



ITES GHANA READINESS TO WORK PROGRAMME

CASE STUDY REPORT

Submitted by
Farouk Rabiu & Daniel Doh

April 2013

TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary

Section 1: Introduction

1.0 Background..... 1

Section 2: Description of the ITES Readiness to Work Programme

2.0 General Project Descriptions.....6
 2.1 Recruitment and Training of Participants (Trainees)... ..7
 2.2 Training Arrangements and Outcome.....
 7
 2.3 Training Curriculum.....8
 2.4 Placement of trainees.....8

Section 3: Section of BPOs and Government Agencies

3.1 Selection of BPOS.....9
 3.2 Selection of Government Agencies/State Institutions (SI).....9

Section 4: Evaluation Methodology

4.0 The Evaluation Design.....10
 4.1 Sampling arrangement.....10
 4.2 Data Collection and Analytical Approach.....10
 4.3 Data Analysis.....11

Section 5: Discussion of Preliminary Findings

5.1 Synthesised profile of programme participants (trainees).....12
 5.2 Analysis of training outcome on participants (trainees).....12
 5.3 Usefulness of Skills Acquired in the BPO Programme.....13
 5.4 Effect of Programme on Socio-Economic Status of Participants.....14
 5.5 Effect of programme on participants future prospects for jobs in ICT.....15
 5.6 Effect of Programme on Government Agencies.....15

Section 6: Preliminary Observations on Program Progress

6.1 Training and Re-training.....16
 6.2 Relationship between BPOs and Government Agencies.....16
 6.3 Performance-Based Payment.....16

Section 7: Preliminary Recommendations

7.0 Conclusion.....17
 7.1 Recommendations.....17

References

Appendices

Executive Summary

This is the final evaluation report of the first phase of the IT Enabled Services Secretariat (ITES^{GH}) Readiness to Work Project. The project was designed to respond to the growing phenomenon of youth unemployment and the quest to develop innovative interventions to resolve the problem. The project forms part of the overall e-Ghana programme. The project was based on the assumption that when relevant ITES/BPO skills are provided to a talented pool of young people who are at the base of the pyramid (poverty), their opportunities for gainful employment in the growing ITES/BPO industry in Ghana will be enhanced.

On the basis of the project assumptions the following questions guided the evaluation process: How has the ITES Work Readiness project contributed to skills of young people and what effect does this have on employment, income and welfare of poor young people? How has the ITES Work Readiness project led to the digitisation of records of selected government agencies and what are the relationship dynamics in the process of digitisation? And finally, how are the capacities of BPOs developed through the ITES Work Readiness project?

A participatory evaluation process involving the use of mainly qualitative tools and minimum quantitative tool (survey) was used. The process involved mainly in-depth interviews with key project participants and in some cases focus group discussion. It also involved the use of structured survey instruments with young people herein referred to as trainees. The process also involved the use of process observation and informal interactions where the evaluators sat and observed the process of scanning and digitisation. The key participants in the evaluation were: Management staff of BPOs, Management staff of Government Agencies, Management of ITES Ghana, Management of Ghana Telecom University and selected young people who are participating in the project. In all, a total 52 respondents made of 30 trainees and 22 officials were involved in the evaluation.

Findings on the socio-demographic characteristics suggest that most (70%) of the young people who participated in the training and the ITES Work Readiness Program had secondary(Snr High) education. The age range of the distribution was between 21 and 50 years with the highest age cohort (46.7%) falling between 26 years and 30 years.

Key skills areas for the training of young people in the project include: Awareness of the Windows Environment, Microsoft Office, Scanning and digitization, Personal Grooming., Work Ethics, Key Boarding Skills, Time Management, Communication Skills and Entrepreneurial Skills. The effect of the training provided to participants shows that there is an average improvement in skills of about 80 per cent in all skills areas. On average, more than 90 per cent of respondents have rated each of the skill areas as very useful for the kind of work they were doing with BPOs.

On the issue of employment of young people before and after ITES training, the evidence shows that prior to enrolling on the ITES Work Readiness program; half of the respondents (50%) were not in any form of employment. The other 50 per cent who indicated that they were in some form of employment were involved in works such as family business (3.3%), sales agents (10%) and many others. However, at the time of this evaluation all young people who participated in training programme were in employment with the three BPOs that were participating in the programme.

Final Evaluation Report

Furthermore, average monthly income for the whole distribution before participating in the programme as noted from the income figures provided by respondents stood at GH¢97 per months. However, at present the average monthly income accruing only from the ITES Work Readiness Program is GH¢340 per month. This shows a difference of GH¢243 per month or an increase of about 250%. A further probe into the use of the money however reveals that on average about GH¢150 is spent on transportation alone depending on how far an individual stays from the work centre of the BPO. Almost all (97%) of respondents are of the view that their statuses in their respective localities have been enhanced. They attribute this to the fact that they are able to wake-up and leave for work like many others do, and for the fact that they now go to work regularly, people including their families now respect them.

