training centers and two instructor each from Edwenase and Jachi and three from PCAF were selected for the in-depth interview (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of study participants**

Participants	Vocational Rehabilitation Centers							
	Edwenase Rehab		Jachi Rehab		PCAF*		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>Past Trainees</b>	16	15	28	26	64	59	108	100
<b>Directors</b>	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	3	99.9
<b>Instructor</b>	2	28.6	2	28.6	3	42.8	7	100

\* Physically Challenged Action Foundation

### Sampling technique

Three sampling techniques: purposive, convenient and snow ball, were used to select participants. Directors and instructors of the three centers were purposively selected to provide information on their training programmes – the type of training they were providing, their perception of the relevance of the training and their challenges. With the past trainees, some of them were initially contacted via telephones, and the purpose of the study and eligibility criteria explained to them. Telephone numbers of the past trainees were obtained from the directors of the institutions. Those who did not leave their telephone numbers with the directors were contacted through their colleagues. Those who were interested were invited to meet at their respective institutions on specific dates. At each meeting, prospective participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and then taken through the informed consent process, after which the questionnaires were distributed to them.

### Ethical consideration

Approval to conduct the study was given by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology's Committee on Human Research and Publication Ethics before the fieldwork. Also, directors of all the training centers gave their approval to the study. All participants consented verbally before they were included in the study. They were given the assurance that they could withdraw from the study anytime, they were not obliged to answer all questions, and that participation in the study was completely voluntary. They were also assured of their privacy and confidentiality. All potential risks and benefits of the study were as well discussed with them.

### Data collection

As indicated previously, the study employed mixed methods and utilized interviews and questionnaires as the data collection tools. A semi-structured interview guide and questionnaire were developed to collect information on the nature of the training programmes, the relevance of the training programmes, and challenges being encountered. Apart from these major questions, demographic data, such as, age, gender, marital status, religion, occupation, and level of education were collected. Both the questionnaires and the interview guides were written in English. All the questionnaires were self-administered with support from the researchers. All the interviews with the directors and instructors were conducted in English language. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes and a voice recorder was used to record the responses to the questions with permission from the participants. The researchers monitored the interview process by debriefing after each interview.

### Data management and analysis

All the recorded data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim into word format. In order to ensure accurate transcription of the data, two persons were employed to transcribe the data separately. Transcripts from the two translations were compared to ensure that nothing was missing during the transcription. A coding system was devised using the research objectives. Each research objective was assigned

two alphabetical codes, a capital letter representing the main theme and a small letter representing the sub-themes.

Using the research objectives, each researcher read through the word document several times to identify and then marked out statements (using the alphabetical codes) that were related to each of the research objectives. The researchers met later to discuss and merge themes that were identified. Quotes relevant to the themes were identified and used to support each of the themes. The quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 16. Basic descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and cross tabulations computed to compare response differences among the three vocational training centers.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Distribution of Trainees

The Table 2 below shows the demographic distribution of the study participants.

**Table 2. Distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of participants' (trainees)**

Variable	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
	70	64	38	35.2	108	100
<b>Age</b>						
20-29	11	10.1	3	2.8	14	12.9
30-39	32	29.6	18	16.7	50	46.3
40-49	25	23.1	17	15.7	42	38.8
50 and above	2	1.9	-	-	2	1.9
<b>Educational Status</b>						
No education	17	15.7	28	25.9	45	41.6
Basic	53	49.1	10	9.3	63	58.4
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	40	37.0	24	22.2	64	59.2
Single	10	9.3	2	1.9	12	11.2
Divorced	8	7.4	11	10.2	19	17.6
Separated	12	11.1	1	0.9	13	12
<b>Religious Background</b>						
Christianity	49	45.4	27	25	76	70.4
Islam	17	15.7	11	10.2	28	25.9
Others	4	3.7	-	-	4	3.7
<b>Type of Disability</b>						
*Phy. chall.	70	64.8	34	31.5	104	96.3
Blind	-	-	4	3.7	4	3.7
<b>Occupation</b>						
Tailoring	26	24.1	10	9.2	36	33.3
Shoemaking	28	25.9	-	-	28	25.9
Beads making	-	-	2	1.9	2	1.9
Not working	16	14.8	26	24.1	42	38.9

