ABLE-GHANA:
Reports, Resources, Reflections

Edited by Professor Rob Paton
Foreword by Professor Franklyn Manu

Advancing Business Learning for Employability in Ghana
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Foreword

I am delighted to write a foreword to this collection of working papers emanating from participants in the ABLE-Ghana Project. From the initial challenges faced by all participants some thought the project objectives could not be achieved and therefore dropped out. I am glad to note that the remaining participants rose above these challenges and have made important contributions to the development of management education in Ghana. I am impressed in particular by the concerted effort to develop locally relevant instructional materials through the writing of case studies focusing on SMEs and also to design an appropriate enterprise development curriculum.

Business education faces enormous challenges in Ghana. Many of them are rooted in the structure of universities and public perceptions of the irrelevance of what is taught in business schools and faculties. Business schools must make themselves relevant to the private enterprise and public management sectors. This will require that curricula and programs are meaningful and that quality is not compromised. The proposed Association of Ghana Business Schools should provide some impetus to meeting these challenges.

The Project has also shown how Ghana-based faculty can work together to improve business education, albeit “prodded” by an external agent, The Open University. But sometimes that is what is necessary to get people and institutions out of their respective silos! It is my hope that this fruitful collaboration on academic matters will continue and result in nation-wide academic and practitioner journals.

In concluding, let me thank Professor Rob Paton and the team from Open University for their support and “openness”. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mrs. Akua Armah, the project manager, and staff of the Center for Management Development (CMD), GIMPA Business School for managing the administrative processes involved in the project. Congratulations to the pioneering faculty and the Deans of the KNUST and UCC Business Schools for hosting aspects of the project.

Franklyn A. Manu, Ph.D.
Professor of Marketing and International Business
Dean, GIMPA Business School
Preface and Acknowledgements

ABLE-Ghana was undertaken under the auspices of The International Management Practice, Education and Learning (IMPEL) Centre in The Open University Business School (http://www8.open.ac.uk/business-school/research/themes/international-management-practice-education-and-learning). The case studies and other learning resources in parts 2 and 3 are available as Word documents, for use and adaptation in teaching. They are provided free of charge under a 'Creative Commons' licence. You can access these resources in electronic form by visiting the ABLE – Ghana website (http://labspace.open.ac.uk/course/info.php?id=6045) or copying them from the CD-Rom version of this book.

This project would not have happened without the advice and encouragement of many people. In the planning phase Yaw Badu, the Rector of GIMPA, and Josiah Cobbah, the Registrar, were generous with their time. In due course events showed that they had also been wise in their suggestions. Professor Jophus Anamua-Mensah opened doors and offered a dispassionate view on key decisions. Moses Anibaba of the British Council in Accra was fully supportive from the start, and followed through by contributing to a lively session at the first meeting at Greenhill.

The Deans of the business schools deserve a special mention: they embraced the idea from the start, released their staff, travelled to attend meetings and were ready to put their hands into their pockets when we feared we could not meet all the costs of the OER project. Professor Franky Manu ran a case-writing workshop for the project despite all the other calls on his time. And it was in the office of Dean Frimpong at KBS that I first met Professor Yaw Debra of Swansea University. His continuing interest and practical support for ABLE-Ghana, both in the UK and in Ghana, has been a model of practical collegiality.

Mrs Akua Armar had what was surely the toughest job in the project – working on the boundary between two cultures with a far-away boss, and having to manage and distribute the funds. She was a pleasure to work with – always sensible, straightforward and positive even under pressure.

In orchestrating the project I enjoyed – literally – the support of many OU colleagues, too many for me to mention them all. However, Mrs Lyn Singer, as international operations manager, was simply crucial in making things happen; and Matt Childerhouse needed both patience and ingenuity to look after the finances.

I learned a great deal from all my academic colleagues in the ABLE-Ghana learning community. At the risk of being invidious, I want to give special mention to Bright Oduro-Kwarteng and Bernard Obeng from GIMPA; and to George Tackie, who was indefatigable in making arrangements at UCC. The many long conversations with my IMPEL colleagues Richard Blundel and Ku Nyathi were academically rewarding as well as a vital source of professional support.

Finally, we are all grateful to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the British Council, whose financial support made the project possible. We hope the results shown here go some way to justifying the trust they placed in us.

Rob Paton
Walton Hall, July 2011
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Overview: ABLE-Ghana as an exercise in experiential learning

Professor Rob Paton

The complaint that graduates are ill prepared for employment – let alone for creating their own employment – is not unusual in Europe and North America. But it has become widespread and strongly expressed in Africa in recent years. So when the British Council announced funding for a further round of Educational Partnerships in Africa (EPA), they called for proposals that would encourage greater attention to employability and entrepreneurship in African higher and further education.

The Open University (OU) had used an earlier EPA scheme to develop an ‘open door’ policy through which it shared its state-of-the-art educational resources in mathematics, science and technology with African universities, free of charge. A project to build on what had been learned through that initiative, but focused this time on business, management and enterprise education, seemed to be a possibility. It would extend the OU’s presence in Africa and might assist with the OU Business School’s ambition to extend its network of international partnerships.

For various reasons Ghana was the obvious choice of country and a British Council travel grant provided the opportunity to visit and prepare for a bid. In April 2009, two weeks were spent visiting Ghanaian business schools and meeting Deans, staff and students, including some who had been involved in the earlier project; but also British Council staff and some employers or their representative bodies from the private sector (e.g. the Association of Ghana Industries), the public sector (the Ministry of Education) and the social sector (the Credit Unions Association, Kuappa Kokoo). These conversations were necessarily broad and exploratory, and more about the education of the ‘obruni’ than joint planning.

From these discussions, two points were clear. First, from the considerable trouble taken by senior figures to assist me, and from the responses of staff I met, that an initiative within the broad terms set out by the EPA scheme would be welcomed. Second, that the challenges facing Ghanaian business schools were considerable and systemic. Staff were generally aware of the need to address the employability and entrepreneurship issues, and keen to do so; but they faced multiple challenges, including extremely large class sizes, limited experience of new pedagogies, a shortage of appropriate learning resources, a weak technology infrastructure, and student resistance to new forms of learning. Again, these challenges were all familiar from a UK context, but seemed generally more acute in Ghana.

Back in the UK, only a few weeks remained before the submission deadline. A proposal that would address the specific requirements of the call was drafted in suitably bold and uplifting terms. ‘Advancing Business Learning for Employability in Ghana’ would be a 16-month project exploring the use of new teaching methods in the business schools of the five public universities, supported by employer representatives from the formal, informal and public sectors. The central purpose would be to initiate processes of professional renewal, employer engagement and institutional development – and do so in a sustainable way. Two senior and two junior faculty members from the OUBS and from each of these business schools would form a learning community and meet three times in residential meetings in Ghana, to plan and then review practical change projects. Such initiatives might involve:
experimenting with forms of reflective, investigative or work-based assessment
• trialling experiential learning activities and guidance notes on their use in Ghana
• reviewing and adapting OUBS learning resources and activities for use with
  Ghanaian students
• preparing and testing new learning resources based on or adapted to Ghanaian
  contexts
• researching and writing case studies derived from Ghanaian industries, social
  enterprises and government bodies
• revising curricula to allow more scope for experiential and reflective learning.

Between the residential meetings participants would follow through on their chosen
projects, staying in touch through further meetings, teleconferences and virtual meetings
as appropriate. The OUBS would make available its course resources in electronic form
for review and possible adaptation by our Ghanaian colleagues (under a ‘creative
commons’ licence).

The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), chosen as the
lead partner, helped with costings and advice on operational matters. The proposal was
circulated to the Deans and employers for comment, phone calls were made, and
signatures were gathered. But, in the time available, it was not realistic to talk through
what was envisaged, and the difficulties that would be involved; instead, it was made
clear to everyone that this proposal simply created a framework. If it was successful,
then those directly involved would have to work out worthwhile ways of operating
within its broad terms. As a plan, it had much to recommend it – it set out an approach
and purpose, but was ‘roomy’ and flexible, with relatively few specific commitments. But
it was still just a plan; and the project was unusually uncertain because it involved work
across cultures. The plan was bound not to work – but in what ways only time would tell.

The ‘learning community’ approach

If the plan was flexible in many respects, the learning community approach that
underpinned it was not – even though I realised that in some respects it was likely to be
controversial and problematic. Hence, before describing how ABLE-Ghana unfolded, it is
important to ‘unpack’ what this approach meant and why it was chosen. The argument
can be summarised in terms of five propositions.

1 Business and organisations have changed quite fundamentally

Your father may have worked in a stable and sedate bureaucracy with clear lines of
responsibility and a well-defined remit. Nowadays, ‘post-bureaucracies’ work through
cross-functional teams, taskforces and partnerships. Entrepreneurs depend on
networks. Your mother will have relied on the authority of her position, and would not
have gone beyond it. Nowadays, managers and professionals are expected to exercise
influence even where they do not have authority. This too is normal for entrepreneurs.
Your father would have thought keyboard and IT skills were for secretaries and
technicians. Nowadays, keyboard skills are essential at middle and senior levels – and for
entrepreneurs. Your mother would expect to be given a set of objectives and to be
closely supervised. Nowadays, middle managers are expected to anticipate the objectives
required and to operate appropriately with a minimum of supervision. Entrepreneurs
set their own objectives.

2 This new world of work demands a different sort of graduate

We are increasingly called upon to produce graduates (and mid-career postgraduates)
who have acquired more than a disciplinary training (as accountants, marketers,
production engineers...). They also need to understand the firms and organisations in
which they find work, to be able to learn fast about new challenges, and to collaborate
with other professionals. And they have to be proactive – putting solutions and
proposals to their bosses, not just waiting for instructions. Knowledge is still important,
but what is crucial is knowing how to apply that knowledge, which also means working
with others. In the UK, higher education institutions are now expected to present their
courses in ways that ensure students acquire generic, transferable skills. Some of these
are ‘hard’ (numeracy, and basic IT skills) but many others are ‘soft skills’, concerning
reasoning, communication, creative problem solving and ethical clarity, for example.

3 Contemporary graduates require contemporary learning processes

In order to develop soft and transferable skills, both business schools and universities
more generally are increasingly rethinking and redesigning their programmes. The aim
is to expose students to real-world experiences, bringing theory and practice back
together, and change the balance between classroom-based instruction and various
forms of active and work-based learning. The underlying drive here is to create learning
processes that better match the roles that students will play in the new organisation, in
terms of greater responsibility, self-directed learning, knowledge application, working
with others, and so on.

4 These new learning processes require major changes on the part of business
schools, their universities, teaching staff and students

Traditional university structures and processes (lectures, seminars, libraries, term
papers, exams and so forth) are no longer adequate. More engagement with industry is
needed. More is now demanded of students as active and collaborating learners.
Assessing soft skills is often difficult and time consuming. The new learning processes
place heavy technological demands on universities. The academic staff may be resistant
to the new practices; and, crucially, they will not be able to use these more experiential
teaching methods effectively when they have not themselves experienced them. In the face
of these challenges, universities in the UK have, for the past 20 years, been struggling to
renew themselves.

5 Top-down efforts to ‘drive change’ work painfully slowly, if at all; the
academic staff have to be the subjects, not the objects, of the changes

An extensive literature covering professional and public organisations, including
universities, details how autocratic approaches commonly result in perfunctory
compliance – for example, the ceremonial adoption of new language and practices
disconnected from the real work, which continues much as before. Ultimately, the
professional staff are the organisation, and if they do not embrace and understand the
changes and make them their own, the results will be disappointing.

The clear implication of this line of argument is that the medium had to be the message.
ABLE-Ghana would be an extended exercise in action learning. Through it, academic staff
would simultaneously experience work-based learning (by undertaking projects ‘for real’,
reflecting on and sharing the experiences and writing up the results, with all the
uncertainty, effort, anxiety and frustration this involves); and start the process of
introducing new practices into their institutions. This approach did not preclude some
teaching (for example, to explain new teaching or assessment practices) – but this would
be provided responsively, on a need-to-know basis.

It followed, too, that the sorts of changes undertaken would be those that aligned in
some ways with the interests of community members, broadly construed. For this
reason, the OUBS team members tried to be clear from the start about what they were
seeking, both individually and for their institution. We explained that, for us, ABLE-
Ghana was an opportunity to gain first-hand experience of business issues in an African
context, to help develop and gather case materials, to identify potential partners for collaborative research, and to prospect for other mutually beneficial academic-cum-business relationships.

Finally, it should be stressed that notwithstanding the necessary poetry of the project proposal (‘designed to put employability and entrepreneurship at the heart of teaching and learning in Ghanaian business schools’), the prose of project delivery was restrained and pragmatic (‘over-ambitious projects will be discouraged: it is important to be realistic about how much can be achieved in the time available, and to build confidence and wider support through modest but solid successes’).

The four phases of ABLE-Ghana

A summary account of the way the project unfolded will provide a context for the working papers in this collection. To this end, I find it helpful to think in terms of four phases.

1 Initial engagement (October 2009 to January 2010)

This covered the set-up phase (appointing a project manager, preparing a more detailed prospectus, confirming the involvement of the four other business schools, the selection of participants by each institution, planning for the first residential meeting in Accra and inviting employer representatives) and the first meeting. At that meeting The discussions were, at times, intense, close and warm, frustrated and confused, energised and relaxed. Some participants quickly grasped the need to define their own projects; others were perplexed and a bit anxious: why didn’t we just tell them what they had to do? What were we playing at?’ Indeed, two participants were visibly sceptical and drifted away. Nevertheless, by the end we had planned a first set of projects in terms of three themes (new SME curricula, case studies, and assessing large cohorts), fixed dates for future meetings, and agreed how we would organise ourselves. The atmosphere was very positive. I noted down the following comments as they were made in the final session: ‘Your strategy has worked… we will be more open to each other in the future’ and ‘Now it is our project – we have come out of the confusion’. There were others in a similar vein. Nevertheless, in my report to the Deans I said we still needed to go ‘much deeper’ in sharing and understanding each other’s practices.

2 Hiatus (February to June 2010)

With a few honourable exceptions (especially on the new SME curricula), the energy and commitment quickly dissipated. Cases did not progress, a promised website was not created, OU resources were not investigated and requested, documents were not shared… To a degree, this was to be expected and did not come as a surprise (I found it difficult to protect time for ABLE-Ghana work, just like everyone else). Nevertheless, the fall in activity was greater than expected and it gradually became apparent that an important task for the next meeting would be to explore why more was not happening.

3 Reflecting and searching (July to November 2010)

The OU team went out in advance of the July residential meeting (at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST) in order to talk with Ghanaian colleagues and plan the programme with them. It was also a chance to progress some of our own initiatives. Through that meeting, and the discussions before and after it, we:

♦ explored new approaches (visiting employers; and, because the exploration and adaptation of OU resources was not happening, setting up the opportunity for Ghanaian academics to visit the OU to engage with the OU’s open educational resources (OERs))

♦ surfaced some of the difficulties and issues (see Section 2.7 ‘The difficult workshop’)
♦ put in place revised plans and arrangements (such as regular teleconferences) to stay in touch
♦ re-planned the project in ways that went some way towards providing the financial recognition that Ghanaian colleagues expected.

Not all these efforts worked very well, but during this time, gradually, more progress began to be made on more of the projects.

4 Focused efforts (December 2010 to April 2011)

The OER study visit had a galvanising effect and this was sustained through the third residential meeting at Cape Coast. There, the Deans reviewed the work so far, and made specific proposals for how it could continue through the formation of an Association of Ghanaian Business Schools. During this meeting, too, proposals for using the remaining funds to complete mini-projects were prepared and peer-reviewed. The highest rated proposals were allocated support (though one subsequently had to be withdrawn due to a job change), and in the months that followed both these mini-projects and the experimental use of OERs were carried through, more or less. Likewise, in the time available they were written up – with varying degrees of success – as the papers report. Dissemination workshops (on OERs and case writing) were arranged and run. In a sense, the project officially ended in March, just as it had gathered most momentum.

So what did we all learn?

A project of this sort exposes participants to many new experiences and ideas, and stimulates and enables a diverse range of activities, conversations and insights. What will stand out for particular participants and be recalled and reflected upon as ‘learning’ is bound to vary widely. Moreover, learning was evident around the formal programme, not just through it. Nevertheless, despite all such variety, some clear themes emerged and these were captured quite vividly through an exercise at the third meeting. We invited anonymous, individual reflections, written down in silence, as prompted by sentence stems such as ‘The most important things that I am learning from ABLE-Ghana are...’ and ‘The challenges that I will face in using this learning are...’.

Reviewing the 16 pro formas, it was clear that the focal activities had worked: many references were made to what had been learned about preparing and using case studies, using peer assessment and new approaches to learning and teaching (‘It’s better to guide people than always to spoon-feed them’). In particular, the OER activities had been a great success, attracting comment from far more participants than just those who had enjoyed the study visit to the UK.

It was also clear that the Ghanaian participants would face many challenges in sustaining and extending the use of what they had learned. Concerns were expressed over infrastructure, institutional and managerial support, the need to win over students, and above all time pressures.

Nevertheless, a substantial minority also volunteered that their confidence had been boosted through their involvement in the project. And others offered personal reflections, suggesting quite deep learning (‘I need to open up...’; ‘I need to actively participate...’). Others referred to what they had learned as a result of the cross-cultural

1 I noted in the first report to Deans: ‘A wide range of informal exchanges were taking places around the main programme... for example, one Ghanaian colleague demonstrating to another from a different institution how to build a simple website and how it could be used in course administration and in communicating with students...’.
engagement (referring for example to ‘can do attitudes’, to the work ethic they had observed, or simply to the realisation that ‘education is dynamic and international’).

However, far and away the most striking feature of the responses was entirely unexpected: every single respondent referred, unprompted and often several times, to the importance for them of the experience of collaborating with others on academic work. This was clearly the most satisfying thing about the project, something that they were not used to, but very much wanted to continue, and that was seen as a potential solution to the various challenges they faced.

Such reflections should not be seen as the end of the process, the sum of what was learned. They were quite brief, and gathered mid-way through the third meeting, before two of the main activities – and before all the follow-on work after the meeting. Indeed, from a personal point of view, I am still not sure what I make of all that happened. For some aspects, I feel unable to come to firm conclusions without more information from others on what they make of it all in hindsight. I expect the same may be true for others to varying degrees. That said, for me personally, the more important learning seems to fall into three areas:

♦ Working cross-culturally takes much longer and means you are bound to make ‘mistakes’. The admirable intention of surfacing, explaining and discussing the differences as we became aware of them – thereby turning them into a positive part of the process, not a sign that something had ‘gone wrong’ – was surely correct. But this approach is always operating in arrears; it requires time that may simply not be available; and it addresses issues that may only ever be half-resolved (through a bit of give and take that still leaves those on each ‘side’, for whom an issue is particularly important, feeling unvalued or uncomfortable). With hindsight, I would like to have done more reflection (and sooner during the project) around some of the ‘hot’ issues – but when? Perhaps we needed a separate discussion space in which to explore these. Or perhaps a fair amount of uncertainty, misunderstandings and frustration are inevitable in cross-cultural working – along with all the learning, fun and positive experiences.

♦ In various ways I came to realise (again) the subtle and pervasive power of ‘practices’ in business school teaching. Against that backdrop, I was struck by the level of interest in OERs and what seems to me to be their potential as a way of introducing some new teaching and assessment practices, not just teaching resources such as case materials. I will be pondering these issues further, and hope to be able to explore them in quite practical ways through a project with Credit Unions in Ghana and beyond.

♦ I became aware of the research deficit, perhaps especially on the ‘soft’ side of managing and leading in African organisations. As a project, ABLE-Ghana was framed by the ‘modernising’ assumptions of the EPA programme pursued through an ‘action learning’ approach, summarised above. There is much truth in those assumptions, and useful work to be done on the back of them. But it seems increasingly clear now to me and my colleagues that the modernising agenda alone is not enough; it needs to be combined with what might be called an ‘Africanist’ agenda, one that focuses on capturing distinctive local experience, thinking, practices and expertise. This is no small challenge – it is far more than introducing local colour to make the teaching seem more relevant. Again, this is a subject that requires a fuller treatment in another context.

And so it continues

So this collection is a staging post and not the destination. The reports, resources and reflections that follow are all works in progress. They are for working with and working
on. Comments are invited on all of them (including this overview) and will be welcomed – several are likely to be revised for submission to journals in due course.