On the effect of the programme on BPOs, it was noted that some unspecified volume of documents re-organised and arranged for digitisation. Also, at the Registrars General's Department for example about 6 million documents have been scanned and uploaded into software. Similarly, at the Births and Deaths Registry about 8million documents have been scanned and digitised. A similar situation is found with the Ghana Revenue Authority.

It is concluded from the evaluation that in spite of the success of the training programme, there were challenges bothering on diversity in the backgrounds and experience of trainees. There were also issues relating BPOs having to retrain the participants because some of the critical skill areas relevant for the work of specific BPOs were not provided. Furthermore, there is a cordial relationship between BPOs and Government agencies in all three sectors. However, there are also indications of misunderstanding of rules of engagement due to initial entry point difficulties in some agencies.

It is observed that payment to participants were fixed on monthly basis but could have been based on outputs with a more effective payment method for performance monitoring. The monthly fixed payment method mostly result in the inability of employers to measure and reward deserving or punish nonperforming staff. Even though BPOs found a way to correct the system that in itself had the tendency of creating some kind of tension between BPOs and some of the participants who became victims of non-performance.

BPOs capacity and willingness to retain some of the staff after the 6 months compulsory phase is quite unclear and not promising. The absorption capacities of the BPOs seem not to have expanded to allow them to engage more hands. The idea of supporting participating BPO companies to acquire Industry certification-to prepare them to be competitive at the global outsourcing market , must be taken seriously and as a critical part of creating permanent employment to trainees now and in the future. Given the nature of the Industry, retention of staff is contingent upon availability of jobs. To sustain this project, ITES^{GH} and its Sponsors/partners must explore seriously an extension of this project.

In terms of functionality of digitized data and numbers, some Government Agencies were not satisfied with progress so far. The argument was that hypothetically, the project concept and demonstration promises to be very useful but the current stage of the project is unacceptable. Others argued that given the fluid nature of the record system, a one-off data digitisation process will only add burden of going back in history

Given the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made: A more effective targeting using community-based volunteers and groups together with a proxy means test

Final Evaluation Report

should provide some good targeting system for the ITES Work Readiness program in the future. It is also important that BPOs are part of the training curriculum design and the training itself to avoid situations where BPOs will have to train their employees again upon taking them. The use of performance-based payment system is recommended in order to ensure some sense of responsibility on the part of young people who benefit from the project. For the purposes of future usage and continuity of service, it is recommended that the relationship between Government agencies and BPOs be strengthened. In addition, the functionality of the system/data must be placed very high in all discussions in a more consultative and participatory manner between Project managers-ITES and Government Agencies who will use the database.

Going forward, there must be a clear cut exit strategy and sustainability plan outlining time frames and resources to support the strategy after the end of the project.

Section 1: Introduction

1.0 Background

Youth unemployment is a growing phenomenon throughout the world and especially in Africa. Several innovations and attempts are being made to reduce youth unemployment. In respect of this the Government of Ghana with the assistance of the World Bank launched the eGhana Project in April 2006 to assist Ghana to generate growth and employment by leveraging ICT to improved efficiency and transparency of selected government functions through e-government applications and development of the IT Enabled Services/ Business Process Outsourcing (ITES/BPO) industry in the country. The project has been funded at an estimated amount of US\$40 million and implemented by the Ministry of Communications.

The eGhana Project has two main components including: the provision of e-government applications (infrastructure) and the development of IT Enabled Services environment to attract and retain Foreign Direct Investors (FDIs) especially ITES/BPO companies in the country. In line with this, two separate agencies were established by the Ministry of Communications to concentrate on their assigned roles to make the eGhana Project implementation successful.

The National Information and Technology Agency (NITA) is responsible for the implementation of the e-government applications to some selected government departments and agencies such as the ministry of finance, parliament, immigration services, birth and death registrar, the judiciary, the Ghana Revenue Agencies etc. The government of Ghana has committed to provide transparent and citizen services. It has its built a government data center to facilitate the consolidation and aggregation of all the Government's key computing infrastructure in secure, highly available and resilient facilities.

The government has already begun the implementation of the e-government applications by the National Information and Technology Agency (NITA). The participating ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) which provide citizen services understand that electronic services does not just mean current uploaded data but existing data too is equally important for national planning and decision making. For example, the Registrar General department of the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General needs to upload all the information of registered company's online. Recently, a ministry of Foreign affairs building burned down and the nation's passports and other documents of national importance were burnt without any trace. This event proved to the country the need to convert manual data to digital form to ensure its security.

The Information and Technology Enabled Services (ITES^{GH}) Secretariat is responsible for branding and packaging the country as the preferred destination for Business Process

Outsourcing (BPO) companies in Africa. ITES^{GH} has since 2009 been improving the investment climate for the ITES/BPO sector.

In pursuit of this agenda, ITES^{GH} developed an ITES/BBO Certification curriculum as part of the capacity building initiative in ITES/BPO skills and reading the abundant talent youth for both Multinational and indigenous ITES/BPO companies. The main objective is to provide a unique curriculum throughout the country whereby the abundant talented youth can scale-up their skills in ITES/BPO and leverage themselves for the growing ITES/BPO industry.

