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A Review of Apprenticeship Policies in Ghana

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Abstract:

This research explores the intricate landscape of apprenticeship in Ghana, focusing on the traditional apprenticeship system and the contemporary challenges it confronts. Traditional apprenticeships have long served as a fundamental mechanism for skill development, predominantly within the informal sector of the nation. Using a descriptive research approach, this study conducts a comprehensive literature review to elucidate the historical and prevailing policies designed to regulate apprenticeship in Ghana. Findings reveal that issues such as inadequate regulation, financial constraints, and a misalignment between acquired skills and employer expectations have emerged as substantial impediments to the efficacy of the system. In response to these challenges, the Ghanaian government has instigated a series of reform initiatives aimed at fortifying and modernizing the apprenticeship framework. Central to these endeavors are the National Apprenticeship Programme and the Ghana Skills Development Initiative, both seeking to formalize and enhance traditional apprenticeships. The introduction of the National Apprenticeship Policy in 2020 further cements the government's dedication to advancing apprenticeships, with a particular emphasis on competency-based training and greater integration with the formal education system. These policy reforms signify critical strides towards ameliorating the limitations inherent in the current apprenticeship system, ultimately aiming to bolster the employability of young apprentices and foster economic and social development. Effective collaboration among a spectrum of stakeholders, including governmental bodies, Master Crafts Persons, and vocational institutions, assumes paramount importance in the successful implementation and monitoring of these policies.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, skill development, policies

1. Introduction

Apprenticeship represents a formal arrangement between a master craftsman and an apprentice, wherein the apprentice acquires practical experience while being supervised by the master craftsman over a specified period. This type of learning occurs within a workplace setting and facilitates hands-on training (Uwameiye & Iyamu, 2010). In earlier times, apprentices often had a familial connection to the master craftsman, and upon completing their training, they would continue working with their father until they inherited his tools and responsibilities due to his retirement or passing. In other instances, apprentices could come from outside the family and were required to successfully complete their training course before being officially recognized. Typically, the financial responsibility for the graduation ceremony fell on the father or other relatives (McWilliams, Kwame-Poh, 1975). This apprenticeship model was also employed for learning chieftaincy roles, as evidenced by historical accounts from Asante, where Obiri Yeboa, a chief, sent his nephew Osei Tutu to train in chieftaincy within the Denkyira chief's court (McWilliams, Kwame-Poh, 1975). This highlights the enduring prevalence of apprenticeship in Ghana for individuals seeking to acquire practical skills.

Within the informal economy, Apprenticeship is a prevalent occurrence. To transmit expertise from one generation to another, disadvantaged communities have established informal apprenticeship structures that are entirely centered around the workplace (Quartey-Papafio, 1914). A young apprentice gains knowledge through observation and emulation of a skilled master craftsperson, mastering the trade's skills and becoming integrated into the business's culture and networks. Typically, these apprenticeship arrangements are communicated verbally, but they are deeply rooted in the customs, standards, and traditions of the society (McWilliams, Kwame-Poh, 1975).

In Ghana, the practice of apprenticeship training originally aimed to transmit knowledge to families or communities. However, it has evolved to incorporate formalized agreements, fees and fewer restrictions on access to this training (Quartey-Papafio, 1914). In Ghana, approximately 80-90% of fundamental skills training is attributed to apprenticeship training, in contrast to 5-10% from public training institutions and 10-15% from for-profit and nonprofit NGOs (World Bank, 2004). Aryeetey (2005) highlights that apprenticeship training is the primary source of skills acquisition for Junior Secondary School (JSS) graduates who lack access to further formal opportunities. For many individuals, apprenticeship is the sole available avenue for acquiring employable skills. The typical characteristics of apprenticeship training are widely recognized. In Ghana, a prospective apprentice typically attaches themselves to a master, typically for a period of three years, although this duration can vary by trade and master. An initiation fee is often required for training, although it may be waived in cases where the youth is already known to the master. While contracts between the master and apprentice are signed in some trades, verbal agreements are more common. The apprentice primarily learns through observation,

initially performing simple tasks unrelated to the trade, such as running errands, odd jobs, cleaning, washing, fetching water, or farming. During this initial phase, the apprentice is also assigned basic trade-related tasks, such as cleaning nuts and bolts or performing basic wood-smoothing work. As the apprenticeship progresses, they are entrusted with progressively more complex tasks under the guidance of the master craftsman and senior apprentices.