\*Phy. chall. = Physically challenged

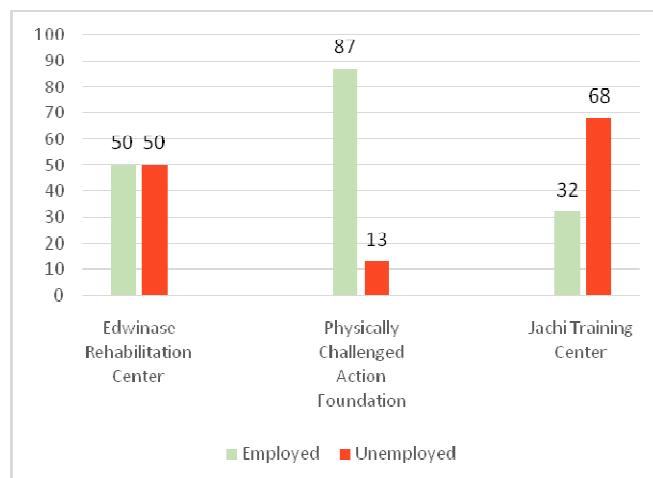
Out of the total of 108 participants, 64.8% were males. Less than half (46.3%) of the participants were within the age range of 30-39 years, with just a few (1.9%) being 50 years and above. The highest educational attainment of participants was basic education; 58.4% had attained basic education.

About 59% of the participants were married while 11.2% were unmarried. More than one-third (38.9%) of the participants were not employed; many of those employed were engaged in tailoring. With regard to their type of disability, majority (96.3%) were persons with physical disabilities. None was deaf because Jachi Training Center and Physically Challenged Action Foundation do not admit deaf persons. Only Edwenase admits very few deaf persons but they were not available at the time of the study, so they could not be included in the study.

### Employment outcomes of graduates

A majority (61 %) of the graduates said they were employed. However, graduates from the Physically Challenged Action Foundation (87%) had the highest employment outcome among graduates from the three vocational centers; that is, they were the most likely to be employed. Graduates from Jachi Training Center (32%) had the least employment outcome, suggesting that the private training center seemed to be offering programmes that are more relevant than the public ones (see figure1).

**Figure 1 Percentage trainees employed**



### Graduates were engaged in Types of jobs

Graduates from Edwinase were most likely to be employed in shoemaking (75%) while those from Jachi (63%) and PCAF (61%) were likely to be in tailoring. When their current jobs were compared with their preferred jobs, overall, there was a slight difference between what they were currently doing and what they would have preferred doing. Generally, shoemaking was a slight edge in terms of preference over other jobs. However, there were differences among the graduates from the three centres. For graduates from Edwenase, there was no difference between their preferred and current jobs. However, a slightly higher percentage of graduates from both PCAF and Jachi Rehabilitation Centre would have preferred engaging in shoemaking than the percentage currently in shoemaking. Bead making was the least job engaged in and preferred among the graduates from all three centers (see Table 3).

### Job satisfaction

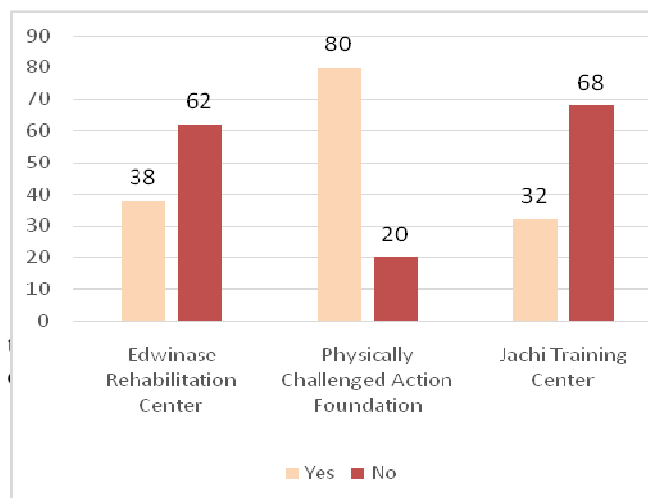
On how satisfied the graduates were with their current jobs, on the whole, majority (61 %) claimed they were satisfied with

**Table 3. Current and preferred employment**

Institution	Tailoring		Shoe Making		Beads Making		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>Current job</b>								
Edwinase rehabilitation	-	-	6	75	2	25	8	100
PCAF	30	61	19	39	-	-	49	100
Jachi training center	6	63	3	33	-	-	9	100
<b>Preferred job</b>								
Edwinase rehabilitation	-	-	3	75	1	25	4	100
PCAF	25	57	19	43	-	-	44	100
Jachi training center	2	50	2	50	-	-	4	100

the jobs they were currently engaged in. This is somehow consistent with their responses on their preferred and current jobs, which showed only a slight difference between the two. More than three-quarters (80%) of participants from Physically Challenged Action Foundation said they were satisfied with their current employment. Graduates from Jachi Training Center (32 %) were the least likely to say they were satisfied with their job (Figure 2 below).