Section 2: Description of the ITES Readiness to Work Programme

2.0 General Project Descriptions

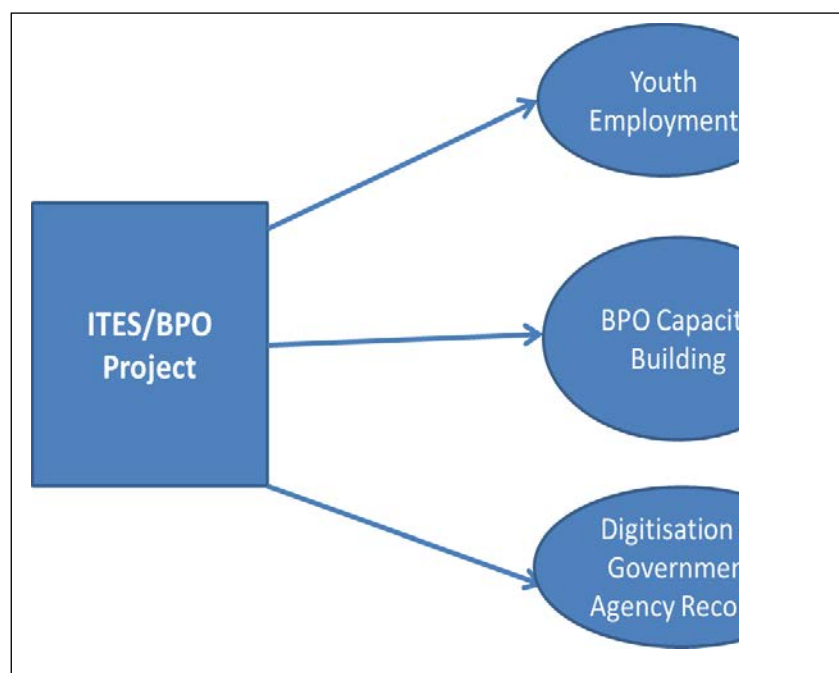
The Project Rationale

The objective of this program is to provide ITES/BPO skills to the talent pool of youth who are at the base of the pyramid (BoP) to enhance their opportunities or gainful employment in the growing ITES/BPO industry in Ghana. In addition, the program will also promote document digitization of government by selecting agencies whose documents are relevant to the day to day planning and implementation of socio-economic programs for the nation.

The program has three main targets or focus areas:

- Youth unemployment at the BoP
- Need for capacity building of local BPOs
- Need to digitize government record

Figure 1: The ITES Work Readiness Program Component



The project aims to enhance the skills and capacity of talented youth at the base of the

Final Evaluation Report

pyramid (BoP) in ITES/BPO skills (data entry and data conversion), job creation in document digitization of government institution and capacity building in the local ITES/BPO companies through;

1. Identifying individual youth at the BoP and providing them on hands on **training in work readiness skills** ,and data entry, data conversion, and document archiving
2. Providing an enabling environment to increased job opportunities for the youth to utilize their newly acquired skills
3. Promoting document digitization in 3 selected government agencies that are willing to move their documents from their premises
4. Create jobs by outsourcing the digitization to 3 local BPO companies that are willing to hire the 50% to 75% of their assigned ITES Work Readiness Program graduates

ITES^{GH} shall ensure that the BPOs have full access to available manual materials to enable it digitize the materials.

The Project Theory

The project theory is that when relevant ITES/BPO skills are provided to a talented pool of young people who are at the base of the pyramid (poverty), their opportunities for gainful employment in the growing ITES/BPO industry in Ghana will be enhanced. As these young people get employment, they will earn income which will also improve their well-being and eventual reduction in poverty with enhanced social status. A further assumption of the project is that, the capacity of local BPOs will be enhanced to deliver quality services with government agencies having the opportunity to have their records (data) digitised for efficient service delivery.

2.1 Recruitment and Training of Participants (Trainees)

Selection of program participants was done solely by ITES Ghana Secretariat using certain defined criteria. By design, ITES Ghana targeted young people who are believed to be below the social ladder, given poverty as the main criterion. The selection procedure was informed by city profiles and poverty maps of localities within Accra. In effect, participants were selected from very low income areas and slums within the Accra Metropolitan Area. Consideration was also given to applicants from the 3 northern regions as national data suggests that, they are poorer than their southern counterparts. The selection was mainly done using some form of proxy means analysis.

By process, ITES Ghana initially placed media adverts in the National Daily Newspapers (see Appendix C) to call for applications with some preliminary conditions and qualification criteria. This was later followed up with visits into communities through identified CBOs and influential community members (a kind of expert identification of the poor).