Larbi (2009) corroborates this by indicating that in the apprenticeship system, there is typically no formal curriculum or established procedure for skill acquisition. Apprentices primarily learn through observation, imitation, and the trial-and-error method. On-the-job learning occurs through direct instruction, and apprentices could face repercussions for making errors. Furthermore, the apprenticeship system was the mode of learning for various fields, including healing, law, carving, rituals, etc. It operated as a loosely organized system, allowing the instructor, or craftsman, considerable autonomy in structuring the program, even if this freedom sometimes disadvantaged the learner. Larbi (2009) noted that the apprenticeship system discouraged questioning or the offering of suggestions by apprentices. The master craftsman exercised an autocratic teaching style, establishing authority in the learning process. Additionally, there were no standardized regulations governing the apprenticeship process except those determined by the master craftsman. In indigenous Ghana, the apprenticeship system involved hardship, commitment, and discipline, particularly from the apprentice. The success or failure of the apprentice hinged on the master craftsman, as well as the endurance, patience, and determination of the apprentice. The level of skill, knowledge, and expertise acquired also depended on the master's own proficiency.

The age of apprentices typically spans from 9 to 40, although Ghana Statistical Service (2008) observed that the majority of apprentices are usually between 12 and 25 years old. The duration of apprenticeships varies from one profession to another, and graduation hinges on how quickly the apprentice grasps the fundamentals of the trade and their performance on the job. This includes displaying good moral conduct and commitment to both the master and the vocation. It is important to note that apprenticeship training primarily focuses on learning rather than the teaching process. The master craftsman evaluates the learning process based on the apprentice's performance of specific vocational tasks. Upon completing the training to the satisfaction of the master craftsman and meeting the attached conditions, the apprentice is granted freedom. This is often marked by a ceremony to celebrate the apprentice's graduation. Unlike graduates of Western education, apprenticeship system graduates do not face the risk of unemployment since they become self-employed and even employers of labor upon graduation. It is crucial to recognize that apprenticeship encompasses more than just acquiring technical skills. In many cases, apprentices also acquire a range of management and organizational skills, such as negotiating with suppliers or customers, costing products, and training others (Steedman, 2011). According to Ismaili (2008), it is not unusual to find that masters often adhere to a training plan, even if it is not officially documented. Some masters may follow guidelines provided by their professional associations. There are instances where the learning process is highly structured and divided into modules, but it is based on a fixed timeline rather than being competency-based. Theoretical aspects are generally given less emphasis, and it is uncommon for apprentices to take notes. Typically, most apprenticeships commence with an introductory phase where the novice is taught proper behavior and assigned tasks like cleaning the workshop and running errands. In the subsequent phase, apprentices become familiar with the tools of the trade and, when relevant, the materials, ingredients, and spare parts. Over time, the apprentice is gradually exposed to more complex tasks and assumes greater responsibilities, which may include completing a project, interacting directly with customers, overseeing junior apprentices, and occasionally managing the business in the absence of the master.