We expect the work also to continue through collaborative projects that were incubated in and around ABLE-Ghana, some of which have already been alluded to. And above all, we look forward to the learning continuing under the auspices of the planned Association of Ghanaian Business Schools – which all of us involved in ABLE-Ghana welcome unreservedly.
Part 1 New SME curricula

1.1 Introduction

Dr Bernard Obeng and Dr Richard Blundel

This theme was led by Dr Bernard Obeng (GIMPA) in conjunction with colleagues from the other business schools. The core team comprised the following, with additional support from other ABLE-Ghana participants:

♦ Dr Bernard Obeng, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (Group Leader)
♦ Dr Richard Blundel, The Open University Business School
♦ Mr George Tackie, University of Cape Coast Business School
♦ Mr Ibrahim Bedi, University of Ghana Business School
♦ Mr Gordon N. Asamoah, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Business School
♦ Mr Ahmed Agyapong, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Business School
♦ Mrs Abigail Opoku Mensah, University of Cape Coast Business School

We began our work at the first residential meeting in Accra (January 2010) by discussing the nature of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and entrepreneurship in a Ghanaian context, clarifying our understanding of the informal sector, and identifying priority areas for curriculum development. At an early stage, we recognised that there was a need to develop more appropriate courses to support enterprise education within our universities and also entrepreneurial learning beyond the campus, particularly in relation to the informal sector. This work informed the first phase, in which we began to engage with SMEs and their associations and to establish their various requirements through dialogue and knowledge sharing. This information was brought back to the second residential meeting in Kumasi (July 2010) as the basis for designing new types of provision. At Kumasi, we worked on two projects that are reported in more detail in the following sections:

♦ A problem-based design for the informal sector: the Sokoban Wood Village Project (Section 1.2)
♦ Strategies for curriculum review and course design in Ghanaian universities (Section 1.3)

Our initial discussions were based around curriculum review and development and its implications for SME and enterprise education in Ghanaian business schools. George Tackie outlined an approach that he had applied recently at UCC. The team looked at how this approach might be adapted in order to enhance the SME and enterprise curriculum. As part of this discussion, we also conducted an initial mapping exercise on existing approaches to learning and teaching in Ghana to identify current patterns of provision in Ghana and possible areas for further development. For example, we noted that informal tuition (i.e., acquiring knowledge and skills through friends, relatives and business associates) is widely used and can be effective in reproducing well-established practices. By contrast, approaches such as mentoring and placements are less common, and may have potential applications for students and others. There is also scope to explore other channels, such as television programmes. (For example, 'Masem' is a popular TV3 programme in which successful Ghanaian entrepreneurs tell their stories
and discuss challenges. The Nigerian version of ‘Dragons’ Den’ also attracts large audiences in Ghana.) SME and enterprise education has become an important issue for policymakers and practitioners in developed and developing countries. Across Africa, governments have recognised the need for universities to teach students how to be entrepreneurial, seize opportunities, and turn ideas into action (Cloete et al., 2010). There has also been a growth in scholarly research on entrepreneurial learning in the past decade. By gaining a better understanding of the different ways that entrepreneurs learn, we have the potential to advance our academic understanding while also informing policy and practice. More informed interventions are particularly important in relation to the informal sector both in Ghana and more widely:

As important as the African informal sector undoubtedly is in terms of providing a cushion against unemployment, political insecurity, and encroaching poverty in the context of dwindling resources, it has rarely enabled entrepreneurs to make the leap necessary to graduate from microenterprises to small- and medium-scale and large enterprises. Instead, most microenterprises and SMEs in the sector remain confined to traditional market niches and fail to grow in terms of capital, structure, scale, products, and markets. (Dia, 1996, p. 155)

We developed this theme at Kumasi through field visits to ‘the Magazine’, a large cluster of metalworkers and associated trades, and to Sokoban Wood Village, a similar cluster of artisans that had recently been relocated to a new, purpose-built site. We heard at first hand about the achievements of Ghanaian informal sector enterprises and the issues involved in running them (and in doing so we also recognised that informal field visits were a much more effective way of engaging with enterprises than inviting them to a more formal meeting). We also conducted a small semi-structured questionnaire survey of woodworkers at Sokoban. Having analysed the responses, the team began to devise a new, more problem-centred approach that was geared to the needs of an informal sector audience, and planned how to trial this material at Sokoban.

In December 2010, two members of the team (Bernard Obeng and George Tackie) also took part in a two-week study visit to The Open University’s Milton Keynes campus in the UK, where they had an opportunity to develop their own open educational resources (OERs) and to learn about current large-scale OER projects in Africa, including TESSA and HEAT (see Part 4). We all learned an enormous amount from this experience, and became increasingly convinced of the potential value of OER-based business and enterprise education initiatives with partner organisations in Ghana and elsewhere. Bernard Obeng’s draft OER materials were further developed at the Cape Coast meeting (January 2011), and have formed the basis for our first pilot project at Sokoban Wood Village (see Section 1.2).

We also returned to the theme of university-based enterprise education at the Cape Coast meeting, with discussion of a possible new project led by Abigail Opoku Mensah and colleagues. This would examine the views not only of students and faculties but also those of alumni, to discover which of the ideas they found most useful in their jobs or in starting up businesses. We hope ways can be found to carry through this project in the near future.

References
1.2 A problem-based design for SME and enterprise education in the informal sector

Dr Bernard Obeng and Dr Richard Blundel

One of the main issues arising from our discussions is the challenge of developing learning experiences that are capable of meeting the needs of smaller enterprises. How can educational programmes help to address challenges such as translating informal sector enterprises on to a more formal basis, making smaller low-growth enterprises in the formal sector more resilient (i.e., encouraging innovation and diversification to pursue new opportunities or counter downturns), and creating new growth-oriented ventures? We drew on a wide-ranging supporting literature that included Bernard Obeng’s doctoral and post-doctoral research on business support in Ghana; Ahmed Ayapong’s recent (Paris) conference paper on resource-based perspectives on SME development; research conducted by colleagues from the University of Ghana at Legon; Richard Blundel’s work on the growth of firms and networks; and recent work by entrepreneurial learning specialists. We also took into account Mamadou Dia’s (1996) examples of African enterprises that have successfully managed the growth process without abandoning traditional values:

To varying degrees, these cases attest to the possibility of coming of age in the formal sector while resolutely clinging to, and indeed capitalizing on, hardy traditional values that have, through the years, been the vital cement holding together indigenous society. (Dia, 1996, p. 156, emphasis added)

In this project, we are acknowledging this insight as we consider the potential for combining traditional practices and more innovative learning approaches.

Background to the training project

This project aims at developing training modules for micro and small businesses in the informal sector based on the problem-based approach to teaching management. To do this, the curriculum design project team developed a training module in marketing. To test its suitability, we undertook a pilot study with artisans from Sokoban Wood Village (formerly Anloga Wood Village): see the box below.

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<tr>
<th>The Sokoban Wood Village Education Project: pilot study overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title of training:</strong> Marketing of Products and Services in the Informal Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date and time:</strong> 4 March 2011, 10.30am to 1.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Sokoban Wood Village Conference Room</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participants:</strong> 35 participants from five associations: Anloga South Association, Anloga North Association, Anloga Carpenters Association, Israel Lumber Association and Kyirapatra Lumber Association</td>
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<td><strong>Trainers:</strong> Dr Bernard Obeng, Mr Gordon Asamoah, Mr Ahmed Agyapong, Miss Abigail Appiah (teaching assistant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training materials:</strong> Training manual, overhead projector, file, notebooks, pens</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medium of instruction:</strong> Twi (the local language) and English</td>
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The main aim of the initial pilot study was to introduce participants to the basic principles and concepts of marketing and the applications of these principles and
concepts in the marketing of goods and services to achieve customer satisfaction and profit. Module 1 comprised the following topics:

- What is marketing?
- Organisational philosophy/business core values
- Defining the market and understanding customer needs and wants
- Marketing research
- Understanding consumer behaviour.

We identified the following formal learning outcomes. At the end of the presentation, participants were expected to:

- understand the term ‘marketing’ and how it relates to the management of their businesses
- define the term ‘marketing’ based on what each participant does
- appreciate the importance of business core values and how they guide the formulation of marketing strategies
- identify customers for their products and services and the needs and wants that they are seeking to satisfy
- use marketing research to gather information about customers, competitors and the various stakeholders.

**Teaching methods and materials**

Taking into consideration the age of the target audience (average 40 years) and their educational background (the majority have no formal education), the problem-based approach to teaching management methodology was used. This method of learning combines academic understanding with practical application. The module was designed from materials that were obtained from sources such as an Open University module on marketing available in the OER LabSpace, and marketing textbooks such as *Principles of Marketing* (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010) and *Marketing Management* (Winer, 2007) were consulted. Newspapers advertisement pages were also used. Pictures were taken of carpenters displaying their products on their various premises. The team also used a short video made by Bernard and colleagues, and visited The Open University, as described in Section 1.1.

The workshop used a problem-based approach to teaching and as a result there were many activities during the session. Pictures and video were used for demonstration purposes. For example, the participants were introduced to the term ‘marketing’ by the use of pictures such as carpenters showing their finish products along the roadside to attract customers, a typical market setting where sellers and buyers were transacting business, and pictures from newspaper advertisements. Then participants were asked to provide their personal view of marketing. The video clip was used to help the participants appreciate the importance of understanding customer needs and wants. Participants were asked to discuss the video in terms of the key problems that emerged and the solutions to the problems. The pictures and the video helped participants to connect their previous experience to the issues being discussed and some were able to provide practical examples to support the discussion of concepts. However, there were instances where the participants found it difficult to connect to the issues under discussion, in situations where we found it difficult to find the appropriate Twi word for the relevant terms. Participants gave examples of when their lack of marketing skills affected their ability to attract new jobs. They also mentioned that their inability to meet deadlines or work according to customer specifications sometimes led to conflict with customers. Initially, they did not see that as a major problem, but after extensive discussion they realised that they had lost customers as a result.
At the beginning of the session, Bernard, Gordon and Ahmed introduced themselves as trainers. They also explained the aims of the ABLE-Ghana project and its participating institutions. After this, they explained the objectives of the Informal Sector Training Project and of the pilot module ('Marketing of Products and Services in the Informal Sector'). In all cases, the trainers tried to use the Twi language because the majority of the participants could not communicate well in English. Bernard, with support from Gordon and Ahmed, started the training with the ‘Get-to-know-you’ exercise, where the participants introduced themselves and their expectations of the training. An unedited summary of the participants’ expectations is presented below (in most cases, these are direct translations from Twi). We have left them in this ‘raw’ form in order to give a more direct impression of the woodworkers’ perspectives:

**Participant expectations:** How to improve finishing, Increase sales, How to understand customers, Want to be able to help others, How to add value and understanding of marketing and management practices, How to attract customers, Why sales have been up and down, How to manage work, How to help and handle customers, How to improve relationship with customers through communication skills.

Bernard introduced participants to the basic marketing concepts and principles and their application to the marketing of products and services in their businesses. The medium of instruction was mainly Twi, although the training manual was written in English. The use of Twi helped to enhance participants’ understanding of the concepts and the principles and also enabled the majority of them to contribute to the class discussions. The key challenge during the classroom discussion was finding the appropriate Twi words to explain some of the marketing terms. However, Gordon and Ahmed were on hand to clarify some of the concepts and the principles that Bernard found difficult to get across in Twi.

The problem-based approach to teaching management methodology also helped to ensure that participants were actively involved in the classroom discussion. Practical examples that related to the participants’ business operations and activities were introduced to explain the marketing concepts and principles. The use of other teaching materials such as pictures and video also helped to connect participants’ personal experiences to issues that were being discussed. One problem we did not anticipate during the module preparation was that the exercises introduced as part of the classroom activities would be undermined by the poor English language skills (both oral and written) of the majority of the participants. These class exercises had to be abandoned, and were not able to serve the intended purpose of increasing participant involvement. Notwithstanding the above challenge, participants were fully engaged throughout the training session and were able to relate their personal experiences to the issues being discussed and to provided practical examples orally using the Twi language. At the end of the training, participants were given the evaluation form to complete and lunch was provided. Certificates of Participation were to be presented to the participants at a later date.

**Participants’ evaluation of the training**

The list below is a record of the participants’ evaluation of the training. These verbatim comments represent immediate reactions to the pilot training module that can be compared with the initial expectations summarised above.

**Reasons why the course is good:** An insight into work conditions, Knowledge about customer care, Helps to improve business, Personal development and enhancement, Inspires creativity, Customer satisfaction and retention, Training of apprentice, Customer appreciation, To improve working environment and
conditions, Improve market share, Self-branding/personal branding, Very simple and explanatory, To know the way forward for our businesses.

Ways to improve the course: Government interventions, Increase the number of days of the seminar, The lecturer should be patient enough when lecturing, Course must be in a dialogue way, Use local [Twi] dialect, Expand facilities, More topics should be treated, More training, Visit workshops to study trends on the ground, Repeating training course, Bring in other trainers, Regular update of market trends, All mobile phones should be off during such sessions, There should be a specific duration for the course, There should be more publicity next time, Demonstration in the shop [i.e. the carpentry workshop], An expert in the industry should be in the team, Respect reporting time and closing time.

Overall assessments: Course is timely, Good response, Good start, Good, It is good in that, formerly we were ignorant of many things that are a hindrance to the progress of our business in general, We now know how to deal with our customers, Ensure continuity, Best thing that ever happened to the wood village and very educative, We have benefited so much, Very helpful and must be repeated in other aspects of SMEs, Educative, I find the course very useful, It has exposed us to basic issues of managing our business, Excellent programme for the wood village, Is nice, I want to continue – it is very good, Excellent programme, should be introduced to market women and cover other aspects of SMEs, Excellent presentation and participation is quite good, Thank you, Thanks for your investment in woodworkers, Continue training.

Concluding reflections
This proved to be a very popular intervention with the artisans at Sokoban. There was an enthusiastic response to the pilot programme in marketing and many constructive suggestions as to how the learning experience might be improved in future presentations. The team were aware that participants might be interested in other kinds of training. During the feedback session, the participants requested further programmes in the following areas:
♦ Product development
♦ Working capital management
♦ Bookkeeping
♦ Identifying your customer market segmentation and positioning.

The team also gained a great deal from the experience, and has identified a number of modifications that can be made to improve the effectiveness of future interventions. For example, on reflection, we will organise around a smaller class size and fewer topics. We will also group participants according to the nature of their business activity. This will help to ensure that the module is designed to meet a specific need; separate seminars can then be organised for each group. In addition, the classroom activities such as exercises will involve more pictures with participants identifying good and bad marketing practices instead of the current writing exercises, which proved less useful. A reading manual containing examples of good and bad marketing practices using pictures will also be designed. Lastly, we think it is important to establish a system for monitoring participants on regular basis to ensure practical implementation of the issues discussed during the training. Our intention is that all these modifications will be factored into the design of future modules.

References

1.3 Strategies for curriculum review and course design

George Tackie

Introduction

All over the world, businesses are finding new and innovative ways of competing effectively. Ghanaian businesses need well-educated people if they are to succeed in that competition. The quality of the graduates available to our businesses depends on the curricula used by our universities – what they teach, how they teach it, and the values that infuse that teaching. But how do universities and business schools decide on their curricula? Do they just want to make their programmes and courses attractive to students? That could easily be done by giving the programme or course a ‘charming’ name. But students are not the only stakeholders, and meeting student expectations is only one consideration. Other key factors include labour market needs, employer expectations, and institutional and national requirements. The process can be complex and controversial.

This short paper arises from my engagement with the curriculum review process at the University of Cape Coast School of Business, under the chairmanship of Dr Henry F. Akplu of Department of Management Studies, and from the interactions with key stakeholders as part of that process. That experience is clearly relevant to the aims of ABLE-Ghana.

The driving forces in curriculum review

Akplu (2009b) identified the following as the driving forces in curriculum review and course design:

♦ increasing complexity in academia and the business world, as well as constantly changing needs within industry
♦ increasing demand for human resource competence to create and sustain organisational competitiveness
♦ growing pressure from industry to make its fresh inductees productive from day to day in order to reduce the subsequent training costs
♦ increasing interdependence between academia and industry to satisfy the need for sustenance and innovation in their respective areas
♦ a shift in the management paradigm of business schools from earlier academic models to revenue-based models.

The above requires that we:

♦ explore the connections between objectives, teaching strategies and assessment
♦ use programme/course objectives, teaching practices and assessment to improve teaching and learning
♦ support lecturers and teaching assistants in aligning their teaching practices with programme/course objectives

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2 I want to acknowledge the immense contribution of Dr Henry Akplu. It was a privilege to work with him on the review of the undergraduate curricula of the School of Business, UCC. The material in this paper draws heavily on his ideas presented as part of that process. I am also grateful to my ABLE-Ghana colleagues in the ‘new curricula’ theme.

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engage and collaborate with industry and employer representatives in programme/course design and delivery. This is particularly necessary considering the neglect of local content in our course delivery: most textbooks being used at the tertiary level are full of foreign examples. We need to interrogate research reports on Ghanaian businesses and industries to provide inputs and examples for use in course design and delivery.

**Major considerations in curriculum review and course design**

Since there are different approaches to achieving an outcome, it is suggested that the process of reviewing a curriculum or designing a new course can begin with some probing. Akplu (2009a) therefore urged reflection on the following questions:

1. What are students expected to be able to do in their work when they have completed a particular course?
2. What must students know to be able to do (1)?
3. What learning activities must students engage in so that they can achieve (1) and (2)?
4. How will we tell whether students have successfully mastered the concepts through their individual study or by working with each other?
5. How will we tell if students will be able to use these concepts in real life contexts?

Responses generated from the above questions provide the platform to establish bases for developing the appropriate content for the curriculum. However, it is imperative to consider the following when reviewing an existing curriculum or developing a new one:

- **Labour market needs**: jobs and tasks performed. Most jobs require generic skills – communication, critical thinking, creativity and innovation. Others require specialised skills.
- **Graduate profiles**: capabilities that employers want graduates to have on leaving university and entering the job market.
- **Institutional policies and accreditation requirements**: the focus of the institution in terms of its mission and vision, and its approach to curriculum design. The national standards and accreditation requirements must also be considered.
- **International ‘best practices’**: how to ensure that the curriculum content meets global standards so as to ensure that locally produced graduates can compete globally.
- **Learning outcomes/curriculum goals and objectives**: the intended aim of the curriculum must be well delineated, in terms of both the university or business school as a whole, and the programme-specific goals and objectives.
- **Faculty/staffing**: full time, part time; current strength; future requirements? Together, the staff must have the mix of capabilities required to deliver the curriculum.
- **Educational values**: values which influence curriculum design include those of students and lecturers, and established traditions/values of the university, business community/employers and society at large. Values shape our priorities in selecting content and delivery methods. Values can also be barriers to curriculum change. We need to question what we value if we are to review a curriculum and not just make cosmetic changes to it.
- **Students**: what assumptions can be made about background and experience; how much flexibility will there be to meet individual differences and interests?
- **Entry requirements**: what is required for admission and how will it be judged – through grades, written tests, or an interview?
Resources/facilities: the availability and adequacy of resources is key to curriculum implementation. Instructional technology support is needed to make curriculum delivery effective. Business schools must set their own standards in investing in instructional technologies.

Certainly, taking all of these into consideration is a tall order and incredibly difficult to do. However, the essential point is that of making efforts at addressing each ingredient.

Reflections

From my experience in this project I came to the view that we must develop personal philosophies of education covering the various aspects of course design. Great schools and institutions are not founded just on visions and missions but also on the philosophies that the faculties are committed to. There should also be school and departmental philosophies on curriculum/course design and delivery, so that our programmes have a common rhythm. While marks and grades matter, we should keep in mind that our real purpose here is to prepare students for work; it is not just a matter of marks or knowledge acquisition but what students can do with the knowledge. If the focus of our curriculum design is the graduates we intend to produce for the job market, then efforts must be made at engaging with the questions and approaches set out above. Views may differ and continue to differ on how best to respond to the various challenges. These are important debates. The bottom line is that strenuous efforts must continue, in order to ensure that the quality of our graduates continues to improve. If things are done only to satisfy a narrow interest without looking at the issues holistically, then the products from our institutions will not succeed in the business world of work; they will become unemployable, the nation will suffer, and our business education will have failed in its essential purpose.

References

Akplu, H. (2009a) 'Curriculum review and design: the process', personal communication, 18 September.

Part 2 Case studies

2.1 Introduction

Dr Nceku Nyathi

Not surprisingly, the current popularity and success of the case method in business schools attracted a lot of interest in ABLE-Ghana. Right from our first gathering in January 2010, GIMPA’s Rector set the tone in his welcome address by stressing the importance of the need to produce and use locally written case studies. This became an overwhelmingly agreed area of focus that required urgent exploration by ABLE-Ghana. It was felt that there was an over-reliance on cases produced outside Ghana, mainly western case studies that did not seem to relate to and prepare students for the real world that they were going to be engaged in. The paucity of local cases had arisen owing to the limited activity in Ghana and Africa in writing them, leading to a reliance on materials produced in the west. ABLE-Ghana therefore created the space to explore the wide range of potential benefits of using the case study method in management and education. Could it provide a platform for further transformative resource building? To that end, the ABLE-Ghana case study group was also tasked with covering the skills for writing case studies, exploring their use in assessment and understanding the issues involved in using case studies with students in Ghana and Africa.

Initially a fascinating list of titles for possible cases was gathered, all of which ABLE-Ghana participants wanted to explore further. However, by the time the group gathered together for the second workshop it became apparent that a couple of issues needed urgent attention. First, a prevailing view was that case studies were used only for assignments. The varied ways in which case studies could be used for illustration or activities had not really been recognised. This led to a ‘lightbulb’ moment for the group. It was agreed that case studies from other countries were often not very suitable for Ghana and so writing our own cases was very important. However, because cases are best based on real situations, this caused a lot of blockages when it came to writing cases. How did one obtain access to the necessary information? In fact, cases can also contain fictional as well as real elements, so this is not as serious a block as one might think. Perhaps more seriously, most ABLE-Ghana colleagues thought that a case had to look like a full-blown, Harvard-style case study. The idea that a case might be short, medium or long depending on the particular teaching purpose you wanted it to serve was controversial.