In all, a total of 453 prospective applicants submitted their applications directly to ITES Ghana Secretariat for processing. ITES Ghana then evaluated the application using some proxy means including income, housing, other supports, education and many others as noted below. There was however no limit on age. Given available resources ITES was able to select only 150 participants out of the 370 who qualify from the initial 450 applicants. The selected 150 were made up of 100 males and 50 females drawn from key areas such as old Fadama, Choko, Bukom, Agbogbloshie, and Ashaiman. (see appendix XXX)

Some selection criteria:

Final Evaluation Report

- ✓ *Age : No explicit limit was set*
- ✓ *Have completed at least SHS or DBS*
- ✓ *Be unemployed and living in a low income /depressed area/slum*
- ✓ *Be available for the training for 8 weeks training duration.*

2.2 Training Arrangements and Outcome

ITES Ghana contracted the Ghana Telecom University College (GTUC) to provide training for participants. The training was conducted over an eight week period. During the period, participants were introduced to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) on ICT platforms. The training sought to provide participants with knowledge and good understanding of BPO and the industry's standards, rules and culture. As part of the training, ITES Ghana provided five (5) Ghana cedis per day as transport for each participant during each training day.

The training ended with an end of program examination in all the areas in which training was provided using both written and practical methods. According to the GTUC, out of 149 trainees who took the examinations, 14 failed and the remaining 135 passed and were graduated accordingly.

2.3 Training Curriculum

The content of the training curriculum followed an existing curriculum developed earlier under the auspices of the eGhana Project for the BPO industry in Ghana. To make trainees more useful to the current task, GTUC developed its own contents to complement the existing ITS/BPO curriculum to meet the specific tasks of this project. The curriculum therefore includes the following modules:

- Introduction to BPO environment
- Awareness of the Windows Environment
- Microsoft Office,
- Scanning and digitization
- Personal Grooming.
- Work Ethics,
- Key Boarding Skills
- Time Management
- Communication Skills,
- Entrepreneurial Skills,

2.4 Placement of trainees

The ITES project made an explicit demand on the 3 selected BPOs that are willing to create jobs by outsourcing the digitization of the 3 selected Government agencies to them on condition that they will be willing to hire the 50 to 75 of the graduates each. The arrangement was such that BPO will be given industry certification if they complied with the recruitment arrangement. It should be emphasized that the objective of the contract period is twofold- first ,to offer job to the trainee to earn income and second, is to have them potentially become employees with the particular BPO, within the Industry or with allied industries

Final Evaluation Report

Section 3: Section of BPOs and Government Agencies

3.1 Selection of BPOS

The selection of BPOs was by open invitation for tender which was placed in the National Dailies. In all, 25 local BPOs responded to the EOI out of which 3 were competitively selected. The 3 local BPOs and the respective Government Ministries assigned them is below.

BPO Company	State Institutions
Inter- Regional Bridge Group (IBG)	Births and Death Registry (BDR)
Nyansah Group	Registrar Generals Department (RGD)
Data Systems Company Limited	Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA)

The whole selection process was conducted by a 5 member Team drawn from the Ministry of Communication -1, ITES 2, e Governance Project 1, and NITA 1.

The team members came from different fields and have different expertise. It included a Lawyer, e governance expert and an M & E expert. Contracts were signed and project BPOs commissioned to start work in June / July 2012.

3.2 Selection of Government Agencies/State Institutions (SI)

ITES^{GH} in consultation with the National Information and Technology Agency (NITA) of the Ministry of Communication selected 3 MDAs (State Institutions): – Ghana Revenue Authority, Births and Death Registry and Registrar Generals Department to pilot this project. Participating SIs were mandated to provide space for BPOs, congenial working, cooperate, facilitate and protect equipment and property of BPOs.

Section 4: Evaluation Methodology

4.0 The Evaluation Design

The evaluation adopted participatory evaluation design which sought to combine the collection of both quantitative and qualitative information from key project participants. The process involves in-depth interviews with BPO management and Government agency staffs. The in-depth interviews provided the platform to interact with all facets of BPO project management, recruitment of trainees, relationship with client, training performance and relevance to project success and other issues relating to future employment of trainees. Furthermore, some quasi-quantitative tools were designed to collect data from sampled trainees.

4.1 Sampling arrangement

A purposive sampling arrangement was used to select officials from both Government Agencies and BPOs. The selection was based on officials who are directly involved in the project and have sufficient knowledge to respond to the issues. Trainees, (participants) were sample using the simple random sample method. In this case the samples were selected from each of the participating BPOs. In all, 30 participants were selected from the three BPOs. There were 22 officials and other key informants who were interacted with during the evaluation.

4.2 Data Collection and Analytical Approach

As indicated, two different types of data were collected including primary and secondary. The secondary data included review of BPO level documents, ITES project document and other relevant documents that will assist the evaluation process. Some of these include the following:

- ITES Readiness for work Proposal /Project Document;
- 1st BPO, progress report , Digitization of RGD, Nyansah Ltd,
- Implementation Plan, Time lines and Retention Strategy, Nyansah Ltd, May 30,2012.
- Expression of Interest for Births and Death Registry and Registrar General,Nyansah group,April 5,2012
- Grant Agreement between Microsoft Community Affairs for West, East, Central Africa and Indian Ocean Islands and IYF;
- 2nd BPO progress report,Birth and Death Registry Digitization, IBG, October 2012
- Inception Report, Births and Death Registry Digitization Project,IBG,July 2012.
- Proposal For Digitization GRA,Data Systems Software Gh Ltd, 2012.
- Inception Report, Digitization GRA, Data systems Software Gh Ltd,October 9,2012.
- Training Report, Non-Consultant service for training of one hundred and fifty poor and vulnerable youth in ITES/BPO skill, Ghana Telecom University College, 2012.
- ITES Readiness Applicants, ITES, 2012.