Apprenticeship training has a rich history in West Africa, and it is not surprising that it has become highly developed in this sub-region (World Bank, 2004). The World Bank (2004) acknowledges that it is less advanced in eastern and southern Africa, but it still plays a significant role in imparting skills to workers in the informal sector. Despite the early recognition in Ghana of the potential of apprenticeship training as a means of delivering skills, few policymakers showed interest until the mid-1990s. Today, the World Bank asserts that in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), "traditional apprenticeship is the most crucial source of training for informal sector workers" (World Bank, 2004). Furthermore, it is stated that "traditional apprenticeship training contributes more to skills development than all other training providers combined" (ibid: 129). In alignment with the earlier statement, Liimatainen (2002) and Overwien (1997) observe that a greater number of young people acquire competence through informal apprenticeship than would be achievable through more formal educational programs. Compared to investing in the expansion of formal technical education and training, this approach represents a cost-effective way to boost a country's skills base and improve the employability of its youth since the training is seamlessly integrated into the production process. Enhanced apprenticeship systems can also invigorate local economies by contributing to the diversification of products and services and fostering innovation, productivity, and adaptability among micro and small enterprises.

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2008) furnished data on the distribution of apprentices aged 15 and above across various industrial sectors in the Ghanaian economy. According to this data, the textile, apparel, and furnishing sector had the highest percentage, with 36% (of which 78% were female), followed by the building sector at 15.2% (with less than 1% being female). Steedman (2011) highlighted the crucial role played by the informal training sector in the national economy by promoting technical and vocational skills through traditional apprenticeship training programs. Uwameiye and Iyamu (2010) indicated that apprenticeship represents the most significant avenue for acquiring employable skills in the informal sector of West Africa, with the informal sector accounting for over ninety percent (90%) of all skills training in Ghana. Uwameiye and Iyamu (2010) also pointed out that roadside apprenticeship offers an opportunity for training adolescents who have dropped out of school. According to Sawyerr (2019), in recent times, young people have displayed reduced interest in acquiring skills through apprenticeship. Instead, they tend to favor formal training to obtain academic

certificates and other paper qualifications. Therefore, the objective of this research is to assess the apprentice policies that have been employed to guide the apprenticeship system in Ghana and what their intended outcomes were.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Types of Apprenticeship

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2017), there are three distinct categories of apprenticeship: Traditional apprenticeship, Informal apprenticeship and Modern apprenticeship. Firstly, traditional apprenticeship involves the structured transmission of skills within families and social groups, guided by socio-cultural norms. This form of apprenticeship entails an agreement between the master craftsman and the apprentice's parents or guardian, outlining the parameters of skills training. The master craftsman typically provides accommodation and food and even imparts a degree of moral guidance to the apprentice. Secondly, informal apprenticeship bears similarities to traditional apprenticeship but is more inclusive, with a significant portion of apprentices originating from outside the family circle. Informal apprenticeship training is commonly found in modern informal sectors like car repair, welding, and hairdressing. In recent times, there have been instances of master craftspeople who have shifted their primary focus from production activities to mentoring and training. Thirdly, modern apprenticeship is usually governed by an 'Apprenticeship Act' that defines the duration of the training period, the format of training, the requisite number of working or training hours, and provisions for payment, including minimum wage requirements, among other specifics. In many developing countries, modern apprenticeships are relatively limited in number and are typically concentrated within medium and large enterprises and state-run organizations.

Steedman (2011) classifies apprenticeship into two primary categories: Informal Apprenticeship and Regulated Apprenticeship. Informal Apprenticeship is a prevalent practice within the informal economy. It serves as a widespread means of passing on skills from one generation to the next, particularly in economically disadvantaged societies. Informal apprenticeship systems in these settings are entirely workplace-based. In this context, a young apprentice learns primarily through observation and imitation under the guidance of a seasoned master craftsman. They acquire the skills of the trade while becoming immersed in the culture and networks of the business. Apprenticeship agreements are typically verbal but deeply rooted in the society's customs, norms, and traditions. However, informal apprenticeships often suffer from several drawbacks, such as long working hours, unsafe working conditions, minimal or no allowances or wages, limited social protection in cases of illness or accidents, and significant gender imbalances. Despite these shortcomings, there is a recognition of the importance of upgrading informal apprenticeship systems. While facing challenges, these systems represent a cost-effective method for enhancing a country's skills base and improving youth employability since training is seamlessly integrated into the production process. Moreover, improving informal apprenticeship can also stimulate local economies by contributing to product and service diversification, fostering innovation, boosting productivity, and enhancing the adaptability of micro and small enterprises. On the other hand, Regulated Apprenticeship, as described by Steedman (2011), is characterized by structured and formal regulation, typically established through national-level legislation. It involves compensation, takes place within the workplace, and is governed by a contract specifying the duration of the apprenticeship, the learning program (including transferable skills), assessment procedures, final certification, and the entitlement to off-the-job learning opportunities.