Some of us argued that, really, a case study is essentially a story, provided for a purpose. At this juncture, another issue arose: ‘How do you tell the story, then?’ As one Ghanaian colleague admitted, perhaps the real blockage was the difficult, solitary work of writing! In fact, a whole range of factors can be obstacles to case writing, and some of these are laid bare in the next paper. This presents the initial findings from a study exploring the use of case methods in Ghanaian business schools. The aim was to understand what is being used, the rationale behind the chosen cases, and why more local cases have not been prepared.

By the end of the Cape Coast meeting (January 2011), we had several cases of varying lengths, and a commitment to more being produced. Those that were ready in time are presented in this part and they illustrate something of the variety of lengths, styles, uses and sources of case material. However, it was also clear that much more work remains to be done. So we were fortunate that, later, Professor Manu from GIMPA offered to run a case writing workshop to help aspiring case writers to develop their skills.
2.2 Making the case for case studies

Dr Nceku Nyathi and Prince Kodua Akortsu

Introduction

The potential benefits of using the case study method in management training and education (Rees and Porter, 2002) have become widely taken for granted in the western business schools. The most influential champion of the case method is Harvard Business School, whose case studies have become known as the Harvard cases. In Africa, however, Wits Business School (WBS) claims to be the only business school in South Africa to have a dedicated case centre. WBS asserts that while it uses many international cases in its courses, it has found that the real-world decisions, companies and scenarios depicted in these cases are not always applicable in the South African context. Moreover, the South African business environment has unique characteristics that cannot be depicted in cases set in international contexts. WBS therefore took the initiative to change this imbalance as far back as 1993, when it decided to established its own case centre to produce South African cases, retaining a Harvard-trained case writer (Courtenay Sprague, who is today one of WBS's academic faculty members) to help to develop the specialist skills needed.

In this paper we consider the reasons put forward by WBS and explore them through the ABLE-Ghana (AG) project. WBS's concerns seem to have been shared by AG in that the latter also needed to address an overwhelming reliance on cases from abroad in producing local case studies for teaching Ghanaian and African business and management students. We therefore glance back here in this study to pose the question: 'Why the case study method?' Our efforts were then channelled into finding out what cases were being used; how they were being used; what kind of gaps existed; and how these could be rectified. Based on this background, this study seeks to investigate the extent of case study usage in Ghanaian business schools. It has the following specific aims:

1. To determine the nature of case studies used in business schools in Ghana
2. To determine the type of case studies in use
3. To understand case study authorship by Ghanaian academics
4. To determine the challenges of using case studies.

Meanings, benefits and why case studies?

The case study focus was firmly established by the end of the first AG meeting. It drew out very ambitious outlines which were accompanied by interesting titles that covered wide facets of functions in organisations in Ghana. All the AG academics were very clear about the benefits of case methods in teaching. They were found to be the most effective way for lecturers and tutors to bring realism and practical meaning into theories and concepts. It was argued that the reliance on western or international cases created a sense of dislocation for Ghanaian and African students as these case studies were out of sync with the reality and context of organisations in Ghana and Africa, and so were not introducing the students to the world they were going to practise in. AG therefore presented an opportunity to explore why there were not enough local cases being written in Ghana and establish what steps could be taken to create an atmosphere that resulted in local cases becoming an integral part of the curriculum in management training and education.

Lundberg et al. (2001) have suggested that case method often involves giving students a real historic business situation consisting of a detailed factual description of an issue faced by an organisation together with the surrounding facts, circumstances, events and
management opinions. Cases are often actual or fictional descriptions of problem situations in the field in which the case is being used; sometimes, they are syntheses constructed to represent a particular principle or type of problem (McKeachie, 1999). This is in direct opposition to what Friere (1971) termed the ‘banking method’ of education, in which students are repositories for the instructor’s information. The students then regurgitate the facts that the instructor has provided: there is no critical thinking involved in this practice. Brooke (2006) noted that with the case study method, students and teacher engage in a Socratic dialogue which fosters critical thinking skills, thereby eradicating the ‘banking method’ of education in the classroom, whether actual or virtual.

The case study method is designed to enhance student understanding of core concepts of the course as well as to encourage critical thinking. As Brooke (2006) further indicated, by using cases, students become active, in a similar way to the Bauhaus method of ‘learning by doing’: it is an active learning strategy. For Washull (2005), cases provide students with the opportunity to exercise decision making, whether individually or in a team format. For the disciplined student, using cases helps to increase motivation. Further, it provides them with real-life examples and so addresses the difficulty that some students may have in connecting theory with practical situations. Case-based teaching has been found to be a more effective instructional method than conventional lecture-based teaching for promoting student’s critical thinking and decision-making skills (Boehrer and Linsky, 1990). Cases are used as examplars inserted into the text or lecture to identify theories and generalise actions. Doyle (1990) noted that cases can advance knowledge and understanding by focusing on problem solving and decision making. Here, the emphasis is on the development of a way of thinking – a heuristic method of problem solving that emphasises the messy, complex nature of teaching.

By simulating real-world situations, case-based teaching challenges learners to engage in problems they are likely to encounter in their professions. Whether successful case-based teaching depends on a skilful discussion facilitator or well-crafted case materials is debatable. Describing the content of cases, Shulman (1992) and Blumenfeld et al. (1991) suggested that to engage learners with sustained interest and motivation, teaching cases should target an appropriate level of learners, match the content with instructional goals and objectives, and make the setting of the narrative explicit. For Eurell et al. (1999) and Snyder and McWilliam (1996), cases should reflect the backgrounds, needs and diversity of learners. Cases should address the goals and objectives of both learners and teachers (Leong et al., 2003; Snyder and McWilliam, 1996; Peavy, 2001). Goals and objectives of case materials can cover a wide spectrum of cognitive levels, such as eliciting information, interpreting information, integrating multiple sources of information, making decisions, and providing the rationale for the decision-making process (Cliff and Wright, 1996; Zimmerman et al., 1997). To make the content of cases reflect the students’ environment, cases should be set in realistic and relevant practice settings, such as the office visit, hospital admission, etc. (Leong et al., 2003). Cases that approximate real-world settings increase the likelihood that learners will transfer their learning from one setting to another (Hmelo et al., 1996; Levin, 1995; Khan and Yip, 1996; Weiss and Levison, 2000). Realism in cases can be added by providing authentic materials, distracters (i.e. non-pertinent features), and gradual disclosure of content.

In order for cases to be engaging, they should include rich and sufficient content that allows multiple levels of analysis and interpretation; multiple voices and perspectives; and opportunities for learners to determine the course and outcome of the case. These strategies allow learners to avoid oversimplification or over-generalisation by exploring problems from different vantage points (Barnett, 1991; Koehler, 2002). Sufficient
information in a case allows learners to identify the people, problems, situations and tasks involved (Clark, 2002; Gibson and Cochran, 1982; Cox, 2001). Complex cases can be used more than once for analysis, reflection and discussion (Lundeberg and Scheurman, 1997. Cases can allow learners to elicit information from multiple sources and examine problems from a variety of perspective (Koehler, 2002; Van der Blonk, 2003).

Cases can be made challenging for learners by increasing the degree of content difficulty, including cases that are rare or unusual, altering their structure by presenting data in a non-sequential way, or including multiple cases in a series. Difficulty in a case can be increased by adding or withholding information, and adding tasks, problems, ambiguity, uncertainty or possibilities for multiple solutions (Hmelo et al., 1996; Kolodner, 1997; Thomas, 1993).

Many studies reported learners’ feedback on: usefulness of cases (Leong et al., 2003; Eurell et al., 1999; Anwar and Ford, 2001); amount of learning by thinking through cases individually or collectively in a group (Malloy, 2002; Eurell et al., 1999; Carlson and Schodt, 1995; Flynn and Klein, 2001); adequacy of the number of cases (Carlson and Schodt, 1995) case realism (Ward, 1998; Kamin et al., 1999); content level (Chew, 2001); level of challenge and fun (Maleck et al., 2001; Cliff and Wright, 1996); time to complete cases (Malloy, 2002); and components of cases that contributed to learning (Regula et al., 1999). Examples of assessing learners’ knowledge and skills include quizzes or multiple choice questions to test content knowledge levels (Monahan and Yew, 2002), and case analysis to examine a learner’s ability to identify dilemmas, provide evidence of multiple viewpoints, formulate a plan and justify actions (Monahan and Yew, 2002; Parr and Smith, 1998).

Research methodology

Consistent with the previous studies in case study utilisation among academics (Reddy, 2000; Nasmith et al., 1995) a quantitative cross-sectional approach was adopted to understand the phenomenon under study. The sample was gathered using a survey instrument from full-time public and private universities’ business school academics in Ghana. The minimum requirement of response rate was based on the criteria of Hair et al. (2010). The participants were asked to voluntarily complete the questionnaire based on their perception of case study usage as both an institutional requirement and a personal teaching philosophy. During the data collection period 100 questionnaires were distributed, of which 64 were returned; of these, 50 were useful. Measurement items used in this study were operationalised using validated items from prior research into case study usage. Three scales were used to measure the nature of case study use, types of cases in use and the authorship of cases used among business school academics in Ghana. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The demographic statistics provide a detailed description of the data sample used for the study. The analysis was done using mainly frequency analysis.

Findings and discussions

This section throws more light on the data captured and its findings based on the variables of interest to the study. The study asked various questions concerning the use of case studies in the business schools in the country at tertiary level. A total of 50 questionnaires were satisfactorily completed and in good condition for data processing. The presentations and interpretations that follow are therefore based on the responses from these 50 questionnaires.
Demographic characteristics

From a total of 50 respondents, 82 per cent were male, 18 per cent female. This is in line with the general trend in Ghanaian universities, where male academics dominate by wide margins. The 50 respondents were made up of (in order of seniority) one professor, two associate professors, four senior lecturers, 30 lecturers and nine assistant lecturers. Treating male and female together, 32.7 per cent were in the 31–40 age range, followed by 30.6 per cent in 41–50 range. Those under 30 years and above 50 years old were in a minority. It is useful to note that, in terms of the academic qualifications of the 50 respondents, 15 (representing 30 per cent) are PhD holders, with the remaining 35 (70 per cent) holding Masters and other equivalent qualifications.

Place of education is very important, since it lets us know the kind of exposure one might get from education. In all, 48 per cent got their qualification from Ghana, 38 per cent from Europe and 10 per cent from the USA. Australia and other parts of Africa were all at 2 per cent. With the majority receiving their training within the country, one can easily say that they are abreast of issues concerning the Ghanaian business context.

From the survey, 31 per cent had taught four different courses and 26 per cent three different courses. Those who had taught five different courses were at 17 per cent, with 14 per cent having taught two courses. The remaining 6 per cent had taught only one course. The more courses they teach, the more easily they can relate to cases to what they are teaching. Although teaching more or different courses can be very challenging, it has the potential of making academics more adept and open-minded in a given discipline. In all, the modal number of courses taught was four and the mean value 3.58, with a minimum of one and a maximum of six.

We further asked the lecturers whether they taught at undergraduate or postgraduate level. In all, 54 per cent said they taught at undergraduate level and 12 per cent at postgraduate level. The remaining 34 per cent said they taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Our interviewees were 35 academics from the government universities and the remaining 15 from the private universities. The government universities include the business departments of the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration and the Institute of Professional Studies. The private schools were made up of Pentecost University College, Ashesi University and Wisconsin University. Looking at the teaching methods employed by the academics in teaching in the business school and whether anyone had written a case study before, the results were very interesting. From the survey we realised that all the academics who had been teaching for six years and above had not written any case study. However, those who had been teaching for less than three years and between three and five years had at least written one case study.

Objective 1: Nature of case studies used

The use of the case study in lectures exposes the student to real-life situations on issues in various sectors of the economy in both local and foreign contexts. It was therefore of interest to find out the rate of usage of case study methodology in teaching among business academics in Ghana (Table 1).

The long cases. The long cases or the Harvard-style cases are complex and require independent or subjective analysis in the classroom. From our findings we discovered that about 42 per cent of lecturers occasionally use the long case study, while 17 per cent rarely use this method. About 32 per cent reported that they have never used this approach. However, 9 per cent responded that they quite often use long case studies. Thus most lecturers do not take this approach to teaching.
Table 1  Type and frequency of case usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of case study</th>
<th>Frequency of case study usage among business academics in Ghana (in raw percentages)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

The short cases. These cases normally have about three to six pages, expressly for student to practise and help them diagnose situations and also draw out implications and conclusions. In our study 40 per cent responded that they occasionally use this approach and 29 per cent that they quite often use it. Others responded that they rarely or never use this approach: 19 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. We can say that about 70 per cent sometimes use this approach.

Mini cases. These cases are normally not more than two pages long and are aimed at illustrating specific concepts or ideas for students to practise. A total of 46 per cent responded they use this approach quite often, with 33 per cent saying that they occasionally use it in teaching. Rarely and never were in the minority, with a value of 13 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. On the whole, we can say that majority of the lecturers like using mini cases, probably because it is not as complex as using short and long cases.

Objective 2: Type of cases in use (local versus foreign)

We wanted to ascertain whether the cases that are used in teaching in business schools in Ghana are locally derived cases (have local content) or are foreign cases with foreign examples. From the survey, the majority of lecturers use case studies from western countries. As many as 78 per cent of the respondents said that they usually use case studies from western countries, with only 12 per cent using case studies from elsewhere in Africa and 29 per cent using case studies from Ghana.

Objective 3: Case study authorship by Ghanaian academics

In line with the research objectives, respondents were asked whether they had personally written case studies for the purposes of teaching.

Table 2  Type and number of cases written

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case type</th>
<th>Number of cases written</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long cases</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short cases</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini cases</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

From the responses, it came to light that the majority of the academics had written case studies but these are normally the mini type of cases. Only a few that had written long case studies or short ones, as shown in the Table 2.

To enrich our understanding, we further asked those who said they had personally written case studies to tell us whether they adapted cases written by others.
Irrespective of whether they have written a case themselves, lecturers sometimes use cases written by others on various issues. In all, 46 per cent had adapted articles and/or cases written by others about business management in Ghana and other countries. On the other hand, 54 per cent had not adapted cases or articles written by others in other countries, probably those who do not use case studies in their lectures.

From our investigation, it came to light that case or article adaptation for teaching purposes normally involves minor changes to the original work to make it more relevant to the Ghanaian context. Foreign names and phraseology are replaced with local names and slogans; figures and characters are also changed with a view to making the case personally relevant to the local student audience and to enhance comprehension.

With regard to why lecturers had not written case studies (Table 3), 50 per cent said they did not have the know-how to write such cases. Others, representing 30 per cent, were also of the view that there was no financial support for developing case studies in the business school. Apart from these reasons, the remaining 20 per cent attributed the problem to the unavailability and the difficulty of accessing information, as organisations were often unwilling to cooperate in the release of information.

Table 3 Reasons for not writing Ghanaian case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not have the know-how to write such cases</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No financial support for developing case studies in the business school</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information is somewhat demanding; organisations are often unwilling to cooperate in the release of information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Objective 4: Challenges with the use of case studies

To measure academics’ perceptions of the difficulty or ease of using case studies in teaching, respondents were asked to indicate their attitude on a five-point Likert scale, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. From Table 4 it is clear that majority of the lecturers disagreed with the assertion that the case study is a difficult method for teaching in the business school: 64 and 16 per cent of the respondents respectively answered in the negative, i.e., they disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement that ‘using a case study in teaching is difficult’. It is equally interesting to note that there were a significant 10 per cent of the respondents who for whatever reason perceived case studies as a difficult method of teaching. The research did not probe further into why this group considered case studies to be difficult. It is also possible to infer that those who are undecided have never used cases in teaching.

Table 4 Difficulty of using case studies in teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data
However, the issue of local relevance has often cropped up as a challenge in the case study discourse. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Many of the case studies that are available do not have relevant local content'. As can be seen in Table 5, an overwhelming 80 per cent said they agree or strongly agree that most of the available case studies do not have relevant local content. We can thus say that the majority of the lecturers believe that available cases lack relevant local content to make management issues more realistic and relevant to students.

Table 5  Local content of available case studies for teaching in business schools in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Conclusions and recommendations

The study sought to establish case study utilisation among Ghanaian academics in business schools in Ghana. Four specific objectives for the basis of understanding the phenomenon under study were pursued: the nature of cases in use, the type of cases, the authorship of cases among Ghanaian business school academics and the challenges of case study use. The study confirmed some of the perspectives that had been raised in the AG project and the case study group. First, the majority of cases in use in Ghana were from Europe and the USA, while a paltry 29 per cent were written locally. This also confirms the problem of student attitudes towards the use of these types of cases for assessment: students perceive them to be too tasking and demanding, resulting in lecturers who used the cases being given negative feedback. This seems to also be one of the reasons for lecturers’ reluctance to use cases, i.e. to avoid negative student feedback. The other perceived challenge was the required adjustment from traditional methods of teaching and assessment to using and completely relying on the case study method. The question that arises is therefore one of either negativity of cases or the wrong curriculum development.

Interestingly, a significant number of lecturers indicated that they had written one form of case, the majority of these cases being mini cases. However, 46 per cent of these cases were adaptations of foreign cases. This confirms the paucity of scholarship on local cases, some of the reasons for which came to light throughout the AG project. We observed that there were issues of capacity and resources – often contradictory ones. For instance, some lecturers had research assistants available to them, but only in some places were there resources to adapt and use cases for teaching. We also observed that while there were infrastructure and technological challenges, some schools or libraries could not afford the subscription to online journals and could only have access to abstracts that were not adequate for teaching and assessment purposes. When the issue of local relevance was posed as a challenge, about 80 per cent of the respondents indicated that it presented a major challenge. This could explain why the lecturers prefer mini cases that they can adapt to local situations.
It was a surprise to most of AG participants in the case study group that attention had not been paid to cases in local journals as a great resource, while the tendency was to seek out foreign cases. This tendency to look for foreign examples seems to have been driven by the assumption that cases in local journals were of a lower and inadequate quality. The different perceptions of cases in the case study group and the seductive power of the Harvard cases perhaps got in the way of creating and writing local cases. The case study group realised that cases need not be long and elaborate but could quite be short and focused, depending on what the lecturer was trying to do in their teaching. As a result of recognising some of the obstacles to producing more local cases, the study based on the findings above recommends that lecturers are trained in how to write and use cases. This will provide them with the capacity to write cases that are locally relevant, hence solving the problem of lack of local relevance and the current reliance on the use of western cases. The training will also provide academics with the skills needed to use case studies as a teaching method. Again, the various business schools should provide the necessary financial support to academics to motivate them to engage in case writing. Future research directions can focus on the opportunity for local cases to insert an African perspective on management education and knowledge as well as considering student perceptions of case study as a teaching method in Ghana and other African business schools.

References


2.3 Creative problem solving in public administration

*Dr Paul Effah* and *Professor Rob Paton*

**Teacher’s notes**

This exercise was written to support the teaching of *creativity* and *problem solving* in public administration and business.

At root, all techniques for creative problem solving involve finding a different way to think about and describe an (apparent) problem. In this case, the situation invites students to think about Patrice’s problem with the press in a particular way – either he does (a) or he does (b), when neither option is satisfactory. *So the challenge for the students is to find a different way of thinking about the situation, one that leads to a different way of responding, that is neither (a) nor (b).* Make sure this is understood as part of your teaching before you distribute the handout.

After, say, 10 minutes, ask some students to enact the role play – one person pretends to be the journalist and another is Patrice; then another pair try it. And another. Use these as the springboard for a classroom discussion in which you see who has come up with good ideas for option (c) – responses that reframe the situation.

If you have creative students, you may get some interesting and plausible ideas. Great! Appreciate these warmly, and gently point out the difficulties with improbable solutions. This is *not* an easy exercise and some, perhaps most, students may be paralysed with frustration and confusion. Sympathise with them. Everyone gets caught by their own assumptions from time to time.

Eventually, tell them ‘what actually happened’ – which was on the following lines:

Patrice dealt with the phone calls by wearily telling the journalists that there was no story. *Of course* the Head of the Institute was ‘out’ – as was well known, it was becoming a University, and the Council would need to recruit a suitable Head, someone who would be able to handle the new, expanded responsibilities. So the current Head was bound to stand down and the Minister was only stating the obvious. To pretend otherwise was to make a fuss about nothing at all. That said, the Head of the Institute could apply for the new job along with other candidates – indeed, having won the Institute the right to award degrees, he would be quite a credible candidate. This would all be obvious to the Minister, but it was not his decision – the new Council would decide in due course. And if the Minister wasn’t clear about any of this then he, Patrice, would have no hesitation in putting him right. The independence of the Institute, now that it was also a University, was more important than ever. Patrice explained that the Minister’s action was an administrative arrangement to ensure smooth administration in the absence of a Council and that when Council was reconstituted, it would take steps to appoint a suitable substantive Head.

Played this way, Patrice was able to defuse a potentially difficult issue. Indeed, it helped him develop his relationship with the new Minister – both by being supportive of him, and by making it clear that interference would create difficulties.

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*3 Dr Paul Effah was until recently Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) in Ghana.*
**Student handout**

Patrice is the Director of a regulatory agency for higher education institutions in a developing country, and he has a problem. Journalists have started ringing up to ask: ‘Is it true that the new Minister of Education has relieved the Head of Planta College, which is a public tertiary institution? Does he not know that it is beyond his power to do so – only the independent Council of the Institute can do that? What will you be doing to protect the independence of the Institute and academic freedom?’ And so on.