The primary data include the use of in-depth interviews to collect qualitative data on mainly institutional and management issue of the ITES/BPO project and the progress of trainees. The primary data also include the administration of a survey instrument to the 30 sampled trainees under the ITES project.

4.3 Data Analysis

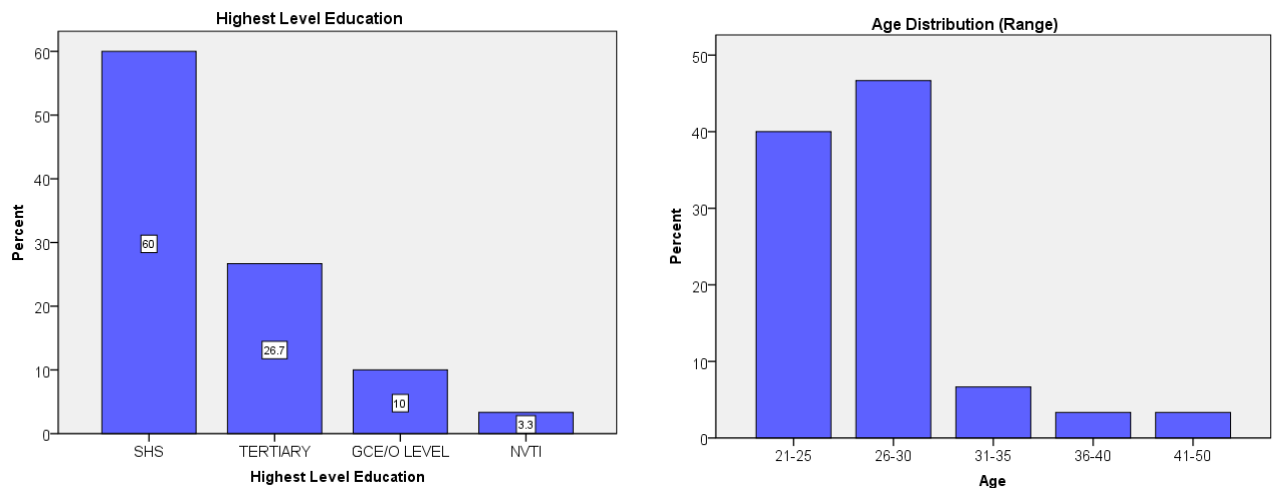
In this evaluation we used a thematic analytical approach to understand the relationship between our key variables that the in-depth interviews with BPOs and Government Agencies provided. The process was such that our variables of interest were coded, categorized and discussed. For the quantitative data from trainees, statistical software -SPSS was used for the analysis. The data entry phase included a review of the completed questionnaires prior to data entry; and a cross checks of the hardcopies with the data entered in the database for the purposes of quality control. The data analysis included mainly descriptive statistics. Some life stories of trainees have also been presented to provide some qualitative insight into some of the findings.

Section 5: Discussion of Findings

5.1 Synthesised profile of programme participants (trainees)

Analysis of the socio-demographic profile of trainees (programme participants) shows that out of the 30 sampled trainees, 53.3 per cent were females and 46.7 per cent were males which actually reflects the distribution of male-female representation in the programme. As shown in Figure 1, most of the programme participants had secondary education (70%) and a little above a quarter (26.7) had tertiary level education. Only 3.3 per cent of the distribution had either vocational or technical education (NVTI). The age range of the distribution was between 21 and 50 years with the highest age cohort (46.7%) falling between 26 years and 30 years. See Figure 1 for details. It is also important to note that all participants reside in areas known as poor and slums areas of Accra with few coming from Ashaiman areas.

Figure 1. Education and Age Distribution of Trainees



These findings on the socio-demographic profile of the participants are to some extent consistent with the overall ITES project philosophy of reaching the lowest ladder of poor young people. However, There still remain issues of exact targeting as interactions with some of the participants especially those who had tertiary education shows that some of them were not extremely poor prior to starting the programme. This however does not preclude them from participating in the training and eventual employment if that is the goal. Nonetheless, proper targeting is imperative in meeting the philosophy that underpins the programme.

5.2 Analysis of training outcome on participants (trainees)

The extent to which the training has brought changes to the skill level of participants was ascertained in this evaluation. As shown in Figure 2, the key skills areas include awareness of windows environment, Microsoft Office Suite, Key Boarding Skills Scanning and Digitisation, Entrepreneurship Skills, Time Management , Work Ethics, Communication Skills and Personal Grooming. It is evident, based on the perception of the trainings that tremendous change in skills has occurred as a result of the training. As shown in Figure 2, there is an average improvement in skills of about 80 per cent in all skills areas. The rest 20 per cent either indicated a medium improvement or low improvement which is only indicated for scanning and digitisation and entrepreneurship. It is also important to note that no

respondent indicated the option “no improvement”.