Walter (2008) presents an alternative form of apprenticeship known as Cognitive Apprenticeship. This approach is characterized by its capacity to combine the advantages of traditional apprenticeship while aligning with the objectives of formal schooling. It is rooted in constructivism and situated learning principles. Cognitive apprenticeship is realized through instruction facilitated by guided learning, with a focus on making progress and making the intended outcomes readily observable. It serves as a theoretical framework for instructing intricate cognitive tasks through guided learning processes. The techniques employed in this form of apprenticeship encompass modeling, articulation, exploration, coaching, and reflection.

2.2. Benefits of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship, as practiced by West African artisans, is far from being an outdated system. Instead, it represents a dynamic institution that frequently demonstrates adaptability and growth potential, serving as a fundamental cornerstone in the development of the informal sector. This system caters to a significantly larger number of young individuals than governments can reasonably hope to equip with valuable skills. Given the prevailing circumstances, it remains both relevant and highly effective, standing in contrast to more contemporary and externally imposed training models (Larbi, 2003). In alignment with this perspective, Biney-Aidoo (2006) notes that apprenticeship retains its relevance by directly addressing a critical employment challenge faced by many developing countries. While it may not create employment opportunities for everyone, it offers a solution for young men and women, who, regardless of their educational background, find themselves with no viable alternative but to seek livelihoods within the informal sector. It adequately prepares them for self-employment across a range of valuable trades, ultimately enhancing their productivity compared to other potential scenarios. Imirhe (2004) also contends that in the absence of apprenticeship, the informal sector would struggle to absorb the increasing influx of new entrants into the labor market, especially given the current income levels. Traditional apprenticeship demonstrates its effectiveness by achieving its intended goals with a remarkably high level of "customer satisfaction." Despite instances of dropouts and the fact that not all "graduates" go on to establish their own businesses, the system still produces artisans who effectively apply their acquired skills. Moreover, the system operates efficiently and is self-sustaining, and it maintains a significant degree of self-regulation.

2.3. Challenges of Apprenticeship

However, it is important to acknowledge that traditional apprenticeship is not without its imperfections. The prevailing belief is that apprenticeship primarily caters to individuals who may not excel in the formal education system or whose parents cannot afford to finance their education. This perception creates difficulties in attracting young graduates and school-age youths to participate in the system. Unfortunately, those undergoing apprenticeships often face a lack of recognition and respect compared to their counterparts in the formal education system. Another substantial hindrance stems from the absence of a standardized curriculum for the apprenticeship system. Across all vocational fields, there is a notable absence of a structured curriculum. Instead, apprentices learn based on the specific tasks available in the workshop, without a clear sequential progression or a transition from simple to complex learning. Topics within the apprenticeship system are acquired in a somewhat disorganized manner, lacking a specific assessment method (Monk et al., 2008).