The government has just changed following an election, and everyone is watching closely for signs of the new leadership’s priorities and how its ministers will conduct themselves. A recent decision of the outgoing government was to change the remit of Planta College – it can now award degrees for its advanced professional courses and can operate as a University College.

It is true that the Minister has said publicly – but perhaps he thought he was speaking ‘off the record’? – that the Head of the Institute is ‘out’. This is what has triggered the phone calls. The situation is complicated, even confused, by the change of status of the Institute/University College and the fact that there is currently no Council because, with the change of government, its members have been asked to resign, and a new Council is in the process of being appointed.

The press are convinced this is a very important story. They are expecting Patrice to do one of two things:

- (a) support the Minister, even though it is the Council’s responsibility to hire and fire the Head of the Institute;

- or

- (b) contradict the new Minister.

Patrice has held his position for many years, is a respected figure, and has been noted for speaking his mind. But he must work closely with the new Minister; he needs to win his confidence, and publicly contradicting him on this matter would be a terrible way to start the new relationship. He ponders: which option should he choose, or is there any way he can turn the situation around?

The phone rings; Patrice reaches to pick it up...

**What does he say?**

Discuss with others how he might respond.

When you have decided on your response, prepare to do a role play, playing either the part of the journalist, or of Patrice.
2.4 Customer service in electricity supply

Frederick Kofi de Heer-Menlah

Teacher’s notes

This case study maybe used for a management information systems (MIS) class, an e-governance class, a customer relationship management class or a change management class. Guidance is given below for an MIS or e-governance class at Masters level.

In discussing this case study the students should note how there is a dis-connect between the information system (IS) and the company’s mission. They should note how the implementation has been carried out without the business processes of the organisation changing to take advantage of the efficiency the fault report system is supposed to bring to the organisation.

The system can be discussed in terms of the types of IS that can be found in an organisation. Here students can classify the system and also discuss how the system could be improved to harness new developments in technology. Particular attention could be drawn to Customer Integrated Systems and internet-enabled systems.

The case study is also very good for highlighting information flow in an organisation. Here the dimensions of information maybe considered for the various departments or district offices of Electricity Company of Ghana. The different actors in the company may also discussed in terms of a systems analysis of the company.

The experience of a customer of the Electricity Company of Ghana may also be discussed in terms of supply chain management in an environment where there are other suppliers of electricity. A discussion can also be focused on the value of information that flows through the customer report system. Given the chance to commission the system as a manager of the Electricity Company of Ghana, what would students ask of the IS developers to improve the efficiency and reduce the costs of business operations?

Two sample questions are given below. The lecturer is advised to modify them in order to direct the discussion of the case according to the needs of the students and the concepts being taught.

Discussion questions

1. The introduction of the call centre as an MIS was supposed to improve efficiency and effectiveness and reduce costs. To what extent were these objectives achieved by ECG?
2. In terms of MIS, discuss to what extent the fault report call centre was implemented, commenting on the information flow component of the system and the business processes of ECG.
The tribulations of an Electricity Company of Ghana customer

An Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) customer, Mr Kofi Mensah, notes on Friday 7 May 2010 that his lights and all other gadgets are flickering all night until the power to the house eventually goes off. Thinking he has run out of credit, he goes to buy prepaid units. He then observes that the prepaid meter is also off. He reports his problem at 8.30am at the local ECG prepaid office. The office promises to send a technician to attend to the fault. At 11am Mr Quansah, a prepaid technician, shows up at the house and after initial diagnosis ascertains that the problem is not with the prepaid meter but with the mains line to the house. Mr Quansah instructs Mr Kofi Mensah to go back to the ECG local office, but this time to report at a different department that there is no power to his house. Mr Kofi Mensah stares in amazement, wondering how ECG internal sections work. He wonders if ECG will ever get to fix problems on time. Having no other choice, Mr Kofi Mensah goes back to the ECG office to make his second complain at the fault office as directed.

The ECG staff member at the fault office, Mr Akapo, logs Mr Kofi Mensah’s complaint in an exercise book on his desk and tells him to go home and that someone will arrive to assist. When Mr Kofi asks for a reference number Mr Akapo does not give him one. Mr Kofi Mensah goes home and waits for three hours without any technician showing up. He decides to telephone the district fault office. His call goes to a call centre answered by one Diane, who logs his complaint and gives him a reference number with a promise to contact the district engineer. At 4pm Mr Kofi Mensah rings the call centre again, quoting the reference number. Another attendant, Thomas, apologises for the delay and promises to contact the district engineer. Mr Kofi Mensah has spent GH¢4.50 on telephone calls. He waits in vain until 6pm and decides to drive to the district fault report office once more.

On arrival, Mr Akapo tells Mr Kofi Mensah that the technicians have been in the field all day and have just returned to the office. When Mr Kofi Mensah asks for a reference number for his earlier complaint in the exercise book, he is told that the district office does not give reference numbers for reported faults. When Mr Kofi Mensah tells Mr Akapo he has also reported twice to the fault call centre, Mr Akapo goes into his PC and quickly retrieves the reference number for him. Mr Akapo now asks the field technicians in the office to go with Mr Kofi Mensah to solve his problem. When interrogated by Mr Kofi Mensah, the two technicians remark that they had been in Mr Kofi Mensah’s area during the day but had not received any radio notification of his problem.

On arrival at Mr Kofi Mensah’s house, the ECG technicians diagnose that the power cables from the ECG pole to the house are loose and also missing a bi-metal clip to hold them in place. The technicians tighten the cables on the ECG pole and promise to come and fix the clip on the following day to solve the problem permanently. This the technicians do not do.

On 29 August 2010 at 5.15pm, Mr Kofi Mensah again notes his lights and other gadgets flickering and then going off. Mr Kofi Mensah calls the ECG fault report centre and tells Beatrice at the call centre that there are sparks on the same ECG pole. Mr Kofi Mensah spends over five minutes on the phone and his phone credit runs out. Beatrice calls Mr Kofi Mensah back with a promise to report to the Tema ECG area manager. No ECG technician shows up all night or next morning. Mr Kofi Mensah phones the fault report call centre at 11.45am and another call attendant, Bernice, answers his call. Mr Kofi quotes the new reference number that Beatrice gave him and is informed the job was only given to a technician that morning. In desperation Mr Kofi asks for the Tema ECG area manager’s direct line. Bernice refuses. Mr Kofi Mensah asks Bernice that if the pole and his house were burning, would they have burnt to ashes without ECG being bothered? Bernice replies that ECG technicians do not climb ECG poles after dark.
Mr Kofi Mensah wonders whether this is a case of the need for ‘facilitation fees’ before ECG officials will despatch technicians to attend to emergencies. Or is this the training that ECG has given to its workers – to ignore telephone reports to the call centre? Or are there no supervisors/managers at ECG who are to ensure that reported faults are handled promptly and completely? Or is it a case of sheer indifference at ECG? Is it that ECG management is not aware of its employees’ attitude and the cumbersome processes they operate and put customers through? Mr Kofi Mensah asks himself, is there routine inspection and maintenance of ECG electricity poles and other ECG equipment? What happened to the ECG’s commitment to ‘operating at internationally accepted standards of quality, security, profitability and environmental friendliness through the cooperative effort of well-developed and sufficiently motivated personnel using the state of the art technology to become and remain the number one choice in the industry’?

Mr Kofi Mensah gets home on 30 August at 9.45pm and observes that there is still no light in his house and that the ECG technicians have not been there to attend to the problem. He goes to the district fault office and again meets Mr Akapo and two technicians, who confirm they saw the report in the morning but have not done anything about it. Bewildered, he leaves the office to go and sleep in darkness for the second day. At 6am on 31 August another technician team show up at his house and within five minutes they have tightened the cable on the pole. Mr Kofi Mensah has his lights back on the third day, but to his amazement the technicians have not brought the bi-metal clip with them.

Mr Kofi Mensah sets out at 9am to locate the Tema ECG regional manager. After a lot of difficulty and giving a false agenda for the meeting, he finally meets the regional manager, Mr Akrasi, who receives him politely. He hands over a copy of this case study to Mr Akrasi, who reads it with intense shock and with apology after apology. Mr Akrasi summons the district engineer and asks him to read this case study. He is given the day to solve the problem and is also asked to summon everyone involved in the saga. One hour later ECG technicians show up at Mr Kofi Mensah’s home to fix the bi-metal clip. Three days later the district engineer calls Mr Kofi Mensah to find out if his electricity supply is fine.

Mr Kofi Mensah still wonders what mechanisms and procedures are in place at ECG for ECG supervisors and managers to verify the turnaround time for faults reported. Does a customer have to phone and always go the district office and beg before ECG faults can be rectified? What is the use of the ECG call centre? Is ECG made up of empires that don’t communicate or coordinate their work? Mr Kofi Mensah notes that the prepaid division does not talk to the fault report section and vice versa. The call centre is an empire on its own and doesn’t talk to the fault report section. The fault report section has its own schedule independent of reports to the call centre.

Does the MIS have no monitoring feature? Or is ECG just not interested in monitoring and evaluating its technicians’ work? Or is it that ECG is not bothered because no matter what ECG does, there is no way a customer can ever get redress for non-delivery of services or consequent losses incurred?

Meanwhile, the Electricity Company of Ghana has just established a fault report call centre that its customers can reach by telephone 24/7. In addition, it also has fault report offices at all of its 77 district offices, which it has linked by a wide area network (WAN) and, as one of its managers at the head office informs him, ‘The company is committed to operating at internationally accepted standards of quality, security, profitability and environmental friendliness through the cooperative effort of well-developed and sufficiently motivated personnel using the state of the art technology to become and remain the number one choice in the industry.’
2.5 The metal fabricators: challenges of growth in a small Ghanaian business

Professor Rob Paton, Dr Richard Blundel and Dr Nceku Nyathi

Teacher’s notes

This case has been written in order to provide a basis for class discussion. It is presented in three parts and could be run over several class meetings. In keeping with the OER approach, it could easily be re-versioned – for example, to provide the basis for an assignment.

Part 1 is very short and simply sets the scene. Use it to draw out student attitudes to the sort of small, informal sector business which they will often have seen but may not have thought about. These are often looked down on, even though they probably make up 80 per cent of the economic activity in Ghana. Encourage students to share their knowledge of such businesses – some students at least must have family members who work for them. Encourage them to be curious about the business activity that is all around. How are the businesses run? What are they like? If students are dismissive of them – perhaps thinking they should compare them with ‘proper’ (i.e., large, formal business) – then urge them to think again. Big successful businesses usually start as small ones, and are often informal to begin with. Even ones that remain small are often very shrewdly run, overcoming many obstacles.

Part 2 provides at least some information on all the main business functions – marketing, production, finance and HR. Good students will recognise that the financial information is sketchy and slightly confusing; it is not clear how Labaran calculates profit. Was he just reluctant to reveal too much about the business, or is he himself a bit uncertain about the contribution the different lines make? Nevertheless, it is clear that the business is profitable, and has unexploited business opportunities.

The questions posed to students could be answered in different ways and so you should be able to appreciate a range of reasonable views from them. Clearly, Labaran has done well – and better than others who had the same opportunity. But might he have done even better? Those students who think so need to be able to point to specific changes that might have been made, and not just imply that they would have done better! Unless one thinks that a business based on scrap metal working is going to be squeezed out and has no long-term future, the main challenge is that of expansion. The opportunities are in producing additional profitable products, as well as serving a wider area. Good students will realise that the site is now unsuitable for everything except passing sales.

The main challenges that Labaran himself faces are those of many owners of small businesses, especially artisans, but with additional dimensions provided by the fact that it is all an informal arrangement. The transition into the formal economy will require him to learn a great deal and gradually come to lead and manage in somewhat different ways. But there is considerable scope for discussion about how far and how fast all this should happen. Some quite large businesses continue to run successfully on an informal basis – and as long as it works, informality is a very economical way to run a business (accountants and marketers are usually rather expensive!).

Part 3 provides more information about the realities of surviving as a small business and poses further, more focused, questions. But students can reasonably argue for a range of different answers, and this should be encouraged. The point is for them to think through what is involved in growing a business, and the very different ways this can be done.
If they all assume that a private company is the 'obvious' form, then it may be worth explaining that producer cooperatives have often been very successful in this sort of craft industry. Reasons for this include the fact that the skilled workforce is a key asset – you don't want them walking away and setting up a rival operation. So sharing ownership with this group provides a basis for trust and makes good sense. Also, this form might fit well with the culture of Yoyili. Sceptical students might be encouraged to google the Mondragon Group or visit www.mondragon-corporation.com/ENG.aspx. It is essentially a very large worker’s cooperative, even if it now operates across many countries!
Part 1: Origins

Sign for the business

Yoyili Enterprises was named after a chief in the north of Ghana whose family moved south seeking work and opportunities. Some of them started a family-owned forge and scrap metal business, gradually building it up on the basis of skilful metalworking and the shrewd purchasing of scrap. The business was located on a small site by a busy road through Ashiaman, a growing township within the sprawling Accra-Tema metropolitan complex. The business was successful in its own terms but not distinctive; it was one of many such businesses.

In 1998 it was agreed that Labaran – who had successfully completed secondary school and was then in his early twenties – would take over the leadership of the business. At that time it was providing a livelihood for about 12 people. Some forging was still undertaken, but increasingly the business was focusing on using scrap sheet metal to fabricate a range of household, agricultural or light industrial products such as watering cans, buckets and oilcans.

Various products
Discussion questions
1. How might this business have been owned and organised?
2. What do you think the prospects would have been – and are – for this sort of business? Some people have suggested that Labaran should have tried to get an office job or go to university or a polytechnic (as his older brother did) instead of working with his hands. Do you agree?
3. What specific business opportunities would there be? What threats?
4. What would be the main challenges if Yoyili was to grow? How might they be addressed?

Part 2: Yoyili Enterprises in 2010

By the summer of 2010, Yoyili was providing a livelihood for about 40 people. The single most important vehicle for this growth was its production of the Gyapa range of highly efficient charcoal-burning stoves designed and promoted by Enterprise Works – a project of the US NGO Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA). Labaran had been trained in how to produce them and keep records on sales. Unlike some metalworkers from other regions of Ghana who also accepted the training, Labaran was convinced the Gyapa stoves had potential. He put effort into training his workers and he persuaded them to produce them. Through a series of seminars VITA supported him in managing the development of the business. Yoyili become one of a small number of approved manufacturers. All this took place over a period of five years.

During this period, VITA began advertising the stove nationally with a lively jingle on the radio and television; and it was able to sell carbon credits on the back of a well-documented audit trail – this was the reason for the training in record keeping and provision of a one-year guarantee for each stove. If the price of carbon credits rises, Yoyili will share some of the additional revenue generated.

The promotions worked, Gyapa became a familiar brand, and demand rose continually. In fact, Labaran believed he could expand sales further – for example, by selling into other regions – but he is operating at full capacity.
Yoyili was selling about 1500 stoves each week, with the medium-sized ones being the most popular. But this was still less than half of Yoyili’s overall business. During this period, Ghana’s economy had been expanding steadily and the main road was now a business and shopping thoroughfare. So how did the business run? Here is an overview.

**A good location for passing trade**

**Product range and marketing**

- High-volume items – Gyapa stoves, chicken feeders – sold direct to customers and also in bulk to traders who take them off to sell 50 or more miles away.
- A wide range of low-volume items, as illustrated in the pictures – large ovens and stoves for catering businesses; domestic and agricultural equipment. Direct sales to local businesses and shoppers; also some sales to traders.
- Bespoke items to order.
Some of the numerous products

Financial management and sample financial analysis

The business is run on a cash basis and it seems not to have a bank account, though Labaran surely does have one. Nevertheless, various local taxes are paid regularly at intervals through the year. For a high-volume stove the breakdown was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Description</th>
<th>Cost (GH₵)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bought-in parts and materials, mainly the ceramic element</td>
<td>GH₵2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>GH₵3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale price</td>
<td>GH₵8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory retail</td>
<td>GH₵10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail elsewhere</td>
<td>GH₵12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 10 of his people working on these he could produce 1800 per month and could expect about GH₵1000 per month in net profit.

This was not the only profitable line for which demand was high. The number of poultry farmers was growing, and once the farmers had invested in the purchase of chicks, they needed devices to feed them. But the farmers soon discovered that the cheap plastic feeders were unreliable, and could not be repaired (this was equally the case with plastic watering cans, another line waiting to be properly exploited). With five people producing feeders, Labaran could produce 500 a month and sell them for GH₵7 – netting another GH₵500 profit.

Technology and work organisation

There were no managers as such. The work was undertaken using small group batch production – several people work on a batch together – and simple tools, some made by themselves (see pictures). It was coordinated through a network of implicit and explicit contracts and established practices.
Work in progress

Labaran’s leadership roles
♦ Sourcing and purchasing of scrap metal and ceramic elements
♦ Pricing and arranging/agreeing major sales
♦ Quality control and training
♦ Cash management
♦ Agreeing what batches are produced and the internal labour payment
♦ Being the leader of one of the small production groups
♦ Thinking ahead – for example, Labaran’s younger brother is studying marketing at the Polytechnic in Accra.

The culture of the enterprise
A number of Labaran’s family work for the business. In a fairly low-key Ghanaian way, a shared ethnic identity (as Muslim northerners) probably also provides some social ‘glue’. The business upholds some shared social concerns – they try to take on youngsters, for example, and provide training (although, because it takes six months to become productive, they cannot do as much of this as they would like). They have provided work to a mute person whose father and brother had died, and who was a not very close relative of another member of the business. All those working in the
enterprise contribute GH¢1 per week to a welfare club (social insurance); the revenue from the sale of their own offcut scrap is also put into the welfare club.

Labaran has been concerned for some time that the business will have to adopt a corporate form. Among the reasons for this are the continuing claim which some members of the extended family think they have on the business – even though they have not been involved for many years. Some years ago he invited 15 of the more senior figures to join him in discussing how this might be done and the investments they might make to achieve it. These discussions did not lead anywhere.

Discussion questions
1. From the information given so far (including in the pictures), how do you appraise Labaran’s achievement?
2. What are the main business challenges and opportunities that Yoyili faces?
3. What are the main challenges that Labaran himself faces?

Part 3: Business challenges and possibilities

The success of the business (and others) has made it much harder to obtain the scrap metal they need, and they have to pay more for it. Eventually, he may have to buy scrap from other countries, or even buy cut pieces from China. But this is as nothing compared with the capacity constraints the business faces: the workforce cannot work in full sun – they need shade, and it is all now in use. Moreover, every bit of available space is used to store finished and part-finished goods. On top of this, the firm’s use of the site is being challenged by the commercial developers who have put up a large office building on the land immediately behind the Yoyili plot. Not long ago, this challenge took a very direct form: the owners of the new building, with the support of the police, tried to evict them from the site. Labaran was not intimidated: he called to the workforce to pick up their heaviest tools and fight for their livelihoods. The result was a brief stand-off, from which the police and commercial developers backed down. Nevertheless, Labaran warned his people that if the police returned with the army, then they should run, not stand and fight. Happily, it did not come to that.

In fact, finding a better site was a long-running issue. This event meant it was now urgent. Years before, Labaran had been to talk to the National Board for Small-Scale Industries (NBSSI) to seek assistance in moving to another site. They had suggested he should talk to the Tema Development Corporation. He did – but they said he should be talking to the Planning Department of the Tema Metropolitan Authority (TMA). They lost his letter, so he had to visit twice – and all they did was refer him back to the NBSSI. At one point he had formed an Association of Metalworkers with other independent artisans in the hope that this would make it easier to get permission for a site. But when this had still not succeeded after four or five years, the Association collapsed. In the course of these efforts, Labaran had visited the Ministry of Local Government and the HQ of the NBSSI in Accra; and presented a letter from the Association to the Deputy Chief Executive of the TMA, but this did not even receive a response.

Basically, the character of the site had been transformed: the local authority was keen to see the property along the road upgraded (to increase tax revenue), and was insisting that traditional structures were replaced with modern ones. The fact was, TMA was not going to give a permit for a workshop on a valuable commercial site. Moreover, Yoyili’s legal claim to the site was not that strong, even if the business had been there for generations.

Essentially, Labaran seemed to face a choice between three options:
1. Try to stay on the site, and redevelop it – almost certainly unrealistic as the space was insufficient for the existing business, let alone an expanding one.
2 Strike a deal to leave the site and move elsewhere to create a new facility with more shade and space – but there was no obvious site nearby, and it would mean losing all the valuable passing trade.

3 Try to stay on the site but redevelop it as a small depot and retail outlet, for which it was well suited, and also develop a production unit capable of larger volumes on a suitable, larger and cheaper site elsewhere.

Finally, whichever option he and the family chose, it was clear that they would need to take out loans, and to adopt a corporate form. Labaran’s previous experience with the NBSSI meant he was not looking forward to engaging with the men in suits again.

Discussion questions

1 What appear to be the advantages and disadvantages of options (2) and (3)? What challenges might be involved in carrying them through?

2 What questions do you think Labaran needs to consider to help him decide between options (2) and (3)?

3 Who might sensibly share ownership in the business, and in what ways? What legal forms might Labaran consider as means to incorporate Yoyili Enterprises?
2.6 Sakawa in Ghana: what problem? Whose problem?

Gordon N. Asamoah and Daniel Agyapong

Teacher's notes

This paper can be used for a classroom discussion. It will also serve as the springboard for a student project. Instructors in disciplines such as entrepreneurship and youth policy, public policy, information technology, research methods, international finance, business ethics, management and stakeholder analysis can use it to illustrate the idea of social problems of cyber-crime and youth unemployment. It can be used to illustrate serious, but hidden, social and technological problems in society, and the need for leaders to take a microscopic view of their society (organisations) to deal with minor issues before they become crises.