Figure 2: Level of Improvement in Skills after Training

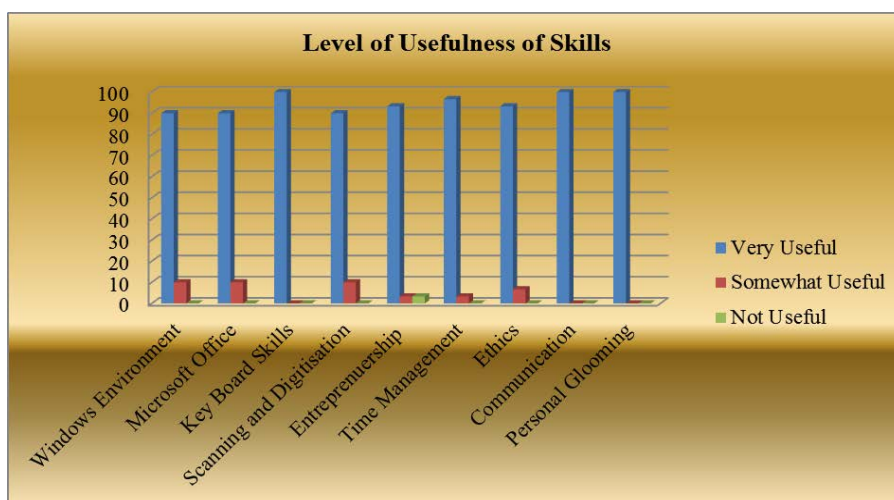


5.3 Usefulness of Skills Acquired in the BPO Programme

Increasingly, the usefulness of skills acquired within an employment situation is critical in understanding the skills operationalization dynamics. In effect, we examine how useful the skills acquired have been for participants in the kind of work they find themselves doing. As seen in Figure 3, On average, more than 90 per cent of respondents have rated each of the skill areas as very useful for the kind of work they were doing. In particular, some of the skills areas were rated 100 per cent as the Figure shows. Only about 10 per cent of the distribution rated some of the skills areas as somewhat useful and about 3.3 per cent rated entrepreneurship as not useful. The finding is an indicative that on the whole the skills have been very useful for the project. It was however noted in another level of analysis that scanning and digitisation skills were the skills mostly used. Others also noted that the keyboard skills were also very useful for all they do.

Figure 3: Level of Usefulness of Skills Acquired During Training

Final Evaluation Report



5.4 Effect of Programme on Socio-Economic Status of Participants

One of the key variables explored in this evaluation was to examine changes in economic status of programme participants which can be partly or wholly attributable to the project. In effect, employment, income and social status were examined before and after the project. The quantitative proxies were augmented with some qualitative insights into some of the observations.

Employment

The evidence shows that prior to enrolling on the ITES/BPO project; half of the respondents (50%) were not in any form of employment. The other 50 per cent who indicated that they were in some form of employment were involved in works such as family business (3.3%), sales agents (10%) and many others as noted in Table 2.

Table 2: Employment Status before Project

Employment	Frequency	Percent
No employment	15	50.0
Family Business	1	3.3
Sales	3	10.0
Web Developer	1	3.3
Private Security Personnel	1	3.3
Attachment	1	3.3
Video & Music Production	2	6.7
Internet Cafe attendant	2	6.7
Teaching	4	15.4
Total	30	100.0

It is obvious from the interaction with the respondents that at the moment, all of those who were working before have given up their respective works in order to take the ITES/BPO project which combines both skills training and some interim employment with the prospect for future employment. In an interview, one respondent remarked that:

Final Evaluation Report

“I took up this project not because of the money they will pay at the end of the month, which is good anyway but because of the skills I have acquired which can help me in my future endeavours”

Income

As noted from the employment record of respondents, by implication 50% did not work to earn any money prior to the ITES/BPO project. However, there were indications of other minor sources that provided some form of income such as menial jobs. Average monthly income for the whole distribution as noted from the income figures provided by respondents stood at GH¢97 per months. However, at present the average monthly income accruing only from the ITES/BPO project is GH¢340 per month. This shows a difference of GH¢243 per month. A further probe into the use of the money however reveals that on average about GH¢150 is spent on transportation alone depending on how far an individual lives from the work centre of the BPO.

Social Status

Almost all (97%) of respondents are of the view that their statuses in their respective localities have been enhanced. They attribute this to the fact that they are able to wake-up and leave for work like many others do, and for the fact that they now go to work regularly, people including their families now respect them. Besides, they indicated that they were also now able to respond to some of the family needs which hitherto they could not and this has earned them some respect, dignity and self-worth. A lady remarked:

“In the past, I only wake up and stay at home throughout the day. I was called all kinds of names, such as lazy by my family, friends and neighbours. I was really looked down on by many, but now they have changed their minds about me. I have skills, I go to work every day and I earn some money” [Interview: 15th January 2013].