Masters' attitudes often serve as a barrier to the effective practice of apprenticeship (Steedman, 2011). This issue arises from the fact that many masters lack formal training in the art of teaching. Consequently, they may struggle to engage and maintain the apprentice's interest in their work, resulting in a high dropout rate and a significant number of apprentices not completing their training. Furthermore, funding presents another challenge to the apprenticeship practice. The economic circumstances of both the parents of apprentices and the apprentices themselves frequently hinder their ability to finance the agreed-upon training period. Even master craftsmen often grapple with financial difficulties, which can impede their capacity to provide contemporary technological resources. In cases involving trades, the degree of success in the chosen business heavily relies on the availability of funds, which, unfortunately, may not always be readily accessible. Moreover, their inability to offer suitable collateral for bank loans further compounds the issue. Even microfinance banks have established guidelines that make it challenging for graduates of the apprenticeship system to access loans (Monk et al., 2008). Another challenge is the selection of an inappropriate career path by the apprentice. Often, due to a lack of exposure and limited understanding of psychology and career counseling, apprentices make misguided career choices. Many times, parents or guardians exert pressure and impose careers on aspiring apprentices without adequately considering the apprentice's own interests, abilities, and capabilities. As a consequence, this frequently leads to an incomplete apprenticeship period, as the apprentice may struggle to meet the physical and intellectual demands of the chosen career (Akpalu, 2011).

Another significant challenge facing the practice of the apprenticeship system in Ghana is the issue of outdated and unimplemented policies. It appears that there are no clear and coherent government regulations or guiding principles in place to oversee the apprenticeship system (Walther, 2008). This lack of structure and regulation makes it less appealing to both young individuals and graduates. Despite the initial intention of the government to establish such schemes as a means of addressing unemployment, it is primarily the local craftsmen who play a central role in these programs. They take on the responsibility of mentoring the apprentices and providing them with training in their chosen vocations. In essence, what these organized bodies are doing is akin to the traditional societal role of parents. They take the apprentices to the master craftsman, act as guarantors for the apprentices, bear the financial burdens involved, and help the apprentices settle into their roles as masters themselves. Over the years, various apprenticeship policies have been established to regulate the system. The purpose of this paper is to identify some of these policies and find out what these policies were expected to achieve.

3. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive research method as its primary approach. The main research technique employed was a comprehensive literature review aimed at gathering data for the study. Consequently, the information discussed in the text primarily came from secondary sources. These secondary sources encompassed conference proceedings, books, journals, and internet resources, which were consulted to obtain data on the issues and concepts under consideration. Furthermore, the study made use of various reports and documents associated with apprenticeship training in Ghana to supplement the research.

4. Results and Discussion

Government policy in Ghana acknowledges apprenticeships as a distinct form of contractual agreement, highlighting the need for effective regulation. The traditional apprenticeship system has long been a primary source of skilled labor supply to Ghana's industries, yet there have been limited efforts to enhance it. The Ghanaian government has made several attempts to reform the traditional apprenticeship system. Early initiatives to regulate non-formal training included the establishment of the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) in 1970 and the formation of the National Coordinating Committee on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACVET) in 1990. However, these coordinating bodies and accompanying legislation proved ineffective due to their failure to establish a cohesive national policy, capacity-related challenges, and differing objectives among various government ministries (Palmer, 2009).

The National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) was then the government-appointed agency responsible for organizing and overseeing the apprenticeship system and was under pressure to fulfill its mandate. In response to calls for the reform of the apprenticeship system, the NVTI Board initiated processes aimed at developing a comprehensive program to restructure the Institute. This restructuring involved establishing a robust connection between the NVTI apprenticeship system in both the formal and informal sectors. The goal was to enhance the quality of training provided to equip individuals with employable skills. Additionally, the initiative aimed to create a demand-driven, competency-based curriculum, making NVTI programs more accessible to those who were working or facing financial constraints, allowing them to engage with NVTI programs at their own pace (Atuguba, 2006).