As presented in the case, the problem of 'sakawa' exists in our society. So the case presents an opportunity for discussions and brainstorming among students in order to construct system maps, look beyond the current identified stakeholders involved and debate different sorts of 'solutions' to the problem.

The case can be used to illustrate how to conduct difficult investigations such as semi-criminal and other socially unacceptable behaviour as part of scientific methods. The case also can be used to illustrate the research process.

The case can be used to illustrate threats in online business and finance transactions. It represents online payment security, and threats to cross-border business and investments.
**Sakawa in Ghana**

**Abstract**

This study looks at the issue of sakawa, that is, internet fraud: its development and practices and its effect on youth and households and the techno-social aspect of the Ghanaian economy. Personal interviews and questionnaires were the main instruments in data collection. It was found that sakawa has a negative effect on the economy, including loss of corporate and national image, setbacks in online business transactions and reduction in foreign investments. Notwithstanding, some have seen it as a mode of income redistribution. It is also seen to have increased remittances. The practice is apparently increasing and requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders to deal with it.

**Background**

'Sakawa' – a term derived from the Hausa language which means ‘put inside’ – has in recent years generated headlines and a huge public outcry against it. It is sometimes referred to as 419, especially in Nigeria. Sakawa emerged in the late 1990s and was the preserve of a few highly intelligent youngsters, mainly in the Zongo communities of Nima, Mamobi and Newtown, all in Accra, and Agona Swedru in the Central region of Ghana. At that time it involved the use of credit cards for online shopping. Goods purchased were either shipped directly to Ghana or through partners overseas. Population experts were already pointing to the influx of foreigners from within the sub-region, especially from Nigeria, into Ghana when these criminals realised that scamming was no longer lucrative in their own country, as being a contributory factor.

Several unemployed university students first used this scam as a means of manipulating business visitors interested in shady deals in the Nigerian oil sector before targeting businessmen in the west, and later the wider population. Scammers in the early to mid-1990s targeted companies, sending scam messages via letter, fax or Telex. The spread of email and easy access to email-harvesting software significantly lowered the cost of sending scam letters by utilising the internet. In the 2000s, the 419 scam has spurred imitations from other locations in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe and, more recently, from North America, Western Europe (mainly the UK) and Australia, the latter three mainly carried out by Africans.

They brought new ideas and a modus operandi which resonated well with their counterparts here. Men posed as women to chat with unsuspecting victims online. Such imposters pretend to be in love with their supposed ‘boyfriends’. The boyfriend is asked to send gifts and huge sums of money for a marriage to be established. The scammers also resort to ‘business transactions’ with unsuspecting clients and partners online. They therefore deal in non-existent gold dust, timber, securities and oil, and use sophisticated documents from government agencies to establish authenticity. Until recently another modus operandi has been added to the phenomenon – voodooism. Perpetrators engage in occult practices and other spiritual assistance to facilitate and enhance their activities, while others resort to blood money – ‘sika aduro’ in local parlance. There are thus three groups participating in these activities: those who link cyber-fraud with voodooism, those who strictly use their brains and discount voodooism, and those who seek blood money with the pretence of also engaging in cyber-fraud.

The issue of sakawa has dominated the news for about a decade now. However, what is lacking in most instances is concrete evidence. It appears that most reports of sakawa have been allegations and few works have provided concrete evidence to support their claims. Therefore this study sought to find out the causes and effects empirically from those who are involved.
Literature review

Definitions of cyber-crime

The concept of cyber-crime has been variously been defined. According to Guerra (2009), cyber-crime is crime committed online with the aid of a computer or networks including child pornography, botnets, SPAM, identity theft, fake security software, credit card fraud, DDoS (distributed denial of service) extortion, click fraud, cyber-squatting, blackhat SEO (unethical search engine optimisation) and pump-and-dump – artificially inflated – stock schemes. Farlex (2011) views such a crime as one in which the perpetrator develops a scheme using one or more elements of the internet to deprive a person of property or any interest, estate or right by a false representation of a matter of fact, whether by providing misleading information or by concealing information. Such activities include online theft of credit card information for criminal use.

Theories of cyber-crime

Several theories explain causes and effects of cyber-crime in one way or another. These theories range from economic through social to technological. The ‘tragedy of the commons’ economic theory explains a cause of cyber-crime by analysing it from the point of view of its protection. The theory describes how a common resource is used up by multiple individuals acting independently in their own self-interest (Hardin, 1968). According to Guerra (2009), many researchers have made the analogy that the internet is the commons and no one self-interested individual or group has an incentive to protect the whole. According to Guerra, while individual users may be incentivised to purchase anti-virus software to protect their system, they would probably not purchase software to stop attacks against a third party. This explains why the internet is susceptible to abuse. This view is supported by the ‘lemon market’ economic theory, which also predicts that information technology products will be inherently insecure (Anderson, 2009).

The ‘space transition theory’ looks at cyber-crime from a different angle. The theory explains that people behave differently when they move from one space to another. While some people exhibit conforming behaviour, others may display non-conforming behaviour in the physical space and in cyberspace (Jaishankar, 2008). The theory postulates that persons with repressed criminal behaviour (in the physical space) have a propensity to commit crimes in cyberspace that they would not commit in physical space owing to their status and position. Identity flexibility, dissociative anonymity and a lack of deterrence factors in cyberspace provide the offenders with the choice to commit cyber-crime. Criminal behaviour of offenders in cyberspace is likely to be imported to physical space which may be re-exported to cyberspace as well. Intermittent ventures of offenders into cyberspace and the dynamic spatio-temporal nature of cyberspace provide the chance to escape; strangers are likely to unite together in cyberspace to commit crime in the physical space. Likewise, associates in physical space are likely to unite to commit crime in cyberspace; persons from a closed society are more likely to commit crimes in cyberspace than persons from an open society; and the conflict of the norms and values of physical space with the norms and values of cyberspace may lead to cyber-crimes (Jaishankar, 2007).

Research into sakawa

Several commentaries on sakawa at the individual, institutional and national levels have been made over the years. As already alluded to, sakawa is a type of ‘computer-assisted crime’ (Wall, 2010, p. 99) in Ghana. It is an activity mostly engaged in by youths. As Oduro-Frimpong (2011) points out, sakawa narratives allege that participants engaged in this fraudulent activity, mainly males aged 16 to 40, indulge in occult ritual practices to enhance their potential to defraud people and become wealthy. But the problem with
most of the news condemning sakawa has been that it just consists of allegations. As indicated by Oduro-Frimpong (2011), such rituals, it is alleged, come with dire negative consequences for participants. These results include any type of ill-health such as insanity and/or death within a short time of achieving one’s desire. The work of Oduro-Frimpong (2011) and other public commentators provides insight into the activities of sakawa and how those who practise it live. It shows that sakawa is a coinage by youth fraudsters from deprived communities and often poverty-stricken areas in towns and cities. It is alleged that they are cyber-fraudsters who engage in occult rituals to woo their victims. Those who engage in it are required to follow certain rules and live a certain lifestyle, including swearing an oath of secrecy to fully abide by sakawa rules; inflicting wounds that never heal; sleeping in coffins in cemeteries on specified days; carrying coffins in the dead of night at road intersections while semi-naked; drinking human blood obtained either from murdering someone or from discarded menstrual pads; eating the contents of rubbish dumps for a required number of days; abstaining from taking baths; spiritually sacrificing one’s manhood (which manifests as either impotence or infertility). Other alleged ritual rules to be followed after making a hit include spending one’s wealth in specific ways such as not owning any permanent fixed structures or, in the case of owning such a building, entering it backwards. Furthermore, one also has to purchase new ‘luxury’ cars such as a Toyota Matrix, Chrysler or Hummer. According to popular accounts, the consequences of violating these ritual rules include losing all the wealth, going mad, dying or all of these (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011).

Sakawa has been an issue of both public and institutional concern for a number of years. This is because of its variation from traditional crime. Since 2007, sakawa rumours have featured strongly in the Ghanaian media as well as inspiring popular entertainment such as ‘hip life’ songs and the Ghanaian film industry. Three months of sakawa fieldwork and internet research included 55 newspaper articles, 27 television reports and 165 radio references, with many informants citing the radio during interviews. Meanwhile, some culturalists believe that sakawa is anti-Ghanaian. This is exemplified by Douglas (2002, p. 27), who points out that the sakawa rumours’ portrayal of young men performing socially grotesque tasks constructs a dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ and, ultimately, ‘Ghanaian’ and ‘not-Ghanaian’ behaviour.

Methodology

The methodology used was mainly questionnaires and interviews to collect data from the participants. A sample size of 140 was used for the study. For the sake of anonymity, questionnaires were administered for the youths while interviews were conducted with the other categories of respondents. Those involved in the research were selected from four (prominent Sakawa-prone areas in Ghana, namely Nima, Mamobi and Accra Newtown (all in Accra), and Agona Swedru in the Central region. The snowball sampling method was used in selecting the respondents because of the peculiar nature of the subject matter. The sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of respondents</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youths (perceived to engage in sakawa)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security personnel</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet café operators</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrine operators</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests (clergy)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data analysis and findings**

**Factors that account for rapid growth**

Five major factors surfaced prominently as causing people to engage in the activities of sakawa. These are: (a) unemployment; (b) covering up illicit drug trading to outwit security; (c) the desire to get rich easily and rapidly; (d) payback time for the colonial masters; and (e) peer pressure.

**Unemployment**

Unemployment is a major factor which has plunged many youths into these fraudulent activities. Most of the youths that indulge in these activities come from deprived areas and slums, hence have a low level of education and skills. Therefore they resort to crime as a means of improving their standard of living.

**Drug trafficking**

Drug traffickers are increasingly taking advantage of the internet to sell their illegal substances through encrypted emails and other internet technology. Some who pretend to be sakawa boys are actually drug dealers posing as sakawa boys to divert the attention of the security agencies.

**The desire to get rich easily and rapidly**

Greediness and the burning desire to get rich overnight is also a factor. The perception that political leaders are corrupt also has a role to play. Most participants believe that since their leaders use pen and paper to defraud the state and live flamboyant lifestyles at citizens’ expense, they can also use the internet to get money and solve most of the problems confronting them as citizens.

**Payback time for the colonial masters**

The notion that it is payback time for our colonial masters who deprived us and stole our natural resources to build and develop their countries, leaving us in absolute poverty, also has contributed to this vicious practice.

**Peer pressure**

Peer pressure, when young men see their colleagues driving flashy cars, wearing quality clothes and getting all the girls, encourages them to find a means of having an ostentatious lifestyle.

**The factors as revealed from the data collected**

**Nima**

The interviews conducted by the researchers at Nima, in Accra, indicated that 13 out of the 25 interviewees (52 per cent) said the main factor that accounted for sakawa activities was unemployment, while 4 per cent said the activity was not real as perceived, but was being used as a decoy in order not to attract the attention of security personnel towards the illicit drug trade being undertaken. Another 12 per cent attributed the activity to the desire to get rich easily and rapidly, while 24 per cent related it to payback time for the colonial masters. However, the remaining 8 per cent believed it was all about peer pressure influencing many of the youths to take up the activity.

**Mamobi**

From Mamobi, in Accra, it was realised that 48 per cent attributed the cause to unemployment, 8 per cent to an illicit drug trade, 8 per cent to getting rich easily and
rapidly, 28 per cent to payback time for the colonial masters and 8 per cent to peer pressure.

**Accra New Town**

The findings from Accra Newtown were that 48 per cent agreed with Mamobi that unemployment causes youths to go in for sakawa, but 16 per cent thought of it as a cover-up for illicit drug trading. Another 16 per cent pointed to the desire to get rich easily and rapidly, while 8 per cent attributed it to payback time for the colonial masters and 12 per cent of the interviewees indicated it to be a result of peer pressure.

**Agona Swedru**

Agona Swedru, the area with the highest level of sakawa, on the other hand, produced the following as factors that account for the growth of sakawa: unemployment accounted for 24 per cent; cover-up of the illicit drug trade is responsible for 16 per cent; while the desire to get rich easily and rapidly accounted for 20 per cent. Sixteen per cent thought it was payback time for the colonial masters, and peer pressure accounted for 24 per cent.

The aforementioned are the views as expressed by the youth perceived to engaged in the activities of sakawa. The internet café operators, the shrine operators, the security agencies and the clergy all concur with the above factors.

**Conclusion: the effects of sakawa on Ghana**

**Positive effect on the economy**

The economy has seen a significant increase in remittances during the past decade. Undoubtedly cyber-fraud has played a significant role in achieving these successes. Some of the money accrued from those activities was sent by victims through the various money transfer systems and banks. One can imagine the number of people involved in these activities and the amount of money that has been sent to them. It is no wonder, if you visit most of these money transfer outlets, to find that most of the people receiving cash are engaged in cyber-fraud.

At Agona Swedru, the houses of these practitioners are found in an ultra-modern village – Woraba Estate – on the Swedru-Agona Asafo Road around the Swedru Secondary School area. This has led to the modernisation of the town.

**Negative effect on the economy**

Ghana has been shortlisted among countries with a high rate of cyber-fraud, which is rare in the international business community. In recent times many foreign companies have been too careful to engage Ghanaian companies in business deals. This means the government is losing revenue, especially from the private sector.

E-commerce has also suffered a major setback due to the restriction of Ghana’s ability to partake in online trade on most of the international companies’ websites. This is obviously not a good signal for a country which prides itself as being the gateway to Africa. The prevalence of sakawa has scared off foreign investors who, more often than not, have previously been duped when they have contacted locals in Ghana for business transactions over the internet. This has economic implications for foreign direct investment and other trade issues. Human resources are being depleted, since most of the youths who indulge in these activities don’t find education and acquiring skills relevant – they are able to meet their daily needs and live comfortable lives.

The issue of sakawa is one which requires a general consensus of all the stakeholders involved. There should be laws set up by the law-making agencies to streamline the
activities of all manner of persons who use the internet. Who knows what will follow the already worsening situation? The current trend is showing a general increase in the practice of sakawa. If action is not taken, it will reach an epidemic level. It is better to cut off the head of the snake while it is still young.

References
2.7 The difficult workshop

*Professor Rob Paton*

**Teacher’s notes**

This case comprises:
- the case itself
- questions on the case
- a marking scheme for those questions.

Together, these mean the case can be used in different ways:
- as a basis for classroom discussion
- as a basis for an exam question
- as a basis for a peer-assessed piece of coursework

In deciding whether and how to use it with your students, it will first be essential to ensure that it illustrates ideas, or offers scope for using techniques, that you teach in your course. Some of these possibilities are suggested in the marking notes. But you may wish to adapt the case a little, in order to align it better with your own teaching.

Thus, the questions and marking scheme offered are simply indicative of how the case would be explored in discussion or used for assessment in the context of an Open University course.

This case is made available under a creative commons licence.

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4 The events described in this case draw on real situations. All names and places have been changed and the account has been elaborated in various ways for teaching purposes. Its purpose is to illustrate the sorts of challenges that may arise for those working in the middle to senior levels of public administration in West Africa; it is not meant to illustrate either good or bad practice in public administration.
The difficult workshop

It had been a perplexing week for Theresa. She was a project manager for Advancing Learning for Engineering Excellence (ALEE). The second week-long meeting had just taken place at the University of Development Studies (UDS), and Theresa had been responsible for arranging the accommodation and meeting facilities needed by the 20 academics who were attending – most from other West African universities, but three from a UK university, including the project leader, Bill Connolly.

The first meeting, six months earlier, had gone off well. But that workshop had taken place on the campus of the Institute where Theresa was an administrator. It had a reputation for being well run. This was why it had been chosen to manage the project. It also meant everyone in the Engineering Faculty was keen to make the project a success.

This week had been a bumpier ride. In fact, the difficulties had started long before she arrived on campus. The UDS was one of several universities which had suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was needed to signal their involvement in the project. Bill had dismissed that idea – he simply couldn’t see the point and was horrified by the time and effort that would needed to prepare it. But perhaps, Theresa wondered, this was why she had found it difficult to get responses from senior figures in the Engineering Faculty at UDS. Bill Connolly had also tried – but also with limited success. Emails were ignored and phone calls – if they were picked up – only led to bland reassurances. She had, of course, written formally explaining what was required and repeating information (which the Dean and faculty secretary had already done) about the financial provision for the programme (provided by a UK government scheme to create partnerships between UK and African universities).

The situation had been complicated by the fact that the Engineering Faculty at the University of Development Studies did not have a conference centre. So the meeting was to be held instead in the School of Medical Sciences Rest House which, she had been assured, provided good facilities for this sort of meeting. On top of that, Kwesi Mensah, the energetic young faculty member who led the team from UDS and who had been a keen contributor to ALEE, was out of the country in the month before, and during, the meeting. So the person who had said his faculty would be glad to host the meeting had not been around to make things happen.

When she arrived she found there was no computer and printer (or, rather, the Rest House staff weren’t making it available) and no photocopier. They had to ask for flipchart paper. There was a good main meeting room – but no ‘break-out’ rooms for small groups. Nor was there a projector for presentations. Support from the Engineering Faculty continued to be vague. Bill went across to greet the Dean in the morning before the workshop started – but he wasn’t there. The faculty secretary said he would be there at the start to welcome everyone – he wasn’t. Then some of the participants complained about the food. They also complained that those from UDS and from a university college in the same city had not been provided with accommodation. One or two had made representations to Bill: ‘The meetings need to be an occasion that people remember, not with student food. Look after us properly. Otherwise we won’t want to come to future meetings – we all have so much work to do marking assignments. We make a big sacrifice attending these meetings...’

More worryingly, Asemaila, a senior figure from her own institution, had been bothered as well – was it because he thought the difficulties reflected badly on their own institution? (‘We are a centre of excellence!’ he always said.) Or was it just because he really liked his food? Then to cap it all, she hadn’t been able to pay attendance allowances to the participants. She had had to settle the Rest House bill herself in cash.
By the time she had made some provision for travel costs, there was nothing left for the allowances. How some of them complained!

But despite all the grumbling, the workshop hadn’t really gone badly. Bill and his colleagues had not been bothered at all. They puzzled over the complaints: ‘Why did they need attendance allowances to do something that was a great opportunity, and a part of their jobs anyway? It was as if they want to be paid twice.’ The bedrooms were fine, they thought the food excellent (‘better than you would get at our university’), and the limited facilities no more than a minor inconvenience. Samuel, one of the UDS team, had solved the printer problem by bringing one in, and also a projector, from across the campus. The broadband wi-fi worked well. Above all, the work had gone well: Samuel had arranged visits to interesting engineering and technology transfer projects and the discussions had been lively and productive. The missing Dean had even turned up at the end and pledged funds to continue the work of the project. So the ‘obruni’ had been really pleased – indeed, Bill had said very clearly that, as far as he could see, she had done all she could.

Still, Teresa wondered, as an outsider he might not be the best judge. So what else might she have done? She was still quite new in her job and after studying abroad at a top university she was keen to advance in her career. The trouble was, she had several other responsibilities as well, not just looking after ALEE. In fact, she had been away in another city looking after another project for the two weeks before the ALEE meeting. More importantly, the budget for the project was quite tight. They had overspent considerably at the first meeting. Bill had been very firm about the need to economise – although, in Theresa’s view, the situation was not serious because they could cut back in other areas, now they saw how the project was working out. But all these people saying we should have had fufu and drinks and everyone residential… eh! Anyone can spend other people’s money… If Asemaila didn’t like it then he should have advised Bill to do things differently...

She would discuss it all with her husband, who had studied in a business school and was her best friend. Perhaps he would reassure her – or would have suggestions for what else she might have done, or might try in the future.

Questions

Question 1
Analyse the reasons for the difficulties that arose.
Credit will be given for the appropriate use of diagrams in presenting your explanation. You are, of course, expected to use concepts from the course in your analysis – simply reproducing the information in the case will not earn any marks.

(50% of marks)

Question 2
Given the circumstances and constraints, how well organised was the workshop, in your opinion? Give reasons for your assessment.

(25% of marks)

Question 3
If you were Theresa’s husband, what suggestions (if any) would you make for how she might do things differently when she faces similar challenges again in the future?

(25% of marks)
Marking guidance

Question 1

Relevant concepts are:
♦ organisational structure, delegation and lines of responsibility
♦ communication
♦ motivation (e.g., perhaps Herzberg’s theory: for the African delegates the ‘hygiene factors’ were clearly insufficient and this meant the ‘motivators’ did not have the same effect; or Expectancy theory...)
♦ cultural differences – the incompatible expectations of the UK and African delegates.

Any diagram that shows either the multiple causes of the difficulties, or that there was a wide spread of involvement and responsibility without clear lines of accountability, should be rewarded.

Question 2

Withhold marks from, and consider failing on this section, any sweeping and simplistic answer – whether it says Theresa did very well, pleased Bill, her boss, and was powerless to do more; or argues the reverse (saying it should have been run in a textbook way, regardless of the realities).

Award marks to balanced answers, especially those that are well argued using the information given.