5.5 Effect of programme on participants future prospects for jobs in ICT

Given the level of skills acquired, participants are of high expectation that they will get employment after their work with BPOs. There are others who have expectations that the BPOs will take them on after the expiration of the project with ITES. However, a further probe from the BPOs indicate that even though the agreement with ITES was to take some of them on, most of the participants will need further training to be able to fit into the nature of the work they do. Nonetheless, some of the BPOs have already marked some participants for future employment.

5.6 Effect of Programme on Government Agencies

One of the key objectives of the ITES project was to enhance government data management processes through data digitisation. In all three government agencies including the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Birth and Death Registry and the Registrar Generals Department participated in the programme. At the time of this evaluation it was evident that there is a revolution within some of the government agencies in times of data extraction and digitisation. For example at the Birth and Death Registry, a little over 6 million manual data has been digitised; for easy access, retrieval and disaster recovery, and also a total of 2 million individual records extracted into comma-separated value (CSV) format for unique

Final Evaluation Report

identification and verification including a customized Document Repository. At the Registrar Generals' Department, data scanning was on-going and has achieved a great success. A similar observation was made with the Ghana Revenue Authority.

These notwithstanding, whereas, some of the government agencies were open and happy with the digitisation process, others were apathetic. In an interaction with selected officials, it was noted that the practice of business outsourcing was not something they intend to do as there were staff who could such jobs. Their argument was that irrespective of what has been scanned and digitised, there will always be the continuous need for scanning and digitisation in order to catch up with time but with a BPO who will complete their task and leave, the practice is not likely to help them. On the contrary, others thought that the use of BPOs was an excellent idea but there was the need for the building of a better working relationship between BPOs and government agencies.

Section 6: Some Key Observations

6.1 Training and Re-training

In the opinion of the GTUC, the Curriculum and training was judged to be generally successful by GTUC notwithstanding the few challenges bothering on diversity in the backgrounds and experience of trainees. A typical trainee background challenge can be seen from the difficulty some trainees who had no knowledge of computers encountered during the training as it was difficult for them to pick and digest all the models within the 8 weeks training period.

We observe that the training sessions were made quite close to real BPO work environment and class sizes kept at 4 persons through a shift system to allow for flexibility and more close and quality contact hours over the 8 weeks training period allowed. The training was a combination of theory and hands on practice and was not customized to fit uniqueness of Clients/ User agencies specific type of data characteristic by the different agencies. This resulted in a situation where particular BPOs required certain skills more than others to handle particular clients /agency. The training and development of curriculum was not done with BPO inputs or consultation. It would therefore have been more worthwhile if the BPOs had directly participated in the training of the participants

6.2 Relationship between BPOs and Government Agencies

Interactions with Government Agencies and BPOs are indicative of the fact that there is seemingly some level of pretense and suspicion between them. This may be attributed to the nature of the initial engagement with BPOs and Government Agencies. The issues surrounding the entry point of BPOs into the Agencies is not been very clear leaving some of the BPOs struggling to build their own bridges with the Agencies they work for.

6.3 Performance-Based Payment

It is observed that almost all the BPOs were not very enthused with the direct payment to the participants as the practice did not allow for performance monitoring. Thus, irrespective of whether a participant comes to work or not there is the likelihood that the person will be paid. Even though some BPOs have found a way to correct the system that in itself has created some kind of tension between BPOs and some of the participants. The view is that payment must be tied to performance. BPO companies insisted that remunerations are performance – based (measured in terms of Cost, Time and Quality) but ITES readiness to work did not conform. In all, 2 out of the 3 BPOs maintained that, the salary and logic of payment was higher and inconsistent with the BPO industry regime. Thus, it will be the difficult for BPOs to engage participants on non ITES projects where salaries are lower and are performance based. BPOs therefore lamented that the situation could distort the industry's wage levels. On the contrary, the third BPO was of the view that given the high cost of living, the current salary paid staff is low and should be adjusted upward, if possible.

Indiscipline and Misconduct

Some level of misconduct was observed and recorded during the evaluation. Indeed, both BPOs and GTUC, complained of indiscipline on the part of some participants. For example, it was reported by GTUC that out of the 150 trainees 1 person's results/Certificate has been withheld for indiscipline and misconduct. BPOs hiring participants have also complained of lack of discipline-no sense of work, lateness to report to work and absent without permission.

Targeting Issues

There was no explicit age limit in the call for application, but the very mention of youth in the Ghanaian context connotes persons between 18 and 35 years. This could present many persons living in low income areas, unemployed and have completed Shc/DBS from applying. But as it turned out to be, some above 35s participated successfully and consider the project to be useful and imparted positively on their lives.

BPO Capacity and Employment Opportunities

BPOs capacity and willingness to retain after the 6 months compulsory phase is quite unclear and not promising. The absorption capacities of the BPOs seem not to have expanded to allow them to engage more hands. The idea of supporting participating BPO companies to acquire Industry certification-to prepare them to be competitive at the global outsourcing market , must be taken seriously and as a critical part of creating permanent employment to trainees now and in the future.