In its 2002 report, the President's Committee on the Review of Educational Reform in Ghana put forth the recommendation for the establishment of an Apprentice Stream as one of the post-basic education alternative pathways. This recommendation was primarily aimed at Junior Secondary School (JSS) graduates who, for various reasons, were either unable or unwilling to pursue education at technical or vocational institutes. Instead, they could opt to engage in formal or informal industry apprenticeships. The Government White Paper on this report accepted these recommendations and made specific commitments regarding their implementation. Notably, the White Paper outlined the government's decision to establish a National Apprenticeship Training Board. This board would have the responsibility of overseeing and regulating apprenticeship training, as well as addressing matters related to registration, curriculum content, training duration, and certification. The introduction of the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) bill aligned with the government's commitment to realize these objectives. The Education Regulatory Bodies Act 2020 (Act 1023) converted COTVET to Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training with a mandate to regulate, promote and administer technical and vocational education and training for transformation and innovation for sustainable development.

Additionally, various institutions and agencies have been created to promote education and employment, with the National Youth Council playing a pivotal role. This Council, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, devised the National Action Plan for implementing the National Youth Employment policy. A survey conducted by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development highlighted the significant disparities in youth policies and their effectiveness across West Africa. Nonetheless, Ghana stands out for its substantial youth policies and a coherent plan for developing institutional mechanisms to support youth employment. In recent years, the government has shown renewed commitment to skills development and its role in addressing unemployment (Palmer, 2009). Ghana's National Youth Policy identified a range of challenges facing its youth population. These challenges encompass issues such as "access to quality education for the youth within the educational sector, accompanied by inadequate or unsuitable training for the job market," as well as "unemployment and underemployment resulting from insufficient and unsuitable job market training." Subsequently, the policy outlined priority areas for addressing these challenges, including education and skills training, information and communication technology (ICT), modern agriculture, and entrepreneurial development (Ghana Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010).

In 2006, Ghana implemented its strategy for addressing youth unemployment, known as the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP). This initiative aimed to provide training and employment opportunities for 500,000 young individuals across various trades and occupations between 2006 and 2009. However, the program incurred high costs due to the wages it offered, which exceeded prevailing market rates. An evaluation of the program by the World Bank revealed that it was not a cost-effective approach when compared to other traditional rural public works programs. Additionally, the NYEP exhibited a bias towards urban areas and areas with relatively higher income levels (World Bank, 2009a). Ghana possesses a well-established apprenticeship system, where young men and women receive sector-specific private training in skills commonly utilized within the informal sector. Currently, non-formal apprenticeship training accounts for a significant portion of skills development in Ghana, making up 80-90% of all skills training. In contrast, public training institutes contribute only 5-10%, and NGOs contribute 10-15% (Palmer, 2009).

Several projects aimed at skills development have been implemented, including the Vocational Skills and Informal Sector Support Project, the Rural Enterprise Project, and the Skills Training Entrepreneurship Programme. In 2008, ambitious plans were set in motion to create a regulated or formalized informal apprenticeship system known as the National Apprentice Programme (NAP). This program primarily targeted junior secondary school graduates who could not pursue further education and provided them with twelve months of skills training. During the training period, apprentices received toolkits that they could retain after completing their training. The program, also referred to as "apprenticeship as a means of self-employment," was designed to be organized and overseen by the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET). The first group of 5,000 junior high school graduates was placed under the guidance of master craftsmen who were selected and trained by COTVET. These apprentices were enrolled in five trades: automobile/engineering, electronics, cosmetology, garment making, and welding and fabrication.