Question 3

This is a chance for good students to shine. They will make modest, realistic suggestions that acknowledge the difficulties. These might include:
♦ going for a visit to UDS in advance to meet people face to face
♦ contacting Kwesi for help and advice even though he was out of the country
♦ asking Bill to explain the financial constraints to everyone in advance so they were not disappointed when they arrived
♦ arranging a simple memorandum of understanding with UDS anyway, even if strictly speaking it was unnecessary
♦ alerting her boss to the fact that she needed to be in two places at once in the run-up to the workshop – and perhaps sharing the work with a colleague
♦ discussing the issues with Asemaila, to seek his advice and assistance, and to keep him ‘onside’.

Penalise students who simply recite textbook prescriptions that ignore the realities.
Part 3 Assessing large cohorts

3.1 Introduction

Professor Rob Paton

‘Assessing large cohorts’ was the smallest theme group, starting off with five members – Seyram Kawor, Dr Margaret Crabbe, Simon Gyasi, Kingsley Opoku Appiah and Rob Paton.

In the first sessions, the issues we discussed centred on the workload that large classes imposed on lecturers, the scope for ICTs to save time, and what lecturers needed to do to maintain the integrity of their assessments. In Kumasi, we shared examples of the assessments we set our students and the discussions went deeper. Margaret Crabbe’s description of how she had used elements of peer assessment in one of her courses stimulated an animated discussion about whether this might provide one way of ‘squaring the assessment circle’. Online searches quickly produced a range of resources and demonstrated that this was an established practice in both Europe and North America. Rob Paton reported on some of the research on peer assessment that had prompted the OU to explore how it might be adapted for use in distance learning. Buoyed by this new information, peer assessment became the main focus for the work of the group, and attracted interest beyond the group as well.

After the meeting, these discussions led to preparation of the guidance note – which explains the rationale for peer assessment and some of the ways it can be used – and the student feedback form, presented in Section 3.3.

The discussions continued at Cape Coast, where Kwame Mireku was an enthusiastic addition to the group, compensating for the unavoidable absence of Kingsley Appiah and Margaret Crabbe. By this time Simon Gyasi and Seyram Kawor had run small-scale experiments and the group planned two papers. One would be a general piece on the assessment challenge, why it was so important, and how academic staff were coping. In the end, this was written by Seyram Kawor and Rob Paton, drawing mainly on contributions to the GIMPA and KNUST discussions. It is presented in Section 3.2.

The second paper was envisaged as a synthesis report, one that would summarise and review the experience of the various experiments – half a dozen or more – that by that time had been run or were planned (hopefully using a common method for gathering student feedback). In the event, this proved too ambitious. Kwame Mireku produced an exemplary report on his experiment, presented below (Section 3.4), but with very tight deadlines and lacking the focus of another meeting to discuss the results, reports on the other experiments – including another large-scale exercise with hundreds of students – were not finished in time.

Throughout these discussions I was deeply impressed by the hard work and commitment to students of those involved. This showed in lots of ways, but especially in the willingness to experiment with new forms of assessment, even though this was bound to involve additional work initially. No one pretends that peer assessment is a silver bullet for the challenges of assessing large cohorts of students. But it may be part of a solution, because it is a form of experiential learning, not just a form of assessment. A paper that reported the experience and results of these experiments in peer assessment would be valuable in enabling others to incorporate it into their teaching. It was heartening to hear, while this section was being edited, that members of the assessment theme were meeting again in Kumasi to progress this.
3.2 Assessing business school students in Ghana: can quantity and quality be reconciled?

Seyram Kawor, Dr Margaret Crabbe, Simon Gyasi and Professor Rob Paton

Introduction

For more than 20 years, in many African countries, student numbers have increased steadily while the resources made available to universities have either shrunk or stayed the same (Materu, 2007). Ssenkaaba (2007) notes that in 1960, Africa had only six universities, mainly producing civil servants. Now there are about 350 universities in Africa with more than half a million students. According to Materu (2006), between 1985 and 2002 the number of tertiary students increased more than threefold (from 800,000 to about 3 million), by about 15 per cent yearly.

One consequence has been that class sizes in public universities have increased enormously. So how can lecturers maintain standards when teaching very large numbers of students? How are lecturers coping? What practices do they employ – and how have these changed under the pressure of numbers? This challenge is particularly acute for business schools, which are also under pressure to make their programmes more relevant to employment. The criticism has been that business schools concentrate too much on passing on abstract knowledge, and do not spend enough time developing the occupational skills and judgement that employers seek.

But now these two trends – increasing class sizes and the need for students to learn more complex skills – combine to make student assessment the single most challenging issue facing business school staff today. On the one hand, lecturers are practically obliged to use methods of assessment that will keep their own workloads manageable, which means less time per student; on the other hand, complex skills are harder to assess, requiring more time to be spent on grading and providing individual feedback. This dilemma will be familiar to anyone teaching in a university, in any part of the world. The ‘massification’ of higher education is a worldwide phenomenon (Daniel, 1996; Mohamedbai, 1998). A debate on these issues is already happening in many countries, including Ghana.

This paper is a contribution to that debate. What are the more and less effective ways of assessing very large cohorts of students? What pressures and tensions does assessment introduce into business schools and what do staff think about the developments? What are the implications for business school policies and practices?

The paper draws on conversations within the ABLE-Ghana learning community, and presents the results of an informal inquiry into current practices. Those involved shared examples of the assessments they used, and spoke in confidence about the practical challenges they faced in meeting the needs of their students, the expectations of their institutions, and the demand their roles placed on their families. All were experienced academics who were well placed to observe practice in their institutions – what might be called ‘key informants’ in research terms. The report is not, of course, comprehensive, because not all business disciplines and none of the new Ghanaian universities and polytechnics were represented. But it presents an up-to-date snapshot of what is happening in Ghanaian business schools, both to inform the debate and as a challenge to others to provide better data on and analysis of this important issue.
**How serious is this issue?**

Concern about the quality of higher education is on the rise in Ghana. It comes at a time of growing recognition of the potentially powerful role of tertiary education for growth, and it is a natural response to public perception that educational quality is being compromised in the effort to expand enrolment in recent years; growing complaints by employers that graduates are poorly prepared for the workplace; and increasing competition in the higher education marketplace as numerous private and transnational providers enter the scene. More recently, it has been argued that the professional classes in Africa are losing faith in domestic universities and are sending their children abroad (Akanmu, 2011). To what extent are these concerns justified?

Assessment has always been central to the student learning experience – it drives study behaviour, and is a key source of feedback (Siong et al., 2010). Indeed, it is so powerful a driver of behaviour that it provides a major incentive for various forms of cheating. Unless students have developed a strong honour code, this requires secure forms of assessment with the means to detect third-party authoring, copying and plagiarism. However, assessment is not only about grades; it is also a vital form of the feedback that is central to all learning. Thus, so-called formative assessment – from which students can see how to improve – is also important; and summative assessment also needs to serve a formative function. Detecting cheating and providing constructive feedback both require academic time, and the more students, the more time is required.

Against this backdrop, the implications of large class sizes are obvious, and worrying. In a Principles of Accounting course for 600 first-year students at UCC, for example, it takes on average 20 minutes to mark and administer a quiz paper for each student. Hence, the accounting course requires 200 hours of academic time to mark, per quiz. If two such quizzes are set in a semester, it means the course needs 400 hours for the semester, just for continuous assessment records. Similar calculations can easily be made for exam papers: if you have 400 students, and it takes on average 30 minutes to mark, moderate and administer each exam paper (hardly a generous allowance), then this single course requires 200 hours – which is 25 days, or five weeks’ full-time work. In these circumstances, setting easily marked assignments – even if these only assess a small part of the learning that a course is intended to engender – may be seen as something close to a survival strategy.

These issues do not only affect business schools, and they are not unique to Ghana. An authoritative report by the Association of African Universities stated bluntly:

> Massification is also posing serious problems for student assessment and the conduct of examinations. In view of the large number of students, it is becoming increasingly impractical to make provision for adequate continuous or interim assessment. At the University of Ghana, only one continuous assessment is made per semester and it has been decided that interim assessment no longer contributes to undergraduate grades, as a result of which students are graduating with little practice for undertaking research, critical analysis and writing. Examinations have to be held more frequently and lecturers often repeat the same exam paper to different groups of students. The nature of the examination has also changed, most lecturers preferring structured and multiple choice questions which are easier to mark. Such questions, however, test knowledge acquisition rather than knowledge application. (Mohamedbhai, 2008, p. 42)

The counter-argument is that Ghanaian universities and business schools have been working hard to protect and enhance standards. The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana also play a crucial role in ensuring quality is maintained at all levels. At the business schools, three different types of quality assurance practices can be observed: institutional audits, institutional accreditation, and programme accreditation. These practices address issues
that enhance the quality of teaching, training and research, which in turn depend on the quality of staff, programmes and resources; quality learning, which derives from teaching and research, but also implies quality of students and the learning environment; and quality of governance and management, which impact on the teaching, learning and research environment.

Business schools in Ghana have extensive procedures for designing, approving, supervising and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards. There is a consistent implementation of laborious assessment practices which ensure that the appropriate and/or professional standards for each award are maintained and that student performance is properly measured against these standards. The quality assurance unit in the business school ensures that mechanisms for continuous assessment exist; assessment tools enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved expected learning outcomes; and assessment instruments are varied. Moreover, many of the courses count towards qualifications offered by professional bodies working to international standards. Much more could be said about the ongoing efforts to assure and enhance standards.

So the picture is contradictory – the glass is half full as well as half empty. Arguably, Ghanaian universities have done remarkably well to uphold their standards and academic values while facing extraordinary pressures and demands. Nevertheless, like their counterparts in Europe, they still face severe challenges in being able to test and demonstrate that students have achieved more complex learning outcomes. Indeed, it is precisely because Ghanaian academics are committed to high standards that assessment is seen as such a crucial issue.

So, against this general background, how is assessment practised in Ghanaian business schools?

**Current assessment practices**

Table 1 attempts to provide a broad-brush overview of current practice. It is of course a simplification – different subjects use somewhat different patterns of assessment; and these different forms of assessment can be executed in more and less searching ways. The elements listed in column 1 should not come as a surprise to those currently teaching in business schools. For the purposes of this paper, it is columns 2, 3 and 4 that are crucial, and especially the relationship between them.

The good news is that all these assessment methods are in use, and that Ghanaian academics are willing to experiment with them, despite the various difficulties that may be involved. We heard, for example, of the need to check closely on industrial placements as students had been known to fake them. Likewise, we heard of evening classes that regularly ran late by more than an hour, as the lecturer took care to ensure all the students had the chance to deliver (and receive feedback on) their group presentations to class. Given large class sizes, such group-based activities are essential if students are to be active learners and to receive feedback informally from each other on their efforts.

The bad news is that if the educational purposes listed in column 2 and the lecturer workload and frequency of use crudely estimated in columns 3 and 4 are broadly correct, then the situation is indeed worrying. Efforts to cultivate, test and provide feedback on the higher-level skills now required (teamwork, engagement with practice, writing skills, personal reflection, self-direction) do indeed require more time and organisational effort on the part of the lecturers. Business school staff are indeed ‘caught between a rock and a hard place’ – and we heard stories of the ways this creates tensions within business schools. For example, high demand for a course meant two classes had to be run in parallel – one by a lecturer, the other by a professor – but to the
same syllabus and with the same assessment. The professor suggested it would be enough to assess by using a few objective questions; the lecturer was shocked and had to argue strongly for a more searching approach. They agreed on a compromise approach, but it was a difficult situation.

**Table 1  Assessment practices in Ghanaian business schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment practice</th>
<th>Educational purposes served</th>
<th>Lecturer workload</th>
<th>Frequency of use and comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Quizzes (objective questions/MCQs)</td>
<td>Ensure students do the reading/study Test recall and understanding of concepts (definition, meanings, stages of a technique, etc.)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very widely used in all types of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Class assignments (e.g. presentations), individual or group</td>
<td>Ensure students do the reading/study Show understanding and develop skills through presentations, search, interviewing, IT use, teamwork, etc.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Widely used. Lecturer has to give opportunities to all students over the course of the semester. Scope for peer assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Individual term papers</td>
<td>Ensure students do the reading/study Test understanding and ability to use ideas taught Develop/test student writing skills</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Quite common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Term papers with group and individual work (say 50:50 weighting)</td>
<td>Ensure students do the reading/study Test understanding and ability to use ideas taught Develop teamwork and test writing skills Prompt personal reflection (self-appraisal and awareness, observation, critical thinking)</td>
<td>Moderate to high</td>
<td>Not unusual; administratively more complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Project reports, from e.g. industrial visits and placements; own organisation; enterprise planning and design</td>
<td>Ensure engagement with practice (applying concepts to complex situations; critical thinking) Prompt personal reflection (self-appraisal and awareness, observation, critical thinking) Develop self-direction and test writing skills</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Experiential learning may involve keeping a journal or log Not common: hard to arrange and supervise. Scope for peer assessment in advanced courses only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Final exam (and mid-term exams) using e.g. simple case analysis, calculations, short and longer answer questions</td>
<td>Test that students recall, understand and can apply concepts/techniques (basic application, simple cases)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mid-term exam less common, but offers clear scope for peer assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How are staff coping with large numbers?**

Our discussions recognised that new structures and teaching practices are emerging as ways to keep the job manageable, while maintaining or raising standards. Three trends are apparent:

♦ Introducing a division of labour in academic work, with greater use of teaching assistants and adjunct faculty staff. UCC, like The Open University, takes this furthest
and runs complex supervised teaching and assessment processes. This was seen as controversial; some universities had decided the security risks – ‘leakage’ of questions and marking schemes – were too great to be countenanced.

- Using ICT tools and processes to save time. These include requiring students to submit their assignments electronically, and the use of spreadsheet tools to speed up marking administration (within ABLE-Ghana, colleagues with IT skills offered to share their expertise and were never short of takers).

- A gradual shift away from a reliance on conventional lecturing (with some Q&A and discussion) and towards a much greater use of group activities, assignments and presentations (row 2 in Table 1). These may be assessed in class, sometimes involving forms of peer assessment, though this is not yet widespread. For example, instead of lecturing, one lecturer asks students to volunteer to give a five-minute presentation on one of the questions she had previously set on the reading for that class. All 60–70 students have to take their turn in different classes, and the lecturer will probe for their depth of understanding, and to expose ‘passengers’. Other lecturers assign students into groups to prepare a presentation (and they can call in the lecturer if they get stuck) – but when the group’s turn comes, the lecturer chooses which member of the group will make the presentation. In other cases a group report earns the members of the group the same mark for that element of the assessment, but an individually written element is also required.

As well as changing their practices or adopting new ones, lecturers are having to develop new skills to ensure their assessments work properly. These ‘tricks of the trade’ include:

- Taking measures to make copying and sharing more difficult, for example, by ‘shuffling’ the key to objective questions; or changing the order of questions; or changing the context or detail of questions.

- Constant vigilance regarding copying and plagiarism: lecturers had learned to check for superficial changes in answers (e.g. font size, the order in which points were presented) and to check between classes as well as within classes (typically, the later class produces ‘better’ answers). Increasingly, when their suspicions were aroused, lecturers would put student text into a search engine to see if a source could be identified (the ease of doing this was one advantage of e-submission).

- Warn students that you will be strict with cut-and-paste plagiarism. One lecturer did this immediately after students had submitted their first assignment; she gave them the opportunity to take back their papers and resubmit the following week. Every single student took back their paper!

- Get known for strictness – for example, by setting unannounced quizzes, and reading the assignments carefully. Once you have earned a reputation for thoroughness, students will adapt to the situation, they will work harder, and the level of plagiarism and copying will reduce.

- Be prepared to act ruthlessly to expose cheating. For example, one lecturer who suspected widespread cheating set an assignment and marked it. The next week he set a surprise exam-style test in class – based on exactly the same question. For those who had done the assignment themselves, this was (of course) straightforward. But sure enough, a significant number of students could not answer the question – so they failed both the original assignment (whatever mark it had been given) and the test.

- Gather systematic feedback from students. One lecturer’s searching assessments and firm policies prompted noisy complaints from a few students. He responded by issuing a questionnaire to be returned anonymously. The results were strongly positive.
Possibilities, limits and prospects

The three trends identified – a greater division of academic labour, new teaching technologies, and new learning designs – all have much further to run, and not just in Ghana. These trends are interacting, as well. The debate about whether to introduce a greater division of labour, with more use of teaching fellows, or teaching assistants or associate lecturers, continues in the UK and Europe. Those who advocate it argue that the academic role has changed and become much more demanding. At the same time, technological developments make a division of teaching work more straightforward and secure. When a university or business school has a very large number of students, all kinds of statistical checks become possible through which lenient, severe and erratic marking can be identified, and inappropriate alterations to assignments by a marker can be flagged up. Likewise, the new teaching technologies offer secure and more searching forms of multiple choice questions (MCQs), making administration much simpler and making possible the safe reuse of questions in later courses (see the discussion of OER in Part 4). Likewise, the identification of plagiarism becomes semi-automatic when systems such as Turnitin and Copycat are used (as at the OU and elsewhere).

But of the three trends, arguably it is the development of new learning designs that is, in the last analysis, the most important. It is these designs that ensure students are active learners not just passive absorbers of information; that require the practice of vital skills, not just reading about them; that mean students can receive useful feedback from each other, and not just look to the extremely scarce attention of the lecturer for validation. This is the argument for peer assessment – but it is only one way in which focused group activities and discussions can provide a much richer and more motivating learning environment than the traditional lecture hall. This is the crux of the matter because the technologies and the teaching assistants will only be as useful as the underlying course design allows.

Some important implications follow. First, these trends mean that the role of the lecturer is becoming ever more demanding. It is no longer enough to know your subject and be able to hold forth confidently in a lecture hall. Your subject may be evolving rapidly, or it may require contextualisation to Ghanaian conditions. A host of practical and ICT skills become important in managing large numbers. The design of learning processes and new forms of assessment require quite advanced understanding of educational methods.

But, second, the solutions cannot be developed by individual lecturers alone. The challenges require institutional development – with new technology infrastructures and academic leadership willing to encourage and support experimentation and innovation.

Conclusions

Reconciling quantity and quality will always be a challenge, and perhaps never more so than at the present time when expectations are rising rapidly. This paper has reported from the front line on how business school academics in Ghana are meeting that challenge – one that becomes most acute around student assessment. It found that the commitment to academic standards and a willingness to experiment remained strong, despite very onerous workloads. But this provides no grounds for complacency. The pressures on academic staff remain intense, as more is expected of them and their roles become more complex.
References
3.3 How to do peer assessment

Margaret Crabbe, Seyram Kawor and Professor Rob Paton

What is peer assessment?
Any form of assessment in which some or all of the marks and feedback are provided by other students taking the same course.

Who uses it?
It is widely used in universities and colleges in both Europe and North America, especially in professional and applied subjects.

Why is peer assessment used?
It requires students to engage more deeply with course ideas: in order to judge other students' work, they have to absorb and then apply relevant criteria. The result is that they can then judge their own work more clearly as well. Moreover, in assessing each other's work students are practising an important skill: it is needed in many aspects of employment (in awarding contracts, in selection, as part of strategic planning, etc.). So peer assessment is a form of experiential learning as well as being a form of assessment. It also seems to encourage students to take responsibility; many find it motivating (peer pressure!). In short, peer assessment is used because it enhances student learning.

Will it save me time marking?
Quite possibly – especially if you have a very large class and administer it carefully. But don’t expect it to do so straight away! Both you and the students have to get used to it.

So how do I do peer assessment?
In lots of ways – it depends on what you are teaching, and at what level you are teaching. Providing a clear and well thought-out marking scheme for the students to use is essential. This can double-up as a form on which students record the marks they award. Here are some ideas to get you started.

♦ Use student assignments from a previous year as the basis for a classroom exercise, and to get students used to applying criteria. Use this as a chance to spot confusions and to discuss the judgements they will have to make.

♦ Have students work in small groups of four, and mark four pieces of work written by another four students. They read and mark one each, then pass them on, until each has marked all four. Then they compare their separate scores, discuss the differences and try to agree a mark for each piece of work in turn. They complete a form with all these results on it, and return the assignments and the form to you to review and moderate.

♦ Require the groups to prepare simple feedback to the student – what they most appreciated about the work, and what changes would most improve it (giving feedback is a very important part of management!).

♦ Have students work as groups to assess each other's group reports and projects – either formatively or summatively.

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5 One controlled evaluation study of peer marking found that the students who had to mark other students' work did better in later assignments than those who did not have to do so; and this was true even if they were not very good at awarding marks.
♦ Have small groups of students take turns teaching parts of a course (it also develops presentation skills). You chair the session and correct errors or confusions. Peers pose questions if they don't understand, and finally rate how well they thought the teaching was done on a given set of criteria. Student-awarded marks count for (say) 40 per cent and the lecturer's rating for 60 per cent of the student's mark for that element of assessment.

♦ Allow time to discuss the peer assessment process – both assessing and being assessed. Consider setting an exam or other assessment question. For instance, ‘From your experience in this class, what did you learn, that is likely to be relevant in business, about the challenges of assessment processes [or: giving and receiving feedback on performance] and the different ways of doing this?’

♦ For later modules in a Masters programme, ask the students to devise the marking scheme in a classroom discussion.

**How do you stop students cheating or misusing the arrangement?**

Spotting offenders (who award all the same, or random, marks; or who agree to give each other high marks, for example) is quite easy. Early on, publicly penalise those who cannot plausibly justify the marks they award, and students will quickly get the message.