Functionality and usefulness of digitized data

In terms of functionality of digitized data and numbers, some BPOs were not satisfied with progress so far. The argument was that hypothetically, the project concept and demonstration promises to be very useful but the current stage of the project is unacceptable and unconvincing.

Section 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.0 Conclusion

It is concluded from the evaluation that in spite of the success of the training programme, there were challenges bothering on diversity in the backgrounds and experience of trainees. There were also issues relating BPOs having to retrain the participants because some of the critical skill areas relevant for the work of specific BPOs were not provided. Furthermore, there is a cordial relationship between BPOs and Government agencies in all three sectors. However, there are also indications of misunderstanding of rules of engagement due to initial entry point difficulties in some agencies.

It is observed that almost all the BPOs were not very enthused with the direct payment to the participants as the practice did not allow for performance monitoring. Thus, irrespective of whether a participant comes to work or not there is the likelihood that the person will be paid. Even though some BPOs have found a way to correct the system that in itself has created some kind of tension between BPOs and some of the participants

BPOs capacity and willingness to retain after the 6 months compulsory phase is quite unclear and not promising. The absorption capacities of the BPOs seem not to have expanded to allow them to engage more hands. The idea of supporting participating BPO companies to acquire Industry certification-to prepare them to be competitive at the global outsourcing market , must be taken seriously and as a critical part of creating permanent employment to trainees now and in the future.

In terms of functionality of digitized data and numbers, some Government Agencies were not satisfied with progress so far. The argument was that hypothetically, the project concept and demonstration promises to be very useful but the current stage of the project is unacceptable. Others argued that given the fluid nature of the record system, a one-off data digitisation process will only add burden of going back in history

7.1 Recommendations

Given the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made: A more effective targeting using community-based volunteers and groups together with a proxy means test should provide some good targeting system for the ITES/BPO project in the future. It is also important that BPOs are part of the training curriculum design and the training itself to avoid situations where BPOs will have train their employees again upon taking them. The use of performance-based payment system is recommended in order to ensure some sense of responsibility on the part of young people who benefit from the project.

For the purposes of future usage and continuity of service, it is recommended that the relationship between Government agencies and BPOs be strengthened. In addition, the functionality of the system/data must be placed very high in all discussions in a more consultative and participatory manner between Project managers-ITES and Government Agencies who will use the database.

Going forward, there must be a clear cut exit strategy and sustainability plan outlining time frames and resources to support the strategy after the end of the project.

Appendix A: Data Collection Tool

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF ITES/BPO READINESS TO WORK PROGRAMME

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

(TRAINEES)

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPIC DATA

Name of Respondent		
Highest Education		Sex:	Age:
BPO working with(tick)	IBG	NYANSAH	DS
Client Working with (Govt Agency)		

SECTION B: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED

Q1. How will you describe the level of improvement in your skills and knowledge after the training programme? Kindly indicate per each of the courses you took (as listed below).

Course Name	High Improvement	Medium Improvement	Low Improvement	No Improvement	Not Applicable
Awareness of Windows Environment					
Microsoft Office					
Key Boarding Skills					
Scanning and Digitisation					
Entrepreneurship Skills					
Time Management					
Work Ethics					
Communication Skills					
Personal Grooming					

Final Evaluation Report

Q2. If you have indicated in Q1 any improvement in your knowledge and skills, kindly list some of the key areas of the course(s) that have led to an improvement in your knowledge and skills

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Q3. Kindly indicate by ticking the usefulness of Knowledge Gained in the training to your current work with the BPO

Course Name	Usefulness of Knowledge Gained (tick)				
	Very useful	Somewhat useful	A little useful	Not useful	Not Applicable
Awareness of Windows Environment					
Microsoft Office					
Key Boarding Skills					
Scanning and Digitisation					
Entrepreneurship Skills					
Time Management					
Work Ethics					
Communication Skills					
Personal Grooming					

SECTION C: IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Q4. Were you earning any income prior to working with the BPO?

YES	
NO	

Q5. If yes to Q4, what was your main source of income? *(please write)*

.....

Q6. If yes to Q4, how much did you earn per month? (Please indicate)

.....

Q7. If No to Q4, what were you doing prior to working with this BPO?

.....

Final Evaluation Report

Q8. What is the nature of your work with the BPO?

.....

Q9. How much do you earn per month with the BPO?

.....

Q10. Kindly describe the ways in which your earning on the ITES project is affecting your way of living including and that of your family

Q11. How has the project led to any improvement in your socio-economic well-being

	Impact of project on socio-economic well-being				Not Applicable
	High Improvement	Medium Improvement	Low Improvement	No Improvement	
Personal Income					
Household income					
Social acceptance (respect)					
Prospects of future employment					

Q12. What were your challenges during the training? Discuss them

Final Evaluation Report

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.....
.....

Q13. What were your challenges while working with the BPO?

.....
.....
...

Q14. What recommendations will you give to address the challenges above?

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