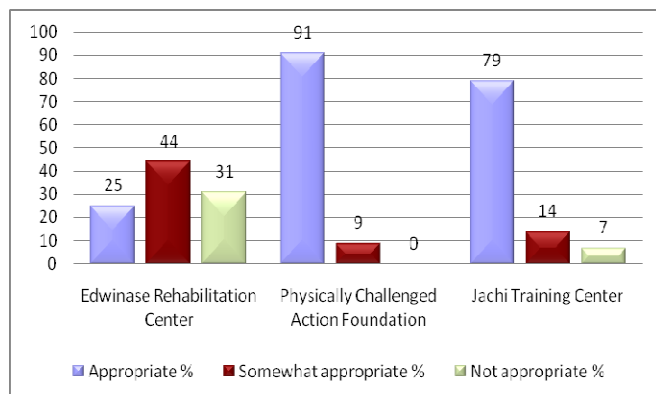
**Figure 2 Job satisfaction among participants**



### Appropriateness of training

The graduates' views on the appropriateness of the training they received was sought. Overall, most (78%) of the graduates claimed that the training they received was appropriate. In terms of individual institutions, most of the graduates from the Physically Challenged Action Foundation (91%) and Jachi Training Center (79%) said that their training was appropriate while a lower percentage (25%) from Edwinase said their training was appropriate, suggesting why they were not satisfied with their current jobs. Although the responses from graduates from the Physically Challenged Action Foundation is expected, it is unclear why those from Jachi rated their training appropriate since they had the least employment outcome and job satisfaction (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3 Participants' opinion on appropriateness of training**

## INTERVIEWS

### Lack of resources

Resources in the form of funds, materials and equipment are important elements that must be available to ensure the success of every programme. Lack of resources can adversely affect implementations of the programme. However, responses from the participants suggest that the two public training centers were not well-resourced and that the lack of resources was hampering the effective management of the training centers. Two directors described the situation:

*Resources to train the students are very disappointing. Let's talk about facility; every effective training must have the appropriate training materials and facilities. What pertains in the training institutions of persons with disability? And so if the facility is sub-standard, there are no basic training tools, equipment and materials, then appropriate training are you going to give to them. There is no money for the children to buy food, government doesn't pay for water, electricity left alone to talk about learning materials. So what kind of training are we offering? The resources that will make the training possible are not given so that is another factor (Director, Edwenase).*

*The challenges we faced here are infrastructure in terms of accommodation, teaching materials also feeding the government doesn't give any support for feeding and now the only Ghc150 that the student pay for a term of 11 to 12 weeks is what we used to feed them and also performing administrative activities unless we get support from some benevolence individuals. The students buy their own materials (Director, Jachi).*

### Lack of qualified personnel

While the authorities of Edwinase and Physically Challenged Action Foundation centers complained of lack of qualified personnel, the director at Jachi center claimed they had well trained staff to train their students.

*Then let us talk about personnel. Every output depends on the input, so you set up a place train people and you just have to look at the training, the caliber of trainers you have before the trainees would benefit, so we need to look at that if we are talking at the appropriateness let us look at the input first. What caliber of trainers do we have, the requisite skills to impact into*

*given that appropriate training we are asking for? (Director, Edwenase).*

*I don't have enough teachers here, why don't I have enough? Because I don't have money to pay for their services. Many of them who come here charge from Ghc1000 and above but sometimes the whole month I would not get that amount (Director, Physically Challenged Action Foundation).*

*We don't have teachers here as we are speaking now I am the only teacher at the leather works department and I had to supervise the students from level one to the final level. I had to combine them and teach them based on their level (Instructor, Physically Challenged Action Foundation).*

However, the Director at Jachi stated that:

*"we have enough qualified instructors here, 80% of the instructors are more than qualified. They were picked from polytechnics. They are instructors with certificate A among others."*