**What if the students are bad at marking, and the results are not fair?**

To begin with, you will have to moderate the marks carefully. Give them feedback on what you have done – congratulating them on being broadly on target, or advising if they have been too severe or too lenient, or just erratic. Then if a student complains, you can say ‘But that is the mark I awarded, or the same as I would have awarded – and this is why…’ Once they are used to it and you are more confident, your moderating can focus on weaker students, or any suspicious patterns. Remember, you are entitled to ignore modest differences (say, up to a grade). But if the students’ marking really is all over the place, that means you have set them too hard a task: perhaps you went too fast in the teaching, or your marking scheme isn’t as clear as you thought.

**Any other points to bear in mind?**

Start simple, with modest experiments. Remember that peer assessment is part of the teaching and learning as well – it is about cultivating their judgement, not just assessing their learning. Use a student feedback form at the end of the module to find out what students think about it – see below.

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6 Marking is not an exact science, and we aren’t as good at it as we like to think. If you or I mark the same script twice with a gap of a few weeks, lo! – we do not give the same mark. If a group of us mark the same script, we often disagree by two or more grades. But this does not invalidate academic grading, because cumulatively, over a series of assignments, our scores for particular students converge; we do still agree on the excellent, strong, middling, weak, failing and hopeless students (A to F grades).
Peer assessment – student feedback form

As part of [name of your course] you took part in some peer assessment – that is, you marked some of your fellow students’ assignments, and you had your work marked by some of them.

1 On reflection, what were the best things about this peer assessment?

2 On reflection, what were the worst things about it?

3 Peer assessment can be done in different ways. Would you like to see it used in other courses as well? Please tick one of the boxes below.

1 Definitely not – I don't see the point and it undermines the course

2 Probably not – I doubt if it can be made to work properly

3 Undecided - it all depends on how it's done

4 Probably yes – I'd like it to work, but I realise it isn’t easy

5 Definitely yes – it's a good idea and I learned more by doing it

If you have any comments or suggestions concerning peer assessment, please give them here:
3.4 Peer assessment with student feedback: a report from KNUST School of Business

Kwame Mireku

Executive summary

The ‘Peer assessment–student feedback’ is an activity which enables students to grade assignments or tests based on a lecturer's benchmark or marking scheme agreed upon with students, and to give one another feedback so they learn from and support each other. It aims to make better use of a lecturer's time and to improve students' understanding of course materials as well as develop their skills.

This report describes how students were organised for a large-scale version of this activity. A total of about 350 students from the KNUST School of Business (KSB) took part. A questionnaire was distributed among 40 groups and 25 students and the responses were analysed in writing this report. It identifies some benefits and challenges associated with this form of peer assessment. On reflection, some best things identified about the exercise were promoting a teamwork spirit among students, equipping them with techniques of presenting assignments, and creating avenues whereby students can air their views and mixed feelings on how marks are awarded.

It is recommended that for peer assessment to have its full impact, bigger and better places than classrooms should be used. Also, a good majority of students suggested that they should be given prior information on the marking scheme before such exercises are conducted. This would enable them to prepare adequately for the exercise.

Introduction/background

Teachers and lecturers nowadays are experimenting with alternatives to traditional tests. Performance assessment, portfolio collections, classroom observation, self-evaluation and peer assessment are joining the unit test and the final exam in the repertoire of the skilful teacher. Such teachers ensure that an over-reliance on testing does not seriously distort instruction or impede important school improvement efforts. Teachers who include authentic assessment in their repertoires are driven by a belief that curriculum assessment experiences should prepare students for life in the real world.

This report presents and provides information on peer assessment in which students marked some of their fellow students' assignments. Self- or peer assessment can be described as a process whereby students or their peers grade assignments or tests based on a teacher's or lecturer's benchmarks. It adds a valuable dimension to learning. The opportunity to talk, discuss, explain and challenge one another enables students to achieve beyond what they can learn unaided.

The objective of this exercise was to find out whether peer assessment could be used as a mode of student assessment when working with the large numbers often encountered in business schools.

Methodology

Course used for the peer assessment

Financial Accounting II for second year students was used for the peer assessment.
Student population
A total of about 350 students participated in the exercise. Students were grouped into 40 groups with at least eight students in a group.

Work done
A group assignment was given to students to work on and present, in groups, which they did on the day of the assessment.

Organisation of the peer assessment
Four sessions were held on the day of the exercise. Each session had 10 groups participating in the exercise. For each session, students sat in their respective groups and the marking scheme was explained to them. Discussions were held on the marking scheme and a final scheme was agreed upon.

The assignments prepared by the various groups were shuffled and given to different groups to mark, based on the agreed scheme.

After marking, each group had its assignment back and members were given the opportunity to raise issues they were not clear about regarding the marking. The groups that marked the work were given the platform to respond to the queries. From these interactions, and with the aid of my teaching assistants, a fair mark was determined for their assignments.

Approach to reviewing how the assessment had worked
The review of the exercise employed face-to-face interaction (discussion) with students as well as the administration of questionnaires. All students were given the chance to participate in the face-to-face interaction to review the peer assessment process. The following were some issues on which the questionnaire\(^7\) sought to gather views from students:

♦ the best and worst things about the peer assessment exercise
♦ whether they recommend peer assessment for other courses
♦ their comments and suggestions concerning the peer assessment.

With regards to the questionnaire administration, all the 40 groups and 25 students picked randomly participated in the exercise. In all, 65 questionnaires were administered and returned.

Observations and findings
Best things about the peer assessment exercise (merits)
A good majority of the participants attested to the fact that they were enlightened on how lecturers mark their assignments. In other words, they (participants) gained ideas on lecturers’ marking techniques. This, to most of them, would help them in the preparation and presentation of assignments in the future. By grading and examining themselves, most of the participants were better able to understand the grading process and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses while learning how to think as they complete assignments. Most of them were of the view that once they had been briefed on the lecturer’s expectations, this would go a long way to help them improve the presentation of their assignments. To some of them, the new ideas and techniques learned would help them get good marks in their assignments in the foreseeable future.

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\(^7\)This was the feedback form given with the guidance note in Section 3.3.
It is worth noting that a greater portion of the participants took the peer assessment exercise as an opportunity to air their views and perceptions on how they thought marks were awarded. This served as a relief to these students as they had always wished for an outlet to make their voices heard.

From a lecturer’s point of view, peer assessment saves time because an entire class can be graded and assessed together in the time that it would take a lecturer to grade just a few individual papers. Moreover, rather than having a lecturer rush through each paper, students are able to take their time to correct them. Students can spend more time on a paper because they only have to grade one paper and therefore can do a more thorough job.

The exercise instilled a teamwork spirit in most of the participants. The majority of the participants saw the exercise as helping them to work in groups. This part of the exercise helped many students with different backgrounds and behaviours to coordinate their efforts and work together as a team. At the end, the exercise inculcated a good teamwork ethos in the participants and this, according to many of them, would help them in their future aspirations and careers as they would have to work in a team.

Lastly, a section of the students saw and took the peer assessment exercise as a learning cycle from which they learned from their mistakes as well as from their fellow colleagues. This helped students to see tests, assignments and exams not as punishments but as useful feedback. In addition, some of the participants who wished to be lecturers in the future took this opportunity to learn some techniques and, in their own words, ‘We had a feel for a lecturer’s work.’ Another section of students considered the exercise to be an entertaining activity. For these participants, academic work pressures (such as submitting assignments and learning for exams) always exert a form of stress and the peer assessment exercise was a very good avenue to overcome such stress.

Worst things about the peer assessment exercise (demerits)

Notwithstanding the merits the peer assessment exercise provided, another portion of the participants saw the exercise as a complete waste of time. To them, the hours spent on conducting the exercise could have been channelled into other important ventures. To some of them, there was some form of bias when it came to the awarding of marks between the participants. This was because of the friendly relationship existing between them. Others attributed this to subjective feelings as well as the fears of the participants.

Another demerit of the exercise that was frowned upon by the student participants was the disorganisation of the entire peer assessment exercise, especially not having prior knowledge of the marking scheme. A good majority of the participants thought that the entire exercise was not well organised. This they attributed to a lack of organisation in the time and the environment (venue/place).

Other findings

As part of the exercise, participants were asked to indicate whether they would like to see peer assessment used in other courses. On this, opinion was divided. Nine respondents, representing about 14 per cent, indicated that they definitely would not want to see peer assessment used in other courses as they did not see the point and that it also undermined the course. Thirteen participants, representing about 20 per cent, probably did not see the need for using peer assessment in other courses as they doubted if it could be made to work properly. Eighteen out of the 65 participants (forming about 28 per cent) were undecided as they were of the view that whether peer assessment should be used or not depended on how it was done and conducted. Twenty-five per cent (16 out of 65) were to a large extent convinced that peer
assessment should be used in other courses and that they would like to see it work out well, even though it would not be easy to do so. The last section of the respondents, numbering nine and representing 14 per cent, were in no doubt that peer assessment exercise was a good idea and that they had learned more by participating in it. This last section took the affirmative stand.

Conclusions and recommendations

From my experience of overseeing the exercise, and taking account of the responses of the students, it is clearly possible to run forms of peer assessment even when dealing with very large numbers. This is not easy, and careful thought needs to be given to the arrangements. The environment within which the peer assessment exercise is conducted has a bearing on how effective the exercise will be; so it is recommended that a suitable and friendly environment should always be used so as to make the exercise more fruitful. It is also recommended that participants should be given prior notice of the exercise, especially the marking scheme, to enable them prepare adequately. But these are challenges that can be overcome, and with experience lecturers will know how to handle them. The potential advantages of peer assessment are considerable – some of them were demonstrated in this exercise – so further use of peer assessment in large classes is needed.
Part 4 Creating and using open educational resources

4.1 Introduction: the significance of OERs and the project as action research

Professor Rob Paton and Kofi de Heer-Menlah

Open educational resources (OERs) are described as any educational materials, technologies and resources offered freely and openly for anyone to use under 'creative commons' licences. Such licences permit remix, improvement and redistribution. The core belief underpinning the OER movement is that by making first-class educational materials readily available for teachers to adopt and adapt as they think fit, it will be possible to enhance the quality of learning while reducing the costs of course development and delivery.

The idea of the ABLE-Ghana OER project emerged shortly after the second residential meeting at KNUST. On reflection, the UK team realised that although Ghanaian colleagues had asked to explore the Open University catalogue and their associated resources stored in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), this had never happened. Infrastructure problems and a full schedule had meant there was never the right moment and enough time. In consequence, one of the aims of ABLE-Ghana – the exploration and adaptation of OU resources – was not happening. Following consultation with the Deans, who were enthusiastic, a working study visit was set up for December 2010. Four universities participated by nominating lecturers to visit the OU Business School (OUBS) for two weeks. The nominated team comprised Dr Bernard Obeng, Mr George Tackie, Mr Ibrahim Bedi and Mr Gordon N. Asamoah. In addition, Mr Fred Kofi de Heer-Menlah from GIMPA (who was becoming involved with ABLE-Ghana through an engagement with the Credit Unions Association) was also able to join the group as an OUBS International Fellow.

The OU was already heavily involved in OER projects – for example, TESSA\(^8\), STEM\(^9\) and HEAT\(^10\) – but none had involved business schools in Africa. The purpose of the ABLE-Ghana project therefore was to start to explore the potential of OERs in African business education, by engaging the Ghana Business School educators in the development and use of their own OERs. More specifically, the objective of the ABLE-Ghana OER project was to explore the following questions:

- How easy or difficult is it to create OERs for business and management courses in Ghana by selecting suitable OU resources and adapting them? What does this involve? What are the challenges? How long does it take? What sorts of OERs (in what subject areas) can more readily be produced in this way? Are the pedagogies transferable as well as the expositions and cases?
- Would the Ghana colleagues see advantages in incorporating OERs into their teaching practice? What would they be?

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\(^8\)Teacher Education for Sub-Sahara Africa, [www.tessafrica.net/](http://www.tessafrica.net/)


\(^10\)Health Education And Training project, [www.open.ac.uk/africa/HEAT_project.shtm](http://www.open.ac.uk/africa/HEAT_project.shtm)
When academics try to incorporate the use of OERs into their existing courses, what does this involve? What are the constraints, challenges and advantages? How do students respond?

How do the OER developers’ colleagues respond to the availability of Ghana-related OERs? Under what circumstances do they become interested in experimenting with and using the OERs?

Given the limited prior knowledge of the OER approach on the part of Ghanaian colleagues, and this extensive range of questions, the OER project was conceived as an exercise in action learning and action research. The idea was that the group would simply set about trying to create OERs from OU resources; that they would take them back to Ghana and share and use them there; and they would document what happened. If this proved impossible for various reasons, then the team would be learning about the obstacles that needed to be addressed. If they more or less succeeded, they would learn about some of the possibilities of the new approach, and the impact on student learning. More likely, they would learn about both the obstacles and the possibilities.

It was clear from the planning stage that this would be a challenging assignment for those involved. To stop it being completely impossible, the size of the OER was restricted. In some literatures, creating an OER might be understood as putting the content of a whole course into a single OER. The OER envisaged for this project would be more focused; generally they were expected to take the form of a session of 2–3 hours of study or class time devoted to a particular concept, issue or technique, as explained further below.

The ABLE-Ghana OER project took place in four phases, namely:

- the working study visit to OUBS, Milton Keynes, UK
- peer training in the use and design of OERs at the third ABLE-Ghana residential meeting at University of Cape Coast
- the experimental use of the OERs developed by the ABLE-Ghana OER team in their teaching
- the write-up of each of the ABLE-Ghana OER project team members’ experience in the creation or adaptation, use and sharing of his OERs.

**Phase 1: The study visit**

The two-week programme started with an orientation in which team members were introduced to their assignment: to produce two OERs each to take back to Ghana for use in the next semester. One of the OERs was to be used by the OER project team member on return to his teaching and the second was to be prepared for a colleague to use in his or her teaching.

A short worksheet suggested the elements that each created OER should contain: a title and keywords, learning activities, some work that might be assessed or that could become part of an assessment, and a study guide. The study guide was to spell out:

- the focus and aim of the OER
- the courses or management situations it has been developed for
- how long it is likely to take students to work through it
- the component learning activities of the OER, and how students were to work through them.

The same briefing note explained that the learning activities could be an exposition (for example, a reading, a piece of teaching text or a podcast), a case study, a video clip, an investigation, a worked example, a simulation or interactive exercise, or a discussion with other students. It was suggested that two or three activities be linked coherently
together, culminating in the self- or peer assessment activity. Finally, a simple five-step procedure for preparing the OER was also suggested to the team as a guideline for preparing the OERs.

Following this orientation, the visiting OER team were introduced to the OU OpenLearn LabSpace\(^{11}\). This provides free access to a suite of experimental educational tools for learners and educators to collaborate with each other to develop OERs, to adapt or modify OERs, or to use and share OERs. However, it is not the easiest facility to master. Moreover, at about this time, we found that several of the group could not access the OU Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) where its course resources are held. It turned out that Visiting status did not provide the requisite electronic privileges (or, more precisely if bizarrely, it was disputed whether they should have this access – some did, others didn’t!). By the time this issue was resolved, the OER group had rightly decided to look elsewhere for resources to adapt.

Following the briefings, the team were left to work largely on their own. However, after the first week and preparation of their first OER, the team were able to attend the first day of a one-week course, an OER ‘boot camp’ organised by the Support Centre for Open Resources in Education (SCORE). This ‘boot camp’ session was so informative that the team wished they could have attended the rest of the course. However, it was acknowledged that if they had started with this session – before they had begun to grapple with the selection, creation and adaptation of OERs – they might not have gained so much from it. The SCORE course enhanced their ‘learning by doing’ but could not replace it.

The OERs created by the team are shown in Table 1. On their last day the team gave a seminar on their work and experience in producing OERs to the OU community. The seminar was recorded and the presentation materials were posted to the ABLE-Ghana website.

### Table 1  The OERs and their use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OER</th>
<th>Created by (and for)</th>
<th>Used or not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing of products and services in the informal sector</td>
<td>Bernard Obeng</td>
<td>Used in the Sokoban project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to computer and information systems</td>
<td>Bernard Obeng for colleagues</td>
<td>Not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning double entry bookkeeping using spreadsheets</td>
<td>George Tackie</td>
<td>Used by author at UCC in his teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer marked assessment for management accounting</td>
<td>George Tackie for a colleague</td>
<td>Not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for assessing the progress of teaching and learning auditing at undergraduate level</td>
<td>Ibrahim Bedi</td>
<td>Used at UG in his teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for relevant literature using e-books and e-journals</td>
<td>Ibrahim Bedi for colleagues</td>
<td>Used at UG in his teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online resource for financial markets students</td>
<td>Gordon N. Asamoah</td>
<td>Used by author at KNUST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-governance models for public administration</td>
<td>Kofi de Heer-Menlah</td>
<td>To be used later in the semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) [http://labspace.open.ac.uk/](http://labspace.open.ac.uk/)
Phases 2 and 3: Sharing the learning, and using the OER with students

The OER project continued with a presentation to the ABLE-Ghana residential meeting at the University of Cape Coast. This was the first attempt to disseminate and share the developed OERs. The report of the experiences of the OER team went down well. However, the discussions after the presentation brought out a number of issues on the likely challenges to be faced at the business schools, and these have informed the final paper in this section. This discussion was followed by a short workshop to introduce the residential meeting participants to the creation of OERs. Later, the two members from GIMPA gave a seminar at GIMPA on ‘Open Educational Resources and Quality Distance Learning’. This introduced the lecturers of the GIMPA Business School to OERs and gave information on where to find them. This surfaced further important issues.

The third phase of the OER project was using the created OERs in teaching for the second semester of the 2010/2011 academic year. The members were to document their experiences in the usage, sharing, adaptation and creation of OERs at their campuses; and two contrasting experiences are reported in the papers that follow. Essentially, however, when the lecturers were able to use the OER properly, the students responded very positively. Here, for example, is what Gordon Asamoah said in one of his messages:

> I used it in the teaching of financial markets and the students responded fantastically. They really enjoyed having to go online to source the materials. I will use it again. I plan developing it very well for subsequent years so that all the students I handle can also have access to it.

Not all the OERs were used, for a variety of reasons. Kofi de Heer-Menlah had not yet used the OERs he developed on LabSpace simply because their use was not required until late in the semester (however, he had used other OERs from w3schools.com’s online tutorials). However, the main reason for non-use seems to have been a reluctance on the part other lecturers to use resources that they had not themselves developed. This issue is taken up in the final paper.

Phase 4: Reflection and analysis

The final phase of the OER project has involved team members sharing reports of what happened when the OERs were used, and continuing to reflect and discuss with other Ghanaian colleagues the possibilities and challenges that OERs present. The sharing of experiences was undertaken through email question-and-answer messages, preparing the reports presented here, and by telephone interviews undertaken by Mr de Heer-Menlah. Initial reflections are presented in the final paper, but this work continues with a view to journal publication in due course. The work will also involve an exploration of the emerging literature on OERs, to compare our experience with that reported by others.
4.2 Creating and using tools to assess auditing students

*Ibrahim Bedi*

Accountancy education in Ghana is faced with the challenge of large numbers. An average undergraduate class for a course in accountancy is around 150. This affects lecturer–student interactions. Additionally, only very bold students are able to ask questions. It is also difficult to identify every student’s needs in class. Tutorial sessions invariably become another lecture. This affects student performance and how well students are prepared for the job market. Furthermore, it affects students’ critical thinking abilities and their ability to debate with lecturers. Students are unable to determine their learning needs because of these large numbers. The major effect is the inability of lecturers to assess students regularly. Usually, two to three class tests and sometimes one end-of-semester assignment are used. Where a lecturer assesses students, marking the scripts and providing feedback is also a major challenge. This means that there is a need to find a better approach to how to deal with assessing large numbers. This challenge was what I saw could be solved by using the Open University’s LabSpace tools. After our dilemma of having to go through the tools on our own and discovering the various functions of LabSpace, I realised that LabSpace provides simple tools for designing banks of questions and setting quizzes. These quizzes can be restricted in terms of the length of time allowed to attempt them and the period they will be available. The questions and the sequence of them can be shuffled, and there is the option of showing immediate feedback to the student or not. This function is most important as it means that students cannot tell their friends the answers before they try the quiz.

Therefore, I used the IndieSpace within LabSpace to develop quizzes for testing the progress of teaching and learning of auditing by my 300 diploma-level, undergraduate and MBA students. I had 125 diploma, 167 level 3 and 15 MBA students just for the second semester of the 2010/11 academic year. The tools on LabSpace allow one to develop questions and answers using multiple choice, Yes/No or even short answers. Hence, I developed a series of questions in auditing to help my students test their level of understanding as I taught during the semester. (A sample screenshot is provided in Figure 1 overleaf.) I designed the series of questions for each topic I covered. The questions set were broad enough to test students’ understanding and allowed them to identify areas for which they needed more explanation.

My students visited the site to answer those quizzes. It took about 15 minutes to try each set of questions. Additionally, I developed an evaluation questionnaire for my students to give me their feedback when I complete each topic. They were required to respond to the feedback questionnaire as well (see Figure 2 overleaf).
In view of the need to provide feedback, I organised what I called 'after-burns'. We started every lecture 15 minutes earlier so that students could come up with questions they needed answers to. The quizzes offered the students the opportunity to identify their learning needs. They asked several relevant questions which provided the opportunity to give more explanation. As a result, my students did not miss a lecture and my lecture room was always full. It also developed a personal rapport between us, and the students’ confidence level was high.