Another project that has been initiated recently is the Ghana Skills Development Initiative (GSDI). This project was commenced by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with financial support from the European Union (EU) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). The GSDI is carried out in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, working in conjunction with the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET), as well as various public and private sector stakeholders. Since 2012, the Ghana Skills Development Initiative has been dedicated to enhancing the conditions for acquiring gainful and respectable employment in Ghana. It aims to achieve this by creating a more inclusive and higher-quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system that aligns with the labor market's demands. The primary focus is on enhancing the professional skills of Ghana's youth. During the period between 2012 and 2016, Phase I and II of the Ghana Skills Development Initiative concentrated on modernizing vocational training within the informal sector. This involved upgrading traditional apprenticeship programs across five different sectors. The overarching goal of the project was to enhance the employability of trainees, workers, and master craftspeople, ultimately leading to the employment of a skilled labor force in these sectors. To accomplish this, the traditional apprenticeship training in the informal sector was restructured, introducing the Cooperative Apprenticeship Training (CAT) system. This system emphasized an 80% focus on workplace-based training under the guidance of the Master Craftsperson (MCP) and a 20% emphasis on training at Institutional Training Providers (TP). The project also worked on establishing favorable conditions for competency-based training (CBT) and elaborated on occupational standards, unit specifications, and the

development of teaching and learning materials for National Proficiency levels I and II. Pilot courses were conducted for NP I (GFA-Group, 2023).

Phase III of the initiative aims to provide training for job-seeking youth, apprentices, workers, and owners of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in accordance with the demands of the labor market. This phase builds upon the successes of the previous phases while further expanding and upscaling the program to meet the evolving needs of the labor market.

The National Apprenticeship Programme is also a project designed to offer vulnerable youth the opportunity to acquire employable skills through state-funded apprenticeship training with private Master Crafts Persons (MCPs), aligns with the broader policy framework outlined in the Education Sector Plan 2018 – 2030 and the Strategic Plan for TVET Transformation 2018 - 2022. These plans support competency-based skills development in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The National Apprenticeship Policy (NAP), established in 2020, delineates the necessary mechanisms to fortify the National Apprenticeship System (NAS) in Ghana to enhance youth employment prospects. This policy seeks to provide guidance for the practice of apprenticeship in Ghana and establish a unified framework for effective coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. It emphasizes the integration of apprenticeship across various forms of learning and advocates for its incorporation into curriculum design, delivery, assessment, and certification.

The existing apprenticeship training in Ghana faces significant challenges in terms of how apprenticeships are conducted and regulated. Weaknesses are evident in the regulatory framework, with inadequate coordination among key actors, limited capacity for training and monitoring, insufficient funding, and a substantial misalignment between the skills acquired by learners and what employers require. The current policy document aims to set a clear direction for enhancing the National Apprenticeship System to benefit the Ghanaian economy. The National Apprenticeship Policy establishes the essential standards and features of effective apprenticeships, providing a framework for meaningful partnerships and institutional arrangements among key stakeholders. It is intended to assist stakeholders in developing appropriate interventions to steer the apprenticeship sector towards contributing to skill development, decent work, and economic and social progress (National Apprenticeship Policy, 2020).

5. Conclusion

Apprenticeship in Ghana plays a crucial role in skill development and youth employment within the informal sector. While the traditional apprenticeship system has a rich history and provides a substantial portion of basic skills training, it faces several challenges, including inadequate regulation, funding issues, and a mismatch between acquired skills and employer demands. The government has recognized the need for reforms to strengthen the apprenticeship system and align it with modern workforce requirements. Efforts to enhance the apprenticeship system in Ghana have included the introduction of initiatives like the National Apprenticeship Programme and the Ghana Skills Development Initiative, which aim to modernize and formalize traditional apprenticeships, thus improving the employability of young trainees. Furthermore, the National Apprenticeship Policy, established in 2020, provides a comprehensive framework for the development of apprenticeships, emphasizing competency-based training, integration into the education system, and effective coordination among stakeholders. These reforms and policies are steps in the right direction towards addressing the challenges faced by the apprenticeship system in Ghana. By improving the regulation, quality, and alignment of apprenticeships with labor market needs, Ghana can strengthen its informal sector, enhance youth employability, and contribute to economic and social development. It is crucial for all stakeholders, including government agencies, Master Crafts Persons, and vocational institutions, to collaborate effectively to implement and monitor these policies for a more robust apprenticeship system.

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