### Appropriateness of the training

Participants explained what they thought an appropriate training should be and whether the training they were providing was appropriate. According to some of the participants an appropriate training means matching training with individual's ability, and that when people are lumped together and given the same training, which was the practice in some of the vocational training centers, it may not benefit some people. A participant explained:

*Every training must commensurate the knowledge or the capacity of the individual, and that is why all training institutions have requirement, other than that, they should open it for everybody who desire to enter there, but the grading requirement is supposed to be a sieve that would be used to sieve to get appropriate material before the training even goes on. That is why all training institutions have their intake requirement. It is a sieving system. Is it the same with training for persons with disabilities? Do we put together all categories of people and say train them? When this happen most of them will not get skill that will be accepted in the society. That is if we are talking about the appropriateness we have to look at that. (Director, Edwenase)*

Some participants also thought that the appropriateness of the training depends on the skills that are being offered. A training programme is considered appropriate if it is able to assist graduates to compete with others on the labour market. But he admitted that the kind of training being provided was inadequate and not all that appropriate so there was the need to upgrade their training. A participant remarked:

*The training they received here is like a standard something, that is, disabled and dress making, sewing, I personally don't like it. Because this is the time for us to raise our standard of trade given to them so that when they enter the job market they can compete... because training here when you go to the road side all non-professionals are doing the same in large quantities which our trainees find it difficult to compete. (Director, Jachi)*

However, the response from one of the participant seemed to contradict the above as indicated by the quote below.

*The training is appropriate because about 99% of the trainees are able to establish themselves after the training. What we do is that we coordinate with the parents of the trainees' to provide them with a shop before they leave the center and whiles leaving, the center will also provide them with tools and equipment and a start-up capital to start their business.* (Director, Physically Challenged Action Foundation)

The Physically Challenged Action Foundation Director further indicated that, they had a “transitional programme” for their trainees and this seemed to have positively impacted on the employment outcomes of graduates from the center. The programme involved collaborating with parents to provide support in the form of shops, tools, machines and a startup capital for the graduates after their training.

The divergent views regarding the appropriateness of the training programmes among the directors seem to reflect perceived differences in the kind of training being offered at the three training centers. Their views are also generally consistent with perceptions of the graduates. The findings suggest that a wide range of factors determined the relevance of skills, that is, the ability of the graduates to utilize the skills they have acquired. The quality of the training is only one of the factors, and so, providing the training alone may not be enough to make the graduates employable.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of every vocational training programme is to provide trainees with skills that are relevant to the current labour market demands<sup>12</sup>. In other words, people going through vocational training programmes should be able to use their skills to benefit themselves and their communities. Many persons with disabilities are unable to enroll in school or further their education after basic education because of barriers in the educational system<sup>20</sup>. Vocational training is an alternative to assist such individuals to acquire skills to make them productive in life. Therefore, vocational training programmes for persons with disabilities should be capable of offering skills that are marketable and can make graduates competitive on the labour market. This requires that vocational training programmes are well-resourced to effectively perform their functions<sup>1</sup>.

However, the findings from the study suggest that the vocational training centers in the Region, especially the public ones, were facing a lot of challenges that seemed to be affecting their capacity to provide appropriate training and skills for the trainees. For example, inadequate resources, including qualified teachers and the use of outmoded training methods, implies that the training centers may not be able to provide the trainees with appropriate skills. For persons with disabilities, who require special attention, specialized teaching materials and well trained staff to cope with educational training programmes<sup>21,24</sup>, the lack of resources meant that many of the trainees were having difficulties coping and were not benefiting from the training. This probably accounted for the large number of unemployed graduates from some of the training centre. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Aboagye<sup>21</sup> and Laing.<sup>24</sup> These studies discovered inadequate resources as a major

setback to vocational training for persons with disabilities. It should also be noted that the lack of resources seemed to be a general problem with vocational training in Ghana and not just limited to those that focused on persons with disabilities. The major problem with vocational education in Ghana is lack of resources and the use of outmoded teaching methods<sup>22</sup>. These challenges, according to the author, were hindering the provision of appropriate skills to trainees.

It appears there is lack of commitment on the part of government in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities, especially investing in training and education. Several studies have identified inadequate funding, lack of qualified teachers, and teaching and learning materials as major barriers impeding the running of special schools in Ghana<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, the problems identified in the current study are not limited to only vocation training programmes. The lack of commitment on the part of government to support the vocational training centers is probably one of the reasons accounting for their poor performance, in terms of employment outcomes and job satisfaction for graduates from the public training centers.