The major challenge for all this is finding the extra time to develop the questions. Setting the questions requires tact and skill so that the quizzes are not too easy or too tough – I tried to test students’ understanding and critical thinking abilities, and some of the
questions were very practical in testing their ability to apply concepts they had learned. However, I was motivated to do it as my students expressed their excitement and pleasure and really appreciated the innovativeness of this approach. My students were full of praise and this resulted in a high rating for me during my university's annual student evaluation. I had the highest rating since I joined the university as a result.

I must add that the use of ICT as a result of using LabSpace also encouraged the students to learn. It is said that most students are unwilling to read from hard copy these days: the average student is more likely to read a document if it is on a screen. Hence, the global trend towards e-libraries, e-journals and e-books. Therefore, I realised that as a result of this approach, most students read and were more prepared for lectures compared with the past. I could tell they had attempted the quizzes and wanted to find answers to questions they found difficult.

The major difficulty for some of the students was connection problems. However, they managed to try the quizzes at internet cafés and other computer centres on campus.

I will continue to use this approach because of the excitement it generated and I have been talking to my School's IT personnel to find out the possibility of developing a similar IT platform for the School. I can use this approach to test my students on all the other courses I teach, such as taxation, financial accounting and corporate reporting.

Making such a tool available in my School could drastically reduce the challenges of assessing large classes. It can also provide a platform for better lecturer–student interaction, both in class and online. As a teacher, it allows you to find out the extent to which teaching and learning have happened.
4.3 Great OER, pity about the infrastructure!

George Tackie

As part of the OER project I developed two OERs:
♦ Learning double entry bookkeeping using spreadsheets
♦ Computer marked assessment for management accounting

A full version of each of them can be accessed in the Business and Management area of the OU LabSpace at http://labspace.open.ac.uk/

Learning double entry bookkeeping using spreadsheets

This is a three-hour study session intended to expose students to the techniques of using spreadsheets to consolidate their understanding of basic double entry bookkeeping. This OER therefore provides a starting point for a shift from manual accounting to computerised accounting.

For this OER to be useful to the learner, it is important that the learner acquires a thorough understanding of basic double entry bookkeeping principles, which can be taught in the classroom before proceeding to the computer laboratory to have a hands-on experience of the use of spreadsheets. The learner however also requires a practical knowledge of the use of spreadsheets. A functional computer system with spreadsheet application software is also required.

The key resources or elements of this OER are:
♦ a study book (e-book)
♦ learning activities
♦ spreadsheet exercises
♦ end-of-course assessment.

See Figure 1 (a) and (b) for screenshots of the spreadsheets used in learning double entry bookkeeping.

(a)
Figure 1 Sample spreadsheets for double entry bookkeeping

Computer marked assessment for management accounting

This is a 30-minute assessment test tool using multiple choice questions (MCQs) to test students undertaking a course in management accounting. The MCQs were developed using templates designed in the OU LabSpace. The computer reshuffles the MCQs between questions and within options so as to avoid students’ cheating. The computer assesses the student’s responses and provides prompt feedback. This mode of assessing students makes assessment easier, more objective and faster. It can also be used to assess large cohorts of students. However, both the learner and the assessor require practical knowledge of use of basic computing. In addition, the assessor needs to learn the techniques of constructing MCQs as well as the appropriate use of MCQs.

Figure 2 (overleaf) shows what the assessment pages look like.

Using the OERs

With much excitement and enthusiasm, I was convinced that the OERs developed were going to help improve teaching and learning. ‘Learning double entry bookkeeping using spreadsheets’ was expected to be particularly useful considering the extent to which computerised accounting has gained prominence in modern business education. The development of this OER was not done with wishful thinking but with a sound commitment to ensuring that we ‘change’ or enhance the way accounting education is delivered. After a demonstration of this OER in class, my students greeted this innovative idea with much more enthusiasm than I had even envisaged. But, to my disappointment and theirs as well, they could not have a hands-on experience of how to use this OER due to inadequate infrastructural support facilities, apart from the privileged few who had access to laptop computers and could also gain access to the limited connectivity on the university’s wide area network.
Figure 2  Sample assessment pages
The other OER, 'Computer marked assessment for management accounting' could not be used at all. This OER was intended to be an assessment tool which required reliable internet connectivity and adequate computer facilities, which were non-existent at the time it was meant to be used. Perhaps it may be very useful and helpful in the near future when conditions improve. The only opportunity to expose students and lecturer colleagues to the OER was during a faculty seminar where a presentation was made on it. The discussions that followed the presentation confirmed the many issues raised about the creation and use of OERs for business schools in Ghana. Of course, many were optimistic about the benefits to be derived from the strides made in the creation of OERs to improve our teaching and learning.

**Challenges of creating and using OERs**

Technologically, we may be handicapped in terms of availability of adequate and reliable computer facilities and internet connectivity. Even where these facilities are available, the faculty as well as the students of the business schools may lack the technical know-how. But with the upsurge in the use of mobile phones and laptop computers, our faculty and students may already be up to the challenge when it comes to technology. Africa is endowed with vast amounts of, both natural and academic resources, and African academics who have been privileged to have access to education must ensure that education is made open, and its resources learned and shared.
4.4 OER prospects and possibilities: reflections on the project

Kofi de Heer-Menlah, George Tackie, Ibrahim Bedi, Dr Bernard Obeng, Gordon Asamoah and Professor Rob Paton

Introduction: so what did we all learn?

The OER project presented serious challenges and took the visiting team out of their 'comfort zone'. Most still hardly knew what the term meant, but they were expected to set about creating OERs in a short period of time. They faced serious technological obstacles and had to master unfamiliar systems, working under intense time pressure. The technological frustrations continued back in Ghana where, in addition, colleagues were wary about OERs as much as they were interested in them. Indeed, one could argue that the whole project was ill-conceived and badly managed... except that the results were so good. The fact is that the 20 or so OU staff who attended the seminar in December were hugely impressed by the variety and quality of the work presented. That this included an improvised video to illustrate particular marketing concepts showed the teams' willingness to experiment and explore the technological possibilities.

Impressive and gratifying though this was, it is not the heart of the matter. This was an action research project that should be judged in the last analysis by the usable knowledge that it generated, rather than the particular OERs it produced. So the question is, 'What have we learned about the possibilities for the creation and use of OERs in and for Ghanaian business schools?'. Viewed from this perspective, many of the frustrations represent significant data concerning issues and obstacles that will need to be addressed. This paper presents our initial reflections and analysis of the project experiences, focusing on the questions it was designed to explore.

How easy is it to develop OERs for business education in Ghana?

To answer this we first have to explain what creating an OER involves. From the response of all five team members, this is a very complex process which we can say is not well documented. It is set out in very general terms in Figure 1. Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 all need to be done before the work of actually creating or adapting the resource can begin. Originally it had been envisaged that the OU course materials would be the main focus for steps 2–4, but the access problems ruled this out and meant that one of the central questions driving the project – the 'ease of adaptation' of OUBS resources – could not be explored. Instead, the team had to seek out other websites with OERs, including the OU’s open access site called OpenLearn (http://openlearn.open.ac.uk), which did have some resources relevant to business education. Later discoveries at the SCORE ‘bootcamp’ exposed the team to the other OER search engine sites for use in finding suitable OERs.

But if the project could not learn about the adaptability of OU resources, it learned about other important issues instead. The whole process of searching websites and appraising possible resources proved time consuming. It became obvious to most of the team that they would do better to create their own OERs. This is why all the OERs developed, apart from the Introduction to computer and information systems, were developed from scratch. This exception was selected by de Heer-Menlah, the most experienced member of the group (in terms of learning technologies) and the only one with prior experience of OERs. The obvious implication of this experience, therefore, is that time must be allowed for this part of the process, especially if this is the first such search one is undertaking. However, it is reasonable to expect that the time required will fall with increasing experience, familiarity with key sites, and the development of specific skills in searching.
Step 5 also proved to be challenging – this is likely to be the case with any reasonably sophisticated development site – but the team members could at least support each other in finding ways to do things. By the end of the study visit the OER team had shown that it was possible in an intense two weeks of work to:

♦ develop a working knowledge of OERs, where they may be found, and the main debates associated with them
♦ explore examples of different and innovative ways of teaching and learning
♦ discover new ways of making assessment a lot easier, faster and more effective
♦ appreciate the range of technology tools available to improve the quality of learning design and delivery
♦ learn, on the basis of personal experience, what may be involved in preparing OERs and some of the main challenges and choices likely to arise.

*Figure 1  Preparing and using an OER*
The different ways of using OERs

When we review the OERs produced it is clear that different members of the group produced different sorts of OERs. There seems to be a spectrum from using OERs to deliver an existing way of teaching through to using them as a vehicle for introducing new teaching practices. Thus, for example, Gordon Asamoah developed an OER to present and embellish his existing course design. George Tackie went a bit further, developing a resource to reinforce his existing teaching of double entry bookkeeping and also to demonstrate the power of accounting software. Ibrahim Bedi radically extended the assessment in his course and added in new opportunities for student feedback. And Bernard Obeng went furthest, creating resources to support a quite different way of teaching.

All these ways of using OERs can be valid and useful – the point is simply that this range of possibilities exists. But it does raise the question: under what circumstances will OERs actually be used in these different ways? For our project one obvious factor restricting the more adventurous uses was the time pressure; and one can expect this would be true in other situations as well. One effect that OERs introduce is that new possibilities for how a course is taught are opened up – this is the meaning of the dotted line back from step 6 to step 1. But the more one rethinks the design of a course, the longer the whole exercise may take (albeit, one hopes, with even better results). It is surely significant that the person in this project who was most adventurous with his OER (Dr Obeng) was also the person who was least constrained: he was developing a new course from scratch.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that for all five team members the experience of incorporating OERs into their existing courses was an enjoyable experience that they wanted to continue. But they also indicated that finding the time to develop further OERs would be a major challenge. In this respect it must be emphasised that realising the potential of OERs will require academics to engage with new teaching practices and pedagogic approaches underpinning some of the OERs that would be suitable for adapting for use in their courses in Ghana. The process in Figure 1 is not a straightforward mechanical sequence, but a series of professional investigations and judgements.

Student responses

All the OER team members agreed that incorporating OERs into their teaching practice was a very useful exercise. The interviews by email showed this, as do the reports by Ibrahim Bedi and George Tackie in this document. Perhaps the single most important reason is that the students’ response to the OER was excellent for all five team members, even where there were technological challenges. The students were excited; they really enjoyed having to go online to source the materials; they were eager to have a hands-on experience with the use of OERs. Bedi noted that his students were obtaining and reading more material online, particularly e-journals, and his class became more interesting. He also reports receiving the highest performance rating for the semester due to the use of OERs in his teaching. The consistently positive student responses to these early OER efforts seem highly significant for the future of OERs in Ghanaian business schools.

Spreading OER use more widely

None of the team members was able to persuade a colleague to use the developed OER. Amongst the reasons were it was not easy for colleagues to determine whether the developed OER would be useful to them or not; and the time needed to introduce the colleague properly to the developed OER would have been considerable. If two people were already familiar with OER it might well be possible for one of them to ask the other
to prepare an OER to help in teaching a course, and for them to talk that through. But that was not the situation. If more teachers are to learn to use OERs, this will happen, in the first instance, by them finding ones that they want to use or creating them for themselves.

Nor can it be assumed that all academics will be positive towards OERs. During the third residential meeting, some participants were initially resistant to the use of the OERs, arguing in particular that it would not be possible to use them. A challenge we faced at the workshop was the failure of the local internet connection. GPRS modems were purchased for all participants, but by the time they were delivered valuable time had been lost. Small group tutorials were organised using these (slower) connections and all participants were given a taste of OERs. After a lengthy discussion and additional information, participants accepted the use of OERs as likely to be beneficial for business schools. But this experience exposed many of the obstacles, including the lack of a working local area network to connect the lecture halls to the internet at one university, which would mean that OERs could only be used by students outside classes through internet cafés.

From the feedback it was clear that many of those involved were now keen to learn how to search for and create OERs. So despite the difficulties, an appetite was created, even if it could not be satisfied in the time available. This too has clear implications for future efforts to encourage the spread of OERs.

An OER seminar at GIMPA led to another lively debate, this time between advocates of open and closed educational resources. It also led to a proposal for the Academic Board to find innovative ways of counting the creation of OER resources as part of the performance appraisal of lecturers. Given the heavy workloads of academic staff, institutional changes to encourage the adoption of new practices also need to be considered.

Conclusions: looking ahead

If, in the light of all this, we consider how the use of OERs might be further promoted in Ghana, then the following seem to be required:

♦ an introduction to the idea of OERs and the issues associated with them
♦ training in how to search for and appraise OERs
♦ provision of a stable and user-friendly technology infrastructure for the preparation of OERs and their provision to students
♦ familiarisation with some of the methodology and pedagogy that may underpin quality OERs
♦ encouragement for lecturers to develop and use OERs
♦ infrastructural support in Ghana, to increase the availability of computers and reliable internet connectivity
♦ appreciation by university leaders and policymakers in Ghana of modern ways of improving teaching, learning and assessment.

In conclusion, there is a need for more clarifications, explanations, assumptions and requirements for the Ghana business schools to embrace the use of OERs in their teaching and learning. The experience of non-functioning local area networks coupled with non-functioning internet connections is a challenge that needs to be tackled at a higher level by the universities’ policymakers.

The team also identified the need for more collaboration, institutional support, enthusiasm and motivation. There is a need for Ghanaian business school educators to change their mindset to be positive about the use of technology. The exercise is a new
challenge and more work needs to be done to embrace this new challenge. It may be helpful to form a consortium of institutions to spearhead the creation and dissemination of OERs for Ghana and then for Africa as a whole.
The contributors and other members of the ABLE-Ghana learning community


Mr Ahmed Agyapong is a senior member of KNUST School of Business, KNUST-Kumasi, Ghana. Areas of interest: strategic management, corporate strategies.

Mr Daniel Agyapong lectures in the Department of Management Studies, School of Business, University of Cape Coast (UCC). Areas of interest: entrepreneurial finance, marketing of financial services and innovation management.

Mr Kingsley Opoku Appiah, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), KNUST School of Business (KSB), KNUST-Kumasi, Ghana. Areas of interest: corporate failure, small and medium enterprises.

Mr Prince Kodua Akortsu is a Lecturer in Marketing and a PhD student at the University of Ghana Business School. He is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana, and holds an MPhil in Business Administration (Marketing) from the University of Ghana, where he currently teaches at both undergraduate and graduate levels, including the Executive MBA. Prior to becoming a lecturer he held various senior managerial positions in the airline, telecommunications and real estate industries. He has been involved in several research and consultancy projects for various institutions including the British Council, Ghana.

Mr Gordon Newlove Asamoah is a Lecturer and Public Policy Analyst at the Department of Accounting and Finance at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology School of Business. The courses he teaches include Money and Banking, Financial Markets and Risk Management in Financial Institutions. His research interests are in financial markets, financial sector development and growth. He holds a BEd (Hons) from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana and an MSc (Econ) in Public Policy from the University of Hull, UK. He has attended and presented a number of papers at international conferences all over the world and has several publications to his name.

Dr Kofi Fred Asiedu is a Senior Lecturer in Economics and Ag. Managing Consultant of GIMPA Consultancy Services. His teaching and research interests include economic business environment; impact of development agency policies on health and poverty; household adoption behavior and sustainability; business development and entrepreneurship, corporate strategy and micro savings and credit in developing countries. Apart from several technical reports produced, Dr. Asiedu has also published several working papers as well as publications in World Development, Global Water Initiatives (IUCN/IIED, London), GIMPA Journal of Leadership, Management and Administration.

Mr Ibrahim Bedi ACCA, ICAG, BSc (Admin), MBA is a Chartered Accountant and a Lecturer in the Department of Accounting, University of Ghana Business School. His areas of specialisation are auditing and taxation. He has authored two textbooks and a number of researched articles.

Dr Richard Blundel is a Senior Lecturer in Enterprise Development and a member of the Innovation, Knowledge and Enterprise Centre at The Open University Business School, UK. His research interests are in the field of organisation studies, with a focus on entrepreneurial growth processes, innovation and organisational communication. Richard is a board member of the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) and chairs the ISBE conference track, 'Social, Environmental and Ethical
Enterprise’. He edits the *Quarterly Survey of Small Business in Britain* and is involved in a number of research projects related to entrepreneurship and sustainability.

**Dr Margaret Crabbe** holds a Doctorate in Management Information Systems from Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. She also holds an MBA (Finance) from the University of Ghana. She currently lectures at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), teaching MIS and International Business Management. Prior to her career in academia, she held managerial positions in the Central Bank of Ghana. Her research interests are in the area of technology adoption, consumer behaviour and customer satisfaction.

**Mr Frederick Kofi de Heer-Menlah** is the chairman of the GIMPA Distance Learning Task Force. A computer scientist by profession and a Senior Lecturer at GIMPA School of Technology, he set up and managed the African Virtual University (AVU) Learning Centre at GIMPA from 2004 to 2008 when the project ended. He is an e-learning and e-governance expert and lectures in Web Technologies, Java Programming, C#, MIS, IT Project Management, ICT for Public Sector Management and Software Engineering. He has been researching critical success factors for managing virtual learning projects, OERs and e-governance. He is a FOSS (free and open source software) advocate and a consultant for the Parliament of Ghana ICT directorate.

**Mr Seyram Kawor** attended Keta Secondary School in 1995 and graduated in 1997 with a Senior Secondary School Certificate in Business Studies. He graduated from the University of Cape Coast in 2003 with a Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com). He did his national service as a Teaching Assistant at the School of Business, University of Cape Coast for the 2004/2005 academic year and was employed by the same university as a Senior Research Assistant until 2009. He had a scholarship from the University of Cape Coast to pursue an MBA in Finance from 2006 to 2009. He graduated with an MBA-Finance (Research Option) in 2009 and is currently a lecturer at the School of Business, Department of Accounting and Finance, University of Cape Coast. His special interests are accounting and finance, financial statement analysis and business law. Seyram is also an External Examiner and Moderator for a number of private universities in Ghana. He has experience as an Assistant Examiner in company law, law of contract, commercial law and business communication for the Centre of Continuing Education, University of Cape Coast.

**Mrs Abigail Opoku Mensah** is a lecturer at the School of Business, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. She holds a BA degree in Psychology and an MPhil in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Ghana, Legon. Presently she teaches at the Department of Management Studies, School of Business, University of Cape Coast. Some of the courses she teaches include: Organizational Behaviour, Human Resource Management, Organizational Psychology, Consumer Behaviour and Gender and Development. Her areas of specialization and research interest include work and family conflict, women's issues in the workplace and employees' job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job involvement. She has conducted research among Ghanaian lactating working mothers on the challenges they face in the workplace.


**Mr Kwame Mireku** is an Accounting and Finance Lecturer at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology School of Business in Ghana (KSB). He has over four years’ experience in administrative and accounting duties. He holds a BCom degree with first class honours from the University of Cape Coast and an MBA (Finance) from KSB. He loves working with children and the less privileged.

Dr Nceku Nyathi is a Lecturer in Management Learning at The Open University Business School. He is an Executive Member of Africa Academy of Management (AFAM). His research interests are in international management, individual and organisational learning in an international context, research and theory in international organisations, post-colonial analyses, globalisation and behaviour in the global economy.

Dr Bernard Acquah Obeng PhD, MBA, PgCert, BCom, DipEd is a lecturer at the Graduate School, GIMPA. Dr Obeng's teaching and research interests are in the fields of entrepreneurship and small business management, and marketing. Before joining GIMPA, Dr Obeng was an ad-hoc lecturer at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK. He has contributed widely to international journals and conferences. Prior to joining academia, Dr Obeng worked as Senior Banking Officer at the National Investment Bank, Osu-Accra and as Assistant Consultant at Kwame Asante and Associates, Accra.

Mr Bright Oduro-Kwarteng holds two separate degrees in Political Science and Political Economy and a Masters degree in Political Economy. He has been pursuing his PhD in Economics at the University of Greenwich (England) before joining GIMPA Business School (GBS), one of the four schools of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). Areas of interest: the role of the state in economic development, performance management, human resource management, public sector reforms.

Ms Hannah Vivian Osei, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), KNUST School of Business (KSB), KNUST-Kumasi, Ghana. Areas of interest: HRM, organisational behaviour, industrial relations, corporate governance.

Professor Rob Paton was born in Ghana, schooled in Edinburgh, and a student at the Universities of Oxford and Pennsylvania. He has taught at The Open University for more than 25 years where he has helped to pioneer the use of Supported Open Learning for management development and led major curriculum design projects. He helped to set up the Business, Management and Accountancy Subject Centre, which provides advice and support on pedagogy and educational technology to other business schools. He has consulted to the Cabinet Office and to the National School of Government in respect of e-learning and related developments. He is Professor of Social Enterprise; his research interests concern the measurement of social performance and the leadership dilemmas arising in third sector organisations.

Mr George Tackie is a Chartered Accountant and Lecturer in Accounting at the Department of Accounting and Finance of the School of Business, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He holds a BCom and an MBA (Accounting) from the same university. He has extensive research and teaching experience in accounting. Due to his passion and professionalism in the teaching profession, he has undertaken training in a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education. His areas of specialisation and research interests are accounting standards, auditing and assurance services, taxation, financial reporting strategy and corporate governance.

Ms Theresa Taylor, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana (UEW). Areas of interest: human relations, tax processing, management.