Although resources are important ingredients in training programmes, the type of skills provided with the resources available is also very important. In other words, even if the required resources are available, but the skills provided do not match demand on job market, graduates may not be able to utilize their skills productively leaving many of them unequipped for higher paid jobs. Thus, although some of the graduates may have been able to secure jobs and are self-employed, the jobs may not be able to make them self-sufficient and self-reliant; the jobs are unlikely to address poverty among them. Skills such as making doormats, tailoring, dressmaking, and shoemaking are a bit restrictive because graduates are limited to a few job options. Also, these skills are not highly demanded in the modern labour market economy and as the findings indicated, there are already too many people with these skills, who cannot make any meaningful living with them. Moreover, focusing on these skills disregards the potentials of persons with disabilities and perpetuate negative perceptions about their capabilities. This observation is somewhat consistent with findings by Slikker<sup>5</sup> who also observed that trades persons with disabilities acquire from vocational training centers are outmoded and there is no market for their products.

Again, just providing skills without any transitional programmes to enable the graduates to settle is not adequate to make them self-reliant. The findings that graduates from the private training institutions had better employment outcomes than their counterparts from the public centers although both the private and public centers were offering almost the same skills, suggest that the private training center was offering something in addition to the provision of skills. It appears the “transitional” arrangements being provided by the private training center have contributed immensely in helping their graduates to get established easily after training. Such a programme did not exist in the public training centers, so graduates had to struggle alone

to overcome many barriers, including negative societal attitudes and financial constraints to establish themselves. Thus, vocational training programmes should not focus only on the provisions on skills without arrangements to assist the graduates to settle. Without any support, for example, financial assistance, many graduates will be unable to utilize their skills after the training.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several implications for vocational training programmes in Ghana, particularly those that focus on persons with disabilities. The study findings indicating that a wide range of factors determined the relevance of vocational skills point to the needs for vocational training programmes for persons with disabilities to consider the complexity of factors that affect the lives of persons with disabilities and incorporate them in their training programmes. For example, transitional arrangements, which may be financial packages as well as building positive self-concept of the trainees, and the provision of entrepreneurial know-how should be part of the training.

Since one of the findings is that the programmes being offered by some of the centers are not appropriate and do not make the graduates employable, there is the need to review the training programmes. A complete restructuring of the programmes should be undertaken, which should involve a review of the curricular to make them consistent with current market conditions and resourcing the training centers with modern tools and equipment. To address their staffing challenges, the centers could employ some of their graduates who are good and could help to train others, and also request for national service personnel to beef up the staff.

Lack of adequate support from government is one of the main reasons for most of the challenges being encountered by the training centers. If government were a bit more committed to developing the potentials of children with disabilities by providing the needed financial and material resources for their education and training, most the challenges would be reduced. It is therefore recommended that government should review its attitudes towards issues affecting persons with disabilities and increase budgetary allocation for their training programmes. The Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations should vigorously advocate for the implementation of provisions in the Persons with Disability Act 715 to ensure that persons with disabilities in Ghana enjoy equal rights as others. In particular, provisions in the Persons with Disability Act 715 requiring that persons with disabilities who are unable to continue their education be given appropriate vocational training<sup>20</sup> should be implemented by the appropriate ministries.

### CONCLUSION

The study investigated the relevance of vocational training programmes in three vocational centers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana to persons with disabilities. Employment empowers persons with disabilities, enhances their independence, increases their integration into society and, thus, contributes significantly to their overall quality of life. Vocational training is one of the

many activities that can assist persons with disabilities to exercise their rights to employment. Through vocational training, persons with disabilities acquire skills to engage in some form of economic activities. However, findings of the study suggest that a lot needs to be done to make vocational training programmes relevant to persons with disabilities. Although restructuring vocational training programmes to make their graduates useful is recommended, restructuring alone will not be enough to provide sustainable employment for persons with disabilities and to reduce poverty among them. A more comprehensive approach, that include collaboration between training centers, parents, graduates, and community members will help to eliminate all barriers and increase the potentials and prospects of the graduates. It should be noted that employment is a human right issue and so persons with disabilities are entitled to it and must be assisted to exercise it through the provision of appropriate training, legislation, and the elimination of physical, social and economic barriers.

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